



Trustees celebrate launch of Whānau Mercy Ministries

History was made on March 25, feast of the Annunciation, with a celebration of the Eucharist in St Patrick's Cathedral in Auckland to mark the launch of Whānau Mercy Ministries, the new entity which will own and oversee the incorporated ministries established by Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand.

Known as a ministerial Public Juridic Person, the entity was established by decree of the Holy See on November 27 last year.

The Eucharist was led by Auckland's Bishop Steve Lowe, joined at the altar by Emeritus Bishop Pat Dunn, Monsignor Bernard Kiely and Pa Peter Tipene. The entrance procession included the Leadership Team of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa, along with the seven trustees who have been appointed to the board of Whānau Mercy Ministries.

Sisters of Mercy from around New Zealand were joined by lay companions, alumnae and friends from a wide circle of Mercy groups and organisations. Special guests included two Sisters of Mercy from Sydney who had celebrated the launch of their own PJP a year ago, and Sr Margaret Endicott from Brisbane who served for more than four years as project facilitator of the local PJP.

'It is not often that we Sisters of Mercy want to shout good news from the rooftops or announce to the world or invite the wider Catholic community to gather with us,' said Congregation Leader Sue France. 'But today we do, because this is an exceptional day, a significant milestone in the life of Ngā Whaea Atawhai Sisters of Mercy and in the life of the church.'

'We celebrate publicly and pray for this new creation for mission, which is Catholic, founded in the gospel of

Jesus Christ and in Mercy in the tradition of Catherine McAuley, something unique in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand and based in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.'

She described the PJP as the culmination of years of prayer and discernment, produced by working parties of sisters and companions in mission working side by side. 'While as a body it already exists, it really only comes into being once the ministries transfer into it, and this

will happen in the coming week.'

The process of change is never without difficulties and challenges, said Sue France, 'and this process has been no different, working as we did through a pandemic when coming together in person was not possible. A fluid time-frame of waiting for a response to our petition from the Holy See created uncertainty and anxiety for those involved. Trusting in God's providence, as

Catherine did, has taken on a much deeper meaning.

'For us as a Congregation, this is a profound moment of change, a seminal moment in our history. The decision to establish Whānau Mercy Ministries marks a shift in our journey as vowed women in Aotearoa. In many ways, the shift has already been made over time, and now this is the final step. And we know it is the right time.'

'It is with trust and hope for the future that we entrust our incorporated ministries to Whānau Mercy Ministries and with great joy that we call the trustees forward to bless them.'



TRUSTEES of Whānau Mercy Ministries following the Eucharist to mark the launch of their Trust. Front: Philip Alexander-Crawford, Catherine Fyfe, Judy Whiteman, chair Denise Fox rsm, Congregation Leader Sue France rsm. Back: Charlotte Cummings, Gerald Scanlan, Michael Quigg, Bishop Pat Dunn, Bishop Steve Lowe.



This bronze sculpture, known as Te Ngākau Atawhai Heart of Mercy, was gifted by Sue France on behalf of Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand to Whānau Mercy Ministries. Created by artist Gael O'Leary, the bronze was carried in procession and placed in front of the altar during the Eucharist on March 25 which marked the Trust's foundation. Sue France described the bronze as 'a symbol of our shared history and our shared charism, the charism of mercy. The Mercy cross at its centre is open, allowing us to see through the cross to the world. The two koru symbolise the regenerative power of creation, the nurturing of new life and hope for the future.'

Ministries to join new Mercy Trust

These incorporated ministries established by Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa Sisters of Mercy New Zealand will move into the new Whānau Mercy Trust in the coming days:

- Te Korowai Atawhai Mercy Hospice, Auckland
- Mercy Hospital, Dunedin
- Te Waipuna Puawai Mercy Oasis, Auckland
- Mercy Villas, Upper Hutt
- Coolock Cottages, Dunedin
- St Mary's College, Auckland
- Carmel College, Auckland
- St Mary's College, Wellington
- St Catherine's College, Wellington
- Villa Maria College, Christchurch

The world has enough corporates; what it most needs now is mercy

Bishop Steve Lowe told the congregation that he felt it was 'a real privilege for me as a Mercy boy' to lead the celebration on the feast of the Annunciation. Years ago, he had attended a Mercy school in Hokitika on the West Coast.



'Mary's generous "yes" opened the way for God's mercy to be conceived in her womb. Today is about not letting Mercy die. As we remember God's plan for working out salvation when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, in the same way a new chapter in Mercy begins today, as the charism that was given to Catherine McAuley and was lived out by her sisters is passed now to the Trustees of Whānau Mercy Ministries.

'The same courage that is found in Mary of Nazareth, found too in Catherine McAuley, stretches through the sisters to you. It's the courage to put out into the deep. It's not about being corporate; the world has enough corporates. What the world needs now is mercy. The sisters have given such a good example of that and, please God, will continue to do so. What you are going to offer is another, a new way, for other people to pick up and run with,' said Bishop Lowe.

'The Word was made flesh in the womb of Mary. In Hebrew the word for womb is the same as for mercy. Womb is the place of mercy, and God's plan is for mercy to come into our world. In Christ, we see that mercy revealed in its fullness, in a love that stretches out for all humanity.

'Let's pray that the same Holy Spirit that came down on Mary will come down upon the new structure, that the power of the most High will overshadow it, so that mercy will continue to come to earth in new ways, in response to the needs of the people of this land.'

Openness to change integral to Mercy's charism

Openness to change has been an integral part of the Mercy charism, said Denise Fox rsm, chair of Whānau Mercy Ministries at the close of the ceremony to launch this new Trust.

'I think this openness continues, as Sisters of Mercy have established new structures to provide long-term stable governance of their ministries and for the continuance of their Catholic identity.

'Like Catherine and her sisters, Whānau Mercy Ministries will respond to emerging needs and hopefully flourish into the future, with openness to developing new expressions of the gift of mercy, to address what Pope Francis has described as "new forms of poverty and vulnerability."

'We commit ourselves to the development of whānau, centred in the gospel and committed to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the three core values of Mercy - whanaungatanga, aroha and kaitiakitanga.'