



A poem for Catherine

The Mercy Star

(to Catherine McAuley, inspired and inspiring still)

When you found the quality of Mercy-
a burning compassion shining in your heart
like a pulsing star-
you fell in love with its blinding
protective intensity.

It became your guide.
It led you through deserts dry with old dust
and mountains of unbearable heights
with no beaten paths for guides.
It bathed you in its shimmer
and fed you with food
not to be found in any other place.

It was the Mercy Star that led you
unerringly through lands
as unknown as the moon. And –
against all odds and obstacles –
you followed it faithfully
through criticism
misunderstanding
from those dearest to your heart
and obstacles to your own unfolding.

Later, it led you home, leaving us-
the daughters you would never know
who also glimpsed the Mercy Star
through your eyes –
to find and follow it through
as many unknowns as you also did.



Not through our works
not through our education,
or our buildings or our monuments
rightly built to women
who lived their lives through wars
of all kinds to make this world brighter
for women and the poor –
those countless who could not and cannot
find their way alone –
no-

but through the Mercy Star
guiding our hearts.
That's what you plucked down
from the heavens
and embodied:
no less shining
even as our monuments fall down;
even as our works transform
beyond recognition
and our numbers dwindle and disappear –
the Mercy Star continues to shine
finding receptive hearts
unknown
in worlds yet to emerge.

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