



Catherine's Relationships Right Relationship with God Week Two- Catherine and Scripture

Catherine sought to be in right relationship with God and it was with scripture that she came to a deeper understanding of what this meant. As a lay person in this period of history, Catholics were not typically encouraged in their independent reading of the scriptures. However, Catherine showed a great depth of understanding of Scripture and was able to use it to support and shape the community which she formed.

We believe that Catherine was nourished in this area during her years at Coolock. Mrs Callaghan, as a Quaker, would have read the scriptures daily. As Catherine took on the daily care of Mrs Callaghan it is understood that she read the scriptures to her. Catherine's familiarity with the scriptures, is shown in her correspondence and formal documents.

Catherine's knowledge and love of the Scriptures was not one of a dispassionate academic. She had a gentleness about her use of scripture. She once counselled her Sisters to not take "a gloomy view of passing events," reminding them that the Scriptures do not describe Jesus as "sad or troublesome."

She quoted scriptural texts directly or sometimes would take Scripture and echo it in her own wording to shape the community that had gathered around her. In "*The Spirit of the Institute*" she states the following: "In order to excite and animate us in our daily occupation, let us imagine that God says to us, as we read in Holy Scripture "Fear nothing, it is I who have called you, take courage, and be of resolution" (adapted from 2 Kings 13:28).

She used Scripture to support the mission, to build and form the religious community that she founded as a response to the needs. In the early years of the community, when there were many challenges, she reminded the sisters to "put your whole confidence in God" (1 John 3:21). Her leadership was one of encouragement and reassurance.

In her later years, Catherine was engaged, in a constant internal dialogue between her understanding of Scripture, her knowledge of the tradition of the Church, and her personal experience of the work she was undertaking and the world in which she lived. Her relationship with God was dynamic and contextual. Her circumstances shaped and renewed her response to the gospel.

Catherine echoed the call of the Gospel to be a prophetic voice in a world that had ignored the poor and those at the margins. Her reading of Scripture together with the work she was undertaking exemplified a rhythmic cycle of contemplation and action. Catherine had learnt a way of living from these sacred texts, a way of living that would inspire thousands to follow her in this particular ministry of Mercy.

Catherine had acquired the conviction that the life of Christ was to be imitated. She not only entered the Gospels, she internalised them. For her, Jesus was a model, a way to be, a way to live.

Tender Courage p 45

*Bring justice to the people, O God, and your mercy to all generations!
May the people be known for mercy, rendering justice to the poor.*

Psalm 72

**What is stirring within you that is compelling you to (contemplative) action?
How have you been shaped and formed to "take courage and be of resolution"?
Who are the "poor" and those "at the margins" in your life?**

