

*Note: When using the script with the power-point, the red indicates when you need to click to next slide.*

## The Global Citizen

Allow me, first and foremost, to express my deepest gratitude to all of you for giving up your time to come and take part in this conference. Your presence here is of great significance because we each bring different perspectives in our common pursuit of educating the young in the tradition of Mercy, encouraging them to become global citizens and agents of change in a world so much in need of a compassionate way of being.

My presentation is in four (4) parts:

1. Mercy as the Sympathy of God
2. Where it all began
3. The call of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
4. Educating the Global Citizen - How might we do this?

### 1. Mercy as the Sympathy of God

We teachers who "Touch the Future" have been called from the limitless bounds of eternity to be teachers of and for the future. Mary Sullivan RSM claims that we who are Mercy Educators are called to be the recipients and instruments **of the Mercy of God.**

**"Catherine claimed this Mercy as the principal path that God has laid out for us to follow in this world and that the Spiritual and Corporate works of Mercy laid out by Jesus in Matthew 25 constitute the *very business of our lives.*"**

And it is not just *what* we do in carrying out the works of Mercy that is important, but the *manner* in which we accomplish it. This “how” Mary Sullivan calls “mercifulness”, which she defines as a set of qualities and actions that should characterize persons and institutions bearing the name Mercy. These qualities and actions include:

- Forgiveness
- Gentleness
- Sensitivity
- Empathy toward distress
- Charity of mind and heart
- Sympathy
- Self-sacrifice for the sake of another's need
- Loving kindness
- Humility

And she sums this list up as “all the ways the love of God expresses itself for our sake”. This manner of thinking and acting should be evident at all levels of the institution - in the atmosphere and tenor of the campus, in the willingness to listen and experience the other side of situations, in mutual relationships, in the language that is used, in the look in the eyes, in the presence of compassion.”

In the light of Sullivan's description of the characteristics of a Mercy Institution, I present this paper entitled: *Educating the Global Citizen*.

I will begin with a story for reflection.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*, in his book *Wind, Sand and Stars (Terre des Hommes)* is on a train journey before the start of the Second World War. The first-class carriages were empty, while the third-class

carriages were crowded with Polish workmen being sent home from France:

"Looking at them I said to myself that they had lost half of their human quality. These people had been knocked about from one end of Europe to the other by economic currents...

A baby lay at the breast of a mother so weary that she seemed asleep. Life was being transmitted in the shabbiness and the disorder of this journey. I looked at the father. A powerful skull as naked as a stone. A body hunched over in uncomfortable sleep, imprisoned in working clothes, all humps and hollows. The man looked like a lump of clay, like one of those sluggish and shapeless derelicts that crumple into sleep in our public markets.

And I thought: The problem does not reside in this poverty, in this filth, in this ugliness. But this same man and this same woman met one day. This man must have smiled at this woman. He may, after his work was done, have brought her flowers. Timid and awkward, perhaps he trembled lest she disdain him. And this woman, out of natural coquetry, this woman sure of her charms, perhaps took pleasure in teasing him. And this man, this man who is now no more than a machine for swinging a pick or a sledgehammer, must have felt in his heart a delightful anguish. The mystery is that they should have become these lumps of clay. Into what terrible mould were they forced? What is it that corrupts this wonderful clay of which the human is kneaded?

I sat down face to face with the couple. Between the man and the woman a child had hollowed himself out a place and fallen asleep. He turned in his slumber, and in the dim lamplight I saw his face. What an adorable

**face!** A golden fruit had been born of these two peasants... a miracle of delight and grace.

I bent over the smooth brow, over those mildly pouting lips, and I said to myself: This is a musician's face. This is the child Mozart. **This is a life full of beautiful promise.** Little princes in legends are not different from this, protected, sheltered, cultivated, what could this child become?

When by mutation a new rose is born in a garden, all the gardeners rejoice. They isolate the rose, tend it, foster it. **But there is no gardener for humanity.** This little Mozart will be shaped like the rest by the common stamping machine. This little Mozart will love shoddy music in the stench of night dives. This little Mozart is condemned. I went back to the sleeping car. I said to myself: Their fate causes these people no suffering. It is not an impulse to charity that has upset me like this. I am not weeping over an eternally open wound. Those who carry the wound do not feel it. **It is the human race and not the individual that is wounded here, is outraged here. I do not believe in pity. What torments me tonight is the gardener's point of view.** What torments is not this poverty to which after all a man can accustom himself as easily as sloth ... What torments me is not the humps nor the hollows, nor the ugliness. It is the sight, a little bit in all these people of Mozart murdered. **What torments me tonight is the sight of little Mozart..."<sup>1</sup>** and I am sure that Antoine de Saint-Exupéry would not mind my adding this thought to his story:

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<sup>1</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Wind, Sand and Stars*, Cutchogue, NY: Buccaneer Books, 1992, pp. 226-229.

- **What might happen if the little Mozart in the story were to encounter the best of Mercy Education?**
- **Would we, could we, make a difference to this child's life and future?**
- **Are we perhaps being called to be gardeners of the human soul as we prepare the young to nurture the divine within themselves, to act conscious of embodying that divine presence for others, and recognizing it in the other - in all others - irrespective of class, colour or religion?**

This conference comes at a time of rising intolerance and growing cross-cultural tensions. Events of recent years - from global terrorism and the means used to fight it, to offending words or publications - have recently accelerated these trends. **Today, we find ourselves living in the global village where there is a widening gulf between communities and nations.** If unaddressed, this gulf has the potential to destabilize our very fragile world.

Recently, the **Secretary-General of the United Nations**, addressing the delegates at the Informal Thematic Debate on ***Civilizations and the Challenges for Peace*** remarked:

**"In our age of satellite television and jet travel, distances have collapsed but divisions have not.** Instead, our proximity has heightened longstanding suspicions of - "the other" - the other religion, the other ethnicity, the other nationality. It has led increasing numbers of people to reject diversity in favour of the familiar.

**In response, we need to reassert the truth that diversity is a virtue, not a threat.** Indeed, it is the very essence of the human condition, and a driver of human progress.

The formal education system can play a crucial role in promoting this perspective. It can shape people's views and influence their actions. It can educate and inform and demystify. It can promote the message that what unites humanity is much stronger than what superficially separates us.<sup>2</sup>

We, who are educators, are people deputed by the rest of the world to explain to the young what sort of world they are living in, and to defend, if possible, the part their elders are playing in it.

Institutions in the Mercy tradition are embodiments of human endeavour that try to make a difference. As such, they are in need of continuous consideration and change to address the needs and signs of the times. Our Mercy students today live and operate in a world where the qualities of Mercy as outlined by Sullivan:

- **Forgiveness**
- **Gentleness**
- **Sensitivity**
- **Empathy toward distress**
- **Charity of mind and heart**
- **Sympathy**
- **Self-sacrifice for the sake of another's need**
- **Loving kindness**
- **Humility**

are in short supply. They are also much needed in our world if we are to begin to save ourselves from the carnage,

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<sup>2</sup> Bam Ki Moon, **Secretary-General of the United Nations**, Address to delegates, May 10, 2007. [www.un.org/specches](http://www.un.org/specches) of SG

intolerance of difference, and destruction which so marks modern society all over the globe.

## 2. Where it all began

Just imagine this scenario: suppose the world's creator, foreseeing the needs of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, had held a conversation with some of our great founding women - Catherine McAuley, Ursula Frayne, Francis Warde, Mary Ann Doyle and Vincent Whitty, saying:

"I am going to make a world, a world in which the conditions will depend on each of several agents doing their level best. I offer you the chance to take part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and the other agents sufficiently to face the risk?" Or would you, rather than be part and parcel of so fundamentally pluralist and irrational a universe, prefer to relapse into the slumber of nonentity from which you had been momentarily aroused by the tempter's voice?"<sup>3</sup>

Stop and imagine for a second if our Sisters, afraid of the unknown, had said **NO**.

I am sure that Catherine, Ursula, Francis or any of the many great women who built and staffed our **Mercy Educational Institutions all over the globe** could not have imagined or foreseen the many Mercy enterprises that have been shaped and reshaped by Mercy women and their colleagues over the past 175 years. We, who are gathered here today, participate in a daring challenge that **another world is possible**, begun by the energies

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<sup>3</sup> William James, *Pragmatism*, quoted in *The Dignity of Difference* by Jonathan Sacks, Continuum, 2002, p. 192.

and imagination of two -"Sister Doyle and I" ... and we participate in an enterprise and future that they could not have imagined.

**What is the world's creator asking of each us gathered here today?** We, who are educators of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are we doing our "level best" to educate and equip the young to be participants and agents of change in our world that is so much in need of fixing?

**The story of the Sisters of Mercy began with a woman named Catherine McAuley, a woman for all seasons** who refused to accept that the poor of her day should be confined to a social status allotted to them by the wealthy. Born on September 29, 1778, to a prosperous family, Catherine imbibed a sense of care and concern for people less fortunate than herself when she accompanied her father as he tried to help destitute and poor people. Then, on his premature death, she herself experienced poverty and a humiliating dependence on family and friends. At the age of 25, she moved in and lived with Catherine and William Callaghan, a retired, childless couple. When this gentle Quaker couple passed away, they left their considerable wealth to Catherine, knowing that she would use it well.

Use it well Catherine did, for **she built, in 1827, the first house of Mercy in Baggot Street, Dublin. Designed as a house where she and her associates could live, where young women in distressed circumstances could find refuge and vocational training, where poor children could be educated and orphans housed, it attracted much attention in the fairly affluent neighbourhood.** The House of Mercy also attracted many young women as volunteers and it was during this time that Catherine was advised to form a religious institute. The Institute of the Sisters of Mercy began on December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1831.

Known as the "walking nuns", the Sisters of Mercy were a new phenomenon in the ecclesiastical world and the first Irish group of Sisters to escape enclosure. **They responded to calls throughout Ireland, England, Newfoundland, the United States of America and eventually Australia and New Zealand.**

Opening schools all over the globe, the Sisters who followed in the footsteps of Catherine, Ursula and Francis, tried to provide value-centred education in the Roman Catholic tradition. **Today they work in over 44 countries.**

I sometimes wonder if Catherine McAuley and the early educators in Mercy grasped the concept of **Global Citizenship**. In a paper entitled *Some Lasting Efforts*, Helen Marie Burns RSM says that, "Catherine McAuley had great respect for the faith tradition of others - Protestant relatives, the Quaker beliefs of the Callaghans."

Burns contends that "our present attitudes of inclusion may have a longer history than the experiences of the 60s and a more profound rationale than tuition costs and depleting enrolments. **In the fabric of Catherine's life and the spirit she bequeathed to followers rests a consistent thread of appreciation for the insights, the challenge, and the complementarity of other faith traditions.**"<sup>4</sup> I wonder, however, if we have really embodied this appreciation or have we

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<sup>4</sup> Helen Marie Burns, RSM, *Some Lasting Efforts - Mercy Tradition and Secondary Education*, Mercy Secondary Education Conference 1V Cincinnati, Ohio, 1985, p. 6.

become so *certtain* of our rightness that we no longer question the assumptions?

Are we, for example, prepared to question the scandal of uniqueness absolutized by Christianity into one of its central doctrines, which claims, as Sallie McFague comments, "that God is embodied in one place and one place only: in the man Jesus of Nazareth. He and he alone is the 'image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15). In its traditional form, is this claim not only offensive to the integrity and value of other religions, but incredible - indeed absurd - in the light of post-modern thinking."<sup>5</sup>

**What do you think?**

The idea that we fulfil God's will by waging war against the infidel, or **converting those whom we label 'heathen'**, so that all humanity is the same, owes much to the concept of empire and little to the heritage of Abraham, which Jews, Christians and Muslims claim as their own. It is an attempt to impose a single truth on a plural world and is akin to the tower of Babel of our time. And Catherine McAuley wants none of this in her name.

As she said so well,

**"Do not look with contempt on any country, culture or religion."**

### **3. The call of the 21<sup>st</sup> century:**

From so rich a past, where are we being called today? I believe that it is imperative that Mercy Educators all over the globe **teach those in our institutions to become Global Citizens**, beyond the local and the national, and to try and understand how our actions and decisions influence what happens in different parts of the globe.

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<sup>5</sup> Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology*, Fortress Press. p. 159.

What do I mean?

Because of growing ethnic, cultural, racial, linguistic and religious diversity throughout the world, education for global citizenship needs to prepare students to function effectively in the 21st century. **Citizens of this century need the necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills to function in their cultural communities and beyond their cultural borders.** They should also be able and willing to participate in the construction of a national civic culture that is a moral and just community. The national community should embody democratic ideals and values, such as those articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Students also need to acquire the knowledge and skills required to become effective citizens in the global community. **Are we educators, up to this challenge?**

Citizenship education in the past, in most nations, embraced an **assimilationist ideology.** In many western societies - and I suspect in Australia and New Zealand - its aim was to educate students so they would fit into a mythical Anglo-Saxon Protestant conception of the "good citizen". Anglo-conformity was the goal of citizenship education and one of its objectives (just for variety!) was to eradicate the community cultures and languages of students from diverse groups. **One consequence of this assimilationist conception of citizenship education was that many students lost their first cultures, languages, and ethnic identities.** Some students also became alienated from family and community. Another consequence was that many students became socially and politically alienated within the national civic culture.

Members of identifiable racial groups often became marginalized both in their community cultures and in the national civic culture because they could not function effectively in either. When they

acquired the language and culture of the Anglo mainstream, they were often denied structural inclusion and full participation in the civic culture because of their racial characteristics.

**Citizenship education** must be transformed to fit the needs of the 21st century. Several world-wide developments make a new conception of citizenship education an imperative. They include the deepening ethnic texture of nations such as the United States, Canada, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and **Australia**. The large influx of immigrants who are now settling in nations throughout the world, the continuing existence of institutional racism and discrimination in various nations, and the widening gap between rich and poor nations also make education for Global Citizenship an imperative.

Educational institutions which bear the hallmark of Mercy have a responsibility and a unique opportunity to reflect a Global Perspective of the works of Mercy. Currently, **our Sisters are working in 44 countries**. We serve through education, health care and other ministries to further social, political, economic and spiritual well being. The task of educating towards global citizenship is a challenging one as "social mores and political ideologies narrow the definition of neighbour to the familiar, **the definition of world to the particular part of the earth which I inhabit**. Global perspective also suggests, I think, that we view our own particular institutions as participants in the neighbourhood, the civic community, and the regions in which they are located. As Catherine McAuley remarked, 'Every place has its own particular ideas and feelings which must be yielded to when possible.' **Especially an association such as ours must strive for**

the balance which recognizes the universal, yet nurtures the unique."<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. Educating the Global Citizen - How might we do this?

Educating the young to become Global Citizens is a moral project.

Jonathan Sacks in his book *The Dignity of Difference* contends that:

"Economic superpowers, seemingly invincible in their time, have a relatively short life span: Venice in the sixteenth century, the Netherlands in the seventeenth century, France in the eighteenth century, Britain in the nineteenth century and the United States in the twentieth century.

**Economics and politics are no match for moral truths.**

Civilizations survive not by strength but how they respond to the weak; not by wealth but by the care they show for the poor; not by power but by their concern for the powerless. The ironic yet utterly humane lesson of history is that **what renders a culture invulnerable is the compassion it shows to the vulnerable.**

Global capitalism threatens inequalities that will eventually become unsustainable and cultural vandalism that will eventually become unbearable. Men (*and women*) were not made to serve economies; economies were made to serve us; and men and women were made to serve one another, not just themselves. We may not survive while others drown; **we may not feast while others starve**; we are not free when

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<sup>6</sup> Helen Marie Burns, RSM, *Some Lasting Efforts: Mercy Tradition and Secondary Education, Mercy Secondary Education Conference 1V Cincinnati, Ohio, 1985*, p.19

others are in servitude; we are not well when billions languish in disease and premature death.”<sup>7</sup>

Towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United Nations held a series of summits on matters of poverty and environmental degradation. **In September 2000, 189 Heads of State and Governments, meeting at the UN General Assembly in New York,** pledged solemnly to a whole raft of suggestions that would make our world better and healthier for the millions living in dire poverty. The then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, described the totality of these summits as **'the humanitarian agenda of the 21<sup>st</sup> century'**. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were born, grouping the aspirations of this humanitarian agenda into a set of goals which governments should achieve for their people by 2015.

For Christians and as Mercy Educators, our aim must be to rid the world of hunger and a poverty that **dehumanizes people created in the image of God**. These goals, sometimes also referred to as the ***Minimum Development Goals***, are the only offer on the table that can dent poverty in any substantial way. They are politically feasible, affordable, and already have the approval of the world's nations. These goals were NOT a casual commitment. In 2000 every world leader signed up. Every international body signed up. Almost every single country signed up. That is why they are important.

Changes in the world's system *can* reduce poverty. For example, through **debt relief, Mozambique has been able to introduce free immunization for children,**

**Tanzania has abolished primary school fees, leading to a 66% increase in attendance,** and

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, Continuum, 2002, pp. 195-196.

in Uganda an extra 2.2 million people gained access to clean water. This demonstrates that the MDGs *are* politically feasible.

But it's not always that simple... Let us look in more detail at the MDGs and the challenges they present.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger: In our world of high-speed internet connections and regular trips into the stratosphere, one billion people live on less than \$1 USD a day, 2.7 billion live on less than \$2 a day, 800 million people go to bed hungry every night and **28,000 children in the world die each day because of poverty-related causes.**

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

2. Achieve universal primary education: The goal of achieving universal primary education has been on the international agenda since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed in 1948 that elementary education was to be free and compulsory for all children in all countries. **Yet today, nearly 60 years later, 103 million children do not attend primary school - more than half of them girls -** and less than 20% attend secondary school. There are also 133 million adolescents who cannot read or write.

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

3. Promote gender equality and empower women: We frequently speak nowadays about the 'feminization of poverty' - that poverty has a woman's face. **70% of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women. They form 75% of adults who are illiterate.** In addition, they work two-thirds of the world's working hours, produce half of the world's food, but only earn 10% of the world's income.

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

4. Reduce child mortality: Every day, 29,000 children under the age of five die of preventable diseases - **that is 21 children every minute.**

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

5. Improve maternal health: In Europe, one in 2,000 women dies in childbirth - in North America one in 3,500. **In the "poor" world, more than half a million women die each year in pregnancy or childbirth.**

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases: HIV/AIDS and other pandemics such as malaria and TB are not only health issues but development issues. Today, 42 million people in the world live with HIV/AIDS. The virus kills 6,000 people every day and infects 5,200 more. **Every 30 seconds, an African child dies of malaria, more than one million per year.**

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

7. Ensure environmental sustainability: More than one billion people do not have access to clean water and 2.6 billion do not

have basic sanitation. It is becoming clearer that climate change and similar environmental disasters are having a devastating effect on the poor, making them more vulnerable to disaster.

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

8. Develop a global partnership for development: Whereas the first seven goals focus on changes which can be measured in developing countries, they cannot be achieved without Goal Number 8. For poor countries to achieve the first 7 goals, rich countries must deliver their side of the bargain in advance of 2015, with effective aid, more sustainable debt relief and fairer trade rules. In terms of debt, for every \$5 given in debt relief, \$15 comes back in debt repayments.

Question: What do you think Catherine or Ursula might do if they were faced with these statistics?

The MDGs represented a bond of trust between the rich world and the poor, but already these goals are looking more and more out of reach. Present progress in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that primary education for all will not be delivered by 2015 but by 2130 - 115 years late! Poverty will not be halved by 2015 but by 2150 - 135 years late! Avoidable infant deaths will not be eliminated by 2015 - but by 2165 - 150 years late!

As Mercy educators in the tradition of Catherine, we have a vital role to play in our endeavour to help students of the 21<sup>st</sup> century become global citizens. We must educate and inform our young people about the Millennium Development Goals.

Working with the MDGs means getting involved in change and change involves advocacy. Advocacy is a big word for a simple matter: **planning to bring about change.**

It involves..

- **Research**
- **Awareness-raising**
- **Lobbying - that is, bringing your research to the attention of decision-makers.**

All over the Mercy world, Sisters of Mercy and their colleagues are working on the ground to bring about change. Many live with the consequences of broken promises. But one way forward lies in educating students about our Mercy Global reality, then connecting the dots to make a difference. I think what I am hoping for is summed up in the African Proverb: ***When Spiders webs unite, they can tie up a lion.***

(See also: ***Where in the World are My Sisters?***)

Patricia Smith RSM, speaking on how Catherine might embrace cultural diversity and hence global citizenship, had this to say:

"If I were to summarize in the broadest terms Catherine McAuley's embrace of cultural diversity and her legacy of hospitality to strangers, I would have to say that:

- She did not narrowly define the love of God or the unity to which we and our neighbours in the world are called.
- She did not misname differences or see cultural variations as obstacles to that unity.

- She did not use adversarial language to describe these differences.
- She did not cling to her own distinctiveness or her own personal preferences or non-essential customs.

Rather:

- She emptied herself of the comfort of her former way of life.
- She extended her affectionate embrace to otherness.
- *She opened her door to strangers.*
- *She welcomed them.*
- And she followed, as best she could, the example of Christ, who became obedient to God's wide and merciful love of all humankind."

That, my friends, is what we are being called to do today.

Thank you for your attention today and let us resolve to go forward to change this world for the better by seeing each other as global citizens and acting in ways which serve the "common good". *The common good is whatever is best for the whole human family, the whole community of living beings, the whole universe in its grand unfolding.* I can only begin to serve the common good when I sideline my ego and experience my oneness with all others. Only then am I on my way to helping others hear their call to become *Citizens of the World.*

*The Global Citizen*  
*Deirdre Mullan RSM*  
*Director*

Mercy Global Concern  
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