Early Life

Mother Teresa, also known as Saint Teresa of Calcutta, was born on August 26, 1910, and given the name of Agnes. She was baptized on August 27, and she always considered this her “true birthday.”

At the age of eighteen, Agnes joined the Sisters of Loreto in Ireland. She hoped to learn English so she could become a missionary with the Sisters of Loreto in India. On May 24, Agnes made her first profession and took the name of Saint Therese of Lisieux, the patron of Missionaries. Since another sister had taken the name Therese, Agnes chose the Spanish spelling and became known as Sister Teresa. During this time, Sister Teresa worked as a teacher. On May 14, 1937, Sister Teresa made her final profession.

Missionaries of Charity

The road to founding a new community was filled with difficulties but that did not discourage Teresa. On October 7, 1950, the Vatican approved Teresa’s new community of thirteen sisters which would care for those who had no one to care for them—“the poorest of the poor,” the unlovable, and the burdensome, and the shunned. Teresa became Mother Teresa and served as superior general of the Missionaries of Charity from 1950 until her death in 1997.

Each member makes the customary vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. However, they also make a fourth vow— to give wholehearted free service to the poorest of the poor. In 1963, Mother Teresa also founded the Missionaries of Charity Brothers.

At the time of Mother Teresa’s death, the Missionaries of Charity had grown to more than 4,000 sisters and 300 brothers working at 610 missions in more than 123 countries.

Serving the Poor

Sister Teresa was transferred to the convent school of the Sisters of Loreto in Calcutta, and she taught there for almost twenty years. During her years teaching, she became disturbed by the poverty that abounded in Calcutta. On September 10, 1946, Sister Teresa experienced “the call within the call.” She describes the experience in the following way,

“I was to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them. It was an order. To fail would have been to break the faith.”

In 1948, Teresa donned a cotton sari (traditional Indian garb) with a blue border. Armed with Indian citizen and basic medical training, Teresa ventured into the slums. She founded a school and began caring for the poor and the hungry. Women began joining her in her work in 1949. Teresa then began formulating the groundwork for a new religious community dedicated to serving “the poorest of the poor.”

Feast Day: September 5
Patron of: World Youth Day, Archdiocese of Calcutta
Birth: August 26, 1910
Death: September 5, 1997

Discussion Questions

*What could you do in your everyday life to act/live like St. Teresa?

*Can you commit to pray a Hail Mary everyday for the needy children in the world?
Hi, I’m Mother Teresa!

People started calling me Mother Teresa after I founded the Missionaries of Charity. The sisters in my order take care of the poorest of the poor all over the world. After spending my life taking care of those who had no one to take care of them, and teaching the world about the great love of God, I died and went to Heaven to be with Jesus just a few years ago.