

Hello. My name is Catherine McAuley.

Welcome to my house!

Catherine's House began its journey half way around the world, in Dublin, Ireland. The fundamental principles of mercy, love and empowerment that we hold dearly, and the vision that those core components could serve as a catalyst for life changing growth all came from one woman's vision; and her courage to act. Her name is Catherine McAuley. This is her story.

Catherine McAuley was born in Dublin, Ireland in the late 1700s. Her father, a successful businessman, was a devout Catholic who was devoted to serving the poor throughout Dublin. Many of her earliest memories were of his personal care for the poor. This compassion and mercy shown by her father made a great impression on Catherine, who soon shared her father's empathy for those who were less fortunate.

Catherine was still young when her parents died; first her father, her mother a few years later. With both parents gone, Catherine and her two siblings were in the care of a kind Protestant family.

Living with this family, Catherine's brother and sister eventually chose to be Protestant. This was notable, as in 18th century Ireland, Catholics were excluded from education, professional positions or the right to own land. However, Catherine remained devoted to her Catholic faith.

While in her 20s, Catherine was introduced to William and Catherine Callaghan. The Callaghans had no children of their own and took an immediate liking to Catherine, inviting her to live with them at their new estate. While they were not Catholic, the Callaghans encouraged Catherine to practice her faith as well as follow her passion to assist and provide for the poor. She began by providing food and religious instruction to the poor at the local parish. Soon, she felt compelled to do more, and asked the Callaghans'

received permission to visit and minister to the poor at local hospitals. She also sought out those who were suffering alone, in cold and destitute conditions, to offer care and mercy.

Catherine continued to face obstacles and challenges in her work. Her inheritance began to dwindle and she became dependent on the donations and support of others to keep the ministry running. Additionally, because her community was not a religious order, some Catholic leaders feared that her need for money would erode support for Catholic Sisters in Dublin. Soon it became clear that if the ministry were to endure, they must become a religious order, and the House of Mercy a convent.

Thus on December 12, 1831, at the age of 44, Catherine McAuley and two others, completed their novitiate and took their vows as the first Sisters of Mercy. And though their order as Sisters had just began, their work and reputation was rewarded with rapid growth. In just over six years, the Sisters of Mercy opened ten new convents throughout Ireland.



Catherine McAuley

permission to use a small cottage on the grounds of the estate, where she taught girls to read, pray and sew.

After many years, both Mr. and Mrs. Callaghan became ill and passed away. Soon after, Catherine was surprised to learn that she had been left as the sole heir to their estate, an inheritance of more than \$5 million in today's money. Now 44 years old,

Catherine understood that it was her responsibility to use these resources to serve the poor.

She began her work by adopting four orphaned children and teaching at the local parish school. Soon, she began to envision a ministry centered around a large home, where compassionate women might change the lives of other women, those who were working and without shelter, as well as those with no power or prospects of their own.

As is common in every generation, there was significant opposition to her

idea. The wealthy of Dublin complained that the new ministry would ruin the fashionable neighborhood that Catherine targeted for her ministry. Even those in the Catholic community questioned how women would live a life of service, without joining a religious order, as Catherine had no intention of creating such an order. However, Catherine pressed forward. On September 24, 1827, her vision became a reality, as the House of Mercy opened its doors in Dublin.

Catherine knew that education would be the way out of poverty, particularly for children. So, the House of Mercy began its work by teaching young children of all ages. In only a few months, Catherine had over 200 children under her care. Next, Catherine began to attend to the care of those who were sick. She

As the ministry continued to flourish, and the Sisters of Mercy continued to grow in numbers, Catherine grew ill. Soon, it became obvious that this was not an illness from which she would recover. On her last day, Catherine added the name of every living Sister of Mercy to her will, entrusting the House of Mercy to their care. She died on November 11, 1841.

Now, more than 200 years after her birth, the mission of mercy that she envisioned continues to shine brightly. The Sisters of Mercy now span the entire globe with thousands of Sisters of Mercy and lay men and women serving together, as partners in ministry. At Catherine's House, we are proud to carry on her name and the beautiful legacy that she began; to provide mercy, love and empowerment to women and children, by providing them with safe housing and services that will help them build self-sufficiency.

Much of the above history of the life of Catherine McAuley are excerpts from the film, "In God Alone." If you would like to learn more about Catherine's beautiful life, we invite you to view the film created by Mercy International Association. You can watch the film at their website:

www.mercyworld.org/film-in-god-alone