

POEMS ABOUT CATHERINE MCAULEY

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Windows into Morning God to Catherine

See how quietly the Great God does all His mighty works, darkness is spread over us and light breaks in again, and there is no noise of drawing curtains or closing shutters.

I am the darkness around you
The movement of curtain
The billowing grace
That reaches through caring
To brush your cheek
Your tears
Your fear.

I am the pacing shadow
That falls upon you
In quiet
Settling the day's pain
In deepest night.

I am the silken white midnight
The eye awakened
In your vigil.
I surround the sleeping sick
Of your tireless care.

I speak your name
Through the silent folds of linen
That move across the window
Breathing dawn.

Dancing in the Evening God to Catherine

Catherine McAuley wrote to her friend Sister Mary Francis Warde about another sister, an artist with a very temperamental nature.

...Sister Mary Clare is a character not suited to my taste or my ability to govern, though possessing many very estimable points. She teased and perplexed me so much about the difficulty of copying two pages, I was really obliged to give up, unwilling to command lest it produce disedifying consequences. She said it would take an entire Lent. Indeed you have no idea how little she does in a week.

She's painting leaves again
When you come in.
You scowl at her and them
You scowl at things that can't be
healed or fixed
You scowl at life's own desperation
You scowl within...

God says: I've seen the way
You glance
To catch the point
of tender light
Poised upon the curling of the leaf
She paints in light gold.

You won't indulge the eye
That let you find
The beams of the cross
In fragile vines and straight limbed trees
When you were young

You won't allow the softened gaze
That blurs the painful edges
Of your care in beauty's bright embrace.

But sometimes in the evening
When she is lost
In painting living leaves
Sometimes in those nights
I've seen you dance.

Comfort

Catherine McAuley died in November, a cold month in Ireland. Her sisters came from far and near to keep vigil with her, praying for her, and asking questions, which she answered as if prompted by her own conversation with God.

Mother
Who will filter Mercy
When you are gone?

“Tell them,” says your God, “about
the tea.
I’ve talked to them for ages
About the Birds
And grains of wheat
And lilies of the field.
You can speak of mugs of tea
Pots and cups and vats of tea
Tea to warm their souls.”

Catherine says
God bids me speak
In words of comfort
Streaming, streaming, steeping
from my soul
Words of solace
And of rest
Finally I can see it, say it.
Deep brewed
And made alive from heart-love
Strained and strong.

God bids me leave behind
A brew to stir you
A drink for vigils
And for dawns.

God bids me leave behind
This harbored fear of death
And let it heat to vapor
And arise
In incensed steam
To moisten
Earth’s sore crust.
God bids me pour
From pots of quite enough
A liquid spreading flame
To lands unknown to me.

God bids me pause
To know you each by name
For one last time
Then send you out
And let you let me go.

I offer now
The comfort
I could never fully give
Until today.

Have
When I am gone
A cup of tea.