

# ASH WEDNESDAY

*A Journey of Becoming*



*"Mercy bestows  
benefits,  
receives us  
anew and  
pardons us  
again and  
again"*

Catherine McAuley

## Introduction

*Adapted from the Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy of Ireland*

Mercy is the call, the charism and heritage which forms and reforms our lives. It enables us, through the power of the Spirit ... to reach out with courage and compassion to Christ's suffering members and to witness to the constancy of God's loving kindness in every age. Our response [to God's call] is accomplished gradually through a life-long process of formation and growth. As we begin this Lenten season you are invited to take another step on that journey of becoming.

## Scripture *Genesis 3: 8-9*

Adam and Eve heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees in the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

## Reflection

*Play reflective music or sit quietly with a candle as you ponder the questions below and your Lenten journey in Mercy.*

If God asked you, 'Where are you' what would you reply? Where are you in relation to God? Where are you in relation to your purpose in life? Lent is an extended period that gives us time to ponder these deep questions. We have 40 days to make this journey deeper within ourselves, as we once again reconnect with our 'Why'. This is our deepest reason for being. This is the purpose beyond ourselves to which we connect. We do not travel this journey alone - God accompanies us. You are invited this Lent to take intentional time to reconnect with God's personal call for you. What is it that inspires you, what gives you energy? Jesus told us that he came in order that we may have life and have it to the full. When you notice what is life-giving for you, pay attention. God is looking for you in that place, calling you to be the person you were created to be, so that you may have life in all its fullness. When we reconnect with our unique, personal call, we are energised to reach out to others with compassion and mercy, following in the footsteps of Catherine McAuley. Let us keep Catherine's words in mind during this Lenten season: "Oh let us endeavour to use these days, such as we should wish the past to have been."



## Poetry

*Poem by Brenda Peddigrew rsm*

Mercy opens a door  
In the heart-  
Just that. All else-  
How, what, when, who, where and  
how much-  
These are frills and frames,  
And when that door opens  
These take second place  
To the pulsing presence  
Of palpable love, flashing briefly, flame from spark.

The best of Mercy traverses the door as softly as a  
Cloud, as silently as prayer.  
It is given and received without fanfare,  
A sacred mystery of mutual blessing.

For what is Mercy  
but Compassion's countenance?  
An empty doorway embracing all.

Most of all, Mercy is known in a moment, seen and  
sent forth, a feather on the wind,  
uncontained by any door.

## Quiet Reflection

As we begin this season of Lent, can you notice where God, as Mercy, is opening a door in your heart? Can you rest with 'just that' without trying to figure out the 'how, what, when, who, where and how much'?

## Universal Prayer

*Adapted from 'Be as Shining Lamps' by Mercy Partners, Australia*

God of Mercy and Compassion, hear the prayers of this community gathered in your name as we begin the journey of Lent. Open our hearts to the Mercy call to pray unfailingly for others, especially those made poor.

*God of Compassion, hear us.*

We pray for openness to the call of the Gospel to go out into the world, like Catherine McAuley who spent her resources - financial and physical - on building a house for the poor.

*God of Compassion, hear us.*

We pray for the spirit of humility and service modelled by Catherine McAuley who welcomed every person who came to the door in Baggot Street.

*God of Compassion, hear us.*

We pray for an unwavering focus on the care of others, that we may be like Catherine McAuley who embraced those rejected by society - children, single mothers, the elderly, and the poor.

*God of Compassion, hear us.*

We pray for welcoming hearts and the faith to believe that we can make a difference in our world. This Lent may we open our hearts to others.

*God of Compassion, hear us.*

## Closing Blessing

*From 'Being the Bird' by Mary Wickham rsm*

Mercy be the name;  
Mercy be the path;  
Mercy at the heart;  
Ever, ever, Amen.

