



## Catherine's Relationships

### Right Relationship with God

### Week Three - Catherine and Prayer

When Catherine was once asked what were the requisite characteristics of a prospective Sister of Mercy, she replied that a person should have “an ardent desire to be united to God and serve the poor.”<sup>1</sup> Catherine undoubtedly had this desire, a desire to be in a relationship with God and to serve God through her work with the poor. As we have seen over the past two weeks, Catherine had faith in God and knowledge of Scriptures. However it was prayer that nourished and sustained Catherine in all that she did.

In the difficulties that Catherine encountered, we know that she sought solace in prayer and called upon God in those dark hours. Prayer, for Catherine, was an essential and life giving practice.

As Catherine sought a “right relationship” with God, she placed herself in God’s presence and sought consolation and guidance, offering herself in prayer and action to the work of God’s mission on earth.

In her Retreat instructions, Catherine McAuley urged that “our centre is God, from whom all our actions should spring as from their source.”<sup>2</sup> She made reference to this notion in one of her letters to Sr Mary de Sales White - “We have one solid comfort amidst this little tripping about: our hearts can always be in the same place, centered in God.”<sup>3</sup>

Catherine understood prayer to be much more than the recitation of formal texts. The cycle of contemplation and action, didn’t divide Catherine’s days into periods of praying and periods of not praying. For Catherine her work with the poor was prayer.

*Prayer is a plant the seed of which is sown in the heart of every Christian, but its growth entirely depends on the care we take to nourish it.*

*Retreat Instructions p 90*

**Where is your “centre”?**

**What keeps you grounded in the difficult times?**

1 Mary Sullivan, *The Path of Mercy*, p 190.

2 Mary Bertrand Degnan, Ed., *Retreat Instructions of Mother Mary Catherine McAuley*, compiled by Mary Teresa Purcell, p 154.

3 Mary Sullivan Ed., *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley* p332.

