

Lives
of
Saints

St Teresa of Calcutta

1910 - 1997

Feastday: 5th September



“Keep the joy of loving God in your heart and share this joy with all you meet especially your family. Be holy – let us pray.”

St Teresa of Calcutta

I was born on in 1910, in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. My real name was Gonxha or Agnes. My father died when I was about eight years old. As a young child, I was fascinated by stories of the lives of missionaries and their service and by the time I was twelve, I was convinced that I should commit myself to a religious life. I left home when I was 18 to join the Sisters of Loreto as a missionary.

I enjoyed teaching at our high school for girls in Calcutta, but I was increasingly disturbed by the poverty surrounding me. In 1948 I received permission from Pius XII to leave my community and live as an independent nun. My first year was fraught with difficulties. I had no income and had to resort to begging for food and supplies. During these early months, I experienced doubt, loneliness and the temptation to return to the comfort of convent life.

On October 7, 1950 I received Vatican permission to start the diocesan congregation that would become the Missionaries of Charity. Its mission was to care for all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society, people that have become a burden to the society and are shunned by everyone. We began as a small order with 13 members in Calcutta. Today there are more than 4,000 nuns running orphanages, AIDS hospices, and charity centres worldwide, and caring for refugees, the blind, disabled, aged, alcoholics, the poor and homeless, and victims of floods, epidemics, and famine.

By the early 1970s, our work was known internationally, and in 1979, I was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for humanitarian work.

I died to the world in 1997, was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2002 and canonized by Pope Francis in 2016.

