

# MERCY DAY PRAYER RESOURCES

**Celebrating Mercy Day, Sunday the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2023.**

## Opening Blessing

*Catherine McAuley by Maria McGuinness RSM.*



Catherine McAuley had a dream.  
We have a privilege of knowing it.  
We have the responsibility to understand it.  
We have the honour to live it.  
Let's live it well – together we can make a difference.

## Opening Prayer

*God of Compassion and Mercy from Mercy Prayers.*

God of compassion and mercy,  
source of compassion and love.  
Inspire us to live the Gospel call to care  
For all who are most vulnerable.  
Kindle in us a fire for justice poured out on our world.  
May we be like Catherine McAuley in our faith, our love and our hope.  
Amen.

## Opening Reflection

*Mercy as a Value by Patricia Smith RSM.*

Mercy is a mode of relationship, not a momentary sporadic feeling. It is, rather, a habit of mind and heart, a way of organizing and interpreting the world. It is an enduring approach to the world. And, like any relationship, it is a two-way street. And a power. This is the exciting, challenging part. Mercy is only what it is when it is effective — when it survives against great odds and when it empowers all who come within its orbit of care. Because mercy opposes injustice and whatever is degrading, it is likely to involve danger. Conflict is inevitable, struggle enduring. Courage is needed, as never before, in our time.

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Wounded (but not destroyed) by the suffering of others. If Mercy is com-*passion*, or “suffering with,” it is also comfort, or “standing strong with.” An inner-city minister in Baltimore put it beautifully: “Mercy is justice in tears.” Propelled to Action. Propelled is a very active verb. It says that mercy is God’s empowering presence in the world, a presence known only in and through those who act in God’s merciful name. What needs propel us and our organizations today? What wounds us?

Now. The God of mercy does not wait to care for us at the end of our lives or at the end of time. This God cares for us during all time. Made in this God’s image, we are exhorted by Mother Jones: “Pray for the dead, but fight like hell for the living.” This means practical action. Now.

## Poem on Mercy

*Mercy Day by Mary Wickham RSM.*



If we utter aloud the word mercy,  
standing, each of us, by an open window  
anywhere we are in the world,  
then the word mercy will carry on the soundwaves  
onwards and unceasing,  
through the air of the wounded world.  
And maybe, when it takes flight  
into deed and kindness, justice and effort,  
it will effect a healing, a hope and a blessing.  
It may call the homeless home,  
it may coax to hope the betrayed and broken,  
it may ease the burdened earth.  
Listen for it, the repeated word mercy, on this Mercy day,  
Listen for its neighbourly dialects and global idiom.  
Imagine those who, like you, are saying it aloud,  
and those who need to hear it, today- the word- mercy.  
One word, one deed of justice, one kind effort at a time.

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Creator God, sustainer of life,  
Jesus, our companion Word,  
Spirit, who, like the air, inspires,  
give us the simple daring this day  
to say and to be Mercy.

## Reflection Question

Take some time to reflect on your journey in Mercy and how these words speak to your heart. Take one word, phrase or line and quietly repeat it to yourself a few times.



## Prayers of Intercession

***Response: God of justice, transform our words into actions.***

We pray for all those who, like Catherine McAuley, have given their lives in service to others. **R.**

We pray for each of us that we may be an influence for good on this earth. **R.**

We pray for peace and unity: that global leaders may work together to end war, violence and persecution. **R.**

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We pray for trust in God's providence during times of doubt and difficulty. **R.**

We pray that we may find hope as we confront the challenges of the climate crisis. **R.**

We pray for the Sisters of Mercy and the mercy community throughout the world, that Catherine's life and death may continue to call each of us to embrace the spirit of hospitality and service. **R.**

We bring all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, before the God of mercy as we say together, Our Father ...

## Closing Reflection

*Our Need for Mercy from Mercy Readings from The Mercy Prayer Book.*

Catherine lived a fairly balanced life. Indeed she was a woman committed to being an instrument of God's mercy to those most particularly in need. She was also a woman who was united with the compassionate sufferings of Jesus Christ particularly by her presence with those persons who are poor. At the same time, she was a woman in need of the tender mercy of God... Forgetting this dimension ... can lead to a kind of deadly seriousness about ourselves ... an over-emphasis on self-reliance and achievement, and a lack of balance between work and leisure, seriousness and play, self and other... If we worked a little less and spent more time listening to the deepest desires of our own hearts, what would we hear today? Might we come to that deeper gratitude of heart which Catherine evinced in her daily life for all the ways in which God surrounds us?



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## Poem

*Just for Now by Danna Faulds.*

Just for now,

Without asking how, let yourself sink into stillness.  
Just for now, lay down the weight

You so patiently bear upon your shoulders.  
Feel the earth receive you,

And the infinite expanse of the sky grow even wider,  
as your awareness reaches up to meet it.

Just for now,  
Allow a wave of breath to enliven your experience.  
Breathe out whatever blocks you from the truth.

Just for now,  
Be boundless, free, with awakened energy tingling in your hands and feet.  
Drink in the possibility of being who and what you really are –

So fully alive that the world looks different,

Newly born and vibrant, just for now.

## Closing Prayer

May the God of Mercy continue to lead us and inspire us.  
May the spirit of Catherine be a light and a joy for the road.  
May the compassion of Jesus be our guide and our measure.  
In the name of the Trinity of Love: Creator, Word and Spirit. Now and always.  
**Amen.**

## Closing Song

*Circle of Mercy by Jeannette Goglia RSM.*

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.

For the circle of mercy is timeless:  
it is Spirit of Life itself.



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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.

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, the Spirit Faith will root us in God's presence.  
In mercy, the Spirit Hope will lift us out of doubt.  
In mercy, the love of God will be our joy in living.  
In mercy, we join with one another on our journey.

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.



*“Prayer is a plant the seed of which is sown in the heart of every Christian, but its growth entirely depends on the care we take to nourish it”*

(Catherine McAuley, Retreat Instructions, p. 90).