



# FEAST OF OUR LADY OF MERCY

*opening doors to an emerging future*

## INTRODUCTION

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)*

Today, we celebrate Mercy Day as a global Mercy community. We gather in faith to remember this past year and those we love who have died. We gather in hope, as we allow God's gentle touch to lead us forward, into a future we cannot yet see.

Beginning to emerge from these Covid times, we light a candle and take some quiet time to listen with the ear of our hearts to the plans God has for us, to give us an emerging future of hope.

## OPENING SONG: CIRCLE OF MERCY

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In Mercy, we touch the hearts of those who are in misery.  
In Mercy, we're touched by them and feel their strength and courage.  
In Mercy, we heal the pain of those who are in sorrow.  
In Mercy, we're healed by them and see the face of hope.

*Refrain:* For the Circle of Mercy is timeless,  
it is Spirit of life itself,  
which grounds us in faith, and lifts us in hope  
and holds us in God's loving care,  
and holds us in God's loving care.

In Mercy, we welcome those the world has left rejected.  
In Mercy, we're drawn within the loving heart of God.  
In Mercy, we forgive the incompleteness in another.  
In Mercy, our sins are healed and we are whole again. Refrain

## OPENING PRAYER

Trasna  
The pilgrims paused on the ancient stones  
In the mountain gap.  
Behind them stretched the  
    roadway they had traveled,  
Already a far journey – was it a lifetime? –  
Ahead, mist hid the track.  
Unspoken, the question hovered:  
Why go on? Is life not short enough?  
Why seek to pierce its mystery?  
Why venture further on strange paths,  
    risking all?  
Surely that is a gamble for fools – or lovers.  
Why not return quietly by the known road?  
Why be a pilgrim still?

A voice they knew called to them, saying:  
'This is Trasna, the crossing place.  
Choose! Go back if you must,  
You will find your way easily by yesterday's road,  
You can pitch your tents by yesterday's fires,  
There may be life in the embers yet.

If that is not your deep desire,  
Stand still. Lay down your load,  
Take your life firmly in your two hands –  
(gently ... you are trusted with something precious) –  
While you search your heart's yearnings:  
What am I seeking? What is my quest?  
When your star rises deep within,  
Trust yourself to its leading.  
You will have light for your first steps.  
This is Trasna, the crossing place. Choose!

## SCRIPTURE READING: MATTHEW 13:31-32

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field; which indeed is smaller than all seeds but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches.

## REFLECTION

*Adapted from Boots, Cracked Pots, and a Place at the Table: Mercy in a World Becoming by Madeline Duckett RSM*

This past year we have learned what it is to be vulnerable. Vulnerability can close us down in fear, or open us up to previously undreamed possibilities. Possibilities for the future that is emerging, for ourselves and those to whom we minister.

Catherine McAuley always stood midway between vulnerability and possibility. Can we stand with hope and faith in this place of possibility, allowing the Spirit's dream of Mercy to gently unfold?

*'To be truly merciful, we must sometimes become defenseless, powerless, like the poor we serve.'*





## UNIVERSAL PRAYER

Merciful God, on this feast of our Lady of Mercy in 1827 Catherine showed her love for your people and entrusted her hope for the future in You. As we celebrate this feast of Mercy, may we be blessed with hope and trust in your providence as abundantly as Catherine.

Merciful God, give us the kindness to hear with compassion, and to offer support, loving comfort, and care to those in need.

**God of Mercy, hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, protect all those experiencing the struggle of migration, those impacted by the degradation of our earth, and those living on the margins.

**God of Mercy, hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, give us the courage to do what is needed, the wisdom to choose what is right and fair, and the vision to see what is possible.

**God of Mercy, hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, guide those in leadership positions to hear the cry of the poor and the earth and to make just decisions to protect those most vulnerable.

**God of Mercy, hear our prayer.**

## SUSCIPE OF VENERABLE CATHERINE MCAULEY

My God, I am yours for time and eternity. Teach me to cast myself entirely into the arms of your loving Providence with a lively, unbounded confidence in your compassionate, tender pity. Grant me, O most merciful Redeemer, that whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me. Take from my heart all painful anxiety. Suffer nothing to sadden me but sin, nothing to delight me but the hope of coming to you, my God and my all, in your everlasting Kingdom. Amen.

## CLOSING BLESSING

*Adapted from To Have Hope written by the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo, Honduras*

To have hope, is to believe that history continues to be open to the dream of God and to human creativity. To have hope, is to continue to affirm that it is possible to dream a different world, without hunger, without injustice, without discrimination. To have hope, is to believe in the revolutionary potential of faith and to leave the door open, so that the Spirit can enter and make all things new. To have hope, is to begin as many times as necessary. To have hope, is to live.

Give us the blessing of courage to ask what you want of us, Lord. **Amen**

Give us the blessing to know that to live is to change. **Amen**

Give us the blessing to trust that you always have faith in us. **Amen**