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MOTHER TERESA: STRUGGLES OF LIFE AND ROAD TO SAINTHOOD

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Mother Teresa: Struggles of Life and Road to Sainthood

Section I: Mother Teresa's Life

Mother Teresa performed many great works “through the grace of God” during her lifetime. She spent her entire life helping many people in crisis: sickness, poverty, criminality, the grieving, the hopeless, and the unloved. On the surface, Mother Teresa seems like a great woman who placed her heart and soul into her service to the people of the world. She has influenced millions of people around the world with her words and service. So, of course, the first step after she died is to send her on her way to become a saint, which is a fairly long process with many steps. So how could such a great woman of the Church not be on the “fast track” to sainthood? Her process got put on hold because of what was found in her journals and writings. She wrote about feeling much despair and distance from God. Those who are declared saints can have despairing feelings or go through a dark time; but often not to Mother Teresa's extent. Through my research, I want to explain who Mother Teresa really was. I want to compare her life and her writings to other saints' writings and show how she is different from these other saints. Along with the differences, I want to point out the similarities she has with past saints. Ultimately, I want to explain why Mother Teresa should or should not become a saint and how this decision will affect the Church. This research project will be as thorough as circumstances will permit.

Born in present-day Skopje, Albania in 1910, Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu (later taking the name Mother Teresa) was born to a prosperous, well-educated father and a stern, but loving, mother. Her mother was religious, and Agnes grew up with poor people constantly approaching the home. Her mother always helped the poor and never turned anyone away at her door. Her mother also visited the poor on a regular basis to feed them and donate money. Agnes would

later report that her mother “taught us to love God and our neighbor” (Chawla, 2005, p. 7).

Tragedy struck when Agnes’s father died and his partner in the business took the business and all the money. The Bojaxhiu family of four was now broke. Agnes and her sister, Age, prayed together in the Church and spent an increasing amount of time in the Church and in the community. It was at twelve years when Agnes began to feel a calling toward God; she felt it stronger right before her eighteenth birthday. Not only did she feel a calling toward sisterhood, but also toward serving the poor (Chawla, 2005, p. 7-9).

When she took her first vows, she was given a new name. Agnes chose Thérèse after Thérèse of Lisieux. Saint Thérèse was a Carmelite nun who admired those who travelled the world to work with the poor. She could not actually join those who travelled and helped because she died of tuberculosis at an early age. In 1927, she was declared the patron saint of foreign missions. At the time, there was another nun by the name of Thérèse so Agnes adopted the Spanish version which is Teresa. She was always sure to explain that she adopted her name from Thérèse of Lisieux and not St. Theresa of Avila (Chawla, 2005, p. 12-13).

In 1931, she returned to Calcutta where she was born to teach at a school. She spent seventeen years of her life at St. Mary’s School in the Loreto Convent. Over the course of those seventeen years, she taught geography, history, and became principal of the school. Later Sister Teresa says that “In Loreto, [she] was the happiest nun in the world” (Chawla, 2005, p. 14).

In 1946 when Mother Teresa was on the train to her annual retreat to Darjeeling, she heard the call that completely transformed her life forever. She felt she had heard an order from God: give up everything and go and serve Him in the slums. At this point, she knew she had to leave her comfortable convent and join the poorest of the poor in the streets. When Mother Teresa returned from the retreat, she consulted her spiritual director/chaplain priest about the

event and about the order she received. After long-awaited approval from multiple members of the church including the Vatican, Mother Teresa was cleared for work. Her chaplain gave her three white saris with blue borders which were worn by the women of Calcutta who worked in the streets. This is the habit that is so commonly portrayed in the media. This habit becomes the habit for all of her Sisters and is still used today. Mother Teresa received some basic medical training, concerning diseases and malnutrition; this information was supplemented with more that she would have to utilize on a daily basis on the streets. After she completed her medical training at a hospital, she left Patna and arrived in Calcutta on December 9, 1948 (Chawla, 2005, p. 20-23).

Mother Teresa had only one idea of where to begin her work: teaching. She got in touch with a few poor families with children and told them she wanted to teach their children. The next morning Mother Teresa arrived at the slum to find five children looking at her. She continued to place her trust in God and taught these children with the use of donated books, writing utensils or furniture. She held these classes outside until she could find a suitable room to use as a classroom, which she later found. Within a month, twenty-one young faces looked into Mother Teresa's eyes (Chawla, 2005, p. 24-25).

Soon, she discovered that life in the slums was much different than life at the Convent. She found herself alone and uncertainty set in. She found a home with two brothers, Alfred and Michael Gomes, who were friends with Mother's priest. The brothers kindly offered her extra things they had, but Mother only accepted a single chair and a few boxes. Only now did she finally understand what having nothing really meant. A couple months later, one of Mother's former students, Subashini, visited her and decided to join her to serve the poor in the slums—the first Sister to join Mother Teresa (Chawla, 2005, p. 29-31).

More and more help came. Finally, on October 7, 1950, the Vatican recognized their work as an organization, and the small group became known as the Missionaries of Charity. Rules and mission statements were laid down and approved; women from all over the country arrived to help out the Sisters. The **brothers' home** became too small to house the growing group, so Mother Teresa found a larger house, all twenty-six other Sisters moved to the house, and this became their Motherhouse (Chawla, 2005, p. 35).

Mother and the Sisters continued to do amazing work in the slums of Calcutta. She continued to have a house where she could house the dying, the sick, the unwanted, and the unloved. Mother Teresa taught all who worked with her to take in any person who needed a place. Even if the person was near death, two or three sisters would go out into the street, pick up the man or woman, carefully carry him/her inside, and place him/her on a clean cot. A Sister would clean the person and provide a comfortable place for the person to die with dignity and self-worth. Mother Teresa believed that dying as unwanted and unloved was the worst way to die. She assured all the sick and dying that they were loved and cared for. Anyone brought to Mother Teresa's care died knowing they were loved.

The evening when Mother was going to die, she had attended Mass, spent the day with visitors, and talked with the Brothers and Sisters. She then went to bed and was in great agony. Later in the evening, she was unable to breathe on her own. The Sisters quickly resorted to using the oxygen mask, but the electricity went off suddenly. A priest and a doctor were called in, and the Sisters had two emergency independent electric supplies. Both shut off instantly, and the other breathing machine could not be started. Calcutta was in complete darkness when Mother Teresa left this world (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 333). She is always remembered as the woman

who brought light to Calcutta and the woman who trusted God and became His light in the slums.

Section II: How to Become a Saint

After Mother Teresa's death on September 5, 1997, countless people inquired about her becoming a saint of the Catholic Church. Those who had met her wanted her to be set on the path immediately after her death. But, what is a saint? I think Pope Francis has a great definition of what being a saint really means. "Saints are those who obey the Lord, those who worship the Lord...the saints of the Church. Just as the corrupt do so much harm to the Church, the saints do so much good...about the saints, the Word of God tells us they are like light" (Pope Francis, 2013). Also, the Church says that anyone can become a saint. Trigilio and Brighenti explain that one has to have demonstrated "heroic virtue" and gone above and beyond to serve your community, Church, and God (2003, p. 279, 281). This does not mean that the person must be sinless. The Catholic Church believes that no one is perfect or sinless. After the death of a person, a formal request can be submitted anywhere between five to fifty years after death. Usually the priest in the deceased person's diocese formulates a request and sends it to the bishop of the diocese. If the bishop sees that there is enough interest and a strong argument in the case, then he can send a request to Rome. Then the Congregation of the Causes of Saints will approve or disapprove the request. Upon approval, the bishop can then investigate the case. Now, people who knew the person are questioned about personality traits, activities, conversations, written letters, reputation, etc. of the dead person. If the person passes this stage, he/she is now a Servant of God (Trigilio & Brighenti, 2003, p. 280-281).

The next step is to send all the discovered information to Rome so the documents can be translated into Italian. Nine theologians and a committee of cardinals and bishops decide whether

to approve the case based on the translated information. If this passes, miraculous events are investigated. To be considered a miracle, the event must be documented and authenticated. The evidence of the event is looked at by renowned physicians, Catholic and non-Catholic. After an extensive, exhaustive review, if the “cure” does not have any scientific or medical explanation, then it is considered a miracle and the person is now placed in the category of “Blessed,” and a mass is celebrated in his/her honor to declare the person *beatified* (Trigilio & Brighenti, 2003, p. 282-285).

The last step to becoming a saint is canonization. This involves one more miracle as described above. Once this miracle is confirmed, then the Pope holds a mass that is usually located in St. Peter’s Square outside the Basilica, in the Vatican. If the canonized person is more widely known and venerated in his/her homeland, such as Mexico’s St. Juan Diego, then the Pope can travel to that land to perform a mass. It is important to remember that the Pope has the final say on all cases sent to the Vatican (Trigilio & Brighenti, 2003, p. 284).

As discussed, those who are in the process of becoming a saint must have miracles that happen in their name. Mother Teresa is considered “Blessed” because one miracle has been confirmed. This miracle happened to Monica Besra in West Bengal. She had abdomen pains along with nausea and fever so she went to a doctor. The problems continued to get worse with no relief, and she had been to multiple doctors. Monica later found a lump in her stomach which the doctors diagnosed as a tumor. They did not, however, know how to cure it. She finally sought help from the Missionaries of Charity Sisters who got her admitted to a hospital. The tumor eventually took over her body, and the Sisters had to care for her at all hours of the day and night, since Monica could no longer care for herself. The Sisters took turns and began to pray for her at all the times when they were with her. One of them placed a medallion of the Virgin Mary

that had belonged to Mother Teresa on Monica's stomach. Another asked her to pray to Mother Teresa's picture. On the first anniversary of Mother's death, Monica began to pray with the Sisters. A few hours later Monica felt much better and saw that her stomach was no longer swollen and the lump had disappeared. Upon returning for an appointment, the doctors could find no trace that a tumor had ever been in her stomach. This phenomenon met the criteria required by the Vatican for a miracle (Chawla, 2005, p. 87-88).

As described, the request must wait until at least five years after the death of the person (Trigilio & Brighenti, 2003, p. 280). When Mother Teresa died, the Archbishop in the local area, Henry D'Souza of Calcutta, immediately wrote the Vatican to start the investigation process. Pope John Paul II was familiar with Mother Teresa's work and allowed the investigation to begin even though it had only been two years since her death. With all the information the Sisters sent and the miracle healing of Monica Besra, Mother Teresa was beatified in 2003 (Chawla, 2005, p. 88).

At the beatification mass for Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II said in his address to the pilgrims visiting Rome, "there is no doubt that the new Blessed was one of the greatest missionaries of the 20th century" (Pope John Paul II, 2003). She had a huge impact on all people of the world, and even the Pope knew of the great work she was completing. The Pope was sure to explain that Mother Teresa was a missionary and 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...keep her charism unaltered...and from Heaven she will not fail to sustain you in your daily journey" (Pope John Paul II, 2003). The Pope finishes his address to the pilgrims telling them that "her entire existence reminds us that being Christian means being witnesses of charity" (Pope John Paul II, 2003). On that day in 2003, it was important that the

Pope continued to remind us how important charity can be and how important it is to follow your calling to do God's will. It may not be easy—the prime example being Mother Teresa leaving everything and everyone to live in the dirty streets with some of the poorest people. Mother Teresa was one of the greatest women of the century, and she will never be forgotten.

Section III:

When Mother Teresa left Loreto, in one of the letters she sent to Archbishop Périer she said that “the first step towards the slums is over” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 124). This was in 1948. I believe one of the hardest steps in the beginning for Mother Teresa was leaving all the friends and sisters and comfort of the Convent. She was so pulled toward the poor, and she knew she had to be with the poor. This she had already accepted as what would happen; I think the struggle came when she had to leave everything she knew and go somewhere where she knew no one. Once she left the hospital where she was learning medical skills, she wrote “O Jesus, only love of my heart, I wish to suffer what I suffer and all Thou wilt have me suffer...” in the inside of her medical notebook (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 124). This one line shows that Mother Teresa knew that joining the poor would not be an easy task. I also think that she was totally accepting all the suffering God could give her. In another letter she wrote, “The missionary must die daily, if she wants to bring souls to God. She must be ready to pay the price He paid for souls, to walk in the way He walked in search for souls” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 140). In this example, she is talking about herself and her sisters. She is saying that missionaries of God will suffer as much as he did so that she can present God with souls. Mother Teresa showed completely and utter humility constantly throughout her life. She truly believed this was the way to give everything to Him, and she wanted all of the suffering. She understood that feeling God's suffering would ultimately get her closer with these poor

people. Through her suffering she saw Jesus in the faces of the poor people. She saw her suffering as a way to get closer to the poor which got her closer to Jesus, and the pain was “uniting her with Christ in His Passion and with the poorest of the poor” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 146).

In 1951, she continued to show her determination to be with God, and through a letter to the archbishop she wrote, “I want to become a real slave of Our Lady—to drink only from His chalice of pain and to give Mother Church real saints...please pray for me, that I may give to Our Lord all that He asks without a thought of self” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 141). This is just another example of how deeply she wanted to bring in souls for Christ. She knew God would give her the strength to get through any situation so she asked for all of the suffering to come to her. Mother Teresa would do anything that Our Lady or God asked her to do. If any challenges stood in her way, she relied on God to give her the strength to get her through it. She knew she could get through any suffering because God was giving her the strength to do so.

The darkness in her diaries and writings continue until shortly before her death. Around 1957, she wrote about this darkness in one of her letters. “For the first time in this 11 years—I have come to love the darkness—for I believe now that it is a part of a very, very small part of Jesus’ darkness and pain on earth” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 208). In 1961, she wrote to her Sisters saying “let us share the sufferings—of our poor—for only by being one with them—we can redeem them that is bringing God into their lives and bringing them to God” (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 220). She would do anything and everything to get every single person closer to God. She also wanted God to be the light for anybody else in the world, and she didn’t want to take His light from anyone else. “If my darkness is light to some soul—even if it be

nothing to nobody—I am perfectly happy—to be God’s flower of the field” (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 212). She was willing to give up her spiritual food so someone else could have it. She also felt like God was draining her of self. She felt that God had to make the pain so great and the dark so dark so that she could truly be with the poor and with Him (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 218-219).

The sisters around her often talked of how she displayed such a cheerful disposition. She would “keep smiling in spite of everything and give Our Lord always all with a cheerful smile” (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 141). Even in her years of darkness, she “chose to spread joy”, and in another letter she wrote, “In spite of everything that has happened these last years, there has always been perfect peace and joy in my heart” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 142). In 1962, she wrote to her sisters about the poor seeing Jesus through their eyes. “The light you give must be so pure, the love you love with must be so burning—the faith you believe with must be so convincing—that in seeing you they really see only Jesus... You can give Him only if you have surrendered yourself totally to Him” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 231). Again to her sisters, she showed the love that she had for Jesus. She wanted the sisters to feel that same love and to in turn show that same love to the poor people. Her last sentence is about surrendering her entire being to God so that she could show Jesus to the poor, dying people in the streets. To be the face of Jesus, Mother Teresa had to suffer right beside Him.

In 1962, Mother Teresa wrote about her feelings of being unwanted, unloved, and unclaimed. This is a part of Mother Teresa’s life when she truly felt alone in the world. She felt that God did not love her, claim her, or want her. In this darkness, she later said, “The greatest evil is the lack of love and charity” (Mother Teresa, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 233). Mother Teresa first of all believed that she and the sisters could not truly comprehend the poor’s emotions

unless they had first experienced the poor's pain. Also, as the quote says, she believed that being unloved and unwanted and alone was one of the worst ways to live. Additionally, dying unloved or unwanted was the worst way to die. Through this interior darkness, she became closer with the poor. Kolodiejchuk says that "Mother Teresa would not have won over their trust and their hearts to the extent she did" without experiencing that awful darkness (2007, p. 234). "She willingly embraced the full measure of this suffering so that the poor she loved might experience the full measure of God's love. As a consequence, her darkness became her greatest blessing; her "deepest secret" was indeed her greatest gift" (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 234). I agree with Kolodiejchuk in his analysis. Since she went through the emotions of feeling unloved by God, she could better understand the pain and suffering the poor, sick people were experiencing. I also believe that she was so successful in helping the poor because the poor trusted her so much. She was living on the streets with them for some time, she dealt with illness and death daily, and she gave up her entire being and soul to God. She had absolutely nothing to give and she had nothing materialistic so the poor could relate with her. The poor saw her as one of them.

Mother Teresa truly admired St. Thérèse of Lisieux as discussed earlier. Mother Teresa always wanted to give more to God than what He was giving her, as did Thérèse of Lisieux. "The greater the pain and the darker the darkness the sweeter will be my smile at God" (Mother Teresa). St. Thérèse of Lisieux also went through a period of spiritual desolation. She privately rejoiced one Good Friday morning because she had awoke to blood in her mouth and thought she would soon be in Heaven (Ellsberg, 2005). After this event she fell into deep desolation, came ever so close to despair, and experienced scary images and visions. She hung on to the image of God and eventually saw the end of the suffering just before she died surrounded by her Carmelite Sisters (Ellsberg, 2005). The both of them are very similar because they both were called to be

with the poor. Even though St. Thérèse of Lisieux was ultimately not able to be with the poor, she aspired to do nothing less than help to the very best of her ability. Mother Teresa used St. Thérèse of Lisieux as a role model and looked to her in her mission.

The argument with Mother Teresa is that she spent a great portion of her life suffering in darkness. St. Paul of the Cross, for example, lived during the 18th century and had quite a lengthy desolation period. In 1717, Our Lady appeared to St. Paul dressed in a black tunic with a badge of the Passion on her shoulder. St. Paul had envisioned himself in this black tunic during prayer many times. When she appeared she asked if he knew that she was wearing the tunic of mourning. She told him that he must wear the black tunic and found a Congregation where the same outfit will be worn. She left him stunned and in a daze. Later, during prayer he received warnings about the road ahead. "I will show you what great things you must suffer for my Name." Now all Passionists wear a badge with the words "The Passion of Jesus Christ" on it. At the time when Our Lady visited St. Paul, the depression came upon him and the joy started to disappear (Passionist Publications, 1983, p. 7-9).

As the founder a Congregation, the Passionists, he was destined to have a unique relationship with Jesus. He fully shared the sufferings of Christ and his crucifixion, and the graces he received gave him a deep appreciation for Christ's suffering. He did not get a sweet taste of Heaven as most other saints did. After fifty years of spiritual suffering, Our Lady once again appeared to St. Paul, but this time she was holding the Divine Child. The child placed his hands on Paul's head and said, "As surely as I place my hands on your head, so surely will you save your soul" (Passionist Publications, 1983, p. 24). He spent the remainder of his days in a triumphant way visiting people of the neighborhood. These people brought out their sick and

waited along the street for St. Paul to come by and bless each one of them (Passionist Publication, 1983, p. 10-24).

St. Paul's sufferings were very real and very painful. He persevered even though he was terrified because he did not know what to do or how to do it. He spent a couple years after the first appearance in complete shock and confusion. He continued to trust God with all his heart, soul, mind, and body. Sure, he was scared, but he continued to do great things. In this way, I think he is comparable to Mother Teresa; she had a long period of her life where she did not feel God's presence except when she was with the sick and the poor. She continued, however, doing what she knew God had put her on earth to do. Even though she was near giving up, she never quit and never gave in to her suffering. She truly spent most of her time in darkness. "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, Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 230).

Mother Teresa also looked up to St. Francis of Assisi. In a photo story account documented by American Catholic, she was asked why she admires him so much. "I suppose it's because St. Francis of Assisi tried to imitate the poverty of Christ so closely" (American Catholic, 1999). Mother Teresa knew the story of St. Francis and the leper on the road. One day St. Francis was riding horseback across the plain when he discovered a leper along the side of the road. He immediately was filled with disgust and repulsion, and he left the man and kept going. Soon, he turned around, got down from his horse, embraced the man, and gave him all the money he had in his possession (Robinson, 1909). Mother Teresa believed that this surrendering point made Francis into St. Francis. This act of kindness and giving made him (American Catholic, 1999). St. Francis's main virtue is thought to be humility (Robinson, 1909). I think St. Francis truly relates to Mother Teresa in the sense that they were both willing to devote their

lives for the poor people. When St. Francis went back to help the leper, he showed extreme humility and selflessness. This is also very similar to Mother Teresa because she gave up everything she saw as comforting and safe to be with the poor, diseased, sick, and dying. Such humility is needed to work with and embrace dying people.

At Mother Teresa's beatification in 2003, Pope John Paul II talked of her service and thirst for Christ. "Her life is a testimony to the dignity and the privilege of humble service. She had chosen to be not just *the least* but to be *the servant of the least*...Her greatness lies in her ability...to give until it hurts" (Pope John Paul II, 2003). I think this quotation speaks for itself about how beautiful Mother's work really was. She set such a wonderful example for the Sisters who follow her and for the world that respects her. This level of service to such a vulnerable population has pushed and will push people to be selfless and feel a sense of humility. The Pope also talked about how Mother Teresa wanted to quench God's thirst. She wanted to provide God with the love she thought He "needed". This idea caused her "run in haste across the globe to labour for the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor" (Pope John Paul II, 2003). She wanted to bring people to God and God to people through her service. She wanted all of her patients to feel the love they deserved.

In a letter written to her friend Father Neuner, Mother Teresa "wants to be to them what Mary was to Jesus—their mother" (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 223). As she was suffering in Christ's suffering, I'm sure she felt close to Mary the Mother of Jesus, also. Superficially, I think Mother Teresa wanted to show each of her patients that they were loved, but I also think it goes deeper than that. I believe that she understood the suffering Mary, Jesus's mother, was enduring. I believe she understood that suffering because she was taking care of dying people. Mother Teresa loved each and every person who came through the door needing assistance. And just as

Mary watched her Son suffer and die a painful death, I think Mother Teresa felt some of that realm of pain also.

Even two years prior to her death, Mother Teresa still performed daily activities as usual. She met with people, answered phone calls, and handled mail. At this time, she had fractured ribs, a broken shoulder; and experienced colds, coughs, and malaria (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 324). One of the sisters commented saying how Mother would perform regular community tasks jobs like doing dishes and wiping down the table after mealtime before going out and meeting the neighborhood (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 324). She still asked for help and spiritual direction and took any advice with great enthusiasm. She was still humble and simple and took advice with such humility. As an expression of her humility, she offered her darkness up to God and she offered all her memory of what it felt like to feel Jesus's presence. She wanted to give God the happiness she experienced before beginning her journey to serve the poor (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 326). She wanted absolutely and literally nothing for herself. She offered everything she had up to God; she truly wanted to give God more than He could give her because she loved Him so.

In 1996, a Sister recalled Mother Teresa's state. "What suffering she had! I never saw in my life the physical suffering that Mother put up with...one morning she wrote, "I want Jesus." We asked Father Gary to come...after the Mass he was just able to give her a drop of the Precious Blood. She began to improve...all believers and non-believers realized that her strength came from Jesus, and only with Him...could she go through that terrible pain and agony" (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 329). In a horrible debilitating physical condition, she still wanted Jesus. She wanted Him badly and could only go on with Him and through Him.

Less than a year before her death, she traveled to the United States and to Rome with Sister Nirmala, who became Mother's successor. Upon returning to Calcutta after her trip, she

was absolutely overjoyed to be home at the Motherhouse. She happily told a friend that her “work is done” (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 331). A sister recalls that “Mother had been extremely happy, joyful, optimistic, and talkative. Her face was always radiant and full of fun” (Kolodiejchuk, 2007, p. 331). The sisters realized that God had revealed that she would be coming home to Him soon. She had her glimpse of Heaven and knew her work on earth was finished.

Mother Teresa’s emotional darkness is clearly not a new concept concerning past saints. Generally speaking, Mother Teresa’s, St. Thérèse’s, St. Francis’s, and St. Paul’s darkness was all lengthy and hard to bear. Mother Teresa is the most recent example of the incredibly engulfing darkness that the other three saints dealt with too. They experienced it in a different time period. St. Paul said “I carry this thorn in my flesh.” Mother Teresa often said she carried the suffering that God gave her. The only difference between these two sides is the way it is interpreted today. Both are suffering from God, and both are done out of love for God. The way we explain it today makes the two sides have different meanings.

As one can see, Mother Teresa was a remarkable woman. She gave everything she had to God, including her entire self, she cared for dying people of all ages and loved every single one until his/her death, and she performed all of this through suffering with Christ. It’s such a paradox because she felt like He was absent in her life, but she saw Him every day in the faces of the sick, the poor, and the dying. Ultimately, I do believe Mother Teresa will be named a saint. Many of her writings show much feelings of distance, darkness and separation, but even though she felt distant from Him, she did not give up hope or quit serving the people. After she heard His call on the train to Darjeeling so early in her life, she knew what her job would be for the rest of her life. She knew what she needed to do for the poorest of the poor, but, more importantly,

she knew that she was in love with God. Mother Teresa realized that she would serve Him for the rest of her life. She was such a humble person that she even remarked that she would be absent from Heaven because she would be in the darkness, providing light to all those in the darkness. In this decision, I do not think it will have any negative effects on the Church either. I also feel that the world is basically expecting that she will become a saint.

I hope it happens in my lifetime so I can witness the canonization. She is such an inspiration to the world. When she was so young, she left home to teach a handful of poor children. She conducted a school and classroom setting with nothing but her, her knowledge, her children, and some sticks to write in the ground. I could not imagine the Church denying her canonization based on her depressing writings. I hope that the insights I may gather will be helpful in helping others discern the complex issues surrounding the life, work and significance of Mother Teresa.

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