



**Ngā Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa
Tiaki Manatū**



**Sisters of Mercy Ministries
New Zealand Trust**

Whānau Mercy - Two Page Summary - Richard Kerr-Bell. Feb 2019

Whanau Mercy

Atawhai mai Atawhai atu - Mercy received, mercy shared. This principle and practice sums up Catherine's experience, which was not easy and not comfortable. Living with those who lived the works of mercy had a profound impact her. She learnt of God's infinite love and mercy for her. She received God's Mercy in her life and her response was to share it. Atawhai mai, Atawhai atu.

On Divine Mercy Sunday Pope Francis said mercy is essential in living the Christian life... "Let us never forget that mercy is the keystone of the life of faith, and concrete way with which we give visibility to the Resurrection of Jesus. Additionally, mercy also allows us to open the door of our hearts and draw close to those who are "alone and marginalized," recognizing those in need and finding the right words to say to comfort them.ⁱ

On seeing the plight of many in Dublin, Catherine desired to share God's love with them. From the legacy she received from the Callaghans – both in vision and finance - she built a House of Mercy for the shelter and education of poor women and children. Before ever considering or entering into religious life, within this house she understood whanau by bringing up her sister's children and providing shelter for women in distressing circumstances.

To be whanau is to belong, to know you belong and to belong in a particular way. It provides an identity and a set of symbols, stories, whakapapa, and beliefs one can stand tall with, be proud of and be confident in. Whatever the weather or circumstance, you know you can count unequivocally on this support and expect it. This is tautoko – the support offered and provided because you belong to the whanau, you are the whanau.

Whanau as a way of decision making

Our values and vision apply to each of us, from the board chair, to the casual volunteer. We make decisions based on tikanga Mercy, the Mercy Way of putting the values into action. These can be expressed in three concepts/ways of being and acting as they apply to Mercy.

Aroha: love, compassion. Aroha is 'in the presence' and in relationship. As Pope Francis enunciated in his TED Talkⁱⁱ, "... Good intentions and conventional formulas, so often used to appease our conscience, are not enough. Let us help each other, all together, to remember that the other is not a statistic or a number. The other has a face. The "you" is always a real presence, a person to take care of".

Whanaungatanga: To cause, make create relationship, to enable belonging and inclusion. This principle acknowledges one's story, the inter-relatedness of other stories and whakapapa. It listens, holds, honours, and retells story.

Kaitiakitanga: A kaitiaki is one who guards, who guides and ensures the safety, spiritually, culturally and personally of people or a cause or group of people. "I am, we are, Mercy".

Tikanga Mercy in our Catholic context embraces and is grounded in: Catholic social teaching, the Christian Gospel, Catholic social teaching, the charism of Catherine McAuley, the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the cry of Earth and the cry of the poor.

What is Mercy?

Mercy is the underlying wairua or spirit of the work and its beginning and end point. It is the Mercy of God in the world, who is Christ Jesusⁱⁱⁱ. It is the expression of God's infinite love and care. It was the term used and embodied by Catherine McAuley and those who chose to devote their lives to the actions of Mercy. In Aotearoa the Māori word that can be applied is atawhai.^{iv}

Mission

There are more than enough needs and social problems that need addressing in New Zealand and Pacific. Our call is to the margins with whom no one is working.

This means education for those who would not otherwise have access to education or good education, health treatment and care for those who would not otherwise have access or this form of love, care in a way that others do not care. Even in the earliest days of establishing schools in New Zealand, the mission was clear and attracted those for whom it was set up to provide mercy and who made up the majority of students: "Maori, those of mixed race (Maori/pakeha), orphans, the abandoned, children of widows, who could not otherwise afford education."^v

Are we authentically producing outcomes prioritising the poor, vulnerable, and making a difference for Earth in the process? Or is it a secondary priority?

Conclusion

The great difference the Mercy of God makes, is in the presence of those who would be that Mercy with those and in the places where that 'Mercy' (in any expression) is needed most. As Moira Keenan RSM stated, "The peace from Christ and in Christ, is the gift of mercy par excellence. Here he is in person, the mercy"^{vi}

Our strength is in acting as one family with a unity of purpose, collective prayerful action and unwavering in why we choose to be Mercy. The strength of whanau is tikanga. Tikanga challenges us to act on Christ's call to be a brother/sister to the poor. It emboldens us to be unconventional, counter-cultural and creative in meeting the poorest and most vulnerable, fearless in carrying the fire of Christ's love, God's Mercy in the world.

ⁱ Downloaded 29/1/19 <https://catholicnewsagency.com/>

ⁱⁱ Francis, Pope. (2017). From https://www.ted.com/speakers/pope_francis, 31/1/2019

ⁱⁱⁱ Moira Keenan SOM, Mercy Phd

^{iv} Atawhai definitions are from the Māori Dictionary online.

<https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=atawhai>

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^v Kirk, D. Marcienne RSM. 1998. Remembering Your Mercy. Mother Mary Cecilia Maher & the First Sisters of Mercy in New Zealand 1850-1880. Broughtwood Printing House, Auckland, PP89

^{vi} Keenan, Moira. RSM. 1982. The Richness of God's Mercy. A. Biblical, theological study of Ephesians 2,4a. PP 42