



*A poem for Catherine*

## Venerable Catherine McAuley

Who is she, so fair and stately,  
Treading through the mud  
And Dublin mire,  
Eyes uplifted spreading sunshine  
As she raises spirits high that were  
Crushed by sickness, poverty and petty crime?  
Heart of mercy, beating strongly  
Fed by pity, love and time,  
Reaching out to those who suffer –  
Young and old or in their prime –  
Beaten down by laws that left them  
Dispossessed of all their pride.  
See her, loving heart of mercy, and  
Her angels moving round  
Spreading hope and joy and healing  
So that what was lost could  
Once again be found!

What have years and times of 'progress'  
Meant to lives ordained by God

To have life and in abundance,  
Full of joy and love for all!  
Sad to see how things unfolded  
Human life to cheapened now  
In a world grown cold and heartless  
Coarser, harsher hour by hour.  
Horrors come and woes unending  
Human trafficking.... lives are pawned....  
No time to see so many grieving  
No time to ask what is the cause.

Where's the spirit of Venerable Catherine?  
Where's the heart with love aflame?  
Let's muster up a workforce holy  
To serve the marginalized – the anawim.  
May we find the zeal that  
Fired her and her heroines of old  
To alleviate the pain that people carry  
And set them free once more.

Sr. Baptist Leen  
Southern Province



**Venerable Catherine McAuley made two ‘responses’ to Sr. Baptist’s poem  
and they are presented below.**

Baptist, a chroí  
Fair dues to thee!  
For taking up the challenge  
To pen a poem about me!  
Though Venerable I may be  
I’m just your loving “Mother mo chroí”  
Watching over you, and all  
My nuns that be,  
So much has been done  
Since the rising of the sun  
Of Mercy, in your hearts, in dear Tralee  
As you reach out to those in need  
For the marginalised you plead –  
But the poem is something else and dear to me!  
Blank verse you say it is,  
What would Milton or Dryden think of this??  
Or, doggerel verse you say  
May be the big take of the day  
Poor thing, don’t throw it away just yet?  
For there cometh the day  
When the real poets lose their sway  
And the humble rise up and take their stand  
Without fear of jeering elders  
Or smart remarks from cheeky childers,  
In a world where justice is at bay.  
But give woman a free hand,  
Or a nun, a rubber band!  
Then you’ll see Mercy again along your way.

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Siúr Baiste, a stór  
You must have been ‘maith go leor’  
When you sat to compose  
A poem about me!  
Despite your lack of the art  
Of the poetic craft  
It gladdened my poor heart  
And pleased me  
To hear once more, our story retold,  
And the gaisce done by many a Mercy nun,  
In the beautiful vale of Tralee.

