



Mercy, The Principal Path
Opening the Doors of Mercy

September 12 - 14, 2024

CONFERENCE *for* MERCY
HIGHER EDUCATION

CONFERENCE *for* MERCY HIGHER EDUCATION

Mission

The mission of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education is the preservation and development of the core Catholic identity and mission of Mercy higher education in accord with the spirit, mission, and heritage of the Sisters of Mercy.

Website: mercyhighered.org

CONFERENCE FOR MERCY HIGHER EDUCATION

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Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Rooted in the Catholic faith and inspired by our founder, Catherine McAuley, we follow Jesus. We strive to deepen our relationship with God and one another and to intensify our work with those seeking a more just and inclusive world. Our life in Mercy focuses on contemplation and action, prayer and service. Drawing on the example of Jesus' life, we are guided by the Gospel and enlivened by the spirit of our founder, Catherine McAuley. We carry out the mission of Mercy with prayerful consideration of the needs of our time.

Website: sistersofmercy.org

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Thank You

CMHE is grateful for the generous assistance of the Mercy Fund for Ministry Grant, which enabled a number of leaders from our member institutions to attend this conference.

And to Metz Culinary as a generous sponsor.

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CONFERENCE *for* MERCY HIGHER EDUCATION

September 12, 2024

Dear Mercy colleagues:

You are very welcome to the first Mercy, The Principal Path gathering since 2018!

As theologian Terrence Tilley notes, "A tradition can be lost should a community fail to pass along its practices to its successors." Your participation is a testament to your commitment to advancing the Catholic, Mercy mission and tradition at our colleges and universities continuing the vision of our foundress, Catherine McAuley.

We hope these next days offer you an opportunity to blend leadership development with a deeper understanding of our Catholic, Mercy heritage.

This year's theme is Opening the Doors of Mercy. We encourage you to heed the invitation to walk through many doors to be challenged, inspired, and equipped with skills and insights to take back to your campuses and excel as Mercy leaders.

We offer two main outcomes during our time together:

- 1) Develop a deeper understanding of our Catholic, Mercy mission to inform and transform your leadership;
- 2) Apply our Catholic, Mercy lens when making decisions through practice with a fictitious case study.

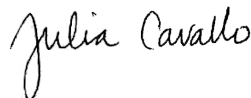
You will engage with a diverse group of Mercy peers and thought leaders, all while developing skills that will empower you to carry on Catherine's legacy. We encourage you to get to know one another and, as much as possible, unplug from your daily work. We look forward to supporting you on this journey and celebrate the impact you will undoubtedly make.

Together, let us strive to be confident Mercy leaders and make a lasting difference.

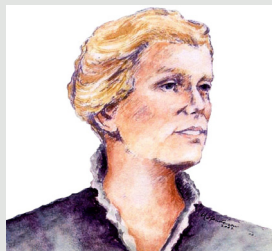
In Mercy,



Jane Gerety, RSM
CMHE Board Chair



Julia Cavallo
CMHE Executive Director



A good beginning is of great importance.

- Catherine McAuley

Table of Contents

Contacts, Sponsors and Acknowledgements.....	inside front cover
Welcome Letter	1
Table of Contents.....	3
Conference Schedule.....	5
Prayer and Reflection Aids	10
Thursday, September 12, Opening	10
Door of Mercy Poem.....	10
Evening Prayer Response	12
Friday, September 13, Morning	12
Mid Morning	15
Summary Reflection & Prayer.....	15
Evening Prayer.....	15
Saturday, September 14, Morning	15
Closing Prayer and Missoning Ritual.....	16
Biographies of Presenters	23
Guidelines for Case work.....	24
Other Mercy Enabling Assets	25
CMHE Map of Institutions.....	29
Notes	30

10:05AM Input Session 4 - *Catholic Social Thought and Mercy Critical Concerns*
Jennifer Reed-Bouley

10:50AM **Reflection**

11:00AM **The Mercy Way in Practice:**

A Case Study Approach Andrea Lee, IHM and
Jennifer Reed-Bouley

Case Method, Process Overview and Case Content

Considering what you heard from Tom Flynn, the ILT, Julia, and Jennifer, as well as the experience you bring, what are some possible solutions in the case presented?

What makes this case “complex and complicated?”

What does the Mercy Way suggest must be considered?

How can competing goods or other complicating factors be effectively balanced to reach an “elegant solution”?

11:45AM **Lunch** *Chesapeake Dining Room*

1:00PM **Case Discussion: in Affinity Groups**

Affinity Groups:

Presidents (green)	<i>A303</i>
Board Chairs (red)	<i>A307</i>
Academic Officers (yellow)	<i>A111</i>
Mission Officers (orange)	<i>A113</i>
Sister of Mercy Trustees (blue)	<i>Bridge Room</i>

Discussion Focus:

In seeking an “elegant solution,” how might your affinity group approach this case in the Mercy Way?

What more do you need to know? What doors are “open”, and which might appear “closed”?

Given present constraints, opportunities, and learnings, what decision(s) could align more fully with your Catholic, Mercy mission? What are the possibilities as well as the potential barriers or blind spots?

As deliberations and decisions are in process, how attentive are you to including a diversity of voices at the table?

What is your tentative “leaning” about an optimal solution? What values are expressed in your response? How does your leaning reflect our Mercy mission?

Any implications or residual issues to consider if this were to be your decision?

2:10PM

Case Discussion Continues: Remixed Groups

Original group members take a few minutes to share where the group landed or was headed before the “complexity add” and the addition of new members.

Remixed group then addresses the “complexity add,” considering perspectives of both new and returning members regarding a new or more refined solution as deemed wise and desirable.

What more do you need to know? What doors are open, and which appear closed? How attentive are you to a diversity of voices at the table?

Given present constraints, opportunities, and learnings, what would align us more effectively with our Catholic, Mercy mission? What are the possibilities? Potential barriers or blind spots?

What is your “leaning” about an optimal solution? What Mercy values are reflected in your particular response? Any implications or residual issues to consider if this were to be your decision?

3:00PM

Break

3:30PM

Case Discussion Continues: Institutional Groups

Considering your college/university’s specific needs, realities and other unrelated but potentially impactful factors that might affect how your institution would address this case before addressing the following:

If this case were the reality at your institution, would your thinking or approach change? If so, how and why?

What voices are/should be at the table?

What values are expressed in your proposed optimal or elegant solution? How would this solution or decision reflect our Mercy mission? Any implications or residual issues to consider if you choose this path?

Given present constraints, opportunities, and learnings, how might your institution better align with our Catholic, Mercy mission? Possibilities? Potential barriers or blind spots?

How could you work optimally as a team to agree on an elegant Mercy solution to this case, as well as to other complex challenges like it?

4:15PM

Large Group Reassembles

Bridge Room

Discussion will focus on concrete and emerging realities where the Mercy Way – its process, assumptions about engagement, and essential questions – can lead to more holistic consideration of options during these turbulent times in higher education. Effectively communicating both the process and decisions will be considered as well.

5:00PM

Summary Reflection

What did we see, hear and observe today? What gives us hope?

5:30PM	Dinner	<i>Chesapeake Dining Room</i>
7:00PM	Open Forum Closing Prayer	<i>Bridge Room</i>
8:00PM	Social	<i>Deck Club</i>

Saturday, September 14

6:30-8:30AM	Breakfast	<i>Chesapeake Dining Room</i>
8:00AM	CMHE Board Meeting	<i>A307</i>
9:00AM	Morning Prayer	<i>Bridge Room</i>

9:15AM Moving Toward The Practical

Affinity Group Discussions:

Presidents *A111*

FOCUS - Marketing our Institutions in light of Mercy.

Board Chairs *Bridge Room*

FOCUS - Achieving the right balance in both supporting and challenging my president toward excellence and in making Mercy-wise decisions during challenging times.

Academic Officers *Bridge Room*

FOCUS - Ensuring faculty buy-in of the Mercy Way during planning for curricular growth hiring for mission; program adjustments; and business model transformation during times of fiscal, enrollment and morale distress.

Mission Officers *A113*

FOCUS - Ensuring that Mission and Mercy are both “at and on the table” during high-stakes decision-making, whether the MO sits on the President’s cabinet or not.

Sister of Mercy Trustees *A307*

FOCUS - Moving in meaningful and helpful ways from the “doing” to the “enabling” role of Sisters of Mercy trustees in institutional governance, especially in developing and supporting lay trustee leaders for Mercy.

Discussion Questions for Affinity Groups:

What is our desired outcome or intended result here?

Is the outcome we desire also feasible? If not, what would be needed to make it so?

If we pursue this path, when would be the projected endpoint?

What are our “next two” most important steps?

10:15AM

Break

10:30AM

Large Group

Bridge Room

What has been your experience over these days?

What have you learned? Any lingering questions, doubts or concerns?

What are you ready to put into practice?

What further help or assistance might you need or want?

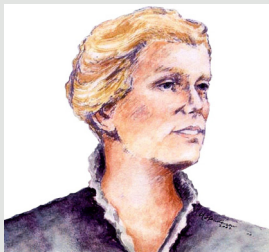
10:45AM

Closing Prayer and Missioning Ritual

Bridge Room

11:30AM

Adjourn



The simplest and most practical lesson I know is to resolve to be good today, but better tomorrow.

– Catherine McAuley

Prayer and Reflection Aids



We should be shining lamps, giving light
to all around us.

– Catherine McAuley

Thursday, September 12

4:00PM

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer/Reflection:

Our conference theme is *Opening the Doors of Mercy*, a familiar and rich metaphor for the Sisters and their colleagues in mission, one made beautifully concrete in the welcoming red door at the entrance to the House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Dublin.

Employed often as a sign of what might lie beyond, but which requires courage and purpose to open and pass through, opening the doors of Mercy is certainly a “courageous doing” which simultaneously signals uncertainty and ambiguity along with possibility and opportunity.

We will return to this metaphor over these days and encourage you to think about the *Door of Mercy* as a path to the future as we encounter the challenges and possibilities we face in higher education and in our Mercy institutions.

So, we begin with a prayerful reading of *The Door of Mercy* by Mary Wickham, RSM.

The Door of Mercy is double hinged,
swinging in, opening out,
sturdy, yet easily moved.
My friend says: You only have to knock once,
and you only have to knock lightly.
The Door of Mercy rests on the threshold of need.
Its single key is kindness, which is always in the lock.
Faithfulness is its lintel,
hope and healing the strong jambs on either side.
The Door of Mercy might be splendidly red,
it could be an unobtrusive brown.
It will need to be carefully handled
and its fittings are locally sourced.
Mostly the Door of Mercy stands ajar.
In spirit and in flesh you cross its threshold each day,
often unmindful, but sometimes,
and increasingly, amazed at its potent familiarity.

The smell of the food of home wafts out,
the blood of the wounds of the earth flows in.
It is not immediately apparent
which side is which of the Door of Mercy,
since they interchange fluidly,
pain and promise etched sharply on both.
Blessing is for all who come and go, stay and return,
helper and helped,
all belonging, each bestowing.
My friend says: You only have to knock once,
and you only have to knock lightly.
The God of Mercy, whose door it is
is always home.

Leader:

We believe these days will be graced; days we have been given and wisely chosen for our beloved Mercy institutions as well as for ourselves. We believe the spirit of Catherine McAuley is with us, as are the spirits of Mercy women and colleagues who built and sustained the institutions we cherish.

May the grace of these days deepen our belief that it is God, the God of Mercy, who shares grace with abundant generosity and rejoices in the work we undertake. This work of the Gospel of Jesus is to build a world of mercy and justice; a world for all of creation.

We gather as the Mercy community of higher education

To consider who we are; where we stand;

Where we want to go, and where we intend to go.

Our success will pivot, to some degree, on forces and circumstances beyond our control.

Yet success will also depend on much that is within the scope of our control and planning, and certainly within our imagination and our will to succeed.

So, we begin by considering that.

Reader:

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

We will ask, "What's possible?" not "What's wrong?" We will keep asking.

We will notice what we care about and assume that many others share our dream;

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.

We will talk to people we know,

Talk to people we don't know.

Talk to people we never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences we hear;

Expect to be surprised.

We will treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite everybody who cares to work on what's possible.

We will:

...acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something;
...know that creative solutions come from new connections;
...remember, you don't fear people whose story you know;
...that real listening always brings people closer together.

We will:

... trust that meaningful conversations can change our world;
... rely on human goodness;
...and we will stay together.

Adapted from *Turning to One Another* Margaret J. Wheatley

So let us open the door and light the candle of Mercy as we begin our work.

Thursday, 5:20PM

Prayer Leader:

We have heard Tom's well-considered thoughts and had a few minutes to discuss them, conversation we hope will continue at dinner and into the evening.

But now, in these very few minutes before we break, let's return for a moment to the Door of Mercy poem.

First, take a breath – we've heard and discussed a lot already – and, for just a moment enter a space of quiet contemplation. Then I invite anyone who so moved to pierce these few moments of silence with a word, a phrase, or single line from Mary Wickham's poem – one that sparks the desire in you to enter fully within these graced days and to take what you have learned from our speakers and from our conversations to what Mercy Sister Marilyn Lacey calls the "solid ground" of your reality.

To all of this, we say:

ALL: Amen. So be it. Let us stand together as we open – again and again – the Doors of Mercy.

Friday, September 13

8:45AM *Music plays as participants enter the room.*

Lord of All Hopefulness (Celtic tune: SLANE)

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares can destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.
Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

Text: 10 11 11 12; 'Lord of all hopefulness' by Jan Struther, 1901–1953; fr. Enlarged Songs of Praise, 1931. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press. All rights reserved. Music: Trad. Irish melody; adapt. fr. The Church Hymnary, 1927.

Prayer Leader:

Let us greet this morning with gratitude! God is here and present – at the break of day; at noontime; into the evening and as night falls. May that belief bring us to a place of joyful confidence that we are about the work of God on earth as, to this day, was Catherine McAuley and so her followers. May our effort together today teach us well and deeply, and bring us joy, peace and strong resolve for the work ahead.

Beginnings adapted from the work of John O'Donohue

1. All that is eternal in me welcomes the wonder of this day.

The field of brightness it creates;
Offering time for each thing to arise and illuminate.

2. May our minds come alive today,

To the invisible geography that invites us to new frontiers;
To break the dead shell of yesterdays; to risk being disturbed and changed.

1. May we have the courage today to choose the good and right path;

To postpone our dream no longer,
But do at last what we came here for, and waste our hearts on fear no more.

2. May the clarity of light be ours.

1. May the clarity of light be ours.

ALL: May the clarity of light be ours.

1. In out-of-the-way places, where our thoughts never think to wander

This beginning has been forming,
Waiting until we were ready.

1. Though our destination is not fully clear we can trust the promise of this opening;

Unfurl ourselves into the grace of beginning,
That is one with our vision and hope.

2. May this be a safe place

Full of understanding and acceptance;
Challenge and creativity.

1. May ours be a community of courage.

2. May ours be a community of courage.

ALL: May ours be a community of courage.

1. May new work excite our hearts;

Kindle in our minds a creativity
To journey beyond old limits.

2. Remember to be kind to those who work for and with you.

Endeavor to remain aware of the quiet world
That lives behind each face.

1. May we have the grace of encouragement

To waken the gift in the other's heart;
Building in them the confidence to follow the call of the gift.

2. May the work ahead be worthy of the energy of our hearts

the light and strength of our best effort.

1. May it bring each Mercy institution to a good and strong place.

2. May it bring us each to a place of deep satisfaction

All: And inspire the best effort of all.

Prayer Leader:

Toward these good ends, we pray in grateful thanks for the inspiration of Catherine McAuley; for Frances Warde and for all the Sisters of Mercy leaders over the decades, strong leaders who built and sustained our beloved Mercy institutions.

Response: For Mercy, they lived and worked then. For Mercy, we live and work now.

10:50AM

Participants enter a quiet moment before offering reflective comments on the input of the Institute Leadership Team, Julia Cavallo and Jennifer Reed-Bouley as backdrop for engaging in the work ahead today.

Something you learned from the speakers and want to put into practice...

Something you still want/need to understand more about...

Something you have learned about the Mercy Way...

5:00PM

End of Day Summary Reflection and Prayer

Prayer Leader:

Good and gracious God, as we approach the evening of this long day, we come before you with full heart: tired, inspired, yet eager to learn and to do and be more.

Thank you for the meal and for the more relaxed time we are about to share. May it nourish our bodies and refresh our energy. We are grateful for its bounty and for the labor of all those who have worked to bring it to our table.

Above all, thank you for the great gift of the Mercy charism. We know that sharing in that charism is a gift of great magnitude, and we are both privileged and proud to share in it. And so, as we move now to dinner, we give thanks to you, and thanks for your servants of Mercy – Catherine and her followers, past and present, as well as our colleagues in mission, who call us to the same depth of commitment and perseverance. For Mercy they lived and worked,

ALL: For Mercy, we shall live and work.

Evening Prayer

Spontaneous Litany of Gratitude

Response: For this and more, we give thanks and praise.

Saturday, September 14

9:00AM

Morning Prayer

Music plays as participants enter the room.

Be Thou My Vision (Celtic tune: SLANE)

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art:
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord:
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son,
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, or man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav'n's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Text: 10 10 10 10; Ancient Irish; tr. by Mary E. Byrne, 1905; fr. Eleanor Hull's Poem Book of the Gael, 1912, alt. Music: Trad. Irish melody; adapt. fr. The Church Hymnary, 1927.

10:45AM

Closing Prayer and Missioning Ritual

Prayer Leader:

From the time we came together, we have centered around four ideas – ones that encircle the center and substance of the CMHE Mission Integration Core Areas – inspiration, animation, reflection and renewal.

First, Inspiration – hearing as we have from Tom Flynn about the landscape of higher education, particularly Catholic higher education; the value and promise of Mercy in that work as shared by the ILT; and on the meaning and possibilities embedded in the Covenant, in Catholic Social Teaching and the Mercy Critical Concerns as shared by Julia Cavallo and Jennifer Reed-Bouley.

Then, **Animation** – learning about and together practicing the principles, methods and art of doing and being Mercy in all our efforts, encounters and decisions.

So now, having strengthened our confidence in the power and potential of this approach, of the Mercy Way, as we have threaded it together and through during our **Reflection** – prayer and deeper thought about what we are doing and why; about how a path toward the future we desire might have the best chance of coming to be by taking this path, this way, through the Door of Mercy. Now comes the time for

Renewal – to look at the place from which we have come; at the place and time in which we find ourselves today, and ahead toward the still not fully clear horizon beckoning; and to do so with hope and unwavering determination.

Since the founding of the Sisters of Mercy by Catherine McAuley in Dublin, Ireland in 1831, education at all levels has been a hallmark of our congregation and continues today as 'one of our enduring concerns.'

And so, individually, as teams from our 17 schools, and as the CMHE collective, we come to pledge ourselves anew to and for the Mercy mission and the imperatives that lie ahead.

We believe that this mission embodies the most critical work of God on the earth; with Mercy most completely mirroring the essence of the very God we serve.

We have come to a crossing place, to a door that we want to open.

The Celtics call it *Trasna*

Reader:

The pilgrims paused on the ancient stones in the mountain gap.

Behind them stretched the roadway they had travelled.

Ahead, mist hid the track. Unspoken the question hovered:

Why go on? Is life not short enough?

Why seek to pierce its mystery? Why venture further on strange paths, risking all.

Surely that is a gamble for fools - or lovers.

Why not return quietly to the known road? Why be a pilgrim still?

A voice they knew called to them, saying: This is *Trasna*, the crossing place.

Choose! Go back if you must, You will find your way easily by yesterday's fires,
there may be life in the embers yet.

If that is not your deep desire, Stand still. Lay down your load. Take your life firmly in your two hands,
(Gently... you are trusted with something precious)

While you search your heart's yearnings: What am I seeking? What is my quest?

When your star rises deep within,

Trust yourself to its leading. You will have the light for first steps.

This is *Trasna*, the crossing place. Choose! This is *Trasna*, the crossing place. Come!

Prayer Leader:

So where do we stand, and in what direction shall we move?

What doors shall we open, or close, or pass through?

May we choose well and wisely.

May we always choose in the company of others who share our love for Mercy, and our commitment to it.

Reader: Roman 1: 8, 12

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you and for the way in which your faith is spoken all over the world.... For I am longing to see you, whether to strengthen you by sharing a spiritual gift with you, or what is better, to find encouragement among you from our common faith.

Prayer Leader II:

The crossing place, the threshold, is always a place of decision and action.

We believe, though, that sometimes it is right and good to pause; to stand still; to think and to pray deeply.

But eventually...to move forward; to open the door in front of us and step across the threshold with purpose and anticipation.

To prepare for that step, let us welcome the wisdom of our leaders and be strengthened by their pledge to remain in this work with and among us.

Will the members of the **Institute Leadership Team of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas** please rise?

Question:

And so, as elected leaders of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, will you support and remain in solidarity with the leaders and the learning communities of the institutions you sponsor; sharing with them your wisdom; your experience, your confidence in them and your joy in seeing them thrive?

ILT Pledge: In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we will and do so pledge.

ALL SING:

Amen we affirm. Amen we encourage.

Amen we bless and we celebrate AMEN.

Will the Board and staff of the **Conference for Mercy Higher Education** please rise?

Question:

And so, as Board and staff of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education, will you fulfill the sacred responsibility with which you have been entrusted: to act on behalf and for the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas as their delegate and to support, enable and monitor the Catholic and Mercy identities of our member institutions?

CMHE Board and Staff Pledge: In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we will and do so pledge.

ALL SING:

Amen we affirm. Amen we encourage.

Amen we bless and we celebrate AMEN.

Will the **Presidents of our Mercy institutions** please rise?

Question:

And so, as presidents of our Mercy colleges and universities, will you honor the sacred mission and legacy with which you have been entrusted; will you lead in the Mercy Way; and work with your teams to ensure a vibrant and Mercy-rich environment on your campus?

Presidents' Pledge: In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we will and do so pledge.

ALL SING:

Amen we affirm. Amen we encourage.

Amen we bless and we celebrate AMEN.

Will the **Board Chairs or their delegates** please rise?

Question:

And so, as elected leaders of the Mercy Boards of Trustees will you support and remain in solidarity with the leaders and communities of the institution you serve, sharing your wisdom; your experience and your joy in seeing it thrive?

Pledge of Board Chairs: In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we will and do so pledge.

ALL SING:

Amen we affirm. Amen we encourage.

Amen we bless and we celebrate AMEN.

Will the **Sisters of Mercy trustees** please rise?

Question:

And so, as Sisters Trustees on our Boards, will you support and remain in solidarity with the leaders and the communities of the institutions sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy at which you serve; sharing your wisdom; your experience, and your pride in seeing them thrive?

Sister Trustee Pledge: In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we will and do so pledge.

ALL SING:

Amen we affirm. Amen we encourage.

Amen we bless and we celebrate AMEN.

Will the **senior academic officers** please rise?

Question:

And so, as the academic leaders of our Mercy institutions, will you lead in the Mercy institutions at which you serve to inspire the faculty and staff, imbue the curriculum with the values and principles evident in the Mercy legacy and support your colleagues and president in pursuing the Mercy mission?

Academic Leaders Pledge: In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we will and do so pledge.

ALL SING:

Amen we affirm. Amen we encourage.

Amen we bless and we celebrate AMEN.

Will the **mission officers** please rise?

Question:

And so, as mission officers of our Mercy institutions, will you embrace and support the Mercy mission and legacy at your institution, inspiring and leading your colleagues in deepening its presence and influence in every aspect of the institution's life, especially the student experience?

Mission Officer Pledge: In the spirit of Catherine McAuley, we will and do so pledge.

ALL SING:

Amen we affirm. Amen we encourage.

Amen we bless and we celebrate AMEN.

Prayer Leader:

We now ask the representative or representatives of each Mercy institution to come forward as we bless and commission you to continue, strengthen and deepen our good and noble work.

Saint Xavier University, Chicago, IL	1846
Mount Aloysius College, Cresson, PA	1880
Mercy College of Health Sciences, Des Moines, IA	1899
Georgian Court University, Lakewood, NJ	1908
Saint Joseph's College, Standish, ME	1912
Mercy College of Ohio, Toledo, OH	1918
College of Saint Mary, Omaha, NE	1923
Misericordia University, Dallas, PA	1924
Mercyhurst University, Erie, PA	1926
Mount Mercy University, Cedar Rapids, IA	1928
Carlow University, Pittsburgh, PA	1929
University of Saint Joseph, West Hartford, CT	1932
Salve Regina University, Newport, RI	1934
Gwynedd Mercy University, Gwynedd Valley, PA	1948
Maria College, Albany, NY	1958
Trocaire College, Buffalo, NY	1958
University of Detroit Mercy, Detroit, MI	1990

CMHE Leader:

Inspired by the spirit and legacy of Catherine McAuley, will you work together at **[institution]** to achieve the noble vision of the Sisters of Mercy as it is embraced and lived at your institution in this time and place?

Collective Response: We will and do so pledge.

Leader:

And so, dear colleagues, amid all the uncertainty and challenges of the world, believing, as we do, in our mission of Mercy, and trusting in each other and in the power of the charism and the legacy we are privileged to hold, let us open the doors we are called to open,

Reader:

Go and open the door.
Maybe outside there's a tree, or a wood,
a garden, or a magic city.

Go and open the door.
Maybe a dog's rummaging.
Maybe you'll see a face, or an eye,
or the picture of a picture.

Go and open the door.
If there's a fog
it will clear.

Go and open the door.
Even if there's only

the darkness ticking,
even if there's only
the hollow wind,
even if nothing
is there,
go and open the door... adapted from poem of Miroslav Holub

Leader

*You only have to knock once,
and you only have to knock lightly.*
The God of Mercy, whose door it is
is always home.

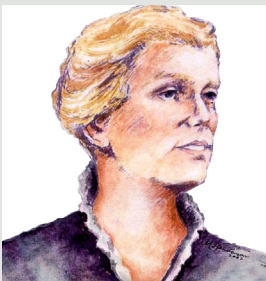
What door will you knock on that, perhaps, you have not been able to approach before?

Reader:

So, do not worry if the struggle seems unduly great and the work and the suffering unupportable, for the reward is great in proportion to them. Do not lose courage for an instant. Run with love in the midst of struggle. God is all-powerful. The things you have undertaken to do are far beyond your strength to accomplish but God has promised to see you through and God's word is true.

Leader:

Let us conclude, trusting that we hold the wisdom, deep spirit and determination of Catherine McAuley by singing our way confidently toward whatever door we intend to open; toward whatever door we must open.



Mercy, the principal path pointed out by
Jesus Christ to those who are desirous of
following Him.

– Catherine McAuley

Circle of Mercy

Jeannette Goglia, RSM

In mercy, we touch the hearts of those who are in misery.

In mercy, we're touched by the and feel their strength and courage

In mercy, we heal the pain of those who are in sorrow

In mercy, we're healed by them and see the face of hope.

REFRAIN

*For the circle of mercy is timeless, it is Spirit of Life itself, which roots us in Faith,
and lifts us in Hope and holds us in God's loving care, and holds us in God's loving care.*

In mercy, we welcome those the world has left rejected.

In mercy, we're drawn within the loving heart of God.

In mercy, we forgive the incompleteness of another

In mercy, our sins are healed and we are whole again (REF)

In mercy, the Spirit Faith will root us in God's Presence.

In mercy, the Spirit Hope will lift us out of doubt.

In mercy, the Love of God will be our joy in living;

In mercy, we join with one another on our journey. (REF)

Presenter Bios



Thomas F. Flynn, Ph.D.

Thomas F. Flynn is the Senior Associate for Advising Services at the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (ACCU) and a Senior Fellow and Senior Consultant at the Association of Governing Boards (AGB). Dr. Flynn is president emeritus of Alvernia University, where he served from 2005 to 2019. Previously, Dr. Flynn served as Provost and President at Millikin University (IL) and as both Professor of English and Dean of the College at Mount Saint Mary's University (MD). Dr. Flynn has written and spoken extensively on contemporary higher education and has been a consultant-evaluator on academic programs, especially general education, for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Lilly Endowment, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), and approximately two hundred institutions. An undergraduate at Boston College, he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. in American Culture at the University of Michigan and completed professional development programs at Harvard University.



Jennifer Reed-Bouley, Ph.D.

Jennifer Reed-Bouley is Professor and Program Director of Theology at College of Saint Mary in Omaha, Nebraska, where she has taught courses in Catholic social thought and environmental ethics since 2004. With Bernard Prusak, she co-edited *Catholic Higher and Catholic Social Thought* (Paulist, 2023), which applies Catholic social thought to the operational decisions in Catholic colleges and universities. Her article "Challenging Racism and White Privilege in Undergraduate Theology Contexts: Teaching and Learning Strategies for Maximizing the Promise of Community Service-Learning," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 18/1 (2015), won the College Theology Society's annual award for "Best Article Published in Theology." Jennifer earned her BA from the University of Notre Dame, and her MA in Theology and Ph.D. in Christian Ethics from Loyola University Chicago.

Case Work as an *Enabling Asset*: Some Helpful Guidelines

- Assess the situation and be clear about the problem you are trying to solve, including as many relevant facts as possible.
- Pay close attention to the situational context, as well as to culture, and the organization's deeply held values and principles.
- Consult with and/or include others, especially those who will be most affected by your decision or plan.
- Gather and analyze relevant data.
- Ask the right questions.
- Review and evaluate past decisions or factors that may affect the current situation.
- Do frequent "reality checks."
- Learn what other organizations you respect have done in similar situations.
- Develop one or more solution strategies, most effectively with others.
- Choose a path, assuming no possibility for full certainty.
- Have a plan ready to address possible or probable backlash to a potentially unpopular decision.
- Communicate lavishly both during the process and after a decision is reached and, when persons are directly affected, preferably in person.

Pitfalls to Avoid

- Relying on inadequate or unreliable data.
- Failing to address culture and context adequately.
- Excluding people who hold essential info or those who will be most affected by the decision.
- Assuming there is one and only one "correct" answer.
- Adopting a "narrow vision" versus "inclusive and holistic" approach.
- Failing to find a solution that is both desirable and feasible or reaching that conclusion prematurely.
- Paying insufficient attention to the organization's deeply held values.
- Approaching the "problem" in a "lone ranger" fashion, i.e., from a solely positional stance.
- Shutting down dissenting voices prematurely.
- Failing to keep your "finger on the pulse."
- Communicating poorly either or both process and decision.



Sisters of Mercy CRITICAL CONCERNS

The Sisters of Mercy were founded out of a deep concern for the needs of persons who are poor. Today, we focus our ministry on those needs identified through our "critical concerns." We address these concerns through prayer; our own communal life as a religious congregation; education; advocacy with legislators and other leaders; and corporate engagement.

Immigration

Believing firmly in the dignity of every person, we work for just and humane immigration laws in the U.S., address policies that push people to flee their countries, and examine the global impact of immigration.

Earth

We believe in the need for sustainability of life, supporting both a lifestyle and legislation that acknowledge everyone's right to water and the need to address climate change.

Racism

We believe racism is an evil affecting us all. We work to recognize and dismantle institutional racism in order to become an anti-racist multicultural community.

Nonviolence

We work for peace through prayer, education, personal and communal practices of nonviolence, and legislative advocacy to reduce armed conflicts, gun violence and human rights abuses.

Women

Through our schools, colleges, health-care institutions and spirituality centers, and through our legislative advocacy, we give special attention to women's education, health and spirituality.

JOIN IN OUR ADVOCACY EFFORTS AND SIGN UP FOR EMAIL ALERTS ON ANY OR ALL OF THESE CRITICAL CONCERNS.

www.sistersofmercy.org/advocacysignup

Mercy Colleges and Universities – contributing to Mercy in the world through higher education.
Global Mercy see: [Mercy International Association \(MIA\) in Dublin, Ireland.](#)

As a Mercy College or University, who and what inspire us?

What principles and bodies of thought help stir our imaginations, challenge our creativity, deepen our questions, conversations, reflections, and engage us in moral decision making and methods of learning as we live our Mission?

Charism of Mercy – A gift and expression of God’s presence in the world

In 1827 **Catherine McAuley** opened the first House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Dublin, Ireland in response to the needs of poor women and children. In 1831 she founded the religious community of the Sisters of Mercy as a way to assure that this work would go forward. Her vision was to provide education, skill development, safety, health care and support to those with few options. Catherine McAuley died in 1841, leaving a community with convents and ministries in Ireland and England, and with nascent invitations to go to other lands. -- Catherine's history is one of joys and sorrows, deep prayer and faith, and respectful, warm relationships in her leadership and fostering of community. In addition, she trusted in the wisdom of others to lead in Mercy wherever they are planted.

The **Sisters of Mercy** of the Institute of the Americas sponsor Mercy colleges and universities through the work of the **Conference for Mercy Higher Education (CMHE)**. Their spirituality, charism, history and ongoing presence and ministry as a Roman Catholic religious group of women inspires the character, vision, and mission of Mercy higher education institutions and their communities at all levels.

The agreement and relationship between the Institute and each college or university is described as a **Covenant**.

The Covenant speaks of the desire and commitment to carry on the mission of higher education as a Mercy Catholic institution and to CMHE’s commitment to support their mission and identity in the context of each college or university’s distinct culture and location.

The Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy regarding institutional sponsorship contextualize the spirit of this Covenant in their Mercy community Constitution:

“As Sisters of Mercy we sponsor institutions to address our enduring concerns and to witness to Christ’s mission. Within these institutions, we, together with our co-workers and those we serve, endeavor to model mercy and justice and to promote systemic change according to these ideals.”
(Constitutions 5)

The Catholic Church’s Tradition, culture and documents, such as **Ex corde ecclesiae**, issued by Saint John Paul II, and **Core Principles of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition** contextualize and inform our identity and mission. -- Mercy colleges and universities drink from the well of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT).

--CIT is accumulated wisdom of the past and contemporary scholarship across all disciplines, studied in ways that encourages dealing with life’s challenges and questions with a sense of the Transcendent, the belief that creation is good and beautiful, and that humans are called to participate and contribute to this evolving goodness and beauty.

--CIT supports a rigorous search for truth, asserting that coming to know truth, at least very good approximations of truth, is possible and to be respected. It supports a lively, dynamic relationship between reason and faith, because reason alone is not complete, and faith without reason can be superficial. Today, CIT

represents an integrated approach to learning that values inclusiveness and diversity in a pluralistic world, with respectful dialogue that goes across disciplines and activities, even engaging in critical critique of itself. Philosophy, theology, and Mission content, questions and processes can act to facilitate a lively relationship between reason and faith. -- One does not have to be Catholic to appreciate CIT and to contribute to the dialogue. In fact, this participation makes it all the richer. CIT is a means to seek truth together.

Core Principles of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition as listed by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. A Commitment to Universal Truth | 6. The Power of Beauty |
| 2. Faith and Reason | 7. An Appreciation of Creation |
| 3. Integral Relationship to the Catholic Church | 8. The Dignity of the Human Person |
| 4. Hospitality and Tradition | 9. Innovation for the Common Good |
| 5. A Sacramental Vision | |

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT) affirms and appreciates:

- **Transcendancy** - broad horizon that calls us forward.
- **Sacramental Vision** – dynamic inter-relatedness of life, whose meaning and beauty can never fully be captured.
- **All Creation is good** - humans are inherently good, though we sin, personally and collectively.
- **Community** - essential at all levels, constantly forming and reforming.
- Christian story of the **Paschal Mystery** and how we might see the world and ourselves in and through this story.
- **Seeks truth and meaning** through reason & faith, all disciplines, traditions, and our experiences, questions and doubts.
- **Ethical systems of thought** ask “how should we act and why?” – Guiding Principles of **Catholic Social Teaching (CST)**.
- Sense of **Vocation in life** to be about the common good in the world in ways that are just and values key qualities of **beauty**.

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching are active in decision-making processes. Within CIT, diverse ethical systems of thought come into dialogue, engaging Philosophical and Theological theories and principles, including Principles of CST. The list of principles is sometimes listed slightly differently.

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
 - Call to Family, Community, and Participation
 - Common Good
 - Subsidiarity
 - Rights and Responsibilities
 - Preferential Option for the Poor and Marginalized
 - Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers
 - Solidarity
 - Care for Creation
- See also: *Just War Theory*



Mercy Critical Concerns

Non-violence

Earth

Women and those who are marginalized

Immigration and Migration

Anti-Racism

How would you re-word the Works of Mercy, mindful of the need for systemic responses to suffering and injustice?
Works of Mercy are a means of grace, ways to love our neighbor in light of the Gospels?
(Matt. 5:3-12 & Luke 6:20-22)

Corporal Works of Mercy (traditional wording)

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Shelter the homeless
- Clothe the naked
- Visit the imprisoned
- Visit the Sick
- Bury the dead
- Care for the Earth (added by Pope Francis)

Spiritual Works of Mercy (traditional wording)

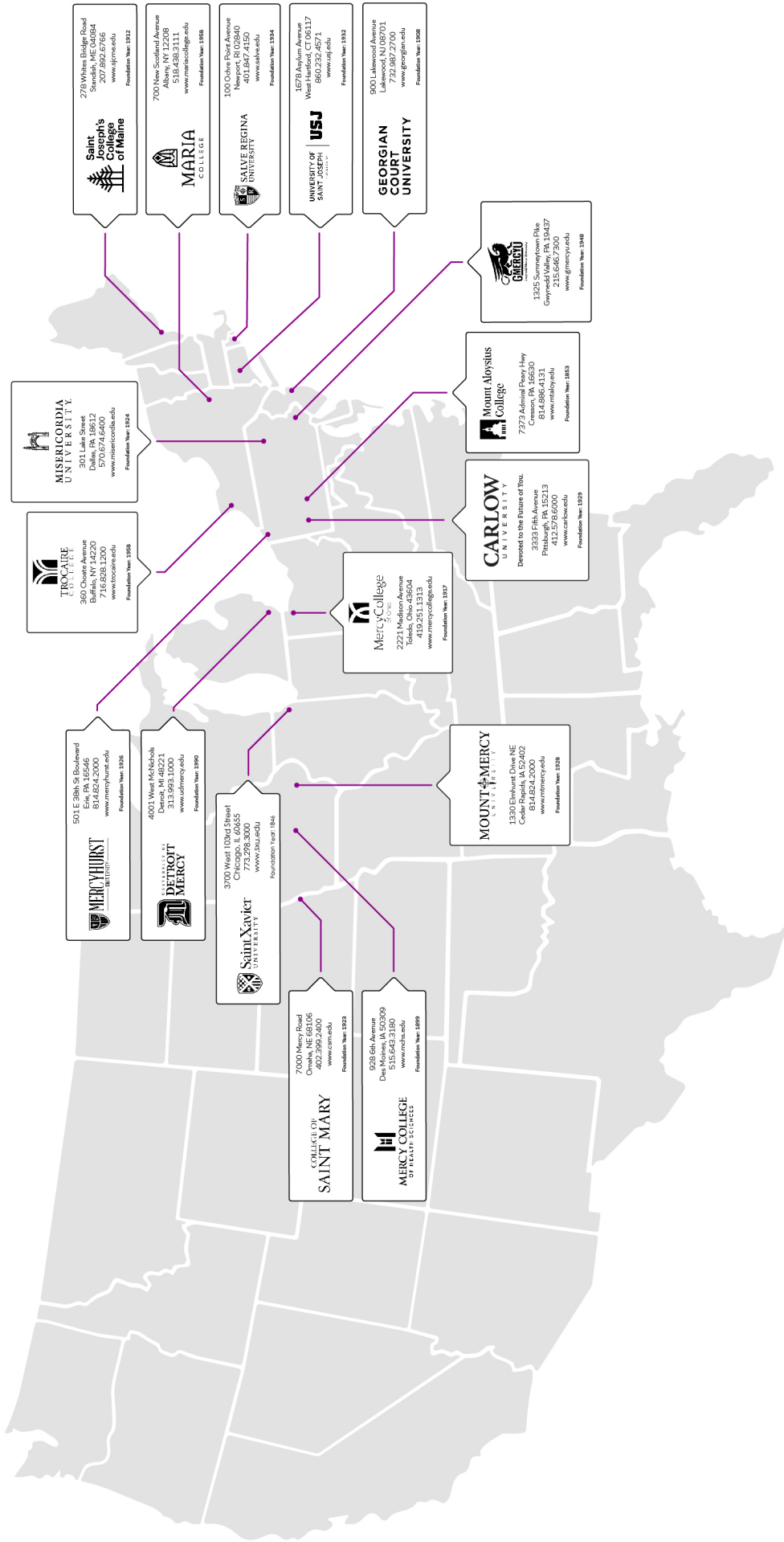
- Counsel the doubtful
- educate the ignorant
- Convert the sinner
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Forgive offenses willingly
- Bear wrongs willingly
- Pray for the living & the dead
- Care for the Earth (added by Pope Francis)

Some Common Focus Areas and Characteristics of a Mercy College / University

Focus on Mission Collaboration Hospitality Compassion / Action Holistic Approaches	Future Relationality Excellence Humility that Stands Up	Mercy Justice Systemic Just Laws and Policies Prayer Reflection	Discernment Faith Dignity & Respect Seeking Truth Questions	Learning & Discovery Beauty Joy Simplicity Perseverance ...
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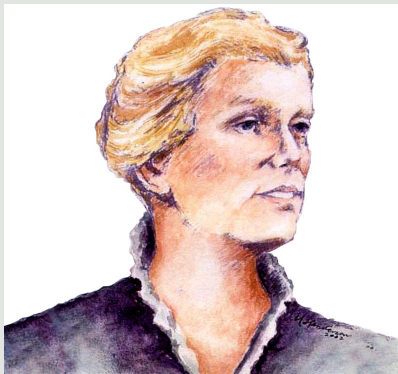
Mission Questions to be mindful of when deliberating and making decisions: (composed with the wise input of many)

1. Whose voices are/are not at the table of decision making? - Are there people at the table who are silent?
Are those present sensitized to the complexities of biases, prejudices and racism and able to speak-up when needed?
2. What values are expressed in our particular response/action?
3. How does this decision/action reflect our mission?
4. Who will benefit? Who will pay or lose some benefit or value, and who will carry the work of this decision/action?
5. How do our Mission Integration Core Areas influence our decisions? How are these areas impacted?
6. Given present constraints, opportunities, and learnings, is there a way to more deeply align our action/response with our Mission?
7. How are our partners, and those we contract with for services, aligned with our values?
8. At the close of a Board Meeting, consider asking: How well did we integrate our values into our deliberations and decisions?



The mission of the Conference for Mercy Higher Education is the preservation and development of the core Catholic identity and mission of Mercy higher education in accord with the spirit, mission, and heritage of the Sisters of Mercy.

Compassion should be our animating principle when undertaking instruction with children and adults, since they are made in God's image.



A community in which this universal charity reigns, is capable of surmounting all difficulties.

– Catherine McAuley