



# Catherine

A newsletter to promote the Cause for Canonization of the Servant of God,  
**Catherine de Hueck Doherty** — Combermere, Ontario, Canada.



No. 1 — Summer 2001

## ◆ Latest News

A new stage has been reached in Catherine's Cause. In a letter to the postulator, Father Robert Wild, July 21st, 2000, the former Bishop of Pembroke, the Most Rev. Brendan O'Brien, wrote:

“Catherine can be referred to as ‘Servant of God’ once the inquiry has been started at the diocesan level. One may refer to her in this way in writings or talks since this is the customary way of referring to those whose cause is under consideration.”

Thanks be to God!

## ◆ The Cause

Dear friends,

This is the first issue of a newsletter to promote the Cause of canonization of Catherine de Hueck Doherty. In a recent trip to Rome, in order to confer with some priests who are involved with the Causes of Saints, it was strongly suggested that such a newsletter as this be started. I was told that it was a common practice, and advisable to do so. I had thought of such a project for several years, but this suggestion finally provided the necessary inspiration to begin.

My plan is to put out an issue at least several times a year. Since this

first issue will be mailed to people who have already communicated with me about Catherine, as well as to many of our friends, I will presume a certain familiarity with her life and work in this first issue. As times goes on, I will include more biographical information for those perhaps less familiar with her.

The purpose of this newsletter is: 1) to promote knowledge of Catherine's life and work; 2) to solicit and publicize the testimonies of people who believe they have received favours through her intercession; 3) to keep people informed of the progress of the Cause; 4) to ask that our friends pray for her canonization—if it be God's will; 5) to ask for financial donations to help defray the expenses of the Cause.

What I thought would be appropriate, and of interest, for this first issue, would be to give a brief history of the progress of the Cause to date. From the very beginning we have sought to work as closely as we can with the Bishops of our Diocese, Pembroke, Ontario, Canada, and to follow the canonical procedures required by the Church. Involvement in a Cause was new for me, so it has been a learning experience all along the way.

Canonical work on a person's life for the purposes of opening a Cause cannot begin until five years after that person's death. Catherine died in Combermere, Ontario, December 14th, 1985. She is buried in the local cemetery of Canadian Martyrs Church in Combermere. At an appropriate time, therefore, after her death, the Directors General of



*Catherine de Hueck Doherty  
15 Aug 1896 – 14 Dec 1985  
“She Loved The Poor”*

Madonna House, Father Robert Pelton, Jean Fox, and Albert Osterberger, asked the then Bishop of Pembroke, the Most Rev. Joseph Windle, to approve their appointment of myself as Postulator for Catherine's Cause. In a letter to me dated January 30th, 1991, Bishop Windle wrote: "In accordance with the Norms outlined in the Apostolic Constitution *Divinus Perfectionis Magister* of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, issued on January 25th, 1983, I am pleased to confirm your appointment as Local Postulator in connection with the Introduction of the Cause of the late Mrs. Catherine de Hueck Doherty."

I would like to say publicly what a great privilege it was for me to be so chosen by the community for this holy task. Since my appointment I have been collecting testimonies of people concerning Catherine's life, gathering materials for the eventual examination of the Bishop's Committee, and endeavouring to follow the proper canonical procedures on the community's behalf. It has been especially important to interview people who may no longer be alive at the further stages of the investigation.

On April 25th, 1993, I wrote Bishop Windle, presenting to him a prayer I had composed to be prayed privately, asking for Catherine's intercession. He returned that prayer with his signature and imprimatur on May 11th, 1993. Since then I have been liberally passing out this prayer (which we now have in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian), careful to tell people that this is strictly for private and not for public liturgical use.

We have now over 400 testimonies concerning Catherine's life

and reputation for holiness. We also have hundreds of testimonies of favours people believe they have received through her intercession. At this very preliminary phase, the Bishop is simply asking us to keep a record of favours received.

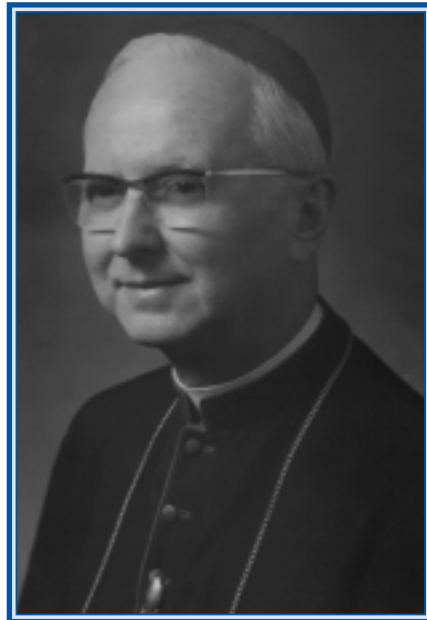
Bishop Windle retired, and has since gone to his eternal reward. I would publicly like to acknowledge his very enthusiastic support for the Cause at its beginning. He guided it in its early stages. We will be eternally grateful to him. He was succeeded by the Most Rev. Brendan O'Brien, who saw the process through the next several significant steps.

One canonical requirement is to consult the bishops of the region where the person lived, asking if they have any objections to the opening of a Cause. Bishop O'Brien brought this question to a meeting of the Ontario Bishops Conference. No objections were raised. Next, he was required to publicly consult the faithful of the diocese with the same question. Again, no serious obstacles were encountered.

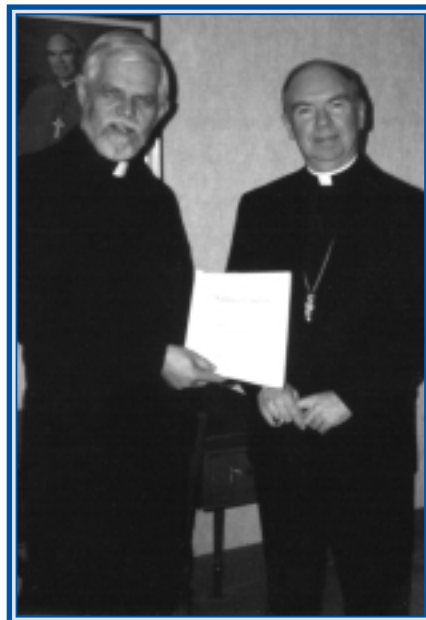
The next significant step was for myself, representing the community, to formally present a petition to the Bishop to open the Cause. This also was done.

A further step on his part was to appoint competent people to begin reading Catherine's writings for any theological difficulties. Members of this committee have been at work for several years.

However, in the Lord's providence, Bishop O'Brien was recently appointed to St. John's, Newfoundland. At this writing we are awaiting a new bishop. I publicly give thanks to Bishop O'Brien's whole-hearted support for the Cause.



*The late Bishop Joseph Windle, former Bishop of the see of Pembroke.*



*Father Robert Wild presenting the petition for the Cause to Bishop Brendan O'Brien.*

Under his fatherly guidance, significant steps were reached in the process.

However, with the present vacancy of the see of Pembroke, the continuance of the work of this committee will await the arrival of a new bishop. We have every confidence that it will resume with our new shepherd.

In November 2000, I was asked by Father Pelton to go to Rome to make some personal contacts with the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints. I made several important ones.

Msgr. Robert Sarno works at the Congregation. He was very generous with his time, and extremely helpful. (He himself is presently engaged in the Cause of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.) He is a canon lawyer, and was able, through our conversations and shared material, to outline for me the next necessary steps and procedures. He made it clear that the main task of myself and Madonna House is to gather all the relevant material on Catherine's life for eventual investigation by the Bishop's committee. A very exciting moment was when he wrote out for me (in Latin) the official title on Catherine's file: *Pembroke: Cause of the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God Catherine de Hueck Doherty, lay faithful and foundress of the Apostolate called "Madonna House"*.

Another valuable contact was Father James Fitzpatrick, O.M.I., Postulator General for the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He had been involved in the Cause of their founder, St. Eugene Mazenod. He was also more familiar with the Canadian Causes presently in process.

Finally, I visited our dear friend

Archbishop Angelo Palmas, the former Pro-Nuntio in Canada for many years. He was one of the first Father Brière and I went to visit, asking advice about the Cause. He has a great love for Madonna House. There is still a great deal of work to be done, but at the present time the Cause is progressing steadily. This newsletter will keep you up to date on its progress.

— Father Robert Wild  
Postulator



*Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, Rome*



*Archbishop Angelo Palmas, former Pro-Nuntio in Canada.*

## Testimonies

“On my part, I thank God every day for the grace I had to meet several times the servant of God. She warrants very much the public opening of her cause.”

— Archbishop Angelo Palmas

“I met Catherine de Hueck briefly ten years ago and she impressed me very deeply. Aside from this meeting, I know of her life and action only by her writings and the witness of the members of Madonna House.

In my limited information, it seems to me that the life of Catherine presents extraordinary signs of the action of God. In the first place, the fruits of holiness in the service of charity and as far as the poor and the conversion of sinners are concerned. If she is canonized, her life will speak to our contemporaries by:

- the example of a consecrated lay sanctity.
- the fruitfulness of service to the poor carried out in total detachment.

- the power and the necessity of the contemplative life in our civilization.
- the strength of love of the Church and the grace of forgiveness which give birth to an authentic Marian piety.

Everything that I have learned and have been able to intuit about Catherine makes me desire deeply that her cause will be opened and that it will result in a positive decision of the Holy Father. That is one grace that I ask of God for the Church.”

— Cardinal Jean Marie Lustiger, Paris, France

I used the prayer asking for favours through the intercession of Catherine Doherty. I used it daily in my most difficult circumstances. I must confess that I was fortunate enough to receive all of my requests better than I expected: 1) my own financial needs were granted; 2) my health restored; 3) the sick for whom I prayed have better health; 4) unity and peace were granted for those who wanted me to pray for them. I will continue to ask for her intercession. Wishing you all the success in promoting the cause.

— DG, Sri Lanka, 7/25/2000

## Favours Received

Catherine believed in miracles, and in the power of intercession of the saints. “Favours Received” will be a regular part of our newsletter. Some of the testimonies and favours will be from years past, as we have been receiving them since Catherine’s death. I encourage anyone who believes he or she has received favours through Catherine’s intercession to send them to *Postulator* at the address found at the end of this newsletter.

I wish to tell you that I’ve been praying to Catherine Doherty for two weeks faithfully saying the prayer asking for her favours. My request was granted. I was hired today to begin employment. I am so very grateful and blessed.

— LS, Pennsylvania,  
U.S.A., 3/1/2000

### Prayer asking for favours through the intercession of the Servant of God Catherine Doherty

All loving Father, through your beloved Son, Jesus, we have been taught to ask for what we need. And through his spouse, our Mother the Church, we have been instructed to pray for one another, and to ask the intercession of your servants, who have fallen asleep in Christ. Therefore, through the intercession of your servant, Catherine Doherty, we ask

*[ here mention your petition. ]*

We ask this for your honour and glory, and in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son Our Lord. Amen.

*For private use.*

Imprimatur: † J.R. Windle  
Bishop of Pembroke, May 1, 1993

Testimony: Through Catherine’s intercession I asked Jesus to continue to finance my daughter’s education in France. The day before she returned to Paris, three-quarters of the necessary funds had come in donations. Thank you Lord Jesus. Thank you, Catherine. I pray to her every day as I am convinced that she intercedes for us before God.

— ML, Québec,  
Canada, 10/1998

I have been praying to Catherine Doherty for the last two or three years for forgiveness and reconciliation between family members, particularly siblings. A week ago I received a phone call from a brother and he also phoned my sister. He had been estranged from one sibling for about 14 years and from the other for about 5 years. I’ll continue to pray to Catherine for three others who need to forgive and be reconciled. Prayer does work and miracles do happen.

— CA, Ontario,  
Canada, 12/14/2000

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Our son complained of frequent back pains. The doctor said that this pain could in some way be connected with infections. After tests, his urine revealed a high white blood cell count, indicating severe infection. He was scheduled to see a specialist in a week. Before this appointment, we prayed over our son, asking for Catherine's intercession. The urinalysis that week showed no trace of infection. Fifteen months later he has also been completely free of the back pain.

— WZ, Ontario, Canada, 10/13/2000

I want to thank God for taking the pain away from my back. I believe it was through the intercession of Catherine Doherty. I prayed to God and asked Catherine to pray for me to have the pain leave if it was God's will for me. I went to sleep and when I got up in the morning, the pain was completely gone. I believe this happened through her prayers for me. I think God granted me this blessing through Catherine Doherty and I thank her very much.

— ML, Ontario, Canada, no date



## Catherine's Life

God is a Lover who hungers to be loved in return. Burning with this vision of faith, Catherine de Hueck Doherty challenged Christians of her day to live a radical Gospel life and to recognise God's image in every human being.



She was a pioneer among North American Catholic laity in implementing the Church's social doctrine in the face of Communism, economic and racial injustice, secularism and apathy. At the same time she insisted that those engaged in social action be rooted in prayer and that they incarnate their faith into every aspect of ordinary life. Catherine was a

bridge between the Christian East and West. Baptised Orthodox and later becoming Roman Catholic, her spiritual heritage drew upon both of these traditions.



Catherine was born in Nizhny-Novgorod, Russia, on August 15, 1896 to wealthy and deeply Christian parents. Raised in a devout aristocratic family, she grew up knowing that Christ lives in the poor, and that ordinary life is meant to be holy. Her father's work enabled the family to travel extensively in Catherine's youth. At the age of 15, she married her cousin, Boris de Hueck. Soon, the turmoil of World War I sent them both to the Russian front: Boris as an engineer, Catherine as a nurse.

The Russian Revolution destroyed the world they knew. Many of their family members were killed, and they themselves narrowly escaped death at the hands of the Bolsheviks. The Revolution marked Catherine for life. She saw it as the tragic consequence of a Christian society's failure to incarnate its faith. All her life she cried out against the hypocrisy of those who professed to follow Christ, while failing to serve him in others.

Catherine and Boris became refugees, fleeing first to England, and then in 1921, to Canada, where their son George was born. In the following years she experienced grinding poverty as she laboured to support her ailing husband and child. After years of painful struggle, her marriage to Boris fell apart; later her marriage was annulled by the Church.

Catherine's talent as a speaker was discovered by an agent from a lecture bureau. She began travelling across North America, and became a successful lecturer. Once again she became wealthy—but she was not at peace. The words of Christ pursued her relentlessly: "Sell all you possess, and come, follow Me." On October 15, 1930 Catherine renewed a promise she had made to God during her ordeal in the revolution, and gave her life to Him. She marked this as the day of the beginning of her Apostolate. With the blessing of Archbishop Neil McNeil of Toronto, Catherine sold all her possessions and provided for



her son, George. In the early 1930's she went to live a hidden life in the slums of Toronto, desiring to console her beloved Lord as a lay apostle by being one with his poor.

The lay apostolate was still in its infancy in the 1930's. Dorothy Day, another pioneer in this field, was among the few

who understood and supported what Catherine was trying to do. Catherine searched for direction, prompted by an inner conviction that she must preach the Gospel with her life. As she implemented this radical Gospel way of life, young men and women came to join her. They called themselves Friendship House, and lived the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi. In the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930's, the members of Friendship House responded to the needs of the time. They begged for food and clothing to share with those in need and offered hospitality of the heart to all. They also tried to fight the rising tide of Communism, through lectures, classes, and the distribution of a newspaper called "The Social Forum", based on the great social encyclicals of the Church.

Misunderstanding and calumny plagued Catherine all of her life. False but persistent rumours about her and the working of Friendship House forced its closing in 1936. Catherine left Toronto, feeling her work had failed. Through the seeming failure and great disappointments, she heard the voice of Christ beckoning her to share His suffering.

Soon after she left Toronto, Father John LaFarge, S.J., a well-known Civil Rights Movement leader in the U.S., invited Catherine to open a Friendship House in Harlem. In February, 1938, she accepted his request, and soon the Harlem Friendship House was bursting with activity. Catherine saw the beauty of the Black people and was horrified by the injustices being done to them. She travelled the country decrying racial discrimination against Blacks.

In the midst of widespread rejection and persecution, she found support from Cardinal Patrick Hayes and Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York. In Harlem, a small community formed around her, but

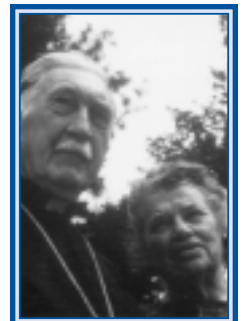
again, her work ended in failure. Divisions developed among the staff of Friendship House and in January, 1947, they out-voted Catherine on points she considered essential to the apostolate. Seeing this as a rejection of her vision of Friendship House, she stepped down as Director General.

On May 17, 1947, Catherine came to Combermere, Ontario, Canada, with her second husband, American journalist Eddie Doherty, whom she had married in 1943. Catherine was shattered by the rejection of Friendship House and thought she had come to Ontario to retire. Instead, the most fruitful and lasting phase of her apostolic life was about to begin. As she was recovering from the trauma, Catherine began to serve those in need in the Combermere area, first as a nurse and then through neighbourly services. She and Eddie also established a newspaper, "Restoration", and eventually began a training centre for the Catholic lay apostolate.

At a summer school of Catholic Action that Catherine organised in 1950, Fr. John Callahan came to teach. He was to become Catherine and Eddie's spiritual director and the first priest member of Madonna House. Under his guidance, in February 1951, they made an act of consecration to Jesus through Mary, according to St. Louis de Montfort. Mary, Mother of the Church, became guide to their lives and to Madonna House.

Catherine's lifelong passion to console Christ in others propelled her forward. Again young men and women asked to join her. Graces abounded. In October 1951, Catherine attended the first Lay Congress in Rome. The Papal Secretary, Msgr. Montini (later to become Pope Paul VI) encouraged Catherine and her followers to consider making a permanent commitment.

On April 7, 1954, those living in Combermere voted to embrace a permanent vocation with promises of poverty, chastity and obedience, and the Community of Madonna House was established. The following year, Catherine and Eddie took a promise of chastity and lived celibate lives thereafter. From these offerings, an





explosion of life took place and Madonna House grew. On June 8, 1960, Bishop William Smith of Pembroke offered the Church's approval to the fledgling community at the blessing of the statue of Our Lady of Combermere.

Catherine had a faith vision for the restoration of the Church and our modern culture at a time when the de-Christianisation of the Western world was already well advanced. She brought the spiritual intuitions of the Christian East to North America. Lay men and women as well as priests came to Madonna House to live the life of a Christian family: the life of Nazareth. They begged for what they needed and gave the rest away. At the invitation of bishops, they opened houses in rural areas and cities in North and South America, Europe, Russia, Africa, and the West Indies.

Catherine's vision was immense, encompassing farming, carpentry, cooking and laundry, theology and philosophy, science, the fine arts, and drama. "Nothing is foreign to the Apostolate, except sin... The primary work of the Apostolate is to love one another... If we implement this law of love, if we clothe it with our flesh, we shall become a light to the world," she said, "for the essence of our Apostolate is love—love for God poured out abundantly for others."

In response to the deepening dilemmas of the Western world, Catherine offered the spirituality of her Russian past. She introduced the concept of *poustinia*, which was totally unknown in the West in the 1960's, but has since become recognised in much of the world. *Poustinia* is the Russian word for "desert," which in its spiritual context is a place where a person meets God through solitude, prayer and fasting. Catherine's vision and practical way of living the Gospel in ordinary life became recognised as a remedy to the depersonalising effects of modern technology. In response to the rampant individualism of our century, she called Madonna House to *sobornost*, a Russian word meaning deep unity of heart and mind in the Holy Trinity—a unity beyond

purely human capacity.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty died on December 14, 1985, after a long illness. She left behind a spiritual family of more than 200 members, and foundations around the world. She left to the Church, which she loved passionately, a spiritual heritage that is a beacon for this new century.

The following is taken from a Letter to Madonna House Family:

"We need to be poor! Let us live an ordinary life, but, beloved, let us live it with a passionate love for God. Become a mystery. Stretch one hand out to God, the other to your neighbour. Be cruciform. ... Christ's cross will be our revolution and it will be a *revolution of love!*"



## The Little Mandate

Catherine Doherty considers the words of the "Little Mandate" to be the very heart and essence of her personal vocation:

Arise—go! Sell all you possess. Give it directly, personally to the poor. Take up My cross (their cross) and follow Me, going to the poor, being poor, being one with them, one with Me.

Little—be always little! Simple, poor, childlike.

Preach the Gospel with your life—*without compromise!* Listen to the Spirit. He will lead you.

Do little things exceedingly well for love of Me.

Love, love, love, never counting the cost.

Go into the marketplace and stay with Me. Pray, fast, pray always, fast.

Be hidden. Be a light to your neighbour's feet. Go without fear into the depth of men's hearts. I shall be with you.

Pray always. *I will be your rest.*



Catherine Doherty's life is the subject of many books—and she herself was a prolific speaker and writer. We hope to introduce you to some of these popular and important works in future newsletters.

### Fragments of My Life: A Memoir



Catherine tells the story of her life in her own words. However, this is not a dull, date-filled biography—Catherine's memoirs read like an adventure novel. The book shines with her vision of uncompromising commitment to the Gospel. It's a journey into Catherine's life, disclosing the mysteries of world events that shaped her life; the mysteries of her leadership; the mysteries of her marriage; and, most of all, the mysteries of God's love. (Available in paperback or on cassette in AudioBook format.)

***Fragments of My Life.*** Doherty, Catherine.  
Combermere: Madonna House Publications, 1996.  
(ISBN 0-921440-41-3 Audio ISBN 0-921440-58-8)

### Other Biographies:

***They Called Her The Baroness: The Life of Catherine Doherty.*** Duquin, Lorene Hanley. New York: Alba House, 1995. (ISBN 0-8189-0753-3)

***Tumbleweed: A Biography of Catherine Doherty.*** Doherty, Eddie. Combermere: Madonna House Publications, 1988. (ISBN 0-921440-12-X)

***Katia: A Personal Vision of Catherine Doherty.*** Brière, Father Émile. Sherbrooke: Editions Paulines, 1988. (ISBN 2-89039-159-0)

***The Life of Catherine Doherty.*** Bazzett, Mary. Combermere: Madonna House Publications, 1998.

**These titles and more are available from Madonna House Publications. Toll free: 1-888-703-7110.**

If you believe you have received favours through Catherine's intercession, we would be pleased to hear from you. We are also in need of financial donations to help cover the expenses of her Cause. If you would like to contact us, please write to us at:

**Postulator for the Cause  
Madonna House Apostolate  
2888 Dafoe Rd  
Combermere ON K0J 1L0  
Canada**

If you reside outside of Canada, please check postage rates. Friends in the United States can address mail at their normal letter rate to our American address:

Postulator for the Cause  
Madonna House Apostolate  
220 C St N E  
Washington DC 20002-5718  
United States of America

You can also write to us if you would like to receive prayer cards, or to be added to our mailing list.

More information about the Servant of God Catherine de Hueck Doherty and her Cause can be found on the Internet at:

[www.catherinedoherty.org](http://www.catherinedoherty.org)

(You will also find the latest editions of this newsletter there in a printer-friendly format.)

You can also find more information about Catherine's world-wide Madonna House Apostolate on the Internet at:

[www.madonnahouse.org](http://www.madonnahouse.org)

(When you are finished with this newsletter, why not support the Cause by passing it on to your friends?)