

Be Bold and Brave

In this article Good Samaritan Sister Meg Kahler reflects on the call for all of us (but especially women) to be bold.

As we approach International Women's Day let's pause and give thanks for the bold vision of the founders of our ministries and the courage of those who have taken up the call to ministry in education, health, aged care and social welfare around the world. For Mercy Partners ministries we think especially of Nano Nagle and the Presentation Sisters, Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy and Elizabeth Hayes and the Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and all of those who worked alongside them in service of the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

March 8, 2017 marks International Women's Day and this year's theme is "Be Bold for Change".

When I was a child, to be told you had been "bold" meant you had done something wrong – usually that you had spoken out of turn or broken some other social convention. I don't know if boys were ever called bold. It seemed it was a special term for outspoken girls. I can see why it may be a good encouragement for women – to speak up, to break some social convention that is no longer helpful, to be bold.

For me, and possibly other bold young girls, brave might be a better term. It possibly comes before being bold. There are many books, movies and women who have been brave – who have acted courageously in the face of their fear. We hear about the ones who have done this very publicly and usually at great personal cost. These are the 'being-afraid-and-doing-it-anyway' kind of women. We need them.

I can think of Scholastica Gibbons, Mary MacKillop, Julia Gillard, Gillian Triggs, Yassmin Abdel-Magied and the millions of women who have endured much because they are bold and brave. For these women,

their bravery is a public act; it's often reported on and can subject them to a public barrage of abuse. In our modern times, they are trolled and stalked. It costs.

Bold and brave is ... a characteristic shared by many: women who leave relationships that are abusive or violent; women who do whatever is needed to protect children; women who play in the first ever professional football association; women who work in jobs they love but are usually done by men; women who live in distant, frightening or difficult places; and all the women who try new things because a voice inside them guides them to it.

For those with a religious understanding, this small voice is the voice of God, heard through prayer and discernment, tested by the heart, shared and reflected on with those who love them and, most importantly, acted on. This kind of bold and brave implies wisdom, faith and love.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Ezekiel writes of the destruction of Jerusalem, partly due to the people not listening to the voice of God. It's a vivid description of what can happen when the people are unable to be bold and brave... The destruction of Jerusalem reflects the destruction of the relationship with God – a people acting without wisdom, faith and love.

God seeks those who can make a difference, who can stand against those who do wrong by the people. This is the space where bold and brave people often stand – at the junction where violence and wrong collides with peace and love. It is a battle. It requires great wisdom, faith and love to fill that gap. Many people do step into this gap and draw on their bravery and boldness to stay there.

Source: This article, by Meg Kahler SGS, was first published in the March 2017 edition of *The Good Oil*, the e-magazine of The Good Samaritan Sisters. Sister Meg Kahler is currently Co-ordinator of Formation and Partnership for Good Samaritan Education Mission Team. The Mission Team develops formation and immersion programs and resources for staff and students in Good Samaritan schools.
Source: <http://www.goodsams.org.au/good-oil/be-bold-and-brave>

REFLECTION

> Who are the women in your ministry who have boldly answered God's call to make a difference?