

302. To Sister Mary Aloysius Scott  
Birr

[Birmingham]  
[September 17, 1841]

My Dearest Sister M. Aloysius

I have been very weak and sick for the last 12 or 14 days. We return on Monday. I did not intend to write till we changed quarters, but your account of poor Father Toohey [Tuohy] has so distressed me.<sup>7</sup> You may be sure we will pray most fervently for him. I hope you will let us know how he goes on—I shall be most anxious to hear—I am delighted you visit him—& have every hope of his recovery. Endless visitors coming in here & I cannot leave the one aired room without coughing violently. God bless & preserve you.

Your ever affectionate

M. C. McAuley

As your note is not dated, I do not know when it was written. It was delivered here—12 o'clock this day, Friday 17th.

*Autograph: Dublin, Mercy*

303. To Sister Mary Aloysius Scott  
Birr

[Baggot Street]  
[September 21, 1841]

My Dearest Sr. M. Aloysius

After writing a few lines to Mother Cecilia to tell her we got safe—I wish to tell you how sincerely I regret the death of dear Father Toohey [Tuohy].<sup>8</sup> May God receive him into everlasting happiness. He was a kind creature to the Poor & I suppose it is a disguised blessing, that God has called him in all his youthful fervor before coldness or indifference towards the poor would render him less acceptable to Almighty God.

Just half an hour before we left Birmingham yesterday, I received your letter, and one from Carlow—Galway & Bermondsey—I could not go there<sup>9</sup>—nor ever go out, even to the Garden.

May God preserve & bless you all.

Your ever affectionate

M. C. M.

*Autograph: Dublin, Mercy*

<sup>7</sup> "Edmund Toohey" is listed as a curate in Birr in the *Irish Catholic Directory* for 1841 (304), as well as in the *Directory* for 1840 (293) and for 1839 (244). However, in the "Clerical Obituary" for 1841, he is listed on September 17 as "Edward Tuohy, C. C. Birr" (*Irish Catholic Directory* [1842] 437). <sup>8</sup> The curate's death occurred on September 17, 1841, the same day as the death, at age sixty-eight, of Catherine McAuley's old friend John McCormick, curate in Blackrock. Father McCormick had welcomed Catherine's sister Mary back into the Catholic church in 1827 (Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley* 41, 47). As Catherine wrote this letter she may have been unaware of John McCormick's death, having just arrived home from Birmingham that morning. <sup>9</sup> That is, to Bermondsey.

304. To Sister Mary Ann Doyle  
Tullamore

Baggot St.  
September 24, 1841<sup>10</sup>

My Dear Sister M. A.

I am now going to give you a little trouble, or rather to beg you to accept it. A dear much valued Sister in a most delicate state thinks she would receive benefit from change of air which has been prescribed for her. Mr. O'Hanlon, our ever dear good Father, would go with her on Monday next, if you can admit her. I need not recommend her to your tenderness, I know she will experience every mark of affection tho' a stranger. All expenses of course will be defrayed. Write me a line immediately, that we may have her ready. She is one of the last professed—Sister M. Justina.<sup>11</sup>

I received your letter in Birmingham and will reply to it soon. I am going to propose myself—as Deputy to Doctor O'Rafferty in the guardianship [*sic*] of your Convent.<sup>12</sup> Your good Bishop was *much* mistaken as to property here—we have ever confided largely in Divine Providence—and shall continue to do so.<sup>13</sup> God bless you.

Your ever affectionate

M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: Tullamore*

305. To Sister M. Frances Warde  
Carlow

Convent [Baggot Street]  
September 25, 1841

My Dearest Sister M. Frances

I received your note about half an hour before we left Birmingham. We had a weary passage from Liverpool—kept 3 hours waiting for water & did not arrive in Kingstown till 9 o'clock.<sup>14</sup> The poor Sisters had comfortable Tea etc. for us. We rested there till 12 o'clock. Sister Xavier is much improved—Sister de Sales just the same poor "skin & bone."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On the cover of this posted letter addressed to "Mrs. Doyle, Convent, Tullamore" Catherine McAuley wrote "Speed." <sup>11</sup> Mary Justina Fleming, who had just professed her vows on August 19, was now in Booterstown. Catherine hopes to send her—with Redmond O'Hanlon and Mary Vincent Whitty accompanying her—to Tullamore on Monday, September 27. <sup>12</sup> This is a remarkable offer, given what is now known about Catherine McAuley's health at this time. It supports the view that Catherine was not yet aware that she was dying, although two days later (see Letter 306), she will report that she has seen the physician twice. In general, the correspondence of the next seven weeks suggests that very few, possibly excluding Catherine herself, thought that she was in her last illness, until very near her death. <sup>13</sup> Evidently Dr. John Cantwell, bishop of Meath, who resided in Mullingar, was under the false impression that there was considerable money at Baggot Street that could assist the Tullamore convent. <sup>14</sup> On Tuesday morning, September 21, 1841. <sup>15</sup> Mary Xavier O'Connell and Mary de Sales White, who had been helping out in Bermondsey

will. "Be just & fear not." Acquit yourself with justice towards God—let no temporal consideration influence your words or actions, when the duty of your state is in question. I could not think any person with very cautious worldly views—worthy to be admitted to holy Profession. It is not a disposition to bestow gifts, like benevolent persons in the world, that bespeaks generosity of mind for the religious state. It is bestowing ourselves most freely and relying with unhesitating confidence on the Providence of God.<sup>24</sup>

When our innocent—yet very sensible, Sister Chantell [de Chantall] (McCann) was about to hand over all she possessed, making it impossible to ever command one shilling, her Mother told her she ought to have some security, as many persons were of the opinion this House would not be established—and said to her, What would you do then? She answered—"Won't I have my sweet Lord?"—and sweet He was to her indeed to the very last moment.<sup>25</sup> Tho' we may not often have the consolation to meet such noble universal disengagement as hers—yet a spirit directly opposite, I humbly hope will never make its abode amongst us.

Do not fear offending any one. Speak as your mind directs and always act with more courage when the "mammon of unrighteousness" is in question. Let me know when you are closely pressed, and I will divide with you, be it ever so little.<sup>26</sup>

I wish I could hear of your getting up a lottery or raffle occasionally. Sr. M. Teresa has made £80 in Galway at different times. If you had two good prizes—and all the rest trifles, you would sell £25 worth of tickets between this and Christmas at 1 s[hilling] per ticket—by giving 10 to every [one] you know to sell them. The drawing could be in the school room—3 blanks to a prize. We have just had one—and did not expend more than £1-10.

Write soon. Most earnestly praying God to direct and strengthen you—  
I remain with great affection etc., etc.

M. C. McAuley

Give my best love to all.

*Autograph: Bermondsey*

<sup>24</sup> Evidently a novice preparing for profession of vows in Tullamore wished to set aside some of her own money for her future personal use, before she professed the vow of poverty by which she would forever renounce all right to administer any assets legally held in her name. Mary Ann Doyle, realizing that the Tullamore community was in need of professed members, may have been tempted to accede to the novice's wish, which Catherine McAuley calls a "very cautious worldly" view. Catherine then gives an important definition of the generosity of mind distinctive of vowed religious life. The next profession ceremony in Tullamore was held on October 18, 1841. <sup>25</sup> Mary de Chantal McCann, the widow of Dr. John McCann, a Dublin physician, had entered the Baggot Street community in October 1832 and professed her vows on July 1, 1835. She died of typhus fever on October 27, 1837. See Letters 27 and 56. <sup>26</sup> Catherine may be thinking of Matt. 6.24 and 1 Tim. 6.9-10. When the Tullamore community is in financial straits, she will divide with it whatever money the Baggot Street community has.

284. To Sister M. Frances Warde  
Carlow

[Baggot Street]  
[c. July 26-27, 1841]<sup>27</sup>

My Dearest Sister M. Frances

Your letter this morning gratified me very much. The arrangement you propose seems very desirable, and if we could all start together,<sup>28</sup> I have no doubt that Sister Gibson would join at once. I have been speaking with her—she is a treasure to religion, a sweet docile animated creature, all alive—and delighted with her duties.

Sister M. Cecilia you know is a general favorite. Perhaps there never was a more beloved Mistress of Novices. They call the novaship—Paradise—tho' the best discipline is kept up. Her going away will make it easier for any novice or postulant to be moved.<sup>29</sup> Indeed it will be another great blow to poor Baggot Street—which has passed through many sorrows. The sweet little Scotch Sr. said to me—"What shall I do when Mother Cecilia is gone." I am so much confined to one room that they seldom see me before evening.<sup>30</sup>

Do all you can to forward the Liverpool foundation. Sr. Fanny<sup>31</sup> thinks she knows 2 who would join immediately—if Dr. Youens gets Beds, etc. Other matters could be got when you arrive. He says the House is very large. There is no time to spare.

Your ever affectionate  
M. C. McAuley

Having heard from a Priest some unfavorable reports of Bermondsey, I wrote to Mr. Butler, begging him to tell me the real state. I this moment rec'd the enclosed—read it and send it again to me when you are writing. 2 left under angry circumstances, I believe they are enemies—Sr. Agnew is fond of *extremes* in piety, that is her greatest error. She wrote to me in the greatest alarm—about a most trifling matter—if you and I were to write on such subjects—we would never be done.<sup>32</sup>

*Autograph: Silver Spring*

<sup>27</sup> Neumann dates this letter "[July 26, 1841]" (354); Bolster dates it "28 January 1841" (195), which cannot be correct, given the content of the letter (a response to Frances's response to Letter 282). <sup>28</sup> For Liverpool and Birmingham, sailing from Kingstown in mid August. <sup>29</sup> Catherine McAuley had already decided that Mary Cecilia Marmion would remain with the new Birmingham community for the first two or three months, until they got settled—taking over Catherine's own role of helper after she departed from Birmingham. <sup>30</sup> Catherine's acknowledging that she is currently confined to one room, with its windows closed, during the day—probably the parlor on the street floor of the house—is her first extant indication that she is now forced to make some accommodation to ease her persistent cough. <sup>31</sup> Frances ("Fanny") Gibson.

<sup>32</sup> Peter Butler's letter about the Bermondsey community is, unfortunately, not extant. In March 1841, according to the Bermondsey Annals, two novices in the community—Mary Bernard Murray and Mary Angela Browne—were dismissed for reasons of health and deficiency "in the requisite qualities and dispositions" (1:24), but Catherine McAuley would have heard about this at least by June when Clare Moore returned to Ireland. Of Clare Agnew's conduct as superior, the Bermondsey

Professed and 3 received—one for Liverpool. Doctor Pusie [Pusey] invited himself if quite agreeable.

Pray well for your ever affectionate  
M. C. McAuley

Take care of my last born—Birr.

Present my respects to Doctor Spain and remember me to Mrs. Egan.

*Autograph: Dublin, Mercy*

281. To Dr. Thomas Youens<sup>19</sup>

Liverpool

[Baggot Street]  
[c. July 24, 1841]

Respected Revd. Father

I this day received a letter from my dear Sister Warde of Carlow, speaking of your intended Institute. She tells me all the arrangements she intended to make—if she should be called upon—and they seem to me exceedingly good.

She makes me perfectly understand what Sisters she designed to give—who are truly desirable. Some of them would, I think, bring the usual portion. Indeed all she proposes, Revd. Father, far exceeds what we could do—and I am now as ardent as my youthful Sister, praying & trusting that nothing may retard the good work.

Very little preparation would be necessary on your part, Revd. Father, and we might sail together for Birmingham & Liverpool. I have been speaking with Sister Fanny G[ibson]—& find she would go at once with the Liverpool foundation.<sup>20</sup> Recommending myself, etc., etc., to your charitable remembrance.

I remain, etc., etc.  
[M. C. McAuley]

*Autograph: Silver Spring*

<sup>19</sup> This unsigned autograph is the draft of the letter Catherine McAuley sent to Thomas Youens, pastor of St. Nicholas Church, Copperas Hill, Liverpool, in the Lancashire District, where Dr. George Hilary Brown was vicar apostolic. The actual autograph letter sent to Dr. Youens has not been located. <sup>20</sup> Catherine McAuley is now fully aware that she does not have the personnel at Baggot Street to send a foundation to Liverpool, except the postulant Jane Frances Gibson. She is doing her best to encourage Dr. Youens to seek a founding community from Carlow, with the hope that the two parties might travel together to Liverpool and Birmingham in August. Apparently Father James Maher and Dr. Youens were friends and had already had a conversation along these lines, which has occasioned Frances Warde's intended "arrangements." In Letter 250, written to Frances on March 29, 1841, Catherine had said: "I have been told two or three times that you are going to Liverpool ... Matters with you are not closed—or you would tell me." Catherine may have initially intended to send a foundation to Liverpool from Dublin, and she certainly wished to be informed of plans made in the various convents outside of Dublin, but it is probably exaggerated to say that she is simply "showing tolerance" of the arrangements Frances Warde is making (see Bolster, ed. 240).

282. To Sister M. Frances Warde  
Carlow

[Baggot Street]  
Saturday, July 24, 1841

My Dear Sr. M. Frances

A few days before Dr. Youens came to Dublin, our Sister Gibson had a letter from Doctor Brown, her Bishop, who seemed to wish to make arrangements here for Liverpool.<sup>21</sup> If he has had any consultation with Dr. Griffiths of London, or Dr. Walshe [*sic*] of Birmingham they would endeavour to impress him with the feeling that establishments in England ought to be made from the chief or Mother House, as they term it, in Ireland, as they attribute whatever little difficulty has been found in Bermondsey to that want. And certainly in that instance more experience was required, to take down some of Sr. Agnew's self importance as to opinion and bring her well through a noviciate, but the case in question is a very different one.<sup>22</sup> The Sister you offer as superior—is to remain—and her dispositions are well suited. Dr. Youens is so anxious, it is a pity to have any impediment, and if our little plans could be formed, perhaps we might sail together—after our ceremony. I think you would do well to send the enclosed note to Dr. Youens—(with Mr. Maher's approbation).<sup>23</sup> He would shew it to the Bishop who, I am told, is endeavouring to get more persons to come here for preparation—do it without delay.

Pray for your affectionate  
M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: Silver Spring*

283. To Sister Mary Ann Doyle  
Tullamore

Baggot Street  
July 24, 1841

My Dear Sister Mary Ann

You are on the secure high road of the Cross—have the most strong and lively confidence that your Convent will be firmly established, for it certainly

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Brown's letter (Letter 278) must have reached Dublin by July 17 or 18; evidently Dr. Thomas Youens visited Dublin, and presumably Carlow, around July 20. The present letter may imply that, while in Dublin, he came to see Catherine McAuley at Baggot Street. <sup>22</sup> At this point Catherine was well aware of some "difficulty" in Bermondsey, though not, I believe, of its severity. What she knew would have come from Clare Moore or Peter Butler during their visit in June. Clare Moore was twenty-four years old when Elizabeth Agnew, about forty, entered the Cork community in April 1838. <sup>23</sup> The "enclosed note" was either a note from Catherine McAuley herself to Dr. Youens which she thought Frances Warde could forward, or a note from Catherine to Frances which, again, could be forwarded to Dr. Youens in support of Frances's proposal. If it was the former, it may actually be the fair copy of Letter 281 in which Catherine encourages Dr. Youens and Dr. Brown to seek the foundation from Carlow; if it was the latter, it was a note from Catherine to Frances in which she commends Frances's plans—in this case, perhaps it was the enclosed "note written by you to Mrs. Warde" to which Dr. Youens refers in Letter 286.

Description strong  
and not too long  
of each dear Sister given  
creates desire  
To see them nigher—  
e'er [ere] they go to Heaven  
A fond Adieu  
I'll bid to you  
grandaughter [*sic*] dear & sweet  
and hope—I will  
that we may still  
In this poor world—meet

*Autograph: Brisbane*

**269. To Sister M. Frances Warde  
Carlow**

My Dearest Sister M. Frances

It distressed me very much to hear from Mr. O'Hanlon that your good director was changed. I know it is an affliction to you—but rest assured, God will

community on January 22, 1841, and received the habit on May 20; Catherine McAuley was in Birr on both occasions, spending a total of five weeks in Mary Anne's company. Mary Anne's native town was Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary, about twelve miles southwest of Birr, Co. Offaly. Borrisokane is in the riding (an administrative unit of the county) called North Tipperary, sometimes colloquially called "North Tip."<sup>22</sup>

The recipient of the poem had sent Catherine McAuley some poetry, in response to which Catherine sends her this brief poem, with the hope that she will see her again in "this poor world." As it turned out, Catherine made only one more trip before her death, to and from Birmingham, England, through Kingstown and Liverpool, August 20 to September 21, 1841—if indeed this poem was sent to Birr after May 24, 1841.

Mary Joseph Heenan was a lay sister, and Catherine McAuley was particularly devoted to and affectionate towards lay sisters, seeing in their work a close resemblance to the ministry of Jesus: "constantly engaged serving others, but never requiring any care or attendance for Himself" (see Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley* 269, 271). One thinks, in particular, of Catherine's affection for Teresa Carton (who in 1844 became a choir sister), Martha Wallplate and Mary Liston at Baggot Street, Mary Shanahan and Anne Hewitt in Limerick, and Mary Teresa Boyce and Mary Joseph Hawkins in Bermondsey.

The presence of the autograph in Brisbane is no help to identifying the recipient. The autographs of five other poems in Brisbane were sent to Ursula Frayne in Booterstown, Mary Teresa Vincent Potter in Limerick, and Anna Maria Harnett, then at Baggot Street—none of whom seems to fit a "Typee's Land" connection. Ursula and Anna Maria were from Dublin, and Ellen Potter was from Adare, Co. Limerick. Finally, Tippeenan Lower and Tippeenan Upper were townlands in County Kildare, but I have not been able to identify any Sister of Mercy in Catherine McAuley's acquaintance who came from either townland. Thus, one is left with a tender-hearted autograph poem to an unknown recipient—though Mary Joseph Heenan seems the likely recipient.

send some distinguished consolation.<sup>22</sup> This is your life, joys and sorrows mingled, one succeeding the other. Let us not think of the means [God] has employed to convey to us a portion of the Holy Cross, being ever mindful that it came from Himself. You remember what Father Gaffney<sup>23</sup> said to us when in retreat—"If the entire cross upon which Christ died was sent to this House, how impatient would each Sister be to carry it, and she who was permitted to keep it the longest—would be the most favored. Far better and more profitable for you to receive with all your heart the cross which God will send you in any form or shape He pleases." I earnestly hope that you will receive this trial so as to render it valuable to you.

The Ceremony in Birr went on very well. Father Mathew received thousands into the temperance society—he has got a most sorrowful or plaintive manner of saying, "ah, don't pull me." The Bishop went through the ceremony as if he performed it every week—he is a nice celebrant—and very kind & pleasing.<sup>24</sup>

Bernard Cavanagh paid a visit here when I was away—asked to see the Nuns. Sr. de Pazzi appeared—he said—"Did you ever hear of Bernard Cavanagh?" Yes. "What did you hear of him, what does the Public say of him?"—We know very little of public opinion. "Would you like to see him?"—I am not very anxious. "I am he." He asked to see the school, said many spiritual things—thin but not wasted or remarkable—features good, but expression of countenance weak and simple or foolish. Mr. Mathew says he is not an impostor—but certainly a lunatic.<sup>25</sup>

All are well here. The usual increase. We have again 3 postulants, expecting 2 more. Sister M. Cecilia is not as much better as I hoped—she has no appetite. I fear she never will have strength. Sr. Teresa a shadow.

The Sisters in Tullamore well—remove to their New Convent next month. I expected to hear you were in Naas—poor Naas is like the little chicken that belongs to the clutch called—creepy crawly. I wish it would take a start.

My love to all.

Pray fervently for your ever affectionate  
M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: West Hartford*

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Nolan had been a curate in Killeslin (Carlow-Graigie), but was now assigned as curate in Sandcroft, near Kildare (*Irish Catholic Directory* [1841] 294). The Carlow Annals for 1841 notes: "Early in July, our extraordinary Confessor, Rev. Daniel Nolan received an appointment to a curacy about fifteen miles hence, and Rev. John Magee was named to fill his place." Father Dan Nolan, whom Catherine McAuley called "my son," was the brother of the deceased and much-loved Dr. Edward Nolan, on whom Frances Warde had earlier relied. Presumably Father Dan was her "good director." <sup>23</sup> Myles Gaffney, dean of St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, and frequent retreat director for the Sisters of Mercy. Catherine may be recalling their first retreat together in 1832. <sup>24</sup> Dr. Patrick Kennedy, bishop of the diocese of Killaloe. <sup>25</sup> Bernard Cavanagh has not been identified.

will sooner give half our share—than not multiply. The Lord and Master of our House and Home is a faithful provider. Let us never desire more than enough. He will give that and a blessing.

Sister Mary Cecilia looks forward with delight to the time of seeing you.

Remember me affectionately to Mr. Murtagh<sup>100</sup> and believe me  
your attached Mother in Christ  
M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: Tullamore*

## March—April 1841

One notices several important themes in Catherine McAuley's letters in March and April 1841: the persistence of her cough; the impending heartache of her nephew James's death; the ever increasing obligations of corresponding with sisters in the foundations outside of Dublin, especially in "poor Birr," the most recent of the foundations; concern about the future of Mary Clare Moore, who will be leaving London, and about Redmond O'Hanlon, recovering from influenza; and great care to see the health of Cecilia Marmion improved. Of the twenty extant letters of this period all but two are written to Sisters of Mercy, nine of them to Mary Aloysius Scott or Cecilia Marmion in Birr.

Here one also sees characteristic details that flesh out the human portrait of Catherine McAuley, and endear her to observers: her unavailing efforts to doctor herself, her barely suppressed annoyance at the pokiness of Clare Augustine's art work, her occasional weariness, her efforts to be a serious-minded mistress of novices, her playfulness with the postulants and novices, her delight in the St. Patrick's day parade of teetotallers, her need to work around the moods and preferences of the nonetheless beloved Mary de Pazzi Delany, and, always, her gratitude that, despite all, "The blessing of unity still dwells amongst us—and oh what a blessing—it should make all things else pass into nothing" (Letter 257).

243. Sister M. Frances Warde [Baggot Street, Dublin]  
Carlow [March 5, 1841]

My Dearest Sister Mary Frances

I am sorry to find by your letter this morning that they are saying too much about my loss of health. My rather new visitant, a cough—has been with me very constantly since the first Sunday after my return. To please my kind tormentors, I took one large bottle of medicine and put on a small blister<sup>1</sup> from which I (for want of faith perhaps) did not receive any benefit. I am now doctoring myself as I have Sister Teresa—very warm flannel entire dress—mellow barley water, old fashioned sugar candy—a little Hippo<sup>2</sup> at night—and I think—*Mr. Time* taken into account—I am doing very well. I do think that a cough has made

<sup>100</sup> Walter Murtagh, curate in Tullamore when the sisters arrived there in April 1836, became parish priest in English in 1837, but remained extraordinary confessor of the community and thus visited Tullamore several times a year.

<sup>1</sup> A poultice. <sup>2</sup> "Hippo," in this case, derives from the name of Hippocrates, the Greek physician, and was probably a generic name for spiced wine, or a honey-based liquid, used for medicinal purposes—especially in respiratory ailments.

ask you—who have so much to write. A line from any of the Sisters would be very acceptable. They have fever in Limerick. The last account rather favorable, one of the first that joined—before I left.

It is an early cross for the poor Sisters in Wexford—please God it will not end in death. I feel very anxious to hear, and Mr. O'Hanlon will expect me to let him know. His care and anxiety for us all increases every day. He said yesterday—"this is my fourteenth year amongst you."<sup>95</sup>

God bless you & all, my dear child & Sister.

Your ever affectionate  
M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: Silver Spring*

241. To Sister M. de Sales White  
Bermondsey  
Baggot Street  
February 28, 1841

My Dearest Child

I have felt quite anxious to write to you and my dear Sister M. Xavier—but my old cough has made me so nervous that I could not—nor cannot now write distinctly. You must read with patience.

We have imported the London Influenza—six on the Infirmarian's list—Sister Lucy Vincent<sup>96</sup> has been very ill indeed, the only english patient amongst them. Poor Mother M. Cecilia, Sr. M. Austin, Sr. M. Ann, Sr. Fanny Vigne—a postulant—Sr. Vincent Whitty & Sr. Lucy—all going on well.<sup>97</sup> I often think of my old Galway Nurse that would not allow me a little stirabout.

Now, my dearly beloved child, I hope you are exceedingly cautious as to the fast of Lent—remember, obedience is above every other sacrifice, and you will be far more mortified in taking that which you do not like to take, than in abstaining from it. You have not sufficient strength to fast. Take a good collation in the morning, the usual allowance here—and some light supper. Take in the day a crust—or something if you have a long walk. Sister M. Xavier will I know take care—in this particular—I lay this obligation on you.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup> Redmond J. O'Hanlon, ODC, prior of the Discaled Carmelite community on Clarendon Street, Dublin, was appointed confessor of the Baggot Street community on June 4, 1829, and later Dr. Murray's deputy as ecclesiastical superior, but he had become a solicitous friend of the community as early as the opening of the House of Mercy on September 24, 1827. <sup>96</sup> Mary Vincent (Lucy) Bond, whom Catherine McAuley sometimes called Lucy Vincent, to distinguish her from Mary Vincent Whitty. <sup>97</sup> The sisters mentioned are Cecilia Marmion, Mary Austin Horan, Mary Ann Teresa O'Brien, Frances Vigne, Mary Vincent (Ellen) Whitty, and Mary Teresa (Maria) Breen, whom Catherine McAuley often called Lucy Teresa, or simply Lucy, perhaps to distinguish her from Mary Teresa (Amelia) White and Mary Teresa (Catherine) White when they were in Baggot Street. <sup>98</sup> Ash Wednesday was February 24 in 1841. Catherine is writing on the first Sunday of Lent.

How rapidly the days, weeks & months are passing. Another month ended, that seemed but a few days begun. If we have not forfeited the friendship of almighty God—but have been trying to love Him more and more and to serve Him faithfully, they were Blessed days for us. Oh let us endeavour to make these days such as we should wish the past to have been. Let us enter into the spirit of the Church—making this to us a truly penitential season, mortifying the pride of self opinion, performing all with an humble heart—keeping the first Lenten admonition engraved on our heart—"You are but dust, and unto dust will soon return." Our poor Bodys [*sic*] only, but our precious immortal souls—after passing through these few years of pilgrimage, pain and sorrow—will, if we are faithful, soon enter on the joys of a blissful Eternity.

The simplest and most practical lesson I know—my Dear Sister de Sales—is to resolve to be good today—but better tomorrow. Let us take one day only in hands—at a time, merely making a resolve for tomorrow. Thus we may hope to get on—taking short careful steps, not great strides.

God bless you, my Dear children. Pray fervently for your ever affectionate Mother in Christ—

M. C. McAuley

Do all you can to comfort my Dear Mother M. Clare. I will not expect to hear from you during Lent—except something should make it necessary—but you shall hear from us.

*Autograph: Liverpool*

242. To Sister M. Teresa Purcell  
Tullamore  
[Baggot Street]  
[Early 1841]<sup>99</sup>

My Dearest Sister Mary Teresa

I congratulate you on your happy increase, which you and I love so much that we will never frighten a candidate away for not having a bag of money. We

<sup>99</sup> The dating of this undated autograph letter is a problem. Both Neumann (290) and Bolster (183) date it "Early 1841." It was probably written from Dublin and enclosed in a letter to Mary Ann Doyle, the superior in Tullamore. One reason for placing it in early 1841, although it may have been written even earlier, is that Mary Cecilia Marmion went to Birr sometime between March 1 and March 10, 1841, to restore her health (see Letter 244), stopping in Tullamore en route. Catherine's reference to Cecilia's looking forward to seeing Teresa may be to this upcoming reunion, or to Cecilia's return trip through Tullamore, with Catherine McAuley, in May 1841 (see Letter 268). However, the Tullamore Annals does not help to date the letter, in terms of explaining any recent "happy increase" in the Tullamore community. Four sisters, including two lay sisters, received the habit in Tullamore on September 8, 1840, but after that apparently no postulant entered and no ceremony occurred until October 1841. However, a postulant may have entered who did not persevere, and hence is not listed in the Tullamore Register. If this letter was written earlier than 1841, it has not been possible so far to find a date that would satisfy the contents of the letter.

Apostolic of the Midland District, has arranged for them. I do not much like a pet in a bag—not a pig. I like greatly to see and speak first but this cannot be [a portion of the *autograph* is torn off].

May God bless you and all with you. Tell Miss Reddin I got her letter, and set [got?] a Sister to copy the enclosed lines for her.<sup>56</sup> She admired them greatly.

Your ever affectionate

Sister M. Teresa—for Galway 6 months—Sister Leahy to remain—3 postulants.  
M. C. McAuley

We return to Kingstown in 3 weeks by Dr. Murray's desire on the spot.

Ashamed of my writing I got Sister Mary Teresa to write the other letters—but I know you would rather have this—such as it is, and I owe you all in my power—and I take pleasure in giving you my poor tribute of affection and esteem.

*Autograph: Limerick*

167. To Sister M. Elizabeth Moore [Baggot Street]  
Limerick Thursday [March 19, 1840]

My Dearest Sister M. Elizabeth

No words could describe what I felt—on reading the first line of your letter. Though the accounts from Carlow were as hopeless—yet I fear much in this case.<sup>57</sup> The dear sweet innocent creature—you will indeed have a child in heaven.

<sup>55</sup> The words "a pet ... first" have been supplied from the handcopy in the Baggot Street book labeled "Annals" (see note 52). What Catherine McAuley means is that she does "not much like" accepting the Birmingham postulants sight unseen, without an opportunity to interview them before admitting them, but since Dr. Walsh has selected them, her preference "cannot be." One of the proverbial uses of "pig" is the expression "To buy (or sell) a pig in a poke (or bag)" which means "to buy anything without seeing it or knowing its value" (OED)—an expression that fits Catherine's concern, though she is trying to avoid using the word "pig" for the "ladies from Birmingham"! Probably the large portion of this autograph letter that has been torn off contained more wording than the handcopy has supplied. <sup>56</sup> Neumann (203) and Bolster (125) both read the words "set a Sister" as "got a Sister," but the middle letter of the word is clearly "e". However, the word may be "set" or "get." Catherine McAuley is saying that (or asking that) some lines, presumably of poetry, which she encloses in this letter were (or may be) copied for Joanna Reddan. It seems doubtful, though possible, that she would ask to have the copying done in Limerick when she could as easily have it done at Baggot Street. The intriguing question is, which lines of poetry? Although this is pure speculation, the poem in question is possibly the extant autograph transcription, in Catherine McAuley's handwriting, of selected lines from a long poem by Hannah More (1745-1833), titled "Sensibility: An Epistle to the Honourable Mrs. Boscawen." Catherine's untitled transcription begins with the line, "Since trifles make the sum of human things," and has sometimes been given the title "Trifles." The transcription is included at the end of the present volume (Letter 323), among undated manuscripts in Catherine McAuley's handwriting, with notes describing the use she made of Hannah More's much longer poem. <sup>57</sup> The illness—presumably typhus—of Mary Teresa Vincent Potter in Limerick.

God will support you in this great affliction—His Holy Will be done. If He calls her away it will be to shield her from some impending evil—or to exercise your patience—and to try to do you love Him as much when he takes—as when He gives. Some grand motive must actuate all His visitations.

I will be in great anxiety to hear—though I will be agitated at the sight of the next letter.

May God bless and preserve you—and grant you all—humble, cheerful submission to the Divine Will.

Your ever affectionate

M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: Limerick*

168. To Sister M. Elizabeth Moore [Baggot Street]  
Limerick Saturday morning [March 21, 1840]

My Darling Sister M. Elizabeth

I did not think any event in this world could make me feel so much.<sup>58</sup> I have cried heartily—and implored God to comfort you—I know He will. This has not been done in anger. Some joyful circumstance will soon prove that God is watching over your concerns which are all his own—but without the cross the real crown cannot come. Some great thing which He designs to accomplish—would have been too much—without a little bitter in the cup. Bless and love the Fatherly hand which has hurt you. He will soon come with both hands filled with favors and blessings. My heart is sore—not on my account—nor for the sweet innocent spirit that has returned to her Heavenly Father's Bosom—but for you.

You may be sure I will go see you—if it were much more out of the way—and indeed I will greatly feel the loss that will be visible on entering the convent.

Earnestly & humbly praying God to grant you His Divine consolation—and to comfort and bless all the dear Sisters—I remain

your ever most affectionate

M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: Limerick*

169. To Sister M. Elizabeth Moore [Baggot Street]  
Limerick Tuesday, March 24, 1840

My ever Dear Sister M. Elizabeth

Your last letter was a great comfort to me. When I read it in the Community

<sup>58</sup> The death in Limerick on Friday, March 20, 1840, of Mary Teresa Vincent Potter, in her twenty-eighth year. <sup>59</sup> In Letter 166, Catherine McAuley had indicated that she could not stop in Limerick on her way to or from Galway (see note 54). Now she says she will come to Limerick no matter what the added distance (over 100 extra miles).

This is all I could say. The loss of property has been supplied. The Death of the most valuable Sisters passed away as of no consequence. The alarm that was spread by such repeated deaths—did not prevent others crowding in. In short, it evidently was to go on—and surmount all obstacles—many of which were great indeed—proceeding from causes within & without. One thing is remarkable—that no breach of charity ever occurred amongst us. The sun never, I believe, went down on our anger. This is our only boast—otherwise we have been deficient enough—and far, very far, from cooperating generously with God in our regard, but we will try to do better—all of us—the *black heads*<sup>21</sup>—will try to repair the past.

This is a repetition of what you already know. To prepare a detail fit to give Mr. Clarke would be to me now a difficult task—I should write it 10 times at least before it would be fit for his purpose—and as my sight is getting worse and my fingers stiff, I would consider it a hopeless attempt. This is the worst scribble I ever wrote—in this way I cannot hope to improve.

Write soon—it is a great comfort to me to hear from you often. Do not get tired—half your paper not written on—a little nonsense even will be acceptable.

Two Sisters to enter next week.<sup>22</sup> We are too full at present and going to divide the old school room to get more accomm[odation].

Doctor Blake is to perform the ceremonies here on the 21[st]—as our Bishop does not go out early since his last severe illness. Mr. Lynch<sup>23</sup> is to Preach. I had a most kind affectionate letter from Doctor Blake—he tells me of your having written to him.

Tell me, could you read all this? God preserve and bless you, my Dear Sister—pray fervently for your

ever affectionate

M. C. McAuley

On reading this over—I find it quite in a random style. It must stay so. I charge you not to let *this* out of your hand.

The next frank I will write to all my Dear Sisters.

*Autograph: Limerick*

### III. To Sister M. Frances Warde Sunday—commenced on Friday Carlow [January 25, 27, 1839]

My Dearest Sister Mary Frances

We got through our ceremony under most painful circumstances.<sup>24</sup> Poor Mrs. Marmion got her last illness just when the retreat commenced. We concealed it

<sup>21</sup> That is, the professed sisters, who wore black veils, in contrast to the white-veiled novices. <sup>22</sup> Ellen Whitty entered the convent on January 15, 1839, but Annie Fleming, whom Catherine is evidently anticipating, did not enter until February 5, 1839. <sup>23</sup> Either Gregory Lynch or Joseph Lynch, both of whom were curates at St. Andrew's, Westland Row. See Letter 108, note 7. <sup>24</sup> Dr. Michael Blake presided at the ceremony at Baggot Street on Monday, January 21, 1839, during which three

from Sister Francis—but on the third day she heard a message given as she passed in the hall, yet remained perfectly quiet till the day of her Profession. She could merely read her vows—and went immediately after to her dear Mamma, who was in great joy to see her a nun—and have her constant attendance in her last moments. She lived four days, her two children about her bed.<sup>25</sup> She said, “I wonder is there a woman in the world dying so happily as I am.” All is now peace & joy. They are delighted—indeed she was greatly favored by God—thought of nothing but her sins.

I have only a few moments more—expecting the Bishop<sup>26</sup>—he most kindly celebrated Mass for us & promised to call again. This is, I believe, the last day he proposed remaining.

Will you tell dear Sister Mary Josephine that her Sister is not so ill as she fears—I expect she will call here in a few days. Mrs. Lynch of Dorset Street came as Sr. M. J. requested—but agreed with me that I could not go to Mrs. Barrett's house under the present circumstances. Mrs. Lynch said she would prevail on her to come to Baggot St. I will not part her till she promises to do all that is necessary.<sup>27</sup>

I had a letter from Sister Mary Ann Doyle. She expresses great fears about Sister G. and asks what is thought of her sister—says she cannot hear if she has been professed—prays God to direct herself in this matter & says she thinks Sr. G. would die of grief if obliged to go—says the means are reduced to half, and adds “at this the Bishop will be very angry.” I read such sentences with great satisfaction. When not carried quite so far as Cork—they prove a fatherly guidance & shield from censure.<sup>28</sup>

sisters received the habit: Mary Veronica (Elinor) Cowley, Mary Rose (Catherine) Lynch, and Mary (Eliza) Liston; and three professed their vows: Mary de Sales (Jane) White, Mary Angela (Mary) Maher, and Mary Francis (Margaret) Marmion. These women had made a week-long spiritual retreat prior to the ceremony. In 1841 Mary Veronica Cowley changed her name to Mary Aloysius. <sup>25</sup> Mary Francis Marmion was the third of the Marmion sisters to profess her vows at Baggot Street. Her sister Mary Agnes (Frances) Marmion had died there on February 10, 1836. With her sister Mary Cecilia, Mary Francis attended the deathbed of Mary Marmion, their mother. By all accounts the Marmions were a remarkable Catholic family in St. Andrew's parish; a son, Francis Marmion, Esq., often did legal work for Catherine McAuley. Catherine's reference to “four days” (since the profession ceremony) helps one to read correctly her dating of this letter: “Sunday—commenced on Friday,” not “Tuesday—continued on Friday” as in Neumann and Bolster. <sup>26</sup> Dr. Francis Haly, bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. <sup>27</sup> Mary Josephine Trennor was a professed sister in the Carlow community. The particular circumstances to which Catherine alludes have not been identified. <sup>28</sup> Evidently Mary Ann Doyle, the superior of the Tullamore community, was concerned that Mary Josephine (Jane) Greene could not provide the dowry on which Dr. John Cantwell, bishop of Meath, normally insisted. Earlier Jane Greene had been a novice in the Baggot Street community, but delicate health had forced her to leave. She then entered the Tullamore community on March 30, 1837. Her term of postulancy “shortened on account of being in Religion before” (Tullamore Annals 23), she received the habit on May 21, 1837. Still a novice in January 1839, there was now some question, related to the bishop's known views, about whether she could profess vows, having an insufficient dowry. The issue was



I am glad you are to have the balcony since you like it—but I charge you, if you have any affection for me, not to be looking after it at present. Let this month pass over.

I had letters from Limerick yesterday—everything going on well, thank God—from Sister Mary Clare<sup>15</sup> also—whose account is not cheering. She feels very much their progress being kept back—says that none like to propose now, there is so much scrutiny into family concerns and so much about means—though she adds, “we find that very limited means will suffice” and have plenty of money to spare. The House next to them has been purchased to enlarge their Convent, and this seems to perplex her more. No wonder it should.<sup>16</sup>

I fear the Kingstown business is going to be settled. I cannot wish the poor Sisters to go there—they never shall, except a private choir is made for them in the P[arish] Chapel, but I fear this will be done. *Do not say anything of it yet.*<sup>17</sup> Remember me to Doctor Fitzgerald—and give my most affectionate love to all the dear Sisters. Tell them to take care of my child—yourself.

Praying God to bless and guide you with His own Divine Spirit,

I remain, my Dearest old Child,  
your ever fond  
M. C. McAuley

*Autograph: Silver Spring*

110. Sister M. Elizabeth Moore  
Limerick

Baggot Street  
January 13, 1839

My Dear Sister Mary Elizabeth

I received your letter yesterday and thank God that you are all safe after the storm. The accounts from Limerick were as usual exaggerated [*sic*], but we heard the Convent was safe—from some person who called. We remained in Bed all night—some in terror, others sleeping, etc. The morning presented an altered scene from what we had left at 9 o'clock. The Community Room a complete ruin in appearance, though not much real injury—the Prints and pictures all on the ground—only two broken. The maps and blinds flying like the sales [*sic*] of a ship—the Book stand down—the cabinet removed from its place, and the chairs all upset—16 panes broken—and such a body of air in the room that we could scarcely stand. The windows are still boarded up—it is almost impossible to get a glazier—a fine harvest for them.

15 Mary Clare Moore in Cork. 16 Dr. John Murphy, bishop of Cork, was apparently exercising determined control over the size of the dowries young women brought to the Cork community, as well as planning for a larger (and therefore, in his view, more financially sound) community. 17 Some conversation was occurring to get the Sisters of Mercy to come back to their house in Kingstown. However, see Letters 112, 113, 114, 116, and 117. Sisters did not return to Kingstown until April 1840, and then only at Daniel Murray's direct request.

The Hospital at the green<sup>18</sup> greatly broken—a chimney fell. Several Houses blown down—and many lives lost. Your friends and Sister Vincent's safe. The Sisters in Carlow passed the night in the choir—part of their very old roof blown down. The Beautiful Cathedral much injured. The chimneys of the new Convent in Tullamore blown down—the old one & Sisters safe. We have not heard from Cork or Charleville.

My dear Sister E., I would find it most difficult to write what you say Mr. Clarke<sup>19</sup> wishes for, the circumstances which would make it interesting could never be introduced in a public discourse. It commenced with 2, Sister Doyle & I. The plan from the beginning was such as is now in practise—and in '27 the House was opened. In a year & half we were joined—so fast that it became a matter of general wonder. Doctor Murray gave his most cordial approbation and visited frequently—all was done under his direction from the time we entered the House—which was erected for the purposes of charity.

Doctor Blake & Revd. Mr. Armstrong were chiefly concerned—received all the Ideas I had formed—and consulted for 2 years at least before the House was built. I am sure Doctor Blake had it constantly before him in all his communications with Heaven—for I never can forget his fervent prayers—when it was in progress.

Seeing us increase so rapidly, and all going on in the greatest order almost of itself—great anxiety was expressed to give it stability. We who began were prepared to do whatever was recommended—and in September 1830 we went with Dear Sister Harley<sup>20</sup> to Georges Hill—to serve a novice for the purpose of firmly establishing it. In December '31 we returned—and the progress has gone on as you know. We now have gone beyond 100 in number—and the desire to join seems rather to increase. Though it was thought the foundations would retard it—it seems to be quite otherwise.

There has been a most marked Providential Guidance which the want of prudence—vigilance—or judgment has not impeded—and it is here that we can most clearly see the designs of God. I could mark circumstances calculated to defeat it at once—but nothing however injurious in itself has done any injury.

18 The new St. Vincent's Hospital on the eastside of St. Stephen's Green had been founded by Mary Aikenhead and the Sisters of Charity in 1834 in the former mansion of the Earl of Meath. It opened for women patients in 1835, for men patients in 1836 (Blake 55-57). 19 During the spring of 1839, John Clarke, a curate in St. John's parish—the bishop's parish in Limerick—was scheduled to preach a Charity Sermon on behalf of the poor schools there (Limerick Annals 1:37). He had apparently asked Elizabeth Moore for some information about the origin of the Sisters of Mercy. His request led Catherine McAuley to pen the brief, but moving account of the first years of the congregation that is the centerpiece of this letter, all the while claiming that she could not write such a history. 20 Mary Elizabeth (Elizabeth) Harley, a friend of Frances Wardle, had joined the Baggot Street community on November 30, 1829. She went to George's Hill with Catherine McAuley and Anna Maria Doyle, and on December 12, 1831 professed her vows as one of the first three Sisters of Mercy. Four and a half months later (April 25, 1832), she was dead, victim of a consumptive condition that had worsened while she was at George's Hill. All the contemporary biographical manuscripts about Catherine McAuley speak fondly of Elizabeth Harley, and of Catherine's confidence in what she contributed, and might in the future have contributed, to the young congregation. See, for example, Sullivan, *Catherine McAuley*, 63-64, 105, 109-110, and 171-72.

it would seem, particularly designed for what has come to pass—for we did every thing that was calculated to alter her intention, at least I did.<sup>27</sup> Knowing how much these afflictions press on your mind, I will be most anxious to hear that you are yourself again.

You have given all to God without any reserve. Nothing can happen to you which He does not appoint. You desire nothing but the accomplishment of His Holy Will. Every thing, how trivial soever, regarding you will come from this adorable source. You must be cheerful and happy, animating all around you. This [advice] is quite unnecessary, for I know you do not want<sup>28</sup> counsel—or comfort—yet I cannot entirely give up my poor old Child. You may be sure we all pray fervently for you, which is the best we can do. If you could have seen the general feeling that prevailed at recreation yesterday evening, you might almost have thought we were strangers to such sorrows.

You will soon now have an increase—the comfort comes soon after a well received trial. May God preserve and bless you, my own dearly loved child. Remember me most affectionately to all. Sister Ursula forgets me.<sup>29</sup>

Your ever faithful and fondly attached  
M. C. McAuley

I have been 3 hours out in the snow—walking—so I am growing young. 8 Sisters in retreat and so much to be done, I was obliged to assist. 7 to be received & Sister Scott professed on Wednesday next.<sup>30</sup>

*Autograph: Silver Spring*

79. To Sister M. Frances Warde [Late February—March 1838]  
Carlow

My dear Sister Mary Frances

The Register<sup>31</sup> ordered by Revd. Mr. Maher has been here two months, waiting for Sister Moore who prints beautifully in every type to write the title

<sup>27</sup> Kate Coffey was apparently sickly before she entered, perhaps with some weakness of the lungs, and Catherine McAuley had evidently tried to discourage her entering the Carlow community on the grounds that convent life might be too hard for her. <sup>28</sup> That is, lack. <sup>29</sup> Mary Ursula Frayne was still temporarily in Carlow, and had apparently not written recently to Catherine McAuley. <sup>30</sup> The extensive work of visiting the sick poor while so many of the sisters at Baggot Street were in retreat before their reception or profession meant that Catherine herself, who usually worked full-time in the House of Mercy, had to go out to visit the sick in their homes or in hospitals. Mary Aloysius Scott will profess her vows on February 21, and those who will receive the habit that day are Mary Catherine (Ellen) Leahy, Mary Gertrude (Elizabeth) Blake, Mary Clare Augustine (Clare) Moore, Mary Anne Teresa (Annie) O'Brien, Veronica (Mary Anne) Duggan, a lay sister, Mary Frances (Frances) Boylan, and Mary Camillus (Teresa) Byrn, Catherine McAuley's cousin and adopted child. All seven had been approved to receive the habit by a vote of the Baggot Street Chapter (the professed members of the community) on January 20, 1838. <sup>31</sup> The Register is the

page.<sup>32</sup> She has been constantly employed, and now Bazaar work engages all their time.<sup>33</sup> I constantly spoke of your book—for a long time, indeed, a cut finger prevented her.

What pleasure it would afford me to be at your approaching ceremony, but it is quite impossible—two new Sisters and other circumstances must deprive me of that great indulgence.<sup>34</sup> I shall be anxious to hear from you as you say you are not quite well.

Your ever affectionate  
M. C. McAuley

Miss Grace waits while I write.<sup>35</sup>

*Handcopy: Silver Spring*

80. To Sister M. Frances Warde [March 13, 1838]  
Carlow<sup>36</sup>

... immediately after Easter—I have been there, it is quite finished, and will have a good garden for the weak ones.<sup>37</sup> I will find it difficult to add this charge

record kept in each convent of the important dates and appointments of each professed sister: her birth date (if known), her parents' names and location, and the dates of her entrance, reception of the habit, and profession of vows, as well as of her election or appointment to leadership roles (if applicable). In Catherine McAuley's day, the Register of each convent was a large, often artistically illuminated, volume with a page devoted to each professed sister. Often, as in Baggot Street, the relevant facts were recorded in a notebook before being transcribed by a calligrapher into the permanent Register. <sup>32</sup> Mary Clare Augustine Moore, the sister of Mary Clare (Georgiana) Moore, now superior in Cork, had entered the Baggot Street convent on August 8, 1837, and received the habit on February 21, 1838. The present letter was probably written after that date. Mary Clare Augustine was a superb artist and calligrapher, as her many surviving art works testify. Catherine McAuley naturally sought to have her do the calligraphy and illumination of the Baggot Street Register, and at least begin the Register for Carlow, but Clare Augustine's timing and Catherine's did not always jibe, as will be apparent in future letters. James Maher visited Baggot Street in early January 1838 and may have ordered the Carlow Register then—hence my dating of this undated letter. <sup>33</sup> As a fundraising activity, the Baggot Street community held a bazaar of handcrafted goods each year after Easter. In 1838 the bazaar was scheduled to occur sometime after April 15, so preparations would have been well underway at the time of this letter. <sup>34</sup> Catherine McAuley had earlier planned to go to Carlow for the episcopal consecration of Francis Haly (March 25) and the reception ceremony of Mary de Sales (Mary) Maher (March 26), but circumstances now prevented her. Anna Markey had entered the Baggot Street community on February 16, 1838; the other "new Sister" cannot be identified, unless Catherine is anticipating the entrance of Clare Butler and Mary O'Connor, which did not occur until April 15 and April 27, respectively. All new sisters needed Catherine's guidance in their early days in the convent. Moreover, the Kingstown lawsuit and the unsettled chaplaincy situation still hung over her head. <sup>35</sup> The messenger who will hand-deliver this letter. <sup>36</sup> This letter is composed of two autograph fragments which appear to belong to the same letter. Paragraphs one and two are on the front and back of one fragment, which was apparently cut off the bottom of the letter, probably off pages 1 and 2 of a folded (four-sided) sheet of stationery. Paragraph three with the closing was probably on page 3 because the reverse side of this second fragment

76. To the Reverend John Hamilton Convent, Baggot Street  
February 6, 1838

Very Reverend Sir

Though I am aware I ought not intrude on your time which must be fully occupied, yet I feel as if indifference was taking place in my mind when I give up every effort to raise the Institution from its fallen state. Since the first of this year, thirty seven young women went to situations from the House, most of whom merely approached the Sacrament of Penance to obtain a note for admission. We are quite full again of persons under similar circumstances. On such occasions, Mr. Burke attended to the confessional for four or five days together, very often till after four o'clock, to afford them the means of reconciliation, before employment was obtained.

They leave us now, as they came, and there is noise and quarrelling amongst them, which the participation of the Holy Sacraments with due instruction used to cure. The alteration in the school is quite evident.<sup>21</sup> They went to Confession every week in turn, and I assure you, Revd. Sir, Mr. Burke has frequently said he was very tired. Mr. Cavanagh of Fitzwilliam Street, with whom he resided for some time, mentioned here a few days since that Mr. Burke used to say, "That House gives work enough for any man."

I think it was providential that Doctor Meyler refused the salary,<sup>22</sup> for I still hope that God will grant the spiritual assistance required, to meet the expense

transcription, of a previously published treatise by an as yet unidentified author. A great deal of research remains to be done on this topic, guided by an understanding of Catherine McAuley's penchant for transcribing parts of published works that appealed to her (or asking others to "prepare" them), and by a developed knowledge of her writing style and habits. So far, hours spent in the British Library, the National Library of Ireland, and the Central Catholic Library in Dublin have not yielded discovery of the original source of *Cottage Controversy*.

However, the title "Cottage Controversy" or "Cottage Conversation" or "Cottage Dialogues" is used by many authors of religious tracts that present debates between Protestant and Catholic proponents. In fact, "cottage controversy" appears to be a genre of apologetic writing that was popular in Ireland and England in the early nineteenth century, the authors of the debates or dialogues favoring either the Protestant or the Catholic doctrinal positions by the way in which they represented the arguments of the characters in the controversy. In the six conversations contained in the document said to have been composed by Catherine McAuley, the Catholic cottager Margaret Martyn, married to Thomas Lewis, a Protestant tenant, argues more convincingly than her landlord's wife, the Protestant Lady Plembroke]. However, in the second edition of J. S. Monsell's *Cottage Controversy; or, Dialogues between Thomas and Andrew, on The Errors of the Church of Rome* (Limerick: Goggin, 1839), first published in 1838, the opposite outcome is presented. In this volume Thomas is a Protestant and Andrew, a Catholic; at the end of their nine dialogues, the dying Andrew is gratefully converted to Protestantism.

<sup>21</sup> As well as the young women in the House of Mercy, the children in the Baggot Street school for poor girls also used to receive the sacrament of Penance from Daniel Burke, the former chaplain. <sup>22</sup> Walter Meyler asked for an annual salary of £50; Catherine McAuley offered £40, and then £45, which he did not accept.

of which, we would make every exertion and be very kindly assisted. Relying on the charitable allowance you will make for this intrusion, I remain  
Very Reverend Sir, with much respect, etc., etc.  
Mary C. McAuley

Autograph: *Dublin Diocese, Murray Papers AB3/34/15, no. 11*

77. To the Reverend James Maher Convent, Baggot Street  
February 15, 1838

Dear Reverend Father

I have just received your kind letter and feel exceedingly concerned at the melancholy communication.<sup>23</sup> Thanks be to God the event has been attended with such consoling circumstances. It must be a severe trial to her attached relatives from whom she so recently parted.<sup>24</sup> To my dear Sister Mary Frances it is I know a real portion of the Cross, and as such I trust she will embrace it—with humble resignation to the holy will of God. I have great happiness in knowing that she will receive all the solid council [counsel] and animating comfort which affectionate fatherly feelings can dictate. The usual suffrages for a deceased Sister will be offered here. The most sensible participation of the trial has already spread through the House,<sup>25</sup> and all unite in most earnest prayers for our poor Sister Frances and Community.

I remain, Dear Reverend Sir, with great respect, etc., etc.  
Mary C. McAuley

Autograph: *Brooklyn*

78. To Sister M. Frances Warde Convent, Baggot Street  
February 17, 1838

My ever Dear Sister Mary Frances

How deeply, how sincerely, I feel this second trial<sup>26</sup> which it has pleased Almighty God to visit you with, not in His anger—we will humbly hope—but to purify and render the foundation solid and according to His own heart—established on the Cross. The innocent amiable young person you have parted was,

<sup>23</sup> On February 12, 1838, Kate Coffey, a postulant in the Carlow community, while "on the Visitation of the Sick, slipped in the snow, and fell; she only seemed a little stunned for the moment, but after retiring to bed that night, she got a severe attack of hemorrhage of the lungs" and died on February 14 (Carlow Annals). <sup>24</sup> Kate had entered the Carlow community only two months before, on December 8, 1837. Her family lived in Carlow. <sup>25</sup> The community on Baggot Street. <sup>26</sup> The death of Kate Coffey, a Carlow postulant, occurred on February 14 (see Letter 77). The first "trial" Frances experienced was the death of Dr. Edward Nolan on October 14, 1837.

Cork when I had left it—exactly the same fever which was sent by God to take the pious valued Bishop—Dr. Nolan—came, I trust, from the Divine hand for her. She had quite a saintly death—continually repeating aloud—“My God, I love you—forgive me and take me to yourself.” The Physicians were astonished.

I have not been able to write or do much since I returned. On the second day I went to Kingstown—to condole with them on the loss of their lively dear companion. When the Angelus Bell rang, I was hastening to the choir from the Community room, missed the first step of the stairs, fell forward and in endeavoring to save my head from the window, broke my left arm across the wrist—and injured the sinews in the back of the hand so much that I am not likely to have the use of it for months—if ever.<sup>88</sup>

My Dear Sister M. Angela, the Charleville foundation has been a source of great anxiety to me. One of the Curates called on me in Cork, asking in a kind of disguised way—but like as if called on to do so—would any of the Sisters be sent to Limerick—would Sister Delaney. I felt quite distressed, as if we were like persons in the world, changing our House or lodgings on trifling occasions. Since I left Cork, Mr. Reardon, the Monk, made some such enquiry.<sup>89</sup>

What could excuse us before God—for casting off any charge which we had freely undertaken, except compelled by necessity to do so. Are not the poor of Charleville as dear to him as elsewhere—and while one pound of Miss Clanchy's five hundred lasts, ought we not to persevere and confide in his Providence. The Sisters of Charity in Cork have been but 5 in number & a Lay Sister for 10 years. It is wonderful all they do—and they are not all in good health, and live in most confined bad air. I am grieved to find such feint-hearted symptoms amongst us.

I had a letter from Mrs. French.<sup>90</sup> She says that £50 per an[um] will be paid. Your 30 & the interest will make 97. Surely that will do.

I cannot hope to see you till May. Perhaps it would be well to get the 2 Sisters received as Mr. Croke has power from the Bishop.<sup>91</sup> Let us not forget that you and Community are subject to Dr. Crotty, who surely would not approve of any such change—and I really feel that God would not grant his blessing—while we can avoid it.

I am sorry to hear such an account of Jane Taaffe.<sup>92</sup> The sooner she leaves, the better. I write with difficulty, not having the second hand to hold my paper.

88 This is Catherine McAuley's only extensive reference to her broken arm in an extant autograph letter, although, as noted earlier, some references to it appear in fragments of transcriptions of other letters (see Letters 61, 62, and 64). 89 Brother Michael Paul Riordan was a member of the Christian Brothers living in the North Monastery, Cork. Edmund Rice was at the time still superior general of the Christian Brothers, and Riordan was part of “the anti-Rice faction” (Rushe 130–31). 90 The former Miss Mary Clanchy, a benefactor of the Charleville community. 91 Dr. Bartholomew Crotty was bishop of Cloyne and Ross, and former president of the Royal College of St. Patrick, Maynooth. Thomas Croke was parish priest of Charleville [*Irish Catholic Directory* [1837] 278). 92 Jane Taaffe was received as a novice in the Charleville community on June 30, 1837. However, she did not persevere.

I will venture the 2 half notes. Write when you receive this. Remember me most affectionately to my dear Sr. M. Joseph, Sister Ann & Sister Lawless,<sup>93</sup> whom I hope you continue to like. Remember me to Mary and the children.

Present my respectful remembrance to Mr. Croke. Remember me to the Mrs. Clanchys, etc., etc. Tell me all the news you have about your school & sick poor—your little collection, etc., etc.

Put your whole confidence in God. He never will let you want necessities for yourself or children. It would afflict me and it would be a disgrace to our order to have a break up.

Believe me, my Dear Sister Mary Angela, your ever affectionate  
Mary C. McAuley

All unite in fondest love.

Remember you are to charge Jane Taaffe £20 per year from the time she went to you—and anything expended for her. I request you will do this exactly. [*illegible words*]<sup>94</sup>

*Autograph: Charleville*

68. To Sister M. Frances Warde  
Carlow  
Convent, Baggot Street  
December 23, 1837<sup>95</sup>

My Dear Sister Mary Frances

It is no wonder I should take a fancy to my adopted son<sup>96</sup>—for he is a real rogue, according to my own taste. I must let you into the plot. We had sent to buy franks<sup>97</sup>—and of course your name was on the list. They came when Father

93 Mary Joseph (Alicia) Delaney came to Charleville from Baggot Street as a novice; she professed her vows in Charleville in May 1837, but returned to Baggot Street in 1839. “Sister Ann” is presumably Anne Kent who entered the Charleville community in 1837, received the habit on March 2, 1838, but apparently left before professing vows. Miss Lawless is evidently Margaret Lawless who entered the Charleville community in 1837 and professed her vows there on August 5, 1840; in 1845 she transferred to a Ursuline community in Ennis. Evidently, Mary Agnes Hynes, the second novice who had come from Baggot Street on the Charleville foundation in October 1836, had by now left the community. Thus, in 1837, and particularly in 1839, Mary Angela Dunne, the superior, had some reason to anticipate that the Charleville community would not take hold, although the rumors of its closing that reached Catherine McAuley in 1837 may have been clerical speculation that did not originate with Angela Dunne. Actually, in the ensuing decades the community developed and by 1866 was able to send a new foundation to Bathurst (New South Wales), Australia. 94 Catherine's second closing is tantalizingly illegible; it may be an abbreviated “Affectionately yours.” 95 Previous editors have dated this letter December 29, 1837. However, the number in the autograph is clearly 23 or possibly 27, not 29. Moreover, December 23 or December 27 makes more sense, given the content of the letter. Each Mercy convent, including Baggot Street, observed a year-end spiritual retreat of three days, December 29, 30, and 31, and the retreat would seem to rule out Catherine's taking the time on the 29th to write an interesting, even playful, but not really necessary letter. 96 Daniel Nolan, curate in Killeslin, Co. Carlow. 97 Envelopes or cover sheets

After this I had another note from Doctor Meyler—rejecting the proposal—to which he added: "I think I feel your friend Mr. Armstrong<sup>82</sup> urging me in this decision."

Sunday was let to pass in the same disorder, our poor persons did not return home till it was late.<sup>83</sup> When I missed them from their Sunday School, my heart became sore and bitter, and I wrote a letter which is proclaimed a threatening one. I will write you every word of it:

Very Reverend Sir—When I read in your last note that you felt as if my dear respected Mr. Armstrong<sup>84</sup> was urging you to your decision, I thought that in gratitude for the affectionate friendship with which he so long honored me, I ought to mention how he acted towards a religious community. The Revd. Mr. Wall, his predecessor in Ann Street, had been contending with the Sisters in Georges Hill about some temporal matters.<sup>84</sup> When Mr. A. was appointed he immediately visited the convent, gave his most cordial sanction to their two public Masses and a Charity Sermon if they required it—not all this world could give would induce him to harass or annoy a society of women devoted to the service of God and the poor.

We were happily at home today in time for all our different duties, hence for ourselves we ask for nothing—but our poor young women are still about the streets, taking advantage, to be sure, of the irregularity which has been introduced among them. I will make one effort more in their regard. I will endeavour to prevail on the Sisters to accompany me to their Bishop—representing that the Chapel and Institute which he blessed in all the ceremonial form, carrying his Benediction to its outer walls,<sup>85</sup> is now under some kind of condemnation, that even a friendly priest is not permitted to celebrate Mass, that the Blessed Eucharist has not been renewed for near three months, that the poor inmates are deprived of the Holy Sacraments. We will shew what is lost by the change that has been made, and that far from withholding the necessary compensation, we are promising more than we possess. This sad alteration in

identified. Dr. Meyler had asked for an annual salary of £50. Catherine had proposed that the community could afford only £40. However, she is here offering a compromise of £45. <sup>82</sup> Father Edward Armstrong died in 1828. Catherine McAuley had attended her good friend constantly in his last illness. <sup>83</sup> By depriving the House of Mercy of a chaplain, Walter Meyler had, in effect, removed the possibility of daily, and even Sunday, Mass at Baggot Street. This meant that the forty or more servant women and girls living there had to go out to a parish church on Sundays, with the consequent freedom to dally in the city and delay their return to the House—the very shelter created to protect them from the sexual and other dangers lying in wait for them on the city streets. <sup>84</sup> Catherine refers to the Presentation convent on George's Hill where she had made her novitiate and professed her vows as the first Sister of Mercy. Christopher Wall was parish priest of the neighboring parish of St. Michan's on North Anne Street from 1804 until his death in 1826. Edward Armstrong succeeded him (Donnelly 11: 60). <sup>85</sup> On June 4, 1829, Dr. Daniel Murray had dedicated the chapel of the House of Mercy on Baggot Street and blessed the building and gardens. On the same day he had appointed Daniel Burke, OSF, as chaplain of the House of Mercy and Redmond O'Hanlon, ODC, as confessor.

our once orderly Establishment cannot fail to excite pity in a mind like his. If we have incurred displeasure and drawn this heavy malediction on our House, we will on our knees beg his pardon and implore a renewal of his Paternal protection. I remain, etc., etc.

At eight o'clock on Sunday evening, a letter was handed me from Doctor Meyler. It began thus: "When is your procession to take place? I should like to see the Theatrical exhibition—the Bishop must be apprised—perhaps you may not admire the reception you will meet, for he is too strait forward [*sic*] a person to be caught by your Juggle."

I read no more and put it out of my power ever to do so by burning the letter. I must now be done with the matter entirely. I will attempt nothing more. The means that contributed to pay a Chaplain is taken from us, and we are to be forced to promise what we cannot be sure of having. We will shew you our accounts, and you will find there is no prevarication in the statement made. I have no one to appeal to.

Begging you to forgive all this trouble, I remain, Very Reverend Sir, with lively gratitude for the kind interest you have manifested,

Very respectfully, etc., etc.

Mary C. McAuley  
Mr. Lynch<sup>86</sup> was sent on Monday to say Mass, but not since. You told me, Revd. Sir, we were to have Mr. Farrelly entirely, except his last Masses. Dr. Meyler said we were to have two.<sup>87</sup> Of course, we could not know who to call on as a friend—but even to this we assented, distressing as it is.

It is said that we all dislike the Parish Clergy—God forbid—and that we give freely elsewhere. Indeed, Reverend Sir, I should fear that God would be displeased at my ingratitude, did I not declare that Mr. O'Hanlon has been the most generous friend—and that all he ever received for his nine years constant attendance—often every day for a week preparing for Profession—was thirty two pounds in different sums from the Sisters—to get Mass for them etc., etc.—in all, the entire sum—£32—in nine years.

The only apology I can offer for all this writing is that it comforts and relieves my mind to declare the truth where I trust I am not suspected of insincerity.

*Autograph: Dublin Diocese, Murray Papers AB3/34/15, no. 10*

67. To Sister M. Angela Dunne  
Charleville [Baggot Street]  
December 20, 1837

My dear Sister Angela

I confided, that Sister Mary Clare had written to inform you of the death of our innocent dear Sister de Chantal, as the letter announcing it to me arrived in

<sup>86</sup> Gregory Lynch, a curate at St. Andrew's. <sup>87</sup> That is, two curates from St. Andrew's alternating as chaplain.