

## My Time in Baggot Street—Anne O’Connell

What a privilege to spend 3 months living and working in the house that Catherine McAuley built in Baggot Street, and the house that is now home for the Mercy family throughout the world.

Baggot Street is a place of pilgrimage and renewal for Sisters, Associates and friends of Mercy and I met many wonderful and inspiring people during my stay. We were all deepening our knowledge and love for Catherine by walking where she and the early sisters had walked, lived and died. Visitors arrive most days to take tours of the house including the Chapel, the room where Catherine died, her grave and the garden where 49 Sisters are buried.

As a volunteer I was able to meet and welcome B&B guests arriving for their stay in the house. As my family knows, I’m a talker, so found this a very pleasant duty! Volunteers also prepare breakfasts at the weekends and do general dining room work, help out in the shop as necessary, show visitors through the house, look after day to day shopping, lock up in the evening and be on call several nights a week and generally just help out wherever needed. Most days there is a request for a cuppa and a sandwich for a visitor at the front door. I was surprised by the number of people sleeping rough and begging in the streets.

Two groups of Associates came to stay and take part in programmes whilst I was at Baggot Street. To celebrate 25 years as Associates, eight women came from Jamaica to take part in the ‘Come Home to Catherine’ programme - and I was invited to join them. Over 6 days we studied Catherine’s life and writings more closely and walked her Dublin, visiting places which were so significant in her life, including Coolock House and George’s Hill. Catherine, along with her two companions, did their Noviciate at this Presentation Convent and made their vows in the Chapel. We also renewed our Commitment as Associates in the same Chapel.

The second group of Associates to stay were from Sunderland, England. It was very interesting to compare notes and to find that we are all so similar in our goals and aspirations as part of the global Mercy family.



Early in September we welcomed the Peace Angels from Australia – a spiritual based theatre company, whose mission is to bring peace to the world (Google Peace Angels) Twenty five angels came to Ireland to help celebrate peace during this year of the Gathering. Most stayed with us and the others close by. They all came together for daily meditation and although it was a very busy time for us, they were a lovely presence in the house. On their last evening they did a peace walk down to St Steven’s Green. We heard the tinkling of bells and then this vision of them descending the stairs – all dressed as angels even to the sparkling wings! No wonder they all had



*ISMAG—Anne (front right) with Sylvia Williams, Mary Reynolds, Cathy Higgins and Carita Irwin*



*Anne with ISMAPNG Ali Roach  
in the Wicklow Mountains on  
one of her days off*

## My Time in Baggot Street *(cont)*

so much luggage! From Dublin they spread their message to Galway and Northern Ireland.

Mercy Day was a great day of celebration. Bishop Peter Connors was the Celebrant and at the end of the Mass there was much excitement with the 'unveiling' of what is believed to be the only true image of Catherine McAuley, taken from one of Sister Clare Augustine Moore's illuminated artworks.

Volunteers are given days off and good amounts of free time. I was able to visit many places of interest around Dublin and to travel further afield to historic sites and view the wonderful scenery of this lovely country.

I feel very privileged to have had this experience of spending time in Catherine's House and thank those who made my stay such a happy one. Thank you too, to my family, for encouraging me to pursue my dream and giving me the freedom to enjoy it to the full.

*Anne O'Connell*