

## Feast of Our Lady of Mercy – 24 September

*A comparison between a prominent researcher of today and an Irish woman who tended to the poor, sick and uneducated in the laneways of Dublin in the early 1800s.*

Brené Brown whilst researching her book, *The Gifts of Imperfection, Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*, learned so much about giving and receiving from the men and women who engaged in wholehearted living but nothing more important than this:

*Until we can receive with an open heart we are never really giving with an open heart. When we attach judgement to receiving help, we knowingly or unknowingly attach judgement to giving help.*

Brené says, “The wholehearted journey is not the path of least resistance. It’s a path of consciousness and choice ... The willingness to tell our stories, feel the pain of others, and stay genuinely connected in this disconnected world is not something we can do halfheartedly”.

Catherine McAuley through her “wholehearted commitment to serving those who were longing for God’s Mercy encouraged other women to share in her life’s work”. Through her daily practise of courage, compassion and connection she devoted her life to the poor, sick and uneducated. On 24 September 1827 Catherine opened the first ‘House of Mercy’ in Dublin, Ireland. She founded, the Sisters of Mercy four years later. ([mercy.org.au/stories/beginning-with-catherine-mcauley/](http://mercy.org.au/stories/beginning-with-catherine-mcauley/))

Brené identifies three main components in the wholehearted journey:

*Practising **courage, compassion and connection** in our daily lives is how we cultivate worthiness. The key word is practise, theologian Mary Daley writes, “it’s a habit, a virtue, you get it by courageous acts, it’s like you learn to swim by swimming, you learn courage by couraging.” We invite compassion in our lives when we act*

*compassionately toward ourselves and others. And we feel connected in our lives when we reach out and connect.*

Catherine displayed courage, compassion and connection, even in her final hours of life, through her final request:

*... (will you tell the sisters to get a good cup of tea & think the community room would be a good place & when I am gone, to comfort one another.*

*May we  
all experience joy  
this Mercy Day and  
may our Mercy song be  
one that fills not only  
our hearts, but the  
hearts of those  
around us.*

*Berneice Loch rsm  
2016*



### REFLECTION

> Is our heart open to experience mercy and to be mercy to others?

References: [mercy.org.au/stories/beginning-with-catherine-mcauley/](http://mercy.org.au/stories/beginning-with-catherine-mcauley/), [institute.mercy.org.au/celebrating-mercy-day/](http://institute.mercy.org.au/celebrating-mercy-day/)

Brown, C B (2010). *The gifts of imperfection: Let go of who you think you're supposed to be and embrace who you are.*

Center City, MN: Hazelden.

COMPASSION JUSTICE RESPECT HOPE