

Mother McAuley — Mercy Foundress

The rich and gifted Dublin beauty had the world at her feet but she surrendered everything to serve Christ's poor

THE SPIRIT which characterizes the Sisters of Mercy of the Rochester diocese is no chance quality developed through the years. It is the heritage of each Sister as she enters the community, binding her to 24,000 other Sisters of Mercy in the world and marking her as a daughter of Mother Catherine McAuley.

Although by some strange twist of misrepresentation Mother McAuley is most frequently pictured in a seated position, she is the toiling, nursing, scrubbing, instructing, incarnate "Spirit of Mercy."

This "hellish," this "gifted Irish lady," this "Dublin beauty with the world at her feet," so ministered in secret unto her Lord and His needy ones that she left a heritage of long-unheralded virtue imitated by her spiritual daughters in a score of nations today.

Catherine Elizabeth McAuley was born in Dublin, Ireland on September 29, 1787.

As a child Catherine was her father's daughter, companion to all his efforts in behalf of the poor and unfortunate. By his side along the Dublin streets and when he befriended beggars on their front porch at St. Mary's town house, she grew up with the strong conviction that to love God one must love her fellowmen by giving them food and medicine and clothing for their bodies and the Word of God for the guidance and instruction of their spirits.

When Catherine was seven years old she lost her father and four years later her mother also died. Worldly comforts gave way to severe poverty. Her Catholic faith was subjected to harsh trials by bigoted relatives and friends and the lonely orphan knew the bitterness of prejudice and misunderstanding.

Owing to financial difficulties, the three McAuley children could not be

taken in by their Catholic relatives, so they were placed in the home of a Mr. Armstrong, a Protestant relative. Here Catherine lived in a dire



MOTHER McAULEY

spiritual condition, a Catholic only in name and desire.

AT THE AGE of sixteen Catherine was adopted by the Callahan's, wealthy distant relatives but equally as prejudiced against Catholicism.

It was in this home with all its apparently adverse circumstances that Catherine perseveringly grew in her faith and in her apostolate to the spiritually and materially needy servants and beggars.

So sweet was her tenacity in clinging to her Catholic faith that her prayers and example became the channel of grace for the deathbed conversion of both Mr and Mrs Callahan.

In November, 1882, Catherine found herself an heiress, absolute mistress of the vast wealth of the Callahan's with no specific direction as to its use. She began immediately to devote herself to broad works of mercy for the Dublin poor.

Regular distribution of food and clothing was made to the unfortunate and a home for the poor was built on Baggott Street. This house later became the center of operations for a band of zealous women who, like herself, desired to devote their time and strength to the service of the destitute, sick and homeless poor.

This House of Mercy in the Providence of God became the first Convent of Mercy. These women, who dressed somewhat alike and observed together a daily pattern of work and prayer, became the first Sisters of Mercy.

The idea of founding a religious order was not part of the group's plan. For Catherine felt that she could further the work of the Church better as a lay woman. She honestly doubted the effectiveness of religious women in social service.

However, she was urged by Dublin church authorities to form a religious congregation, and realized that her group could not continue permanently in the anomalous position of being religious in everything but name. She and two other women of the group at the House of Mercy made their novitiate at the Presentation Convent, George's Hill, Dublin.

On December 12, 1831 Catherine, at the age of 44, took her religious vows, thus officially inaugurating the Religious Institute of the Sisters of Mercy. A rule based on that of St. Augustine was adopted and approved by Pope Gregory XVI in 1840 and Sister Mary Catherine became the first superior of the infant community.

MOTHER McAULEY was a pioneer in the field of social work in her day. It had not attained the professional status then which it enjoys today.

She worked under the standard which recognized spiritual, mental and moral health of first importance — bodily welfare came second. Hand in hand with social work she established schools for the poor and middle class children whose education had been so neglected.

Despite criticism, opposition and sickness which took their toll in the early days, Mother Mary Catherine during her own lifetime established fourteen Mercy convents in Ireland and England. She died November 11, 1841.

Plans for Sisters to go to America were carried out by her devoted friend, Mother Francis Xavier Warde. Mother Warde and six Irish Mercy Sisters opened the first convent of Mercy in the United States in Pittsburgh in December, 1843. She brought a similar group from Rhode Island to Rochester on June 9, 1857 to found the community here at St. Mary's Church.

Mother McAuley's legacy to her Sisters was charity. No impractical idealism she gave them a working definition of this favorite virtue.

"Charity not only requires that we instruct but also that we should pity, encourage and even reprove those under our care as they may require."

Exhorting her daughters to receive the ungrateful "again and again," she felt it better to receive a hundred imposters than to suffer one really distressed person to be sent away empty.

Mother McAuley Junior College

Mercy Sisters conduct own program of teacher training

To teach well, kindness and prudence while indispensable, will not suffice without the solid foundation of a good education and a judicious method of imparting knowledge.

THESE WORDS of Mother Catherine McAuley, foundress of the Sisters of Mercy, have been the guiding inspiration for the Rochester community in its preparation of teaching Sisters for the elementary and high schools they staff in the Diocese.

Completing a century of school teaching the Mercy Sisters now look ahead to new generations of young teachers who will prepare in an up-to-date "college wing" which will be erected in 1958 adjoining the Motherhouse and provide enlarged facilities for their Catherine McAuley Junior College for Sister-teachers.

Teacher training for a religious community involves many spiritual and financial problems. Hand in hand with the necessity of complying with state regulations in preparing young women for classroom duties, the early years of convent life are dedicated to instilling the principles and practices of solid religious life. A long and difficult program fills every young Sister's training days, for she must excel equally as a novice and as a novice-teacher.

The financial burden of the teacher preparation is heavy for a Motherhouse. Much of the required instruction can be given by members of the community but equipment for courses is expensive.

For degree work and specialized study various Sisters must be sent to distant schools and universities at great expense. All must meet certification requirements of the state and of educational organizations.

In addition to the state certificates which all Mercy Sisters have, are the Sisters who hold degrees from more than 25 colleges and universities including Nazareth College, Catholic University of America, Cornell, Notre Dame, Manhattanville, Rochester Institute of Technology, Fordham, Columbia and many others.

EAGER TO improve the program of teacher formation with special emphasis on the spiritual training and characteristics of the Mercy life, the Community in 1950 requested the State Department of Education for permission to organize their own college for the preparation of grammar school teachers.

After a three year trial of teacher-education leading toward a charter, the Sisters received a provisional charter for Catherine McAuley Junior College from the New York State Board of Regents on May 21, 1954. This grant is valid for five years, during which time the institution must offer evidence of its capacity for performing efficiently the educational service which merits a permanent charter.

The Mercy Sisters training school for teachers has been under the supervision of the State Education Department since 1951, and the first class of graduates received their A.S. (Associate of Applied Science) degree September 24, 1954, the feast of Our Lady of Mercy.

The program leading to this degree, in accordance with the accepted thinking of the State and of educational leaders, stresses the need for a general and cultural foundation, in contrast with the narrower concept of emphasis on teaching methods.

THE FACULTY of the Junior College draws on a large group of teachers, all well prepared in their fields of specialization. Sister Mary de Pazzi, Dean of Instruction, brings to

her work, in the course of 40 years of teaching experience, 18 years of administrative work in the elementary schools, and six years as the community supervisor of Mercy staffed schools.

This latter position was a particularly valuable preparation for her present work, bringing her into contact at close range with educational trends and their repercussions in the day-to-day pattern of classroom instruction in 31 elementary schools staffed by the community.

Rev. Msgr. Louis W. Edelman and Sister Mary Peter formed, with Sister dePazzi the nucleus of the faculty from its initiation. Rev. Stanislaus B. Krolak, Ph.D., Rev. Albert J. Shanon, M.A., Rev. Elmer A. McNamara, S.T.D., and Rev. David M. Murphy, M.A. from St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's seminaries, serve on the faculty in the fields of philosophy, religion and foreign languages.

In addition, more than ten of the qualified members of the community have taught courses in the Junior College at various times.

The curriculum of Catherine McAuley Junior College is broad and comprehensive. Courses are grouped under the following main headings: English, education, citizenship education, science, art, and music.

An especially fine feature of the outline of courses is the inclusion of some 14 alternate subjects, which may be offered in the various fields as the need for them arises. This arrangement helps to preserve the vitality and flexibility so necessary to a forward-looking college program.

The complete three year program entitles the student upon graduation to the degree of "Associate of Applied Science." Attainment of 100 credits represents the minimum requirement for the student. This is exclusive of credits for religion taken during the time of novitiate.

Continued study in philosophy, languages and electives to complete the bachelor degree is left to the major college to which the Sisters will be sent for summer courses.

The present physical facilities of the Junior College will be supplanted by a new building in the near future and feature a large, pleasant lecture room and an exceptionally fine library.

The library currently includes almost 10,000 volumes, as well as a broad range of magazine files. These resources make feasible the established practice that, in every course, "Every teacher is expected to prepare and have students use an extensive bibliography."

Thus, the beginning student is immediately challenged with the use of techniques of research and recourse to source materials which are the foundation of a scholarly approach to education, and of a realistic program of self-education.

Supplementing the course of classroom instruction is a program of additional experiences intended to complete the "integration of the whole Catholic woman: her spiritual, moral, aesthetic, intellectual, social and physical development." It has been an accepted principle from the start that "the auxiliary sources so extensive in Rochester should be used to their fullest advantage."

Guest lecturers and artists have their inspiration to the potential teachers. In rounding out the student's preparation, provision for observation in the classroom, and for supervised practice teaching occupies an important place.

This program of training future teachers, the Mercy Sisters hope will "produce Catholic educators who are a credit to the Church, our Congregation and the teaching Sisterhoods."



Sister Mary de Pazzi, Dean of Mother McAuley Junior College

Mercy Nuns Staff 21 Parish Schools

Now teach over 10,000 pupils in diocesan elementary schools

"Draw souls to God, by your words, by your example, by the works of your Institute."

—Mother McAuley

THESE WORDS of the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy express the ideal which motivates more than 300 of the spiritual daughters in each of their classrooms throughout the Rochester diocese.

Some statistics may give an idea of their influence. On the elementary level alone, 10,438 youngsters are being guided in Mercy staffed schools; 6,497 are in Rochester itself, and 3,941 in ten other towns and cities in the diocese.

As in all parochial schools, the study and practical application of Catholic doctrine is the core of the curriculum, while Christian principles are naturally brought out in the study of other subject fields. Devotion to Our Blessed Mother, patriotism of the community, is a particular aspect of training in Mercy schools.

The strong teaching traditions of the Sisters of Mercy embody a spirit which is progressive in adopting up-to-date methods, as well as traditional in preserving those which have stood the test of time. Their schools follow the diocesan Handbook of School Policies and Practices, and meet adequately the requirements of the State Department of Education. For the past three years, schools staffed by the Mercy Sisters have had 100 per cent membership enrollment in the National Catholic Educational Association.

In August, 1956, Sister Mary Agnes took over the supervisory duties and is ably carrying out the ideals set by both her predecessors.

The steady growth of the elementary schools assigned to the Sisters of Mercy in the diocese has kept pace with the corresponding phenomenal spread of the parochial schools in this country.

Public relations is a vital part of the educational set-up of the Sisters of Mercy. Most schools now have regular parent-teacher meetings at which classroom situations are discussed and home-school relations strengthened. Other interested visitors are always welcome.

Cooperation with civic organizations such as safety and health committees is a must. Many schools have participated actively in essay and poster contests sponsored by these organizations, thus stimulating student interest and ability.

IMPROVEMENTS IN classroom procedure is given added impetus by the yearly Community Institute held at the Rochester Motherhouse on Blossom Road. Here the teachers share ideas, and problems, view demonstrations and participate in panel discussions. Workshops in art and music are held during the summer at the Motherhouse, while several of the Sisters take part in annual inter-diocesan workshops on curriculum and examinations.

Cooperation of the Mercy school system with diocesan and state departments of education, and coordination of all the schools together, has been the main duty of the "Community Supervisor of schools." In 1937, Sister Mary de Lourdes, veteran teacher, was appointed the first full-time supervisor, and served in this capacity until 1950. Sister will long be remembered for her kindness and sincere interest in each teacher and her class. She maintained this kindness even when her last illness forced a curtailment of her visitations.

SISTER MARY DE PAZZI, former principal of St. John the Evangelist School, was appointed in August, 1950, and her efforts to promote progress were most rewarding for the community during her term. Sister is at present dean of Catherine McAuley Junior College.

Twenty-one grade schools are now staffed by Mercy Sisters. One more opens in the fall—Our Lady of Lourdes in Elmira, and three other new schools will be ready for pupils in September, 1958.

Eight completely new schools accepted since 1950—six of which have been completely renovated in the past five years, attest to the good will of earnest pastors and sacrificing parishioners in providing adequate teaching facilities for the quate.

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