

Affectionately Yours (Paper 6 of 6)

BY MARY REYNOLDS RSM

WE are all familiar with 'signature tunes' – pieces of music that specifically identify a particular programme. Today it has become fashionable to use the word 'signature' to highlight the uniqueness of a person or an item or an enterprise, so we get for example signature dishes on restaurant menus – recipes or dishes available in that restaurant alone. If we were to apply a signature to Catherine, I think it would be 'affectionately yours'. It was her favourite end greeting in her letters but more particularly, it was the distinguishing characteristic of her relationships. She herself often encouraged the sisters to be affectionate and cordial to all. Indeed, affectionate and cordial, are among her most frequently used words, always conveying her warmth and intimacy.

The contemporaries of Catherine invariably recalled her great approachability and naturalness, her liveliness and cheerfulness, her kindness and solicitude for each sister, her unpretentious way of being in their midst. From the outset, Catherine wanted a family spirit to reign in the community. Mary Clare Moore gives us an insight on this:

"Being of a remarkably cheerful disposition, she loved to see all under her charge happy and joyful. She tried to make them so, not only by removing whatever could disturb their peace, but also by contributing to the general cheerfulness of the Community especially at Recreation. Although burdened with many cares, she was at that duty as lively and merry as the youngest Sisters, who used to delight in being near her, listening to her amusing remarks and anecdotes. She had a natural talent for composing verses in a playful style, and would often sing them to some cheerful tune with admirable simplicity. She was a great enemy to that spirit of sadness and discontent which destroys true devotion, nor could she suffer them to take a gloomy view of passing events".¹

We know too that Catherine delighted in fun and liveliness. She recommended that there be a piano in every community room and across the top of one of her letters she wrote in big letters "Dance every evening".²

She wished simply to be one of the sisters, shunning the formalities which generally marked religious life in her time. She wanted love, not regulations, to bind the sisters together. Some ordinary life situations give us an

insight into Catherine's loving relationships. When her sisters were suffering any loss from sickness or death she would make great efforts to visit them and when this was not possible she would write to them. In one such letter she wrote to Frances Warde:

"I have been uneasy about you since I heard how you have been affected, though I am aware there may not be any serious cause, for Sister Mary Teresa White had the same kind of attack – yet I know you are not sufficiently cautious... Now let me entreat you not to be going through the new Convent, or out in the garden, even on the mildest day during this month – without careful caping up".³

When there was danger of an over-serious spirit ruling in a community, she would write and urge a little nonsense and play, as we see in one of the Tullamore letters. It seems that the Tullamore superior, Mary Anne Doyle, was traditional in some of her ideas about the austerities of religious life as we can glean from a comment by Catherine. "Mother M. Anne has met with her 'beau-ideal' of a conventual building at last, for our rooms are so small that two cats could scarcely dance in them. The rest of us however would have no objection to larger ones."⁴

On leaving Tullamore, Catherine was somewhat uneasy about Mary Anne's seriousness and rigidity of government, so much so that she wrote a month later to the new postulant Mary Delamere planning some fun for her next visit. Her intention was to relax Mary Anne and to assure Mary Delamere of the great joy inherent in the religious state. The letter is entitled "A Preparatory Meditation" (written a month before the reception ceremony).

"My dear Sister Mary,

It has given me great pleasure to find you are so happy, and I really long for the time we are to meet again – please God – but the good Mother Superior will not have equal reason to rejoice, for I am determined not to behave well, and you must join me. If I write to mention the day we propose going, you might contrive to put the clock out of order – though that would be almost a pity. By *some means* we must have till ten o'clock every night not a moment's silence – until we are asleep – not to be disturbed until we awake. Take care to have the key of the cross door,

and when those who are not so happily disposed go into Choir, we can lock them in until after breakfast. I fear Sister Mary Clare [one of Catherine's travelling companions] will join the 'Divine Mother' – she is getting rather too good for my taste. Sister Catherine is according to our own heart, and surely Sister Eliza [another postulant] will not desert us."⁵

She then makes reference to Mary Teresa, the novice who came on the Tullamore foundation and who became assistant to Mary Anne Doyle on the day Teresa was professed.

"My dear Sister Mary Teresa describes a melancholy night she passed while her mother was so ill. We must banish all these visionary matters with laughing notes hop-step for the ceremony, to be concluded with 'The Lady of flesh and bone'. We will set up for a week what is called a nonsensical Club. I will be president, you vice-president, and Catherine can give lectures as professor of folly."⁶

Catherine's care of the sisters in the foundations was phenomenal. She encouraged them to gather for ceremonies of receptions and professions and to visit one another in the new convents. The Bishop of Galway commented: "It is impossible the order of Srs. of Mercy should fail – where there is such unity and such affectionate interest is maintained, as brings them one hundred miles to encourage and aid one another, and this is their established practice, to look after what has newly commenced".⁷

Catherine constantly kept in touch with all the leaders of the foundations, calling her letters her "Foundation Circulars" to the "Foreign Powers". There were constant references in her letters to the individual sisters in the communities – their needs, their health, their families, the friends of the local community, the parish clergy and the local activities. To one superior she wrote: "Give me a true and faithful account of your charge – to each of whom give my most affectionate love".⁸ And to another, her words were: "How I long to hear of you and dear community... You will write a long account to me – a letter that I may shew [sic] to all".⁹

All too often Catherine was sharing the sad news of the sickness and death of sisters and her letters often convey the depth of her own personal pain and loss on those occasions. On hearing of the death of a young sister in Limerick, one with whom she used to exchange verses, she wrote:

"I did not think any event in this world could make me feel so much. I have cried heartily – and implored God to comfort you – I know He will... My heart is sore – not on my account – nor for the sweet innocent

spirit that has returned to her Heavenly Father's Bosom – but for you. You may be sure I will go see you – if it were much more out of the way – and indeed I will greatly feel the loss that will be visible on entering the convent".¹⁰

Sometimes her letters conveyed news that was very topical, as in January, 1839, when a violent storm ravaged Ireland – talked about for years as "The Night of the Big Wind" – she wrote a graphic and vivid account to put her anxious sisters in touch with the aftermath:

"The accounts from Limerick were as usual exaggerated [sic], but we heard the Convent was safe... We remained in Bed all night – some in terror, others sleeping... The Community Room a compleat ruin in appearance... the Prints and pictures all on the ground – only two broken. The maps and blinds flying like the sales [sic] of a ship... 16 panes broken... The windows are still boarded up – it is almost impossible to get a glazier – a fine harvest for them... The Sisters in Carlow passed the night in the choir – part of their very old roof blown down. The chimneys of the new Convent in Tullamore blown down – the old one & Sisters safe".¹¹

As we all do, Catherine sometimes needed the refuge of a trusted friend. For her, this was Frances Warde. Catherine once said of friendship: "It will be a source of great happiness – for which I thank God – a pure heartfelt friendship which renews the powers of mind and body".¹² She considered life to be inconceivable and intolerable without friends. She believed in friendship as the Spirit's way of illuminating our lives, of affirming and consoling us and of reassuring us of the future to which we all are destined.

Frances was an immensely energetic, strong and vivacious character and there was a mutuality between these two women of great courage and great dreams. From the beginning, she was able to support Catherine in the practical administration of the community and it was to her that she entrusted the care of financial affairs at Baggot Street when she was away at George's Hill.

Over time, Frances became Catherine's closest confidante, yet when a foundress was needed for Carlow, Catherine was prepared to let her go, since she had resolved never to 'reserve' any sister to Baggot Street when the needs of the Church called for an apostolic work on behalf of the poor. The depth of sadness caused by this separation is tangible. And perhaps Frances had it in mind when she wrote of their final separation: "I often think of the heaven to which [death] will give entrance, but to me it would be heaven in itself to see dearest Reverend Mother

once more".¹³ As Catherine left Carlow after the conclusion of her customary 30 days spent in a foundation, the young, fearful Frances turned to Catherine saying: "What shall I do if we are misunderstood or persecuted or have troubles I cannot endure?" Catherine lovingly comforted her with the words: "I will come to you, my darling".¹⁴

Yet, Catherine's friendship was an empowering one and there were times when she judged it more advantageous that Frances needed to be encouraged to grow in maturity and independence and to come to know her own strength in dealing with difficulties. She was sadly bereaved by the death of Bishop Edward Nolan who was her great support and spiritual director, yet Catherine left an interval of time before visiting her. In her letter, which she wrote from Cork to her, Catherine struck this lovely balance between affection and empowerment:

"I will return by Carlow to see you, if only for a few hours... May God bless and animate you with his own divine Spirit, that you may prove it is Jesus Christ you love & serve with your whole heart".¹⁵

Catherine even wrote a poem entitled "Friendship", addressed to Frances Warde in 1837, in which she expressed her thoughts on the value of spiritually-based friendship:

"Though absent, dear Sister
I love you the same
That title so tender
Remembrance doth claim

Your name oft is spoken
When kneeling alone
I sue for high graces
At God's Mercy throne

Then I say not Religion
To friendship is foe
When the root is made healthy
The plant best doth blow

O grieve not we're parted
Since life soon is flown
Let us think of securing
The next for our own.

This day of our mourning
Will quickly be passed
While the day of rejoicing
For ever shall last".¹⁶

While Catherine certainly lived among her sisters, treating them as friends and valued companions, it is consoling to know that at times she was exasperated by some of them. She once remarked: "To live with a saint in heaven above, oh! What eternal glory. But to live with a saint on earth below is quite a different story".

Among those who challenged Catherine's patience was the temperamental, artistic Clare Augustine Moore. Catherine found her exasperating at times – her slowness and perfectionism sometimes irritated her as on one occasion when she requested her to print two pages and Clare Augustine could not oblige. Catherine complained to Frances Warde:

"Sister Mary Clare [Augustine] Moore is a character – not suited to my taste or my ability to govern – though possessing many very estimable points. She teased and perplexed me so much about the difficulty of copying the two pages, that I was really obliged to give up – unwilling to command lest it should produce disedifying consequences. She said it would take the entire Lent – indeed you can have no idea how little she does in a week – as to a day's work, it is laughable to look at it. She will shew me 3 leaves, saying I finished these to day – 3 rose or lilly [sic] leaves".¹⁷

"The letter containing those lines was written in March, 1841 and it is in that same letter that she introduces us to "the cough". "My rather new visitant, a cough – has been with me very constantly since the first Sunday after my return... I do think that a cough has made a resting place with me – and will be no unusual visitor in future."¹⁸

We can guess that Catherine knew exactly the consequences of this cough and some would hold that it was her own panic at the first symptoms of a fatal disease and her own sense of 'unable' in the face of impending loss and death that caused her to project on to Clare Augustine. However, it seems Clare Augustine was quite unaware of Catherine's irritation with her for she wrote later herself:

"At Recreation she moved about the room but the sisters were not to stand up or she went off. I had a trick for keeping her. She liked to look at me drawing or working and I always contrived an empty chair I could reach without standing up and by drawing it to her I have often got her to sit half an hour at the end of the table".¹⁹

Similarly, Sister de Pazzi Delany tried Catherine's patience. She was Catherine's assistant in Baggot Street after Mary Anne Doyle went to Tullamore and Frances Ward to Carlow. Lacking confidence and prone to attacks of epilepsy, de Pazzi tried to control Catherine's absences

from Baggot Street. She often showed displeasure at her prolonged stays in the foundations and would greet her return with a long tale of woe. She was constantly bemoaning the transfer of sisters from Baggot Street in order to staff new foundations. Catherine's only remedy was to 'outmoan' de Pazzi, as she explained in a letter to Sister de Sales White in Bermondsey:

"Mother Mary de Pa[zz]i and I have kept up the most musical sighing or groaning in the Bishop's parlour. I thought she was far surpassing me – and yesterday I determined not to be outdone and commenced such a moaning as brought all to an end".²⁰

It is interesting that Catherine did not write or speak in a theoretical way about community, defining or analysing it in terms as we might today. As we have seen, her true affection and love made her wonderfully free and natural with the sisters. She rejected formalities, encouraged cheerfulness, delighted in fun and liveliness. At recreation, she would laugh and sing, she would compose playful verses to amuse and to instruct in a light-hearted way. Her love was manifest in concern for all the sisters in every aspect of their lives. It made her miss them in their absence, grieve with them in their sorrows, rejoice with them in their successes, forgive them in their weaknesses and gently urge them to greater courage in their following of Jesus on the way of Mercy.

Catherine had an immense freedom of spirit and she rejoiced to find this in others so that Mercy communities would be marked by a love which respected others in their difference and uniqueness. Writing to Elizabeth Moore at Easter, 1841, when there were busy preparations being made at Baggot Street for receptions and professions involving English novices and at least one lay sister, Catherine gives us a glimpse of her ideal of Mercy community:

"All are good and happy. The blessing of unity still dwells amongst us – and oh what a blessing – it should make all things else pass into nothing. All laugh and play together, not one cold, stiff soul appears. From the day they enter, all reserve of an ungracious kind leaves them. This is the Spirit of the order indeed – the true Spirit of Mercy – flowing on us... Take what He will from us – He still leaves His holy peace – and this He has graciously extended to all our Convents".²¹

The true spirit of Mercy was God's gift, creating a strength of unity founded on love. Catherine was not suggesting that the Sisters were free from the weaknesses of human nature, but she believed that the ordinary happenings of community life, and the ordinary tensions and weaknesses among

the sisters, were opportunities for developing compassion and tolerance and for practising forgiveness and reconciling love. It was in this strain that she wrote to Elizabeth Moore in Limerick in 1839: "One thing is remarkable – that no breach of charity ever occurred amongst us. The sun never, I believe, went down on our anger. This is our only boast – otherwise we have been deficient enough – and far, very far, from cooperating generously with God in our regard, but we will try to do better".²² (During 1839, a priest in Limerick was preparing a Charity sermon on behalf of the poor schools in Limerick. He had asked Elizabeth Moore for some information on the origins of the Sisters of Mercy. His request led Catherine to compose a brief history of which the above quotation is a part).

What Catherine most rejoiced in was the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation which enabled the sisters to live in union and love. Jealousy and gloomy depression in a sister concerned Catherine, as we know from a letter she wrote to Frances Warde. It related to Teresa Carton, whom Catherine had brought to Booterstown to improve her health. It seems Teresa was dependent on Catherine's affection and that she feared the others might take over her work at Baggot Street. Catherine writes:

"I hurried out here to get poor Teresa into change of air. She is already evidently better, but is fretting so much for being taken from her employment that I fear the good effect will be lost. She has given me much uneasiness by the gloomy peevish manner she behaves every day since she came. The collection goes on just the same with Sister Aloysius... She distressed me very much yesterday – I almost thought she was sorry to hear the collection children went on as usual – perhaps I was mistaken. Please God she will triumph over this human weakness – and I rejoice at the good which must result from her seeing that those things do not depend on any one in particular, but on the continuance of God's blessing".²³

Catherine encouraged a selfless attitude in her sisters and it is variously recorded that she often conveyed such wisdom as: "Our love for others ought to be so cordial, that we should never refuse to do or to suffer anything for the good of our Sisters". In another place she expands on the word 'cordial': "now 'cordial' signifies something that revives, invigorates, and warms; such should be the effects of our love on each other".²⁴

Another insight that Catherine had was the influence of courtesy upon community harmony. The Bermondsey annals record:

"While she passed over without seeming to notice them many inadvertant [sic] offences, she was most

watchful to correct in their [the Sisters] conversation or manners the least failure against politeness, and anything which could discover the want of a good education, being convinced by experience that the inattention of some Religious persons to these minor points often lessens charity in a Community".²⁵

Her hope for the shared life of her sisters was that each person would be treated with love, respect and dignity.

Closely related to community was Catherine's concept of authority. She believed in authority and leadership that was life-giving and liberating. As we know, she shunned any monastic trappings of office. For example, she found abhorrent the custom of kneeling before a superior; she wished to avoid the special title Reverend Mother and she never used the title in her correspondence with the sisters; and she would not allow the sisters to stand when she entered or left the community room. When she visited the sisters in Carlow, they were deeply impressed by her humble manner and the annalist notes: "the most amiable trait in her character which we believed we discerned was a total absence of everything in her manner telling, I am the Foundress".²⁶

Catherine maintained a loose hold on the reins of authority. She entrusted full authority to very young sisters, but she was there to support and encourage. She was far from giving authority with one hand and taking it back with another. She allowed the young superiors to use initiative, stepping back to do this, but knowing when she should intervene in the most appropriate and tactful manner possible. Her style was adapted to suit the person she was dealing with; she could encourage the initiative of the resourceful Frances Warde, spur on cautious Elizabeth Moore in Limerick as evidenced in several warm letters or when writing to Mary Ann Doyle, be firm and direct. "Do not fear offending any one. Speak as your mind directs and always act with more courage."²⁷

When Catherine felt the need to admonish, she did it tactfully and often softened it by using playful verses. When Sister Ursula Frayne was superior in Booterstown, she wrote to Catherine for permission to buy a new pair of boots and also complained that the cups supplied by Baggot Street were too small. Catherine teased her about her spirit of poverty:

"My dear Sister Muse, I am sorry to find
That sweet holy poverty's not to your mind...
Is soling and heeling a language obscure
To those who have freely made vows to be poor...
May we not fear 'tis the enemy lurking
Our fears & our fancies so artfully working
Who at the word Cobbler would teach us to blush

And whisper – get boots made of leather & plush
But where reason is not, all reasoning is lost
Then, pray get the boots to keep out the frost.
Now as to the China, your taste must be bad
If you don't like what we send, more than those that
you had.

They were once, I assure you, nice breakfast cups
And no mouth but your own could make them 3 sups
They hold full as much as the modern grand shapes
And each cup & saucer has different landscapes
Here again holy poverty's flitted away
'Tis plain you want nothing in this but display".²⁸

Yet in spite of this poetical rebuke, Catherine signs off in a flattering jocose way:

"As I have not got a poetical name
Borrowing yours – I beg to remain
The affectionate Mother of Ursula Frayne".²⁹

Frances Marmion, a novice, once wrote a witty verse requesting relaxation of the rule of silence for her anniversary day:

"This very day twelvemonth it was that you bound
With a black leather cincture my waist & will round
And to tell of my happiness humbly I pray
That the Sisters may have recreation today".³⁰

Catherine replied, granting the request but gently underlining the importance of silence:

"I rejoice in your motive for liking this day
But not in your wishing to spend it in play
I must freely confess it were more to my mind
If to reflection your heart were inclined
But since you're not weaned, nor alone cannot walk
I suppose you must do what you can do – then *talk!*"³¹

With great trust in her sisters, Catherine readily applied the principles of collegiality and subsidiarity long before these became the jargon terms that they are now. She freely sought advice of all in the community, shared information with them and involved them in decision making. The Dublin manuscript records: "At the first Recreation the business of the convent was talked of as freely as if it were a Chapter of Discreets".³² The whole community was involved in the decision to make the Presentation Rule the one which would be the basis of the Original Mercy Rule. The Derry manuscript says simply: "They all chose the Presentation Rule".³³

As always, Catherine was not adverse to fun even in the midst of weighty decision making. For example, when

the appointment of a superior for Birmingham was under discussion, one English postulant offered her services and Catherine wrote as follows to Frances Warde:

"They [the English sisters] are most interesting, two so playful that they afford amusement to all at recreation. One about 20 – not looking so much – thinks she will be best suited for superioress at Birmingham, makes up most amusing reasons".³⁴

On another occasion, when a bishop from overseas had come to Baggot Street to request sisters for his diocese, Catherine prompted the newest postulant to stand up and offer to make the foundation! The bishop got the message – he would have to wait a little longer for his wishes to be fulfilled.

In more serious circumstances, Catherine willingly shared with her much younger sisters, treating them as peers and respecting their wisdom. Many believe that the rapid development of the congregation was due in no small measure to the way in which she formed superiors after her own heart. Even at the end, she refused to name a successor. When a sister spoke to her of this and asked her to show her preference, her only response was to insist that the constitutions gave the sisters freedom to choose.

Catherine remained her caring, affectionate self until the end. In the months before her death, her letters are sprinkled with comments about her deteriorating health. It is clear that pain and weariness were sapping her energy. She tried to make light of her illness, but was also giving delicate hints that time was drawing in for her. In many of her letters in 1841, she made playful remarks about her "old man's cough" and "dear good acquaintance", her arthritis.

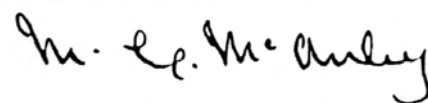
Catherine was trying to spare her sisters pain and anxiety, and indeed they seem to have been so reassured that they did not realise just how near death she actually was. Or perhaps, the thought of separation from her was so painful that they did not allow themselves to countenance the thought that the parting could be so close. Among her last letters was that written to one of her first companions, Mary Teresa White, in Galway. She wrote it as she was about to return from Birr to Baggot Street, the place of rich memories of the people who had been her first companions. In it we touch into her deep sense of loneliness as her thoughts drift to those first loved companions:

"I will not expect a letter from you till I return to our old dear habitation, where I shall never again see all my dearly beloved Sisters etc. – all strange faces. They all say that the first separation from kindred, etc., was a joyous sorrow, but that the separations in religion are bitter sorrows. What must it be to me who never met one unkind Sister yet. This is a gloomy subject – will we

all meet in Heaven – oh what joy – even to think of it".³⁵ That was written in February. Nine months later, many of those beloved sisters were gathered around her deathbed. During her last days, Catherine had several affectionate messages for each sister in the community and for the foundations she had made. Though constantly in great pain and weakness she would say after a sleepless night: "I was thinking of my poor children in Birr during the night".³⁶ In her dying hours her thoughts went in compassion to this last foundation in Ireland, with its special need for support, and she commended it to the sisters around her bed: "Take care of my last born – Birr".³⁷ Tradition tells us of her dying words to her beloved god child, Teresa Byrne, now Sister Camillus, a novice. Catherine had cared for Teresa since she was a small baby. As she wept by her bedside, Catherine gently said to her: "Kiss me, my heart, and then go away. But don't be crying".³⁸

Early on her last morning Catherine asked for all the sisters to be brought to her and to them, and through them to us, she gave her last precious words: "My legacy to the Institute is charity: If you preserve the peace and union which have never yet been violated among us, you will feel, even in this world, a happiness that will surprise you and be to you a foretaste of the bliss prepared for every one of you in heaven."³⁹

As her last moments drew near, Catherine whispered to the sister assisting her: "Be sure you have a comfortable cup of tea for them [the sisters] when I am gone – the community room would be a good place".⁴⁰ It was the last little thoughtful attention of the woman who signed her letter: "My best love to all – believe your ever affectionate C." ❖



¹ MCS1, p. 116.

² Letter 228 in MCS2.

³ Letter 109 in MCS2.

⁴ MCS1, p. 38.

⁵ Letter 36 in MCS2.

⁶ Letter 36 in MCS2.

⁷ Letter 255 in MCS2.

⁸ Letter 226 in MCS2.

⁹ Letter 148 in MCS2.

¹⁰ Letter 168 in MCS2.

¹¹ Letter 110 in MCS2.

¹² Letter 169 in MCS2.

¹³ MCS1, p. 220.

¹⁴ Kathleen Healy RSM, *Frances Warde: American Founder of the Sisters of Mercy*, Seabury Press, New York, 1973, pp. 64-65.

¹⁵ Letter 56 in MCS2.

¹⁶ Letter 47 in MCS2.

¹⁷ Letter 243 in MCS2.

¹⁸ Letter 243 in MCS2.

¹⁹ MCS1, p. 206.

²⁰ Letter 196 in MCS2.

²¹ Letter 257 in MCS2.

²² Letter 110 in MCS2.

²³ Letter 90 in MCS2.

²⁴ MCS1, p. 117.

²⁵ MCS1, p. 115.

²⁶ MCS1 p. 230.

²⁷ Letter 283 in MCS2.

²⁸ Letter 130 in MCS2.

²⁹ Letter 130 in MCS2.

³⁰ Letter 73 in MCS2.

³¹ Letter 73 in MCS2.

³² MCS1, p. 206.

³³ See reference in MCS1, p. 52.

³⁴ Letter 182 in MCS2.

³⁵ Letter 235 in MCS2.

³⁶ Letter 310 in MCS2.

³⁷ Letter 280 in MCS2.

³⁸ M. Austin Carroll RSM, *Life of Catherine McAuley, Sister of Mercy*, St Louis, Missouri. First published 1866. Sadlier, New York, 1884, p. 435 (herein referred to as Carroll).

³⁹ Carroll, p. 435.

⁴⁰ Carroll, p. 437.

To Assist in Your Reflection and Prayer (Affectionately Yours)

REFLECT on you own living of community today. How do you see it in the light of Catherine's description of the 'blessing of unity'? What do you contribute or withhold that either helps or hinders community from being one according to the mind and heart of Catherine? What will you do, and invite others to do, to deepen the gift of love and union?

Reflect on these words from Catherine: "One thing is remarkable that no breach of charity ever occurred among us. The sun never, I believe, went down on our anger. This is our only boast".

What thoughts and feelings arise in you when you read and listen to those words? Have you experienced genuine reconciliation in community? How does this affect you? Are you withholding reconciliation from anyone?

In memory and imagination, recall some special people in your life who have exemplified the spirit of union and love with a particular grace and beauty. How did they make a difference? How might you make a similar difference in a similar way?

Read and reflect on the following little poem composed by Catherine:

*"Don't let crosses vex or tease; Try to meet all with peace and ease.
Notice the faults of every day – but often in a playful way.
And when you seriously complain, let it be known to give you pain.
Attend to one thing at a time; you've fifteen hours from 6 to 9.
Be mild and sweet in all your ways; now and again bestow some praise.
Avoid all solemn declaration, all serious close investigation.
Turn what you can into a jest, and with few words dismiss the rest.
Keep patience ever at your side; you'll need it for a constant guide.
Show fond affection every day, and above all fondly pray
That God may give the charge He's given
And make of you their guide to Heaven".*

The parting advice of your ever affectionate.
M. C. McAuley

