

# Catherine

Issue 14 • Fall 2007

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



## Catherine, Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana of Graymoor

### ■ From the Postulator's Desk

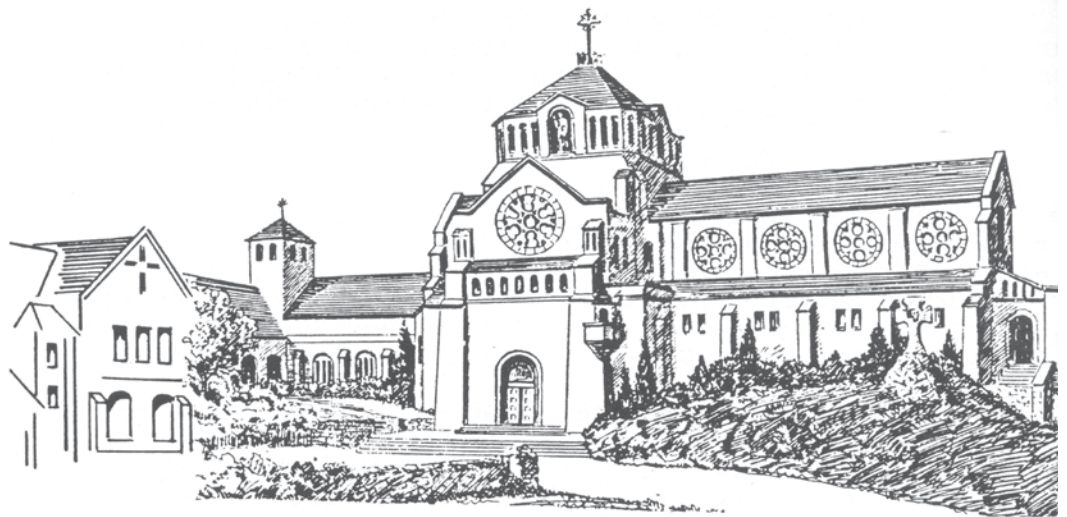
Fr. Paul Watson, the co-founder with Mother Lurana White of the Society of Our Lady of the Atonement, died in 1940. The second superior, Fr. Raphael, wrote to Catherine in 1944 when she was then living with her husband, Eddie Doherty, in Chicago. Fr. Raphael asked for Fr. Paul's correspondence with Catherine. At that time Friendship House didn't have any archives, so Catherine reluctantly said she would send her correspondence to Graymoor. In her response she wrote:

"In what is little known, even by the good Friars and Sisters, is that Friendship House and all the good work they now do and did in the past are really the children of both Founders of your two communities. Without them we would not be in existence. I feel sure that even you did not know to what extent and how closely we were associated, and how much FH and all our members owe to Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana."

I had known Catherine for 14 years before her death in 1985; and since her falling asleep in the Lord,

*"Praying daily for you, Beloved Father. I am your obedient daughter in Christ. Catherine de Hueck."*

~ To Fr. Paul Watson, April 15, 1935 ~



Graymoor

Drawing of proposed National Shrine of St. Anthony and St. Francis Chapel  
The Lamp, 1939

I've been trying to understand her life and teaching for the community and for the Church at large. To come across a new, deep insight into her character and formation still thrills me. This happened a year or so ago when I started reading her correspondence with Fr. Paul. I had known that Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana were significant people in Catherine's life. What I hadn't realized was the depth of their influence. For her to say that her followers of both Friendship House

and Madonna House are *children* of these two great people, and that without their influence we would *not be in existence*, well – even considering Catherine's tendency to exaggeration – these words opened up a new window for me onto the mystery of Catherine's spirit.

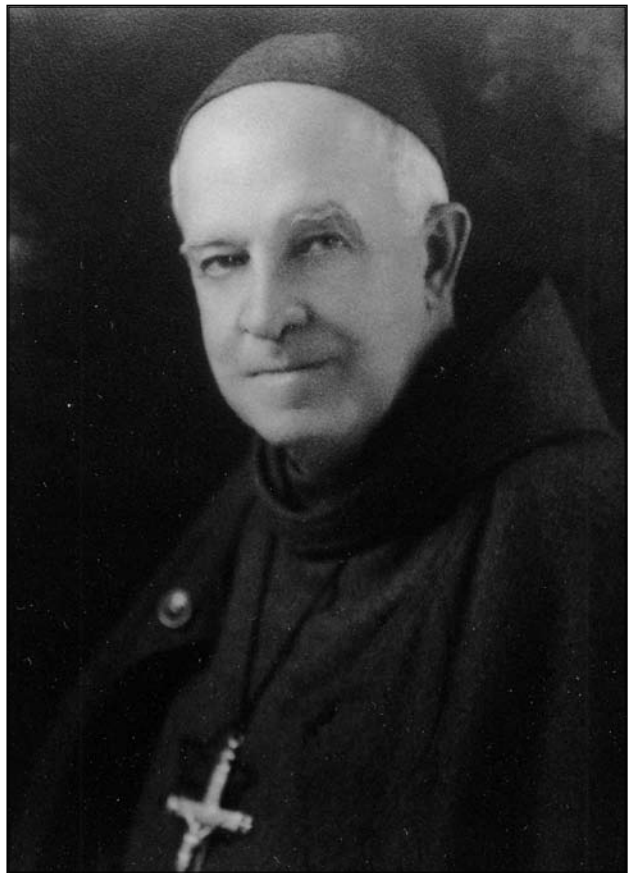
What struck me most in their correspondence – and started me on a new path of insight and research – was how Catherine addressed and signed many of her letters. To no one else in her long life did she

ever address letters to “My dearly Beloved Father,” or sign letters to spiritual directors in the following ways: “Lovingly and respectfully, your daughter”; “Your loving daughter”; “Your obedient and loving daughter in Christ”; “Your loving daughter in Jesus Christ.” (And frequently, he addressed her as “My dear daughter.”) She had a number of spiritual directors, but her relationship with Fr. Paul was qualitatively unique.

I used to presume that she considered her spiritual directors also as spiritual fathers. Now I don’t think so. From her Russian background she would have been familiar with the *staretz*, the spiritual father of one’s soul. My new insight is that *Fr. Paul was spiritual father in a way that her other directors were not, therefore one of the most profound-*

ly formative persons in her life. To a lesser degree, Mother Lurana was her spiritual mother. In the above-quoted letter to Fr. Raphael she mentions them both in the same breath: “... how much FH and all our members owe to Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana.”

My purpose here is not so much to detail the facts of Fr. Paul’s life, or even to emphasize the many practical directives he gave her in the formation of the first Friendship Houses in Canada and America. I simply want to draw your attention



Courtesy of Graymoor

Father Paul Watson of Graymoor

to the existence of this relationship which Catherine had with Fr. Paul, of spiritual daughter to spiritual father; it would take a book to flesh out the details.

The following quote – which may not appeal to our modern understanding of spiritual direction! – confirms for me that Fr. Paul *did consider himself Catherine’s spiritual director*: “If you care to be spiritually directed by me you will ab-

earth, decorate herself in this way, and I think He would like to conform you to her likeness.” (Fr. Paul to Catherine, June 2, 1939)

Fr. Emile Briere, who perhaps was Catherine’s closest associate in Combermere, said a few years back that Catherine’s relationship with Fr. Paul needed to be further explored. Mother Lurana should also be part of this exploration, the be-

## The Little Mandate

Words which Catherine Doherty received from Christ, and which guided her life:

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.*

*What is little known is that Friendship House and all the good work they did are really the children of both Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana. Without them we would not be in existence.*

jure the lipstick in future. Saint Paul reminds us that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost and I do not think the Holy Ghost would be at all pleased to see them decorated artificially in that way. I am sure He would not be pleased to have the Blessed Virgin, were she on the

ginnings of which I attempt here.

## Origins of Their Relationship

It was Fr. Paul who first reached out to Catherine. When did this happen, and why would he have been attracted to her?

In 1926 there were two organizations in North America soliciting funds for the Greek, Armenian, and Russian refugees who had fled to Constantinople to escape from the Bolshevik horrors of the Crimea. Fr. Paul was the vice-president of the society called the *Near East Welfare Association*, which he had helped to found. The other, *The Catholic Union*, was founded by Fr. Von Galen, brother of the famous Cardinal Von Galen who would later speak out courageously against the Nazis. The *Union* was concerned with the refugees in Vienna.

When Catherine was experiencing some difficulties in her lectures for the Chautauqua circuit, her good friend, Fr. George Daly, suggested she go to New York and offer her speaking talents to the *Catholic Union*. Besides raising funds, the *Union* was also dedicated to the reunion of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, a theme close to her heart. "I am sure this work would appeal to you more than Chautauqua work, for I know your heart and soul are in this great



Altar at St. Francis chapel, Our Lady of the Atonement, Graymoor



Byzantine Chapel at Graymoor

movement." One of Catherine's first speaking engagements for the *Union* was at the College of St. Elizabeth, Convent Station, New Jersey, May 15, 1926.

Father Paul supported the *Union*, but ecclesiastical authorities felt that the two organizations were duplicating work, and decided upon a merger. The *Union* was dissolved in favor of the *Association*. For a brief period Catherine continued lecturing for the *Association*. Catherine and Fr. Paul met through their involvement in this work. Fr. Paul would have been attracted to helping her because she was a Russian refugee and a convert.

They had much in common. He was a convert, as she was; he was a lover of St. Francis, as she was. In those early years, Catherine, in her writings and talks, was calling people to convert to Catholicism. Fr. Paul was internationally known for his pioneering work in ecumenism, laying the ground work for what would eventually become the Christian Unity Octave of prayer. He was concerned with the plight of the Russian refugees in Europe.

He would have been attracted to her both as a refugee and as a Russian Orthodox convert to Catholicism.

Why would Catherine have been attracted to Fr. Paul?

He was born Jan. 16, 1863, and therefore was 33 years her senior – well-suited to be the spiritual father she was searching for. (She might not have been consciously aware that she was searching for a spiritual father.) At the time of this first

*Coming to Graymoor has always been to me as coming home. There is about it an atmosphere of peace that seems to restore me spiritually.*

meeting in 1926 Catherine was 30 years old, and in need a spiritual father. Also of great significance was the fact that she had only been a Catholic for seven years, and thus was in a strange church and religious culture. She needed a Catholic spiritual father.

As well, emotionally and psychologically, she was facing several severe personal crises, and thus in need of guidance and counseling.

Her marriage was rapidly deteriorating; Boris had mistresses at the time. The lectures she was giving about Communism were putting her very safety in danger. (Her talks were so powerful that some Communists invited her to change sides!) She was losing weight and her health was failing after completing a five-week lecture tour for the Association. It was at this critical time that Fr. Paul entered her life in a more personal way.

In late February, 1927, he invited Catherine, Boris, and George to come and use an old farmhouse at Graymoor. For the first time in 14 months the family was reunited. At that time Graymoor was her spiritual home. In a letter to Fr. Paul, Nov. 7, 1935, she wrote: "I do not know when or how I shall be able to leave for the little holiday [to Graymoor] that I contemplate so eagerly in the depths of my heart. Coming to Graymoor has always been to me as coming home. There is about it an atmosphere of peace that seems to restore me spiritually."

Besides receiving help from Fr. Paul with her practical problems, she would have been attracted by his holiness. She had experienced holy men in the monasteries of Russia, and, spiritually perceptive as she



In the late 1920's, Catherine lived in the Kenney House, Graymoor

was, she would have recognized Fr. Paul's sanctity. And – most importantly – she sensed that Fr. Paul *understood her prophetic vocation* that was very little understood in the Church at the time. (He himself had had experience of such a lack of understanding in regards to his own vocation in founding Graymoor.)

When writing the *History of the Apostolate* (Chap. 6), Catherine said that it was in 1926-1927 (the time of her meeting with Fr. Paul), when "this strange vocation entered my heart, this dream became the reality of my soul." What vocation? "I wanted to sell what I possessed, give it to the poor, and follow Christ into the slums of our big cities." She consulted many priests, and they all told her she couldn't because her vocation was to take care of her son.

After having been immersed in this period of her life with Fr. Paul during the past year, I believe that *he was the first* to see deeply into her heart, to understand this new prophetic apostolate of the laity and, more importantly, *to believe in it*. Only she could see it at the time: "But it appeared so strange to me, so utterly impossible, that I laid it away, as people do beautiful, fragile garments, within the depths of my heart. I was sure that all I could do with it was to take it out from time to time and wonder how a human being could get the idea that this beautiful, precious vocation might be hers."

She had the courage to take it out of her heart in 1926 and show it to Fr. Paul. And when he confirmed this new vocation as coming from



Crucifixion scene at the Entrance of Graymoor

God, I believe Catherine experienced that she had found a spiritual father.

I have before me Catherine's spiritual diary from February 4 -August 10, 1927. At the end of February she is still lecturing; then at Graymoor for the summer. In a letter to Fr. Paul of May 5, 1928, she signs herself, for the first time, as "your daughter." Also in the text of that letter she writes, concerning a cause she is involved in: "I know that the great heart of *my father* [ital. added] will find a way of helping this cause." During that summer at Graymoor the relationship of Catherine and Fr. Paul passed over from that of colleagues and associates in the Near East Welfare Association to one of spiritual daughter to spiritual father. It added greater depth and meaning for me to reread these diary entries, knowing she was sharing them with her new spiritual father.

### My Visit to Graymoor

A recent visit to Graymoor deepened my belief in the extraordinary influence of Fr. Paul upon Catherine. During this visit I was usually introduced as "Fr. Wild, the pos-

tulator for the cause of Catherine Doherty.” Usually, after such an introduction anyplace else, one also needed to explain who Catherine Doherty was! But, here, at Graymoor, each time I was introduced in this way, a light of recognition and delight shone on the faces and in the eyes of the person to whom I was being introduced. A most unusual experience! It’s the only place I have ever visited where I sensed that *Catherine was still very much alive, remembered, loved.* It confirmed for me that this had been one of her spiritual homes.

One of the persons I met was Sr. Mary Celine, SA, who wrote a life of Mother Lurana. Over ninety, she was sitting in her wheel-chair. She told me that she was in the community when Catherine lived here at Graymoor. She said Catherine used to take dictation for Fr. Paul. Then she graciously gave me a copy of her life of Mother Lurana.

### Enter Mother Lurana

During that summer of 1927 Catherine not only acquired a spiritual father; she also acquired a spiritual mother. Mother Lurana was a very holy and remarkable woman. Born April 12, 1870, she was, therefore, 26 years older than Catherine, and, like Fr. Paul who was 33 years her senior, also an apt candidate for being a *spiritual mother.*

There is not a great deal of correspondence between Catherine and Mother, but I was told at Graymoor that Catherine used to sit at the feet of Mother when she came to Graymoor, pour out her heart to her, and listen to her guidance. In her diary dated May 23, 1927, Catherine wrote: “Am spending the week at St. Francis on the Sea with Mother Lu-

rana, Sister Gabrielle and one whose name I do not yet know, two postulants. It is like a retreat, many wonderful opportunities to see my soul. Do not lose them.” Mother Lurana helped in this “seeing of my soul.” Also during these early years she addresses her letters, “Dearest Mother.” Catherine was never prone to use such language to anyone outside her family.

When Mother died (April 15, 1935), Catherine wrote to Fr. Paul: “I just could not visualize how we could stay on without her. I love her so much. I have prayed much for you beloved father, for I know your worries and your sorrow. To

### *Mother Lurana helped in this “seeing of my soul.”*

me – I mean it in all sincerity – you are like a reincarnation of St. Francis and Rev. Mother of St. Clare.”

And in a letter the following May 20: “Beloved Father, at last I gath-



Mother Lurana of Graymoor

ered up my courage to write to you about our dear Mother Lurana. It is no use my telling you how I miss her. You know it yourself – and I feel that the loss at Graymoor is tremendous. To express what it has meant to me is impossible. She was the Mother of our Guild, she was my mother – I always felt I could tell her all my troubles. She would understand. For the last month I have gone about with such a terrible sense of loss – a repetition of the passing away of His Grace Archbishop Neil McNeil. I suppose one has to bow his head at this loss. It is the will of God.

“Consolation comes in thinking of her happiness – of realizing that her help now is greater than ever. Yet human tears cannot be held back! Such is the tragedy of life – the best go only too soon. *She was my mother. My dearest Father.*”

I don’t believe we will ever find a great deal of written evidence about the depth of influence of these two people on Catherine’s formation. (That’s another thing that struck me about their relationship: There is a hiddenness about it – a historical blackout – as if it was too intimate to be articulated in documents.) The depth of these relationships may forever remain hidden. But isn’t it true that the most profound aspects of life are hidden? I believe the indications I have briefly mentioned point to a depth that is unseen, but real nonetheless, an aspect of Catherine’s life and formation for which we should always be grateful to Fr. Paul and Mother Lurana.

# Testimonies & Favours Received

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## Testimony of Fr. Paul

*Excerpts from a letter to Archbishop McGuigan, August 26, 1936:*

May I convey to Your Grace my own estimate of the Baroness.

*I regard her as a very humble woman, not hesitating to scrub the floors and to do the most menial tasks in ministering to the poor, to spend and be spent in the service of humanity.*

It seems to me that God has given her a real apostolate to the Communists. She possesses a grasp and understanding of the red propaganda quite beyond that of the ordinary student of Bolshevism. Ever since she came to America she has been a public lecturer on the subject as well as a publicist writer, but whether she “wants undue publicity” I personally question. If she has been heretofore a “free lance,” nevertheless she had shown a disposition to be under direction and ecclesiastical control. Otherwise why should she seek to submit herself and her associates to the Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis and at the same time to seek to submit herself to a spiritual Director. Has she not, both in Toronto and in Ottawa, sought to do all things under the approval and direction of the Archbishops? Some have called her proud, but in reality I regard her as a very humble woman, not hesitating to scrub the floors and to do

the most menial tasks in ministering to the poor, to spend and be spent in the service of humanity. As to the vagueness of her field, it seems to me that during the two years of her work in Toronto, she accomplished much that was very practical, particularly in reaching so large a number of boys and girls, youths and young women, drawing many

of them away from Communistic influence and bringing them back into touch with our Lord in the Sacraments of Holy Church. That she had done all this, not for vain-glory and self-aggrandizement, but out of pure love for the Sacred Heart and the souls that He redeemed by His Precious Blood, I have no doubt.

*Excerpts from an Ordination Homily by Bishop Robert Baker, July 27, 2007, Columbian Convention Center, Charleston, S.C. (Bishop Baker has recently been appointed as Bishop of Birmingham, Alabama):*

I'd like also to call those being ordained to a deeper friendship with the saints of the Church, past and present. They are our big brothers and sisters in the faith who model for us the way to Jesus and help us realize that living a holy life is possible, even for ourselves. Cultivate a deep relationship with the saints. Celebrate their feast days as special days in the life of the Church and

in your own life as well.

I think of the great influence the Servant of God Catherine de Hueck Doherty had on my life, both by her writings – *The Gospel Without Compromise, Poustinia, and Dear Father* – as well as her letters to me and my friends. She gave us and the world a solid direction in meeting the challenges of a secular, materialistic culture separated from religious values. Her Friendship Houses and Madonna House provided spiritual oases to the cultural vacuum of western society. They still serve as beacons of light to the world of today. One of our future priests spent time at Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario, in preparation for his ordination as a priest.

I mention Catherine because she was a product of our culture and times. She experienced – as one of the members of the community has written – “the first World War, the Russian Revolution, the Great Depression in North America, the Second World War, the racial integration movement in the United States, the Second Vatican Council and its aftermath. And she did not simply read about these events: she was part of them. It is because she came through all of them with her faith flaming and her love stronger than ever that she can serve as a safe guide for others in the life of faith.”

That is what the saints do for us: They help us by serving as safe guides in the life of faith. My prayer for our new priests of the diocese of Charleston is that someone will be able to say the same about them: “They came through all the events of their service as a priest with their

faith flaming and their love stronger than ever.”

### Growing Awareness of Catherine in Canada

During the four weeks of July, 2007, four major articles about Catherine, the cause, and Madonna House, appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen*, that city’s prominent newspaper. We thought they were very objective and well-written by reporter Donna Jacobs. Here is one of the responses she received:

“I want to thank you truly and sincerely for this column and the two that preceded it, which I have sent to my devout Catholic 94-year-old mother in Saskatoon. Several decades ago I was able to visit

Combermere with her and my father now deceased. Combermere made a difference in her life, and in mine while growing up on a farm in rural Saskatchewan. In the 1950s and 60s, my mother used to send for books from Combermere for us (me and my two siblings). I waited eagerly for them. There were no such resources at hand in our little village. Those readings in early adolescence, literally down on the farm, made a profound and lasting impression on me. I don’t know if they count as ‘favors’ but they were certainly life-long blessings for which I am grateful, just as I am grateful to you for bringing such an excellent account of Combermere to a large readership.”

- Gerald Schmitz, Ottawa

### Favors Received

On December 19, 2006, I visited my doctor. He informed me that x-rays showed that I was completely free of osteoporosis. I had been diagnosed with osteoporosis of the spine for the last four years. For about a month before my visit to the doctor, I had been praying for a healing of my back through Catherine’s intercession. I consider this a miracle of healing through the intercession of Catherine Doherty.

JH – Ontario –12/29/06

I have received two favors which I attribute to Catherine’s intercession. After trying everything humanly possible to spur a decision for a University to accept my application, I had nearly given up for a timely decision. On that morning of 25 Feb. 1999, I petitioned Catherine for a speedy and successful decision. That very afternoon on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb., I received an e-mail confirmation. This confirmation enabled me



Catherine, carved by Father Paul Crochat

to compete for a fellowship. I did receive the fellowship. I firmly believe that these favors were through Catherine’s intercession.

DG – Ontario –10/4/99

### Credits

Photographs of Father Paul and Mother Lurana; Carving of Catherine - Madonna House Archives.

Chapels - Lorene Duquin

Drawings and Photos from *Historical Sites of Graymoor* by Fr. Fred Alvarez, S.A. - Friars of the Atone-ment, Heritage Commission, Graymoor, Garrison, NY 10524

### Prayer for Favours through the intercession of 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.*

## ■ Catherine in print and media

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

### They Called Her The Baroness

*The Life of Catherine Doherty*

Lorene Hanley Duquin

The first major biography of Catherine Doherty—a wonderfully absorbing and professionally researched life story which is also a grippingly readable tale.

Born at the turn of the century into the wealth and luxury of Russian nobility, condemned to death during the Bolshevik Revolution, an immigrant to North America, friend of the rich and famous, victim of an unhappy marriage and divorce, foundress of the Friendship Houses in America and the Madonna Houses throughout the world, given to serving the poor, a pioneer in the Civil Rights Movement and a woman passionately in love with God, Catherine Doherty remains an enigma years after her death. Considered a saint by some (her cause for canonization is under consideration) and a charlatan by others, hers is an undeniably extraordinary story.

“A book well worth reading, but be aware: once you start it you will be glued to its pages until you finish.”

*The Bread of Life*

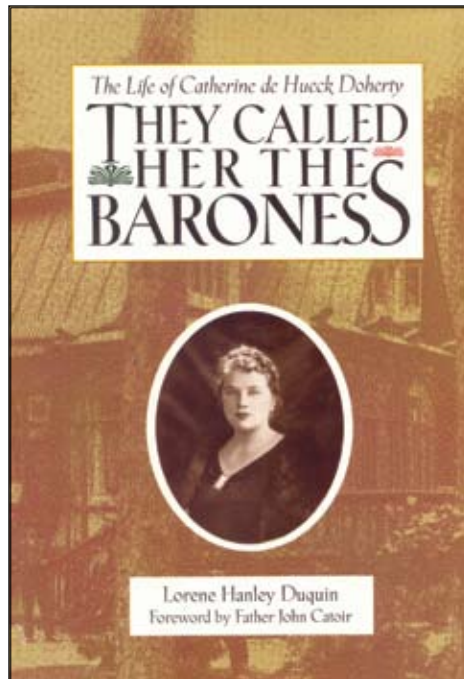
“Catherine’s life is now carefully recorded with professional objectivity.... I hope you enjoy this book as much as I did.”

*Fr. John Catoir*

334 pages • ISBN 0-8189-0827-0

Trade Paperback, 5½ x 8¼

\$14.95



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](http://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, RR 2  
Combermere ON K0J 1L0  
Canada

Fax: (613) 756-3832

E-mail: [cause@catherinedoherty.org](mailto: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 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.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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