

Dignity

We cherish each person as created in the image of God





Dignity

The Mercy Cornerstone

While each of the values and elements of our charism are equally important, dignity is the foundation for the others, it is our cornerstone. We believe each person has inherent dignity and value because we are created in the image and likeness of God (*Genesis 1:27*). Respecting this dignity, we cherish those around us and work to be in right relationships.

Part of Catherine's appeal was how she made people feel. In her presence people felt respected and valued regardless of their social or financial situation.

When we are kind, collaborate and communicate honestly and gently, when we are humble and listen before speaking, when we see the person in front of us as a reflection of God, we are true to the legacy of Mercy and building right relationships founded on dignity.

For Discussion

- When have you felt truly cherished?
- What are the characteristics of relationships founded on dignity?
- How can we ensure others leave us feeling valued and cherished?

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In the Image and Likeness

Then God said: Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. (Genesis 1:26 NABRE)

Dignity is Mercy's foundational value. It is rooted in our belief that all people are made in the image and likeness of God. Made in God's image, we hold sacred the physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions of who we are.

Human dignity is an intrinsic value, something each of us possesses simply by virtue of being a person. Because everyone has such intrinsic value, we are morally obligated to respect human nature, both in ourselves and in everyone else. Jesus displayed this through his care for all, particularly his preferential care for those who are marginalized, poor and social outcasts.

For Discussion

- When have you witnessed dignity being respected and cherished?
- How can we see and honor the dignity in those who are difficult to be around?

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Honesty is the Best Policy

We all know honesty is the best policy. It's also a key element to being in right relationships and honoring the dignity of others. When we're honest, it shows that we're people of integrity and can be trusted. It also shows that we honor, care for and respect ourselves and our co-workers. Some people mistakenly think being honest means saying everything they're thinking, regardless of how it will impact another person. Honesty isn't rude or mean or unkind. Honesty means doing what you say you will do, keeping to your word, acknowledging your own mistakes and treating yourself and others with dignity and respect.

For Discussion

- Who comes to mind when you think of an individual that exemplifies honesty?
- Why do we skimp on being completely honest at times?

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Core Values-Dignity

Dignity means that we cherish all persons as created in the image of God.

While each of the five Mercy values are equally important, dignity is the basis for all the other values. We view all situations through the lens of human dignity. In striving to imitate Jesus, Catherine McAuley treated everyone with respect and compassion. In Catherine's presence, people felt respected and valued regardless of their social or financial situation. Catherine also treated each Sister with dignity and respect. This has been a model the Sisters have honored and the attitude which we continue to follow today.

We live out Dignity in our work by:

- Welcoming everyone, introducing ourselves, using preferred names
- Keeping a clean environment
- Maintaining confidentiality and privacy
- Respecting diversity
- Living the Golden Rule (treating others as we would want to be treated)

For Discussion

- Where do you see dignity lived out every day at Mercy?

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Who Me?

Holding someone accountable for their actions, or lack of action, is easier said than done.

However, it is one of the most important things we can do for our ministry. It requires individuals and departments to work closely together for the care of our patients. When accountability, collaboration and teamwork break down, we see missed deadlines, lower quality of work, lack of vision and poor follow through.

When something in a situation has gone badly it helps to assume good intentions. Directly approach the other person and focus on the facts. Perhaps the co-worker doesn't share the same priority or they've encountered a problem. Whatever it is, show respect for the other person, their ideas and responsibilities. Remember we're all serving on the same team.

For Discussion

- How do you hold yourself and your team accountable to one another?
- How do we hold each other responsible for living out the Mercy values?

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Choosing Our Words

Sr. Mary Roch Rocklage has a wonderful habit: every day, when she says her morning prayers, she prays over her words. She asks God to help her find and use the right words for whoever needs to hear them that day. Anyone who has ever been the recipient of a personal greeting or note from Sr. Roch can attest to God working through her words.

When we choose words that are inclusive, such as “we,” “us” or “together,” we invite others to partner and collaborate with us in achieving our goals. We also can change our individual mindsets to be more team oriented. In the spirit of Mercy, we know that who we are together is as important as anything we will ever accomplish.

For Discussion

- What positive and empowering words could you use to describe your co-workers or leaders?
- When have you experienced a carefully chosen word making a difference?
- How do inclusive and positive words show the value of dignity?

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Handful of Prayer

Created in God's image, we are hardwired to be in relationship with God. Like any other relationship it takes communication. Prayer is one form of communicating with God and involves both sharing and listening. Many traditions have recited prayer and creeds to use, but the most authentic prayers come from the heart. So, let God know what's in your heart and invite the Spirit of God to be with you throughout your days.

If you're still stuck – just follow your hands.

1. Thumb – this finger is closest to you, so pray for the people closest to you.
2. Index "Pointer" – pray for all those who teach, instruct and point you on the way.
3. Middle – pray for wisdom for those in leadership positions on your tallest finger.
4. Ring – this is your weakest finger, pray for those who are weak or hurting and need help.
5. Little "Pinky" – pray for yourself and your concerns last.

For Discussion

- What prayer requests do you have today?

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Hospitality of the Heart

Hospitality is an element of Mercy's charism and is rooted in the Irish heritage of the Sisters of Mercy. We often limit hospitality to a comfortable cup of tea or a smile. But true hospitality is more than this. True hospitality creates an environment where no one is afraid to be themselves, to ask for help or to voice a concern. True hospitality requires us to welcome others into our hearts – even those who are not easy to love. We welcome those who are poor and sick, dirty and outcast, frustrating and annoying. In the name of God who welcomes all, and in the spirit of Jesus, we relate to them as our true brothers and sisters.

For Discussion

- When you are in a new place or with new people, what makes you feel welcome?
- What is special about a Mercy welcome?
- How can you create an environment where no one is afraid?

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Alike in Dignity

Our society falls into the trap of valuing or respecting others according to their cultural or social status, especially in the workplace. But, Mercy's commitment to dignity strengthens us avoid the fallacy that we are our job. It is the sacred dignity of the person doing that work that makes the work valuable, not the other way around!

Consider that over the years the Sisters of Mercy have served in all areas of our ministry: cleaning bedpans, creating budgets, working with families, training, teaching and every other necessary and unforgotten task. Large or small, complicated or simple, they affirmed the work of the hour as ministry and service. Today, we participate in the same ministry and healing work of God. With joy, pride and gratitude, we too can say we are ministers of healing within Mercy.

For Discussion

- What brings you the most pride and satisfaction in your work? Individually and as a team?
- Whose work at Mercy is consistently undervalued or unseen? How can you affirm the dignity and value of their work?

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With All Your Brains

"Look at it with all your brains and you will soon make a great improvement." (Catherine McAuley in a letter to Mary Elizabeth Moore)

Catherine wrote the sentence above when considering structural changes to the convent in Limerick Ireland, 120 miles away from the House of Mercy in Dublin. She knew what should be done, but honored the dignity of those who lived there, trusting their wisdom would be sufficient for the task. Catherine was demonstrating the Catholic value of subsidiarity which holds that matters should be decided by those closest to the issue and by the closest central authority.

We can be tempted just to "do it ourselves" for the sake of speed and convenience. While this individualistic attitude is sometimes justified, often we can come to a better and more creative solution by involving the whole community in decision making, especially those closest to the situation.

For Discussion

- When has working on something with a team led to better results than doing it yourself?
- What voices are missing when you/your team makes decisions?

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The Heart of Our Mission

Sometimes the middle of our mission statement, “the healing ministry of Jesus,” gets left behind.

We remember the example of Catherine, the Sisters and the House of Mercy and strive to provide compassionate care and exceptional service. However, our work rests on something firmer than the foundations of Baggot Street. Mercy’s ministry is built on the cornerstone of Jesus who, as fully divine, demonstrated God’s love, healing and preferential option for those who are poor. We call our work a “ministry” and believe that God continues the work of healing through our efforts. As Jesus was, we remain committed to the dignity of every person as created in the image of God and deserving the best care and support we can provide

For Discussion

- What meaning does “bringing to life the healing ministry of Jesus” have for you?
- Is Mercy’s faith based identity important to you? Why?
- How can we balance living our identity with integrity to our heritage as well as including all co-workers, regardless of faith background and religious affiliation?

Justice

We pledge to be in right relationships with one another,
with particular concern for the economically poor





Justice

What is Good is Common to All

Justice is one of Mercy's five values. Mercy believes that in justice, certain things are fundamental goods for all people – food, clothing, shelter and the basics that allow people to live in full dignity should be common to all people. Thus the common good is understood as the conditions that allow people to have the opportunity to reach their full human potential and live with dignity.

Health care is one such good that should be common to all. Health care belongs to each individual person by right of their dignity as created in the image and likeness of God. Because of this, all people in the community should be ensured access.

Caring for the common good challenges our cultural values of individualism and competition. This approach to life requires us to think in terms of “we” and “us” rather than “I” and “me.”

For Discussion

- How would considering the common good change the way we think, speak and behave?

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Justice

Catherine's Commitment

Drawing on the example of Jesus and the commitment of Catherine McAuley, the Sisters of Mercy have a special commitment to serve those who are poor and marginalized. Consider Catherine's words:

"[God] knows I would rather be cold and hungry than the poor in Kingston or elsewhere should be deprived of any consolation in our power to afford."

"My heart felt sorrowful when I thought of those who are poor being deprived of the comfort which God seemed to intend for them. I made every effort and praised be God, all came round."

"There are three things those who are poor prize more highly than gold, tho' they cost the donor nothing; among these are the kind word, the gentle, compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows."

"We can never say 'it is enough.'"

For Discussion

- How do you see Mercy caring for those in need in your community?
- How does your team participate in caring for those in need?
- How does your team participate in caring for those who are considered poor and marginalized?

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Justice

For the Bible Tells Us So

Caring for those who are poor, sick and friendless is core to our Christian – Catholic – Mercy heritage. In the Gospel of Luke, God is compared to a person who prepares a great feast and invites everyone to participate regardless of class or social status.

Jesus spent his ministry caring for those on the fringes of society. The actions of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and caring for those in need are so important they are offered as the basis for the final judgment. *“And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25:40 NRSVCE):*

Catherine’s commitment to the poor flowed from the call and example of Jesus to care for those who are poor. It is why she said, “It is Jesus Christ you love and serve with your whole heart.”

For Discussion

- Catherine’s inspiration to care for those who are poor and tend to the sick came from Jesus’ example. What inspires you to care for those who are sick and in need?

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Justice

For the Least Among Us

The Sisters of Mercy have always been willing to bravely care for those abandoned by others.

Sister Mary Xavier Kinsella and Sister Mary Veronica Fitzpatrick were serving in Springfield, Missouri, when smallpox broke out in the community. Those who were sick were forced out of town at gunpoint to live in racially segregated “pest camps” that lacked sanitation and were patrolled by armed guards. When the two Sisters heard of these conditions, they volunteered to help and spent nine months caring for those who were ill. They cleaned the stinking camps, tended to the sick, buried the dead and walked to a drop area to pick up food. The victims were so grateful for their service that they named their tents “Xavierville” and “Veronicaville” after the two women.

For Discussion

- How do you think it feels to be abandoned by your community?
- Are there people that we “abandon” today?
- What can we do to restore people to a sense of community?

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Justice

Core Values – Justice

Mercy's commitment to justice means we pledge to be in right relationship with one another, with particular concern for those who are economically poor. In Catholic health care we talk about two kinds of justice: relational and distributive.

Catherine McAuley promoted relationships and encouraged the Sisters but she also held them accountable and was gently assertive. This is an example of relational justice. Relational justice helps us live in community and care for one another. Prioritizing relational justice means we are compassionate and loving, but we also hold each other accountable for our actions.

Distributive justice is largely contrary to the way we function in the United States. Distributive justice means that we strive to give each person what they need. It does not mean everyone gets the same. We live out distributive justice in our ministry when all people are cared for regardless of their ability to pay.

For Discussion

- When have you seen or experienced practices of justice at Mercy?
- How do acts of distributive and relational justice impact society?

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Justice

Being "Just" vs. Being "Fair"

Justice and fairness are closely related terms that are often today used interchangeably, but the two words do not mean precisely the same thing. Mercy justice means giving each person what he or she needs at the time. Fairness implies that what people receive (or don't receive) will be equal to what others receive.

For example, if you have one Popsicle and two children, it wouldn't be "fair" to give the Popsicle to one child and make the other child do without. However, if one child was healthy and had just finished a full meal and the other child was sick and could only eat a Popsicle then giving the sole Popsicle to the sick child would be "just."

For Discussion

- What decisions have you encountered at work that were just?
- What decisions have you encountered at work that were fair?
- Which one is easier for you to adhere to and why...justice or fairness?

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Justice

Worse than Sticks and Stones

Being in right relationship is a part of relational justice. It takes work, but it is something we're called to do as Mercy co-workers and it's worth it. When we're in right relationship, we listen attentively, communicate effectively and speak our truth with honesty and in a way that acknowledges the inherent dignity of others.

So much of being in right relationship has to do with our words. Pope Francis reminds us, "Gossip destroys. Speak of differences face-to-face. [The one] who gossips is a terrorist that throws a bomb and destroys," and "At first it may seem like a nice thing, even amusing, like enjoying a candy. But in the end, it fills the heart with bitterness and even poisons us."

For Discussion

- How do you demonstrate being in right relationship with your co-workers and family members?
- How can you be sure your words and conversations are life-giving, honest and respectful of others?

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Justice

With a Sense of Joy

Working for justice and caring for those in need can be thankless and draining work. As an industry, health care has a high rate of burnout connected with empathy fatigue. Co-workers in both clinical and non-clinical areas are susceptible to overload. Catherine and the Sisters of Mercy dealt with this type of fatigue by striving to develop an attitude that embraced a fullness for life.

This element of our charism involves having a sense of joy and vibrancy for life even amidst suffering and trial. Fullness for life isn't false optimism. It takes the long view and trusts that God's plan will prevail in the end in spite of darkness and struggle.

Catherine's fullness for life is seen in the letters she wrote, with their affectionate jokes and plans for silliness even when threats to the ministry loomed. She once wrote: *"We will set up for a week...a Nonsensical Club. I will be president, you vice president and [another] can give lectures as Professor of Folly."*

For Discussion

- What do you do to cope or recharge in the face of obstacles and stress?
- How does having a fullness for life help in our efforts to care for others?

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Justice

As You Have Done to Others

Many organizations value having good relationships among co-workers and with those served. It makes good business sense and ensures that people will come back. Mercy's commitment to being in right relationships among ourselves and those we serve comes from a deeper place.

When asked to name the greatest commandment, Jesus offered his followers a pair of linked rules (*Matthew 22:36-40*). The first is to love God, in heart, soul and mind. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself. While unique, these instructions are two sides of one coin. We cannot claim to love God while we disregard others. The prophet Isaiah commands believers to, "*learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow*" (*Isaiah 1:17*).

By caring for others and committing to being in right relationships with them, we honor their dignity and honor the God who created us all.

For Discussion

- What inspires you to be kind to others?
- When have you noticed someone following the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," at work?

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Justice

Beyond Charity

Distributive justice involved the relationship between the community and the individual and recognizes that it is in the best interest of the community for each individual to have their needs met and be in a position to thrive. Distributive justice is based on the belief that the gifts God gives to one person are meant for the good of all and that there are enough resources to go around as long as we share them well with each other.

Distributive justice holds that the success of a society is based on how many people have what they need, not how many people have more than enough. When in mercy and love we share what we have with others, we are enhancing the common good and ensuring justice for all. Consider the words of Pope Francis, *“The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty.”*

“A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just.”

For Discussion

- When have I been gifted with something I needed, but couldn't get on my own?
- How can we share what we have with those who need it most?

Service

We seek out and put the needs of others first





Service

Action and Prayer: Hand in Hand

What made the Sisters of Mercy different from other groups of women religious of their day was their efforts to combine prayer and action. Today we focus a lot on the active side of Catherine, but it is important to remember just how much she believed in the importance of prayer. On one occasion she quipped, “Prayer will do more than all the money in the Bank of Ireland.” In this spirit, let us pray together for justice and peace. Pray with me,

God, make us peacemakers and agents of justice. In moments of hurry, let us be patient. In moments of anger, let us be calm. In moments of, noise let us be quiet. Give us courage to be a voice for the voiceless and advocates for those who are alone. Open our eyes and hearts to the needs of those around us and animate our hands and feet to work for change. Amen.

For Discussion

- What is your prayer today as you go about your work?
- Who inspires your action in the ministry?
What inspires you to serve?

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Service

Without Thanks

Sometimes the Sisters of Mercy served people who didn't appreciate them or passed judgment on them because they were Catholic. In San Francisco during the time of the Gold Rush, the Sisters of Mercy were surrounded by violence, illness and prejudice. Yet they remained welcoming, accepting and gracious as they lived out their call. Eventually they won the pioneers and miners over with their nursing experience and willingness to care for those neglected by the rough and tumble frontier society. No matter how limited their resources, they stretched themselves to serve the suffering. One Sister, Mary Baptist Russell, even gave away her mattress to a family in need.

It is painful when our service and efforts aren't appreciated, but Catherine reminds us, "It is for God we serve those who are poor and not for thanks." Each thing we do, noticed or unnoticed, does make a difference.

For Discussion

- Whose efforts are often unrecognized in our team or area?
- What gives you inspiration to keep serving, if not for thanks and recognition?

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Many Hands; One Mission

Every day the work of Mercy is done by many hands and in many ways. Each opportunity to serve is also an invitation to remember that the work of each co-worker is ministry and is necessary for us to fulfill our mission.

Let us dedicate our hands in prayer this morning. Please extend your hands, palms up in front of you. After each phrase, repeat with me:

Bless our hands.

Blessed be these hands that have touched life, felt pain, been compassion to those in need...

Blessed be these hands that clean rooms, administer medicines and deliver food...

Blessed be these hands that type memos, sign forms and answer phones...

Blessed be these hands that bring comfort to a troubled co-worker, or clap in celebration...

Blessed be these hands that reach out in the spirit of Catherine McAuley...

Blessed be these hands that carry on the healing ministry of Jesus...

Blessed be our hands, O God, for they are the work of Your hands.

Amen.

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Generous Service to One Another

Service isn't just for our patients. The Sisters took care of one another, as well as those who were in need. When we serve each other generously we create connections, build up relationships and promote a positive Mercy culture. Consider trying one of these ways to serve generously:

- Seeking out and putting the needs of other co-workers first
- Asking, "What else can I do for you?"
- Freely sharing ideas, information, resources and time
- Taking a "we" instead of "me" attitude
- Celebrating the success of others

For Discussion

- How does it feel to freely help others?
- How does your team already serve and support one another?
- What other department could really use our support right now?

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Serving According to Needs

The Sisters of Mercy have always paid attention to the needs of others when creating their ministries. Consider the story of Sister Teresa Dolan and Sister Mary Bonaventure Fox. In 1885 the two were on their way from Michigan to Los Angeles when they stopped for a night in Fort Scott, Kansas. While there, they attended Mass where the charismatic Rev. Francis J. Watron impressed the Sisters with tales of the fine weather in Kansas, even better than Southern California, or so he said. However, it was the parish's desperate need for a school to educate the pioneer children that spoke to the Sisters. Ever ready to meet needs, they returned to Michigan and requested permission to serve the needs of the pioneers in Fort Scott. But, when they got back to Kansas, Rev. Watron surprised the Sisters with a 12-bed hospital rather than a schoolhouse! Knowing that meeting the needs of the people was all that mattered, they set about readying the hospital for patients.

For Discussion

- When have you seen someone go out of their way to meet unexpected needs?
- How do you notice God in the midst of changing plans?

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Let Go and Let God

Suscipe (pronounced sue-she-pay) is the Latin word for “receive.” A suscipe prayer is a specific type of prayer which asks God to receive us and our offerings in return for God’s peace. Today we might say, “Let go and let God.” Catherine McAuley’s suscipe is also known as the Act of Resignation. This prayer allowed Catherine to serve, trusting she was doing God’s will and trusting God would provide for the ministry.

Center yourself in God’s presence and pray Catherine’s prayer with me:

“My God, I am yours for time and eternity. Teach me to cast myself entirely into the arms of your loving Providence with a lively, unlimited confidence in your compassionate, tender pity. Grant, O most merciful Redeemer, that whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me. Take from my heart all painful anxiety; let nothing sadden me but sin, nothing to delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of You my God and my all, in your everlasting kingdom. Amen.”

For Discussion

- What is a favorite prayer, mantra, saying, or quote that helps you throughout the day?
- What stands out to you from Catherine’s suscipe?
- What gives you spiritual strength to serve?

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Service Today, Not Tomorrow

Our charism is rooted in the life of Jesus and the example of Catherine. Her identity informs how we live our values. This example demonstrates a bias for action in service based on the dignity of others.

A servant girl approached Catherine and confided she was being sexually harassed in the house where she worked. The vulnerable young woman didn't know how she would continue to evade the advances and begged Catherine to help. The House of Mercy on Baggot Street hadn't been established yet, so Catherine asked a Dublin organization to shelter the girl out of harm's way until a new job could be found. The organization told Catherine the request had to wait for approval until the next regular board meeting. Before the meeting, the girl disappeared never to be seen again. Catherine was beside herself with distress. This incident may have prompted her often repeated phrase, "The poor need help today, not next week."

For Discussion

- When was a time you were moved to action, what was the need and what did you do?
- What keeps us from assisting those in need, and what can be done about those barriers?

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Mercy in a Crisis

Mother Mary Frances Sullivan is a wonderful example of serving with an entrepreneurial spirit and bias for action on the frontier of Joplin, Missouri. Though it was a mining town and miners were often hurt on the job, the closest hospital facilities were sixty miles away. Disturbed by the lack of services and access, Mother Mary Francis resolved to bring health care to Joplin. According to legend, she marched into the town's richest casino and boldly demanded the owner give her a building for the hospital. A less dramatic account credits a wealthy mine operator with offering the building for free. Either way, the 10-bed Mercy Hospital opened in 1896 and provided much needed health care services. Always creative and a good steward, Mother Mary Frances offered medical plans to the community. For 25 cents a week miners received a card and unlimited access to the Sisters' medical services.

For Discussion

- Where have you witnessed creativity in caring for those most in need?
- When have you been a bold advocate for someone else? How did that make you feel?

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Core Value - Service

Service means that we respond with compassion to the needs of others. The story of the Last Supper in the Gospel of John shows Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. He then instructs them to do as he has done and wash the feet of others. Placing this in the context of the Last Supper shows that God is present when we are serving one another. Catherine McAuley led a life of service and valued service so much that the Sisters of Mercy have a fourth vow of service. Service is a hallmark of the Sisters of Mercy and their ministry.

We live out service when we:

- Focus on the person before us, respond to their concerns and anticipate their needs
- Pay attention to every interaction and know that little things count
- Create policies with people in mind
- Work as a team
- Provide charity care and advocate for those unable to pay for services

For Discussion

- What do you enjoy most about serving?
- What has been your best experience of serving as a co-worker or volunteer?

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Hospitable Service

Mercy service is unique because it is offered through our Mercy charism, particularly the element of hospitality. Hospitable service ensures those around us feel welcome, safe and unafraid. Nonverbal cues are important ways we communicate welcome and hospitality. Looking up and smiling at others in hallways, instead of walking with your head down, creates an air of friendliness and warmth. Nodding when someone is talking and avoiding fidgeting assures others we are actively listening.

Deeper expressions of hospitality involve welcoming others into our hearts – even those who are not easy to love. Those who were poor and sick, dirty and considered outcasts were all warmly welcomed in Jesus' company and with the Sisters of Mercy. It should be the same with us.

For Discussion

- Who makes you feel most welcome at Mercy?
- What is special about a Mercy welcome?
- How can you offer a welcome to people you encounter every day?

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Service

*Snug as a Bug in a Rug – Meeting Needs,
Offering Comfort*

Before opening the House of Mercy on Baggot Street, Catherine McAuley managed the home of her adoptive parents, William and Catherine Callaghan. One frequent visitor often lingered on the porch steps. She wanted to enjoy the view of the country house and continue the conversation. Noticing the woman's thin shoes and worried that she would catch cold, Catherine called for a thick rug to be placed on the porch to keep the woman's feet warm. This type of anticipatory service marks us and sets us apart as Mercy.

The Sisters of Mercy believe serving others is a privilege, and each Sister vows to commit her life to serving those in need. Sometimes people ask for what they need. Other times they respond when we ask "What else can I do for you?" But sometimes a person doesn't even know what they need. In these moments Mercy service shines.

Mercy service anticipates the unmet and unacknowledged needs of others.

For Discussion

- When has someone met a need you didn't know you had or hadn't asked for? How did it make you feel?
- What unmet needs do you see among your co-workers or those you serve? What can you do to meet these needs?

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Service

Get Off Your Donkey!

Many people know the story of the Good Samaritan from the Gospel of Luke. In this story, a traveler is attacked by robbers who leave him for dead by the side of the road. Two different people come along and, seeing the man, cross to the other side and keep going. A third person comes along and does something entirely different. The Bible says the traveler was first moved with pity. Then he approached the wounded man and treated his wounds with oil and wine and bandages. Finally, the Good Samaritan put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn, where the wounded man received care.

Truly helping someone requires us to seek out the needs of others and act accordingly. In this story, the only one who sought out the needs of others was the one who got off his donkey to help the man who had been left for dead.

For Discussion

- How do we “get off our donkey” to help others?
- Why do we tend to pass by some people without seeing them or helping them?
- When have you been “moved with pity” and helped another person?

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Core Value—Excellence

Excellence in our culture means that we strive to attain high standards of performance and proficiency. God has blessed each person with gifts. We are called to use those gifts to the absolute best of our ability. Through the sharing of our gifts, the love of God is made known to our co-workers and our patients.

Oftentimes excellence requires us to think creatively and innovatively. We live out excellence in our work when we:

- Strive to provide exceptional patient care
- Combine innovative technology with high-touch care
- Empower co-workers to achieve excellence
- Focus on teamwork to develop best practices
- Measure quality outcomes

For Discussion

- When are you in your “excellent zone?”

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Who We Are Together Is Who We Are

Catherine McAuley believed that unity is of primary importance to the success of Mercy.

She explained it in this way:

“The blessing of unity still dwells amongst us and oh, what a blessing. It should make all things else pass into nothing. All laugh and play together, not one cold stiff soul appears. This is the true spirit of Mercy.”

Excellence in Mercy means we are only as good as how we are together as a team. Our Mercy value of excellence must be expressed through the charism element of right relationships. If we finish projects on time, provide excellent patient care, or receive accolades and awards BUT do it at the expense of our team or the dignity of others, our achievements aren't in the true spirit of Mercy.

For Discussion

- How does your team keep a unified spirit?
- What do right relationships look like to you?
- When have you achieved excellence with the help of your team?

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Going Above and Beyond, Literally!

Mercy's value of excellence means going above and beyond for others. It is offering our best to all those with whom we come into contact. We believe that even in the most difficult situations, solutions can be found! Consider the group of friends in Scripture who were seeking healing for a paralyzed man. When they couldn't get through the front door to see Jesus they lowered him in through the roof. This unconventional but highly effective plan worked for the good and the man was healed. (Mark 2:1-12)

Like these committed believers and friends, Mercy co-workers are empowered to think creatively and find innovative solutions. Like the group in Scripture, Mercy co-workers work together going above and beyond requirements to serve others. They offer the best care and healing possible while also creating a wonderful place in which to work.

For Discussion

- What examples of Mercy excellence have you seen recently?
- What inspires you to work for excellence in your area?

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Extraordinary is Our Ordinary

Catherine McAuley believed that serving others, particularly those who are poor, was a “privilege and an opportunity.” She always showed the utmost concern towards each individual she encountered because of the person’s dignity as made in the image of God. She embraced performing ordinary functions in an excellent and extraordinary manner as part of living out Christ’s love.

Sometimes we can get caught up in our daily work or stuck in a rut with routine duties, we can lose sight of whom we are serving and why. This can make us short with our co-workers, impatient with those we serve and feeling drained and empty. By refocusing on the heart of our service – caring for others and showing God’s love and mercy – we can get back on track.

For Discussion

- When you catch yourself not performing your best or not treating others with dignity how do you get back on track?
- How do we remind ourselves to embrace the extraordinary in our daily work by showing empathy, care and concern in our interactions?

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What Is a Charism?

In Christian theology, a charism (pronounced 'care-ism') is a gift of grace freely given by God for the good of others. Charism is always focused externally, enabling the bearer of that gift to share God's love with others in special and unique ways.

Mercy's charism impacts the way we do things. The five elements of our charism grow out of our Mercy tradition. They reflect the qualities of Jesus that Catherine and the early Sisters exemplified in their life. They also explain how we provide excellent service and work for justice. The five elements of our one charism are:

Bias for Action
Entrepreneurial
Hospitality
Right Relationships
Fullness for Life

For Discussion

- What God given graces define you?
- Which elements of Mercy's charism most resonate with your personality?

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A Tradition of Excellence

Commitment to excellence is nothing new for the Sisters of Mercy. When beginning new foundations across Ireland and England, Catherine sent out the most capable and brightest Sisters, which often meant separating herself from dear friends. Firmly believing that the poor children who came to her school should receive a top notch education, Catherine traveled to France to observe the best teaching methods for implementation with the students on Baggot Street.

Our commitment to excellence is rooted in our belief in the dignity of each person. Each person has equal dignity in the eyes of God and therefore deserves the same level of respect and care.

For Discussion

- What inspires you to achieve excellence?
- When have you seen someone go above and beyond what is required in the name of excellent care or service?

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Beyond Our Limits

Marked by dedication to creativity and innovation, even in the most difficult situations Mercy co-workers find solutions.

The Gospel of Luke tells a story about a man named Zacchaeus who was interested in seeing Jesus as he was passing through town. When the time came, Zacchaeus who was very short couldn't get close enough to see Jesus. Undaunted by his limits, Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree. As he was passing under the tree, Jesus saw Zacchaeus, greeted him and invited himself to Zacchaeus' house.

In relentlessly pursuing his goal, Zacchaeus achieved more than he hoped for. Mercy co-workers are much like Zacchaeus. When faced with a problem they think creatively to find an innovative solution that will bring us closer to our goal. When we offer our best and trust God will work with us, we can achieve more than we hope for.

For Discussion

- What obstacles have you faced lately? How did you creatively surmount them?
- Who encourages you to be excellent?

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Light, Salt, and You!

Each co-worker has a unique combination of natural talents and skills they have developed over a lifetime. God has given each of us these gifts to use and refine in order to build up the world around us. Jesus reminds us in Scripture,

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” Matthew 5:14-15 [NABRE]

Letting your light shine at Mercy means using your gifts, talents and skills to serve those around you and build up the ministry.

For Discussion

- What gifts and talents do you have (maybe those others don't know about)?
- What gifts and talents do you see in your team?

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Fullness for Life

Sometimes giving the best for the people and things entrusted to our care can be exhausting and frustrating, making it difficult to maintain balance. Engaging fullness for life in these moments helps provide balance and perspective. Fullness for life is an element of our charisma that means having a sense of joy and love of life, even during suffering and when things are difficult.

As with all elements of the charisma, fullness for life informs how we are to live our values. Fullness for life helps sustain our commitment to excellence by enabling us to engage fully in the challenging tasks, to seek joy in each other and to see beyond the moment. This perspective saves us from undue anxiety. Catherine knew this well. She told the Sisters to “dance every evening” regardless of all the day had brought.

For Discussion

- When has an attitude of joy and vibrancy gotten you through a difficult time?
- How might you live a fullness for life as you strive for excellence?

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One Day at a Time

Achieving excellence and perfection are perpetual goals and moving targets. Trying to make every change necessary at once can be daunting and debilitating. Catherine knew it was the work of a lifetime – best taken one step at a time. Consider her advice on the matter:

“Each day should bring us nearer to that perfection to which we are bound to aspire.”

“Should we live to be a hundred; each day should be more perfect.”

“The more experience we acquire, the more capable we become of discerning deficiency and making some improvement.”

For Discussion

- What are your strongest skills and talents? How are you already excellent?
- In what areas do you hope to grow and develop professionally and personally?

Stewardship

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Stewardship

The Legacy of Mercy

Sr. Judith Marie Keith said to co-workers,
“Mercy is alive in you.”

When the Sisters of Mercy passed on the ministry to us as Mercy co-workers, they entrusted us with their life’s work and asked us to care for it as our own, being good stewards of the legacy they left. Mercy stewardship includes using our time, talents and treasure (resources) wisely to strengthen Mercy, which is a ministry of the Church. Responsible stewardship keeps the ministry healthy to ensure it will continue in the future. Every role within Mercy requires us to be good stewards.

Together we’re all responsible for the legacy of care which has been entrusted to us.

For Discussion

- What does the term “stewardship” mean to you?
- How do you live out stewardship within your role?
- How do you see stewardship lived out within your department? Within Mercy?
- What can your team do to exercise the value of stewardship on a regular basis?

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All of Us, Together

Our vision statement begins; *“We are the people of Mercy Health Ministry.”* Mercy Health Ministry is more than the Sisters, more than doctors, administrators, or front line co-workers. Our ministry is the sum of all of us working together. Mercy Health Ministry is the fruit of the nearly 200-year old tradition of the Sisters of Mercy and depends on the efforts of every co-worker throughout our ministry. If we are to remain real and relevant to the mission before us and achieve our vision of the future of health care it will be because we did it together.

“A turning point for me was a sense of being a part of something that is greater than myself.” Sr. Richard Mary Burke

For Discussion

- When do you feel most a part of the ministry of Mercy?

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Stewardship

Self-Care and Stewardship

Stewardship is about co-worker talent as well as financial resources. Each Mercy co-worker is the hands, feet and voice of Jesus' healing ministry in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy. Because hands, feet and voices can all tire, an essential part of good stewardship of our personal gifts involves self-care.

It can seem selfish to think of ourselves when there is so much to do. However, running ourselves ragged in the service of others can lead to sickness and burnout which will keep us from helping anyone. Taking care of ourselves involves our bodies, spirits and minds. Good stewardship requires us to make time to regularly recharge our batteries. Even Jesus took time to take care of himself: *"The report about him spread all the more and great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments, but he would withdraw to deserted places to pray."* (Luke 5:15-16 NABRE)

For Discussion

- How do you take care of yourself and rejuvenate your spirit?
- How do you take care of each other?

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Stewardship

Co-worker Talent - Mercy's Greatest Treasure

Being good stewards requires the wise use of co-worker time and talent as well as attention to the financial health of the ministry.

Just as each Sister of Mercy is essential to the community, each co-worker is essential to Mercy. Within our individual roles, we are called to steward our time, talent and resources wisely. When a leader sees and utilizes co-worker talents for the good of the ministry, stewardship is happening. When co-workers provide Mercy Signature Service and embody the Mercy attributes (vibrant, easy, personal, comprehensive, professional), they are sustaining the mission and identity of Mercy. With each person doing their part, together we can be sure Mercy will exist far into the future.

For Discussion

- When you hear the term “stewardship,” what does it mean to you?
- Where do you see the value of stewardship lived out within your role? Within your department? Within Mercy?

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Mission and Margin

Mercy's commitment to ministry and good business can be confusing. Mercy is a health ministry that operates as a faith-based business. It is tempting to separate our mission from the business margin we must maintain to advance the ministry. However, if we separate them or focus too much on the tensions between them, we are missing the point. Our true focus should be on the relationship between margin and mission and the ways in which we participate in the healing ministry of Jesus.

The relationship between margin and mission is much like a marriage; you don't focus too much on one spouse or the other, but the focus is on the relationship and the good that it produces.

We're all responsible for the thriving of Mercy, which is both an institution subject to the market demands of today and a centuries old ministry that strives to bring the healing ministry of the Gospels to those in need.

For Discussion

- How do we navigate the relationship between mission and margin?

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Care for Creation

Care for creation is an issue dear to the Sisters. Many Mercy hospitals and clinics have adopted “green” initiatives to help reduce our carbon footprint. Being good stewards means using our money and utilizing the talents and skills of our co-workers wisely plus being conscious of our environmental impact.

“There are many simple practices that we can all adopt in our busy lifestyles. Among my favorites are using cloth bags for grocery shopping, seeking opportunities to carpool and/or walk rather than drive and turning off lights and other electrical appliances when leaving a room. Rather than pour leftover drinking water down the drain, we save it for watering house plants.” Sister Mary Agnes Brueggen, RSM

“We need to rethink stewardship so that it also includes taking care of ourselves and taking care of the Earth.” Sister Cabrini Koelsch, RSM

For Discussion

- What comes to mind when you think of the word “resources?”
- How are we good stewards of our resources? In Mercy?
In the community?

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Cows and Apples and Bias for Action

One of the elements of Mercy's charism is having a bias for action, which means getting things done without hesitation when we see a need. Once we identify what needs to be done, we're swift in bringing it to fruition. We embrace and embody a "go fast" attitude. This attitude often enables us to take advantage of unique opportunities.

This bias for action helped establish two of our Mercy hospitals in their current locations. Sensitive to population shifts, Sister Mary Dominic Lynch bought an apple orchard in St. Louis County and Sister Mary Coletta Massoth purchased a cow pasture outside of Oklahoma City. The Sisters were not going into farming. They had the foresight to see that the needs were going to move with the people. The apple orchard became Mercy Hospital St. Louis and the cow pasture is now Mercy Hospital Oklahoma City.

For Discussion

- How do you see Mercy serving with a bias for action today?
- When have you had to move quickly on a decision or risk missing out?

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The Pioneering Spirit of Stewardship

In 1856, Mother Mary Magdalen dePazzi Bentley led six courageous Sisters into the rough and tumble world of the western frontier, founding the Sisters of Mercy in St. Louis. Responding to the needs of the community, they first opened a free school for girls. In 1871, needs changed and the school was transformed into a 25-bed hospital for women and children, known as St. John's Hospital. Mother dePazzi's innovative spirit of service led her to meet the needs of the day. She organized the first prepaid health insurance in the country through an agreement with United Railways Company, and she also solidified St. John's role in the education of nurses and medical students. When she resigned in 1909, she was able to report the Sisters of Mercy were debt-free due to good stewardship. Then Archbishop Glennon replied, "Ah, yes, Venerable Mother, there is one debt, a debt of gratitude."

For Discussion

- In whom do you see a pioneering spirit like Mother dePazzi's today?
- Is there someone you know who would benefit from an expression of gratitude?
- What are some ways we could be even more generous to those around us?

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Mercy Tradition

The mission, values, charism and history of Mercy make up a rich tradition. Each co-worker, leader and physician within our ministry has been welcomed into the community of Mercy. We are now responsible for sustaining the identity and integrity of the ministry entrusted to us by Jesus and the Sisters of Mercy.

Catherine McAuley involved many people in the first House of Mercy. From the young women who came to live on Baggot Street and help teach, to the wealthy who donated their funds, to the priests and other religious men and women who stood behind Catherine's work, the circle of Mercy has always been inclusive and expansive.

Sr. Chabanel Finnegan said, "Co-workers are an integral part of continuing the mission and ministry of Mercy."

For Discussion

- What do you appreciate most about the Mercy tradition?
- Who most exemplifies the Mercy tradition on your team?

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Stewardship

Mercy's Mission Statement - Understanding It Piece by Piece

As the Sisters of Mercy before us - The mission, beliefs and commitments of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters have been carried forward over centuries. Today, the Sisters trust us to steward the health ministry into the future.

We - We're a community of individuals participating in one ministry regardless of our task. Our shared values and united efforts make the difference for those we serve.

We bring to life the healing ministry of Jesus - Jesus healed to bring God's love and presence to his people. We call our work a ministry because we believe God continues the work of healing through us.

Through our compassionate care and exceptional service - We serve as Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy did, in the name of Jesus. We believe each person is created in the image of God and deserving of the best care and support we can provide.

For Discussion

- What images come to mind for the different parts of our mission statement?
- Which lines from the mission statement most resonate with you?