

Mother Catherine McAuley



From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The Venerable Mother Catherine Elizabeth McAuley (born on September 29, 1778, at Stormanstown House, in [Dublin, Ireland](#) – died November 11, 1841, at the House of Mercy she had built on Baggot Street, Dublin) was an [Irish](#) nun, who founded the [Sisters of Mercy](#) in 1831.^[1] The Order has always been associated with teaching, especially in Ireland, where the nuns taught Catholics (and at times Protestants) at a time when education was mainly reserved for members of the established [Church of Ireland](#).^[clarification needed]

Catherine McAuley as depicted on the £5 note of [Series C Banknotes of Ireland](#).

Having lost her father as a small child, Catherine became orphaned at 18 with the death of her mother. By this time the family had little money so Catherine and her two siblings moved to live with relatives. Unfortunately her relatives also struggled financially, and so Catherine went to live with wealthy friends of her relatives, the Callahans. Catherine spent her time learning about her religion, praying, and serving the needy.

When Mr Callahan died, he left his entire fortune to Catherine.

She inherited a considerable fortune at the age of 48, she chose to use it to build a house where she and other compassionate women could take in homeless women and children to provide care and an education for them.

She never intended to found a community of religious women. The church (clergy and people) of the time, however, were not supportive of groups of lay women working independently of church structures. Catherine's clerical mentor urged her to form a religious Institute. Catherine and two other women entered the formation program of the Presentation Sisters to formally prepare for life as women religious. At the end of one year they professed vows and returned to the House of Mercy. The [Sisters of Mercy](#) consider December 12, 1831, the day of their founding as a religious community.

Catherine lived only ten years as a Sister of Mercy, **Sister Mary Catherine**, but in that time she established twelve foundations in Ireland and two in England. At the time of her death there were 150 Sisters of Mercy. Shortly thereafter, small groups of sisters left Ireland to establish new foundations on the east and west coasts of the United States, in Newfoundland, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina.

Total worldwide vowed membership is about 10,000. The [Mercy International Centre](#) in [Dublin, Ireland](#) is the international "home" of Sisters of Mercy worldwide.

In 1978, the cause for the [beatification](#) of the *Servant of God* Catherine McAuley was opened by [Pope Paul VI](#), and in 1990, upon recognition of her [heroic virtues](#), [Pope John Paul II](#) declared her *Venerable*. This places her on the path towards possible [sainthood](#)