

NOTING THE MILESTONES IN OUR YEAR OF MERCY



FoodShare founder Deborah Manning (right) with Mercy Hospital Dunedin staff who are celebrating the arrival of the FoodShare van with an ice cream! This Year of Mercy venture accords well with the appeal from Pope Francis in Laudato Si to save leftover food from being thrown away. "A third of all food produced is discarded, and 'whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor,'" writes the pope. (LS 50)

The Year of Mercy which concludes on November 20, the feast of Christ the King, has passed the half-way mark. So this month's reflection includes a response from some of our Mercy ministries, sharing ideas on the milestones or high points that have been achieved to date, and on the goals or hopes that wait to be fulfilled before the Jubilee ends.

A recurring theme has been the door of Mercy which Pope Francis opened in Rome to launch the event, and which he also hoped would be replicated around the world, as a symbol for people everywhere to cross the threshold to a new awareness of mercy received and shared. At Carmel College in Auckland, the decision was made to designate a pair of doors in a central place in the school, through which most staff members of students pass each day. The words 'Atawhai' and 'Mercy' have been sand-blasted on the doors, as a permanent reminder to the Carmel community that the works of mercy need to be high on their agenda.

Anna Nicholls, a Sister of Mercy and a deputy principal at the college, lists the overall heightening of awareness of mercy as a milestone. "If there is one thing I would name it's that all staff and students know that this is the Year of Mercy. How wonderful it is that they see mercy as so important that Pope Francis has declared a year for us to focus on it!"

Carmel's Year 12 students have been invited to reflect on how mercy is expressed in the Gospel of Luke, as part of their NCEA scripture studies. Year 11 students learned about the practice of indulgences in their study of the Reformation, then passed through the Holy Door in St Patrick's Cathedral with a chance to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation, pray for the intentions of Pope Francis and engage in a corporal work of mercy, to gain a Jubilee Year indulgence. "Before the end of the year, every student will have had the opportunity to receive this sacrament," Sr Anna notes.

Students at St Catherine's College in Kilbirnie have been planning for a Mercy in Action Day held on June 29. The entire school has taken part, in either an environmental project or something related to the corporal works of mercy. "Watching our whānau groups work together to prepare for this day has been a high point of the year for me," says St Catherine's principal, Mary Curran.

Among the projects she mentioned were a clean-up of the beach at Evans Bay and Lyall Bay, supporting the Wellington City Council with planting along Moa Point, a clothes drive to support a local women's refuge and a focus on food waste, with plans to get left-over food to people in the community. Mary Curran's hope before the year ends is that "each student understands that mercy is about doing something for someone else, and that it doesn't always need to involve money."

Recycling left-over food has become a priority for staff at Mercy Hospital in Dunedin, where the board of directors began the Year of Mercy with a decision to allocate resources to FoodShare, the social venture founded in Dunedin in 2012 by lawyer Deborah Manning, as a way of caring for the environment and reducing food poverty in the local community.

In its first six months of operation, the FoodShare Mercy Hospital van delivered 110 tonnes of food that contributed to 316,000 meals through 50 local community groups and food banks across Dunedin, including Port Chalmers and Mosgiel. Mercy Hospital's mission coordinator, Dr Janice McDrury, says that the van collects food that would otherwise end up in landfill and distributes it to those in need. "Mercy Hospital has established an ongoing relationship with FoodShare to provide the 'on-road' and related costs of a driver for the vehicle."

Staff at Te Ngākau Waiora, the Mercy Spirituality Centre in Epsom, have spent time at the beginning of every meeting this year, reflecting on how their core Mercy values are put into practice in today's society. The centre's manager, Beate Matthies, says that many in the community, including non-Catholics and non-practising Catholics, are interested in talking about what Pope Francis does and says. "There is a growing awareness around the world of what mercy really means."

The Spirituality Centre's programme has focused on the theme of mercy in recent months, but Beate says the staff would like to have some practical involvement in a project relating to refugees. Before the Year of Mercy ends, "we would also like to meet with staff of different Mercy ministries to get to know each other, a kind of 'family gathering' in Mercy," says Beate.

Taihoa, spare a moment.....

You're invited to conclude this reflection by sharing the same questions on which this month's reflection was based when you next meet with your colleagues at the Mercy board or ministry in which you serve.

- *In your view, how has the Year of Mercy influenced the way Mercy's core values are implemented in the ministry you are associated with? Has the Year of Mercy resulted in any new goals or new ways of putting mercy into practice?*
- *In your experience, what have been the milestones or high points of the Year of Mercy to date?*
- *If you were able to make one wish for your Mercy ministry before the Year of Mercy concludes on November 20, what would you wish for?*

- Dennis Horton

He Inoi: Prayer Mercy beyond measure

*E Te Atua hoa hikoi
God, companion on our journey,
in this Year of Mercy you go before us,
inspiring us to turn the longing of our hearts
into deeds that enrich other lives.*

*Reveal to us the milestones on our way,
where your grace has lifted us above
what we could ever have achieved on our own.*

*Teach us to give without counting the cost,
to work with others rather than rely on our efforts.*

*In the months that remain in this Jubilee Year,
give us the courage to hope
in an abundance that grows
when your generous mercy is the model
and inspiration of our lives.*

Amen.

Produced for He Waka Tiaki mission team.

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