

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 sails [*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.