

St. Theresa of Calcutta

Feast Day: September 5



Brief Biography

St. Theresa of Calcutta, also known as Mother Theresa, is among the most recognizable of modern-day saints.

She was born Gonxha (Agnes) Bojaxhiu to Albanian parents in 1910. As a child, she showed a strong interest in foreign missions and, at age 18, was accepted by the Loreto Sisters in Dublin. In 1929, she was sent to their novitiate in Darjeeling, India, where she chose the name Teresa. Assigned to a girls' high school in Calcutta, she taught history and geography to daughters of the wealthy. However, she found the poverty and overwhelming number of destitute people inescapable.

In 1946, while traveling to Darjeeling for a retreat, she felt called to “follow Christ into the slums to serve Him among the poorest of the poor.”

She received permission to leave the Loreto Sisters and to establish a new religious community. Having studied nursing briefly to better prepare herself, she initiated ministry to the poor in the slums of Calcutta. Soon, young women, including former students, began to join her. Her religious order, the Missionaries of Charity,

was established on October 7, 1950. As the number in her congregation increased, services were offered to orphans and abandoned children, alcoholics, the aging, and the homeless.

In 1952 she opened a home for the dying and destitute in a former hostel given to her by the city of Calcutta.

St. Theresa devoted the next 40 years of her life to serving the poor. Her humanitarian work spread to many other countries, including the United States. In 1979 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

St. Theresa died in 1997. By that time, the congregation she'd founded had grown to more than 4,000 sisters and was operating in more than 100 countries. She was beatified by St. John Paul II in 2003 and canonized by Pope Francis in 2016.

Why St. Theresa of Calcutta is identified with the Eucharist

In 1973 St. Theresa decided to have her sisters offer a daily hour of Eucharistic Adoration. It became their "family prayer", with the first half hour given to the Rosary and the second to silence. The sisters drew miraculous strength from this period of prayer.

Brief Quotation

"We cannot separate our lives from the Eucharist. The moment we do, something breaks."

And...

"If I can give you any advice, I beg you to get closer to the Eucharist."

Sources:

Magnificat, June 2023, Magnificat, Inc. Yonkers, NY

Saint of the Day, Leonard Foley, OFM, and Pat McCloskey, OFM, Franciscan Media, Cincinnati, OH 2013.