

Where God Dwells, Mercy Lives



“What would the charity of God have profited us, if God’s mercy had not come to our aid?”

(Catherine McAuley)

Mercy Day – September 24 – is the anniversary of the opening of the first House of Mercy in 1827 in Dublin, Ireland. Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy, sought to incarnate the Mercy of God to the poor, sick, and ignorant. She chose a house in which to create a home environment for the education of poor young girls and as a residence for homeless girls and women. But through God’s grace and mercy it became so much more.

“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house ... What on earth is [God] up to? The explanation is that [God] is building quite a different house from the one you thought of – throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but [God] is building a palace. [God] intends to come and live in it God’s self.”
(CS Lewis, *Mere Christianity*)

In this living house the young women who were invited to Baggott Street ‘as their home’ were Dublin’s poor and needy. The conditions of deprivation which were so

prevalent in Dublin in the early 1830s were reflected throughout the whole of Ireland and it didn’t take long for new foundations to be laid based on life as lived at Baggott Street.

The location of the House of Mercy ensured that the poor would be visible to the rich and that the young women would have employment opportunities close by. It was all very deliberate on Catherine’s part to create connection and community where people could learn from each other. She was building a house pleasing to God.

Fast forward 190 years. Who could have foreseen that Mercy would be found in 46 countries worldwide with over 55,000 Sisters, Associates and Partners in Ministry continuing to minister God’s mercy to those whose lives they touch?

Happy Mercy Day to all of our mercy ministries and particularly our Sisters of Mercy!

Source: www.mercyworld.org

REFLECTION

God calls all of us to be vehicles of mercy as Catherine McAuley was and to build our own houses of mercy:

- > What does ‘life as lived’ in your house look like?
- > Can you hear the cries of the poor and vulnerable most in need of God’s compassion and mercy”?