SANTA MARIA
COLLEGE

SANTA MARIA COLLEGE HISTORY

Catherine McAuley

Catherine McAuley founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831. Catherine lived in Ireland in the early 19th century, when most people lived in great poverty. She responded to the needs of the poor and made a difference in their lives, providing schools for poor children, shelter and training for poor women, and caring for the poor, sick and dying.

Catherine McAuley

Family life

Catherine was born in September 1778 into a happy and wealthy family. Her. father was a prosperous landowner who provided Catherine with a role model by helping others and inviting the poor into his home. However, Catherine's father died when she was five years old. Her mother was unable to manage the finances, and the family gradually lost all their wealth. When Mrs McAuley died in 1798, Catherine was 20 years old and financially dependent on the charity of her relatives. Over the next five years, she lived with some of these relatives as a foster daughter.

In 1803, Catherine was adopted by the Callaghans, a wealthy but childless couple with whom she lived for the next twenty years. While she was living with them, she began to put into practice her saying: "If you really love God, you will prove your love, for the proof of love is deed" Catherine used her time to educate poor girls and women and to look after the sick and dying.

House of Mercy

When Mr Callaghan died in 1822, Catherine inherited the Callaghan estate, valued in today's terms at over $3 million. Catherine was now aged 44, a wealthy heiress and in a position to take up life in Dublin society. However, this was not the pathway that Catherine would choose to follow. To the surprise of her family and friends, Catherine used her fortune to build a large house in Baggot Street, a fashionable part of Dublin, where poor children could be educated, and poor women provided with shelter. Catherine's house was opened on 24 September 1827. As this was the feast day of Our Lady of Mercy, the house was named the House of Mercy. Catherine was joined at the House of Mercy by a group of young women who believed, as Catherine did, that "the poor need help today, not next week"

Sisters of Mercy Founded

To safeguard the work being done at the House of Mercy, Catherine founded the Sisters of Mercy on 12 December 1831. The sisters became known as the 'Walking Nuns' as they were the first order to be allowed to leave their convent and go out into the community to nurse the poor, sick and dying in their homes and hospitals.

The Spirit of Mercy Spread

Catherine worked tirelessly to respond to the needs of the poor. In the 10 years following 1831, she set up 14 foundations in Ireland and England. This growth continued after her death, with the Sisters of Mercy going overseas to help the poor. Catherine had started what was to become the largest congregation in the world to be established by an English-speaking founder.

Catherine's Death

After only 10 years as a Sister of Mercy, Catherine died on 11 November 1841. According to her wishes, she was laid in the ground just like the poor in the garden of the House of Mercy.

Mercy Tradition of Hospitality

Catherine was concerned about the tiredness of the sisters who gathered at her bedside while she was dying and asked that: "the sisters have a comfortable cup of tea when I am gone."

In this way, the tradition of a comfortable cup of tea as a symbol of Mercy hospitality was born and survives today.

The Venerable Catherine McAuley

In April 1990, Pope John Paul II declared Catherine to be 'The Venerable Catherine McAuley'. This is the first step towards Catherine's canonisation. Catherine: a woman who made a difference. Catherine dared to take a close look at her social environment. She saw the needs of her time, she responded to those needs, she made a difference.

Foundation Sisters Arrive in Perth

Seven women of Mercy arrived in the Swan River Colony on 8 January 1846, after a sea voyage of 113 days from England. They were led by Mother Ursula Frayne.

The women were:

- Mother Catherine (Anna Marie) Gogarty
- Sister Anne Xavier (Anne) Dillon
- Sister Ignatia (Catherine) de la Hoyde
- Sister Aloysius (Eliza) Kelly
- Sister Baptist (Ellen) O'Donnell
- Sister Evangelista (Catherine) O'Reilly.

Ursula Frayne

Santa Maria College circa 1938

History

First Catholic School

The opening day for the sisters' first school on St George's Terrace was 2 February 1846, when only one girl arrived to be enrolled. However, things soon changed and the demand for school places increased. School buildings, including a boarding school, were built in the grounds of the present Mercedes College.

Santa Maria College planned: 1935

As the demand for boarding places increased from country families, the Mercy Superior at the time, Mother Brigid McDonald, and her Council resolved to build a new ladies' college for boarding and day students in the bushland in Attadale. The main administration building, which was designed in a Spanish style, was the initial structure. The land cost £5,000. Construction and furnishing required an advance from the bank of just under £30,000. By 1947, the net debt was down to just under £4,000 due to prudent management by the sisters.

Santa Maria College opens: 1938

The College opened in February 1938 with approximately 60 boarders and 13 day-students, staffed by seven Sisters of Mercy. The boarders were transferred from Victoria Square Ladies' College (now Mercedes College).

The following is an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the General Council of the Sisters of Mercy:

"Santa Maria Ladies' College, Attadale was blessed and opened by his Grace, Archbishop Prendiville on 6 February 1938. The Boarders from Ladies' College, Victoria Square are transferred to the new College, which commands a magnificent view of the Swan River."

War Years: 1942 - 1945

During the war years, the college was examined with a view to annexing it as a military hospital, but it was found unsuitable due to the absence of a lift. Soldiers from the military camp at Point Walter did, however, attend the College Sunday Mass. A small searchlight was set up on Santa Maria College's lower Figure Eight lawn, and it was used to train recruits to spot enemy aircraft.

Post-war Years

The post-war period brought with it a rapid expansion in residential development around the College. As a result, there was a growth in student numbers, and the student population at Santa Maria College changed from primarily boarders to a majority of day students.

Foundation students

Changes Over the Years

1937	Foundation stone laid
1938	February - Santa Maria College opened
1939	Swimming pool and tennis courts built
1947	Tennis courts renewed and extended
1955	Chapel built
1958	North-south section of Mercy building constructed
1962	First section of Doyle building constructed and the primary school became a separate entity
1964	Second section of Doyle building constructed First east-west section of Mercy building constructed
1968	Second east-west section of Mercy building constructed and the secondary school became a separate entity
1969	Chapel remodelled to reflect Vatican II Third section of the Mercy building constructed
1970	Third section of the primary school built
1973	Primary school building and surrounds become part of Mel Maria Primary School
1974	McDonald Cultural Centre (the McDonald building) built as a Music and Drama complex. The first section of the Goold building constructed. The building held a library on the first floor. On the ground floor were the Science and Art departments and the canteen
1981	Boarding community: four separate boarding houses built. Previously, boarders lived in the main administration building
1983	Administration section added to what is now the Doyle building
1985	Santa Maria convent is closed. The sisters moved to 23 Moreing Road, Attadale
1986	Theatre Arts centre and Art facility are constructed. The Sisters' former dining room is converted into the Theatre Arts Green Room. The old convent was converted into the current Music Department. The second stage of the Goold building construction extended the library and provided further science laboratory space. The move of Music into the main building freed the McDonald building to be developed as a gymnasium
1990	New swimming pool constructed Final east-west section of Mercy building constructed
1991	Chapel refurbished
1996	Irene McCormack building completed
1997	Boarders' Recreation Centre constructed Information and Technology centre located under the library
1998	Refurbishment of the McAuley building
2001	McKillop undercover area constructed
2005	Refurbishment of boarding houses
2008	Mercy building (previously C-block) renovated and extended

2009	New Learning Plaza, ICT, Food, Technology, Community (staff) Room and Cafe constructed Renaming of College Buildings: • Francis Goold building (previously: B-block) • Mary MacKillop building (previously: Undercover Area) • Anna Maria Doyle building (previously: Mel Maria) Years 5 – 7 students commence at the College
2010	Upgrade to McDonald Hall Renaming of College Buildings: • McAuley building (previously: Administration block) • Mercy building (previously: C-block) • Sawle Learning Plaza (previously: Library and Learning Plaza) • McCormack building (previously: Visual Arts and Science)
2011	Completion of the McDonald building Landscaping of the Terrace completed
2013	Sawle Learning Plaza (previously: Library and Learning Plaza) renamed Sawle Literature and Research Centre Level 1 and Level 2 Inclusion of Hospitality as College value, in place of Mercy
2015	Consilii Science and HASS Centre completed and officially opened
2019	Refuburishment of bedrooms of two boarding houses, Betrand and Catherine Courtyards in all four of boarding houses also refurbished
2023	New pool heating system installed
2024	Student Services moved to McAuley building Solar panels installed on Mercy and McDonald buildings New bus bays on Moreing Road Refurbished Village rooms and surrounds Air conditioning installed in Music rooms McDonald building refreshed changerooms New doors in all boarding bedrooms
2025	Cultural Centre development commences

Traditions

College Values

Santa Maria College is a Years 5 to 12 Catholic school for girls, both day and residential, offering a quality education inspired by Jesus Christ and the vision of Catherine McAuley, with a commitment to living out the Mercy values of:

Hospitality

We respect the dignity of all, creating a welcoming community where everyone belongs.

Compassion

We act with empathy to care for others, with open hearts and minds.

Justice

We promote respectful relationships, equity for all and care for our planet.

Service

We respond to those in need to improve the community.

Excellence

We persevere with courage to achieve our personal best.

Crest

The Patroness of the College is Mary, Mother of God. The crest reflects this with the 'M' in the centre of the shield standing for Mary. The initials 'SMC' at the top of the crest stand for Santa Maria College. Santa Maria is Spanish for Holy Mary. The laurel leaves on either side of the shield represent the honour that Mary deserves and the glory that God receives when life is lived according to His plan.

Anthem: Soli Deo Gloria

Let us all our voices raise, so they are joined as one
And when we have sung out our faith our cause has just begun

Refrain
Soli Deo Gloria, for the Love of God
Soli Deo Gloria, for the Glory of God

The more we work together, the stronger we will be
And when we have accomplished feats we'll join in unity

We thank God for our heritage, that we are blessed to see
And now we pledge to do our part to build community

Cathy O'Leary (1983), Third Verse - Sr Sheila Sawle RSM

College Prayer

Lord, as the Santa Maria Community,
may the Mercy tradition burn strong in our hearts as we strive to achieve
the vision of Catherine McAuley.
Empower us to work with enthusiasm and passion for the good of all.
Teach us, to welcome others with our mind, heart and soul,
in the spirit of Hospitality.
To feel for others and reach out to them,
in the spirit of Compassion.
To uphold the rights of all people,
in the spirit of Justice.
To respond to the needs of others,
in the spirit of Service.
To strive to meet our personal best,
in the spirit of Excellence.
Help us grow in Mercy, to change the world for better, in your name.
Amen.

Written by Kim Landers (Class of 2009), Eleanor Brennan (Class of 2009), Mollie Middleton-Wares (Class of 2011)

Updated in 2013 to reflect addition of Hospitality as a College Mercy Value.

Houses

When the College opened in 1938, there were three houses: Mercian, School and Trinity. From 1941 - 1945, Xavier House was introduced. From 1963 - 1972, Xavier House was again included. From 1972 - 1998 the house system consisted of four houses named McAuley, Teresa, Camara and Chisholm. In 1998, the house system was restructured into six houses: de la Hoyde, Dillon, Frayne, Kelly, O'Donnell and O'Reilly. In 2007, two more houses were incorporated: Byrne and Corbett. These houses compete annually for the McAuley Shield.

BYRNE - Orange

Mother M (Esther) de Sales, (1832 - 1916) was born in Dublin. Esther became a postulant and joined Ursula and Anne Xavier on their return to Australia in 1851. She was the first Sister of Mercy to celebrate sixty years of profession in Australia. Mary de Sales was an exceptional superior and middle school teacher.

Motto: I have found and conquered

CORBETT - Purple

Sister M (Hilda) Bertrand (1894 - 1983) was born in Perth. Hilda attended school at Our Ladies College, Victoria Square, Perth. She entered the Mercy convent at Victoria Square in 1915 at the age of 21. She was the first Principal of Santa Maria College from when it opened in 1938 until 1960.
Motto: God provides

DE LA HOYDE - Black

Sister M (Catherine) Ignatia, (1804 - 1875) was born in County Lowth. Catherine was professed at the first Mercy ceremony in Australia, 25 January 1846. She worked at Fremantle and Guildford, where she was mainly involved in visiting the poor and the sick.
Motto: Of the living speak nothing but what is true

DILLON - Silver

Mother M (Anne) Xavier, (1818 - 1890) was born in County Tipperary. Anne entered the Institute of Mercy at Baggot Street, Dublin in 1840. Her sister Ellen joined her in Perth in 1848. She and Ursula Frayne both moved to Melbourne to found the order in Victoria.
Motto: While I have breath, I have hope

FRAYNE - Red

Mother M (Clara) Ursula (1816 - 1885) was born in Dublin. Clara was under Catherine McAuley's spiritual guidance. She was involved in establishing several new Mercy convents in Ireland, Newfoundland, Western Australia and Victoria.
Motto: I would rather die than be disgraced

KELLY - Blue

Mother M (Eliza) Aloysius (1822 - 1896) was born in Dublin and arrived in Perth as a novice in 1846 with Ursula Frayne. She worked to improve the education offered at the Fremantle branch convent, before helping to establish the secondary school at Victoria Square.
Motto: God is a strong tower for me

O'DONNELL - Yellow

Mother M (Ellen) Baptist (1816 - 1862) entered the Baggott Street Institute in 1845 and was professed in Perth. She was involved in the establishment of the school at Victoria Square. She worked in Fremantle and then was elected to replace Ursula Frayne as the leader in 1857.
Motto: In this sign we conquer

O'REILLY - Green

Mother M Evangelista (1824 - 1899) was born in County Cavan. She was initially the servant to the Perth Mercy community but eventually entered religious life in 1846. She had helped set up branch houses in Guildford and York and an orphanage in Subiaco. She became the Mother Superior in 1883.
Motto: By fortitude and prudence

House mottos were no longer used from 2024.

Boarding

Structure and history

We have a long and proud history of boarding at Santa Maria College. The College opened in February 1938 with approximately 60 boarders and 13 daygirls, staffed by seven Sisters of Mercy.

The present boarding facility was built in 1981 and refurbished in 1992. The recreation centre was added in 1996. In 2006, the facilities were upgraded with the installation of air conditioning, refurbishment of bathrooms, recarpeting and painting of all areas.

The boarding community is organised into four separate houses, each with two housemothers. The Director of Boarding has overall responsibility for the boarding community and for the care of the boarders. She maintains close contact with the Principal and teaching staff. There is also a health centre with a roster of two registered nurses.

Catherine House

Named after Venerable Catherine McAuley, the Foundress of the Sisters of Mercy.

Ursula House

Named after Sister Ursula Frayne, the leader of the group of six Sisters of Mercy who came from Ireland to Perth in 1846 to care for and educate the Catholic and non-Catholic children of the families of the early settlers. She also visited the sick in their homes and cared for orphaned children.

Bertrand House

Named after Sister Mary Bertrand Corbett, the first Principal of Santa Maria College, from 1938 - 1960. Sister was a Master of Arts in Classics, with a triple major in Greek, Latin and English. She was also a talented musician, having obtained her teacher's diploma ('letters') when she was 16. An enthusiastic promoter of theatre arts, Sister was responsible for the annual school productions, one of the most memorable being My Fair Lady.

Sylvester House

Named after Sister Mary Sylvester, who was one of the group of Sisters of Mercy who founded Santa Maria College. Sister Sylvester was responsible for the catering in the boarding school and for making the girls' uniforms. A great lover of people, Sister was always ready to listen to and comfort the girls when school life seemed difficult. After visiting Sister, they usually left in better spirits and with some 'goodies' to eat.

SANTA MARIA
COLLEGE

18 Stoneham Road, Attadale WA 6156
Locked Bag 1, Melville WA 6956
T: +61 8 6330 0200
www.santamaria.wa.edu.au

A Ministry of Mercy Education Ltd
ABN 69 154 531 870