

Trócaire: Mercy in Action



An exploration of the meaning of the word, 'trócaire'.



**Working for
a just world.**

www.trocaire.org

Cover:

Bayee (12) is named after her grandmother Bayee (82), whom she has lived with in Ethiopia since her parents passed away from HIV.

Photo credit: Tamiru Legesse



Éamonn Meehan

Trócaire

Over the past forty three years the word “Trócaire” has become a household name in its own right and needs no embellishment. In light of this being the Catholic Church’s Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, we are afforded an opportunity to explore the deep meaning behind this word ‘Trócaire’. This can inform our answer when people ask the inevitable question, “What is the meaning of your organisation’s name?” To that end we have commissioned a number of people to explore the origins and meaning of the word “Trócaire” and what follows is a summary of some of the main ideas that have emerged.

The Year of Mercy

During this holy year we are invited to become ‘Missionaries of Mercy’. According to Pope Francis, mercy is the foundation of the Church’s life. The Irish Catholic Bishops Conference recognised this four decades ago when they established Trócaire, which is the Irish word for Mercy.

Mercy is at the heart of Trócaire’s work and so this jubilee is of special relevance to us. When Trócaire was founded, the Irish bishops recognised that ‘a time for action’ was needed to answer the calls of the poorest and most marginalised in our world. Pope Francis echoes this call by saying that we do not just show mercy, we ‘do’ mercy and act for justice.

“A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just”

Pope Francis

The Gaelic Tradition

In Old Irish the word “Trócaire” comes from two words – “trógh”, in modern Irish “trua”, meaning “pity” or “compassion”, and the word “car”, from the verb “caraid”, meaning “he or she loves”. A “trócar” is therefore a person who has love for someone who is suffering in life. Trócaire has also been seen to mean “leniency” as a legal term in the middle ages. Also in the middle ages “Trócaire” is translated into Latin by “pietas”, which defines the relationship between the parent and child or between God and an individual.

Most interestingly the Irish language puts more emphasis on action for mercy than to show mercy. We talk about “trócaire a dhéanamh” – to do mercy and not just to show it.

And finally another middle age phrase which has resonance with us today is “tríd an trócaire baintear an fhírinne amach” – “through mercy the truth is revealed”. It is interesting that Pope Benedict’s last social encyclical was entitled “Love in Truth”.

The Biblical Heritage

The word “Trócaire”, (‘mercy’ or ‘compassion’) has a rich ancestry in both the Old and New Testament. There are three Hebrew words associated with the meaning of “Trócaire”. These are “hesed” meaning “loving kindness, charity and love”; “rahamim” is related to the word womb, and expresses the love of a mother for a child with its physical overtones; and “hen” – which is translated as “mercy”, with a suggestion of grace and favour. The term “mercy” is attributed primarily to God in a vertical type relationship; describing God’s loving care from above, while “compassion”

is attributed to horizontal human relationships of loving care through fellow suffering.

When Jesus came into the world the vertical relationship becomes horizontal in his final suffering with the men and women of his time. The final judgment, which is described in Matthews’s Gospel (Ch. 25), reveals the full depth of the Christian response to a neighbour in need, “as long as you did it to one of these least ones, you did it to me”. As the divine Word was made flesh in the person of Jesus so were the words of Jesus made flesh in his active ministry to the poor and excluded. It is out of these biblical revelations in word and deed that the Christian tradition of social action that includes caring for the sick, sanctuaries for the deprived, the homeless and the oppressed, has sprung. Trócaire is a contemporary expression of that tradition with its specific mandate focused on the needs of our times.

What does this mean for Trócaire?

The late Cardinal Cahal Daly, who served as chair of Trócaire's Trustees for many years, speaking at Trócaire's 10th anniversary, spoke of the organization as follows:

“Trócaire has helped Ireland to be a voice, pleading the cause of children and of men and women who are undernourished and under-protected in society's harsh power struggles.... and cold economic calculations. That voice will not be stilled; for it is the voice of Christ that pleads for peace.... that peace whose modern name is development, whose condition is justice and whose manifestation is Trócaire, the Irish word for compassion”.

Trócaire – What does it mean?

So the next time you are asked by somebody “What does Trócaire mean?” you might reply: The word “Trócaire” comes from deep in our Irish culture and our Christian faith. It can mean “mercy” or “compassion”, but goes beyond that. It also expresses solidarity, embracing Jesus' mission, his suffering with humanity and his active ministry to the poor and excluded. It is expressed in the work of peace, development and justice. And, most importantly, it is a call to action. Where we go as ‘trócaire’, we go with a recognition of the dignity and equality of those we meet. How well our name Trócaire was chosen, to embody in just one word what our organisation and our work is all about!

I invite you to take these words with you as you travel, pray and as you work. They draw out with real skill and insight the meaning of our name. Sincere thanks to each of the contributors for the richness they have brought to this piece.

In their work we see a reflection of the richness of our name.

“We pray to all-merciful God to grant us all a share in his mercy. We pray to him to keep our hearts always open to those in hunger and in need...”

Pastoral letter of the Bishops of Ireland on the establishment of Trócaire



Umar (6) practises his alphabet in the sand in Mapel village, South Sudan. His mother Poni is part of a Trócaire project that supports vulnerable women who have lived through the trauma of war.

Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh

Trócaire

Guairne na cruinne
in am an ghátair
síneann lámha chugaibh,

Ní le trua ach le neart
Ní le déirce ach le dóchas
Ní le comhbhá ach le cumas.

Tóg a bhfuil á iompar agat
Buail ar mo ghuaileann é
is abair nach ualach é.

Tá meitheal inniu
ar ghort seo na daonnachta
is tá fáilte roimh chách.

Ní líide an trócaire a roinnt.
Gura móide a brí.

Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh

To the broken
in this time of necessity
my long arms reach out.

Not in pity but in power,
for tomorrow rather than for charity,
not in tears but in tenacity.

What weight in burden divided?
My shoulder is ready
all the weight that you carry.

For there is work to be done,
today, on the soil of humanity.
You are invited like everyone.

And may this division of labour multiply
mercy.
May each subtraction add to its charge.

Translated by Billy Ramsell

Mercy identifies with many types of brokenness in our world today, and brings to that brokenness, love, healing and support.

When we know ourselves to be loved by God, the call to love others is “a freely bestowed experience of love from within, a love which by its very nature must be shared with others.”

Deus Caritas Est 18



Fr. Enda McDonagh

Trócaire 'Our Biblical Heritage'

Although care for the poor and deprived is a primary characteristic of Jewish and Christian Traditions and given its full expression in the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ, it was only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that it received more systematic exposition in what came to be known as the Catholic Church's Catholic Social Teaching.

As with so many other social and pastoral teachings and practices it received a new lease of life with Vatican II and its developing impact. This new life was very evident in John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, particularly in relation to International Peace and Justice with special attention to Human Rights as expressed in the UN Declaration of 1948. New dimensions of Christian understanding of the modern world in political, economic and cultural terms emerged in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). Development issues in relation to the 'Third World' were the central feature of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (the Development of Peoples).

A deeper insight still was attained in the Synod of Bishops document of 1971 with its asserting that 'the work of justice is a constituent element of preaching the Gospel'. Much of the emphasis on such justice engagement occupied a great deal of the long pontificate of John Paul II. However in the aftermath of the Council and the Synod there emerged Catholic agencies organised by national Episcopal conferences which took on the professional implementation of the mission of justice to those poor and deprived peoples of the 'Third World'. It was in this context that the Irish Episcopal Conference established Trócaire in 1973.

The Gaelic word Trócaire and its equivalents in English, Mercy and Compassion, have a rich ancestry in both the Old Testament and the New. The originating meaning and practice of the three Hebrew words employed in the Old Testament (*hesed, rahamim and hen*) deal with the divine attitude and practice of the creator and covenant God with his people, Israel, and ultimately with all peoples. The words have different ranges and shades of meaning. *Hesed* is the

Left:
Marium Eum Imal,
a farmer in the Jordan
valley. Photo: Alan
Whelan

broadest as its translations as loving kindness, charity and love suggest. *Rahamim* is related to the word for womb (*rehem*) and expresses mother love or father love with its physical overtones in compassion. *Hen* is usually translated mercy with its suggestion of grace or favour.

In some discussions the term mercy is attributed primarily to God in a vertical-type relationship describing God's loving care from above while compassion is attributed to horizontal human relations of loving care through fellow-suffering. With the Incarnation, the vertical - God's mercy shared with God's creatures - becomes also horizontal in fellow-suffering with one's fellow men and women through Jesus the Christ. In addition, while horizontal in their relationships with one another, human beings also include the presence and power of God in these relationships - the 'vertical top-down' dimension described above.

A crucial example of all this occurs in the Book of Exodus (34:6), where the Lord initiates the Covenant with Moses and the people of Israel and delivers the Ten Commandments.

'The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a merciful (*raham*) and gracious (*hannun*) God, slow to anger and rich in kindness (*hesed*) and fidelity,,,,"

Psalms 100 ensures the prayerful people will keep up the refrain:

'His mercy (*hesed*) endures for ever'.

In teaching, prayer and practice the people themselves are to behave to one another in the same way as is emphasised among many places including in Micah 6:8

'What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness (*hesed*) and to walk humbly with your God'.

All this is summarised and reaches its climax in the famous saying of Jesus on the two great commandments of the Law; love of God and love of neighbour.

Similarly the teachings of the prophets on the exercise of love and mercy to the poor and deprived is invoked by Jesus in the opening of his ministry in Luke's Gospel, expanded in the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew and movingly illustrated in parables such as those of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, more accurately designated perhaps as that of the merciful Father.

The final judgment as described in Matthew 25 reveals the full depths of Christian response to neighbour in need: 'As long as you did it to one of these least ones you did it to me'. As the divine Word was made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, so were the words of Jesus made flesh in his active ministry to the poor and excluded.

It is out of these biblical revelations in word and deed that the Christian tradition gave us in the West the first hospitals for the sick and the first sanctuaries for the deprived, the homeless and the oppressed.

Trócaire is a contemporary expression of that tradition with a specific mandate focused on the particular needs of our times. To fulfill that task properly it must be fully professional in its personnel and organisation. It must also be imbued with the Spirit in which it was founded if it is to perform its distinctive role of serving the fuller humanity of those whose needs it would serve. It must therefore attend to that spirit in its own people and help develop their fuller humanity, the humanity only fully attained in Jesus Christ as model and motivator. That would suggest in addition to regular holidays, occasional shorter breaks for reflection or prayer days/retreats for all its members in turn that they renew their human and Christian spirit and overcome the physical, mental and spiritual burnout which easily attend such demanding work.

Trócaire – What does it mean?

“Trócaire has helped Ireland to be a voice, pleading the cause of children and of men and women who are undernourished and under protected in society’s harsh power struggles....”

Cardinal Cahal Daly

Professor Peter McQuillan

Bunús an fhocail “Trócaire”

Is comhfhocal é an aidiacht *trócar* a fáisceadh as an ainmfhocal *trógh* agus an eilimint *car*. Faighimid an eilimint seo *car* i roinnt comhfhocal sa tSean-Ghaeilge, mar atá *feólchar* mar shampla. Leis an bhriathar *caraid* a bhaineann an eilimint *car*, briathar nach ann dó a thuilleadh sa chaint bheo, ach a chiallaigh “tugann (sé/sí) grá do”. B’ionann *feólchar* sa chás sin agus “dúil a bheith ag duine san fheoil” i gciall *voracious* nó *bloodthirsty* an Bhéarla; “fuilchíocrach” nó “craosach” a bheadh i nGaeilge an lae inniu. Is ionann *trógh* agus an t-ainmfhocal *trua* “pity, compassion” nó “object of pity”, is é sin le rá “a miserable person, wretch” sa Nua-Ghaeilge. Mar sin, an duine a bheadh *trócar* sa tseanteanga bheadh grá aige nó aici sin don “truán”, don té a bheadh thíos leis an saol. Ón aidiacht *trócar* a dhíorthaítear an t-ainmfhocal *trócaire* “grá don truán”.

Is i lámhscríbhinní ar mhórróinn na hEorpa is luaithe a thagaimid ar an Ghaeilge scríofa, is é sin le rá, lámhscríbhinní ina bhfuil cruth na teanga comhaimseartha leis an scríbhinn féin. I bhfoirm gluaiseanna ar litreacha Naomh Pól atá an fhianaise is túsce, i ngluaiseanna a cuireadh le chéile i Würzburg na Gearmáine timpeall na bliana 750. Faighimid an focal *trócaire* mar aistriú ar *miser cordia* na Laidine. Cuir i gcás an ghluais: *trócaire dé imme-forling dunní iris* “tugann trócaire Dé orainn creideamh a bheith againn”, mar a bhfuil sa Laidin bhunaidh “quod miser cordiam consecuti sumus” (mar go bhfuaramar trócaire [Dé]). Tá sraith eile gluaiseanna le fáil i Milano na hIodáile ar na Sailm thart fá caoga bliain ina dhiaidh sin, is ansin a thagaimid ar an fhocal *trócar* in úsáid mar dhobhriathar ag aistriú na Laidine *miser corditer* “go trócaireach” (*delegit miser cordiam et iudicum* “tá grá aige don trócaire agus don chóir”) a bhfuil an ghluais sa Laidin ag dul leis: *miser corditer salavit ludeos* “le trócaire a shábháil sé na Giúdaigh”).

Faighimid an focal *trócaire* i ndlíthe na Sean-Ghaeilge chomh maith agus an chiall “leniency” an Bhéarla aige is cosúil, mar shampla *do-níther trócaire ris* “déantar trócaire air” i gcás duine a fuarthas ciontach i ndóiteán a dhéanamh.

Speciose Mukagasigura from Nyarubaka, Rwanda with her son, David, and daughter, Sophir. Women and children are most vulnerable to hunger. By working at the coop and being trained in how to farm, Speciose is determined that her family won't fall into this situation.



“Let us be renewed by God's mercy...and let us become channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish”

Pope Francis

Sa Mheánaois, faightear an aidiacht *trócaireach* fosta agus an chiall chéanna aici agus a bhí ag *trócar* thuas níos luaithe: *at trócaireach fri bochto an Choimhdhedh* “tá tú ag déanamh trócaire ar bhochtáin an Tiarna”. Spéisiúil go leor, aistrítear an focal *trócaire* uair amháin i dtéacs de chuid na Meánaoise leis an fhocal Laidin *pietas* a shainníonn an gaol ar leith ba cheart a bheith ann idir athair agus páiste, idir Dia agus an duine aonair, mar shampla. Is é sin le rá, an gaol cómhalartach: tagann trócaire anuas ón Tiarna (féach an focal Béarla *pity* a thagann ó *pietas*) agus, mar chúiteamh ar an trócaire sin, téann ómós an duine aonair do Dhia suas chun na bhFlaitheas (féach an focal Béarla *piety* a thagann freisin ó *pietas* na Laidine).

Féach fosta ó sheanmóir de chuid na Meánaoise an leagan *tánic a thrócaire form* “tháinig a thrócaire orm” sa chomhthéacs áirithe seo. Gan amhras, is féidir le peacaigh trócaire a lorg ar Dhia má ghuíonn siad *déna trócaire frind* (sa Mheán-Ghaeilge) nó “dean trócaire orainn” sa lá atá inniu ann. An bhféadfaí a áiteamh go gcuireann an Ghaeilge níos mó béime ar ghníomhaíocht na trócaire ná mar a dhéantar sa Bhéarla? Is é sin le rá, “trócaire a *dhéanamh*” seachas “*have mercy*”?

Nathán nó dhó eile ón Mheánaois ar fiú aird a thabhairt orthu is dóigh liom ná *tosach trócairi toirrsige* “is é an brón tús na trócaire” agus *is tré tróccuri ro-sechar fírinne* “tríd an trócaire a bhaintear an fhírinne amach”.

The adjective *trócar* is a compound deriving from the noun *trógh* and the element *car*. We encounter this element *car* in some compounds in Old Irish, *feólchar*, for example. The element *car* is associated with the verb *caraid*, which no longer remains in the spoken language, but which meant “(he/she) loves”. *Feólchar* in this instance meant “one’s love of meat or flesh”, where voracious or bloodthirsty might be used in English; “*fuilchiocrach*” (bloodthirsty) or “*craosach*” (voracious) would be the equivalent in Irish today. *Trógh* had the same meaning as the noun *trua* “pity, compassion” or “object of pity”, that is “a miserable person, wretch” in Modern Irish. Therefore, a person described as *trócar* in Old Irish would have loved and had compassion for a “*truán*”, a person who is suffering in life. The noun *trócaire* derives from the adjective *trócar*, “love/compassion for the wretch”.

The earliest examples of written Irish are in manuscripts found in Europe, that is to say manuscripts where the form of the language is contemporaneous with the writing. The earliest evidence is in the form of glosses (explanatory notes) on the letters of Saint Paul, written in Würzburg, Germany around 750 A.D. We encounter the word *trócaire* as a translation of the Latin word *miser cordia*. Take, for example, the glossary: *trócaire dé imme-forling dunni iris* “tugann trócaire Dé orainn creideamh a bheith againn”, (God’s mercy gives us faith) or, as in the original Latin, *quod miser cordiam consecuti sumus* “mar go bhfuaramar trócaire [Dé]” (as we

received [God's] mercy). Another set of glosses on the Psalms is found in Milan, Italy, from around fifty years later. It is in these that we encounter the word *trócar* used as an adverb equivalent to the Latin *misericorditer* "go *trócaireach*" (mercifully), *delegit misericordiam et iudicium* "tá grá aige don *trócaire* agus don chóir" (he loves mercy and justice) accompanied by the Latin gloss: *misericorditer salavit Iudeos* "le *trócaire* a shábháil sé na Giúdaigh" (with mercy He saved the Jews).

We encounter the word *trócaire* in Old Irish Laws where it apparently meant "leniency", for example, *do-níther trócaire ris "déantar trócaire air"* (let him receive leniency, let him be treated leniently) in the case of a person found guilty of arson.

In the Middle Ages we also encounter the adjective *trócaireach* (merciful) with the same meaning as *trócar* above: *at trócaireach fri bochto an Choimhdhedh "tá tú ag déanamh trócaire ar bhochtáin an Tiarna"* (you are showing mercy to the Lord's poor). Interestingly, the word *trócaire* is translated in a text from the Middle Ages by the Latin word *pietas* to define the special relationship that should exist between father and child, between God and the individual, for example. That is to say, the reciprocal relationship: mercy comes down from God (note that the English word *pity* derives from the Latin *pietas*) and as a reward for that mercy, the individual shows honour to God in Heaven (note that the English word *piety* also comes from the Latin *pietas*).

We also encounter the form *táinic a thrócaire* form "tháinig a thrócaire orm" (His mercy came upon me) in a sermon from the Middle Ages in this particular context. Without doubt, sinners can seek God's clemency if they pray *déna trócaire frind* (in Middle Irish) or "dean *trócaire* orainn" (show us mercy) today. Could it be argued that the Irish language places more emphasis on the action of mercy than is the case in English? That is to say, "*trócaire a dhéanamh*" (to actively show mercy) as opposed to "have mercy"?

Another couple of phrases from the Middle Ages that are worth mentioning are *tosach trócairi toirrsige* "is é an brón tús na *trócaire*" (mercy begins with sorrow) and *is tré tróccuri ro-sechar fírinne* "tríd an *trócaire* a bhaintear an fírinne amach" (through mercy the truth is revealed).

Trócaire – What does it mean?

...a person described as *trócar* in Old Irish would have loved and had compassion for a "truán", a person who is suffering in life.

Children of Bar Kawach
village, Northern Uganda.



Dr. Suzanne Mulligan

An Understanding of Mercy in light of Catholic Social Teaching

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes

(Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*)

The concept of mercy has played a central role in Christian thinking, and mercy is characteristic of a Christian lived faith. It has strong Biblical roots, of course, and it soon became a key idea in the thinking of the early Christian community. Even a cursory glance at the Hebrew, Greek, and later Latin translations of the word shed an interesting light on what we mean by this notion. The ancient words for mercy provide a much richer meaning than our English translation allows for.

For example, there are three Hebrew words for mercy, the meanings of which range from *hesed* – a mutual, dependable, strong love, to *h n/h nan* which denotes “grace” or “favour”. It is also associated with the word for womb, suggesting mother-child love or the love between siblings.¹ But there is an added importance attached to the Hebrew understanding of mercy. Put simply, it leads us to action. “It implies a physical response; the compassion for another is felt in the center of one’s body. This mercy ... results in action”.² The Greek word for mercy also has three key meanings. These are not unrelated to the Hebrew interpretations mentioned above.³ But it is perhaps the Latin interpretation that best suits our discussion here.

The Latin word – *misericordia* – literally means “miserable heart”. Mercy, then, might be thought of as a sort of pain in one’s heart because of the suffering of others. This “misery” in one’s heart then moves us towards action on behalf of the other. And mercy ‘blesses twice’, as Shakespeare understood; it transforms not only the recipient of the merciful act or attitude but also transforms the person who has become miserable at the suffering of others. Thus, we think of it in relation to other virtues

¹ On this see Irene Nowell, “Mercy”, in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Joseph A. Komonchak (ed.), (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 650 ff.

² *Ibid.*

³ See Nowell, pages 650 – 652.

such as compassion (a co-suffering), solidarity, forgiveness, gentleness, love. Blessed John Paul II, in *Dives in Misericordia* (1980) emphasised the connection between mercy and love: mercy is love's second name. In other words, mercy is the result, extension, projection of love.

Unsurprisingly, justice and mercy are interwoven. One might think of a "merciful" judge or king. He can at times set aside the strict requirements of justice in order to be merciful in a particular situation. But this is not done at the expense of justice. As John Paul II put it: "This ... does not detract from the value of justice and does not minimise the significance of the order that is based upon it; it only indicates, under another aspect, the need to draw from the powers of the spirit which condition the very order of justice, powers which are still more profound" (*Dives in Misericordia*, 12).

So how might we relate mercy and the work of Trócaire? Trócaire is of course the Irish word for mercy. As a Catholic NGO, Trócaire works on behalf of the poor and marginalised, and is involved with communities in some of the poorest countries around the world. Trócaire's mission and mandate is greatly influenced by the norms of Catholic Social Teaching. However, there is sometimes the temptation of thinking of mercy in a "top-down" manner; the judge (in a position of power) being merciful to another who lacks power. This "top-down" approach influenced Catholic Social Teaching for some time, but Church teaching now recognises the importance of an alternative approach to social reform.

It is in this way that Trocaire's work illustrates for us a different and very important dimension of mercy, one more in keeping with the meaning of *misericordia* discussed above. Trocaire's work involves the empowerment of the poor and marginalised so that they can become agents of their own change. This is not a "top-down" model of social change. Rather it is one grounded in a firm belief in the dignity and uniqueness of each person, and of the significance of participation (social, cultural, political and economic) for human flourishing. Mercy, we are reminded, moves us towards action. And when we consider the work of Trocaire, we see that mercy cannot be separated from other values such as justice, liberation, participation, empowerment. Mercy moves us towards the full realisation of the dignity of the human person made in God's image. It may drop "as the gentle rain from heaven" but its transformative effects can have lasting significance.

"... we must note that Christ, in revealing the love – mercy of God, at the same time demanded from people that they also should be guided in their lives by love and mercy. This requirement forms part of the very essence of the messianic message, and constitutes the heart of the Gospel ethos."

St John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 3

Brother Martin Byrne

A Litany of Mercy in the Inner City of Dublin

“Kyrie, eleison”

In our neighbourliness on the streets of the North Wall
there is a public expression of compassion,
a trace of the divine inner-city DNA in our hearts.

This tangible wave of care
is most obvious at times of pain and loss.
These particular impulses of love within the community
call us beyond ourselves to feel for others.

Such experiences are hints of God
in our peripheral, hurting world
and this mystery explodes in our compassion.

Let's carry on caring in our community,
finding space to sit together, to chat and to tell our stories.
In this North Wall parish where the river ends and the sea begins,
we are together swimming in the ocean of divinity.

In the Divine liturgy of the Orthodox churches the litany of the “*Kyrie, eleison*” is repeatedly intoned as preparation for the Eucharistic mystery. The community stands in its naked humanity beneath the gushing waterfall of God's loving mercy.

The word mercy in English is the translation of the Greek word *eleos*. This word has the same ultimate root as the old Greek word for oil, or more precisely, olive oil; a substance which was used extensively as a soothing agent for bruises and minor wounds. The oil was poured onto the wound and gently massaged in, thus soothing, comforting and making whole the injured part. The Greek idiom for ‘Lord, have mercy,’ is ‘*Kyrie, eleison*’ that is to say, ‘Lord, soothe me, comfort me, take away my pain, show me your steadfast love.’

Thus, mercy does not refer so much to justice, a very Western interpretation perhaps, but to the infinite loving-kindness of God, and his compassion for suffering humanity! **“Kyrie, eleison”**

I have been privileged in my life to participate in the Ignatian Exercises and to experience at first hand, during the first week, my need to taste God’s infinite, steadfast and forgiving love. Strengthened in this unmerited embrace of grace, I, as fragile and convoluted, am then empowered to choose the costly path of discipleship in all its claims. **“Christe, eleison”**

Being moved to respond to human misery and to suffering is integral to mercy. The gospel word *splanchna* connotes an emotional response of compassionate action. We are moved to care for another, to ease their pain and in so doing we will generally have to sacrifice our own comfort. Jesus in his person, in his actions and through his parables explicates *trócaire*. He is the incarnation of God’s loving nature, who continually calls on us to be compassion. As Christians, Jesus reminds us, we will be judged by the quality of our generous and enduring *trócaire* towards those who are pained, outcasts, strangers and misfits. However, it is only by standing under the fast-rushing cascade of God’s mysterious love, can we hope to manifest the mystery of God’s essence in our interpersonal and political relationships. The woman who washed Jesus feet with her tears (Luke 7:38) could be so kindly because she had experienced profound acceptance and loving-kindness. **“Kyrie, eleison”**

Relating in friendship with people who have names and faces and who have been brutalised by the violence of poverty, we are stirred to *trócaire*. To involve ourselves in mutual, friendly kinship is risky and continually calls for humble kenosis. Our hearts are stretched. **“Christe, eleison”**

Trócaire results from seeing the world of our suffering brothers and sisters as God sees it. It involves a heart response and a commitment to action. Screams, cries of frustration and dark, silent laments are daily shrieked globally. *Trócaire* responds to this silenced chorus by letting howling, ground-down people know that they matter to us and that oil is available to sooth our pained humanity. This pulse of God is accessible to transform humanity. **“Kyrie, eleison”**

Around here potential is squelched and people die before their time. The pride, care and devotion that most families lavish at the birth of a new baby are palpable. Hope incarnate is celebrated and shared within the community. This cradle of loving enables our children to negotiate the swamp lands of life, to keep going and to free ourselves from the wash of shame, deep feelings of inadequacy and the entitled gaze of the privileged. Mercy prizes resistance to degradation and sketches out our landscape of humanity. **“Christe, eleison”**

Within our human commerce, wriggle room is found for this mystery we call God, when we are moved to compassion, when we notice our hurting brothers and sisters and when our numbed and atrophied hearts are freed from the shackles of self-focussed distraction. Coming out from our gated communities of security and power we are freed through mercy to make eye contact, to shake hands and to share our lives in friendship with the struggling about us. ***“Kyrie, eleison”***

The Divine liturgy on the streets of the inner city where God incarnate is rendered that bit powerless by the violence of poverty is different. Mercy here is a life-force impelling the local community to remain human, creative and dynamic, speaking and living its raw, polemical, disturbing Word. Mercifully, with all our contradictions, our inner city spirituality is not an exact science but is a connectedness with mystery, as we lean unsure into the cloud of unknowing. Our God does not wish us to be ridiculed, silenced, excluded or forgotten. ***“Christe, eleison”***

Trócaire – What does it mean?

...the Irish language puts more emphasis on action for mercy than to show mercy. We talk about “trócaire a dhéanamh” – to do mercy and not just to show it.



“Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him.”

**Pope Francis
Misericordiae Vultus**

**BULL OF INDICTION OF THE
EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY**

Left:
Milton Okello with his
granddaughter in Bar
Kawach, Barlonyo,
northern Uganda,
August, 2011.

Fr. Pat Hogan

Homily delivered for the televised Holy Thursday Mass, 2013 with members of South Hill Parish and staff from Trócaire

As a young Priest I worked in Northern Nigeria where the parish extended to more than fifty towns and villages. One particular village Kazai was two and a half hours away travelling by motorbike. It wasn't an easy trip crossing rivers and streams. After visiting Kazai for quite some time I announced to them that I wasn't going to come any more, my reason being that they seemed to have no interest in doing anything for themselves. One young man, Amos, stood up and told me that I could not stop coming as I was the only one who ever came to see them, no one else was interested in them. I was so taken by his response that I continued travelling there and eventually things began to happen.

In a parish in Ireland I visited a middle-aged lady one day. I knew that she was not in a very happy place and hadn't been for years. I listened to her story that had caused her deep upset and mental torture and in the end she used a phrase that I haven't forgotten, she said, 'I thought that no one would ever come'.

Another lady described to me her experience of rearing her family and having nothing, no money, no food and five small children in the house. She said that she would catch herself looking out the window wondering, would anyone ever come and would they come with something. That is an image that I cannot forget.

There are many people who continue to wait throughout our world, wait for justice, wait for food, wait for freedom, wait for recognition, waiting for someone to come. There are many in our own country who are forced to wait while others have much easier access.

I see an agency like Trócaire as the one who goes to those places in the world where many are waiting. Waiting for their stories to be heard, waiting for someone to journey with them to a place of greater justice and build greater family and community sustainability. I do not see Trócaire going with answers or solutions but rather going with a willingness to listen and a willingness to be partners in other people's

journeys and development. Not only do they go to those who are waiting but they bring them to us in their stories and news of their development.

Trócaire is sent by us to those who wait and who have waited so long.

Jesus's entire life was spent on going to those who were waiting; for dignity, for acceptance and recognition, for forgiveness. He came to those who were waiting for meaning, purpose and a sense of the true God. His entire life was one of going to meet people, listening to those who came to him, raising people up in dignity, self-confidence and life. He continually reminded them that were part of a far greater family. His entire life was one of washing feet. In the end he tied the Eucharist and the washing of feet together, you cannot have one without the other.

I would like to think that Trócaire has travelled throughout the world for the past 40 years washing feet, in their respectful presence, listening, acknowledging the goodness of those they have met and journeying with individuals and communities to a better life.

I would imagine that they would be the first to admit that no matter what they bring they receive far more, allowing themselves be touched by the goodness of those they meet, goodness and love shining in places where you would least expect to find it.

As we recall the heart of the Gospel message in the action of Jesus washing feet and asking us to do likewise, we acknowledge those who do it in our world. In acknowledging them we allow ourselves to be inspired. We pay tribute to Trócaire and the many others who serve overseas and at home. There are many silent but great examples of people caring for each other in our families and communities, whole lives given over to care. They are an inspiration to us. They truly wash feet and are truly Eucharistic.

So let us acknowledge and celebrate... those who do it so well..

Those who love, and continue to love even when life gets more difficult.

Those who care, and continue to care even when they don't have enough for themselves.

Those who refuse to lose hope as their resources dwindle.

Those who believe in conscience even though they know its going to cost them but integrity is sufficient for them.

Those who can say I have enough.

We are all called to the gentleness of washing each other's feet using all the gifts that we have received but we must remember that when we bend down with someone we rise up with far more.

Right:
Maria Gutierrez with her son, Dani (11). Maria and her husband, Rigoberto, are bravely leading the north Honduran community of La Confianza in their struggle for land and a livelihood.



Blessed Virgin Mary, who can worthily repay you with praise and thanks for having rescued a fallen world by your generous consent! Receive our gratitude, and by your prayers obtain the pardon of our sins. Take our prayers into the sanctuary of heaven and enable them to make our peace with God.

Holy Mary, help the miserable, strengthen the discouraged, comfort the sorrowful, pray for your people, plead for the clergy, intercede for all women consecrated to God. May all who venerate you feel now your help and protection. Be ready to help us when we pray, and bring back to us the answers to our prayers. Make it your continual concern to pray for the people of God, for you were blessed by God and were made worthy to bear the Redeemer of the world, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Saint Augustine of Hippo



"Be Merciful, even as your father is merciful" (Lk 6:36)

Left:
Amos Kimathi (11)
in Kamugaa, Tharaka
Nithi. Son of Teresina
Karimi and brother of
Anthony. Meru
Diocese.

Hannah Evans

Never grow accustomed to injustice and inequality

Trócaire boxes will assume their pride of place in Church porches this month as the 43rd Annual Trócaire Lenten appeal takes place. Whilst it can sometimes seem as if one Lenten campaign resembles the next, this year's Lenten campaign is one with a difference for two reasons.



Firstly, this year's Trócaire box is adorned with images of people based in Ireland with the words 'Join the Fight for Justice' highlighting the fact that these Irish based supporters and volunteers go to incredible lengths to protect the most vulnerable people in our world. Each face represents a genuine Trócaire supporter who gives regularly of their time and support to Trócaire. They do this through a variety of different roles in parishes including volunteering, awareness raising, fundraising or through their pastoral and teaching capacities. This year's box is both a recognition and a celebration of ordinary people who do extraordinary things in the pursuit of justice. They are in effect 'Missionaries of Mercy' as requested by Pope Francis in this Holy Year of Mercy.

The second apparent difference with this year's Trócaire Lenten campaign is that it takes place during the Catholic Church's Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. Our supporters on this year's Trócaire box are an embodiment of this mercy in action.

Pope Francis has called for Catholics all around the world to engage fully in this year's celebrations of mercy in their diocese and parishes. This is not a passive request, but instead a real substantial call to step out into the unknown and to trust in the merciful salvific love of Christ, "the promised triumph of Christ's love enfolds everything in the Father's mercy" he tells us. Indeed, every individual has had the 'door of mercy' open to them as each diocese physically opened their 'Holy Doors' and has invited others to pass through them on the 8th of December.

“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.” (Colossians 4:3)

Similarly, in Rome, as he opened the Holy door on the 8th December, Pope Francis was heard saying “Open the gates of justice” as he pushed open the doors in St. Peter’s Basilica. This open door serves as a symbol of welcome, openness and grace. “It is the year of forgiveness, the year of reconciliation” and the time for a “revolution of tenderness,” he said. Indeed, before this event in Rome, Pope Francis had already opened the first Holy Door in Notre Dame Cathedral on 29th November in Bangui, the capital of the war-torn Central African Republic during his trip there. By placing this act of mercy outside of Rome, he was stressing the universal call of all Christians to live mercifully, and the expectation that it would be exercised all around the world. “Going through the Holy Door is the sign of our faith in the Lord Jesus, who didn’t come to judge us, but to save us,” the pontiff said

“Mercy identifies with many types of brokenness in our world today and brings to that brokenness, love, healing and support.” (Deus Caritas Est)

Below:
Teresina Karimi,
Tharaka Nithi, Kenya.

For this special Year of Mercy, Trócaire has developed a Catechetical programme entitled *Rediscovering Mercy* which invites individuals and parish groups across Ireland to explore and reconnect their faith with the concept of mercy. The *Rediscovering Mercy* programme aims to bring participants into a space to discover and contemplate God’s love and plan for them. It is also an opportunity to see how they are being called to love others in their own family, community and, indeed, around the world. If you would like to avail of this resource please log on to the Trócaire website www.trocaire.org/parishes or contact mary.boyce@trocaire.org for a copy of this resource.

Prior to his time spent in the Central African Republic in November of 2015, Pope Francis had also visited Kenya. There he was greeted by staff of Trócaire in the Kangemi slum, Nairobi, including Paul Healy Trócaire’s Country Director, and Programme Officer for Gender Based Violence and HIV, Catherine Khamali.

This year’s Trócaire Lenten campaign will focus upon the plight of the people of Kenya. Namely, a rural area called Tharaka Nithi in the lowlands of Mount Kenya, where a young family have been forced apart by migration as a result of climate change.



When Teresina and Julius were children, the rain fell and the land was green. Today their home, just two hours from Nairobi, is a different place. The security that once came with farming life has vanished, taking the people of rural Kenya with it, and leaving abandoned rural villages in its wake. In their village, everyone relies on farming. It is a sad irony that men like Julius have had to leave their families to work on other farms far away that have flowing irrigation schemes, the very lifeblood they themselves cannot afford.

Year after year, Julius and Teresina have looked on as climate change dried up their two acres of farmland. Their soil became lifeless and their crops became parched and limp. Migration was the only possible way to put the last two of their five children through school. And so, just last year, Julius made the difficult decision to move away permanently to work on a large commercial farm. Unfortunately, this problem of forced migration due to climate change is not exclusive to this part of Kenya.

Trócaire is witnessing similar climate-related stories in other countries where we work like Malawi, Honduras, Pakistan and Ethiopia where their capacity to deal with the problems of climate change are much fewer. Longer dry seasons, hotter days and droughts followed by intense rainfall all lead to a greater risk of floods and detrimental damage to crops. It also poses a risk to human health through water and vector-borne diseases (i.e. from an insect). Year after year crops are failing and farmers can no longer plan when to sow them. Families are struggling to withstand the ever-increasing length of their hungry season.

Trócaire is working alongside families like Teresina and Julius' in their struggle against the effects of climate change. This year, in partnership with the Diocese of Meru we hope to develop an irrigation system for famers there struggling to water their crops and grow food. This will allow communities to cope with drier seasons and continue to farm their land and provide for their families.

Last year alone, Trócaire's work benefited the lives of 2.4 million people across 24 countries thanks to the continued support of parishes and communities here across the island of Ireland. This Lent, Trócaire will focus on our supporters and volunteers and the committed work they undertake here in Ireland to make sure the communities and families that we work alongside overseas are never forgotten.

In 1973 a line from the pastoral letter of the Bishops of Ireland establishing Trócaire read, "....never let us grow accustomed to the injustice and inequality that exist in this world or grow weary in the work of setting it right". Trócaire's supporters fulfil this mission during Lent and throughout the year and we are eternally grateful and humbled by their work.

Daireana Ní Chinnéide

Buille na Trócaire

Tá na déithe ar buille
is an fharraige ina rabharta
racht feirige ón ngréin
is ár gcrainn ag caoineadh
lorg gaise ag cothú raic.

Tá Manannán éirithe chuige féin
le tuillte dearga fairsing
tá Anyanwo teite ón ngréin
agus Áine ag caoineadh
lorg an fhéir dhóite.

Tá tonnta teasa mharfacha
ag idiú ár n-áitribhigh farraige
an bháisteach ag clagarnach
gan stop gan coinne is sinn ag caoineadh
lorg ár niompar carbónach.

Tá sé in am do choigilt fuinnimh
chun na déithe a chiúniú
is ár gcoilte i ndeire an áil
siad na boicht a chaoineann
lorg ár bpaidreacha ar fán.

Tá an fheirmeoir sa ghort teanntaithe
ag cíorthuathail an ghorta
macallaí ó shrutháin uisce
ag caoineadh ragairne is raidhse
lorg ár n-easpa trócaire ar lár.

“The compassionate heart is in communion with all of life and is willing to enter into suffering with the heart of Christ. Compassion includes awareness, attitude and action. A deeper and clearer look at compassion, the central quality of Christ, enables us to accompany the hurting ones of our personal lives and the larger world with loving kindness. Compassion also teaches us how to live as a person of unbound love.”

Joyce Rupp

Notes on Contributors

ÉAMONN MEEHAN

Éamonn Meehan first joined Trócaire staff in 1991 as Programme Manager for the Southern Africa Region. For five years in this role, he managed the day-to-day running of Trócaire's work in South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In 1996 he became Head of the International Division, responsible for Trócaire's work overseas. This included the allocation of resources to development and humanitarian programmes and securing co-financing from the Irish government, the EU and others.

In 2002, Éamonn was appointed Deputy Director and Head of Trócaire's Ireland Division with over-arching responsibility for fund-raising and marketing, communications, development education, policy and campaigns. Previously from 1987-1991, Éamonn worked with the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO) as Regional Representative for Southern Africa based in Lesotho. A former teacher, he has taught in Clane, County Kildare, Knocklyon in County Dublin and in Turkana in Kenya. Originally from Kilmaley, County Clare, Éamonn holds a Masters in Education from Trinity College, Dublin. Éamonn became Executive Director of Trócaire on 17 October 2013.

AILBHE NÍ GHEARBHUIGH

Ailbhe Ní Ghearbhuigh was born in Kerry. She is the Irish language editor of the online journal, Southword. She has read at festivals in New York, Paris, Montreal and Berlin. In 2012 her poem *Deireadh na Feidewon Corn Uí Néill / The O'Neill Prize*. Her work has been translated into English, French, German, Czech, Spanish and Galician. She recently completed doctoral research in Irish Studies at NUI Galway. Her first collection, *Péacadh*, was published in 2008.

FR. ENDA MCDONAGH

Fr McDonagh is Professor Emeritus of Moral Theology at the Pontifical University, Maynooth. He is an internationally renowned theologian and theological adviser to the Catholic HIV and AIDS Network, a network on Catholic agencies engaged in HIV responses globally. He has written and contributed to numerous books and publications. In 2007 he was appointed an Ecumenical Canon at St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin.

FR. PAT HOGAN

Fr. Pat from Dromcollogher, Limerick was ordained in 1979. He worked for 8 years in Nigeria as a missionary priest and has been working for 7 years in Holy Family Parish, Southill, Limerick. He has a particular interest in community engagement and development and brings this interest to his work in Southill Parish.

PROFESSOR PETER MCQUILLAN

Peter McQuillan holds a B.A. and M.A. from University College, Dublin, and a Ph.D. in Celtic languages and literatures from Harvard. Before taking up his current post as Chair of the Department of Irish Language and Literature in Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana, he held the Sir John Rhys Studentship in Celtic Studies at Jesus College, Oxford University, and taught Irish at the University of Regensburg in Germany and at Harvard. He is the author of *Native and Natural: Aspects of the Concepts of Right and Freedom in Irish* (2004) which provides an analysis of the transformation of concepts of rights and freedom as expressed in the Irish language.

Notes on Contributors

DR. SUZANANE MULLIGAN

Dr. Mulligan is a graduate of the Pontifical University, Maynooth. She lectured in Moral Theology at the Milltown Institute and currently lectures at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. She is the Coordinator of the Higher Diploma in Theological Studies and was Finlay Post-Doctorate Fellow in Theology (Milltown Institute; 2006–2008). Her research interests include Catholic Social Teaching and the Common Good, Ethics of Memory, HIV in the Developing world and Human Rights.

BROTHER MARTIN BYRNE

Martin - involved in community education in the North Wall for the past twenty-five years, is a collector of inner city stories, a Christian Brother, a Presidents' Awards Leader and a member of the 17 October Committee.

HANNAH EVANS

Hannah Evans has worked as the Church Outreach Officer with Trócaire since 2011. Prior to this she worked as a Parish Pastoral Worker with the Archdiocese of Dublin. She holds a Ba.Th in Music and Theology and an MA in Liturgy from St. Patrick's Pontifical University, Maynooth, as well as a Graduate diploma in Music Education from the University of Limerick. Hannah has led a number of Church study visits to Trócaire projects overseas and has a particular interest in educating Parishes and pastoral groups on Catholic Social Teaching and Global Development issues.

DAIRENA NÍ CHINNÉIDE

Winner of the 'Adult Published Poets' category of the 2015 Trócaire & Poetry Ireland 'Feeling the Heat' Poetry Competition.

Tá Seacht leabhar filíochta tagtha ó pheann Dairena Ní Chinnéide. I measc na gnuasaigh tá 'An Trodaí & Dánta Eile' (The Warrior and Other Poems), Cló Iar Chonnacht, 2005 agus 'Cloithear Aistear Anama Coiscéim', 2014. Maireann sí i gCorca Dhuibhne lena mac Jeaic. A former broadcaster, television producer and interpreter, she has been writing full-time since 2005. She lives and works in her Native Corca Dhuibhne.



Children from Northampton National School, Kinvara, Co Galway, who won a national competition to design the 40th anniversary Trocaire Box, placed their winning design among its predecessors, which spanned back to the 1970s. Pictured are Northampton National School students, nine-year-old twins **Niamh** (left) and **Caoimhe**.

Resources for the Year of Mercy



• Rediscovering Mercy:

This resource has been prepared by Trócaire for use in parishes by social justice groups, prayer groups and schools. It consists of four sessions focusing on the concept of mercy and its connection with justice - suitable for use at any time of the liturgical year.

Course goals:

- Building an awareness of peace and justice initiatives and concerns in our world.
- Highlighting the values of Catholic Social Teaching and our relationship with God and others.
- Contemplation on how we weave justice and mercy into our daily lives as followers of Christ.
- An insight into the work of Trócaire, both in Ireland and overseas.
- See more at: www.trocaire.org/resources/parishes/rediscovery-mercy



• Music Resource for the Year of Mercy

Written by Mary Dee, Liturgist for the Diocese of Waterford and Lismore.

Includes suggestions of hymns and psalms for various liturgical uses throughout the Year of Mercy.



• Multimedia:

Images for the Year of Mercy & a short video reflection on 'Trócaire; Mercy in Action' are available at www.trocaire.org/resources/parishes/rediscovery-mercy



• Jubilee of Mercy Candle

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Tel: 01 629 3333
Email: info@trocaire.org

Dublin City Centre

12 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 01 874 3875
Email: dublincentre@trocaire.org

Cork

9 Cook Street, Cork
Tel: 021 427 5622
Email: corkcentre@trocaire.org

Belfast

50 King Street, Belfast BT1 6AD
Tel: 028 90 808 030
Email: infolni@trocaire.org

www.trocaire.org