

BON SECOURS MERCY HEALTH

Mercy Day Prayer Service

September 24, 2023

Leader:

Bon Secours Mercy Health stands on a rich tradition of Catholic health ministry in the US and Ireland, inspired by religious congregations of women and men who extended the compassionate ministry of Jesus long before us. Recognizing their legacies and building on their good work is an important part of who we are and who we are called to be today.

Mercy Day marks the anniversary when, in 1827, on the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy, Catherine McAuley officially opened the first House of Mercy on Baggot Street, in Dublin, Ireland. We gather on this special day to give thanks for the Sisters of Mercy, and to ask for God's help in keeping us faithful to the ministry they have entrusted to us.

Reader 1:

In the biblical tradition, mercy refers to a love that responds to human need, sometimes in unexpected and unmerited ways. It involves showing kindness towards another, even and especially those who are unable to repay the good favor shown to them.

With such a vision of mercy in mind, let us pause to quiet our minds and hearts. Take a moment, simply to breathe and consider this question:

In the past days, weeks, and months, how have I experienced mercy in my life?

Pause

A reading from the Book of Psalms. (Ps 36:6-11).

LORD, your mercy reaches to heaven;
your fidelity, to the clouds.
Your justice is like the highest mountains;
your judgments, like the mighty deep;
human being and beast you sustain, LORD.
How precious is your mercy, O God!
The children of Adam take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the rich food of your house;
from your delightful stream you give them drink.
For with you is the fountain of life,
and in your light we see light.
Show mercy on those who know you,
your just defense to the upright of heart.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reader 2:

Catherine McAuley never set out to establish a new religious order. Rather her heart was singularly devoted to showing God's precious mercy to all those she encountered. This included her adoptive parents, who left her a remarkable fortune after she had nursed them through years of protracted illness. Yet Catherine stewarded her resources wisely, using her inheritance to establish a place of refuge, education, and healing for the vulnerable women and children of Dublin. The House of Mercy on Baggot Street became a fountain of life to many in need.

As more women joined Catherine's mission, the Bishop of Dublin encouraged her to have the community officially recognized by the Church. Catherine famously said, "If the order is my work, the sooner it falls to the ground the better; if it is God's work it needs no one." Such words echo the wisdom of scripture: "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build" (Psalm 127:1).

Reader 3:

As we consider the ongoing legacy of the Sisters of Mercy, it is abundantly clear that their ministry has been and remains to this day "God's work." The Lord has used them to build many more Houses of Mercy, thereby extending the vision that God gave to Catherine almost two centuries ago. In over thirty countries and in partnership with thousands of associates and volunteers, the Sisters continue to reveal God's mercy through their work in education, housing, and social services, and through their advocacy of environmental care, a culture of nonviolence free of discrimination, and greater protections for the rights of workers and immigrants.

Thankful for our ministry's connection to this inspiring community of women, pause once again and reflect upon the role of mercy in your life and work. As a co-laborer with God and together with all of us as Bon Secours Mercy Health, ask yourself:

How can I better reveal God's mercy in my words and deeds to all those I encounter?

Pause

Leader:

Let us pray.

Merciful God,

Our hearts are full of gratitude and joy today, as we recognize the Sisters of Mercy and the gift of their ministry, to serve, advocate and pray for those in need around the world. As Bon Secours Mercy Health, we ask for your help in keeping us faithful to the mission of Mercy in all our encounters, with our patients and families, with our colleagues, and in the broader communities we serve. Like the Sisters of Mercy and in the spirit of their founder, Catherine McAuley, may the example of Jesus inspire us to embody the values of the Gospel and work together in creating a more just world, especially for those who are poor, dying, and underserved. Amen.