

Because Catherine, our founder, was a prolific letter writer, much is revealed about the woman herself and the early women who surrounded her.

One of her closet Mercy co-creators was Amelia White (later Sr. Mary Teresa White). She was the 18th sister to enter Baggot Street on 2nd May 1833.

Amelia was born in 1809 one of 5 children (3 daughters and 2 boys) born to Magistrate Laurence White and his wife Jane, in Carlow. In the manner of upper-class families of the time, Amelia and her sister Jane were presented at the Vice-Regal Lodge. Amelia was so taken by Catherine's charisma that she immediately requested to be admitted.

The glitter of the Vice Regal court is just one elite strand of the rich tapestry of Georgian Dublin life, then the second city of the empire. Dublin's population trebled between 1700 and 1800 (from 60,000 to 180,000). The influx of poor from the countryside was the main reason for the growth.

There are 8 extant letters from Catherine to (now) Sr. Teresa and she is mentioned several times in others. She was Catherine's travelling companion on a number of occasions to Carlow, Cork and Bermondsey. Catherine wrote on 2nd May 1833, *"Of all the sisters, Sister Mary Teresa has more of my spirit and I trust more to her guiding the institute as I wish, than to any other Sister."*

She was trained by Catherine herself, professed in 1835 and appointed Superior in Kingstown in 1838. Here she encountered the first of financial tribulations. When the sisters were forced to withdraw from Kingstown in 1838 Catherine tells her "I leave you free to do what you think best. I am satisfied you will not act imprudently and this conviction makes me happy as far as you are concerned."

Later Catherine wrote to Sr. de Pazzi Delaney, (Assistant Superior at Baggot Street, *"I cannot express the consolation Sr. M. Teresa has afforded me by her manner of concluding the Kingstown business and the few quiet lines she sent to Fr. Sheridan."*

On 6th May 1840, Catherine herself accompanied Sr. Teresa as Superior and Sr. Catherine Leahy to establish a foundation in Galway. The city was a place of great poverty and squalor, cholera and typhus was rampant. When famine struck, the labouring class was almost wiped out.

Yet by 1852 there were 9 Mercy initiatives being carried out by Amelia and by 28 sisters who joined her.

In 1853 she accompanied 3 sisters to Castlebar where they founded a convent. A favourite saying of hers was *"If an action has a hundred faces, already look at the best."*

The Galway Annals tell us that Catherine "had the firm intention of withdrawing Sister Mary Teresa after 6 months to be her successor in Baggot Street, as she felt her health failing." She was Superior in Galway for 12 years until 1854 when she left Galway with 4 sisters to found a convent in Clifden.

While in Clifden, the new Bursar in Galway was unhappy with how the accounts were presented. Sadly, the result was strained relations between the Galway community and Sr. Teresa who despite writing "I still have my rights in Galway and intend to return to St. Vincents when the convent in Clifden is on it's feet."

In her third year in Clifden she rented a house for an orphanage to take in poor children which resulted in a legal dispute between her, the parish priest and the protestants. She made her fourth and final foundation in Carna in 1874.

Inspired by her mentor Catherine, Amelia/Sr. Teresa had a long, varied and sometimes very difficult life. She died on 10th October 1888 and is buried in Clifden – a long way from Baggot Street.