



## CATHERINE'S EMBRACE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

If I were to summarize in the broader terms Catherine McAuley's embrace of cultural diversity and her legacy of hospitality to strangers, I would have to say that:

**She did not** narrowly define the love of God or the unity to which we and our neighbors in the world are called.

**She did not** misname differences or see cultural variations as obstacles to that unity.

**She did not** use adversarial language to describe these differences.

**She did not** cling to her own distinctiveness or to her own personal preferences or non-essential customs.

And **she did not** regard her friendship with God as something to be coveted or exploited for herself alone.

**Rather:**

**She emptied** herself of the comfort of her former way of life.

**She took** the form of a servant in her human context.

**She extended** her affectionate embrace to otherness.

**She opened** her door to strangers.

**She learned** from those who were different and left them whole in their Godly difference.

**She humbled** herself before all human forms.

And **she followed**, as best she could, the example of Christ, who became obedient to God's wide and merciful love of all humankind, even to the point of death, even death on a cross.

If we wish to sow the seeds of a real hope in our world, I think Catherine McAuley would say: This is the way we must do it – one person at a time: one answering of the figurative doorbell, one opening of the figurative door, one embrace of the stranger, one welcoming of the other, one sharing of our bread and milk – one person at a time.

PATRICIA SMITH, "MERCY VALUES TODAY: EVER ANCIENT, EVER NEW"