



MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

JOURNEYS

NEWSLETTER

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Now many saw them going and recognised them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

(Mark 6:33-34)



COMPASSION

COMPASSION

Mark's account of *Feeding the Five Thousand* (Mark 6:30-44), and the miracle of the loaves and fishes, shows Jesus' compassion for those awaiting him on the shoreline. Jesus saw a need and he came ashore. With compassion, He satisfied two kinds of hunger: a hunger of the heart; and, a hunger of the body.

This virtue of compassion was evident in the most practical way in the life of the Venerable Mary Aikenhead. Mother Mary saw a need and she came ashore. She left behind a life of affluence and ministered tirelessly to the poor. Others saw Mother Mary's acts of compassion and her many companions, the Sisters of Charity, joined her on the shore.

Our Australian shoreline is also part of this great tradition. Recall the five Sisters of Charity who first came ashore in Sydney on New Year's Eve in 1838, after a four-month voyage by boat from Ireland. The compassionate heart of those pioneering Sisters led them to minister to the many women convicts who worked for the government. Those five Sisters of Charity saw the need in that Female Factory in Parramatta and provided the most compassionate of responses.

The *Feeding the Five Thousand* (Mark 6:30-44) is a reminder to us today of how Jesus' healing ministry whilst divine, was also very human. The miracle of the loaves and fishes is an enduring reminder to love thy neighbour, to forgive, to pray for the strength to persevere, and how the virtue of compassion can melt the hardest of hearts.

We see the need for compassion in our world in 2019. In the most practical of ways, Jesus responded to the need in his time; as Mary Aikenhead did in hers; as did those first five Sisters of Charity to grace our shores in the summer of 1839.

By your work, you keep alive this great tradition of not just seeing a need but acting and responding. This great work, helping our Lord's poor and vulnerable, is our daily mission across the Mary Aikenhead Ministries family.

We are a family joined by a great spirit of service through our health and aged care, education, and social services ministries. Our calling, like those who have gone before us, is a response that is both grace-filled and compassionate to others. And for your service and dedication we offer our most heart-felt and sincere thanks!

As a newly appointed Trustee, I am in awe of how your heart (yes, yours!) goes out with compassion to those we serve across our ministries. The role you play: our cleaners; medical specialists; teaching assistants; mission directors; nurses; business managers; our kitchen staff; grounds keepers; teachers; board members; surgeons; clinical researchers; dementia ward carers; and, yes, even our lawyers, inspire us daily! And Mother Mary would be the first to remind us of the importance of acknowledging your compassionate spirit and action.

We see you.

We see how you reach out, in the most human way, to the predicament that many in our society find themselves in today.

We are grateful for your compassion-in-action.

In late 2017 Pope Francis opined, "*a healthcare organisation that is efficient and capable of addressing inequalities cannot forget its raison d'être, which is compassion.*" Compassion is at the heart of the daily work undertaken across the Mary Aikenhead Ministries family. "*Compassion is also a privileged way to promote justice, since empathizing with others allows us not only to understand their struggles, difficulties and fears, but also to discover, in the frailness of every human being, his or her unique worth and dignity,*" Pope Francis said.

I now invite you to pause for sixty seconds in your busy day. Place yourself in that *Feeding the Five Thousand* (Mark 6:30-44) scene. Consider the exact moment when the heaving crowd, who had been waiting for hours to hear Jesus preach, first saw Him come ashore. What a grace! What joy they must have felt, both in heart and in body.

Now allow yourself to sit next to a young homeless Dubliner, silently sharing in the personal despair of feeling like you had no-one to turn to. Walking through the moonlight you see Mother Mary. She is coming toward you, extending her compassionate hand on a cold winter's night. Hope now abounds and the human spirit is renewed.

Bring yourself now to a sweltering summer's day in western Sydney in 1839. Gaze on that moment when the forgotten women convicts working in that Parramatta factory first laid eyes on the distinctive dress of those five Sisters of Charity. The convicts' heart would have skipped a beat as they were seen and, for the first time in years, were given a voice. But let's not rest on past glories. Allow yourself to come back to today, to our world, and the challenges of our time.

See the joy you bring daily into the lives of those we serve across our ministries. See your warmth, your kindness, your professionalism, your collegiality, and yes, your compassion. You are the best of Mary Aikenhead Ministries.

This is your great contribution. And, this is our great tradition.

Caritas Christi urget nos.

Prof. Michael Drew
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

*Celebrating
10 Years*

FAREWELL LINDA FERRINGTON RSC

When Sister Linda Ferrington told us that she had decided to step down from her role as a Trustee of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, my heart sank. Our joyous, faith filled, energetic, loyal Sister of Charity would no longer be sitting around our table. My only consolation was that we were so blessed to journey with her as a Trustee for the time we had.

Linda stepped down as a Trustee of Mary Aikenhead Ministries on 31 July, 2019. This was her second term as a Trustee and all up served just over 5 ½ years, having been one of the inaugural Trustees that started in July 2009.

It is my very great privilege to acknowledge the enormous contribution Linda has made to not only the establishment of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, but also its continued growth. I would also like to thank her from the bottom of my heart for her friendship and courageous dedication to the healing ministry of Jesus as evidenced through the people in our ministries.

Linda's vision has always been and I know, will continue to be, the development and success of ecclesial lay leadership within our ministries.

As a Trustee and Sister of Charity, she continually rejoiced in the achievements of the beautiful women and men who reside in our health, aged care and education ministries – our leaders, our health and aged care workers, our educators. These people who take forward with unconditional love and purpose, the healing ministry of Jesus Christ to everyone we serve, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Linda's creative and boundless energy continually inspired and encouraged us to "the more".

We all came to understand Linda as an incredibly hard worker with unfailing commitment to our mission and to the people who work in our ministries. This often translated into a plethora of ideas, which somehow often landed on my desk! I still don't understand how she does that and I suspect that there are also a great many other people in our ministries who will know what I mean.



Around our Trustee table, we will sorely miss her wisdom, her joy filled laughter and humour.

As most people will know we celebrated this year the 10th anniversary since the establishment of Mary Aikenhead ministries. Central to our celebrations was the recent and enormously successful conference. To say that Linda was the inspiration and driving force behind our conference is a huge understatement. While we absolutely had a great conference team, it was Linda's creative, faith filled leadership that produced what everyone has acknowledged was, without a doubt, the best conference to date.

So, go gently my dear friend and until we meet again, may our loving God hold you in the palm of His hand.

[Mr Gary Humphrys](#)
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

IRISH PILGRIMAGE

MAY 2019

Pilgrimage: a journey to a special place to show respect or to learn more.

This is a short definition of pilgrimage and certainly the pilgrimage to Ireland, which about twenty employees and friends of Mary Aikenhead Ministries make each year is a journey to a special place. Perhaps what this definition leaves out is that for most of our pilgrims the trip not only shows respect and enables each person to learn more about the foundation of the Sisters Of Charity and of Mary Aikenhead's life, but also learn more about themselves and the importance of the vocation they have taken on as a part of our Ministries.

Our ten-day pilgrimage in May commenced and finished in Dublin and in between we journeyed to Cork, Galway, Foxford and Glendalough. In Dublin, we visited several convent communities to meet the Irish Sisters and see current works, the heritage centre and nursing home at Harold's Cross and places where Mary Aikenhead established the first school and hospital. In Cork, places of importance were where she lived and grew up and in Foxford we saw the lasting heritage of the establishment of the Foxford Woollen Mills at the end of the nineteenth century.

In all experiences, we were reminded of our Mission imperative to care for the poor, marginalized and vulnerable in our society if we are truly to continue and grow the legacy of Mary Aikenhead.

For many 2019 pilgrims, all of these experiences were able to be pondered upon and implications for our lives at home were made by the beautiful time at Glendalough with a unique three-hour walking Mass with Father Michael.

The following reflections are a snapshot of the impact of this wonderful experience on only a few pilgrims:

- *There were many special moments but for me Glendalough was a beautiful experience with a walking Mass which connected nature, life, prayer and spirituality. To be in such beautiful surroundings you had permission to take a breath, reconnect, realign and recharge to return home with a new sense of connection, courage and purpose.*
- *To follow Mary Aikenhead's footsteps through the pilgrimage and sense her courage, spirit and commitment ...against all odds was inspiring....I came away encouraged and with a conviction to be more alert to those in need around us.*
- *The time spent in Ireland and with the Sisters there reminded me what Christianity really is, what it means and how it is lived....one can only conclude that (in the work of MA and the sisters) "There is Christ."*
- *A new depth to the word Spirituality for me.*

So, did we journey to a special place and learn more? Definitely. But we also came home changed and appreciating wonderful connections with colleagues across our Ministries in different States which would otherwise not have been possible.

The 2019 Pilgrims are deeply grateful to Sister Linda Ferrington and Dr Lisa McDonald, SVHA Group Mission Leader for their meticulous planning and light hand in guiding each of us during this transformative experience.

Ms Janet Freeman

Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



Sr Clare Nolan with the 2019 Irish Pilgrims

ST VINCENT'S CARE SERVICES STEWARDSHIP VISIT JULY 2019

On 30 July 2019 the Trustees had the pleasure to meet with Lincoln Hopper and his team from St Vincent's Care Services. The Trustees also took the opportunity to visit the aged care facilities at Bardon and Carseldine.

It was a privilege to meet with the staff and residents of both these facilities in Brisbane.

Ms Christine Raeside
Executive Officer, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



L to R: Prof. Michael Drew, Ms Janet Freeman, Dr Tessa Ho, Ms Liz Coco, Ms Esme Strydom, Ms Christine Raeside, Assoc. Prof. Peter Howard & Mr Lincoln Hopper

CATHOLIC HEALTH AUSTRALIA GOVERNANCE SYMPOSIUM AUGUST 2019

In August 2019 the Trustees attended the AMPJP AGM and Canonical Stewards Forum and the Catholic Health Australia Governance Symposium in Manly, Sydney. These events provided a wonderful opportunity for the Trustees to meet with lay Catholic Leaders from across the country to discuss current issues facing the Catholic Church and our ministries.

Ms Christine Raeside
Executive Officer, Mary Aikenhead Ministries



L to R: Laureen Dixon rsc, Ms Penelope Wright, Dr Tessa Ho - Trustees, Mary Alkenhead Ministries



L to R: Laureen Dixon rsc, Assoc. Prof. Peter Howard, Ms Penelope Wright - Trustees, Mary Alkenhead Ministries

10TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

JULY 2019

On 22 July, in glorious sunshine, many who share the vision and work of Mary, gathered at the Catholic Leadership Centre in Melbourne for this conference. This was also the feast of Mary Aikenhead so the date and place were no accident, as 10 years earlier this public juridic person, named Mary Aikenhead Ministries was established. The then Congregational Leader, Sr Annette Cunliffe rsc noted *"This is an exciting time for all of us. While there will be little change to the daily management of our facilities, this change in governance will enable us to ensure that the work begun by the Sisters will continue, grow and flourish in the future through gifted and dedicated lay leadership."* And ten years later, many lay people continue the work, vision, the spirituality and the charisma of Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity.

The focus of our conference was our calling in serving the poor. We all have the responsibility to serve our poor. We remember Mary Aikenhead's response upon hearing the proclamation of Dives and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), and how this changed her response to her world. We know that the Sisters take a fourth vow of serving the poor, and we are reminded that as lay leaders in our various ministries, we too, are challenged to respond to this Gospel, to seek new ways to love "God's nobility" our poor, to be God's love in action in our world.

The Conference planning committee used this passage from Isaiah 54:2 to guide our response:

***Enlarge the site of your tent,
And let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;
Do not hold back;
Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.***

Darlene Dreise (Chair, SVHA Reconciliation Action Plan) has enlightened us with this challenge:

As leaders of Catholic ministries, we are called to seek meaning and inspiration from words ever ancient, ever new. Isaiah calls us to be attentive to the signs of our times, expanding our boundaries and borders and stretching to recognise need and accommodate change for the benefit of our communities and ministries.

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people –the first sons and daughters of this land orientated all aspects of their lives towards this understanding, and in doing so, ensured the continuance, flourishing and survival of the oldest civilisation on earth.

Our pioneering Sisters of Charity listened to this beckoning and responded with grace and temerity, their heartfelt desire to work with and serve the poor of this colony inspiring those around them - a legacy to their fortitude which remains with us today.

As servants and leaders of Mary Aikenhead Ministries today, we are continually challenged to recognise the giftedness and strengths of our poor with humility – to both serve and learn from those who seek to flourish. We are leaders, called to move from our places of comfort to the unknown edge. Though we are visionary in our endeavours to serve, we must also act with caution, ensuring that our growth is tempered by reasoned discernment and a futures orientated view of 'what could be'.

We must also bow our heads before the dwellings of others, and in our humility and discomfort be receptive to their invitation and hospitality. To listen and engage, even when we are unfamiliar with these tents or communities. This is truly a moment of vulnerability for us as privileged leaders, yet it is in these moments of hesitancy that we are most bound with the other in our common humanity.

As we 'enlarge the site of our tent', we identify our openness to the potential of new realities, and the inclusion of others, moving from a state of known comfort for the accommodation of greater needs.

As the stake is hammered into the earth may we presume careful discernment, planning and prayer, as this connecting of elemental forces – air and earth – signifies commitment to a new phase of growth and opportunity.

As we stretch the curtains of our habitations, may we honour too the importance of transitory permanence knowing that our great challenges and joys, while of this moment, continue to evolve, in turn manifesting the reign of God.

As those in positions of cultural and societal privilege, it may be relatively easy to expand the site of our tents...but it is also important to recognise and embrace our times of vulnerability and discomfort. True relationship requires us to be open to the scope of human emotion... are we able to easily accept the hospitality extended by others...to walk on unfamiliar terrain and enter the tent of strangers?

The conference committee wishes to acknowledge and thank Linda Ferrington rsc for her wisdom, humour, vision, faithfulness and love, as she led our team in planning this conference. We wish all who serve and lead in the name of Mary Aikenhead, every blessing as we live the Gospel and serve the poor during this 10th Year Anniversary.

Mr Shane Taylor
Head of Faith & Mission, St Columba's College



Assoc. Prof. Peter Howard
Trustee, Mary Aikenhead Ministries

Thank You To All Those Who Contributed To And Supported The 10 Year Anniversary Conference.



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