

# The Divine Whisper

## Discernment in the life of Catherine McAuley

### 2 Deepening

Living in obedience to God does not make a slave of anyone. On the contrary, the will of God finds an echo in our hearts, for we are more at peace when we are doing the right thing. If there seems to be a struggle, it is not between us and God, but within ourselves, between what we *think* we want and our deepest desires.

Catherine McAuley was in touch with her deeper self. She cared about the same things God cared about, which meant that she was only too happy to help other people, often at cost to herself. At the Dedication of the Baggot Street Chapel, the Archbishop of Dublin referred to Catherine's self-giving love as '*an all-consuming fire*' burning within her. He said her heart was overflowing with the Redeemer's love.



Her friend Sister Vincent Harnett said that, even as a younger woman, Catherine's "*zeal made her a kind of missionary in the small district around her... Everyone who had distress to be relieved or troubles to be encountered came to seek consolation at her hands.*"

At a period of her life when Catherine was living in Coolock outside Dublin, nursing the dying Mrs Callaghan, God was pouring so much love into Catherine's heart that it spilled over into her dream-life. These dreams helped her see what she wanted to do with the rest of her life:

*'For many weeks the only sleep Miss McAuley had was on a couch in the sick room, yet even then was her mind engaged in visions of charity and mercy to the poor. At one moment it was a group of orphan children to whom she was ministering; at another it was a crowd of young women engaged in various household occupations. Then the scene would suddenly change, and picture to her a number of destitute females deprived of protectors and deserted by friends, some flying with horror from the suggestions of the tempter. Alarmed and amazed at the wild revelling of her imagination, she often started from her slumbers and burst into tears. "Catherine," the sick lady would sometimes say to her, "I almost wish you never went to sleep, you frighten me so much, and seem to suffer so much agony."*

**Have you ever felt that a particular dream had significance for you?  
In what more ordinary ways does God speak to us?**