

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.