

The History of the Mercy Ring

In the fall of 1960, a new school first opened its doors in Baltimore - founded in the tradition of Catherine McAuley and the Sisters of Mercy, with the mission to provide a superior education to diverse women. On September 26th of that year, Mercy High School opened its doors to the members of the class of 1964. This new school needed a symbol that would reflect the uniqueness that is Mercy, and Sr. Mary Ferdinand Tunis helped the members of the first senior class to design the Mercy ring. While it was important then to see the newness of Mercy in this ring, it was designed with an eye on the future and the many graduates who would one day wear it proudly.

Each year the Mercy ring has been bestowed on the members of the senior class. This ring contains a garnet to reflect the red of the school colors. Its shape is suggestive of the building itself, an appealing design found in the honeycombed windows of the library. As new Mercy alumnae head off to college or career or family or service, they go bearing the Mercy charism and wearing a symbol of Mercy High School.

On one side of the ring is a shield adapted from the shield of the Sisters of Mercy, which itself was adapted from a shield dating back to the

thirteenth century. This original shield, Spanish in origin, was oval in shape with four red stripes for courage on a field of white for purity. For the school ring this was modernized to the three stripes with a cross overhead.

There is a second shield on the Mercy ring which is a symbolic interpretation of the statue of Our Lady of Mercy. At the top, a crown represents Mary. Below the crown is a Chi Rho and an orb representing the Christ Child whom Mary is holding. The Lady holds a fleur-de-lis in her hand and the Baby holds a staff in his. Both of these are found at the bottom of the shield. The central MHS stand for all that is Mercy High School.

Mercy graduates know and recognize each other by this ring. As Mercy girls become Women of Mercy, they are bound by their common experience and the symbol they wear. We are women of compassion and justice, grounded in the Mercy tradition. This class, the class of 2022, today joins all Mercy graduates since the class of 1964 in receiving their rings as a symbol of something much greater than their time here at Mercy.

It is a symbol that says: Red for strength and courage, gold for our devotion so strong, our rings representing Mercy, to which part of us will always belong.

Today, with the same anticipation as the class of '64 and of every following class, you each join the more than 8,000 Mercy women who wear this ring. Welcome and Congratulations!