

Catherine

A Newsletter to Promote the Cause for Canonization
of the Servant of God, Catherine de Hueck Doherty

Issue Number 6 — Fall 2003



Spiritual Maternity

■ A Word from Catherine

An example follows of Catherine's spiritual maternity, which she frequently exercised through letters to the Madonna House community.

The Many Faces of Stewardship

Time and again Jesus spoke to his followers about the need for stewardship. His parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14–30 is an especially powerful example. If we study the Gospels carefully, we ourselves will come to realize the immensity and all pervasiveness of that word 'stewardship.'

Let us take baptism, for instance. When we are baptized into the life and death of Jesus Christ, we receive a tremendous stewardship. We receive the keys of the Kingdom; and we have the responsibility of opening its doors and of finding out all about it. Because we are its stewards, we must seek to penetrate every corner of this Kingdom of ours. We have entered it, not for ourselves alone, but for the whole world. What a tremendous stewardship this is!

This concept of stewardship enters into the nitty gritty every-

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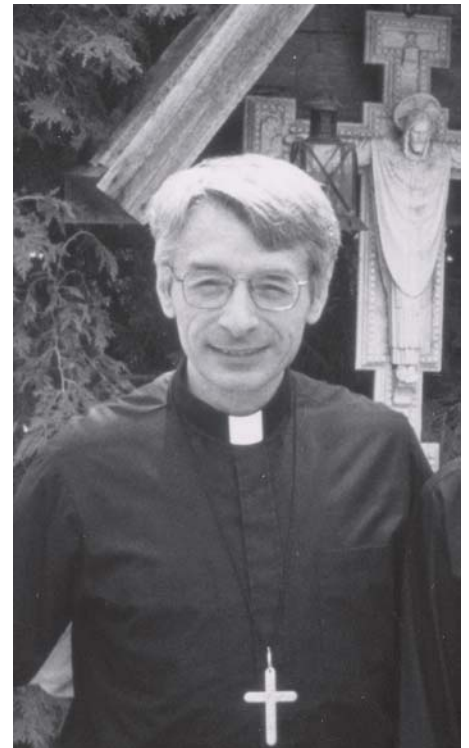
■ From the Postulator's Desk

As Catherine becomes better known, more people are writing about her and researching her life and spirituality. Besides the publications of the community and numerous articles, academic studies have been done. Lorene Duquin's *They Called Her the Baroness* is still the best life of Catherine to date.

This summer, a milestone has been reached in "Catherine Studies," which I am making the focus of this present newsletter. Our associate priest, Fr. Don Guglielmi, of the Bridgeport, Connecticut diocese, successfully defended his thesis and became a Doctor of Sacred Theology on May 28, 2003. We extend to him our heartfelt congratulations. The topic of his thesis? *Staritsa: The Spiritual Maternity of Catherine de Hueck Doherty*. (*Staritz* is the Russian word for "elder" or "wise one.")

The significance of this accomplishment is aptly expressed in his own words: "At my doctoral defence Catherine was introduced

into the heart of the Church." Catherine is now known at the highest level of Church scholarship and study. His dissertation director was Fr. Gabriel O'Donnell, O.P., whom I met in Rome. (He is postulator for the Cause of Fr. Michael McGivney, founder of the Knights of Columbus.)



Father Don Guglielmi
Madonna House Associate Priest

Here are some excerpts from Fr. Don's enthusiastic letter to me:

"Yes, praise God, it is over and a total success. My second reader is a well known professor of spiritual theology here in Rome, Fr. Paul Murray, O.P. His personal view is important because of his stature in the Roman academic world as a spiritual theologian. When he read the thesis the second time he said, 'It burns you, like a flame. Her spirituality shines forth and is a flame.' Isn't that an interesting use of words, just like Catherine!

"He told me that 'for the good of the Church' this must be published. He asked me to seriously consider doing so. He also said, 'I think she is a saint. The holiness of this woman is apparent in this work, and I think she stands a good chance of being beatified.'

The Little Mandate

Catherine Doherty considered the words of "The Little Mandate" to be the very heart and essence of her 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.*

"So our beloved Catherine has now been introduced to the heart of the Church at one of the oldest pontifical universities in the world—the Angelicum, where the Holy Father received his doctorate. In fact, I defended my thesis today in the very same room where he did so in 1948."

Catherine stood up, smiled and pointed her finger towards me, and said, with a thick Russian accent, "Yes, Father, this is your dissertation. It is going to be easy and quite doable." I looked at her with amazement, and then woke from my dream.

How Fr. Don came to write about Catherine is quite remarkable. He had been introduced to our centre in Combermere, Ontario, Canada, in 1987 by mutual friends, our associate Deacon Tom Seith and his wife, Monique. Here is his account of how he was led by the Lord to write about Catherine:

"In April of 1997 I was at a point in my studies when I needed to choose a topic for my licentiate thesis that could later be expanded into a doctoral dissertation. At first I thought about St. Catherine of Genoa or Walter Hilton, but these would have involved archival work in Genoa or Britain, and seemed too burdensome. After two or three weeks without success, I began to panic as the deadline for choosing a topic approached.

"Then one night at the Casa Santa Maria dell'Umilta, where I resided, I had a very vivid dream that changed my life. In the dream I was standing before a larger than lifesize outline with four chapters. I 'knew' (i.e., that I was receiving this knowledge from a source outside myself) that the outline was about Catherine Doherty, the Little

Mandate, and Madonna House. All this was clear, but I did not know what the outline was, or why I was there looking at it. I walked back and forth, puzzled, and examined it.

"Then I noticed that a woman was sitting directly behind the outline. I poked my head around and

there was Catherine herself! She was dressed in a lovely blue dress with a flowery pattern that fell below her knees. Her hair was tied back in a bun, and her face was radiant and full of joy and love. I asked her, 'Excuse me, what is this?' She stood up, smiled and pointed her finger towards me, and said, with a thick Russian accent, 'Yes, Father, this is your dissertation. It is going to be easy and quite doable.' I looked at her with amazement, and then woke from my dream.

"My heart was burning within me and I wanted to know more about this woman who appeared to me in a dream and gave me my dissertation topic. Noteworthy, Catherine referred to the outline as 'your dissertation,' not a thesis, implying that it would be developed for the doctorate.

"After writing down as many details as I could recall, I sent a fax to Fr. Robert Wild, the local postulator of Catherine's Cause, to inquire if writing a thesis about her was, in fact, doable. Three days later I received a very positive reply. Then, a friend of mine who was studying in Rome for the Legionaries of Christ called me

and I told him about the dream. He responded: ‘Well, that is very interesting, Father, because for the past two days I have been doing holy hours for you before the Blessed Sacrament, and I asked Jesus to tell you what he wants you to write about, because you have been struggling with that.’ This was the confirmation I sought. My spiritual director agreed that this sounded like a genuine supernatural dream from God and that I should act on it.”

I will simply pick out certain sections of Fr. Don Guglielmi’s thesis, which especially exemplify his major theme, Catherine’s Spiritual Maternity:

“In his Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, Pope John Paul II speaks of those called to respond to Christ’s invitation to live the Gospel in a more radical way. In the monastic tradition, these men and women were considered ‘bearers of the Spirit,’ authentically spiritual men and women, capable of endowing history with hidden fruitfulness by unceasing praise and intercession, by spiritual counsels and works of charity.

As a ‘bearer of the Spirit’ in the twentieth century, Catherine sought to lead and form others in a radical Gospel life. One way in which she attempted to fulfill this goal was through her spiritual maternity... she exercised a spiritual motherhood to both laity and priests in an effort to lead people closer to God.

“In addition to living a radical Gospel life in imitation of Christ, their witness was intended to ‘transfigure the world and life itself,’ through a radical self renunciation and a ceaseless search for God. Eastern Orthodox scholar

Joseph J. Allen states that ‘since the Spirit *does* abide in the Church, it follows that there *will be* an ever renewing form of bearers or carriers of the Spirit.’

“Catherine’s formation and spirituality reveal that she may be considered one such contemporary ‘bearer of the Spirit.’ Her desire to live the Gospel without compromise was a response in faith to the call of God, and her contribution to restoring the world to Christ. In addition, as a bearer of the Spirit in the twentieth century, Catherine sought to lead and form others in a radical Gospel life. One way in which she attempted to fulfill this goal was through her spiritual maternity.

“This thesis argues that, in the tradition of the desert mothers and the nineteenth century Russian *staritsy*, Catherine exercised a spiritual motherhood to both laity and priests in an effort to lead people closer to God.

“In evaluating Catherine’s exercise of spiritual maternity we need to make a distinction between spiritual motherhood and spiritual direction in the technical sense. Catherine understood that she was both the founder and a superior of Madonna House. As such, part of

her responsibility was to mould and nurture the community in the ways of God and to provide general spiritual instruction on how to live the Gospel without compromise. She did not consider herself a spiritual director, in the classic sense of that term, to anyone at



*Eight Righteous Women (Desert Mothers)
Holy Transfiguration Monastery, MA*

Madonna House, either lay member or priest. Every spiritual director at Madonna House had to be a priest.

“Her intention was to respect and preserve the distinction of the role of spiritual director and confessor in the internal forum, and that of spiritual mother, not restricted to the internal forum. Of course, if someone opened his conscience to her, brought her a spiritual problem or question, or asked something in the internal forum, she would answer them with a ‘word.’

“Catherine understood her spiritual motherhood as one of directing souls aspiring to perfection, but she exercised this ministry in a more general way. Catherine’s method of spiritual maternity was quite simple and direct: she provided comprehensive guidance in living the Gospel, addressing herself to the entire community rather than to individual directees. She exercised her spiritual motherhood primarily through her staff letters to the community. In these letters she taught them how to live

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Testimonies & Favours Received

Our very dear Fr. Émile-Marie Brière, Catherine's closest associate, 'fell asleep in the Lord' on June 16, 2003. I know it would please him to now give his testimony about Catherine and some favours he received through her intercession.

What is it I saw in Catherine? Her faith, trust, humility, love. She was relentless in her pursuit of God. She picked up on everything, that is, she corrected everything, so that you would love God more. That is why she got so impatient with rationalization. She wanted you to get to God.

She lived under inhuman pressures. You think you have problems! You have none in comparison to Catherine. She faced them, irrespective of the cross. She didn't care if people liked her or hated her. She had a terrific personality, but she loved you too much to draw you to herself—because then you wouldn't love God, you would love her. You would be emotionally, sentimentally attached to her, when she wanted you to be strong in love. She didn't attract you to herself.

She was the most tender person I have ever met, understanding of human frailty and human weakness. To her, love was complete and full. The love of Catherine was a very good image of the love of God, which is very gentle, very tender, yet very firm and strong. It wasn't the love of a person who doesn't purify. We have to be purified. We have to die to self. We might lead a mediocre life, but in her eyes we would be wasting our time because we were not loving passionately.

There were so many painful experiences in her life, and you never knew when something would bring a strong association with those experiences. She had many sleepless nights. One of the greatest pressures was the

tremendous suffering that she underwent during the Revolution. A number of her family were killed; that was very painful stuff. She saw the last priest killed, before escaping with her husband.

The Scripture passage about the 'Valiant Woman' can be applied to Catherine. Her love for you was constant, whether she was 'nice' or not. She got impatient, and said publicly that she wanted to become more patient. When she loved a person, she loved them as they were. She had no animosity toward those who hurt her. She prayed for them.

Catherine trusted in God very simply and directly. Her love was not what we equate with love. We think someone who is 'nice' to me, who does things for me, loves me. Her love was a gentle, strong, tender, yet pitiless love, which was a shadow of the love of God. She had to discipline us, purify us. Sanctity is possible if we give all and hold back nothing.

The things to look for in Catherine are faith, trust, and joy. With her the

cross was joyful. With her Christ was a real Person. Our Lady and the Blessed Trinity were very real to her. There was no pietistic stuff. No religiosity or sentimentality. It was from the heart. She loved God passionately. She was very childlike. She had a childlike faith.

— Fr. Émile-Marie Brière

Doug Roche is a Canadian senator. He is currently Chair of Canada's National Committee for the 50th Anniversary of the U.N. He is a long time friend of Madonna House. During a recent visit to Combermere he said:

Growth here since the seventies is phenomenal. I can feel the energy in this room and I can also feel the presence of both Catherine and Fr. Eddie. Over the years Catherine taught me much about different elements of social justice and I want to pay a special tribute to her, to Fr. Eddie, and also to Fr. Brière.

— Doug Roche



Fr. Émile-Marie Brière with Doug Roche and Patricia McGoey



*Catherine Doherty's Friend: Fr. Émile-Marie Brière
(An oil painting by Patrick Stewart, Madonna House staff member)*

Three favours Fr. Émile-Marie Brière believed he received through Catherine's intercession:

In the fall of 1980 I suffered from a very serious skin rash for one month. Stronger and stronger medication was used, to no avail. On a Saturday night, at my request, Catherine blessed me lightly with holy oil. I was cured instantly. Father Robert Wild will testify to this and also Dr. Comerford, of Peterborough, ON.

On August 1, 1986, I had cardiac fibrillation for several days. I prayed to Catherine one night while I was in the hospital. The next morning Dr. Joseph McKenna said to me, "Your pulse is down to 80." I now have fibrillation only occasionally and it lasts only a few hours, as I pray to Catherine each time.

In November 1986, Dr. St. James, optometrist at Barry's Bay, Ontario, told me to see a specialist because I had cataracts in both eyes. In March 1987, after I had prayed to Catherine, Dr. Samis, of Toronto, told me: "No cataracts."

An Unusual Testimony and Favour

I read the information sent to me about the cause of canonization of Catherine Doherty and the request for testimonies, and I decided that I should relate my experience.

In 1961, when I was sixteen, I spent two weeks at Madonna House. One night

I was invited to attend a meeting in the small library overlooking the river. Catherine was speaking about Absolute (or Universal) love. I think she was sitting when she first started to speak and then got up and stood behind her chair during the talk.

I was inexperienced with the feeling that filled that room—although I had experienced similar feelings during bells at Mass and Benediction or sometimes when our parish priest spoke about Jesus or repeated words attributed to Jesus.

"At one point, after Catherine had been speaking for quite a while, I glanced at her and noticed that she was lifted up in the air. She had risen up behind her chair so that she was just a little bit higher up than she was when standing normally—perhaps six inches..."

But I wasn't thinking about any of those things. I just listened and felt a powerful feeling in the room as Catherine spoke about Love. It was a really unusual and unforgettable experience. At one point, after she had been speaking for quite a while, I glanced at her and noticed that she was lifted up in the air. She had risen up behind her chair so that she was just a little bit higher up than she was when standing normally—perhaps six inches. It was just high enough that I understood immediately that she could not be that high up while standing on the floor and it was unquestionably clear to me that she was lifted up physically with-

out any physical factor involved. She had not stepped up onto anything—that would have been obvious. Anyway there was nothing there for her to step up onto. Also the whole experience was inconsistent with any such thing. There was complete silence in the room except for the simple words which she had been speaking about love.

It was not until several years later when similar experiences connected with understandings about God and Love triggered the memory of that event—and only then did I actually realize what had happened.

I didn't speak about this to anyone and I had and have no way of knowing whether or not anyone else saw and felt what I did. Everyone else around that table appeared to be concentrating intensely on what they were hearing. It seemed to me as though everyone had their eyes closed in prayer and I may have been the only one who actually glanced over at Catherine while she was speaking. It did not occur to me to speak about it at the time, although in recent years I have mentioned this experience to a few people. Later when I studied about mystical experiences and followed my search for truth into some understandings of that other dimension of possibilities and being, I returned to that memory and made sense of it. Not that I had ever doubted it—I just had no perspective

from which to react—other than to know that it was an honest and unexploited reality which was a result of the concentration which Catherine was exerting in contemplating Love.

There will always be a little part of me inside my heart that is connected to Madonna House and to that kind spirit whom I know as Catherine.

— M.E., Quebec, Canada. ■

If you believe you have received favours through Catherine's intercession, we would be pleased to hear from you. Please write to the Postulator at the address found on the last page. ■

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the Gospel in every aspect of life. She counselled them about Christian attitudes of the heart, Christian behavior, Christian ascetical wisdom and the common good of the community.

If we compare Catherine's qualities as a spiritual mother to those proffered by the tradition, we will see that she possessed all of them: charity, passionate love of God and neighbour, detachment from worldly possessions—and more...

“If we compare Catherine's qualities as a spiritual mother to those proffered by the tradition, we will see that she possessed all of them: charity, passionate love of God and neighbour, detachment from worldly possessions—and more, a love of poverty, experience of the spiritual life, the dispensing of a ‘word’ of salvation applied to concrete circumstances and situations, humility, discernment, a desire to make Jesus known and loved and *to mother him in others*.

“This latter was a significant aspect of Catherine's approach to spiritual maternity, her idea of ‘mothering Christ’ in others. In one of her spiritual poems, she enters into a dialogue with Jesus about this idea:

“Catherine: ‘So tell me, Beloved. Answer me a question that keeps coming to me again and again. A doctor once told me that I must stop ‘mothering,’ for I mother you in all I meet and all I can. Is this right, or is it wrong? I cannot stop mothering you in all I meet.’

“Jesus: ‘You cannot stop mothering me, Catarina mea, for I made you pregnant with myself in many ways. You always are and will be mother, sister and spouse to me. Priests, men, women, I have begotten through you. In them you mother me, and always will, now and in eternity. I have been all things to all men; where the Master is, so should the servant be. But I have ceased to call you servant. You are my friend, hence the friend to all, mother to all, sister to all.’

“One of Catherine's most unique contributions was her spiritual motherhood to priests. Catherine called this her ‘second vocation’: ‘My first love is God,

and my second love is priests.’ God gave Catherine a tremendous capacity to love priests, to spiritually nourish them, and to offer her life as a victim soul for their salvation. Of particular interest is her poem describing priests as ‘little bridges’ in great need of repair:

Swiftly I run to my Lord with a heart
full of love and desire,
desire to make of myself a bridge
for my Lord to cross over.
For behold he said,
‘My Father made me a bridge
between himself and man's
hunger of him.
I am *the bridge*.

‘But it was my wish to make
many small bridges across the
divide
that would carry me through my
Sacrament
to satiate the hunger of man
whom I love so madly
that I made myself helpless
and hidden in bread and in wine
to be carried to all by my bridges.

‘But behold my little bridges.
My beloved bridges
are falling down.
Go and repair them by making
my sadness your sadness,
my passion your passion,
my pain your pain,
my loneliness, yours.’

I cried out,
‘My Love, give me your sadness,
give me your passion,
your loneliness,
and your pain,
and with it give me your grace
to bear them, for I am but nothing
before thy eyes and have my
being only
in the breath of thy grace.’



Catherine Doherty receiving Communion

“She recognized that priests, too, had become spiritual casualties upon the landscape of a secular culture. Catherine did not hesitate to undertake this ministry to priestly souls. Her contribution to them cannot be overestimated. Her spiritual motherhood to priests was a factor in saving a number of vocations, and leading others to deeper holiness.”

— excerpted from *Staritsa: The Spiritual Maternity of Catherine de Hueck Doherty* by Fr. Don Guglielmi ■

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.

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

“Love is not abstract; it is a fire. It must spend itself in service. What you and I have to be is a flame, a lamp to our neighbour’s feet, a place where he can warm himself, where he can see the face of God.”

— Catherine Doherty

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dayness of my life. I am responsible for so many things. The pollution of the earth begins with me. Do I use sprays that damage the atmosphere? Do I misuse ways of

A sense of stewardship is so very important because our lack of it can easily destroy a family relationship, or an entire apostolate — especially if we fail in spiritual stewardship.

feeding people who are under my care? I am the steward of everything that I use: utensils in the kitchen, books in the library, files in the office, beds in the dorm.

There is also a stewardship over our bodies. God has created us to be icons of Christ. We can blur the image of Christ in ourselves by being sloppy in our appearance, by having a slouchy posture, by not eating properly, by not disciplining ourselves in all the ways people think they find comfort. If we avoid this self discipline, then we fail to be stewards over the first and most important gift God has given us—our own incarnation.

We must also be good stewards of our own hearts, and be careful to give Christian example to oth-

ers. From this springs stewardship of our speech, stewardship of our attention, of our thoughts, of our emotions. This form of self discipline begins in the heart, but it moves into all the areas of our subconscious and conscious life.

As we learn to guard our hearts properly, we become stewards of our brothers and sisters, of our neighbor who is next to us.

Do you understand what I am getting at? A sense of stewardship is so very important because our lack of it can easily destroy a family relationship, or an entire apostolate—especially if we fail in *spiritual* stewardship. We must become like those stewards who spend the ‘money’ of their master wisely. We are entrusted with the money of love, understanding, unselfishness. Especially unselfishness! He gives us these gifts out of the great storehouse of his treasures. Let us ‘spend’ them wisely, not foolishly. [February 3, 1976] ■



Madonna House staff workers, Ruth and Mary D., at work on the farm.

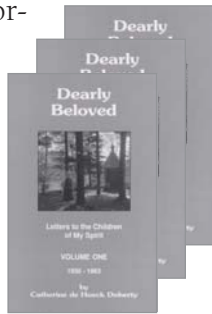
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■ Catherine in Print and Media

Catherine Doherty's life was the subject of many books, and she herself was a prolific speaker and writer with dozens of published works. We hope to introduce you to some of these popular and important works, considered by many to be modern spiritual classics.

Dearly Beloved: Letters to the Children of My Spirit

These three extraordinary volumes contain many of the letters to the community through which, as Fr. Don mentioned, Catherine exercised her spiritual maternity. We consider them among our most precious treasures from her legacy. They are filled with practical Gospel wisdom on all aspects of human life, and can be adapted to any vocation.

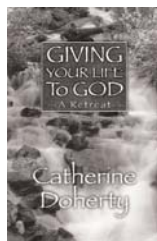


Volume I: 1956–1963
Volume II: 1964–1973
Volume III: 1974–1983

Each volume: \$19.95 U.S. (\$24.95 Cdn)

Giving Your Life to God: A Retreat (2 cassettes)

Take part in an intimate conversation with Catherine Doherty—in her cabin on the Madawaska river in Combermere—where she speaks to a group of men and women preparing to commit their lives to the service of the gospel in poverty, chastity, and obedience. Whatever your



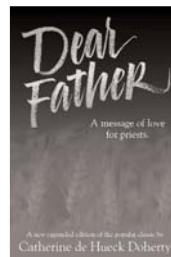
vocation, you will find encouragement and joy in listening.

Divided into four sections, this professionally restored recording of Catherine makes an excellent addition to a two- or four-day spiritual retreat—for a group, or the privacy of your home. It is hosted by Fr. Émile Brière, a priest of Madonna House.

2 cassettes • \$13.95 U.S. (\$17.50 Cdn)

Dear Father: A Message of Love for Priests

This new edition of Catherine's classic book has been expanded, and features five new chapters, including: *The Call to Priesthood, Anointed Teachers, Our Lady Mother of the Priesthood, Priesthood and Loneliness, A Life Offered for Priests.*



“Wonderful news that the expanded edition of Catherine's *Dear Father* is ready for publication. Catherine practiced what she preached: she exercised her priesthood to the full, and she extended her love for Christ the Priest to all priests, especially those in need. Her words, written early in her path to sainthood, take on ever deeper meaning. May they bring solace to many more.” — Monsignor Bernard Prince, *Secretary General, Pontificum Opus A Propagatione Fidei, Rome.*

138 pages • \$12.95 U.S. (\$16.25 Cdn)

These and other titles by Catherine Doherty can be ordered directly from Madonna House Publications by calling toll free: 1-888-703-7110, or on-line at: www.madonnahouse.org/publications

More information about Catherine Doherty and the progress of her Cause—as well as printable copies of this and previous newsletters—can be found on the Internet at:

www.catherinedoherty.org

■ How to Contact Us

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

Fax: (613) 756-3832

E-mail: cause@catherinedoherty.org

If you didn't receive this newsletter in your mail, but you would like to, please write to us with your address. There is no charge, but donations are accepted and appreciated.

- Yes, I would like to receive future newsletters about Catherine's cause. (Please send in English or French)
- Please send me cards of Catherine's official intercessory prayer. Quantity: ___ English ___ French ___ Spanish
- Please also send me a catalogue of Catherine's published books and talks.

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