

## Mother Teresa Canonized “St. Teresa of Calcutta” By Pope Francis, She Lives!

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Vatican City. Lights, Cameras, Action. Reporting live from St. Peter’s Square on the inaugural Feast Day of the newly canonized Santa Teresa Di Calcutta. Surrounded by tens of thousands of pilgrims from every nation, religion and political party, reflecting the people Mother Teresa cared for with compassion and a clear mission. Leading by example to bring more souls to Jesus. It has been an amazing personal journey with profound grace to witness Mother Teresa and her legacy first hand over the past 28 years since we first met in India. Her selfless commitment to God and humanity set the stage for one of the world’s most dramatic mysteries “The Making of a Saint.”

While on one hand it could be construed that her canonization on this September 4th was the culmination of her holy work, the reality is that the story and fruit of God’s plan for her purpose in the world has really just begun. Mother Teresa, now St. Teresa of Calcutta, during her brief time on earth planted the seeds of service to God deeply in many hearts thirsting for their life to have meaning. This humble, holy woman personally nurtured spiritual growth and her Christocentric “I Thirst” spirituality continues to grow. Mother Teresa lives on through her ever-growing Missionaries of Charity and the people she touched across the globe. I was blessed to receive seeds of faith from her that hopefully I will pass onto others along the way, if “thirsting” open hearts desire them. Her society of nuns, brothers, priests and co-workers perpetuate her example daily as servants of God. These holy women and men, consecrated to Christ, carry on her work of selflessly helping “the poorest of the poor” and caring for those least wanted or with spiritual poverty.

In the Catholic tradition, Mother Teresa by her faith and actions has attained eternal life. Thereby, St. Teresa of Calcutta is an intercessor to God for grace. “If I ever become a Saint-I will surely be one of ‘darkness.’ I will continually be absent from heaven-to light the light of those in darkness on earth” is her deep desire. Whilst anyone can pray directly to God, Catholics believe it is an act of humility to ask a saint to intercede on one’s behalf while also undertaking a personal relationship with God as part of an interior life.

## **Finding Calcutta**

Journalist Kenneth L. Woodward researched and wrote the book “Making Saints, How the Catholic Church Determines Who Becomes a Saint, Who Doesn’t and Why.” The opening line of the Introduction written in 1990 states, “Is Mother Teresa of Calcutta a saint?” This topical inquiry was written seven years prior to her passing on September 5, 1997. The author’s response, “To millions of people she is a ‘living saint’ for her unselfish service to the diseased, the dying, the wretched, the homeless, the outcast.” The moniker of calling her a “living saint” was held by a previous pope now Saint John Paul II.

For Mother Teresa her path to sainthood began in Skopje, Macedonia where she was born to Albanian parents who imparted their strong faith and values to the family. In 1928 at the age of eighteen she entered the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Loreto Sisters) in Ireland and took her first vows in Darjeeling, India in 1931, becoming a geography and catechism teacher to Indian girls from affluent families. But it was in the “City of Joy”- Calcutta, India where she discovered her real place of grace, grit and growth in holiness. On September 10, 1946, her “Inspiration Day,” on a train journey from Calcutta she received a “call within a call” to “quench the infinite thirst of Jesus on the Cross for love and souls” by “laboring at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor.” The call from God was her founding of the Society of the Missionaries of Charity, the “MC” family in Calcutta on October 7, 1950, the Feast Day of Our Lady of the Rosary. Following in Jesus’ footsteps she began with 12 members, primarily Indian girls who were her students. Each “MC” has a number according to date of joining. Currently there are more than 5,000 “MC’s” serving God and loving neighbor in poor and war-torn regions worldwide.

Mother Teresa told me and others who were blessed to experience time and guidance with this inspirational role model saint, “You must find your own Calcutta!” It begins with your family and following your call from God; she would firmly proclaim, while strongly reminding, “The family that prays together, stays together!” Adding with equal conviction, “Be holy, holiness is not the luxury of the few; it is a simple duty for you and for me.” Looking deep into your eyes and your heart, the windows of the soul, she would say, “What you can do I cannot do, and what I can do you cannot do, but together we can do something beautiful for God.”

### **“The Fruit of Silence is Prayer”**

Under the blazing golden Italian sun, suddenly as though on cue, this historic canonization ceremony unfolded with a glistening white dove coming out of the crystal clear blue skies above the gray stone head of St. Peter on one side of the simple papal altar. Then somehow knowing that the tens of thousands of faithful were silently engrossed in contemplation listening to the reverent tones of

sacred Gregorian chants while gazing at the realistic image of Mother Teresa this beautiful creature flew low almost touching guests gathered in prayer. While Pope Francis sat quietly for a brief interlude under an auspicious red canopy, the bird of “peace” gently glided over the head of St. Paul and soared past the gleaming turquoise blue mosaic entitled Mater Ecclesia, Mother of the Church. The symbolism of every aspect of this occasion is worthy of consideration. For Catholics, the words proclaimed at this very moment during this grace-filled encounter says it all:

*Veni Creator Spiritus...Come, Holy Spirit, Creator,  
come from Thy bright heavenly throne;  
come take possession of our souls  
and make them all thine own.*

### **“The Fruit of Prayer is Faith”**

People lined up for hours to enter St. Peter’s Square. There were colorful flags from a plethora of countries; the most popular accent heard was the Irish brogue as Irish were scattered everywhere. The canonization ceremony began and ended by honoring Holy Mary, Mother and Queen, with all present reciting The Holy Rosary in various languages and Pope Francis offering The Concluding Rites of The Angelus in Latin. The rosary is a favorite prayer of Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity, illustrating devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Jesus, whom she called, “Our Lady.” The cover on the canonization ceremony program is the Byzantine Icon depiction of Holy Mother Mary holding baby Jesus in her arms with their cheeks touching and their hands holding one another, “Mother of Tenderness.”

Mother Teresa said, “Be only all for Jesus through Mary.” She honors Mary as exemplar of practicing one’s faith teaching the quickest way to Jesus was through His Mother. After all, Jesus gave her to the world when he cried out to humanity from the Cross, “Behold Thy Mother.”

The quiet crowd burst into resounding applause as Pope Francis’ emotionally proclaimed in Latin the “Formula of Canonization,” (English version below):

*For the honour of the Blessed Trinity,  
The exaltation of the Catholic faith and  
The increase of the Christian life, by the  
authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the  
Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and our own, after  
due deliberation and frequent prayer for Divine  
assistance, and having sought the counsel of many*

*of our brother Bishops, we declare and define  
Blessed Teresa of Calcutta  
to be a saint and we enroll her among the Saints,  
decreeing that she is to be venerated as such by  
the whole Church. In the name of the Father, and of  
the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

### **“The Fruit of Faith is Love”**

The Gospel of Luke read at the canonization ceremony is highly relevant in a world filled with contradiction and confusion. One of the young Missionary of Charity nuns declared that this Gospel offered clarity to those seeking the truth about God’s expectation for souls desiring to be holy. The Gospel message teaches “strong faith and tough love,” placing God first to save souls:

*Great crowds accompanied Jesus on His way and he turned and spoke to them.*

*If any man comes to me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be my disciple. Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. And indeed, which of you here, intending to build a tower, would not first sit down and work out the cost to see if he had enough to complete it? Otherwise, if he laid the foundation and then found himself unable to finish the work, the onlookers would all start making fun of him and saying, “Here is a man who started to build and was unable to finish (Luke 14:25-33).”*

Jesus taught Christians “stand your ground” to be respected for your belief structure and to be with Him in eternal life.

The Hymn “Jubilee of Mercy” opened the Eucharistic Celebration at the Canonization:

*Merciful like the Father! Merciful like the Father!  
Give thanks to the Father, for He is good. His love is everlasting!  
He created the world with wisdom, His love is everlasting!  
He leads his people throughout history, His love is everlasting!  
He pardons and welcomes His children, His love is everlasting!*

The scorching heat on this canonization day without wind or water was a test of strength and virtue for those standing in the intense sun. Yet when one of the Missionaries of Charity nuns was offered a seat, she lovingly gave it away to a poor elderly man who came all the way from South Sudan on crutches to show his respect and love for Mother Teresa. He told me he was named after King David

in the Bible. He shared his frustration for the terrible conflict and senseless deaths in his country. He came to the canonization of Mother Teresa to pray for peace. David smiled beaming from ear to ear, without teeth, but with an obvious heart of gold. Exuding joy he exclaimed, “Salaam Aleikum.” My new Sudanese friend David is a devout Muslim. “Peace begins with a smile,” Mother Teresa taught “We must love until it hurts” teaching:

*Do small things with great love.*

*It's not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing.*

*It's not how much we give, it's how much love we put in the giving.*

### **“The Fruit of Love is Service”**

God certainly works in mysterious ways. In 1996 my sister Carole and I were on our way taking Mother Teresa to San Francisco Airport when she asked her to pray with her to God that she would have a baby after years of trying to become pregnant. The dozen sweet “MC” nuns in the back of the van on that momentous day giggled and told my sister to prepare a name for the baby in honor of Mother Teresa. Blake “Terrence” was born nine months later, a healthy baby boy now desiring to become a doctor to serve God and poor patients. The fruit of love is desire to serve others. He joined me at the canonization ceremonies thanking God for the fruit of his life.

### **“The Fruit of Service is Peace”**

Interfaith understanding and charitable cooperation for a more peaceful world is a vibrant fruit flowing from St. Teresa of Calcutta’s seeds of faith, hope and love planted throughout the world by her Missionaries of Charity. On her first Feast Day, celebrated today in St. Peter’s Square, the holiest part of the Holy Mass-The Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist commences with:

*I thirst not for water, I thirst for love,*

*I thirst for peace, I thirst for souls.*

*Sweet Lord, I will quench Thy thirst for love.*

The closing message is: “I long to light the light of love in the heart of every creature of God. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. God still loves the world and sends you and me to be His love, His compassion to the poor.” +Saint Teresa of Calcutta

Sisters and Brothers, Alleluia. Amen.