



Letter From Catherine McAuley

**Dr. Andrew Fitzgerald, OP
Carlow**

**Convent, Baggot Street
August 8, 1837**

My Dear Reverend Father

Our innocent little Catherine¹ is out of this miserable world. She died a little before twelve o'clock last night. She suffered very little, thanks be to God. Not more than one hour of distressed breathing, and her playfulness continued to the end – mingled with an occasional awful feeling, but nothing like melancholy. She represented Mrs Deasy,² on her arrival from Cork, yesterday morning most perfectly. She received the last Sacraments on Saturday, with delight and great fervor. We feel just now as if all the House was dead. All are sorry to part our animated, sweet little companion.

I hope you have been pretty well since I had the pleasure of seeing you³. I suppose the Sisters are in retreat⁴, as they are here, except those who were engaged in the scene of sorrow with me. Thank God it is over. I know you will pray for me. As to her, I believe she was fit to unite with the angels – so pure and sincerely devoted to God. I shall be obliged to return to Cork⁵ after the retreat. May I beg you to give my affectionate love to my Dearest Sister Frances [Warde] and little community, and to believe me, Dear Revd. Father, with great respect

Your attached & faithful

¹ Catherine Macauley was the fourth of Mary and William Macauley's five children. They had been adopted by their aunt after their father's death in January 1829. Young Catherine entered the Baggot Street community on January 28, 1834 at age fifteen; she received the habit on July 3, 1834, taking the name Mary Anne Agnes, but her aunt continued to call her Catherine. She professed her religious vows on October 22, 1836 and died ten months later of tuberculosis, the disease that had taken her sister Mary Teresa, also a Sister of Mercy, in November 1833 and would take her brother Robert in 1840 and her brother James in 1841.

² Marianne Deasy of County Cork was the mother of Mary Vincent (Margaret) Deasy who professed her vows at Baggot Street on July 1, 1837. Surely Mrs Deasy came to Dublin for the ceremony as well as earlier. Dr John Murphy of Cork indicates that the Deasys – from Clonakilty, south-west of Cork – were going to Baggot Street in late April or early May when Margaret was ill (Letter 44). Young Catherine always the playful mimic, had evidently developed a wonderfully humorous imitation of Mrs Deasy's Cork accent

³ Catherine McAuley visited Carlow on May 20, 1837 when the first stone was laid for the new Carlow convent made possible by John Nowlan's gift of £2000. On this occasion she brought young Catherine with her as her travelling companion.

⁴ According to the Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of Mercy, an annual retreat of eight days was made in each convent, preceding the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15).

⁵ Although it was Catherine McAuley's custom to remain with each new community for at least a month, in late July when her dying niece requested that she be sent for (see Letter 49), she returned in haste to Dublin, leaving Cork, as she later said, in an "unfinished state" (see Letter 51).

M. C. McAuley