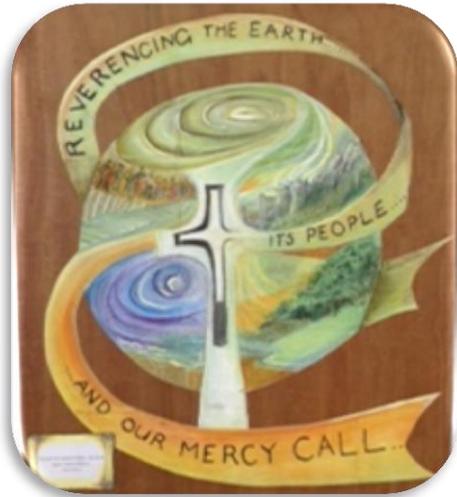


CARE FOR OUR EARTH

I had the privilege of being able to attend two gatherings of Mercy Associates, one in St. Mary's Convent Handsworth on 8th April and one in the hall of the Church of Our Lady, St. John's Wood in London on 20th May

They began in different ways!



The first in St Mary's, as we arrived we experienced what we have come to know as 'a warm Mercy welcome' with everything beautifully prepared and 'a comfortable cup of tea'.

In St. John's Wood everything had been beautifully prepared for us, but the previous evening the hall was broken into, and the destruction that happens through such actions was evident. Nonetheless two Mercy Associates (Hilda and Jeanette) managed to smile and welcome us through their disappointment, and the 'comfortable cup of tea had to be put 'on hold' for a short time, until keys and resources could be located. Somehow the consequences of destruction did not triumph. As the Sisters and Associates began to arrive the whole atmosphere changed, and we experienced that same spirit of 'union and shared vision' in both venues.

Sr. Philomena Bowers (Congregational Leader of the Union of the Sisters of Mercy) addressed both groups. 'Care for Our Common Home' was the theme, and as she spoke she inspired us to think and reflect anew on how we can work in partnership, and individually, caring for every aspect of Creation.



She reminded us of the beauty and complexity of the earth we share, and through thought-provoking slides, powerfully, that the greatest natural resource is the Human Person. 'Laudato Si' (Encyclical of Pope Francis) was brought to life for us. The Pope encourages us to have a profound

love for all of Creation in all its facets. He challenges us to reflect on how we personally use, and are responsible for the resources at our disposal.

When it comes to technology we were challenged on how we would exist without our mobile phones! But our preference for real cards over E-cards was overwhelming!

We were reminded of the destruction that does happen in our world, and perhaps tempted to be down-hearted about it. As I record this we are faced with the horrific destruction experienced by so many in the Manchester Concert Attack, and our hearts grieve for all those people who have been affected. But shining through comes the humanity, compassion, love and bravery of so many who put their own lives at risk and offered their resources to help.

Indeed we are all deeply connected, and as Sr. Philomena reminded us, God's Presence comes into destruction, brings wholeness, and transformation happens when people work together for 'The Common Good'.

We were encouraged to pray for our own 'conversion', and to realise that we can all do something, however small, to help people now, but also to preserve our earth for those who will come after us.



The inspiring Song rang in our ears 'What can you do today for tomorrow?'

Catherine McAuley saw the world and all that is in it as gift.

"The Lord and Master of our house and home is a faithful provider. Let us never desire more than enough –He will give us that and a blessing."

After such an inspiring day we will 'Walk a Little More Gently' in our world as our closing song invited us to do.

Sr. Margaret Jones rsm