

MISSIONARIES OF CHARITY - CONTEMPLATIVE

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



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Laudetur Sacra Familia

"United we stand, divided we fall"

It is a fact of history that the greatest things must always begin with the smallest beginnings. Jesus expresses it very vividly and very intelligibly in the parable of the mustard seed when he spoke of the kingdom of God. *"Jesus put forward another parable to them: 'The Kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, and, when it has grown, it is the greatest of shrubs, and it becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches'."* (Mt 13: 31-32)

On September 10, 1946 Jesus sowed a grain of seed in the heart of Blessed Mother Teresa, which he kept on watering until it sprouted and took root. He remained like a good gardener, weeding, watering and feeding her. The Word of God and the Bread of life not only nourished and strengthened the tree, but made the tree to yield fruits in abundance.

Growth is part of any living organism. Over the years the Missionaries of Charity plant grew into a big tree with many branches, each producing the same kind of fruit.

Since 10 September 1946 to 3rd December 1947 Jesus continued to reveal his designs and his heart's desire to her. First of all Jesus told Blessed Mother Teresa that her vocation was to love and suffer and save souls. *"Your vocation is to love and suffer and save souls and by taking this step you will fulfil my heart's desire for you. That is your vocation."* (Mother Founding Grace (MFG) p. 11)

The M.C.s continued to grow under the shadow of the cross. The main inspirational period was from 10 September 1946 to 3rd December 1947, when Jesus revealed to her his plans and designs.

Mother Teresa left the Loreto convent on 16 August 1948. The arrival of the first candidate, Sr. Agnes (Subashini Das), was on 19 March 1949.

It took almost four full years to be constituted into a religious Institute with a proper name: the Missionaries of Charity of Calcutta, a name given by Jesus. For Jesus said: *"I want Indian nuns, Missionaries of Charity"*. On 7 October 1950 on the feast of our Lady of the Holy Rosary the Missionaries of Charity (M.C.) was erected into a diocesan Religious Institute, in the Archdiocese of Calcutta, with twelve candidates and Blessed Mother Teresa as the foundress and their first superior General.

Jesus also told Blessed Teresa about the kind of sisters he wanted her to choose and the virtues they should possess: *“I want Indian nuns, victims of my love, who would be Mary and Martha, who would be so very united to me as to radiate my love on souls. I want free nuns covered with my poverty of the Cross. I want obedient nuns covered with the obedience of the Cross. I want full of love nuns covered with the Charity of the Cross.”* (M.F.G. p. 10)

Regarding the kind of people the Missionaries of Charity should serve and the quality of their service, Jesus said to her: *“I want Indian Missionary Sisters of Charity, who would be My fire of love amongst the very poor, the sick, the dying and the little children. I want you to bring the poor to me. And the sisters that would offer their lives as victims of my love will bring these souls to Me...”* (M.F.G. p. 11)

The habit too was important, and Jesus told Blessed Mother Teresa the kind of habit she and her nuns should wear. He said: *You will dress in simple Indian clothes, or rather like my Mother dressed-simple and poor. Your present habit is holy because it is my symbol. Your sari will become holy because it will be my symbol.”* (M.F.G. p. 16)

Jesus saw the poor everywhere: they were much neglected. He said to her: *“There are convents with number of nuns caring for the rich and well-to-do people, but for my very poor there is absolutely none. For them I long. Them I love.”* (M.F.G. pp. 11-12)

Jesus reassured her of his unflinching help, but he did not make childish promises, for he said: *“You will suffer, suffer very much, but remember I am with you; even the whole world rejects you, remember you are My own and I am yours only. Fear Not. It is I. Only obey, obey very cheerfully, and promptly and without any questions...I shall never leave you, if you obey.”* (M.F.G. p. 18)

It is necessary to go to the roots of our M.C. Charism, spirit and mission. In the threefold vision Mother Teresa saw the very same great crowd three times. In her first vision she only saw the great crowd with all kinds of people, very poor and children. They all had their hands lifted toward her, who was standing in their midst, and they asked Mother Teresa to be their saviour: *“Come, come, save us.”* They also knew that she alone could not save them. They told her to take them to Jesus, their true saviour: *“bring us to Jesus.”*

Although she saw the same great crowd a second time, she saw great sorrow and suffering in their faces. Something more: this time she saw Our Lady, heard her voice in the form of a command: *“Take care of them, they are mine. Bring them to Jesus and carry Jesus to them. Fear not. Teach them to pray the rosary, the family rosary.”* Assurance: *“Fear not, Jesus and I will be with you and your children.”* (M.F.G. pp. 18-19)

Blessed Teresa saw the very same great crowd for the third time but with a difference: *“They were covered in darkness.”* This time she saw not only the crowd and Our Lady, but *“Our Lord was on the Cross.”* She also saw *“Our Lady at a distance from the Cross and myself (Blessed Teresa) as a little child in front of her...her left hand was on my left shoulder and her right hand was holding my right arm. We were both facing the Cross.”* This time it was Jesus who spoke from the pulpit of the Cross: *“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?" (M.F.G. p. 19)

Mother Teresa surrendered finally and definitely to Jesus' plea from the Cross: *"I answered, 'You know Jesus, I am ready to go at a moment's notice'."* And she went on: *"These desires to satiate the longing of our Lord for souls of the poor, for pure victims of his love, goes on increasing with every Mass and Holy Communion. All my prayers and the whole day, in a word, are full of this desire."* (M.F.G. p. 19)

Jesus from the Cross had already entrusted the whole human race to his blessed and beloved Mother on that first Good Friday, when he said to her: *"Woman, this is your son"* (Jn 19: 26). And again in the church of St. Damien in Assisi, Jesus from the Cross asked St. Francis of Assisi to repair his Church, which he and his followers did down through the ages and still continue to do to this day. In Lourdes, through Our Lady, Jesus entrusted the world of the sick both in body and soul to Bernadette Subirous, a poor, simple and illiterate girl of fourteen. Even today thousands and thousands of pilgrims carrying the weight of their sins, burdens and sufferings go to Lourdes. And then on 13th May 1917 Jesus, through Our Lady, entrusted the world of atheism and the world of sinners to the three simple and illiterate children of Fatima. Here too thousands of pilgrims from all corners of the world flock to Our Lady's shrine of Fatima, where Our Lady appeared to the three children from 13 May to 13 October 1917, asking them to pray for those who do not pray, to make sacrifices and do penances for the conversion of sinners.

On 10 September 1946 in Calcutta Jesus and Our Lady together entrusted the world of the poor to Blessed Mother Teresa, asking her *"to take care of them, to bring them to me* (Jesus)."

This is our foundational story in a few words. This is the M.C. Summa Teologica. All those who want to belong to the M.C. family must be ready and willing to go back to their very origins.

The Missionary of Charity Family Tree (M.C. Family)

Let us see how Blessed Teresa herself saw the M.C. family. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, to whom Jesus entrusted the great M.C. charism to be shared with the whole world, spoke of the various Branches. We have now, she used to say, the Active and Contemplative Sisters, the Active and Contemplative Brothers, the M.C. Fathers, the Lay Missionaries of Charity, the Co-workers (including the sick and suffering co-workers) and the volunteers. There is also the Corpus Christi Movement for priests. There is a candle burning for each group whenever the M.C.s are in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. On 2nd August 1987 Blessed Teresa wrote:

"As the Lay Missionaries of Charity and the co-workers are part of our Society that belongs in a very special way to Our Lady, we will, in the future, burn eight lights (candles) before the Blessed Sacrament during adoration:

*"Two lights to represent the active Brothers and Sisters who are the hands of Jesus;
two lights to represent the contemplative Brothers and Sisters, who are the two feet of Jesus;
one light to represent the M.C. Fathers who are the Heart of Jesus;
one light to represent the Lay Missionaries of Charity, who are the Holy Face of Jesus;
one light to represent the co-Workers, who are the head of Jesus crowned with thorns;
one light to represent Our Lady, Mother of the whole Society, interceding for us and leading us to Jesus.
It will be a wonderful gift to Jesus to have us all together in adoration before Him."*

There can be three different kinds of members in the M.C. family:

1) *Those members of the M.C. family who work against the MCs either from the inside or from the outside, and either directly or indirectly.*

There are those who are part of the M.C.s and very much want to be so, disagree even in the essentials and interpret the M.C. charism in their own way. Worse still they want to live it in their own way, thus going against the M.C. spirit and charism. This reaction can be due to a lack of adequate formation given by those who are responsible for formation, or by the formation being badly received by those members who now disagree or work against it, as they did not understand the M.C. spirit and charism. This then is the first group who are M.C.s, but often work against the M.C. family or one's own proper group.

Blessed Mother Teresa used to say that we have to love all religious congregations, but we must fall in love with our own.

Lack of proper discernment. Not everyone who hears about something new, nor everyone who knocks at the door has a vocation, nor is to be taken in without proper screening. "A scribe came to Jesus. 'Teacher', he said, 'I will follow you wherever you may be going'." What was Jesus' answer? "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have places where they may lodge, but the Son of man has nowhere where he may lay his head." (Mt 8: 19) Jesus knew that this scribe, very learned indeed in the Scriptures, was not seeking Jesus, but some sort of human security, or prestige or honour. He could be even proud of his knowledge as a scribe. "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself, take up his cross everyday and follow me..." (cf. Lk 9: 23-26) They must learn to become meek and humble of heart like Jesus.

When Jesus called Mother Teresa, she told Him to go and find a more generous and stronger soul. "Why has all this come to me--the most unworthy of his creatures; I do not know. And I have tried so often to persuade Our Lord to go and seek another soul--a more generous, a stronger one; but he seems to take pleasure in my confusion, in my weakness." (M.F.G. p. 19)

All those who ardently desire to belong to the family of the Missionaries of Charity, in whatever quality and capacity, must be ready and willing to be meek and humble, must have the attitude of Jesus and of Blessed Mother Teresa. Jesus told her: "In your immolation, in your love for Me, they will see Me, know Me, want Me. Offer more sacrifices, smile more tenderly, pray more fervently and all the difficulties will disappear." (M.F.G. p. 18) There should be no competition or rivalry or disunity among the members of the same family. On the other hand, we must be real Missionaries of Charity, not only in name, but also in fact. By our love they will know that we are M.C.s: "See how they love one another!" We have to work very hard not only to maintain the internal unity, but make every effort to grow and increase this unity. It is the work of everybody. With God's help and the Holy Spirit's guidance we can have this unity in charity

and humility. Let there be unity and let it begin with me. The humbler we are, the more united we become.

On the other hand, we must also work very hard to prevent destructive and negative criticisms, dissensions and whatever else may endanger real unity within our Society, our group or our family. Those who really strive to become holy will certainly avoid any negativity and discouraging way of thinking, speaking, acting or not acting. There is so much good in the worst of us and so much bad in the best of us. We all have to work hard to overcome our own defects, weaknesses and sins before we see the speck in others' eyes and fail to see the plank in our own (cf. Mt 7: 3-5). St. Peter said to Jesus: "*Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man*" (Lk 5: 8). Blessed Teresa said to Jesus of herself: "*I am weak, sinful and unworthy.*"

b) *Those members who may not be working against but go in parallel lines.*

There is a second kind of members of whatever group or category of the M.C. family they belong to. They may not work against like the first group, but they prefer to go in parallel lines, like two roads going parallel. They have no desire to meet and work together, and so they do not make any effort to work for unity, even in the essentials. This kind of people can be found in all the various branches and groups, national and international level. United we stand, divided we fall.

c) *Those members of the M.C. family who work with and work for unity, who keep the unity in all essential things and work as a family encouraging each other.*

We want to stand in the Lord and we stand with and for the Lord. We are called to be one in heart, one in mind, one in attitude on our way to God, like the early Church (cf. Acts 2: 42-47; 4: 32-35). It is very necessary that we pray so that we can have unity in essential matters, liberty in doubtful things and charity in all things.

"My dearest children, be one heart full of love in the Heart of Jesus through Mary. Protect the Spirit of the Society, and so satiate His thirst for souls by working at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the Poor." (from Mother Teresa's letter, 2 August 1987)

Love and prayers.

God bless you.

Fr. Sebastian Vazhakala M.C.