

This year, our Mercy Moments will focus on Personal Spirituality. We invite you to use these reflections for your own personal prayer time or to share with colleagues in leadership team or board meetings.

Spirituality refers to our way of seeing and experiencing life. A spirituality connects us with deeper realities: the presence of God in our lives, the values which define us and our connection with others and with the created world.

We hope you enjoy this reflection on blessings and grace presented by Sr Catherine Reuter RSM, on the occasion of the AMSSA Conference Opening Mass address on 17 August, 2023.



BLESSINGS AND GRACE

The secret of happiness is to live moment by moment and to thank God for what [God] is sending us every day in [God's] goodness
- St. Gianna Beretta Molla.

Blessing means the experiencing of divine kindness, mercy, or goodness. In other words, God wants to bless you.

In "Circle of Grace", Jan Richardson writes about blessings as an ancient, poetic and mysterious literary form. Jan describes a blessing as:

a distinctive constellation of words designed to call upon and convey God's deepest tender-hearted desire for wholeness and well-being, individually and as a community.

Therefore, while there is nothing inherently magical about offering a blessing, it enables us to open our ears and eyes to the ways in which the Sacred inhabits the ordinariness of the everyday.

So, rather than being mistaken as an indicator of God's favour, a blessing most often meets us in liminal times of need, desperation, anxiety, failure, illness or loss when it's difficult to recognize the presence of God and hold onto hope.

Aaron's Blessing in Numbers 6:22-27

*May God bless and keep you.
May God's face shine upon you
and be gracious to you.
May God smile upon you and give you peace.*

was such a reminder for the Israelites. It expresses God's promise of abiding love 'in the bits and pieces of the everyday' where 'they were never to lose hope in God's tender-hearted mercy' – a blessing.


However, a blessing does more than invoke the presence of God. It awakens our imagination, to receive what God wants to give and provokes a response. The story of Mariam's visit to Elizabeth, in the gospel of Luke, shows what a blessing can be and do. Mariam basks in Elizabeth's welcome and solace,

*You are blessed among women,
and the fruit of your womb, Jesus is blessed.*

Mariam does not stop there, she responds with her song of praise, remembering God's blessing of mercy from generation to generation.

With so much of our world broken and in pain - in families, workplaces, church congregations, school communities, nations and the Earth community - it can seem all too overwhelming with no way of easing the conflict or dissension. Yet, we are blessed, for blessings dwell in the most ordinary moments; the writing of a letter, a prayer for graduating teenagers, a greeting shared between friends and strangers, the restoration of hope and joy, the welcome of someone on the margins, the healing of brokenness, or in a threefold benediction for a wandering people - all is encompassed in a blessing – all is drawn into God's circle of grace.

An excerpt from the AMSSA Conference Opening Mass address by Sr Catherine Reuter RSM - Brisbane, 17 August, 2023.



**God of Grace,
Open our minds and hearts
to a greater awareness and
deeper appreciation of your
countless blessings.
Transform us through the
power of your Spirit to
nurture a life marked by
faith-filled prayer, service
to our neighbor and
generous sharing.
We pray through
Christ, our Lord.
Amen.**

Reflection: In what ways will your ministry create a circles of grace throughout 2024?

We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional owners of the lands on which our ministries exist and the Elders both past and present on whose land we walk, work and live. We support the Uluru Statement from the Heart.