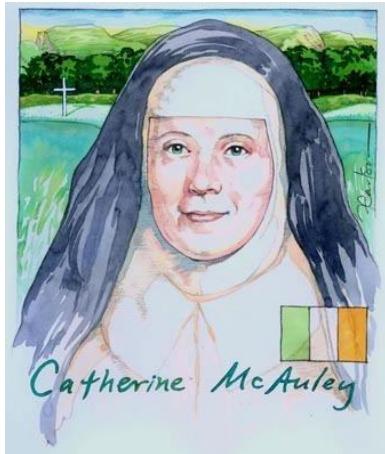


The Catherine McAuley Challenge



Opening Prayer

May our lives be a hymn of praise, O God!
May your glory shine forth in us!
Strengthen us in love, root us in mercy,
That all persons may know your love is everlasting.

(Intercessions of Mercy, 2009. p. 155)

Readings/Reflection Questions

Reading One

"If Catherine had lived at the end of the twentieth century, instead of the cries of the poor children of Dublin haunting her dreams, the cries of a suffering world would have troubled her sleep. She would no doubt have turned her energy to global interrelationships of rich and poor, knowing that as long as in any country the poor, the sick, the uneducated are oppressed or marginalized, the light of the Gospel is dimmed, the peace and justice in the world remain elusive ideals."

(Marie Gaudry, RSM, *With Catherine, My Spirit Mother – A retreat with Catherine McAuley*, Sisters of Mercy, Parramatta, 1999).

Catherine McAuley challenges us to listen for the cries of the poor and vulnerable today. What cries do you hear in your ministry?

Reading Two

"Contemplating Catherine's life and work in the early nineteenth century, and then reflecting on what might be – perhaps ought to be – the life and work of the Sisters of Mercy in the early twenty-first century, one could be easily overwhelmed with the magnitude of vocational responsibility and then resort to silence, inertia or escape. Therefore, one has to try to espouse Catherine's two-fold commitment to trust and

urgency: 'While we place all our confidence in God – we must act as if all depended on our exertion.'"

(Mary Sullivan, RSM, 2008, "Catherine McAuley in the Nineteenth and Twenty-First Centuries," *Listen*, Vol. 26, No. 1. 24).

How is your ministry challenged by the weight and scope of the need in today's world?

Where can your ministry have the greatest impact for change?

Reading Three

"In response to the enquiry from a priest about the qualities necessary for a woman wishing to join the Sisters of Mercy, Catherine responded simply that all one needed was 'an ardent desire to be united to God and to serve the poor.' This is the heartbeat of what it means for each of us, religious and lay, to walk the path of mercy, to carry forward the charism of mercy, as so many of you do in your schools. While in every age and in each place we strive to interpret this call in terms of the times and situations in which we find ourselves, we are challenged to hold in careful balance our lives of prayer and our lives of service."

("The Charism of Catherine McAuley")

When have you responded to the challenge of carrying forward the charism of mercy in your place?

Reading Four

"In terms of community spirit amongst the early Sisters, there is ample evidence of the valued placed on conviviality and simple fun, and the ways in which Catherine herself affirmed and fostered such opportunities, often in the midst of the crudest of losses and setbacks ... Gathering together for 'recreation' in all meanings of that word, was crucial to the group's well-being."

(Mary Wickham, RSM, 2004. "Storms and Teacups." *Listen*. Vol. 22, No 1.21).

How do you raise the spirits of those in your community when times are tough?

Sharing around the readings and/or questions

Closing Prayer

God of justice and mercy, you are our saving God. Come with your power to save and free those held captive by oppression. Use us as your instruments of mercy and peace. Give us the courage to challenge all that enslaves the human spirit. This we ask in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Sources

Be as Shining Lamps, p 89

Intercessions of Mercy, p. 155