

Artistic Response: Presence to Self & Others

Catherine Elliott (North Sydney)

As we farewell the extraordinary year that was 2020, the first year of a new decade, I thought it timely to express gratitude for the enduring presence of Mercy gifted to us from our forebears. Their practical example continues to inspire the mercy world to lead and to love with the dignity of both *self and others* at the heart of all that we do.

We are asked to contemplate who are ‘the other’? At first glance we might identify them as our kin, our neighbours, our community, the world, the earth, all living things. At a deeper dive, ‘the other’ are the sick, the marginalised, the homeless, the lonely, the poor, the aged, the silenced, the displaced.

We are compelled to heed the call (often the cry) of others, those in need of our authentic presence. Presence to others may only be truly realised once our hearts are tuned inwards, listening and reflecting and acting on our inner voice, the ultimate act of presence to self.

As a Mercy Partner working in Mercy schools, we constantly seek ways to inspire students to be present to both one’s self and to others, long after they graduate. This is tangibly demonstrated through ***The Mercy Effect***, a young Monte alumni group supported by the Sisters of Mercy North Sydney, Australia. Through workshops and speaker sessions, young Alumni have the opportunity to personally reflect on the continuing presence of Mercy in their life, their capacity to bring positive action, and the effect their actions or inaction may have on others.

Authentic presence to others can perhaps be perceived as the sharing of one’s charismatic gifts, in the case of ***The Mercy Effect*** alumni group, there is a diverse symphony of gifts within the group, hopefully animated and vibrantly passed on. In her keynote address at the Fourth International Oblate Congress in Rome, Sr Joan Chittister OSB spoke of how charismatic gifts should be passed on in “new and vibrant ways...not to hoard it and hide it for ourselves...to share it, to give it away.” Surely the sharing of one’s gifts is the ultimate realisation of one’s self, our selfless presence to others.

The importance to prepare young women (and men) to embody and reflect our Mercy charism cannot be underestimated. It is critical that a directness of Mercy intention and action be sustained, heralded from generation to generation - from Sisters to teachers, from teachers to students - our future policy makers, healthcare professionals, educators, scientists and activists; our voices of truth, action and mercy.

The Artistic Rendition of The Mercy Effect

The digital artistic rendition of The Mercy Effect is used in marketing communications for **The Mercy Effect** alumni events. Designed to stand out from the white noise of emails, and appeal to a younger target market, the image has several contemporary elements.

The top right of the image depicts a yellow rose in tribute to our traditions of Mercy and Catherine McAuley. Layered on top, is a hand drawn black rose for added dimension. The centre of the image bears the word **Mercy**, written in a bold font and given a vibrant pop of colour, in this case hot pink, in order to proudly stand out. This leaves no doubt that the word **Mercy** should appear front and centre, both on the page and in our world today. The word **Effect** has been handwritten, with the aim to convey an authentic, personal connection with the viewer.