



MERCY DAY PRAYER

Catherine McAuley: Boundary Breaker

Opening Prayer

Tender Courage by Joanne Regan & Isabelle Keiss

Gracious God, by courageous, contagious concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the poor, the sick and the ignorant, Catherine McAuley broke the impossibilities of her time. She animated many to walk with her. She animated others at the centres of wealth, power, and influence to share in her heroic efforts. She connected the rich to the poor, the healthy to the sick, the educated and skilled to the uninstructed, the influential to those of no consequence, to do the work of God on earth. We pray in our time to do the same. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Mark 7:24-30

From there Jesus set out for the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house there where he didn't think he would be found, but he couldn't escape notice. He was barely inside when a woman who had a disturbed daughter heard where he was. She came and knelt at his feet, begging for help. The woman was Greek, Syro-Phoenician by birth. She asked him to cure her daughter. He said, "Stand in line and take your turn. The children get fed first. If there's any left over, the dogs get it." She said, "Of course, Master. But don't dogs under the table get scraps dropped by the children?" Jesus was impressed. "You're right! On your way! Your daughter is no longer disturbed. The demonic affliction is gone." She went home and found her daughter relaxed on the bed, the torment gone for good.

To Ponder

Notice what stirred in your heart as you listened to this Gospel.

Poem: The Open Door

'Root to Bloom: Yoga Poems and Other Writings' by Danna Faulds

A door opens. Maybe I've been standing here shuffling my weight from foot to foot for decades, or maybe I only knocked once. In truth, it doesn't matter. A door opens and I walk through without a backward glance. This is it, then, one moment of truth in a lifetime of truth; a choice made, a path taken, the gravitational pull of Spirit too compelling to ignore any longer. I am received by something far too vast to see. It has roots in antiquity but speaks clearly in the present tense. "Be." the vastness says. "Be without adverbs, descriptors, or qualities. Be so alive that awareness bares itself uncloaked and unadorned. Then go forth to give what you alone can give, awake to love and suffering, unburdened by the weight of expectations. Go forth to see and be seen, blossoming, always blossoming into your magnificence."

To Ponder

What is the Spirit revealing to you, that you alone can give?



Reflection: Catherine's Embrace of Cultural Diversity

Patricia Smith, *'Mercy Values Today: Every Ancient, Ever New'*.

If I were to summarise in the broadest terms Catherine McAuley's embrace of cultural diversity and her legacy of hospitality to strangers, I would have to say that:

- She did not narrowly define the love of God or the unity to which we and our neighbours in the world are called.
- She did not misname differences or see cultural variations as obstacles to that unity.
- She did not use adversarial language to describe these differences.
- She did not cling to her own distinctiveness or to her own personal preferences or non-essential customs.
- And she did not regard her friendship with God as something to be coveted or exploited for herself alone.

Rather:

- She emptied herself of the comfort of her former way of life.
- She took the form of a servant in her human context.
- She extended her affectionate embrace to otherness.
- She opened her door to strangers.
- She welcomed them.
- She learned from those who were different and left them whole in their Godly difference.
- She humbled herself before all human forms.
- And she followed, as best she could, the example of Christ, who became obedient to God's wide and merciful love of all humankind, even to the point of death, death on a cross.

If we wish to sow the seeds of real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it — one person at a time: one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk — one person at a time.

To Ponder

How does Catherine's life inspire you to push boundaries in the world?

As people of Mercy, how are we called to break boundaries?

Prayers of Intercession

Response: God of justice, transform our words into actions.

We pray for peace and unity, that global leaders may work together to end war, violence, and persecution. **Response**

We pray for a better future where fresh thinking and new ideas will build a more sustainable and just world. **Response**

We pray that we may find hope as we confront the challenges of the climate crisis. **Response**

We pray that we may receive the grace to see every human being as a child of God, regardless of race, culture, language, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. **Response**

We pray for a world, where both people and planet thrive - a world where we have the courage to break the necessary boundaries to end the cycles of poverty and marginalisation. **Response**

We pray for strength and guidance, and the humility to listen to where God is inviting us to act. **Response**

We bring all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, before the God of mercy as we say together, Our Father...

Closing Blessing

Adapted from Faith Prayer, Genevieve Cassani, SSND

Divine Father, Holy Mother, you are the source of all life and giver of all good gifts. Nourish the small seed of my faith that I may see you in every human being and all of creation. Transform this tiny seed of faith until it flowers and bears fruit in a land where justice reigns and your love is known in every heart. **Amen.**



'You should remember that not to advance is to go back'

Catherine McAuley