

MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY - CONTEMPLATIVE

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



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L S F (Laudetur Sacra Familia)

New Year 2008

THE M.C. TRAIN

In the dark hours of the night of Tuesday, 10th September, 1946, Mother Teresa IBVM was in a running train, heading toward the hill country of Darjeeling, in the high ranges of the mighty Himalayas.

She was going away from the crowded and noisy city of Kolkata, careless and chaotic, to go into the silence of contemplation, as she knew very well that the call to holiness is accepted and can be cultivated only in the silence of contemplation. She did not know or realize that the crowd she was trying to get away from was following her all the way.

Her eyes being closed, her mind being still, the noisy train running in the dark hours of the night, without warning there appears a big crowd of people: emaciated bodies, eaten up by worms; abandoned babies, orphaned, unloved, uncared for; disfigured faces of lepers, lost limbs and lost feet. Their feeble hands raised towards her, spoke very softly but very firmly without complaints: "*Mother Teresa, come, come, save us, bring us to Jesus.*" We are being abandoned, sheep without a shepherd and guide; we are in need of a guide, a helper, a Saviour!

The crowd knew before she knew the plan God had for her. There would be a radical change in her lifestyle, her vocation and her mission. Her eyes had not yet seen, her mind had not yet grasped what God was preparing her for!

Although she was getting away from the crowd, it was following her They were with her, and she found herself in the midst of the crowd she was going away from! The hungry and the thirsty crowd saw in her the one to bring them to the Saviour. Jesus was still hiding himself. He wanted her to see him in faith.

"Thomas, you believed because you saw me, but blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." (Jn 20: 29) Within minutes he was going to make her meet someone very special to him: his very dear Mother in the crowd: "*Mother Teresa, do you see the crowd? Take care of them. They are mine. Bring them to Jesus,*" who is their true Saviour. Neither the crowd by themselves, nor Mother Teresa by herself, nor even Our Lady can save people. Jesus alone is their Saviour. He alone is our Saviour. He alone saves all. He alone is the Lamb of God who takes away the Sin of the world. (cf. Jn 1: 29)

Our Lady was now entrusting the world of the poor to her. She also knew that Mother Teresa wouldn't be able to do it alone. She was in need of Our Lady and her beloved Son. So she said: *"Fear not, Jesus and I will be with you and with your children. Fear not, teach them to pray the Rosary, the family Rosary and all will be well."*

Who are Mother's children? She did not know yet. It was not yet revealed to her. But the crowd knew. Our Lady knew that she was chosen for her Son's beloved spouse, his partner in the new and very special mission!.

The train continued to run in the dark hours of the night, passing through many hills and dales. Her sleep was being interrupted again in a more dramatic way. The Bridegroom was now going to meet his bride. He made the crowd and his Mother meet her first, making the crowd and his Mother say to her to bring them to Jesus. That was her new vocation: to bring the souls of the poor to Jesus.

And now it was his turn to meet his little spouse face to face: *"You are my little spouse, the spouse of Jesus crucified."* This was still a voice. But now he would make her see him in the midst of the crowd covered in darkness. She would see him in the presence of his beloved Mother. Yes, *"It is in the contemplation of the crucified Christ that all vocations find their inspiration."* The Cross is the origin and the structure of all consecrated lives; and *"the more they stand at the foot of the Cross, the more immediately and profoundly they experience the truth of God who is love."* (V.C. 24)

Mother Teresa's new vocation found its origin; she took her inspiration from the Cross. From then on her songs would be joyful and sweeter, even if there were many long and sharp thorns on her path. The light was going to be dim and her path rough, but she must step it bravely.

The crowd was covered in darkness, and yet she could see the people...and *"Our Lord on the Cross, Our Lady at a distance."* Mother Teresa was in front of Our Lady, just like a little child protected by a Mother's arms. Our Lady's left hand was on Mother Teresa's left shoulder; her right hand was holding her right arm. Both of them were looking at Jesus on the Cross, who told her: *"I have asked you, the crowd has asked you. My Mother has asked you. Will you refuse to do this for me, to take care of them, to bring them to me?"*

The train had not stopped running, nor had the morning broken. There was no time to wait until morning to give him the answer. The answer had to be immediate and direct. There was no more time to doubt, to hesitate. Besides, Jesus was still hanging on the Cross; Our Lady's arms were not going to be removed. Yes, Mother Teresa was to answer quickly. Do not wait; there is no time to waste. Jesus is on the Cross. The more she delayed, the more there was suffering for Jesus...Speak Mother Teresa, speak, fear not. Yes, she did. Her heart could no longer resist; there was no more doubt. The answer came and was positive and creative. Here she followed the example of Our Lady at the Annunciation: *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me as you say."* (Lk 1: 38) *"I answered – you know, Jesus, I am ready to go at a moment's notice."* *"Yes, my Jesus, of my free will, I shall follow you wherever you shall go in search of souls, at any cost to myself and out of pure love of you."*

Neither Jesus nor Mary could accomplish their mission alone; they need human hearts to love the poor... human hands to serve them, as Jesus himself would serve them. *“My little one, come, be my Light.”* *“I cannot go alone to their homes”*... to the lepers, to the homeless, to the crippled and handicapped, to the dying destitutes. *“You carry Me, with you into them”*... into the homes of the poor, into the street corners, into the byways of the world, gather them, feed them, satiate them, clothe them, shelter them, visit them, comfort them...yes, do these things for Me...yes, Mother Teresa do it for us. *“Your vocation is to love and suffer and save souls.”* *“Nothing gives such pleasure to God as the conversion and salvation of men, for whom his every word and every revelation exist,”* says St. Gregory of Nazianzus.

With Mother Teresa, Jesus started a new railway company... the M.C. train... from Kolkata to the end of the world.

The M.C. train is running ceaselessly, quenching the infinite thirst of Jesus everywhere in the world. The M.C. train is full of poor people, unwanted people, homeless people, crippled and handicapped ones, unwed mothers, unloved and uncared-for babies, aged and forgotten ones, victims of leprosy and AIDS, those who live in despair and in the shadow of death, those who are upset, angry, bitter, or revengeful on account of their social status, colour, religion, nationality or whatever reasons. All without exception can find room in the M.C. Train.

The M.C. train is Jesus’ train. He owns it. It is continually gathering and picking up people who fall on both sides of the roads of the big cities of the world. There is always room in the M.C. train for one more. There are plenty of opportunities for everyone of good will to get into the train and offer wholehearted and free service; to be members of the M.C. Family; to be LMCs, co-workers, benefactors, to offer voluntary service.

There are always more people to be fed,
Thirsty ones to be quenched,
Naked ones to be clothed,
Homeless ones to be taken in,
Sick ones to be visited,
Imprisoned ones to be befriend,
Crippled ones to be cared for,
Handicapped ones to be looked after,
Leprosy patients and AIDS victims to be cured.

Yes, Jesus, if you wish, you can touch all these and heal. You said to Mother Teresa back in 1947 that you need M.C.s, because *“there is absolutely no one for your poor people.”* You want first and foremost your poor and helpless ones to be loved and cared for, served and healed. All that we ask you, Lord, is to *“Make us worthy to serve you in our fellow men and women throughout the world, who live and die in poverty and hunger, in cold and in nakedness, lacking the basic necessities of life.*

So we pray, Lord, give them through our hands this day and everyday their daily bread and by our understanding love, give peace and joy.”

The M.C. train must run. It must run continually without seeking rest or reward. The M.C. train must always have room to take in, to love, and to serve.

The M.C. train belongs to the Holy Family. It is the Holy Family train, as every M.C. community, without exception, is meant to be another NAZARETH. It must have the Holy Family Spirit. It must have the Spirit of warm welcome and generous hospitality. The M.C. train must be filled with the perfume of prayer...all the time trying to pray more fervently, all the time trying to smile more tenderly, all the time trying to offer more sacrifices.

Jesus is the centre of the M.C. train. Every one must remember that Jesus is the Centre, the Captain, the Owner. Therefore, we must always be ready and willing to consult him, to ask for guidance...ever more to receive him in the Bread of Life in daily Mass and Holy Communion, without which the M.C. train cannot run, nor can the people in the train be fed.

Jesus' beloved spouse writes: *“One thing I request you, Your Grace, is 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 for the Sisters nor for myself. He will look after us. But without him I cannot be, I am helpless.”* (Mother to Archbishop Perier S.J., 1947)

Jesus is the Epicentre. Yes, Jesus, you too have said: *“Without me, you can do nothing.”* Jesus is the epicentre of our lives. He is the Vine and we are the branches. St. Paul said: *“I can do all things in him who strengthens me.”* Years later Mother Teresa wrote to one of her Spiritual Directors: *“...I want only God in my life. The ‘work’ is really and solely His. He told me what to do. He guided every step, directs every movement I take. The Sisters, all that and everything is in me is His...when the world receives me, it really does not touch not even the surface of my soul. About the work, I am convinced it is all His.”* (Letter to Fr. Neuner, 1961)

*“Injure not the poor because they are poor,
nor crush the needy at the gate.
For the Lord will defend their cause,
And will plunder the lives of those who plunder them.”* (Prov 22: 22-23)

God himself will come to save the poor and he came in Jesus Christ. That is why we read: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor...”* (Lk 4: 14 ff.)

The year 2007 has passed into oblivion, taking with her a good number of people, some of whom were our own family members, while some others were acquaintances and friends; there were also strangers and foreigners. They are from all walks of life, belonging to the various religions of the world or of no religion at all. All without exception of caste, colour, creed, nationality or status have died and gone. Sooner or later it will be our turn too to surrender and sacrifice even the most precious gifts, including our dear and near ones. Here there is no exception: once we are born we have to die. This is absolutely certain. What we are not certain of is **the when, the where and the how** of our final and definitive departure from this valley of pain and sorrow. There is a little piece of poem that says:

“Today is my turn, tomorrow can be yours. Be ready, then; it is your call”...ready to go home to God at any hour of the day or night: *“Watch out, because you do not know the day or the hour.”* (Mt 25: 13)

Unforgettable memories. The year 2007 has left with us many unforgettable memories, good and bad, sad and happy, pleasant and unpleasant. It can be helpful, enriching and beneficial to attempt to bring to our attention or to recall to mind some of the most important ones. We should try to see the meaning and significance of the work that our good God is doing for his poor people through all of us. We should also realize like Blessed Mother Teresa M.C., our foundress and our Mother, our own weakness, sinfulness and unworthiness. It is not because we are better and holier that Jesus chooses us, but as he told to our Mother: *“Precisely because you are weak, sinful and unworthy, I want to use you for my glory.”*

I would like to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to God for all of you, dearly beloved LMCs, co-workers, benefactors both spiritual and temporal, poor people and all those who have helped us in any way. Your lives have become a living exegesis of Jesus’ words: *“As you did it to one of the least of my brethren, you did it to me.”* (Mt 25: 40) Your concern and tender care for the needy, expressed in prayer, assistance and hospitality, has become a normal part of your life. This goes in line with the document *“Vita Consecrata,”* which says: *“And how could it be otherwise, since the Christ encountered in contemplation is the same who lives and suffers in the poor”* (V.C. 82), in the handicapped, in the homeless, in the sick and the aged, in the lonely and the forgotten.

There is an apparent tension here between the active and the contemplative life which could be found in many saints like St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Catherine of Siena...Blessed Teresa of Kolkata, the servant of God Pope John Paul II, who writes: *“In Joseph, the apparent tension between the active and the contemplative life finds an ideal harmony that is only possible for those who possess the perfection of charity.”* (Redemptoris Custos: 27) The perfection of charity then is its solution. Therefore one has to work on charity.

I also would like to thank all of you who have shared your joy of the season of Christmas and New Year with us and with our poor people through telephone calls, letters, cards, e-mail, etc. So many of you have shared your joy with and for the poor in various ways: some by coming and serving them in person, some in kind, while some others in cash. I commend each one of you earnestly to God, that he may reward you a hundred times more with everything you need in this world and eternal life in the world to come.

The “M.C. Train,” with its various compartments, is running slowly but surely, taking us all to our final destination for which we all are created, i.e. to be with Jesus, where he is: *“Father, I want them to be with me where I am.”* (Jn 17: 24)

Love and prayers.

God bless you.

Fr. Sebastian Vazhakala M.C.