

September 5: Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the tiny woman recognized throughout the world for her work among the poorest of the poor, was beatified on October 19, 2003. Among those present were hundreds of Missionaries of Charity, the Order she founded in 1950 as a diocesan religious community. Mother Teresa's beatification, just over six years after her death, was part of an expedited process put into effect by Pope John Paul II.

Born to Albanian parents in what is now Skopje, Macedonia (then part of the Ottoman Empire), Gonxha (Agnes) Bojaxhiu was the youngest of the three children who survived. During her years in public school Agnes participated in a Catholic sodality and at age 18 she entered the Loreto Sisters of Dublin. The following year she was sent to the Loreto novitiate in Darjeeling, India, where she chose the name Teresa and prepared for a life of service. She was assigned to a high school for girls in Calcutta, where she taught the daughters of the wealthy. But she could not escape the realities around her—the poverty, the suffering, the overwhelming numbers of destitute people.

In 1946 Sister Teresa heard what she later explained as “a call within a call. The message was clear. I was to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them.” After receiving permission to leave Loreto, establish a new religious community and undertake her new work, she took a nursing course for several months. She returned to Calcutta, where she lived in the slums and opened a school for poor children.

The work was exhausting, but she was not alone for long. Volunteers came to join her in the work, and others helped by donating food, clothing, supplies, the use of buildings. In 1952 the city of Calcutta gave Mother Teresa a former hostel, which became a home for the dying and the destitute. For the next four decades Mother Teresa worked tirelessly on behalf of the poor. Her love knew no bounds. In 1979 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. On September 5, 1997, God called her home.

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A prayer from Taizé

The exchange with God becomes real for us in prayer: by his Holy Spirit, God comes to dwell within us. By his word and by the sacraments, Christ gives himself to us. In return, we can surrender everything to him.

Prayers of Intercession for our parish

- We pray that the Lord will pour out His Holy Spirit on us all, as He did on the first Pentecost, so that we receive His Sevenfold gifts.
- We thank the Lord for our own life, and for all life on earth. We pray that we will cherish and protect all life, especially the vulnerable and the unborn, and our planet.
- We pray that we will respond to the call to be disciples for Jesus, and to remain faithful to Him in joy and in trials.

Some tweets by Pope Francis

- It is very important to bring together the wisdom of the elderly and the enthusiasm of the young. The encounter between grandparents and grandchildren is key, especially in this moment of economic and social crisis that humanity is undergoing.
- Let us ask ourselves what type of words we use. Words that express care, respect, understanding, closeness, compassion, or do we pollute the world by spreading venom: criticizing, complaining, feeding widespread aggression?
- Prayer, charity and fasting are not medicines meant only for ourselves but for everyone: they can change history, because they are the principal ways for God to intervene in our lives and in the world. They are weapons of the spirit.

September 13: St. John Chrysostom (d. 407)

The ambiguity and intrigue surrounding John, the great preacher (his name means "golden-mouthed") from Antioch, are typical of the life of any great man. Brought to Constantinople after a dozen years of priestly service in Syria, John found himself the reluctant victim of an imperial ruse to make him bishop in the greatest city of the empire. Ascetic, unimposing but dignified, John began his episcopate under the cloud of imperial politics.

If his body was weak, his tongue was powerful. The content of his sermons, his exegesis of Scripture, were never without a point. Sometimes the point stung the high and mighty. Some sermons lasted up to two hours. His life-style at the imperial court was not appreciated by some courtiers. He offered a modest table to episcopal sycophants hanging around for imperial and ecclesiastical favours. John deplored the court protocol that accorded him precedence before the highest state officials. He would not be a kept man.

His zeal led him to decisive action. Bishops who bribed their way into their office were deposed. Many of his sermons called for concrete steps to share wealth with the poor. The rich did not appreciate hearing from John that private property existed because of Adam's fall from grace any more than married men liked to hear that they were bound to marital fidelity just as much as their wives. Aloof, energetic, outspoken, especially when he became excited in the pulpit, John was a sure target for criticism and personal trouble. Two prominent personages who personally undertook to discredit John were Theophilus, Archbishop of Alexandria, and Empress Eudoxia. Theophilus feared the growth in importance of the Bishop of Constantinople and took occasion to charge John with fostering heresy. Theophilus and other angry bishops were supported by Eudoxia. The empress resented his sermons contrasting gospel values with the excesses of imperial court life. Whether intended or not, sermons mentioning the lurid Jezebel and impious Herodias were associated with the empress, who finally did manage to have John exiled. He died in exile in 407.

A Modern Idea of 'The Lord is my shepherd'.

The Lord is my Pace-setter, I shall not rush.
He makes me stop and rest for quiet intervals.
He provides me with images of stillness which
restore my serenity.
He leads me in ways of efficiency through
calmness of mind and his guidance is peace.
Even though I have a great many things to
accomplish each day I will not fret,
For His presence is here. His timelessness,
His all importance will keep me in balance.
He prepares refreshment and renewal
in the midst of my activity.
By anointing my mind with His oils of tranquillity
my cup of joyous energy overfills.
Surely harmony and effectiveness
shall be the fruits of my hours,
For I shall walk in the peace of my Lord,
and dwell in His house for ever.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.
Toki Miyashina

O God-

In you justice and mercy are at one,
and the heart of your holiness is love.
In that love, teach us to discern
the justice that is best for others
and to welcome the justice
that will heal our own souls,
so that all your children may come
to act justly, love mercy,
and walk humbly with you, our God.
Amen.

John Baker, former Bishop of Salisbury