

## Mercy Boards of Trustees - Essential Material

**Mercy Colleges and Universities** – contributing to Mercy in the world through higher education.  
Global Mercy see: [Mercy International Association \(MIA\) in Dublin, Ireland.](#)

### As a Mercy College or University, who and what inspire us?

What principles and bodies of thought help stir our imaginations, challenge our creativity, deepen our questions, conversations, reflections, and engage us in moral decision making and methods of learning as we live our Mission?

### Charism of Mercy – A gift and expression of God's presence in the world

In 1827 **Catherine McAuley** opened the first House of Mercy on Baggot Street in Dublin, Ireland in response to the needs of poor women and children. In 1831 she founded the religious community of the Sisters of Mercy as a way to assure that this work would go forward. Her vision was to provide education, skill development, safety, health care and support to those with few options. Catherine McAuley died in 1841, leaving a community with convents and ministries in Ireland and England, and with nascent invitations to go to other lands. -- Catherine's history is one of joys and sorrows, deep prayer and faith, and respectful, warm relationships in her leadership and fostering of community. In addition, she trusted in the wisdom of others to lead in Mercy wherever they are planted.

The **Sisters of Mercy** of the Institute of the Americas sponsor Mercy colleges and universities through the work of the **Conference for Mercy Higher Education (CMHE)**. Their spirituality, charism, history and ongoing presence and ministry as a Roman Catholic religious group of women inspires the character, vision, and mission of Mercy higher education institutions and their communities at all levels.

The agreement and relationship between the Institute and each college or university is described as a **Covenant**.

The Covenant speaks of the desire and commitment to carry on the mission of higher education as a Mercy Catholic institution and to CMHE's commitment to support their mission and identity in the context of each college or university's distinct culture and location.

The Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy regarding institutional sponsorship contextualize the spirit of this Covenant in their Mercy community Constitution:

*"As Sisters of Mercy we sponsor institutions to address our enduring concerns and to witness to Christ's mission.*

*Within these institutions, we, together with our co-workers and those we serve, endeavor to model mercy and justice and to promote systemic change according to these ideals."*

*(Constitutions 5)*

The Catholic Church's Tradition, culture and documents, such as ***Ex corde ecclesiae***, issued by Saint John Paul II, and **Core Principles of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition** contextualize and inform our identity and mission. -- Mercy colleges and universities drink from the well of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT).

--CIT is accumulated wisdom of the past and contemporary scholarship across all disciplines, studied in ways that encourages dealing with life's challenges and questions with a sense of the Transcendent, the belief that creation is good and beautiful, and that humans are called to participate and contribute to this evolving goodness and beauty.

--CIT supports a rigorous search for truth, asserting that coming to know truth, at least very good approximations of truth, is possible and to be respected. It supports a lively, dynamic relationship between reason and faith, because reason alone is not complete, and faith without reason can be superficial. Today, CIT

represents an integrated approach to learning that values inclusiveness and diversity in a pluralistic world, with respectful dialogue that goes across disciplines and activities, even engaging in critical critique of itself. Philosophy, theology, and Mission content, questions and processes can act to facilitate a lively relationship between reason and faith. -- One does not have to be Catholic to appreciate CIT and to contribute to the dialogue. In fact, this participation makes it all the richer. CIT is a means to seek truth together.

### Core Principles of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition as listed by the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities:

1. A Commitment to Universal Truth
2. Faith and Reason
3. Integral Relationship to the Catholic Church
4. Hospitality and Tradition
5. A Sacramental Vision
6. The Power of Beauty
7. An Appreciation of Creation
8. The Dignity of the Human Person
9. Innovation for the Common Good

## The Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT) affirms and appreciates:

- **Transcendancy** - broad horizon that calls us forward.
- **Sacramental Vision** – dynamic inter-relatedness of life, whose meaning and beauty can never fully be captured.
- **All Creation is good** - humans are inherently good, though we sin, personally and collectively.
- **Community** - essential at all levels, constantly forming and reforming.
- Christian story of the **Paschal Mystery** and how we might see the world and ourselves in and through this story.
- **Seeks truth and meaning** through reason & faith, all disciplines, traditions, and our experiences, questions and doubts.
- **Ethical systems of thought** ask “how should we act and why?” – Guiding Principles of **Catholic Social Teaching (CST)**.
- Sense of **Vocation in life** to be about the common good in the world in ways that are just and values key of qualities of **beauty**.

## Principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST)

Principles of Catholic Social Teaching are active in decision-making processes. Within CIT, diverse ethical systems of thought come into dialogue, engaging Philosophical and Theological theories and principles, including Principles of CST. The list of principles is sometimes listed slightly differently.

- Life and Dignity of the Human Person
  - Call to Family, Community, and Participation
  - Common Good
  - Subsidiarity
  - Rights and Responsibilities
  - Preferential Option for the Poor and Marginalized
  - Dignity of Work and Rights of Workers
  - Solidarity
  - Care for Creation
- See also: Just War Theory*



## Mercy Critical Concerns

Non-violence

Earth

Women and those who are marginalized

Immigration and Migration

Anti-Racism

How would you re-word the Works of Mercy, mindful of the need for systemic responses to suffering and injustice?  
Works of Mercy are a means of grace, ways to love our neighbor in light of the Gospels?  
(Matt. 5:3-12 & Luke 6:20-22)

## Corporal Works of Mercy (traditional wording)

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Shelter the homeless
- Clothe the naked
- Visit the imprisoned
- Visit the Sick
- Bury the dead
- Care for the Earth (added by Pope Francis)

## Spiritual Works of Mercy (traditional wording)

- Counsel the doubtful
- educate the ignorant
- Convert the sinner
- Comfort the sorrowful
- Forgive offenses willingly
- Bear wrongs willingly
- Pray for the living & the dead
- Care for the Earth (added by Pope Francis)

## Some Common Focus Areas and Characteristics of a Mercy College / University

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| Focus on Mission<br>Collaboration<br>Hospitality<br>Compassion / Action<br>Holistic Approaches | Future<br>Relationality<br>Excellence<br>Humility that Stands Up | Mercy Justice<br>Systemic Just Laws and Policies<br>Prayer<br>Reflection | Discernment<br>Faith<br>Dignity & Respect<br>Seeking Truth<br>Questions | Learning & Discovery<br>Beauty<br>Joy<br>Simplicity<br>Perseverance ... |
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## Mission Questions to be mindful of when deliberating and making decisions: (composed with the wise input of many)

1. Whose voices are/are not at the table of decision making? - Are there people at the table who are silent?  
Are those present sensitized to the complexities of biases, prejudices and racism and able to speak-up when needed?
2. What values are expressed in our particular response/action?
3. How does this decision/action reflect our mission?
4. Who will benefit? Who will pay or lose some benefit or value, and who will carry the work of this decision/action?
5. How do our Mission Integration Core Areas influence our decisions? How are these areas impacted?
6. Given present constraints, opportunities, and learnings, is there a way to more deeply align our action/response with our Mission?
7. How are our partners, and those we contract with for services, aligned with our values?
8. At the close of a Board Meeting, consider asking: How well did we integrate our values into our deliberations and decisions?