

Artistic Response: Creating Circles and Culture of Mercy

Mercy is like a Circle



MERCY
GLOBAL
PRESENCE

ABSTRACT

Snapshots from “our lived experiences of Mercy flowing from the one source but lived in many realities”: How Monte Sant’ Angelo Mercy College creates circles to live out our culture of Mercy. (Ref.: Mercy Reflection Guiding Team September 2020)

Continuity & Connection

Without beginning or end, the circle provides continuity and connection. A circle can become larger or smaller without compromising its shape.



Outside the front door of Mercy International Centre is a contemporary bronze sculpture by Michael Bourke. It features slightly larger than life figures: a nun, presumably Catherine McAuley and a woman with a baby in her arms. It is titled Circle of Mercy. The odd thing about it though is that it is not a circle, but literally a penannular, an incomplete circle: it only becomes truly a circle when the observer steps into the ambit of the figures and completes the scene, accepting the tacit invitation to be included in the dynamic.

(Wickham, M. Storms and Teacups: An Acrostic on the Leadership of Catherine McAuley ISMA Journal, Listen, Vol. 22, No 1, 2004.)



Like ripples in a pond the circles have continued to grow and connect people throughout the world. The image of girls in circular ripples and throwing water over their heads are symbolic of the *Ripples of Mercy* that we are now



part of nearly 200 years later. Water from the well in Baggot Street and from the homes of all the new students was collected and poured into our Holy Grass as we all connect as one from many different places. The *Ripple Effect* of our actions is often not known.

Inclusivity



Our College connection to our first peoples is one of inclusivity. At our Year 11 Spiritual Retreat the students painted a mural that now hangs in Bindarray.ga, a sacred site that captures the three key Principles of Learning from Uncle Max Dulumunmun Harrison (watching, listening and seeing) in three circular ponds.

The ponds in the mural have the three lifecycles of the Striped Marsh Frog that lives within our ponds – from eggs to tadpoles to frogs - and reflect the health of the ecosystem. Through the lens of contemplative seeing, the students are able to sit with nature and then reflect through their artwork about the connection between nature and Aboriginal spiritual teachings, as well as to challenge our western world view to open our hearts and minds to the wisdom that lies beyond. The Aboriginal classroom is a circle around a fire – sitting on Mother Earth sharing story – echoing Indigenous Circles of inclusivity and conversation.

Relationships



The image of the Seven Circles of Mercy reflects the Homeroom Groups within Year 7 -when our students start high school - and their Mercy journey. It symbolizes unique individuals coming together as members of their Homeroom – the Year 7 cohort and Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College. It is the start of

many new relationships as the girls are welcomed into the global Mercy family. This affords students the opportunity to build relationships not only within their own school but with many Mercy schools within Australia and indeed globally. Relationships are limitless like circles.

Contemplation & Compass

The College has a Labyrinth available to all staff and students to walk. The journey is never the same for anyone and can be used at different times within our life. Contemplative strolling allows us to:

1. Release – as you walk into the centre, let go
2. Receive – as you stop in the centre, be open to receive
3. Renew – as you walk out and into your life, do so with renewed focus



" We should be as the compass that goes round its circle without stirring from its centre. Our centre is God, from whom all our actions should spring as from their source."

Catherine McAuley



Each Year 11 group, as they start their final year of high school, goes on retreat. Each retreat group paints on a compass piece their shared understanding and learnings from participating in the retreat experience. Each piece is placed in the circular compass on their return as we celebrate, in liturgy, the focus of all our actions springing from God and Mercy.

Life-Long Learning

The circle is the strongest structural shape. The more we learn, the stronger we become; the more able we are to be informed in our decision making, the more we can be the voice for justice in our world. The image of Year 7 and Year 12 in concentric circles around our Holy Grass depicts the youngest and the oldest of students in our care; it symbolizes the knowledge that is passed down through the years – that we are standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before us. It is the circle of life and the evolving nature of Mercy.



Eternity



The energy flow of Mercy empowers our young women to be courageous and bring justice issues to the fore. Like Catherine and Elizabeth McQuoin, we are invited to join the Mercy global family for eternity. Like circles that go around and around we look to the future of lay people to continue the ellipse of Mercy around our world.



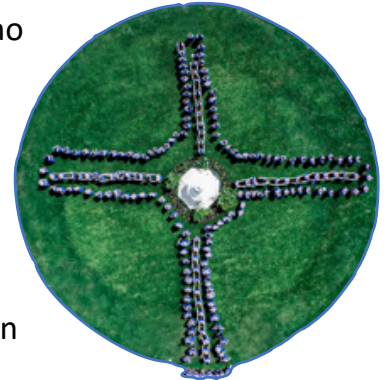
Sisters of Mercy North Sydney - Our Story

The Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney are at the heart of who we are and what we do. The Sisters of Mercy globally have been at the forefront of action to seek to serve, challenge injustice and advocate for change. The 'walking nuns' from the time of Catherine have never been afraid to go out onto the streets and

will you Seek to Serve?

confront the issues of the day. It is the legacy of Elizabeth McQuoin and all the Sisters who have gone

before us that continues to inspire us, and the young women of Mercy in our care, to be the future of Mercy in our world. It is the young Mercy woman in our school who will continue to add to the incomplete circle when:



“...accepting the tacit invitation to be included in the dynamic.”

Wickham, M. *Storms and Teacups:*

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