



St Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa)

St Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa), known worldwide for serving the poorest of the poor, was beatified on October 19, 2003. She founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950; the congregation later grew to include contemplative sisters and brothers and an order of priests. Born Gonxha (Agnes) Bojaxhiu to Albanian parents in Skopje, Macedonia, she was the youngest of three surviving children. Her family lived comfortably until her father's sudden death changed their circumstances.

As a student, Agnes joined a Catholic sodality and became interested in foreign missions. At 18, she entered the Loreto Sisters of Dublin and later went to Darjeeling, India, where she took the name Teresa. Assigned to a girls' high school in Calcutta, she taught the daughters of wealthy families while witnessing the city's poverty and suffering.

In 1946, while traveling to Darjeeling for a retreat, Sister Teresa experienced what she called "a call within a call": to leave the convent and serve Christ among the poor in the slums. After receiving permission, she took nursing training, returned to Calcutta, lived among the poor, opened a school for children, and began visiting neighbours to understand their needs.

Her work soon attracted volunteers, including former students, who formed the core of the Missionaries of Charity. Donations of food, clothing, supplies, and buildings supported the mission. In 1952, Calcutta gave her a former hostel that became a home for the dying and destitute, and the order later served orphans, abandoned children, alcoholics, the elderly, and people living on the streets.

For four decades, Mother Teresa tirelessly served the poor, seeking support worldwide and urging others to see Jesus in the poorest of the poor. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, died on September 5, 1997, and was canonized by Pope Francis on September 4, 2016.