

Mercy Charism

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panies questioning drug dumping and the sale of infant formula in third world countries is another tactic of this group.

Sister Noreen feels that continued pressure upon these corporations does bring issues to their attention, and that they have changed policies as a result. Because so many of the issues deal with respect and reverence for the person anywhere in the world, the sisters' involvement is crucial and very much in line with the spirit of mercy and of the foundress whose followers were ministering in England, the U.S. and Australia within a few short years of their humble beginnings in Dublin.

"Though many people do not look favorably upon criticism of big companies, we cannot ignore injustice that is done through their presence in third world countries," says Sister Noreen, "and that is part of our mission of mercy today."

Mercy Sisters also support Network, a sisters' group which lobbies for social justice issues in Congress, and the congregation sets aside a special fund to respond to social needs such as Bread for the World, Center for Concern, GEM Judicial Process Commission, Women's Ordination Conference, Religious Task Force on El Salvador and sponsorship of Laotian and Cambodian families in the U.S.

Sister Janet Korn, who recently returned after 16 years as a missionary in Chile, sees the sisters' ministry there very much in keeping with the goals of the gospel and of the intrepid Irishwoman who took seriously the call to mercy:

"Catherine McAuley served in Ireland which was (and is still) torn politically into factions of a repressive society. She was most anxious to send her sisters to those exiled from Ireland for political reasons." Sister Janet describes the ministry in Chile also as working in a repressive society, helping the unemployed and families of political prisoners, and the "reverse mission" of working with exiled Chileans, Cambodians and Laotians in the U.S.

Catherine helped the people of her day realize their dignity and worth: in Chile the sisters encourage people to be initiators of their own liberation and future. The missionaries do not see themselves as "saviours," but rather as the enriched, touched by the "gospel come alive" in people for whom the washing of the feet and the widow's mite are daily realities.

In developing local leadership, the sisters try to foster the Christian message of changing and bettering



Mercy Sisters Noreen Graney, Janet Korn, Kathleen Milliken, Doris Gottemoeller and Michael Lapettito.

one's own society, through youth groups and catechetical programs with adults, both sacramental and social.

"The Church that ministers to the whole person and their whole reality is very similar to the style of Catherine McAuley who reached out wholly to meet people's needs. In Chile we work to enable people to supply their own needs, to help themselves. Community helps community," Sister Janet reflects.

Hope for the future in Chile is hope in the people themselves, in the poor-becoming aware of their own lives and in doing what they can in a non-violent way; our mission today is a question of justice, not just charity, and of promoting justice on an international scale.

The world was not as broad in Catherine's day, but the issues of justice were the same, in Sister Janet's opinion. As the Sisters of Mercy of Rochester accept their first novice in Chile, they walk with the people they serve, very much in the pattern of their foundress who accepted aspirants with each new foundation.

Put very succinctly in Sister Janet's words, "We are now a global community."

Concern for women has always been a priority of Sisters of Mercy since the earliest days. When they came to Rochester in 1857, they opened a "House of Mercy" with room and board for women in an unused section of the convent at Old Saint Mary's on South Street.

Throughout the years they have provided quality education for young women at St. Mary's Business School and Our Lady of Mercy High School in Rochester, as well as in many elementary school in the diocese. They have also served for many years at St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell.

With education of the sisters a primary goal, many have been prepared to move into other areas of service, such as pastoral, campus, jail and social work ministries where they witness to the quality and richness of the

presence of women.

In recent years, the sisters have been the initiators of two Catholic worker homes for women in Rochester: Bethany House for battered women and children, and Melita House for unwed mothers.

They have been involved, too, in raising awareness of women's role in the Church and in society through the Rochester Regional Task Force on Women in the Church and in the group giving input to the bishop for his pastoral letter on women in the Church, "Fire in the Thornbush."

Nuclear disarmament is another vital issue in which the Rochester Sisters of Mercy have become deeply involved. In their Congregational Resolution on Disarmament early in 1982, they asked political, economic and military leaders in the U.S. and throughout the world to make peace and disarmament their priority, offering alternatives to the growing defense buildup.

The sisters corporately pledged to pray daily the World Prayer for Peace, to fast on Monday of each week and to do all that they can to promote peace and disarmament by bearing public witness to the gospel of peace in their lives and ministry.

Many Sisters of Mercy are participating in the Sisters' Peace March in Washington on May 30. When asked how she felt these efforts were consonant with the Mercy foundress' vision, Sister Patricia Bearisto, novice, replied, "I think of Catherine McAuley as responding to the needs of her time; nuclear disarmament is certainly the greatest need of our time, and we have no choice but to respond with the gospel message as we see it."

The global dimension of mercy is very real to Rochester Sister Michael Lapettito, executive director of the Federation of Sisters of Mercy of the Americas. Speaking of the mission spirit of Catherine McAuley, the sending forth to respond to needs and moving ahead to meet them, Sister Michael reflected on the theme of the fourth Latin American Conference of the Sisters of Mercy held in Argentina in February: Mercy's option for the poor, and helping to

identify, reclaim and to support this charism:

"I realized the global meaning of mercy when I saw for the first time a Chinese Sister of Mercy with black and Hispanic Sisters of Mercy. I really felt what it means to be merciful, to give and to receive."

Sister Doris Gottemoeller of Cincinnati, past president of the Federation of Sisters of Mercy and a recent visitor to Rochester, shares the vision of the first international gathering of Sisters of Mercy, Trocaille (Mercy) '81, in Ireland last July, to give thanks for 150 years and to chart a common direction for the future:

"It's all summed up in Catherine McAuley's words which became our slogan for the conference: 'God can bend and change, form and reform us to do His holy Will.'"

Both Sisters Michael and Doris see a movement toward even more bonding of Sisters of Mercy together in the convergence of vision and project: increased commitment to women throughout the world, the publication of an international newsletter, and the significance of the new core constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy of the U.S., Ireland, and Australia.

They see Sisters of Mercy moving into the future with greater dynamism for mission and energy, with the "unity in diversity" of the past keeping balance between local autonomy and universal goals.

"Future horizons will be much broader and less provincial," Sister Michael observes. "There will be different styles of leadership and creativity, breadth of interests and more capacity for individuals to develop gifts as we draw more closely together."

She believes that as the period of "refounding" develops, a "new set of miseries" may well arise, in the sisters addressing themselves not only to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, but to the basic causes of society's ills: "If we take seriously what it means to stand with the poor, we will incur the wrath of some of our friends and will really be thrown on our own resources."

As they reflect on the past 125 years in Rochester, the Sisters of Mercy look forward to the 21st century, to the challenge of bringing mercy to people yet unborn, to meeting needs not yet imagined.

They accept this challenge with joy and trust in the legacy of Catherine McAuley, and of the One who has promised us "His mercy is from generation to generation."

Hornellians Attend CDA Convention

Hornell — Six members of Court St. Ann Catholic Daughters of America attended the state CDA convention April 26-30 at Swan Lake.

First place awards were won for Mass vestments and altar cloths submitted in competition at the convention. The vestments included a set for the con-

celebrated ordination Mass of Father Dennis Bon Signore, now serving at St. Ambrose, Rochester; a set for the dedication of St. Paul's Church, Annville, Pa., and a set for the ordination of Father Joseph Catanise at Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira.

Daisy Sherman of Hornell also received a certificate of

appreciation in recognition of her work as a district deputy.

More than 500 CDA members from across the state attended the convention. Representing Court St. Ann were Dolores Anndrus, regent; Dorothy Sagan, first vice regent; Margaret Haley, Daisy Sherman, Betty McKinley and Josephine FitzGerald.

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