

# PRAYER SERVICE FOR MERCY SISTERS AND ASSOCIATES "IN RADICAL COMMUNION BEYOND ALL BORDERS" THIS CHRISTMAS EVE OR DAY, 2007.

Theme:

## *Fire Cast Upon the Earth: The Birth of our Redeemer*

(Lk 12:49)

*Ambience: A number of lighted candles or crib with multi-coloured lights, natural greenery and red berries-bolly.  
Some very gentle Christmas Carol music playing softly in the background e.g. the melody of Silent Night.*

### **INTRODUCTION:**

In November this year, on behalf of our Mercy International Research Commission, thirty-two vowed Mercy members, who minister in the fields of research and writing, were called together from across the globe. The purpose of the meeting which took place in Burlingame, California, was to reflect the theme of Fire Cast upon the Earth: Mercy kindling in the Twenty-first century.

We focused on formulating a new global vision statement emphasising our commitment to greater togetherness in a "radical communion beyond all borders. Grounded in the compassion of God ... [and] aware of our own brokenness, we join with others in healing the wounds of Earth and Earth's peoples." This vision is underpinned by a theology and praxis which, will hopefully, keep Mercy kindling brightly through the twenty-first century and beyond.

On Christmas Day 2007 years ago, God cast fire upon the earth through the birth of the Fire empowered to save all peoples. In recognition of our duty to keep that Fire burning; and of Catherine's love for the image, we reverence and celebrate in prayer this Christmas.

### **GREETING:**

Eternal Flame, be our light and joy today as we commemorate the birth of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

Glorious Fire of Compassion, touch our hearts anew with mercy and love.

Wisdom of God and Purifying Flame be our inspiration in all that we do and say today.

### **Doxology:**

Glory to God creating, living and blessing now.

Hail to God's Eternal Fire born today in mercy and peace.

Rejoice in the Spirit whose Light will shine forever in hearts that pray:

Hosanna, hosanna, Amen.

### **Ant:**

Glorious Flame, Fire of God, Light to all peoples, we welcome your humanity among us, and pray with one voice across the earth: Hosanna, hosanna, Rejoice!



**PS: 18: 1-3; 6-8; 9-12, 19.**

I love you God, my strength.

You are my rock, my safety, and my deliverer,  
my God, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, my only Saviour.

I call upon God, who is worthy to be praised,  
and I am saved from my enemies.

To my God I cried for help.  
From the temple God heard my voice.

Then the earth reeled and rocked;  
the foundations of the mountains trembled.  
Smoke went up, and devouring fire came from  
the mouth of God;  
glowing coals flamed forth.

Wisdom left the heavens, and came down;  
The Eternal Flame rode on a cherub, and flew;  
and came swiftly upon the wings of the wind.

Out of the brightness before God there broke through  
the clouds hailstones and coals of fire.  
Mercy brought me forth into a broad place;  
and delivered me, because God delighted in me.

**Doxology:**

Glory to God creating, living and blessing now.

Hail to God's Eternal Fire born today in mercy and  
peace.

Rejoice in the Spirit whose Light will shine forever in  
hearts that pray:

Hosanna, hosanna, Amen.

**Ant:**

Glorious Flame, Fire of God, Light to all peoples, we  
welcome your humanity among us, and pray with one  
voice across the earth: Hosanna, hosanna, rejoice!

**CANTICLE:**

*God's Grandeur* - by Gerard Manley Hopkins, SJ.

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil; ...  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared  
with toil ...

And for all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things ...  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah!  
bright wings...

**Doxology:**

Glory to God creating, living and blessing now.

Hail to God's Eternal Fire born today in mercy and  
peace.

Rejoice in the Spirit whose Light will shine forever in  
hearts that pray:

Hosanna, hosanna, Amen.

**Ant:**

Glorious Flame, Fire of God, Light to all peoples, we  
welcome your humanity among us, and pray with one  
voice across the earth: Hosanna, hosanna, rejoice!

**SCRIPTURE: LK 12:49.**

*"I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were  
already kindled!"*

*I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am  
constrained until it is accomplished!"*



## REFLECTION:

The world is certainly charged with the grandeur of God on this special day.  
God has cast a New Fire on our earth desiring to renew it afresh.  
It is blazing out through the lives of all who rejoice and give thanks.  
It is the flame that ignites love in families, neighbourhoods – the Church.  
It is reflected in the shining foil that wrapped gifts as tokens of love this Christmas  
It gathers in greatness when shared in families, amongst friends and in Mercy communities.

Winter has come and the soil is bare now.  
But the Fire that God cast upon the earth two thousand and seven years ago is  
burning silently, blazing gently, and spreading joyfully around the globe in:  
mercy, love, forgiveness, generosity, affirmation, solidarity and good will.

At birth It was called Jesus, and nurtured in a manger.  
In Jerusalem It was baptised in Its own blood.  
On the cross It became Salvation for humanity.  
Now It is Eucharist; It nourishes our souls.

Our Redeemer came from deep down in the earth's social order.  
In this way God lifted both the earth and that social order up, as if, on bright wings.

In our brokenness, we've bleared and smeared the earth and created divisive orders.  
We've smudged it, trod on its fruits, violated its innocents, abused its women, and derided its men.

In our moments of pain, feelings of hurt and a wish to 'get even', or to demean others,  
we need to reach **out** for warmth and healing to God Jesus, sleeping in a menial manger.  
Then we need to reach **down** into our hearts where Jesus longs to commune with us.  
There we will discover a freedom purged by the Fire that rises and lifts when we allow Its  
brightness to spiral and spread.

Pause:



## INTERCESSIONS:

Grateful for your gift of Redemption, we bring our petitions before you, Oh Blazing Fire, Welcome of God and Light that will enlighten all peoples until the end of time as we pray for:

Our Holy Mother the Church – that she may reflect Your Light to all peoples with mercy, hope and love.

All women who celebrate the Light of Life with their families today – may they do so with faith and compassion.

All women who on this day struggle to reflect Your Fire by creating a warm family atmosphere and celebration despite the poverty in which they live today – may they be inspired by the simplicity of the manger; and may those of us who have enough be motivated to try to bring about a practical change in their circumstances before next Christmas.

All families who feel bereaved or cut off from Your Light this Christmas – may those of us who know such families be moved to visit; and lovingly to reflect Your Fire in their homes.

All women and men who work in drop-in units, homeless centres, hostels, street-fellowships or on soup-runs this Christmas – may the Fire that warmed the hearts and hands of Mary and Joseph, and the graciousness that they displayed to their visitors in Bethlehem, be their inspiration.

For all of us in Mercy who pray and work for the spread of Your Fire across the globe through the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy – may we work as though the mission depended on us, and journey in faith, hope and love, knowing that we are totally dependent on You, Mercy Kindling.

## CONCLUDING PRAYER:

Gracious and generous God we give you thanks for your unfailing love. We praise you as we commemorate Jesus' birth in our world. We pray for the vision and the strength to accept our on-going baptism, in whatever shape, or form, you see fit to immerse us. May we become truly holistic receivers who allow your Fire to purge our own hearts before we try throughout 2008 to share it anew with others.

Amen.

## BLESSING:

May God who is Light shine in our homes this Christmas.

May Jesus whose birthday we commemorate today bring warmth to our homes.

May God's Spirit Fire, inflame our hearts and bless † us this day and always.

Amen.

