

YOU COULD USE THIS REFLECTION WITH STAFF OR
LEADERSHIP TEAMS IN A REFLECTION OR SPIRITUALITY DAY.

Mercy Attentiveness

Marlette Black pbvm described spirituality as '... the intention to direct our lives in response to God's grace ... it includes being intentional to what we attend to in our lives' (*Presentation Charism and Spirituality*. Queensland Presentation Sisters. 2009).

WHAT WAS CATHERINE MCAULEY ATTENTIVE TO IN HER LIFE AND MINISTRY?

- **Catherine was attentive to those made poor:** she was attentive to their need for education, faith, health, and wellbeing.
- **Catherine was attentive to the structural causes of the injustice that she witnessed daily:** the unemployment, the gap between rich and poor, the treatment of women and girls, the lack of safe housing, the need for education.
- **Catherine was attentive to the future:** she endeavoured to ensure that the work would not end with her. She had a transformative impact, not just on those who worked alongside her, but also on the people she helped, the lives she turned around through education, the community she softened with kindness and compassion.
- **Catherine was attentive to people:** old, young, men, women, poor, lonely, destitute, and abandoned. She noticed them, she felt their suffering, she gave them the gift of presence and mercy.
- **Catherine was attentive to place:** she built a House of Mercy, new foundations across Ireland, and schoolrooms across the city. She knew the importance of a place to feel safe, a place to work and a place to pray.
- **Catherine was attentive to her attitude:** she chose to be positive despite the challenges she faced. She urged her Sisters to 'dance every evening'.
- **Catherine was attentive to God's call to mission:** she had absolute faith in God when she faced opposition and everything seemed to be collapsing around her.
- **Catherine was attentive to a separation between private devotion and religious faith:** she saw the real work of the Gospels so often ignored in Dublin's streets. She strove to restore prayer, the riches of community and the blessings of the common good to her world.

Catherine's legacy endures because she was attentive to the need for the work to continue.

A Final Word

THE BURNING QUESTION OF CATHERINE MCAULEY'S SPIRITUALITY IS:

Are our ministries really responding to the needs of the poor and vulnerable?

IN THE WORDS OF MARIA MCGUINNESS RSM:

'Are the socially radical and politically subversive visions of our foundress still operative today? Are we reading the Signs of the Times in the provocatively disturbing and challenging ways that our foundress did?' (*Challenges to Ministry. Listen*).

If the love of God really reigns in your heart, it will quickly show itself in the exterior

(Retreat Instructions, 145).

For Reflection:

- **What are you attentive to in your life?**
- **How does this define your spirituality and how you choose to express your faith?**
- **Which aspects of Catherine McAuley's attentiveness align with your own way of seeing the world?**