



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PILGRIMS WHO HAD COME TO ROME
FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF MOTHER TERESA**

Monday, 20 October 2003

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dear Men and Women Missionaries of Charity,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. I cordially greet you and joyfully join you in thanking God for the beatification of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. I was bound to her by deep esteem and sincere affection. I am therefore particularly glad to be with you, her spiritual daughters and sons. I especially greet Sr Nirmala, recalling the day on which Mother Teresa came to Rome to introduce her to me in person. I extend my thoughts to all the members of the great spiritual family of this new Blessed.

2. A "*Missionary of Charity*: this is what Mother Teresa was in name and in fact". Today with deep feeling I repeat these words that I spoke the day after her death (*Angelus*, 7 September 1997; *L'Osservatore Romano English Edition*, 10 September, n. 1).

First and foremost a *missionary*: there is no doubt that the new Blessed was *one of the greatest missionaries of the 20th century*. The Lord made this simple woman who came from one of Europe's poorest regions a chosen instrument (cf. Acts 9: 15) to proclaim the Gospel to the entire world, not by preaching but by daily acts of love towards the poorest of the poor. A missionary with the most universal language: the language of love that knows no bounds or exclusion and has no preferences other than for the most forsaken.

A Missionary of Charity. A missionary of God who is love, who has a special preference for the least and the humble, who bends over the human being wounded in body and spirit and pours "the oil of consolation and the wine of hope" upon the wounds. God did this in the person of his Son

made man, Jesus Christ, the Good Samaritan of humanity. He continues to do this in the Church, especially through the saints of charity in whose ranks Mother Teresa shines in a special way.

3. Where did Mother Teresa find the strength to place herself completely at the service of others? She found it in *prayer* and in *the silent contemplation of Jesus Christ, his Holy Face, his Sacred Heart*. She herself said as much: "The fruit of silence is prayer; the fruit of prayer is faith; the fruit of faith is love; the fruit of love is service; the fruit of service is peace". *Peace*, even at the side of the dying, even in nations at war, even in the face of attacks and hostile criticism. It was prayer that filled her heart with Christ's own peace and enabled her to radiate that peace to others.

4. A missionary of charity, a missionary of peace, a *missionary of life*. Mother Teresa was all these. She always spoke out in defence of human life, even when her message was unwelcome. Mother Teresa's whole existence was a *hymn to life*. Her daily encounters with death, leprosy, AIDS and every kind of human suffering made her a forceful witness to the Gospel of life. Her very smile was a "yes" to life, a joyful "yes", born of profound faith and love, a "yes" purified in the crucible of suffering. She renewed that "yes" each morning, in union with Mary, at the foot of Christ's Cross. The "thirst" of the crucified Jesus became Mother Teresa's own thirst and *the inspiration of her path of holiness*.

5. Teresa of Calcutta was truly a Mother. A mother to the poor and a mother to children. A mother to so many girls and young people who had her as their spiritual guide and shared in her mission. The Lord brought forth from a tiny seed, a great tree, laden with fruit (cf. Mt 13: 31-32). And precisely you, sons and daughters of Mother Teresa, are the most eloquent signs of this prophetic fruitfulness. *Keep her charism unaltered* and follow her example, and from Heaven she will not fail to sustain you in your daily journey.

However, today more than ever, Mother Teresa's message is an invitation addressed to us all. Her entire existence reminds us that *being Christian means being witnesses of charity*. This is what the new Blessed entrusts to us. Echoing her words, I urge each one to follow generously and courageously in the footsteps of this authentic disciple of Christ. *On the path of charity, Mother Teresa walks at your side*.

I cordially impart to you and to your loved ones my Apostolic Blessing.