



Letter From Catherine McAuley

*Dr. Thomas Walsh
Wolverhampton*

*Convent of the Sisters of Mercy
Baggot Street
February 4, 1840*

My Lord

I have had the honor of receiving your esteemed letter – and would feel happiness in co-operating to the full extent of my power in the accomplishment of your desire. If two persons who manifested a vocation for the religious state were sent here – one year and three months would finish the time of probation for a new Institute. They could then return, accompanied by one or two well acquainted with our regulations. The pension for each during the noviciate is twenty five pounds per annum – if circumstances required a reduction, it would be made.

Perhaps, my Lord, the persons in view would rather not come to Ireland but join our Sisters on their arrival in Birmingham, which would save expense – and having the ceremony of reception at home might produce a pious excitement that would animate others to follow. Whatever you think best suited to the views and inclinations of those who are disposed to promote the object shall be met in every possible way.

My Lord – as to building – I beg leave to suggest the advantage of not doing so on a very limited scale. We should hope that an Establishment in Birmingham would be productive of others. Your Convent should have at least twenty cells – 10 feet by 7 – a small window – and a small door made so close to the partition wall as to leave a sufficient space for the Bed's head – a novaship [noviceship] – about 18 feet by 14 - a Community room – Refectory – and Choir – each to be 25 feet by 19 – a good room for Infirmary – and a small reception parlour. It is very desirable there should be only two floors above the basement story. The refectory should be close to the Kitchen – all executed in the plainest style, without any cornice – cheap grates and stone chimneypieces.

This could be completed in ten months – and would not cost more than a smaller building – where ornamental work would be introduced. Or, my Lord, if you would think it better – merely to commence preparations for building – and to hire a small House for a beginning – perhaps the people would be induced to contribute more freely to its completion – but it should be commenced, my Lord, as the Sisters would not feel happy – except they had a convent in prospect.

The Convent in Bermondsey is not well suited to the purpose – the sleeping rooms are too large – the other rooms too small – the corridors confined and not well lighted – all the gothic work outside has made it expensive. A plain simple durable building is much more desirable.

Earnestly begging that you will give me and Community a place in your charitable remembrance – I have the honor and happiness to remain

My Lord – with great respect – your obedient Servant in Christ

Mary C. McCauley

The sum your Lordship mentions for support would do very well.