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PO Box 121
Botsford, CT 06404
www.nacsw.org
888.426.4712

MOTHER TERESA: INSPIRATION FOR SOCIAL WORK

By: Dorothea Marie Epple

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MOTHER TERESA: INSPIRATION FOR SOCIAL WORK

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Dorothea Marie Epple PhD LCSW
Grand Valley State University, MI
eppled@gvsu.edu





AGENDA:

- ❖ A brief biographical sketch of Mother Teresa
 - Calling to serve the poor in Calcutta
 - Mystical experiences
 - The Missionaries of Charity
 - Dark Night of the Soul
- ❖ The contemplative prayer life of Mother Teresa
- ❖ The humor of Mother Teresa
- ❖ What social workers can learn from her mercy and love regarding meaningful work and service.



“NO ONE IN OUR PRESENT DAY
WORLD HAD A TRUER
UNDERSTANDING OF MERCY THAN
MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA. SHE
SERVED WITH MERCY AND LOVE THE
UNWANTED, UNLOVED, DYING,
DESTITUTE, ABANDONED, OUTCASTS
– ALL WHO HAVE LOST HOPE AND
FAITH.”

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Called by God to do small things with great love in order to bring Christ to the poorest and the poorest to Christ



- Mother Teresa – born – Agnes Gonxha - 1910 - in Albania
- Her mother told Agnes
 - “When you do good, do it quietly, as if you were throwing a stone into the sea”
 - (Martin, 2006)
- Agnes dreamed of a religious life after hearing of the work of Catholic missionaries at the age of 12
- 18 years old entered novitiate of the Loreto Sisters in Dublin Ireland
- She chose the name Teresa to honor St. Therese of Lisieux
- Taught in a Catholic school in Calcutta
- Made a private vow to give God anything he may ask and not to refuse him anything
- 1946 train ride to Darjeeling
 - “A Call within a Call”

“I Thirst”

John 19: 28



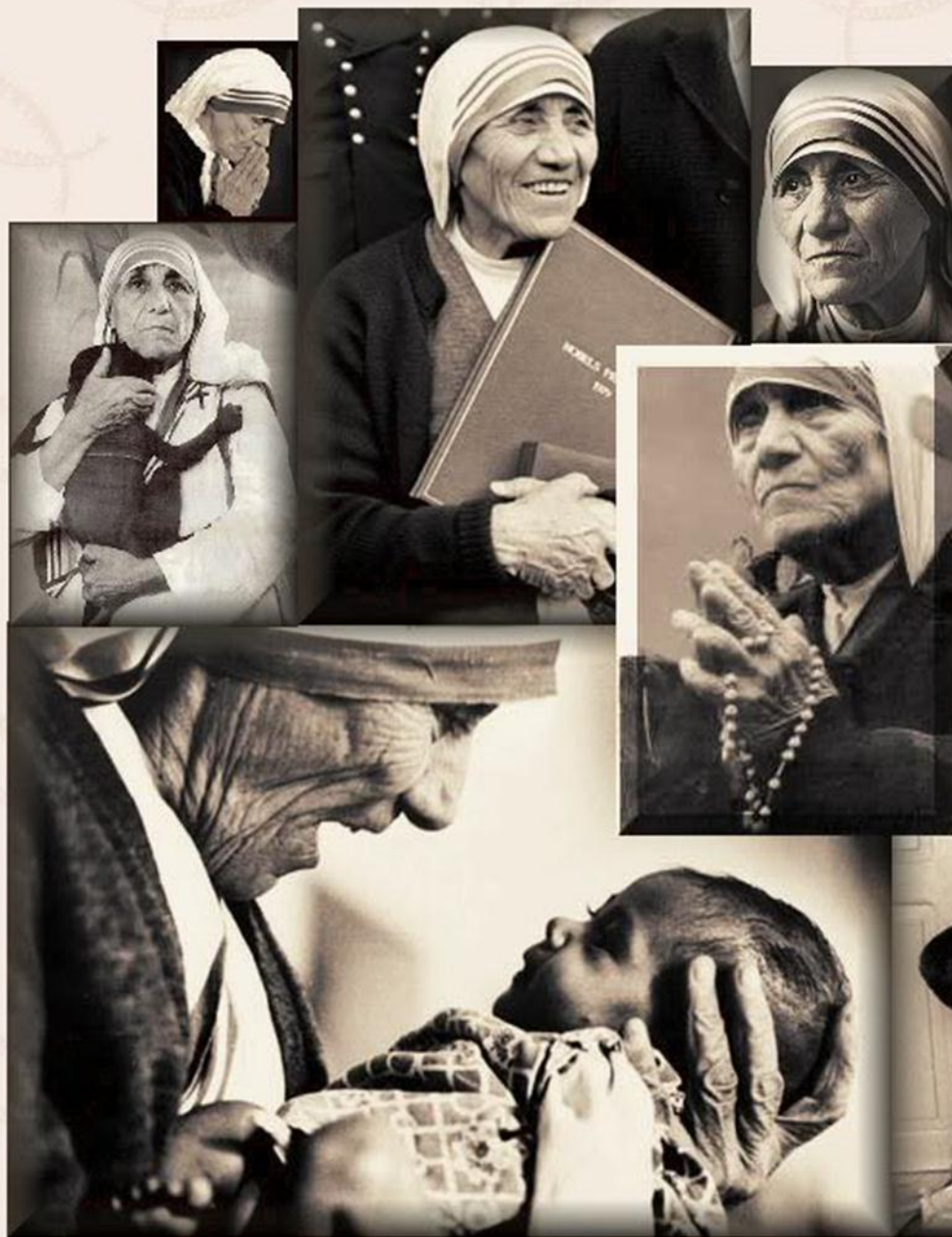
His *infinite Thirst*
“to love us and to be
loved by us”

- **A Vision in 3 parts: “Locution”**
- **First Scene** - A large crowd of the poor – young and old
 - Reaching out to Mother Teresa – as she stood in their midst
 - Calling out for her to save them to bring them to Jesus
- **Second Scene** - She saw the sorrow and suffering in their faces
 - Our Lady was in their midst - Mother Teresa was kneeling at her side
 - “Take care of them – they are mine – Bring them to Jesus – carry Jesus to them – Fear not.”
- **Third Scene** - The same anguished crowd
 - Jesus on the Cross
 - Mother Teresa as a little child in front of Our Lady as they faced the cross
 - “Jesus said to her: I have asked you. They have asked you, and she, My Mother, has asked you. Will you refuse to do this for me – to take care of them, to bring them to me? . . . In your love for me – they will see Me, Know Me, want Me”
 - Langford, J (2007, p. 20)



- The poor had become bearers of His Passion
- Our Lady at the foot of the cross
 - A bridge between Mother Teresa and the poor who cried out to her
 - A bridge between the poor and the crucified Jesus who thirsted for them
- “It is these three – the poor, Jesus crucified, and Our Lady – who rest at the heart of Mother Teresa’s remarkable God-given grace and mission”

Langford, J (2007, p. 20)



*Total surrender consists
in giving ourselves completely
to God. We must give ourselves
fully to God because God has
given Himself fully to us. If
God owes nothing to us and
is ready to impart to us no less
than Himself, shall we answer
with just a fraction of ourselves?*
~Blessed Mother Teresa



Missionaries of Charity

Mother Teresa's instructions to the Novice Mistresses, Casilina / Rome, June 30, 1997

“With great love and trust stand with Our Lady near the Cross. What a gift of God . . .”

Quoted in Langford, J. (2007, p. 23)



Contemplatives at the heart of the world

Prayer binds the Missionaries to God, reveals to them his will, and secures his blessing and protection
They live and work in the heart of the world – with the poorest of the poor

- **“Our first work is Prayer”**

(Mother Teresa)



Mother Teresa and the Missionaries of Charity

Mother House, Calcutta 1993

“Give of your hands to Serve and your hearts to Love”

Mother Teresa

The Missionaries of Charity start the day's work with the same prayer from their community prayer book

“God speaks in the silence of our heart, and we listen. Then, out of the fullness of our heart, we speak and he listens. And that is prayer”



- Dear Lord, the Great Healer, I kneel before you, since every perfect gift must come from you. I pray, give skill to my hands, clear vision to my mind, kindness and meekness to my heart. Give me singleness of purpose, strength to lift up a part of the burden of my suffering fellowmen, and a realization of the privilege that is mine. Take from my heart all guile and worldliness, that with the simple faith of a child, I may rely on you, Amen.

“If I surrender myself
totally to Jesus, I belong
to Him”



- Missionaries of Charity
- Three Fold Mission
 - Loving Trust
 - Total Surrender
 - Cheerfulness



Missionaries of Charity

4,000 MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY

610 MISSIONS

123 COUNTRIES

HOSPICES

**HOMES FOR HIV / AIDS, LEPROSY
AND TUBERCULOSIS**

SOUP KITCHENS

ORPHANAGES

REFUGEE CENTERS



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a small, white rectangular card. The hand is positioned with the thumb and index finger gripping the top edge of the card. The background is blurred, showing a person wearing a blue and white striped shirt. The card contains text in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

Mother Teresa's Business Card

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

Mother Teresa's Humor

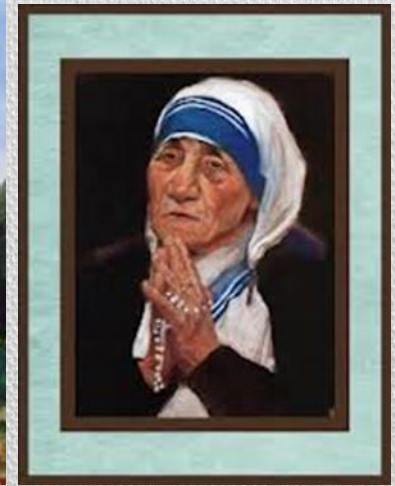
Mother Teresa had a dream that she saw St. Peter at the gate of heaven. He told her to go back because there were no slums in heaven

She did not like to be the center of interest or have her picture taken.

She had a contract with heaven

Every time someone took her picture she ask Jesus to take another soul from purgatory to heaven

Leo Maasburg (2010)



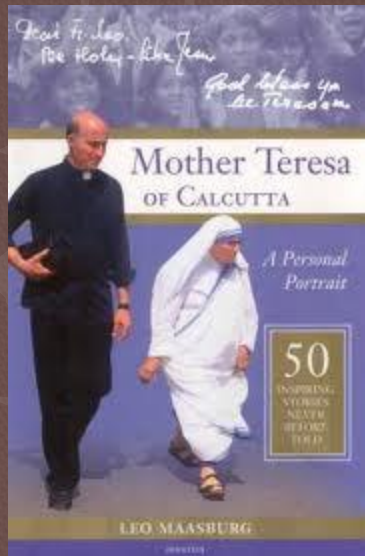


Mother Teresa's Humor

IN THE VATICAN

SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL POVERTY

THE EVIL EMPIRE



“Holy Father we need a Saint for our leapers”





A Beacon in Our Night

LANGFORD (2007, P. 15) DESCRIBES MOTHER TERESA'S DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL:

“GOD FASHIONED MOTHER TERESA INTO AN INSTRUMENT THAT WOULD LIGHT UP OUR NIGHT AT ITS DARKEST, BY LEADING HER THROUGH THAT DARKNESS BEFORE US.”

“O BLESSED NIGHT” THAT BRINGS IN ITS SILENT WAKE SUCH BLESSINGS
(ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS)





A TESTIMONY OF FIDELITY

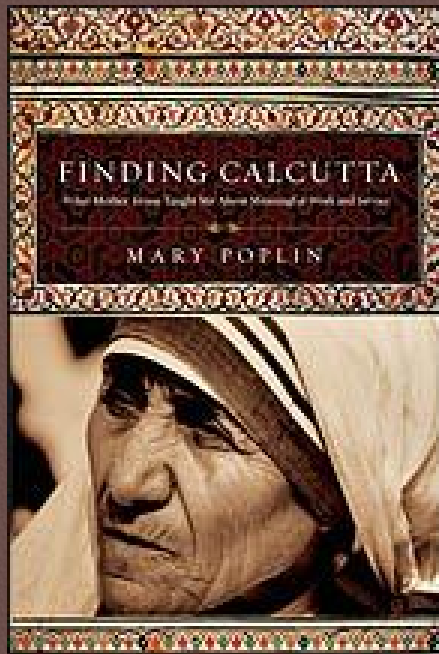
“I HAVE COME TO LOVE THE DARKNESS FOR I BELIEVE IT IS A PART, A VERY VERY SMALL PART OF JESUS’ DARKNESS AND PAIN ON EARTH.” MOTHER TERESA

“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”
MOTHER TERESA



"Find the sick, the suffering and the lonely right there where you are. . . . You can find Calcutta all over the world, if you have the eyes to see." --Mother Teresa

Not everyone can go to Calcutta. But all of us can find our own meaningful work and service



- **What Social Workers Can Learn From Mother Teresa**
Mary Poplin (2008) *Finding Calcutta: What Mother Teresa taught me about meaningful work and service.*
- **Mother Teresa saw her work as religious work**
- **Redemptive**
 - God can do more through human beings than human beings can do on their own
 - Redemptive work entails suffering
 - “Suffering in itself is nothing, but suffering shared with the passion of Christ is a wonderful gift . . . Because suffering was how he paid for sin.”
 - Mother Teresa (1996). A Gift for God.
- **“Vocation means Jesus has called us by name” – Mother Teresa**
 - All humans have one vocation – to belong to God
 - Within that lie many different callings

For my thoughts are
not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways
my ways, declares the
Lord.

For as the heavens are
higher than the earth,
So are my ways higher
than your ways
And my thoughts than
your thoughts.

Isaiah 55: 8-9



What Social Workers Can Learn From Mother Teresa

“Finding Calcutta”

Mary Poplin returned from Calcutta and discovered that God was calling her to serve the university world with the same kind of holistic service with which Mother Teresa served Calcutta



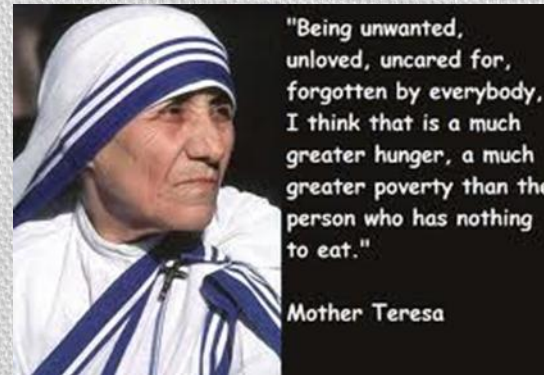
- “Mother Teresa frequently called the work ‘Just a drop in the ocean. But if that drop was not in the ocean, I think the ocean would be less’ ”
 - (Poplin, 2008, p. 94)
- “While with the Missionaries, I learned the satisfaction and joy of meeting a simple need and moving on to meet the next one”
 - (Poplin, 2008, 96)
- “Doing small things with great love”
- “There is nothing small to God, once you give it to God, it is infinite.”
(Mother Teresa)

“We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed. We should not wonder if, in the beginning, we often fail in our endeavors, but that at last we shall gain a habit, which will naturally produce its acts in us, without our care, and to our exceeding great delight.”

Brother Lawrence, 1977, p. 29



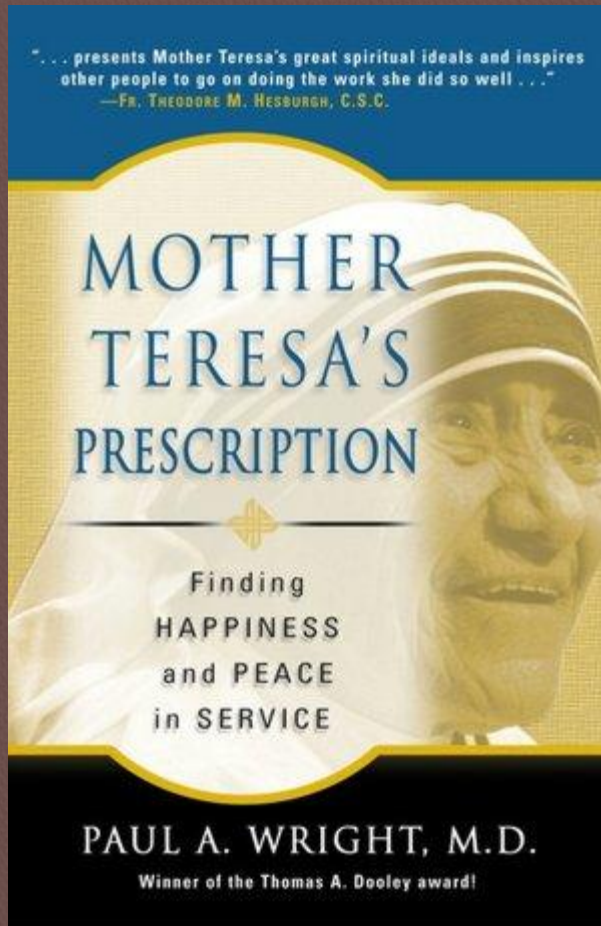
“If we come to see you, would you light the lamp?” he agreed, and they began to visit him regularly. He lived another two years and kept his house clean. He sent Mother Teresa a message, “Tell my friend that the light that she lit in my life is still shining.” (Poplin, p. 128)



"Being unwanted, unloved, uncared for, forgotten by everybody, I think that is a much greater hunger, a much greater poverty than the person who has nothing to eat."

Mother Teresa

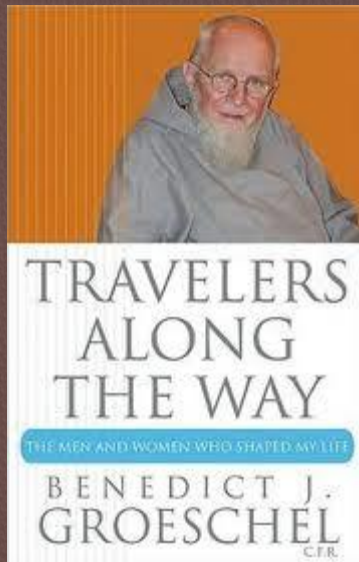
- Mother Teresa believed “the most devastating disease of humanity was not illness, hunger or poverty, but loneliness and the sense of being unloved that she encountered in people all over the world” (Poplin, p.128).



- **What Social Workers Can Learn From Mother Teresa**
- Matthew 25:35 “What ever you do for the least of my brethren this you do unto me”
- Mother Teresa told Dr. Wright: “Don’t ever forget whom you are touching. That person is Christ, your brother or sister in the distressing disguise of the poor. Serve that person with compassion. This is your purpose in life . . . This is how you will be judged.”
- “You must go home and grow in love and compassion in your own community. The Streets of Calcutta lead to everyone’s door” (Wright, 2006, p. 50)



- Just what is this prescription?
 - Ten attitudes of spirit - from Mother Teresa
 - Commitment to community
 - Reverence of all human life
 - Compassion and love
 - Contentment and gratitude
 - Faith
 - Humility
 - Tolerance
 - Patience
 - Forgiveness
 - Honesty
- “You will know that you have succeeded when you are surrounded by the storm and confusion of life, yet feel serene and confident”
 - (Wright, 2006, p. 56-57)



- **Mother Teresa:** “Why do you think God has chosen you to be a priest?”
- **Father Benedict:** “I don’t know – Maybe it is because he has a sense of humor”
- **Mother Teresa:** “You are chosen because of the humility of God. God chooses the weakest and the poorest, the most inappropriate persons to use. . . . I pray that my place will be taken by the most unattractive and ungifted of all the sisters. Then everyone will know that this is not our work but God’s work. Don’t ever forget that you are chosen by the humility of God.”



Criticisms of The Missionaries of Charity

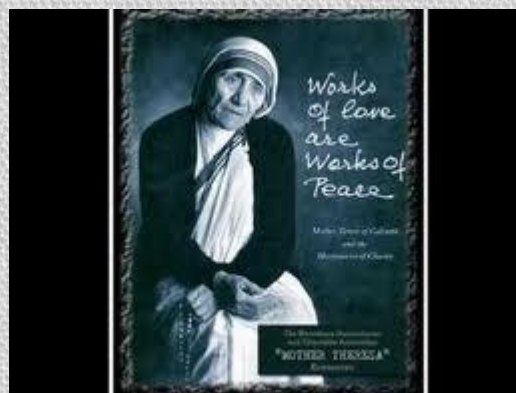
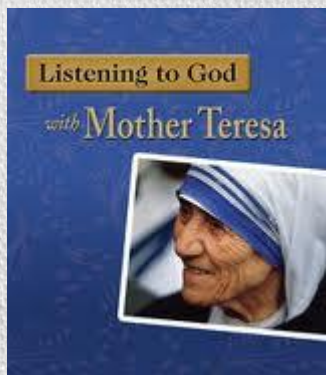
It did nothing regarding the macro efforts to cure poverty

“YOU TAKE CARE OF THEIR TOMORROWS; I TAKE CARE OF THEIR TODAYS” (MOTHER TERESA)

**“MY POOR PEOPLE ARE TOO WEAK TO HOLD THE FISHING ROD THEMSELVES . . BUT IF THEY ARE EVER WELL ENOUGH TO HOLD A FISHING ROD, THEN OUR CRITICS CAN GO AHEAD AND TEACH THEM HOW TO FISH”
MAASBURG (2006)**

Nobel Peace Prize





Quotes by Mother Teresa

- We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass- grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence... We need silence to be able to touch souls.
- In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love
- Be faithful in small things because it is in them that your strength lies.
- Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person.
- I do not pray for success, I ask for faithfulness
- Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work
- Each one of them is Jesus in disguise.
- I have found the paradox, that if you love until it hurts, there can be no more hurt, only more love.
-
- Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.
- There is more hunger in the world for love and appreciation in this world than for bread.
- Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless
- Words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness
- I am a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world.
- We are all pencils in the hand of God.
- We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.
- <http://www.iloveindia.com/indian-heroes/mother-teresa/quote.html>

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