



Lent 2011 – Week Two

Light a candle

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Open the prayer time by reciting or singing the Suscipe of Catherine McAuley

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Input on Catherine McAuley

Rejection and Gratitude

“It is not everyone, even of those who are benefited, that feels thankful. If you work with that expectation, you will often feel disappointed.”

These words of Catherine’s quoted by Clare Augustine Moore in her ‘**Memoir**’ clearly indicate that Catherine had experienced rejection and ingratitude. We remember the story often told about the old woman whom Catherine brought home to Baggot Street. This woman was mentally ill, neglected and clothed in torn, dirty rags. Despite the lack of space, Catherine saw that a room was placed at her disposal. However, she chose to live under the stairs from which place she emerged during the night and stole many items. The community were very distressed by this but Catherine prevailed on them to keep her. Did she gain the woman’s gratitude? No! Instead she was cursed and rejected in abusive language. Catherine kept her in Baggot Street for the best part of three years until she died.

Again, when Catherine’s sister Mary died Catherine stayed on in the house to take care of the children. Her brother-in-law brooded for weeks over his bitter loss and railed against Catherine’s faith in the Catholic Church. When she eventually told him that his wife had died a Catholic he darted at her and swore she would not leave his house alive. While he searched for a weapon she escaped. He returned brandishing a deadly weapon to find his children screaming in fear and the servants hovering over his oldest daughter, who had collapsed in a faint. He immediately came to his senses and promised his daughter, when she regained consciousness, that he would never again attempt to injure her aunt. How rejected and hurt Catherine must have felt. Yet, a few days later when her brother-in law came to where she had fled for shelter, clad only in her slippers and nightwear, and apologised profusely to her, she agreed to return to his house. This was rejection answered with gratitude.

Catherine had truly imbibed the understanding that God’s nature is to experience and accept rejection. Over and over, countries and people have abandoned and turned against God and God just takes it. The ultimate apostasy was nailing God to a cross. So did God send down fire on our heads, or let a comet smash into the earth, or just wither up all life? No, God the Rejected One turned the crucifixion into a blessing for all of us. He secured salvation for all of us by giving His Son. Then we turn around and reject Him and constantly show our ingratitude by forgetting that God has promised to be with us always.

Remember God gave us free will. God created me and invited me into a sinful world, one where solutions to everything can be bought with money or your body or a shake of the dice. Free will sets up God for rejection; why would a young girl want to spend her time contemplating the beauty of the Lord when she could write a hot best-seller and get rich and famous? Why would a

young man prefer to wear darned clothes and play a church organ when he could buy a guitar and become a rock star? Why would a young boy or girl want to spend a few years on the missions when the world could be their oyster at home? God doesn't test us or tempt us or put up roadblocks. I think he **hopes**. He hopes we will turn to Christ, but He is patient when we don't - forgiving and running towards us the way the prodigal father tore down the road to embrace the prodigal son. (Luke 15: 11-32)

Catherine saw that the good things of the earth are the blessings of God; the hurts of earth are the kisses of God. The loneliness and the aloneness we sometimes feel just remind that we are never completely satisfied and are beginning to know that someday God will show us the final gift, the gift of heaven, the indescribable gift of God's own presence.

Catherine's Congregation of Mercy '**was founded on the Cross there to serve a crucified Redeemer**'. She was well acquainted with the Cross throughout her life. She lost her father early in her life and with him the only human bulwark against assaults on her faith. Her mother lapsed into virtual apostasy soon after. She permitted her son to be enrolled in a Protestant military school. She allowed her daughter to marry a Protestant doctor. However, on her death-bed, she was overcome by compunction and the anguish of repentance. Her death affected Catherine to such a degree that a fear of death accompanied her all through life. Eventually, God treated her with gratitude, for her faithfulness, during her last illness. All fear of death abandoned her and she expressed great surprise that it was so easy to die.

One final act of gratitude shows how in tune with her God Catherine then was. It was November 11, 1841 and Catherine was on her death-bed. Dean Meyler, impelled by a feeling of compunction for the bitterness he had caused her, came to visit her. He it was, who was responsible for her terrible suffering about the chaplaincy controversy. He was graciously received by the dying woman, who said to him "**You will be a father to my poor children when I am no more - I know you will.**" He was visibly moved by her forgiveness, and the trust she showed. He promised to befriend her community during the rest of his life and he was true to this promise.

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5 minutes silent reflection on what has just been shared about Catherine McAuley

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Take 5 minutes to allow everyone to share aloud the names of those they know who are sick and in need of prayer. Each person will write the names of the people they wish to pray for, on a piece of paper, and place them in a basket.

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Spend 15 minutes in silent prayer for the sick

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Conclude with the prayer for sick through the intercession of Catherine McAuley

Prayer for the Sick

GOD OF LOVE AND MERCY
YOU INSPIRED CATHERINE MCAULEY
TO SERVE YOUR SON

BY RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF HER TIME.
MOVED BY HER CARE FOR THE SICK,
WE ASK THAT THROUGH HER PRAYERS
YOU REACH OUT WITH YOUR HEALING LOVE
AND RESTORE

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TO FULL HEALTH.
WE ASK THIS IN COMPLETE CONFIDENCE
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST YOUR SON.
AMEN

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