

TANGAZA COLLEGE

[THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA]

LOVE IN ACTION

**[Jesus' Love and the Gift of Mother Teresa: A
Challenge for Us Today]**

**A long essay submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the *
Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies**

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NAIROBI - KENYA



MOTHER TERESA

Quotes by Mother Teresa

**People are often unreasonable, illogical,
and self-centered:**

Forgive them anyway

**If you are kind, People may accuse you
of selfish, ulterior motives:**

Be kind anyway.

**If you are successful, you will win some
false friends and some true enemies:**

Succeed anyway.

**If you are honest and frank,
people may cheat you:**

Be honest and frank anyway

**What you spend years building, someone
could destroy overnight:**

Build anyway.

**If you find serenity and happiness,
they may be jealous:**

Be happy anyway.

**The good you do today,
people will often forget tomorrow:**

Do good anyway.

DEDICATION

This paper is fully dedicated to the memory of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Foundress of the Missionaries of Charity, who is a gift to me from God and whose passion for the poorest of the poor has enriched my spiritual life. I also dedicate this to the innumerable orphaned and abandoned children throughout the world.



STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material used herein has not been submitted for any academic credit to any other institution. All sources have been cited fully.

Signed: TM Chisanga _____

(Chisanga M. Tresphord)

Date: 8/2/2000 _____

This paper has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College Tutor.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Love in action derives from Christ's love. Everything that is Christian must proceed from Christ. It is evident from the Gospels that Jesus Christ had a special concern for the poor. He embodied God's special love for them. Jesus Christ presented Himself as God's promise to the poor in his proclamations. Jesus voluntarily became poor (Phil 2:5-8). Jesus became the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the sick, the imprisoned, the forsaken, and the unwanted. He said, "... you did it unto me...". (Matt 25:31-46). The poor are hungry for our love. That is the hunger of our poor. We need to practise love in action. The establishment of God's Kingdom in humanity was Jesus' mission. Jesus has indicated to us that our love for the poor is also a criterion of growth in perfect charity. This is what Mother Teresa did in her lifetime. She has shown us love in action.

Mother Teresa's love for the poor had a spiritual motive and a solid theological foundation. It was a deep and personal love of Jesus Christ that motivated her to love the poor. In the face of the poor she saw the very face of Jesus Christ. It is evident that the poorest of the poor, materially impoverished people, were the first concern of Mother Teresa. Those who are familiar with the essential Gospel message that appears in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5:1-12), can clearly see the affinity between that message and what Mother Teresa has said and done. It is precisely because the message is ingrained in each of her daily acts.

Mother Teresa's main objective had been to do all the good she could for the least of Jesus' brothers and sisters. Abstract reasoning did not lead her to feelings for the less fortunate. Rather, all she has done, in her own words, is love in action. Not given to

much talking. Mother Teresa spoke only when necessary. For her to love was to live in God.

The Church has to assume the role of its Master, who is Jesus Christ, and to continue His mission today. The Church has to be on the side of anyone who is in need and open to God's love. Jesus Christ and Mother Teresa have to challenge us today in our pastoral work. We have to ask ourselves if we really share in the lives of the poorest of the poor.

Main Objective of this paper: To show that what Mother Teresa did through her life and her Order, the Missionaries of Charity, was to make evident in deed the Gospel of Love, and in particular the Christian belief that is found in a special way in the poor and suffering. She relied only on the grace and power of God, yet she was singularly practical and down to earth. She wanted to manifest God's love in action for the poorest of the poor. This is what really has inspired me and challenged my personal life.

My paper is divided into three chapters:

1. **Jesus' Love in Action**
2. **Mother Teresa's Love in Action**
3. **Pastoral Implication of Love in Action**

CHAPTER ONE:

JESUS' LOVE IN ACTION

1: 1. JESUS AND THE POOR

Introduction

The establishment of God's Kingdom in humanity was Jesus' mission. *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand, repent and believe* (Mark 1: 15). This was the central message of Jesus in the New Testament. The realization of the kingdom of love, justice and freedom among all people in the cosmos is the very purpose of creation and the goal of Jesus' loving and saving presence in humanity. The New Testament leaves us in no doubt that Jesus had a special concern for the poor. This is what we will try to demonstrate in this section; that is, Jesus' love in action.

The new life which Jesus announces in the form of the kingdom of God is first of all a gift from God, liberation from sin, a liberation of all humanity. *He sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind...* (Luke 4:18). Since humanity is incapable of possessing happiness and unable to free itself by its own powers, God in Jesus Christ offers humanity the joy of new life.

In the Old Testament, God is the protector and defender. One of the important names of God in the Bible is 'Go'el', which comes from the verb 'gaal' - meaning to liberate, to redeem, and also to protect or to ransom. This name had come into vogue from the experience of the people. The Israelites had experienced the mighty hand of God in their lives. They were helpless and so put their trust in God. *This poor man called and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles* (Psalms 34:6). God defends the

cause of the poor people: *with justice he will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy and crush their oppressors* (Ps 72:4). God delivers the needy and the poor (Ps 35:10). He hears the cry of the poor, listens to them and leads them into freedom. The liberation of the people of Israel from the hands of the oppressors is the best example of God taking the side of the poor (Exodus 3:7-10; 22:21-22). The rich were reminded of the duty to protect the poor. The rich should have a tender relationship of friendship between God and the people and give up its exploitation. God spoke through the Prophet Isaiah

*This rather is the fasting I wish:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke,
setting free the oppressed,
breaking every yoke,
sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless,
clothing the naked when you see them
and not turning your back on your own* (Isaiah 58: 6-8).

1:2. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted...” (Luke 4: 18-19; 7:22).

Jesus came to preach the Good News to the poor, and to liberate them. The Good News is that God loves the poor and that their poverty is a liberation. Not only have they nothing to fear from oppressors and the constraints of life, but the new law of loving and humble mutual service will help to liberate them from the structures of poverty. They are the heirs of the *anawim* the poor who were the faithful remnant of Israel: *In you I shall leave surviving a humble and lowly people and those who are left in Israel will take refuge in the name of Yahweh* (Zeph 3:12-13).

This aspect of the kingdom of God must be kept in mind in order to understand the ministry of Jesus and his association with the poor. His programme of teaching the Good News to the poor was not a sentimental gesture but a deliberate role fraught with consequences. God was conceived as a king and a king's duty was to protect the weak.

The poor were those for whom something necessary for survival was lacking. In the scriptures, among the poor are often mentioned "the blind, the crippled and the prisoners."¹ They are the poor for whom the servant of the Lord is anointed to preach good tidings (Luke 4:18), they are the beggars before God. To such people the kingdom of God is promised. Jesus was the king that Israel expected. The prophecies found their fulfilment in him, with him came salvation. It is the poor who have the privilege of access to that salvation. The last sign that the poor have Good News preached to them is the most important and transparent. Jesus identified himself with that person Isaiah is talking about in Chapter 61 verse 1-2: *The Spirit of God is upon me....* It is precisely this text which constitutes the starting point of Jesus' mission. We can then see here a common

¹ X L. Dufour, Dictionary of the New Testament (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1980), p. 328.

source of the beatitudes. The poor are blessed because God will make his reign manifest in their favour. The coming of God's Kingdom will be the end of their sufferings. The afflicted are blessed because God's reign will bring consolation to them.

Poverty, hunger and mourning because of sheer destitution are oppressive circumstances, and yet Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who are poor. He congratulates them and confers the "greatest blessing he has promised on them, the kingdom of God."² In order to illustrate this first part, I will consider the first beatitude in Matthew's and Luke's respective Gospels. It gives the point of view of Jesus' love in action and God as the God of the poor.

1:3. THE BEATITUDES OF THE POOR

1:3:1. "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"(Luke 6:20)

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven"

(Matthew 5:3)

Luke's kingdom of God is more likely to be the original phrasing than Matthew's kingdom of Heaven, which is a special preference of Matthew throughout his Gospel.³ In Matthew, Jesus proclaims the beatitudes sitting on the top of a mountain (5:1), while in Luke He announces them on a plain (6:17). Matthew speaks of the poor in spirit and has *blessed are those who hunger and thirst* while Luke has *blessed are you that hunger*. In both cases Matthew uses the term "poor and hungry" metaphorically but Luke speaks of the really poor and of real hunger. More important is the fact that Matthew gives eight beatitudes and spiritualizes them. The beatitudes of Luke are instead very much earthly

² A. Stoger, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1969), p. 14

³ Herman Hendrickx, *Sermon on the Mount* (Manila: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1979), p. 13.

and he mentions only four and follows them as many times with, 'alas for you'. Lastly, Matthew addresses the crowd, while Luke addresses the disciples.

The first three beatitudes do not intend to refer to three distinct groups of people: poor, mourners and those who hunger and thirst. Rather they mention three samples of a large category of destitute and oppressed found in society.⁴ The first beatitude refers to the oracle of Isaiah, Chapter 61, verse 1, and what it says of the good news announced to the poor, *the spirit of the Lord is upon me... to bring good tidings to the poor.*

To whom, then, does the word 'poor' apply? Is it to those who possess no means and no power? Yes. The salvation that Jesus is proclaiming is a prophetic message from the Holy God, who comforts the poor by lifting them out of the dust and dirt of their existence (Ps 113:7) and cheers them by 'establishing his throne' among them, the downtrodden and the abused (Isaiah 57:15). Jesus addresses people who are poor, who mourn and who hunger and thirst. These are in fact variations of the same theme. They are called 'blessed', not because of their virtue, their internal disposition or their openness to the kingdom of God, but, simply because they are poor and as such benefit from God's disposition toward them.

In a sense, the beatitudes have a function of proof. In Jesus' words and actions is fulfilled what had been predicted by the prophets concerning the poor and the miserable (Isaiah 61:1-2). In words borrowed from Isaiah 61, the beatitudes say that the 'time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand' (Mark 1:15), as I have already mentioned in my introduction. Thus, the beatitudes are rightly called 'Messianic proclamations'. This now leads us to the understanding of the first beatitude in Matthew's gospel.

⁴ Ibid., p.15.

(Matthew 5:3)

Matthew has spiritualised and generalised the beatitudes, making them applicable to every member of the Church. This is what we look at in this section concerning the poor. This is the first of the beatitudes and the starting point for the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' New Law.

Who are the poor of this first beatitude? Saint Matthew's version of the beatitude conceals its relevance to the social and economic situations. *Blessed are the poor in spirit* seems to refer to something other than real social poverty. The addition can be justified by pointing out that Jesus is referring in the first place to the voluntary poverty of his disciples and that in the Old Testament, where the *anawim* are the pious poor who rely on God for protection. But the addition does not cause a shift of emphasis. The phrase '*poor in spirit*' does not mean one who is weak in spirit, but one who, like the psalmist, looks to God alone to preserve him in the midst of his affliction (Ps 34). One does not live out of one's own resources, nor rely on one's own achievements to overcome the seemingly overwhelming difficulties.

The poor in Matthew, Chapter 5, verse 3, represent an existential condition. The term is quite frequent in the Gospels, but it is only in this passage that Matthew adds 'in spirit'. In the gospels, the poor are often mentioned among the blind, the crippled and the prisoners (Matt 5:11). All these categories are people who are facing a situation lacking a need, which provokes the compassion of other people, who can express their compassion through almsgiving, kindness and solidarity. In short, the poor need to be helped; their condition of life is in no way ennobled. This is the real paradoxical point in the gospel: *the kingdom of God belongs to the poor*. It does not belong to the poor, just by the fact

that they are poor, but rather, the kingdom of God by its very nature belongs to the lowly and those who are not able to defend themselves. They are the poor in the gospel understanding. It is then a prerogative of God to take care of the poor and to protect them. This is what makes the poor blessed. The poor are the natural beneficiaries of that prerogative. The poor are not better than others; it is their condition of want which provokes God. The poor in this first beatitude are, therefore, persons in distress, which makes them favoured persons to God. What is given as an example to imitate in the poor is not their distress, but their happiness for the preferential solicitude of God on their behalf. Let us now turn to the Gospel of Saint Luke on the beatitude of the poor.

1:3:3. “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20)

The poor, the hungry and those who mourn are all those people who are regarded as the least of all in this world. Jesus encourages them, addressing his message of comfort to them. Israel had experienced in its own history how God takes the side of the poor and the oppressed when they set their hope on him *...for Yahweh has consoled his people, is taking pity on his afflicted ones* (Isaiah 49:13). It is to those who are poor and wretched that God listens above all, *listen to me, Yahweh, answer me, for I am poor and needy* (Ps 86:1). God continues to act in this same way in the time that proclaims salvation. The gospel was preached to the poor and brought to them (Luke 4:18). The disciples left everything and gave up owning the goods of this world and chose to be poor. They understood that the life of a person is not dependent on the goods one owns but on entering the kingdom of God.

1:3:4. Conclusion

We can see now why the poor were so important to Jesus. To be poor in the sight of God means entering into the spirit and practice of the Gospel. It means sharing in God's humble love for others, impoverishing oneself in order to enrich others. It also means depending on God, placing all one's faith and hope in God, like the birds of the air or the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:26-30). For Jesus, the greatest commandments are love of God and love of neighbour. On these two commandments hang the whole law, and the prophets too (Matthew 22: 40). The divine and humble love is the foundation of all the precepts of the Law, the law of the gospel, and this love is exercised through self-emptying and impoverishment. *Laying down one's life* is the sign of the greatest love possible, the love that Jesus Himself demonstrated (John 15: 13).

We will not be questioned about the evil things we have avoided but about the good we have done or failed to do: *feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and prisoners* (Matthew 25:31-45). This leads us to the parable of the Last Judgement.

1:4. THE LAST JUDGEMENT

“Truly, I say to you: whatever you did this to these little ones who are my brothers and sisters, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40).

This is one of the most vivid parables Jesus ever spoke, and the lesson is crystal clear that God will judge us in accordance with our reaction to human needs. His judgement does not depend on the knowledge we have amassed, or the fame that we have

acquired, or the fortune that we have gained, but on the help we have given.⁵ Although the story is often referred to as a parable, it cannot really be classified as such. The only parabolic features it contains are the shepherd, the sheep and the goat (v.3), and these, in fact, are just passing illustrations, probably based on Ezekiel 34.⁶ The emphasis is no longer on the theme of delay, nor even on the continued motifs of the Son of Man, final reckoning, and separation of good and bad. The central point is: what is the criterion of judgement? Or, put in the terms of Chapter 25, what does it mean to be watchful, ready and faithful? The answer is that to be watchful means to be able to recognise the Son of Man in all those in need. To be ready means to have love towards the Son of Man in the poor. Then to be faithful means to translate this love into active service and into concrete deeds of mercy. This is the criterion by which one enters into or is rejected from eternal life. It affirms the ultimate importance of acts of love towards even the least of Christ's brethren.

1:4:2. Love of God and neighbour (the poor)

Judgement according to works of mercy is therefore, a judgement based on Christology, on the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ. The King will answer them: *Truly, I say to you: whatever you did not do for one of these little ones, you did not do for me* (25:45). Neglect of the poor is the decisive not doing of the will of God which marks one as fit company for the devil. Jesus demanded in (Matt 20:26; 23:11) that his disciples be servants, *the greatest among you must be your servant*. No matter what good they may have done or evil they may have perpetrated, the decisive question is; *did you love*

⁵ William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1979), p.324

⁶ David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p.330.

the poor in concrete acts of mercy? Christ's teaching on the twofold love of God and neighbour (Matt 22:34-40), thus undergoes a profound transformation. *Love of the poor (neighbour) is practically identified with love of God and receives a christological basis.*⁷

If Christ himself is solidly with the poor, it could be either He himself is one the poor of Yahweh, known from the Old Testament, or He has chosen to be poor himself. Consciously or not, all people through their attitudes towards the poor are made answerable to a judgement that involves their relation to Christ. This is true because for Christ and Matthew all the law and the prophets depend on the love of God and neighbour. The two commandments are but one, because what is done to a human person is done to God. Whoever loves the poor, loves God and one cannot love God without loving the poor (people). The love we have for our brothers and sisters is the measure of our love for God.

1:5. Conclusion

The things which Jesus picks out: giving a hungry person a meal, a thirsty person a drink, welcoming a stranger, cheering the sick, visiting the prisoners, are things which anyone can do. The list of people who needed help and who should be helped was well known throughout the ancient oriental world (Isaiah 58:6-7): the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and the prisoners. It is not a question of giving away thousands of shillings, or of writing our names in the annals of history. It is a case of giving simple help to the people we meet every day. Whatever one does to these little ones, one does to him. I will now move to Section Two on Mother Teresa. She was inspired by the teachings of Jesus on the Last Judgement.

⁷ John P. Meier, *Matthew: New Testament Message 3* (Delaware: Michael Glazier, 1980), p. 305.

CHAPTER TWO

MOTHER TERESA'S LOVE IN ACTION

2:1. Introduction

The story of Mother Teresa's life is no mere humanitarian exploit, as she would be the first to declare. It is a story of biblical faith. It can only be explained as a proclamation of Jesus Christ by *loving and serving Him in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor, both materially and spiritually, recognising in them and restoring to them the image and likeness of God.*⁸

Mother Teresa relied only on the grace and power of God, yet she was singularly practical and down to earth. She wanted to manifest God's love in action for the poorest of the poor. Her life was fully Christo-centric. Mother Teresa's service to the poor was a selfless, single-minded service to Jesus Christ in the guise of the poor. As Jesus had confirmed in His presence, *I am among you as one who serves* (Luke 22:27). She suffered and lived the life of the poor.

2:2. Theology of the Poor

Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me (Matt 25:40). Jesus' teaching, especially on the Last Judgement in Matthew 25, inspired Mother Teresa to believe that by loving and caring for these people one loves and serves God. Mother Teresa said that our final judgement would be based on such love, unconditional love that should motivate us to the service of the poor.

⁸ Constitutions of Missionaries of Charity, article 1.

Mother Teresa's love for the poor had a spiritual motive and a solid theological foundation. It was a deep and personal love of Jesus Christ that motivated her to love the poor. What Mother Teresa offered was Christian love in action. It was unconditional service based on the love of Christ, *Love one another as I have loved you* (John 15:12).

Love and concern for the destitute was something very much part of Mother Teresa from the beginning of her life. That the poor are the very presence of Christ was her personal conviction. With this conviction, she served them and this was the starting point of her mission. However, the foundation of her conviction goes back to the Gospel. Jesus evidences twelve times that, "*whatever you do to the least of my brethren is done to me*. Six times positively he says: *I was hungry...gave me food, I was thirsty...gave me drink ...* Then he explains six times negatively: *I was hungry...gave me no food* (Matt 25:31-46). However, based on this teaching Mother Teresa expressed her 'theology of the poor'. *We serve Jesus in the poor, we nurse Him, feed Him, clothe Him, visit Him, comfort Him in the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the orphans, the dying. I serve Jesus twenty-four hours a day. Whatever I do is for Him...I love Him in the poor and the poor in Him.*⁹

2:3. Approach to the Poor

Mother Teresa saw the poor with a spiritual vision through the eyes of faith. Her approach has to be understood from the viewpoint of her religious mission. Whether poor or rich, everyone is a child of God. Mother Teresa said that we learn many things from the poor. Their patience in suffering, their spirit of acceptance and their generosity of heart show us how great the poor are. The dying poor teach us how to die, trusting in

⁹ Edward Le Joly, *We do it for Jesus: Mother Teresa and Her Missionaries of Charity* (Bombay: St. Paul Press, 1995), pp 12-13.

God. We receive from them more than we give. *The poor are very kind people and great. They have great value and give to us much more than we give them.*¹⁰

Mother Teresa said that the people of today do not think that the poor are human beings like themselves. They look down upon them. *But if they (the rich) had that deep respect for the dignity of the poor people, I am sure it would be easy for them to come closer to them, and to see that they too are the children of God, and that they have as much right to the things of life, and of love and of service as anybody else.*¹¹ A large section of people today has a negative attitude towards the poor. Although they help the poor, their help is limited to giving from their surplus. This kind of assistance does not reflect the right attitude. Mother questioned, *do you believe that it can happen... that we treat the poor like they are a garbage bag in which we throw everything we have no use for?*¹² Food we do not like or which is going bad... we throw there. Perishable goods past their expiration date, and which might harm us, go into that garbage bag. In other words, they go to the poor. An article of clothing that is not in style anymore, that we do not want to wear again, goes to the poor. This does not show any respect for the dignity of the poor. What is essential is an inner change in our attitude towards the poor and to consider them as equals, our brothers and sisters. We ought to see Christ in the poor.

¹⁰ Mother Teresa, *Heart of Joy* (Calcutta: St. Paul Press, 1975), p.6.

¹¹ Malcolm Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God* (London: Collins, 1971), p.119.

¹² John Moniz, *No Greater Service: Mother and The Mahatma* (Mumbai: St Paul Press, 1998), p.46.

2:4. Christ in the Poor.

Helping the poor, curing the sick and consoling the lowly are ways of helping Jesus Himself. Although Christ is present in every person, He lives in a special way in the poorest of the poor. He became incarnate and was born in a stable (Luke 2:7). Mother Teresa perfectly shared this vision: *in our work, we find Christ under the appearance of flesh and blood. It is the same Christ who said, I was hungry, naked, sick, homeless... The poor anywhere in the world are Christ who suffers. In them the Son of God lives and dies. Through them God shows His face.*¹³

Jesus Christ is present among us in many forms. He is with us through the Word of God, in the community and in the Sacraments. In the Eucharist He is present under the appearance of bread and wine. However, in her work, Mother Teresa meets Jesus in person. The people sunning in the parks who feel alone, undesired, unattended, immersed in sadness are Jesus. Through the poorest of the poor Jesus appears in different forms: *Jesus comes to meet us. To welcome him, let us go to meet him. He comes to us in the hungry, the naked, the lonely, the alcoholic, the drug addict, the prostitute, the street beggars. He may come to you or me in a father, a mother, a brother and in a sister who is alone. If we reject them, if we do not go out to meet them, we reject Jesus Himself.*¹⁴

The poor can belong to whatever religion, yet they personify Jesus Christ. Mother Teresa's love in action transcended every religion and creed. It is very possible that we will find human beings, surely very near us, needing affection and love. We should not deny them this love and affection. We ought to show them that we sincerely recognise that they are human beings and important to us. Who is that someone? That person is

¹³ Jose L. Gonzalez-Balado, *Mother Teresa in Her Own Words* (Mumbai: St Paul Press, 1997), p. 27.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

Jesus Himself, who is hidden under the guise of suffering.¹⁵ To her, all were brothers and sisters in Christ. She denied no one because he or she belonged to another creed. Thus everyone represents Jesus Christ. The appearance of a leper, a newborn baby found in the gutter, an aged person dying on the road, a baby disfigured with wounds, no matter who the needy person may be, he/she is Jesus. *When we touch the sick, the needy, we touch the suffering body of Christ.* Everything she did for suffering people was done for Jesus, since he is hidden in them. *Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I recognise you and say: Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.*¹⁶

We get closer to Jesus by coming closer to each person, especially the least of the least. Mother Teresa was very cautious that this work of serving the poor should not become a social and welfare service. She invited her Sisters to discover Christ in every sick person, moment by moment and day by day. In one of her daily prayers she asked for this particular grace :

*Jesus my suffering Lord,
grant that today and every day,
I may see you in the person of your sick ones,
and in caring for them I may serve you.
Grant also that even in the guise of the fretful,
the demanding, the unreasonable,
I may still recognise you and say:
My suffering Jesus,
how sweet it is to serve you.
Lord give me this vision of faith
and my work will never become monotonous.
I will find joy in indulging the moods and gratifying
the desires of all the poor who suffer.
O dear sick one,
how much dearer still you are to me because
you represent Christ. What a privilege I have to be able to tend you.*¹⁷

¹⁵ John Moniz, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁶ Jose L. Gonzalez-Balado, op. cit., p 15.

¹⁷ Mother Teresa, Love of Christ (Bombay: St. Paul Press, 1978), p. 6

2:5. Identification with the Poor

Another aspect in Mother Teresa's theology of the poor was her solidarity with them. Mother Teresa's service to the poor began from perfect identification with the poor. It was to live, move and have her being with them. *To serve well the poor, we must understand them, to understand their poverty we must experience it. Working for them we came to identify ourselves with them. Our life of poverty is as necessary as work itself.*¹⁸ She stripped herself first, lived a life as simple as possible with minimum belongings. Time and again in the early days, she went hungry so that others could eat or gave people the little money she had, and silently walked home. She said the same to the members of her Congregation: *Our sisters must feel as they (the poor) feel; feel their poverty before God, know what it is to live without security depending on God for the morrow. Our food, our dress, all must be just like the poor.*¹⁹

So much was their identification with the poor during the early years in Calcutta that they were known as the *Coalie Sisters* which means those *who do menial work*.²⁰ The theological basis of this identification is Jesus Christ. The simple and poor life of Jesus is an example. We should have the mind and attitude of Jesus Christ; *though He was in the form of God, He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of humanity* (Phil 2:6-7). We should share with Him just as He shares with us and Christ, being rich, became poor (2 Cor 8:9). If we want to imitate Christ, who in spite of being rich became poor and practised poverty, we have to do what he did. Christ could have chosen a royal palace as his home. However, in order to be like us, He chose to be like us in all things but sin

¹⁸ John Moniz, *op. cit.*, p.60

¹⁹ Jose L. Gonzalez Balado, *op. cit.*, p.3.

²⁰ R. Rai and N. Chawla, *Mother Teresa: Faith and Compassion* (New Delhi: Elements Books Limited, 1996), p. 181.

(Heb 4:15). *We must, in order to be like the poor choose to be like them in all things except in the state of misery.*²¹

2:6. HER METHODOLOGY

Mother Teresa too had her method. It is not that one just picks up the poor, nurses and cares for them and provides all the material help. Everything should start from a deep love of God, unconditional love, and personal prayer and contemplation.

2:6:1. **A Deep Love of God and the Poor.**

Mother Teresa's love of God is also based on the Pauline concept of love in the New Testament. St Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians explains the importance of love. *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have no love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal...* (1Cor 13:1-3). Mother Teresa expressed the same conviction in different ways. Love of Jesus should come first; all the rest is secondary:

*Our activity is truly apostolic only in so far as we permit Him (Christ) to work in us and through us, with His power, with His desire, and with His love. We are to be all love, all faith, all purity for the sake of the poor we serve. And once we have learnt to seek God and his will, our contrasts with the poor will become the means of great sanctity to ourselves and to others.*²²

All that we do, our prayer, our work, our suffering is for Jesus. She used to say that we should serve Jesus twenty-four hours of the day. She loved Jesus in the poor and the poor in Jesus, but always the Lord came first. If one is not interwoven with love then whatever one does has less value. Mother Teresa says that we must never think of ourselves as indispensable. God has ways and means. God sees only love. Love for the

²¹ Gonzalez-Balado, op. cit., p.39.

²² Muggeridge, op. cit., p. 65.

poor should be a reflection of God's love for them. Jesus Christ preached a *religion of love*. It was the definite communication of the eternal love to the whole of humanity, especially to those who desperately needed that love. Someone told Mother Teresa that not even for a million dollars would he touch a leper. She replied, *neither would I. If it were a case of money, I would not even do it for two million dollars. On the other hand I do it gladly for love of God.*²³

2:6:2. Unconditional Love

It is unconditional love that should motivate us to the service of the poor. All other motives should be ruled out. Once it so happened that a young Brother came to her and said,

*Mother, I have a special vocation to work with the lepers. I want to give my life to them, my whole being. Nothing attracts me more than that. Mother Teresa answered him, I think that you are somewhat wrong, Brother. Our vocation consists in belonging to Jesus. The Work is nothing but a means to express our love for him. What is important for you is to belong to Jesus. And He is the one who offers you the means to express that belonging.*²⁴

The service to the poor should be an expression of one's personal love for God. A most important characteristic of true love is that it always makes the other person feel good. It touches the deep hidden self and opens people's eyes to their own worth and beauty. The guiding inspiration in the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta was her awareness of the people's need for love. When she finds some rejected person on the point of death she gives that person all her loving care during the last moments of life, even though the person will not recover.

²³ Jose L. Gonzalez-Balado, *Mother Teresa In My Own Words* (London: Hodder & Stronghton, 1997), p.47

²⁴ Jose L. Gonzalez-Balado, *In Her Own Words*, p. 11.

It is told that as she cradled one old dying man in her arms, the man, who was disfigured by disease and dirt, looked up at her and said, *how strange that I, who have lived like an animal, should die like an angel.* This is the effect that genuine love can have - love that is given not as a reward for some achievement, not as a bribe to get something done but just as a gift, given to someone who is loveable in himself.

Mother Teresa tells how she was once in Europe collecting money for her work in India when she got news of heavy storms and flooding in a district in India where she was working. Many poor people were left homeless. She was greatly disturbed at the news and spoke to a certain priest, sharing with him her distress and near despair. She said to the priest, *Father, how can I go back to these poor people and talk to them about the love of God?* The priest gave her a profound answer. He said, *Mother, go back to those people. But do not talk to them about the love of God, be the love of God to them.*²⁵ This was how Jesus witnessed, he made God's love visible. We are called to be other Christs.

2:6:3. Prayer and Contemplation

Mother Teresa believed that only by the grace of God was it possible to serve the poorest of the poor. No one can give to others what one does not have. It is not possible to give Jesus to others if we do not have Him first in our hearts. Thus we need a deep personal relationship with Him in order to be able to give Christ to others.

A life of prayer is the generator that produces the force to love and serve the poor. Prayer brings new strength and new joy. One cannot engage in giving love to others without first being a person of deep prayer. As Christ was one with the Father we should

²⁵ Robert Kelly ,s.j., Planted in Love (Ndola: Mission Press, 1989), p. 14.

be one with Christ. As Christ prayed always, we should pray without ceasing. *The fruit of Prayer is a deepening of Faith. The fruit of Faith is Love. The fruit of Love is Service and the fruit of Service is Peace* ²⁶

The day begins with prayer. The Sisters go to the bare quietness of the Chapel and prostrate themselves before Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. There they see Jesus in the consecrated bread and throughout the day they continue to see Him in the faces of the poor. In silence, they hear what Jesus Christ says to them; 'I THIRST' are the words written close to the Blessed Sacrament. Each one should respond to this thirst. *It is here that we should have a personal encounter with Jesus who thirsts.* ²⁷ Their personal prayer says that Jesus in the poor is thirsty not only for a drink but thirsty for love, for kindness, for compassion, for a word of hope, for human concern. Having contemplated before the Lord who thirsts, they are ready to live the fruits of contemplation during the day. All this is to prepare for the day's work with the poor. *Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gifts of God Himself. It begets faith and faith begets love and love begets service on behalf of the poor.* ²⁸ In silence and contemplation, in prayerful adoration before the tabernacle, Mother Teresa learned to see the true face of God in every suffering human being. *Cardinal Angelo Sodana, Vatican Secretary of State, said this at the funeral of Mother Teresa: In prayer she discovered the essential truth which underlines the Church's social teaching and her religious and humanitarian work in every age and in every part of the world.* ²⁹ They are two important prayers that the Missionaries of Charity have to pray every morning. One is the prayer of peace by **St Francis of Assisi:**

²⁶ Mother Teresa, *Words of Love*, pp. 36-38.

²⁷ John Moniz, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19

²⁹ *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17th September 1997.

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow Love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;
Lord, may I not so much seek
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
Because it is in giving that we receive,
in pardoning that we are pardoned,
in giving that we receive,
and in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

The other prayer was written by **Cardinal Newman** :

*Jesus, help me to spread your fragrance wherever I am.
Fill my heart with your Spirit and your life,
penetrate my being and take such hold of me
that my life becomes a radiation of your own life.
Give your light through me and remain
in me in such a way that every soul
I come in contact with can feel your presence in me.
May people not see me, but see you in me.
Remain in me, so that I shine with your light.
All light will come from you, oh Jesus .
Not even the smallest ray of light will be mine.
You will illuminate others through me.
place on my lips your greatest praise,
illuminating others around me.
May I preach you with actions more than with words,
with the examples of my actions,
with the visible light of love that comes from you to my heart, Amen³⁰*

These prayers in some way express Mother Teresa's mission. She wanted all Sisters to recite these prayers before beginning their daily activities. The vision that is presented through these prayers is that one should be an instrument of love and peace, joy and hope. The first requirement for prayer is silence. People of prayer are people of

³⁰ Gonzalez-Balado, *In Her Own Words*, pp. 20-21

silence. She used to say that her secret is a very simple one: I pray. To pray to Christ is to love Him. The apostles did not know how to pray, and they asked Jesus to teach them.

Mother Teresa had an integral vision of prayer. She ruled out any tendency to make prayer and activity two water-tight compartments. Sometimes it happens that people pray regularly, recite many prayers and have a number of personal devotions to saints, but they fail to transform prayer into love and service. Although prayer and contemplation in itself is an apostolate, if it does not lead the person to have more love for another person, especially the poorest of the poor, then such a prayer and contemplation is void and becomes a ritual. Mother Teresa was very careful to avoid such an empty form of prayer. *Many times a deep and fervent gaze upon Christ is the best prayer. I look upon Him, He looks upon me, is the most perfect prayer.*³¹ For Mother Teresa the only hope is Jesus Christ. It is through Him that she lived, moved and had her being.

2:7. The Fourth Vow: To Serve only the Poor.

Many of Mother Teresa's former students of St. Mary's High School joined her. Even though they were rich and well-educated they wanted to be poor, to serve the poor and to live among them. They adopted as a habit the simple 'sari' of the 'parias'(the lowest caste in the Indian social scale). This was indeed a cultural and religious revolution of love. The new congregation of Missionaries of Charity obtained the approval of the local Church on October 7, 1950. In 1963, with Fr Andrew Travers, Mother Teresa founded the male counterparts.

³¹ Gonzalez-Balado, *One Heart Full of Love: Mother Teresa* (Glasgow: William Collins & Sons, 1988), p. 6

Wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor is the characteristic mark of Mother Teresa. It is an obligation of her Congregation. Unlike other religious congregations, who take the three vows of poverty, obedience and chastity, the Missionaries of Charity make one more vow, that of giving wholehearted free service to the poor (to serve only the poor). This vow means that they cannot work for the rich; neither can they accept any money for the work they do. Whenever Mother Teresa accepted money or an award, she always took it in the name of the poor, whom they recognised in her. *Who am I? I am nothing. It is the poor whom they recognise in me and to whom they want to give because they see what we do.*³² Although other congregations work for the poor as part of the Gospel, the Missionaries of Charity exclusively dedicate themselves to the poor and live with them. The three basic virtues of Sisters are total surrender, loving trust and cheerfulness. These must enable them to go through their religious life coming closer and closer to the Lord Jesus whom they serve in the poor. The Sisters are prepared to give themselves again to God, to renew and perfect their offering to the Divine Majesty in the spirit of the Congregation. Cheerfulness in the fulfilment of the most unattractive task is a characteristic of the institute. Mother Teresa's words are inscribed in the Constitutions: *Never let anything so fill you with pain or sorrow as to make you forget the joy of the Risen Christ.* This is written at the top of the chapter on bearing the cross of Christ Jesus, which is the proof of the greatness of His love and theirs in return to Him.

Their identification with the poor is no mere figure of speech. Every Sister is allowed to have three saris - one to wear, another to wash and a third one to mend - two sets of underclothes, a pair of sandals, a small crucifix, a rosary, a bucket, metal spoon and

³² R. Kizito, "A Call to Love" New People Magazine, (Nairobi : November 1994), p.26

rimmed plate, a canvas bag and a prayer book. These are their belongings. M. Muggeridge explains, *They eat the same food, wear the same clothes, possess as little, are not permitted to have a fan or any of the mitigations of life in Bengal's sweltering heat even at their prayers. The clamour and discordance of the street outside, lest they should forget for a single second why they are there and where they belong.*³³ Their possessions are held in common.

Their life is being together, living together, praying together and working together. Everything is done for the glory of God. 'Together' is one of the mottoes of Mother Teresa: Together in Jesus and around Jesus and together for God. This is the fundamental choice for the Missionaries of Charity and the goal is crystal clear. It overcomes differences, brings unity in diversity. It accepts the other individual, however different, sees the beauty in that divergence. The clarity of the goal in Christ unites them. This is the reason the Sisters live together, white or black, eastern or western, young or old. Before sharing with the poor, they share among themselves. Sharing with the poor is an expression of their living together and sharing together.

One of the Sisters in Kibera Community, a Nairobi slum, told me that they are not channels, they are instruments. Channels give nothing of their own, they just let the water run through them. We are simply instruments in God's hand. She said that she is nothing, but an instrument, a tiny pencil in the hands of the Lord with which He writes what He likes. In Nairobi's Huruma Estate there are 30 Sisters of Mother Teresa's Congregation, from India, Rwanda, Germany, Tanzania, Kenya and a number of other countries. They take care of the poor and also prepare a huge number of girls to continue in their

³³ Christopher Hitchens, *The Missionary Position*, (New Delhi, Harper and Collins, 1996), p. 44

apostolate. This is the best legacy Mother Teresa has left for us. Sister Janice, from India, says; "Mother Teresa loved Africa so much. She wanted to come here as a missionary and more recently, when travelling, she was telling everybody of how good Africans are, and of how many African girls in Nairobi are preparing themselves to the service of the poor".

CHAPTER THREE

PASTORAL IMPLICATION OF LOVE IN ACTION

3:1. Church and the Poor.

The Church has to continue this mission for ages following the examples of Jesus and Mother Teresa. The Church has to be on the side of anyone who is in need and open to God's love, and who wishes to respond to His message. The oppressed poor deserve our care and concern. God loves and defends them because they are defenceless, reduced to a non-human level, thrown to the bottom of society. They are subjected and humiliated in an unjust way by those with power. *"He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours Him"* (Proverbs 14:31). God comes to their defence because of their helpless situation. He sends prophetic persons to defend the poor, who become the mediators of salvation for all.

Today, it is evident that the poor are becoming increasingly poor. Their number has grown, their suffering increased and their misery has become more acute than ever. They suffer not only from poverty, but they are subjected to deprivation and marginalisation. Let us take an example of what is happening in Kenya, especially in the slums. The so-called *Private Developers* are taking the little pieces of land owned by the poor and leaving them homeless. Where is justice and the Church, when the poor are left in an open space without a shelter?

I know that the prevailing situation cannot be solved by charity alone, although it can reduce the misery of the poor. The eradication of poverty demands that its root causes

be solved by appropriate methods. There should be someone involved, visibly committed to be a representative for the voiceless poor. It is here that the Church must realise its role and become a visible representative, not an invisible one, 'voice of the voiceless' and a cry for the poor and mediators to liberate oppressed humanity. Pope John Paul II says that *the poor are, in fact, God's favourites* He gives a fuller understanding of the option for the poor. Having seen the slum-dwellers, farm - workers, street beggars and encountered Mother Teresa and the poor masses of the world, he says that *the Church all over the world should be like Mother Teresa in caring for the poor.*³⁴ The poor should be evangelised. The Church should redouble all its energies so that Jesus' love in action may be proclaimed to all, but especially to the poor, and that everyone may have access to this living source, the table of the word and of bread.

The option for the poor is a Christian option. It is also the option of a society that is concerned about the true common good. The extraordinary synod of 1985, which was held to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II, contains a section under the title **Preferential Option for the Poor and Human Development**. It declared:

*After Vatican II, the church became more aware of her mission for service of the poor, the oppressed and marginalised. In this preferential option, which is not to be understood as exclusive, the true spirit of the gospel shines out. Jesus Christ declared the poor blessed (Matt 5:3) and he himself willed to be poor for our sake (2 Cor 8:9). The Church must in prophetic fashion, denounce every form of poverty and oppression and defend and support everywhere the fundamental and inalienable right of the human person.*³⁵

Poverty is a crying reality in Africa today. We cannot deny, but believe, that God is intensely present in the midst of this misery. His ears are open to listen to these cries, in

³⁴ John Paul II, *Social Concern*

³⁵ "Preferential Option" *The Tablet*, December, 14, 1985, pp 132-3.

their baffling varieties. The Church is Christ's presence in the world today. So the question which we are bound to ask should be clear: *on whose side should the Church be, on the side of the poor or on the side of the oppressors?* It is in answering this question that the Church is today declaring itself more and more clearly to have decided for a preferential option for the poor. For sure, the religious are the Church's prophetic wing. They cannot function authentically today without consciously assuming this option.

If the Church is being challenged to be sensitive to the love and cry of the poor and to understand what the message is in this cry and what the church is to do about it, religious must be among those concerned in the first place. They should be the feeling part of the church, the organ where serious analysis of the realities can be done and where imaginative responses can be planned in the name of the Church. It is a challenge from the Lord of human history calling the religious to take seriously into account the 'signs of the times', so as to reassess their programmes of action and service with a view to meeting the needs and priorities of the present moment.

3:2. Our Service to the Poor.

In Christian circles, service to the poor is expressed as *option for the poor*. This expression 'option for the poor' has aroused lot of discussion and theological debate today. It has become one of the most controversial terms, especially among liberation theologians. On the one hand, this option has been appreciated and on the other, it is thought that this option comes from a social analysis or human compassion. It is claimed that it leads to sentiments against the rich, causing division, antagonism and even class struggle. Our love in action should not be 'an armchair love' but a 'practical love.'

The poor are materially impoverished, politically and economically powerless. They are people who are impotent in every way. All over the world they are forced to live in areas away from their compatriots. Often these people are forgotten and looked down upon by others. They need someone to show them that they are loved and cared for. St John Bosco, founder of the Salesians, used to say *let the young people especially the poor and abandoned ones, know that they are loved and cared for*. This should be our pastoral concern. Mother Teresa and her congregation have shown us the way to work with poor people. The poor people have no influence or power, no help or prestige; they are downtrodden and oppressed. They live without hope, their faces disfigured, and they are reduced to a non-personal level. How many young people are moving up and down in the streets with their faces distorted? They need someone to be with them and to take care of them. Our love for the oppressed poor (poorest of the poor) is fundamentally based on our love for God. Hence, it is a choice for God. G. Gutierrez, liberation theologian, says that our love for the poor is not based on human motives but on the divine motive. He asserts:

I must strongly emphasise that the ultimate reason for a Christian, is the God of Jesus Christ. We must be committed to the poor because we believe in the God of the kingdom. The Preferential Option for the poor is a theocentric option. We must be committed to the poor, not necessarily because they are poor, but because God is love in action.³⁶

The Christian message will be lived by those who renounce a life of ready pleasure and dedicate themselves to serving others in a realistic way in today's world. For that is the criterion and gauge that Christ is going to use in passing judgement on us, even on those who had not known him (Matt 25:13ff). Service to the poor, involvement with them and commitment to their cause are the privileged gauge of our following of Christ. This

³⁶ "Preferential Option" The Month 7, 1989, p.266.

service demands constant conversion and purification among all Christians. This must be done if we are to achieve fuller identification each day with the poor Christ and our poor in the world.

3:3. Love in Action; A Challenge for Us Today

Jesus Christ and Mother Teresa have shown us the way to eradicate the misery of our people who are poor. It is just a matter of being the witnesses of Christian love in the world. Love in action means a personal commitment to engage actively in helping them at every level. This commitment for the poor takes various forms, depending on the living conditions of the poor. The society we live in has stratified certain structures, depending on communities, economic, political, social and religious situations. The various structures not only favour stratified groups but they promote and perpetuate the system. The established structures operate to promote the dominance of the rich and the powerful, and the poor are forced to surrender to them. In some situations they are reduced to a non-personal level - they are dehumanised. The vast majority of them live in misery. They are economically poor, politically oppressed, socially marginalised, culturally disinherited and religiously silenced. Now what is the challenge for us in these situations?

I have said that 'option' means personal free choice. This choice is for the poor, to defend them and raise them from non-human to human level. Solidarity and material help alone do not solve their problems, but sharing and participating in their sorrows, fears, and tears is the only true aspect of love in action. Along with sharing their sorrows and fears, we should commit ourselves actively to redressing the structural injustice in our countries, to be the 'voices of the voiceless'. This is the only witness we can share with the poorest

of the poor. Ours should be an effort to identify with the people at the bottom that leads to creating unity with the people at the top and to establishing equality. We have to communicate God's love to both of them and to become mediators of liberation to all. In the footsteps of Jesus Christ and Mother Teresa, we should be simple and open to the poor. There must be a collective effort in the Church to go back to the spirit of the primitive community. Such a spirit brings greater vibrant and active witness to the simplicity of God. We should earnestly strive to avoid the appearance of extravagance and ostentation in Church affairs. Following the examples of Jesus, we should foster an ardent desire to give life, like Jesus, for the service of the poor.

As we enter the third millennium, simplicity and authenticity should be the characteristics of the life of the Church today. The Church of today should be the Church of love in action and of witness. The poor people of today want witness, action and integrity and not preaching. We have to read the signs of the times. The Church of this new millennium should be more a simple Church of witness through action, a mediator in the liberation of the oppressed and the oppressor, communicating the integral salvation of the world to the end of the age. We in our lives and action should bear witness to God's love.

Love has to be put into action through unselfish service. To smile at someone who is sad, to visit, even for a little while, someone who is lonely and to give someone shelter from the rain, this shows love in action. Mother Teresa's service to the poorest of the poor was a selfless single-minded service to Jesus Christ in the guise of the poor. It was the way Jesus had confirmed his presence, *I am among you as one who serves* (Luke 22:27). Thus, to serve is to follow Christ the servant. Mother Teresa endured and lived the life of the poor. In the same way, we too have to become the instruments of

redemption to the poor. In this process we have to reduce ourselves to utter poverty and endure every suffering. We have to communicate Christ's redemptive love for the poor to our people today.

Mother Teresa's life was love in action. She was the witness of Christian love to the world. She was the personification of compassion and caring. Her vibrant, simple lifestyle was the sign of one's inner capacity to give oneself to others. At a time when one part of Christian and religious life is tending to be indifferent to the life of the poorest of the poor, she reminds us that it is possible to communicate God's love to the least of the least as we should. One of her Sisters told me that living our evangelical vows in the vertical aspect should lead ardently to its horizontal dimension of love, especially towards the least of our brethren.

Jesus Christ and Mother Teresa teach us how to integrate growth with serving the poor and the destitute. We have to communicate the integral salvation of the world in a unique way. Love of God and love of the poor should go hand in hand. Our faith, our Holy Mass, our prayer and all our religious duties should lead to fervent sentiments of fraternity towards the least of the least and to helping them in every way possible. A life that is indifferent to, or has no bearing on, the poor next door is not a part of the gospel. Hence, the option of Jesus Christ and Mother Teresa for the poor has a special relevance in today's society, especially here in Africa. Mother Teresa was lacking in the direction of becoming a 'voice of the voiceless', although she gave life to the 'lifeless', and hope to those without hope. Option for the poor needs prophetic denouncement as in the Bible but in the world today, which prefers life more than words, witness more than preaching, and action more than theory, Mother Teresa spoke through her life and concrete deeds.

Mother Teresa spoke more with her action than with her mouth, but when speaking, she never failed to please the audience. She delivered the Gospel of Life in blunt

terms, without niceties. When receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, in 1979, and accepting it in the name of 'the unwanted, unloved and uncared for', she added, *for me, the poorest nations in the world are those who legalise abortion.*

The listeners, mostly made up of representatives of the nations she evoked, were stunned. The powerful and their rituals have never intimidated Mother Teresa. Her message was simple: All that is done in the service of the poor, the abandoned and the dying, *is something beautiful done for God.* The poor and the dying are all equal, there is no difference according to their skin colour, their political belief and their religious faith. They just need to be loved. She has taught the world the meaning of goodness, of simplicity, of love, and of that outdated word, being a "saint". In a Church accused of masculinism, she was recognised as the holder of the top position in the hierarchy of holiness. The spotlight did not change her. I am certain, there are other Teresas in this world. As Karl Rahner said, the greatest saints are probably totally unknown. While Mother Teresa was discovered by the press, others continue to be saints in our midst without ever being noticed. Mother Teresa has sidelined the burdensome machinery of papal canonisation and she has been proclaimed 'saint' in an uncanonical way, while still alive, by world consensus, and by people of all faiths.

Fast track for Teresa. *Pope John Paul II has granted a special dispensation from Catholic Church rules that will allow Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who died in September 1997, to be put on the track towards eventual sainthood, the Vatican said today.*³⁷

The recognition of her witness did not spring from an artificially emotional climate created by the media, or from self-promotion, but from a life of service, of cleaning

³⁷ The Daily Nation, Tuesday, 2nd March 1999

wounds and vomit, of holding the hands of the dying. She has served the poor, and the ratification of her goodness has come from the heart of the poor

How to honour Mother Teresa?

The best way would be to do something concrete, like giving a caress, a smile or a meal to the many unwanted, unloved who are in our society. Extraordinary people like Teresa are a gift from God so that we could imitate them, not just sing their praises, put them in a special niche, and go about without change in our business of living. Or, if we have to confess ashamedly that we are not yet ready, or do not have the courage to make the first step towards the poor, at least we can help her Sisters, who in different communities in Africa untiringly dispense tender care and love to the poorest of the poor.

Let me conclude with a special dedication to Mother Teresa:

"Flame in the slum"

In the slums of Calcutta
Among the Poorest of the Poor
A flame burnt bright and clear
Spreading joy and cheer
To the orphaned and widowed
To the aged and disowned
To the millions in need
In word and in deed
Mother Teresa, world's shining light,
We miss you today and forever.
The love that you shared
And the work that you dared
Will go on in fond remembrance of you
There is less love in our world
There is less light in our homes
Our world is poorer again
Come on, join your hands in love
In compassion and in care
To dispel the darkness all around
Let there be Love in Action.

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APPENDIX I

MOTHER TERESA: A GIFT TO THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

Tributes and accolades for the Mother of the poor from civil and religious leaders around the world.

***Pope John Paul II:** 'A gift to the church and to the world.' 'Diminutive figure, bent over by a life spent in service to the poorest of the poor, but always filled with inexhaustible interior energy.'

***Bishop Antony M. Pilla** [Cleveland, USA]: "Her life was a lesson in love. Mother Teresa transcended cultures and politics. She saw Jesus in everyone from the child in the womb to the sick and vulnerable especially those afflicted with AIDS, to the aged and dying abandoned in the streets of Calcutta."

***President Bill Clinton** [USA]: Called her "one of the greats of our time,' a woman who showed us the stunning power of simple humility. The home for the dying she opened in Calcutta almost a half - century ago is called 'Nirmal Hriday,' Pure Heart, and if ever there was a pure heart, it was hers."

***Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral** [India]: 'Words fail me to express my sorrow...' calling the Nobel Laureate, 'an apostle of peace and love.'

***Cardinal George Basil Hume** [Westminster- Great Britain]: "It is rather lovely to think that Mother Teresa, who was very friendly with Princess Diana, should have gone so soon to join her. For our generation Mother Teresa has been a unique example of genuine holiness, her faith and life have inspired ordinary people around the world."

***Cardinal Thomas J. Winning** [Glasgow- Scotland]: Recalled that even as her health was falling, she "was one of the first to pay tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales. 'Both,' he said, showed a deep compassion and tenderness for the poor and the suffering."

***Queen Elizabeth II:** In her message to Missionaries of Charity she stated, 'her untiring devotion to the poor and destitute of all religions has been an inspiration worldwide.'

***Archbishop Francis J. Spence** [Kingston, Ontario, Canada]: "Mother Teresa's robust example of Christian service, made her a living symbol of the love and compassion of Jesus Christ."

***President Fernando Henrique Cardoso** [Brazil]: "Humanity has lost its symbol of solidarity." He called Mother Teresa "one of the most illustrious figures of the Catholic Church at the end of this century."

***Rev Billy Graham:** Recalled meeting her several times, "when she walked into the room to greet me, I felt that I was indeed meeting a saint." Few people in our time exemplified so powerfully and yet simply the love and compassion of Christ. "She is really something! I wish I had faith like that."

***Rev. Konrad Raiser** [Sec.Gen. World Council of Churches]: It was Mother Teresa's exceptionally powerful witness that drew the world's attention. He said that "the world will honour the memory of Mother Teresa best by its commitment to eradicate the exploitation which creates, for the majority of the world's peoples, so much suffering of body, mind and soul."

***Rev. Joan Brown Campbell** [Sec. Gen. National Council of the Churches of Christ in USA]: "We rejoice with you, for the life of Mother and for the friendship, counsel and ministry she preached for the benefit of so many. We celebrate her arrival in the heavens of God and know that the celestial jubilation is most befitting of the life she lived."

***Cardinal James A. Hickey** [Archbishop of Washington]: "She truly saw Jesus in the poorest of the poor. She inspired countless others to know, to love and to serve the poor."

***Cardinal Adam J. Maida** [Detroit]: "The world has lost a beacon of faith. The world has surely been blessed to have this saint walk among us."

***Cardinal Roger M. Mahony** [Los Angeles]: "She never ceased to remind us that the greatest poverty of all is to live and to die unloved and unwanted. So, she set out to show that God wants and loves everyone, and she did it one person at a time, for each of us is uniquely desirable and beautiful in God's eyes. Mother Teresa made God's eyes her eyes."

***Archbishop Justin F. Rigali** [St Louis]: Mother Teresa's love for the poor grew from her love for Jesus. For Mother Teresa, "Jesus was always to be found first in the Holy Eucharist."

***Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick** [Newark- USA]: Called Mother Teresa an 'extraordinary missionary' who always directed the focus away from herself and toward the good that others do to keep the unfortunate.

***Bishop William G. Curlin** [Charlotte -USA]: Personal friend for more than 25 years. "To be in her presence was like being with the Lord. Her entire life was centred upon Jesus Christ... She often walked among kings and heads of nations, yet, she was the most noble of them all."

***Bishop Frank J. Rodimer** [Paterson- USA]: "The acclaim Mother Teresa received, meant nothing to her...the poor got the honour."

***Fr Fred Kammer, s.j.** : "Mother Teresa's joy in her ministry sends a message to all of us who are suffocating in too much that we can find true happiness only in reaching out to others."

***Sharon Daly**: Beyond Mother Teresa's personal holiness, charity and charisma was a less known side of her. She was a strong woman with vision, an institution builder, who knew what she had to do, who came prepared with her facts and figures, who lobbied

politicians and the hierarchy for her cause, who would not be deterred by barriers to her mission."

***Knights of Columbus:** "Among Mother Teresa's many lessons for others, she taught us that the highest form of joy in this life lies in total self-forgetfulness and unreserved self-giving."

***Maryknoll Missionaries:** "A true missionary who brought the light of the Gospel into the darkest and most painful corners of the globe. While Mother Teresa made the world conscious of the needs of the poor and the destitute primarily in the third world, she was also prophetic in pointing out the spiritual poverty of the industrialised nations. She defended at every turn the sacredness of life, and now it is up to all of us to build and expand on the legacy she left us."

***Fr Edward A. Malloy, Holy Cross:** "Words truly cannot do justice to her. She simply and lovingly served God by serving his weakest children. Her example of selfless devotion to the poorest of the poor will live forever."

***President Kim Young-sam [South Korea]:** "The love and devotion shown by Mother Teresa will be remembered forever."

***President Daniel arap Moi [Kenya]:** "Mother Teresa was a special person, whose international acclaim emanated from her humility and selfless service to those who live in abject poverty and squalor, as well as the sick."

APPENDIX II

MOTHER TERESA'S FAMOUS QUOTES OF DEVOTION

- “I see God in every human being. When I wash the leper’s wounds I feel I am nursing the Lord Himself. Is it not beautiful?” - 1974 interview.
- “The poor give us much more than we give them. They are such strong people, living day to day with no food. And they never curse, never complain. We don’t have to give them pity or sympathy. We have so much to learn from them.” -- 1977 interview.
- “I choose the poverty of our poor people. But I am grateful to receive (the Nobel Prize) in the name of the hungry, the naked, the homeless, of the crippled, of the blind, of the lepers, of 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.” - Accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, 1979.
- “I have never been in a war before, but I have seen famine and death. I was asking (myself) what do they feel when they do this? I don’t understand it. They are all children of God. Why do they do it? I don’t understand.”- Beirut, 1982, during fighting between the Israeli army and Palestinian guerrillas.
- Abortion “is murder in the womb... A child is a gift of God. If you do not want him, give him to me. Life is a gift that God has given us. That life is present even in the unborn. Therefore, a human hand should never end a life.”
- “When I see waste here, I feel angry on the inside. I don’t approve of myself getting angry. But it is something you can’t help after seeing Ethiopia.”- Washington, 1984.

- "I was expecting to be free, but God has his own plans."- Calcutta, 1990, when the Sisters of her Order persuaded her to withdraw her resignation.
- "Please choose the way of peace... In the short term there may be winners and losers in this war that we all dread. But that never can, nor never will justify the suffering, pain and loss of life your weapons will cause." – Letter to George Bush and Saddam Hussein, January 1991.
- "The other day I dreamed that I was at the gates of heaven. And St. Peter said, 'Go back to Earth, there are no slums up here. So I came back to continue my work.'" - Quoted as telling Prince Michael of Greece in 1996.
- "If we worry too much about ourselves, we won't have time for others."
- "See the face of God in everything, in everyone and everywhere."
- "Faith, in order to be authentic has to be generous and giving. Love and faith go hand in hand."
- "Often we ask Christ to allow us to share in his sufferings. But when someone is indifferent to us, we forget that then is precisely the moment to share Christ's attitude."
- "The less we have, the more we give. It seems absurd, but it is the logic of Love."
- "God has not called me to be successful. God has called me to be faithful."
- "Let us not be satisfied just by giving money to the poor. Money is not everything. The poor need the love of our heart."
- "Someone told me that not even for a million dollars would they touch a leper. I responded: " Neither would I. If it were a case of money, I would not even do it for two million. On the other hand, I do it gladly for the love of God."

- "If we were humble, nothing would change us- neither praise nor discouragement. If someone were to criticize us, we would not feel discouraged. If someone were to praise us, we also would not feel proud."
- "The Missionaries of Charity are firmly convinced that each time we offer help to the poor, we really offer help to Christ."
- "At the moment of death we will not be judged according to the number of good deeds we have done or by the diplomas we have received in our lifetime. We will be judged according to the love we have put into our work."
- "Holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, what Jesus sends us. It consists in accepting the will of God."
- "Prayer makes your heart bigger, until it is capable of containing the gift of God Himself."
- "Peace begins with a smile."