



## Prayer Service for the Feast of Our Lady of Mercy

September 24, 2019

*Leader:* God of our past, our present and our future, be with us as we gather to celebrate Mary, Our Lady of Mercy,

*All:* who holds each of us lovingly and tenderly in her merciful heart.

*Leader:* Be with us as we gather to celebrate Catherine, Woman of Mercy,

*All:* whose gift was Mercy and whose passion was to serve your suffering people.

**Reading:** Catherine McAuley could have been insulated and isolated against the miserable poverty of Dublin. Instead she recognized the call of the Spirit, and accepted it with a grateful love and a willingness to put it at the service of others. As recipient of God's mercy, she saw herself as steward. Gifts given were gifts for others. Direct and practical in her response, she went out into gutter and garret to teach, to soothe and to shelter. She had discovered that her charism, her gift for others, was Mercy, a charism to the cutting edge of brokenness or imbalance.

*Tender Courage, Joanna Regan and Isabelle Kiess*

### **Pause for Reflection**

**Hymn: God of Justice, God of Mercy** (*Sung to Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee*)

God of justice, God of mercy, make us merciful and just!

Help us see all your creation as from you a sacred trust.

And when people cry in anguish for their own or others' pain,

Show us ways to make a difference. O dear God, make us humane!

How can we, as people chosen by your grace for service here,  
How endure another's hardship without offering hope or cheer?  
God, forgive us, we beseech you, when our love fails to empower.  
Teach us how to be more faithful in this present crucial hour.

### **A Description of a Woman of Mercy**

Mercy is a woman of indeterminate age and remarkable appearance. She is not fussy about the company she keeps, and tends to be full of excuses for her friends, having seen life from their angle.

Her heart, like her pockets, is capacious. She has a voice rich in tender understanding but is at her best in silence when she sits alongside the grief stricken and the guilty and their sorrow seeps into her soul.

Curiously, she sees herself reflected in the eyes of both murderer and victim, so sits not in judgment but companionably. She is a subtle teacher.

She makes strong cups of tea, cup after cup. Her hands are worn by work but eagerly sought by the dying. Her feet are calloused from the long roads trudged with refugee and beggar. She is an endurer of all horrors.

Mercy has a face wrinkled with kindness and worn by cost of living, but even in hovels she has been given to laughter and awareness of simple pleasures.

She has a store of lore and wisdom but is never heard to complain that she has heard any story a hundred times before, believing each teller to be entitled to a hearing as if to the one and only.

Mercy is a lady comfortable to be with—the safest and the soundest—blessed in her being with the indisputable reality that she is a true daughter, in manner and mind of the Maker of the universe.

*Sister Mary Wickham,*

*RSM from "The Many Faces of Mercy"*

### **Pause for Reflection.**

*What touches your heart in this description of some of the faces of Mercy? What faces of Mercy come to your mind at this critical time in our world?*

## **Sharing**

### **Closing Prayer**

As we, Women and Men of Mercy, rejoice in this abundance of grace, we ask you, O God, to deepen in us this wellspring of Mercy. Let us hear the pain and anguish of those who cry out for justice and let us respond generously. Let our hearts be filled with compassion for the stranger and the outcast and welcome them into our midst. Let us open our hearts to the cry of Earth and reverence and care for our common home. And we ask all this in the name of Jesus who by his life showed us the path of Mercy. Amen.

### **Litany of Gratitude**

*Response:* Gracious God, we thank you.

In gratitude for Catherine, woman of faith and woman unafraid to risk ...

In gratitude for all who have walked the path of Mercy from 1831 to today ...

In gratitude for our relationships with each other and with all who have enriched our lives in Mercy ...

In gratitude for all the women and men of Mercy, who with tenderness and fidelity have devoted themselves to the works of Mercy ...

For what else are we grateful ...

### **Closing Hymn**

Grant all people work with meaning, strength to care for those they love.  
Food for table, truth for telling, challenges to rise above.  
But remind us, God of justice, this is now our work, our call!  
Changing life's oppressive systems into ones empowering all.

So the vision you have planted in each human mind and heart

Now becomes the spark of action calling us to do our part.  
Keep that vision clear before us: men and women, boys and girls,  
Valued in response and witness, sharing challenges and joys.

*Words – Jane Parker Huber, 1993  
“A Singing Faith,” Westminster Press  
Philadelphia, PA*

*Prayer service written by Sister Mary Anne Nolan  
(modified for use by the Mercy Education System of the Americas)*