

## MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY - CONTEMPLATIVE

" To do ordinary things with  
extraordinary love for the  
greater glory of God "



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*Easter 2006*

### **The Lay Missionaries of Charity: a Time for Renewal, a Time for Growth**

After the visit of the Magi, King Herod became afraid, jealous and angry; he ordered the massacre of all boys two years or under in Bethlehem and its environs. But Herod did not know that the child the Magi went to visit was God's own Son and Herod as man could never overcome God. (cf. Mt 2: 3ff)

St. Peter, after receiving the Holy Spirit, spoke more boldly and convincingly to the Jewish authorities: "*You have killed the author of life*" (Acts 3: 15). They thought that they had gotten rid of Jesus by nailing him to the Cross. They did not know that they were trying to kill the author of life.

When the apostles were forbidden to preach and teach in public and were arrested by the Jewish Sanhedrin, who wanted to put them to death, there was a wise and prudent lawyer called Gamaliel who said: "*Be careful about what you do about these men...If what they have planned and done is of human origin, it will disappear, but if it comes from God, you cannot possibly defeat them. You could find yourselves fighting with God.*" (Acts 5: 35-39)

If the Movement of the Lay Missionaries of Charity is God's child, if the Movement is wanted by God, then nothing and nobody, not even King Herod or the Herodians, can destroy it, except the members themselves. We must be convinced of God's love and care for the Movement for the past 22 years. It has gone through fire and flood. The water has not drowned it yet, nor has the fire burnt it. As long as the LMCs trust in Jesus lovingly and blindly, it will continue to grow and produce fruit. "*Trust Me lovingly, trust Me blindly,*" Jesus said to Blessed Mother Teresa.

He wants each and every LMC to be convinced of his or her vocation. That means that the person who has called you to become holy through the Lay Missionaries of Charity is not Blessed Mother Teresa, nor the parish priest, not even your bishop, or friend or group link. It is a direct call from the one who has the power to do that. It is your God who has called you individually and personally. "*Your call within a call*" is a gratuitous gift, which means that it is not because you are better or holier or more worthy than anybody else; not at all. It is because the Lord, your God, in a mysterious way loves you and that you are very precious to him. It is up to you not only to protect your vocation, but also to make it grow and produce fruit in abundance.

Your vocation is a gratuitous gift not only for you, but to be put at the service of others; he wants you to visit people, especially his poor people. But he cannot do it alone. He wants to carry him with you and with me into the people's homes, as he told to Blessed Mother Teresa back in 1947: "*My little one, come, come, be My light-carry Me with you into them...In your immolation, in your love for Me, they will see Me,*

*know Me, want Me.*” Jesus demands more: “*Offer more sacrifices, smile more tenderly, pray more fervently,*” and he says, “*All will be well.*”

Your vocation is a call to a greater love, which will make you suffer much more than now. Please do not join the movement with the idea that you will find an easier form of life. It is not meant to be an easier way of life, but a you happier, more peaceful and joyful way of life. You are called to participate in the redemptive work of Jesus. You are called to save souls through suffering love. Jesus told Blessed Mother Teresa: *Your vocation is to love and suffer and save souls.*

The LMC has an identity of its own and is not to be confused with other Movements or Associations. It is normal that the wind will blow, the rain will fall and buffet the house. But if the house is built on solid rock it will not collapse. (cf. Mt 7: 24-27)

Your LMC vocation is based not on your will, nor on your likes and dislikes, but on God’s irrevocable call to do his will. Yes, your vocation is founded on God’s will. Nothing and nobody should deviate you from doing his will. You also have a duty to help others to do God’s will.

Your LMC vocation and your way of life must be founded on the essential Christological, ecclesial and eschatological elements so that you understand and live your vocation more faithfully, more generously and more perseveringly. The basic aim of all vocation is the same, to become holier and holier through the **perfection of Charity and through obedience to God’s will.**

Once we have understood some of the basic and essential elements of our vocation then the various ups and downs of everyday life, the trials and crisis of life can be faced more easily and more serenely. With St. Paul you and I can say: “*I am what I am by the grace of God.*” Blessed Mother Teresa used to say that nothing and nobody should come between me and God, nothing and nobody should separate my love for God and for my neighbour, nothing and nobody should shake my God-given vocation (cf. Rom 8: 31-39).

When we speak of crisis, we can think of many ways, various stages and ages and kinds of crises we all go through. We often speak of economic crisis, political crisis, crisis of health, religious and moral crisis; vocation crisis, crisis in one’s family life, etc. This also shows that it is almost part of our human nature to go through the various crises of life, which can and should help us grow and mature. In other words crises should not become stumbling blocks but stepping stones to greater holiness of life.

It is said that the word ‘**crisis**’ in the Chinese language is composed of two characters: one character means danger and the other character means opportunity. This is the way we should see when crisis comes to our lives, i.e. to see it as an opportunity to grow and mature. In other words, crisis should not become a stumbling block but a stepping stone, an opportunity to go deeper and stronger in one’s conviction. This is the way saints saw their time of crisis. St. Thérèse of Lisieux writes: “*The longer and sharper the thorns, the sweeter will be my song.*” Blessed Mother Teresa writes to her spiritual director, Fr. Neuner SJ: “*If there is hell, this must be one. How terrible it is to be without God. No prayer, no faith, no love. The only thing that still remains is the conviction...I cling to the straw-before drowning- and yet, Father-in spite of all these-I want to be faithful to Him-to spend myself for Him. To love Him not for what He gives but for what He takes-to be at His disposal- I do not ask Him to change His attitude towards me, or His plans for me. I only ask Him to use me, to teach and help me...*” (January 1965)

There are several experiences of this kind of periodic but serious crises Blessed Teresa has left behind her in writing. We can learn from such writings how she used them to love and serve Jesus all the more and make him loved and served by others especially in the poorest of the poor. In other words, for Blessed Teresa, all those long years of dryness and darkness were opportunity, rather than dangerous moments. This is the wisdom of the saints. We also have very similar experiences in other saints and mystics, like St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Catherine of Siena and several others.

So, dearly beloved brothers and sisters, let us learn not only to appreciate the many trials and crisis of life, but make use of them as channels of grace for us and for others. *“Consider it as joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials.”* (Jas 1: 2)

For our LMC Movement it is a time for renewal, reparation, purification and growth. It is the Lord who has planted the LMC vine in his garden. Allow it to grow, spread and produce fruit a hundredfold, sixty or thirty, according to each one’s capacity (cf. Ps 80). Blessed Mother Teresa used to say that if we spend our time to judge, we have no time to love and serve. Let us not waste time then to judge and criticise, but instead let us use our precious time to love and serve the Lord in prayer and in one another.

Whether we are in a crisis or not, we are asked to offer more sacrifices, smile more tenderly and pray more fervently. Let us do that and ask others to do the same.

The LMC Movement was founded on Tuesday in Holy Week, 16 April 1984. This year the anniversary falls on Easter Sunday and 79<sup>th</sup> birthday of our beloved Holy Father, Benedict XVI. We complete 22 years. Our Blessed Mother Teresa was present at our first profession, and then for the remaining 13 years, (i.e. till 5<sup>th</sup> September 1997) she kept our Movement to her heart, loved it very dearly, spoke about it to people of all walks of life, including the kings and queens of Belgium and Spain. Let us not forget her keen interest in and unfailing confidence that she showed towards our least little Movement; and then she used to say that once she had gone home to God, she will continue to bless us all from heaven, which she does now. While on earth if she loved us so much, how much more we should expect her to love and help us all from heaven. So let us pray to her all the more fervently.

The LMC Movement, therefore, is not a human invention. It is willed by God. No external power should destroy our inner convictions and our adherence to Jesus. Let us express our gratitude to God by living the gift of our vocation more faithfully, generously and perseveringly all the days of our life.

The means to sustain and nourish our LMC vocation:

The spiritual exercises **recommended** (cf. R. 36) to the members of the LMC Movement for the sanctification and for the apostolic work are the first and the foremost means, especially the holy sacrifice of the Mass and Holy Communion. Blessed Teresa writes: *“One thing I request you, your Grace, to give us all the spiritual help we need. If we have our Lord in the midst of us with daily Mass and Holy Communion, I fear nothing...He will look after us. But without him, I cannot be. I am helpless.”*

R. 34 of the first Rules she drafted for the future Congregation she was going to found says: *“The sisters **should use every means** to learn and increase in that tender love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.”*

Writing to the archbishop of Kolkata she says: “*These desires to satiate the longing of our Lord for the souls of the poor, for pure victims of his love-goes on increasing with every Mass and Holy Communion.*”

- To make a real effort to live the Statutes and the Way of the Life of the lay Missionaries of Charity, especially R. 4.
- To take very seriously the vows one has made to God and live them with generosity and fidelity.
- To practice R. no. 19 of the Statutes one has to read and reflect on them on a regular basis.
- One has to desire to be holy, long for it and make every effort to become humble and holy like Jesus.
- Practice the seven spiritual and seven corporal works of mercy (cf. Statutes R. 31a, b).
- Accept whatever Jesus gives and give whatever he takes with a big smile. (Blessed Teresa)
- The LMCs must make every effort to be present at all the meetings of whatever kind, including retreats and seminars (cf. R. 42 b: 1-8).
- Study attentively the lay spirituality based on the Church’s teachings such as “Christifideles Laici”, “Familiaris Consortio” etc., as well as the teachings of our Blessed Mother Teresa.

Let us pray to be Jesus’ love, Jesus’ compassion, Jesus’ presence to one another and to all we meet and live with. This is possible only if we remain close to Jesus, Mary and Joseph and learn from them the virtues of faith, hope, charity, humility, patience, obedience, perseverance, justice and the like.

A lot of our precious time is wasted in talking uselessly and negatively about one another, about our Movement, about our Mother Church, etc. Instead let us try to concentrate on what is good and beautiful in the people, in our Movement, in the Church, throwing away whatever is ugly and unbecoming. Let us try to make use of our gifts and talents for the glory of God and for the good of our Movement.

Mr. Adolfo Costa from Parma (North Italy) deserves not only our admiration and appreciation, but our deep gratitude for all the work of preparing the material for the LMC formation called “*Itinerario di Formazione*”. He wants to prepare a two-year programme in 24 volumes; 8 out of 24 are now ready, but only in Italian so far. The Italian LMCs find them very useful and helpful, not only to nourish and deepen their knowledge of the LMC Movement according to the Spirit and Charism of Blessed Teresa, but also to grow in holiness after the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. It is a great treasure for our Movement.

Let us thank God for all our LMCs who work tirelessly for the Lord in the various parts of the world.

The initials LMC should mean not only Lay Missionaries of Charity but also Lay Ministers and Martyrs of Charity. To this end let us all pray and ask for the prayers of all. Happy and Holy Easter.

Love and prayers.

God bless you.

*Fr. Sebastian Vazhakala M.C.*