

Issue 22 | June 2018

# Mercy

SISTERS OF MERCY  
ST CATHARINE'S  
4 LAURISTON GARDENS  
EDINBURGH

dignity  
compassion  
friendship  
acceptance  
hope





CHRISTMAS DINNER 2017

# Twenty five years



IRISH CONSUL AND CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MODERATOR

FOLK EVENING



THANKSGIVING DINNER



DOVEGOT SINGERS



JIMMY SINCLAIR GOLF TOURNAMENT



VISIT OF THE IRISH MINISTER



WEEKLY 'BIG BAKE'

# rs *Dear Friends of St Catharine's*



Well its Newsletter time again and this is our Silver Jubilee year for the Homeless Project. In the beginning as a group we wondered how it would work. One of the Sisters quoted our Foundress Catherine McAuley “**Providence will provide**” and Providence has provided. Now 25 years on we have 154 partners in Ministry, all volunteers. Someone once calculated that roughly on average the volunteers served between 180 – 200 meals (breakfast and dinner) per day, so around 4,000 per month. Multiply this up, and over our 25 years it is incredibly just over 1 million meals. **YOU** made this possible.

To quote Catherine McAuley again “There are three things the 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” all of which our guests receive from our generous volunteers.

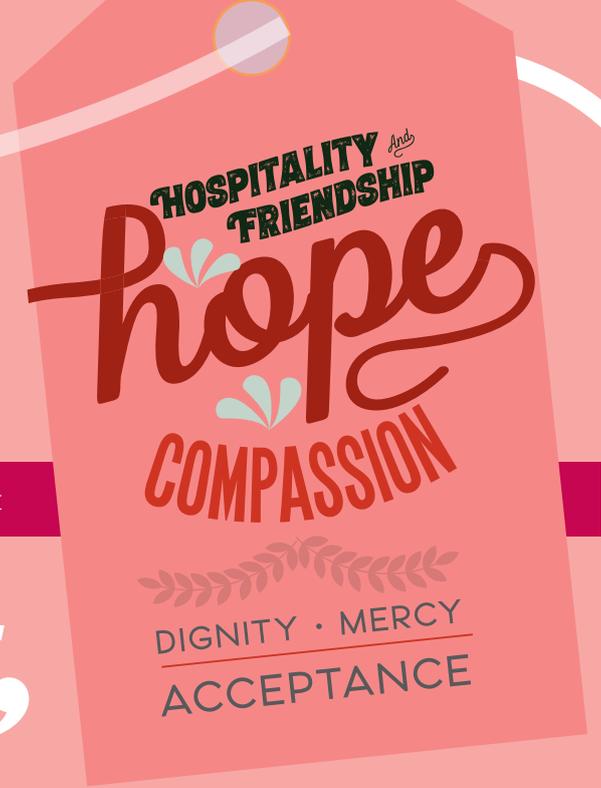
It means so much to us here at St Catharine’s Homeless Project to have such support from you and your friends in our work with the city’s Homeless population whose numbers sadly continue to increase.

We continue to have a daily Morning Prayer service with the Project helpers during which we pray for all our generous benefactors, YOU are our MERCY FAMILY and we thank you.

Sister Aelred

ST CATHARINE'S HOMELESS PROJECT EDINBURGH

# Support, acceptance and friendship



**The Mercy Project provides a safe, comfortable, respectful environment for the poor, homeless and lonely.**

Each person who is greeted at the front door ceases to be faceless or invisible as they often are on the streets, like the chap who sits begging on Princes St with a sign that reads “HELP – poor, hungry and homeless” or the young lad who sleeps in the city’s graveyards because there are no beds available in the homeless shelters and hostels. They become our welcome guests whoever they are and whatever their circumstances.

Our guests receive physical sustenance from a warm nutritious meal morning and evening but alongside this they receive support, acceptance and friendship. Some of the many services provided over and above food are shower facilities, a change of clothing, basic toiletries, spare bedding for those sleeping rough or setting up home and support and advice in seeking medical and welfare assistance. The more vulnerable of our guests receive special help to meet their basic needs.

The Sisters also offer meeting rooms for various addiction support groups i.e. Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and Al-Anon (a support group for families and friends of alcoholics) to name but a few. .

The Sisters of Mercy who run and manage this wonderful Project proactively practice and provide “Mercy to all”. Their founder The Venerable Catherine McAuley once said “There are things the poor prize more highly than gold, though they cost the donor nothing. Among these are a kind word, the gentle compassionate look and the patient hearing of their sorrows”. These words are translated into the ongoing help and support provided at St Catherine’s to one of society’s most forgotten groups.

Liz Gallagher  
Co partner in Mercy

# Father Gabriel SJ.

Father Gabriel was our Angel missioned to St. Catharine's from his Jesuit Community for two months. He brought to us the joy of the Gospel, a dedicated commitment of care, mercy, love and understanding. He touched the hearts of all whom he encountered. His was a witness of love and mercy. It was our privilege to have him here with us at St. Catharine's for that short time.

Thank you Father Gabriel



## Dear brothers and sisters

I have been joining you to serve our guests during nearly two months. Everything was new for me; I never had this kind of mission before and furthermore, my English was limited. It was my first time in Scotland.

So needless to tell you how anxious I was. But thanks to you and to the sisters this mission was a great time. You showed me the incarnated face of mercy and love. Love is a word that is often wrongly used. You never used that word but you lived that word in your way of serving our guests. Love was not a word for you, it was a devoted and a generous commitment in serving our guests. Thanks to you and to your generous commitment, our guests can see the mercifull face of Christ.

I was edified by your commitment and by your welcoming to me. I will never forget the hours spent together in the kitchen or in the dining room; I will never forget your smiles, your nice words, your fidelity to our guests and your encouragements to me. You treated me as one of yours and you never made me feel that I am a foreigner.

I will keep you in my prayers and I will carry you in my heart overseas, to the Middle East, precisely to Lebanon, hoping to see you again. All the best for you and thank you from the deep of my heart.

Fr Gabriel



HOMELESS PROJECT WELCOMES HOUSING MINISTER

On 19 April the Minister for Local Government and Housing Kevin Stewart MSP came to visit St. Catharine's Homeless Project. He met with Sister Aelred, Sister Catherine, volunteers and service users to learn about the project's work which benefits 200 homeless and disadvantaged people each day, many of whom sleep rough or are older people who travel from outlying estates to access a warm meal and companionship.

The Minister sat down for a cuppa with the people who use the service, chatting to them about their experiences and the difference the project makes to their lives.

Later he sat down with Sister Aelred, John Rowan one of the regular volunteers and Jim Eadie, Policy Officer with Age Scotland to discuss the history of the project and its development and adaptation over time to meet the needs of people in Edinburgh and further afield.

Speaking after the visit, Sister Aelred said:

"It was a real pleasure to open our doors to the Housing Minister and for him to meet our guests and volunteers" Sister informed him that the project depends on donations from very generous benefactors - hence they do not seek or receive money from the Scottish Government or the City of Edinburgh Council. He showed a genuine interest in the work of the project and has asked that he and his officials be kept informed of the work the Sisters do to improve the lives of Edinburgh's homeless community.

"We also discussed how the project fits into the wider context of Scottish Government housing and homelessness policy and the delivery of a range of services to support people with complex needs."

The discussion moved on to the work of the Homelessness Action Group chaired by the Chief Executive of the UK charity Crisis and its work to develop a 'Housing First' approach. This approach, already introduced in New York and Finland focusses on developing more effective responses for people affected by homelessness who had not previously engaged with any services.

Sister Aelred emphasised to the Minister, based on 25 years of experience that for such an approach to succeed it must put the needs of the service user at the centre and that statutory agencies, such as health services and housing providers need to put in place appropriate and where necessary intensive support in order to help homeless people access and sustain a tenancy.

Jim Eadie

Policy Officer Age Scotland

# WHAT ST. CATHARINE'S OFFERS

We commit ourselves to be Mercy to all with a preferential option for the poor

## WE OFFER

- ▶ Hospitality
- ▶ Support
- ▶ Acceptance
- ▶ Peace
- ▶ Friendship
- ▶ We meet basic needs
- ▶ Create an atmosphere of respect
- ▶ Help people to become whole

## SERVICES OFFERED IN 2017/18

- ▶ Breakfast/Brunch
- ▶ Evening Meal
- ▶ Shower and toilet facilities
- ▶ Change of clothing
- ▶ Help in setting up house
- ▶ Guidance with job applications
- ▶ Letter writing
- ▶ Counselling
- ▶ Help in seeking medical assistance
- ▶ Transport to hospital where necessary
- ▶ Help in finding accommodation
- ▶ Support groups for addicts
- ▶ Visits to hospitals
- ▶ Visits to prison
- ▶ Helping with recovery programmes
- ▶ Bereavement services
- ▶ Giving talks to schools churches and other groups
- ▶ Trying to be a voice for the voiceless





# ***A way of remembering - a home***

## ***Homelessness Sunday Service***

I attended the Homelessness Sunday service on 4<sup>th</sup> February at St Catharines Convent of Mercy.

The purpose of the service is to remember all the guests that have walked through the door at St Catharines, and have since died. Those guests, at various times, have been given a place at the table where they have been served wholesome meals and afterwards, offered clothing. An integral part of the service is when several of the volunteers read out loud the name of each guest that has died, and an individual candle is lit for each one. I noticed the candles were all shapes, sizes and colours and how this reflected the uniqueness of each guest that had passed through the doors of the convent. This service is a way of continuing to give them a place in all our hearts, a way of remembering – a home.

Angie Fee



## SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL OUR GENEROUS DONORS

Archbishop Leo Cushley for his support

The Consul General of Ireland

Eric and Janis Milligan

Jimmy Sinclair

Father John O.P., the C.S.U and St Albert's Parishioners for their generous help

The Fare Share Team for daily food deliveries

The Caledonian Ball

Alan, James and Ann Marie for The Irish Ball

Maureen Henderson and her 'Folk Night' team

Elizabeth Reid and her team for the Car Boot Sales

Nora Drummond in Peebles for fundraising

The Churches: Catholic, Episcopalian, Church of Scotland, Methodist, Unitarian and Romanian Church

Saint Bernards and Saint Kenneths Ballingry

Canon Hugh White for his ongoing support over many years

Schools and other groups

Valvona & Crolla

To all of you our generous benefactors

Last but not least, to our wonderful teams of volunteer helpers and  
Mercy Associates without you we could not run the project

I would like to take this opportunity to wish each of you well as we  
go forward together in a spirit of service to proclaim the  
Good News of the Gospel of Love to all with whom we live and work

God bless you all

Sister Aelred

Director of Homeless Project



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