

CATHERINE (www.sistersofmercy.org)



Catherine McAuley was born in Dublin in 1778 and died in 1841. She was born into a rich family, which was unusual at the time, since Catholics were widely oppressed in Ireland and prevented from holding a great deal of jobs and from owning property. Catherine was concerned about the lack of opportunity and education that was available to many children and she wanted to do something to help. At the age of 48, Catherine inherited a great deal of money. She chose to use it to build a house where she and other compassionate women could take in homeless women and provide care and education for them and their families.

Catherine never intended to start a religious order, but eventually she was persuaded that associations of women were far more likely to be respected and successful if they had an official status in the Church, rather than simply being loose associations.

The Sisters of Mercy

At the time of Catherine's death there were 150 Sisters of Mercy. Today there are over 10,000 which means that they are one of the largest religious orders of women in the Church. They are predominantly teachers, but they get involved in a range of other humanitarian and care work.

Feast Day: She's not a saint, and so doesn't have one!