**Mercy Reading:** *Catherine’s Embrace of Cultural Diversity* *by Mary Sullivan RSM*

**Catherine’s Embrace of Cultural Diversity**

If I were to summarise in the broadest terms Catherine McAuley’s embrace of cultural diversity and her legacy of hospitality to strangers, I would have to say that:

~ She did not narrowly define the love of God or the unity to which we and our neighbours in the world are called.

~ She did not misname differences or see cultural variations as obstacles to that unity.

~ She did not use adversarial language to describe these differences.

~ She did not cling to her own distinctiveness or to her own personal preferences or non-essential customs.

~ And she did not regard her friendship with God as something to be coveted or exploited for herself alone.

Rather:

~ She emptied herself of the comfort of her former way of life.

~ She took the form of a servant in her human context.

~ She extended her affectionate embrace to otherness.

~ She opened her door to strangers.

~ She welcomed them.

~ She learned from those who were different and left them whole in their Godly difference.

~ She humbled herself before all human forms.

~ And she followed, as best she could, the example of Christ, who became obedient to God’s wide and merciful love of all humankind, even to the point of death, death on a cross.

If we wish to sow the seeds of real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it — one person at a time: one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk — one person at a time.

*From ‘Mercy Values Today: Every Ancient, Ever New’.*