

Resource for Mercy Day – 24 September 2020

(Note: The Sisters of Mercy, Baggot Street Mercy Centre, are intending to broadcast Mass for Mercy Day. For more information see <https://www.mercyworld.org/newsroom/mercy-day-at-mercy-international-centre-2020/> Many schools are streaming Mass into classrooms with representative groups attending and others are marking the day in the school setting. Whatever your school community is doing, you might use some or all of the following prayer service.

This particular resource is adapted – in part – from a resource produced by the Sisters of Mercy for the celebration of Mercy Day, 2014. See https://www.mercyworld.org/uploads/cknw/files/2014/ritual_booklet_mercy_day_2014_Edited_Aug.pdf

'In the midst of all our tripping about our hearts can always be in the same place centred in God'

(Letter of Catherine McAuley to Sr.de Sales White - 20th Dec. 1840)



Opening Words

Principal: Today in our Mercy School (give School's Name) we celebrate Mercy Day. All over the world, hundreds of schools are celebrating Mercy Day. And it's even more important than ever for us to take some time this year to pause and reflect on what being a Mercy school means to us all.

Here is (school's name), the Sisters of Mercy..... (give a little of your school's history here).

For Christians, another word for God is Love and another word for Love is mercy. So when we celebrate Mercy Day we're celebrating our belief in a God who is Love, a God who loves

each and everyone of us. It doesn't matter where you come from, what you have achieved or not achieved in your life, God loves you. It doesn't matter what you're good at and what you're not good at. To God you are wonderfully made and God loves you. And that is what we celebrate on Mercy Day in our school – this God of love and to call to love others. This is where we find our worth; this is where we find our identity.

During these very challenging times, when we're busy minding ourselves and one another, it's really good to take a step back and to relax as a CEIST school, founded in the Mercy tradition to ask questions about what our faith teaches us about who we are and what we're called to be and called to do. For Christians, it's also important to ask the question 'who is God'.

Catherine McAuley put it this way in one of her letters, written in 1840:

In the midst of all our tripping about our hearts can always be in the same place centred in God'.

So that's what we're doing now, in the middle of all the busyness of our life as a school and the worry that Covid 19 is causing many of us, we're just taking some time to centre ourselves, to take a bit of a rest in God.

Year Head/Other Teacher: To begin our prayer service together, we present now some symbols that show us who we are as a CEIST school founded in the Mercy tradition. We present...

(This section will need to be designed by your own school. Some examples might include: A picture of Catherine McAuley, a symbol of social outreach undertaken, a Christian symbol like a Crucifix or a candle, school books, cup and saucer etc. But you'll be best placed to pick your own symbols. Each symbol can be presented by one student and explained by another).

Principal: So we will listen now to two very short readings, one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. Both tell us about the reality of God's love and what it means. The first reading tells us that God's love for us never ceases. This text was probably written by the prophet Jeremiah in about the 6th Century BC. It was written at a time when the Jewish people were really, really suffering a great deal. They were having an awful time because their Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed and the city of Jerusalem itself had been devastated. So, the people for whom this book of the old testament would have been written would have known a thing or two about suffering. Maybe at times over these last few months, we've also wondered where God is in it all. But the people of Jeremiah's time didn't give up entirely on hope and there are some beautiful lines in it about God' love for them and it's those lines (student name) is going to read for us today. They remind us also to hold on in faith to God's love for us.

The second reading tells us that God is Love! It's is really quite dramatic because it tells us that because God is love, if we don't love one another, we can't know God. It's as simple and as challenging as that.

Student: A reading from the Book of Lamentations

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, God’s mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is all I need and I can depend on him.

The word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God).

Principal: Before our second reading, we’ll listen now to a song that celebrates that great love. It’s called, ‘You say’ and it’s from the musician Lauren Daigle. This song reminds us of how God sees us.

It reminds us that God loves us and believes in us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slaT8Jl2zpI>

Student: Our second reading is a reading from the First Letter of Saint John

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to give his life for us. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

The Word of the Lord (Thanks be to God).

Principal: Pope Francis also has a great deal to say about Mercy. (Students’ names) are going to read us some quotations from Pope Francis that tells us what he has had to say. After each quotation, we’ll light a candle as a symbol of our prayers rising up to heaven and (Students’ name) will say a prayer for us.



Student: Pope Francis reminds us that “Mercy is the name of our God, and without mercy we are lost.”

(Light candle)

Student: We pray for one another. We’re all trying to get our heads around these very challenging times. Lord in your loving mercy, be with us and show us the way to your peace. Lord hear us. (Lord graciously hear us).

Student: Pope Francis reminds us that “Mercyis the Lord’s most powerful message”.

(Light candle)

Student: For our school, we pray that here in (school’s name), we will always seek to be good ambassadors of God’s mercy in how we treat one another. Lord, bless our friendships, bless our teachers, bless all those who work in our school, bless our families. Lord hear us. (Lord graciously hear us).

Student: Pope Francis reminds us that “Hearing the word ‘mercy’ changes everything....it changes the world”

(Light candle)

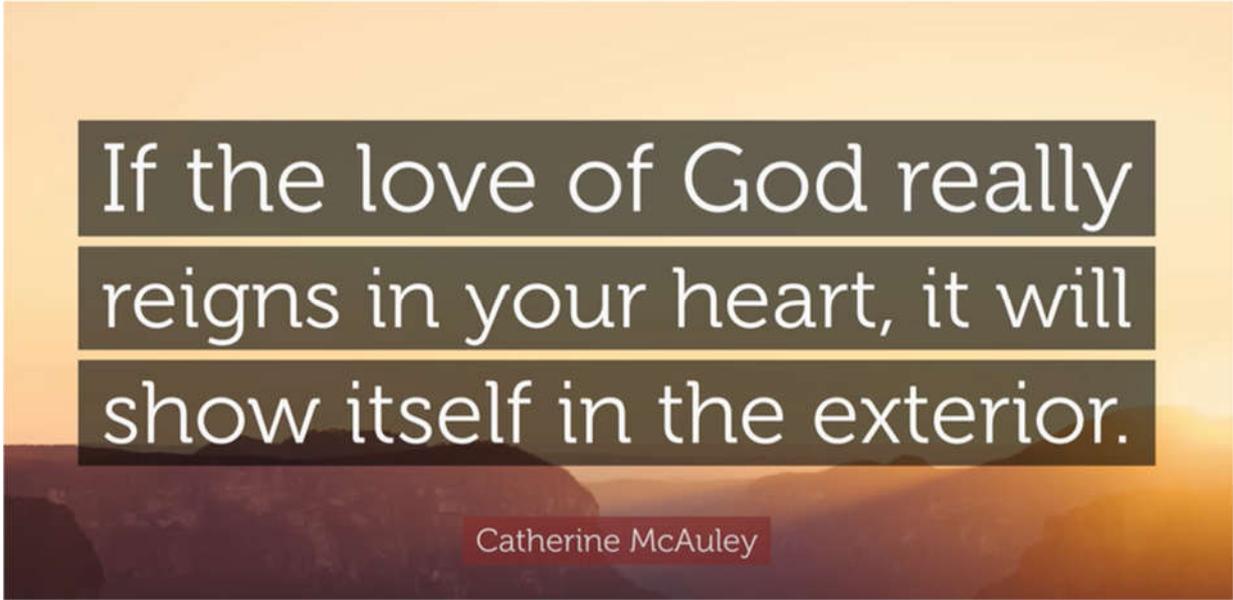
Student: For our planet, we pray that we will remember that ‘mercy’ applies also to the way we look after God’s creation. Lord, help us to hear the earth as she cries out for mercy. Lord hear us. (Lord graciously hear us).

Student: Pope Francis reminds us to “Be ministers of Mercy above all else.”

(Light candle)

Student: For courage. We pray that we will have the courage to reach out to bring God’s love, God’s mercy to others, especially those in our communities who are crying out for our help. Lord, bless us with courageous hearts so that we can become ministers of mercy. Lord hear us. (Lord graciously hear us).

Principal: And together we place all our prayers together in the hands of the God who loves us, who is our Father, by saying together, “Our Father who are in heaven...”



If the love of God really
reigns in your heart, it will
show itself in the exterior.

Catherine McAuley

We'll finish our prayer service now with a beautiful song called *You can Count on me* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yc6T9iY9SOU> We're going to use this song to close our prayer service. This song really summarises the call to love others as we have been loved by God who is mercy and who is Love. Happy Mercy Day to you all!

(Note: if it's possible, you could intersperse this beautiful hymn with some images from the life of your school that illustrate your school's living out of the call to mercy and to love).