

Engaging

Read the Mercy reflection on Respect and highlight the words, phrases or ideas that speak to you.

Read the following texts:

- Genesis 2:15
- Exodus 20:12
- Genesis 1:31

What do the scripture passages and the words of Catherine McAuley reveal to you about the nature of God's respect.

Reflecting

Take a moment to make yourself comfortable and allow yourself to be still.

In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you.

Reflect on a time when someone showed you respect. In what way did you feel strengthened or affirmed by this experience?

Respect extends to all God's creations including our Earth and its inhabitants. Recognising the interconnectedness of all creation, how do we show respect to all God's creation?

Acting

Respect is about recognising and acknowledging the goodness in everyone and everything. How often do you consciously look for the goodness in others rather than being distracted by first impressions?

How will you celebrate the goodness of others in the coming week:

- at home
- at school
- in community?

In what ways do you take action to respect and care for the Earth and all its goodness? In what other ways can you show respect for and honour God's gift of creation:

- personally
- locally
- globally?

Growing

The natural consequence of seeing the goodness (Godness) in everyone we encounter is respect.

What stops you from being more receptive or open to seeing the goodness in others?

How do you grow into a more respectful person?

How can you grow in understanding of the interconnectedness between yourself and all creation?



Mercy Education Values



RESPECT



Mercy Education
www.mercy.edu.au



Respect

“Our mutual respect and charity is to be ‘cordial’-now ‘cordial’ signifies something that revives, invigorates, and warms”, says Catherine McAuley. While Catherine’s language may seem dated, her meaning is clear. Respect and love, or charity, are two sides of the one coin. They must come from the heart. Our respect and love for each other is to be reciprocal, not one-sided. The end result of mutual respect and love is life (it revives), strength (it invigorates) and warmth. Catherine’s vision of mutual respect is firmly grounded in the Christian gospel. The gospel in its turn emerged out of Judaism. We sometimes forget that Jesus of Nazareth was a Jew and that his teachings can only be understood in the context of his own faith tradition.

Let us take a brief journey back into the world that gave birth to our “mercy” emphasis on mutual respect

and then forward from Catherine’s time to new understandings of mutual respect. The first chapter of Genesis celebrates the goodness of all that is: the recognition of this goodness is the basis for all respect. The second chapter of Genesis has God placing humans in the garden “to till and to keep” or, in a more accurate translation of the Hebrew original, “to reverence and to care for” the earth (Gen 2:15). The other-than-human is to be respected, even honoured and revered.

In Exodus, we find that Israel’s law code requires respect for the God of Israel, for life, and for the rights of every member of the community. Parents or elders are singled out: “Honour your father and your mother” (Exod 20:12). This commandment is addressed to adults as well as to children. It includes respect for the wisdom that is handed on from generation to generation. It is not a command to unreflective obedience. Israel’s law code was initially limited by its focus on its own people, especially the male component of the population, and on its acceptance of slavery. We must remember that the institution of slavery was only outlawed in parts of the western world in Catherine’s time. It continues in subtle ways in our own times. The respect that mercy requires must seek to free all people from any form of oppression.



Honouring or respecting the God of Israel is encoded in the gospel proclaimed by Jesus of Nazareth, and espoused by Catherine McAuley and her companions. Honouring and respecting the whole Earth community, human and other-than-human, is likewise encoded in the Christian gospel. While the focus of the Christian scriptures is more on mutual respect within the human community, the invitation to honour and respect the whole of creation is implicit in the narrative, as evidenced in Jesus’ almost constant referencing of the Earth and the life it sustains. The ecological crisis that confronts our contemporary world has heightened our awareness of our interconnectedness with all being and of our responsibility to respect or honour every interrelationship within that web. Our new consciousness invites us to look again at our sacred texts, to critique what points to a lack of respect, and to affirm what “revives and invigorates.”

*Teachers may like to consult and then introduce students to the Earth Bible project and the principles that underlie it. Note that this is an Australian initiative. www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=291.

Veronica Lawson RSM

