

Catherine McAuley and Everyday Leadership

Opening Prayer

Loving God, you call each of us to lead with courage and compassion. As we reflect on the life and leadership of Catherine McAuley, open our hearts to learn from her example and to grow as leaders who serve others with mercy and presence. We ask this in your name. Amen.



Two qualities that made Catherine McAuley's leadership so remarkable were **presence** and **mercy and compassion**.

"To Harbour the Harbourless" - artwork by Clare Agnew

Part 1: Presence

Attending to, affirming, listening to and being with each person we encounter in our leadership journey is a profound personal blessing which can transform lives. Catherine McAuley knew this, and it was the bedrock of her leadership practice.

Sister Mary C. Sullivan, RSM, reflected: "... this presence began with her sisters: Catherine's love for her companions was revealed to them in dozens of ordinary human ways: her shoulder-to-shoulder presence among them, her attentive care in their sickness, her affectionate letters, her laborious journeys to comfort and assist them, her persistent self-effacement for their sakes, and her grief as they lay dying."

Video: [Clip from the Tour of Catherine's House of Mercy, minute 10-12:30](#)

Part 2: Mercy and Compassion

Sister Mary also writes: "Catherine McAuley understood mercy to be the beating heart of her work with the vulnerable and marginalized. She frequently reminded her sisters

that mercy was the recognition of Jesus in the face of every person and the imperative to do all in one's power to assist those in need."

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew (25:35-40)

"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me... And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"



Works of Mercy Cross by Sister Celeste Marie Nuttman, RSM <https://www.sistersofmercy.org/a-works-of-mercy-cross>

Reflection Questions

Take a few moments of quiet reflection.

- ✚ Describe a time when you witnessed how the gift of presence made a difference in someone's life.
- ✚ What are the barriers to practicing presence in your ministry or daily work?
- ✚ Who is calling out for your presence?
- ✚ Who is in need of your mercy and compassion?
- ✚ How can you strengthen the practice of mercy and compassion in your leadership?

(Pause for silent reflection or quiet sharing)

Closing Prayer

Loving and merciful God,
You called Catherine McAuley to be a leader of presence, compassion, and mercy.

Through her example, show us how to be attentive to those around us, especially those who feel unseen or unheard.

Help us to lead with kindness,
to act with courage,
and to serve with open and generous hearts.

May we recognize your presence in every person we meet,
and respond with love in all that we do. Amen.

This prayer service is based “Mercy Leadership Reflection: Catherine McAuley & Everyday Leadership,” found in Caroline Thompson’s *Be As Shining Lamps* (page 53).