

Theological Statement for *Mary Aikenhead Ministries*

Preamble

The Theological Statement presents an understanding of how we see ourselves and the Congregation's ministries at this point of time. It gives a particular context to our thinking, and it is a way of recording how we reflect theologically on the work we carry out in the name of the Church. It is a way of saying how, in the light of the gospel, we think about how we live, what we stand for and what we hope for in the future. It is a statement to align our legal and canonical entities with the mission of the Church.

“And no-one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth to an old coat; for then the patch tears away from the coat, and leaves a bigger hole. Neither do you put new wine into old wine-skins; if you do, the skins burst, and then the wine runs out and the skins are spoilt.” Mark 2:22

In the spirit of renewal and responding to the needs of the Church in the 21st century, the Sisters of Charity look towards the future with joy and hope. In considering a new sponsorship model, we have focussed on the ministries, with respect for and celebration of the rich heritage of the works originally undertaken and developed by the Sisters of Charity. We trust that the newly chosen sponsorship model will further these ministries.

“To live justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

The biblical image of God's people is that of a people on the way, a pilgrim people who have received God's promises but await the fulfilment of God's plan. The Church is primarily a community drawn together by God. The Church is the people of God. Every Christian disciple is centred in Jesus the Incarnate Word, who constantly calls us to life, relationship, and action for justice. Jesus inspires hope, encourages reconciliation, challenges oppression and responds creatively and courageously to people's needs.

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

The Australian Sisters of Charity, energised and inspired by Mary Aikenhead, were founded to continue Christ's mission in the world. The love of Christ continues to inspire those who work within this mission to bring about God's reign of justice for all, especially the poor and marginalised. Our task is to act in communion with the Church in recognising and promoting the Holy Spirit's presence and activity in our world, with openness to the needs of all humanity. At the heart of this commitment is our service of the poor, understood to include every manifestation of poverty at any time or in any place to which we are called.

(RSC Constitutions, Norm 25).

“The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth.” Jn 14:13

Mary Aikenhead valued the tradition of St Ignatius of Loyola which informed the Congregation’s Constitutions, spirituality and decision-making. This new sponsorship model will embrace and acknowledge the movement of the Spirit of God discerned through prayerful reflection which enables truth to be known and lived.

“All the believers were together and had everything in common.” Acts 2:44

As faithful stewards of these ministries, we have been entrusted by the Church with the patrimony which allows these ministries to continue to flourish in response to the needs of God’s people.

“I tell you in so far as you did it to the least of mine, you did it to me.”

Matthew 25:40

All the baptised are called to be prophetic in challenging the prevailing culture in light of the gospel announcement of the presence of God’s reign in the world. The Australian Sisters of Charity story is expressed within the context of Christ’s mission and the Church. The central prophetic elements of this culture are found in stories, rituals, service and advocacy, the hope and the humour, the risks and the vision.

This prophetic culture discerns the “signs of the times” and recognises the image and voice of God in all humanity and all creation. In this spirit we are committed to collaborate with others as we strive to be:

*welcoming and embracing
passionate and compassionate
strong and courageous
contemplative and creative
inclusive and empowering
inspired and inspiring
in service for and with others
while always trusting in Divine Providence.*