

9a. Living Mercy: Founders



GATHERING SPACE

Mercy is more than charity: it not only bestows benefits but receives us anew, and pardons again and again even the most ungrateful. (Catherine McAuley)

The word solidarity is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few ... (Pope Francis)

> How did Catherine McAuley go in search of the lost sheep of her day?

FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Jesus often uses parables and images of things lost and found to highlight the nature of God, who in this story is patience, love and compassion. The sub-text reminds us that no one is too unimportant to be found or helped or engaged in relationship. Lost and found - you can't have one without the other and this reading asks us to consider - lost from where? lost by whom? While a rational response would be to look after the ninety-nine sheep that you have, Jesus is reminding us that the lost sheep is also precious in God's sight. Like Pope Francis who urges us to 'go to the outskirts' to build inclusive communities, Catherine McAuley also

defied social conventions to seek out those who were truly marginalised and made poor.

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So Jesus told them this parable: "Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15)

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- > The parable of the Lost Sheep challenges all of us to be alert for those who are lost.
- > Who are the lost sheep in our society, ministry, world?
- > How do Mercy ministries find the lost and celebrate their return?

PRAYER

God of mercy and tenderness

Help us to see the lost sheep in our everyday lives.

Give us the courage of Catherine McAuley to reach out in practical ways to those who need our love and compassion.

May we be ever mindful of the challenges in our Board work which call for inclusivity and a merciful response.

For Mercy ministries around the world which shepherd those who are lost

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For struggling families and victims of domestic violence

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For those who struggle to find work and direction in life

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For the homeless and those for whom home is not welcoming

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

For our world which cries out for merciful climate policies

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

Give us courage, in this Year of Mercy, to open the doors of our hearts to the power of a merciful way of living and being

God of the lost sheep, impel us to action

(Pause for any special intentions)

FOR THE END OF THE MEETING

The voice of mercy is echoed in the lives of three Irish women, ordinary in extraordinary ways. Catherine McAuley, Nano Nagle and Mary Aikenhead are now recognised as women who worked tirelessly to set free the oppressed people of their time. They were women who had great opportunities, but instead they chose shepherding. They were drawn into the heart of mercy, ever radical, always prophetic ... Mercy is the shepherd's staff. (Anna Burke)

The words of Catherine McAuley reflect the size of mercy: 'We can never say it is enough'. (Luke 1)

Illustration from Sieger Köder 'Art and Inspiration'. Pope Francis: *The Church of Mercy* (2014), p26. Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. Burke, A *The Quality of Mercy* (2015), p43. McAuley, C *Familiar Instructions* (1927), p2

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE



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