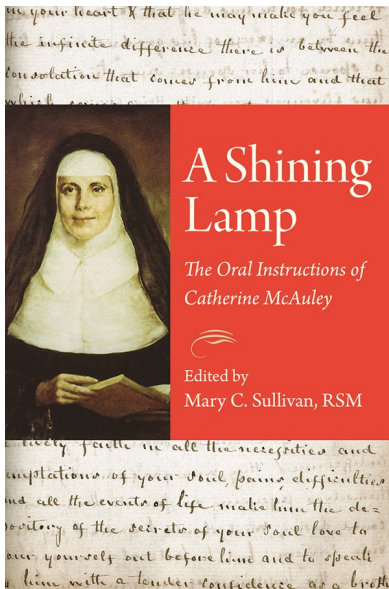




A Shining Lamp

The Oral Instructions of Catherine McAuley

Edited by Mary C. Sullivan



A nineteenth-century Irish woman's voice—after Pope Francis's own heart

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Catherine McAuley (1778-1841), the founder of the Sisters of Mercy in 1831, frequently gave oral instructions to the first Mercy community. Though she sometimes spoke explicitly about their religious vows, her words were always focused on the life, example, teachings, and evangelic spirit of Jesus Christ, emphasizing “resemblance” to him and fidelity to the calls of the Gospel. Her instructions have, therefore, a broad present-day relevance that can be inspiring and encouraging for all Christians. They are the “shining” words of a companion, a soul-friend, who offers guiding light to those who wend their pilgrim way toward the full-embrace of God’s merciful reign.

These instructions were initially written down, insofar as that was humanly possible, by sisters who were actually present and listening as she spoke. Some of their manuscripts were later copied into the long manuscript compilation that is the centerpiece of this book. Research also indicates that in preparing and giving her lectures, Catherine often relied on the content of previously published spiritual books, including works by Alphonsus Rodriguez, SJ, Louis Bourdaloue, SJ, and other well-known spiritual writers of the eighteenth and earlier centuries. The book’s endnotes illustrate this dependence.

Catherine McAuley’s voice in these instructions is realistic, down-to-earth, humble, and compassionate. She is clearly dead-set against “froth” and “mere outward show” in one’s spiritual life. Like the practical Saint Teresa of Avila, whose life and thought she studied, she favors surrendering oneself now, with God’s help, to “ordinary,” everyday, possible holiness, rather than simply dreaming about extraordinary, but perhaps impossible, future sanctity. Her themes are some of the great themes of the Gospel: genuine humility and poverty of spirit, universal charity, self-denial, taking up one’s “cross,” and following Jesus Christ.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Mary C. Sullivan is the author of *The Path of Mercy: The Life of Catherine McAuley* and the editor of *The Correspondence of Catherine McAuley* (both CUA Press).

PRAISE FOR THE BOOK

“A sophisticated scholarly reconstruction of McAuley’s oral instructions to the early Sisters of Mercy. *A Shining Lamp* contributes to the cumulative work of recovering something like the ‘historical Catherine McAuley.’ A serious contribution to women’s history and the history of spirituality.”

—William Portier, author of *Divided Friends: Portraits of the Roman Catholic Modernist Crisis in the United States* and *Every Catholic an Apostle: A Life of Thomas A. Judge, CM, 1868-1933* (both CUA Press)

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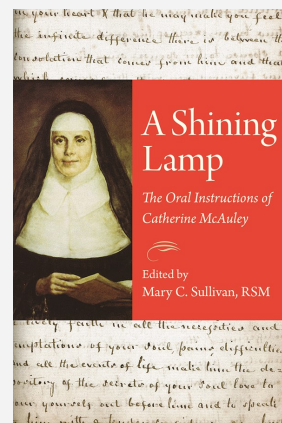
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