



Hope in a time of pandemic – new ways of being Mercy

By DENNIS HORTON

IT'S 193 years ago this Thursday 24 September since Catherine's house of Mercy opened in Baggot Street, Dublin, launching a story that is still unfolding within the days of our lives. The event will be marked by a Mass pre-recorded and streamed around the world from the chapel in which she prayed. Whether or not we catch that celebration, all of us can draw inspiration from her call to be shining lamps "giving light to all around us."



Catherine McAuley – 'be like shining lamps'

Taihoa – spare a moment

Call to mind or share with a friend or colleague how Covid-19 has caused you to rethink what Mercy means to you.

How has the pandemic changed your life?
Is there anything you now value which you may once have taken for granted? What makes you hopeful in this extraordinary time?

Coincidentally, the great Mercy feast falls within the Season of Creation, a global event shared by Christians of many traditions who recognise that in a world overwhelmed by a pandemic, care for our common home is calling for new ways of protecting life, especially when it is most vulnerable and at risk. Covid-19 has reminded us that all life on Papatūānuku is interconnected, that humanity can only be saved when the diversity of other life-forms that share our planet is respected and enhanced.

The Mercy Day Mass will be available on the newsroom page of mercyworld.org from midnight on Wednesday 23 September as Aotearoa New Zealand becomes the first nation to cross the international dateline. The same newsroom carried a [story](#) last month entitled 'Hope in a time of pandemic – responding to Covid 19 through a Mercy lens.' There are several glimpses from New Zealand in this fascinating review from Mercy Global Action, including one from Mercy Hospice Auckland of how staff enabled one person chosen by their whānau to live within the Inpatient Unit during lockdown, to be near patients whose lives were nearing their end. And a Sister of Mercy from New Zealand shared how Zoom had been used to grieve for members of their community who died during lockdown (though not from coronavirus) while they were unable to attend the funeral.

This touched me as it reminded me of my own response to the death in June of a young nephew in Australia, after his long struggle with alcoholism and depression. I could not join my extended family for his burial but was able to provide online the service of committal that followed his funeral in Victoria. Covid-19 has drawn us all into new ways of dealing with the realities of living and dying. No one is unaffected, and we are being challenged to uncover new ways of being Mercy. As one quote in the MGA story put it, Covid-19 has revealed a 'pandemic of kindness.' We may rejoice to see that 'love spread more quickly than any virus ever could.'

This is the first edition of a new monthly reflection, to be shared among Sisters of Mercy in Aotearoa and their partners in mission. It comes on the heels of *Imaging Mercy* and a variety of earlier publications as our ministries have evolved – *Mercy Link* and *Mercy Today*, *Mana Atawhai* and *Te Kete Atawhai*. With each reflection will come the invitation to stop for a moment to be in touch with our hearts, to see what mercy may be asking of us. As well, there will be a call to share with another person whatever our heart is telling us. A blessing on all you hope and dream for on your Mercy way.