



A poem for Catherine

Reminiscing with Catherine

**Dear Catherine, you asked me to write you a poem
Be it ever so long... well it's nearly a tome!
I got carried away while recalling your story...
So enjoy while you dance with the angels in glory!**

.....
A seed of compassion God nurtured with care
In the home of your childhood... Mercy was there!
And the seed that God planted thrust roots deep and steady...
In soil rich and fertile your heart was made ready.

But quickly your young life became so confusing!
From family to friends – great loss and uprooting!
From plenty to poverty- you learned a hard lesson!
On God's winding ways you were schooled in compassion.
Through suffering and prayer God moulded and made you
A woman of great love- God's mercy flowing through you.

The Callaghans loved you as their own cherished child,
And you tenderly cared for them both till they died.
They had seen how you anguished for the poor all those years;
Often roused from your slumbers you would burst into tears!
You had no way of knowing- you could never imagine-
That because of their kindness, you'd inherit a fortune!

Your new house of Mercy stirred storms of indignation!
What a plan! For poor children - good care and education...
For young working girls - a shelter and support...
And a residence for women who might join you henceforth.

Mary Ann was a godsend- she shared in your vision;
Other young women followed to help your new mission.
And the news would spread far that your house was wide open
To the poor...and the homeless... the sick and the orphan.

But trouble was brewing... you were only lay women!
Yet you lived just like nuns - which was out of the question!
You're faced with a formidable religious decision-
To conform to Church laws - or the poor ones abandon!

You felt great reluctance, but, you bowed to God's will.
For the sake of the poor you set out for George's Hill.
Your new religious group would gain greater stability;
In serving the poor it would bring continuity.

But that human journey wasn't easy- ups and downs in succession...
With Mary Ann and Elizabeth - fifteen months and then Profession...
Who can guess the heartfelt joy on that day of celebration-
Smiles and tears and radiant faces in your new congregation!

Your little band of angels became a presence so consoling...
Such a comfort to the poor to the sick and to the grieving.
With dreaded fevers raging and the tomb ever open,
Your tender compassion relieved the heartbroken.
The Cross never far- plenty bitter in your cup-
It was your trust in God' Providence that kept your spirits up.

You faced weighty challenges, though often tired and weary.
Your playfulness and wit kept your sisters bright and cheery.
With your humour and teasing you'd dispel dark despair...
Avoiding all things gloomy with a light-hearted air.

But God's plan was much wider than for Dublin's fair city!
Calls for Mercy from afar! No end to God's pity!
With great joy and "Hurray!" you embarked on new foundations
By canal boat, coach or rail in the direst situations.
And you always acknowledged who the real founders were...
Those humble benefactors so willing to share.

Your strength slowly ebbing, you bestowed yourself more freely!
With resources declining, your giving kept increasing!
'Round the age of sixty two, when Newfoundland was calling,
Your love for the poor stirred up your own yearning.

Notwithstanding your fatigue, and that cough that so plagued you,
You took the boat across the ocean when the call for help reached you.
And your heart was cheered greatly by those fine English women
Coming joyfully to serve the poor... Christ's fire brightly kindling!

Worn out from all your travels, and your health fast declining,
You eventually conceded that indeed you were dying.
You got everything ready in the silence of your heart.
And when the time came you were ready to depart.

Of the one who had hurt you, you humbly asked forgiveness!
Then you blessed all your loved ones with exquisite sweetness.
“With a good cup of tea tell them comfort one another!”
And your very last advice – “Love one another!”

Your Suscipe you lived... now you died with serenity.
“My God I am yours for time and eternity.”
When you breathed your last, you knew all was not ending...
For the charism was God’s... His fire always kindling!

It has touched us in our time to walk the path of Mercy...
To be a compassionate presence...in challenging diversity;
To urgently awaken to the cry of our earth...
And to live in the Mystery bringing God’s dream to birth.

These moments, dear Catherine, recalling your story,
Have filled me with wonder! To God be the glory!
I’ve glimpsed your compassion... your humour so admirable...
Your heart overflowing... no wonder you’re venerable!
We know you are with us... we trust you will pray
For the places that are hurting in our world today.

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