

CORPUS CHRISTI MOVEMENT FOR PRIESTS

RETREAT- "I Thirst- burning with love at the foot of the Cross"

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I Thirst” – burning with love at the foot of the Cross

In gratitude and praise for the gift of this CCM retreat, let us right from the start entrust these days to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It was at her pleading that the MC charism was granted to Blessed Teresa of Calcutta and through her to the Church and to each one of us. And Blessed Teresa of Calcutta always insisted that it is only through her that we can hear Jesus’ cry on the Cross and His cry in the poor: “I thirst”. Mary burned with love at the foot of the Cross as she joined her sacrifice to the Heart of her Son, burning with love for the Father and for souls. By remaining close to her, by finding our place *iuxta crucem cum Maria*, our own priestly hearts will burn with love for God and for souls. This theme “*iuxta crucem cum Maria*” was very dear to our beloved Fr. Joseph Langford MC, whom the Lord called to Himself two years ago.

I will be drawing a lot from Blessed Teresa’s own words and from the beautiful theological reflections of Fr. Joseph. At the same time I wish to follow the inner dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, which will lead us from a renewed faith in God’s love for us to a deeper conversion and to a deeper oneness with Christ, especially in His sacrifice to save souls and in the joy of His resurrection.

But let us first begin by thanking God for this grace He has given us to be at this retreat and to belong to the Corpus Christi Movement, which has a full share in the charism given by God to the Church through Blessed Teresa of Calcutta. The unique grace of this Movement is that it gives to us priests in particular our own specific share in the MC charism. Fr. Joseph told us in Prague that the same seed produces the same fruit. We cannot do exactly what MT did, but as priests we can do what she could not do. The aim of the CCM is to live our priesthood more fully and faithfully through a deeper prayer life and through a growing apostolic charity. It was MT’s first desire and prayer that we should strive for priestly renewal and holiness. This is the prayer and desire of the Church for us priests. A deep prayer life leads us to oneness with Christ, to union with Christ the Priest par excellence, in whose priesthood we have the grace to share. We cannot be holy, saintly priests except through this deep, personal union with Christ. We are convinced of this.

Fr. Joseph, who started the Movement with MT when he was still a member of my Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary, says that “each priest within the Movement is to personally answer Jesus’ ‘Thirst for love and souls’ (MT) in his own way, where he is, with his particular gifts of grace and mission and in the people who surround him. It is there that he is called not to do what MT did, but as she did: seeing, loving and serving the Lord in the people entrusted to his care – for they are the hidden presence of the thirsting Christ. By virtue of that call, we too are messengers with Jesus of the Father’s love, anointed with His Spirit to “bring glad tidings to the poor” (Lk 4:18) – above all to the spiritually poor of our own parishes who all, regardless of want or wealth, suffer a hunger which can never be satiated by bread alone. They hunger for God, for His word, for the Bread of Life, for the touch of His compassion. And so we, who are ordained to satisfy that hunger, cannot be content with mere administration or even with generous activity. Our people hunger for us to be men of God, to be “so united to Him as to be His radiance”, as Jesus asked of MT. We are called to “be Jesus” for them.

We are convinced, even as MT testified, that Calcutta is everywhere, present in every person and in every moment. We find the thirsting Jesus in every place, in every person, in every event, in every hour. We find Him we the Lord has put us as priests.

And so, as we begin our retreat, entrusting everything to OL, we desire to bring everything that makes up our daily priestly life to the Lord, all the duties and activities, all the people entrusted to our care, all the troubles, worries, failures, attachments and sins, all the good that has happened and is happening, fully convinced that we encounter the thirsting Jesus in all of these details. Those details are not distractions, but are the very places where we are called to hear Jesus' cry "I thirst" and to quench His thirst for love and for souls.

We want to come as we are to the Lord, aware that this is where Jesus is meeting us and loves us infinitely.

I. Principle and Foundation

And so let us begin our prayerful reflection with what St. Ignatius calls the "Principle and Foundation". The spiritual life always has a principle – a source from which the living waters of grace flow. It also has a foundation upon which everything else rests and is built up. In the MC charism, this PF is "I thirst". In John 7:37 the evangelist tells us - "On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and cried out in a loud voice: 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink...If anyone believes in Me, from within him shall flow springs of living water.'"

From the Cross Jesus cried out in a loud voice: "I thirst", and here John tells us that Jesus cries out in a loud voice: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink..." John stresses twice that Jesus spoke these words in a loud voice. Jesus cries out in a loud voice, so it should be easy to hear Him. But we know that it's not always easy to hear His voice. There's a lot of noise around us and in us. We all have our inner thirst, our intense desires, but wounded as we are by original sin and by our own person sin, our desires often conflict with one another. And very often it is these inner desires that make it hard to hear the cry of Jesus. But Jesus knows our inner thirst and desires: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink..." In other words, I know all the deep longing and desires of your heart, but don't try to quench that thirst and satisfy those desires in anything or anyone but Me, because I am the only One who can give you living water, water that fills your heart with love, joy and peace.

Here is the invitation of Jesus at this retreat: "Let him come to Me and drink..." That is what we are doing in these days. We are coming to Jesus to drink. We are bringing Him all of our thirsts and desires, the deepest longings of our heart. By coming to Him and purposely seeking to quench our thirst in Him, the gift of faith is strengthened in our heart, the wellsprings of His grace and love are opened up within us and we begin to experience the life-giving flow of grace: "If anyone believes in Me, from within him shall flow springs of living water." Then we can give to others, because we are not giving out of our own reserve. We are giving what we are constantly receiving.

As I mentioned above, St. Ignatius of Loyola, like all the saints, says that the spiritual life needs a clear principle and foundation. We need first of all a principle, a life-giving source from which we can draw living water. We need to know that there is a well we can go to every day to find all the graces we need to be holy priests, priests who belong totally to the Heart of Jesus. We also need a solid foundation that can withstand the

winds and storms that are inevitable. This principle and foundation is God's creative and redemptive love.

Ignatius is simply telling us what we already find in the Catechism. We have been lovingly created by God in order to know Him, love Him and serve Him here on earth and to live in an eternal union of love with Him in heaven. In MC terms we exist in order to satiate God's thirst for our love and to be satiated by His infinite love for us. Our MC principle and foundation is "I thirst".

Fr. Joseph says that since Jesus Himself spoke these words from the Cross, which is the culminating point of salvation history and the fullness, the pinnacle, of revelation, Jesus is revealing something about Himself as God and man. He is at one and the same time revealing something precious and unique about the inner relation of the HT. He is also revealing something unique about God's love towards us. This revelation contained in the words "I thirst" is a principle from which all flows and a foundation we can build on. But we have to understand these words "principle" and "foundation" not in a merely philosophical way, but rather in a deeply spiritual way. Principle in this sense means this is the source of my entire spiritual life, of my relationship with God and His relationship with me. This is the well of living water that I have to keep coming back to daily, in order to draw water from the springs of salvation. Foundation means that this is a secure rock upon which I can build my house. When the winds blow, the house of my spiritual life will stand, if it is built on this foundation.

God's Thirst "ad intra"

Fr. Joseph makes a beautiful distinction between God's Thirst "ad intra" and "ad extra". He first takes us into the eternity of the Trinity and speaks of the eternal Thirst that was hidden within the bosom of the Trinity before time began. Thirst "ad intra" is the Trinity as thirsting love; God's thirst opens for us a window onto the very heart of God. Jesus' cry of thirst expresses the "thirst" of the One who sent Him: the thirst of the Father. This points us toward the mystery not only of the sacred humanity of Christ, nor only of the divinity of the Son, but necessarily towards the inner mystery of the Trinity. Fr. Joseph points out that the words "I thirst" held for MT and through her charism for the Church itself a potentially important insight into the revelation of God's love. The thirst of Jesus on the cross, in a certain but very real sense, reflects not only the love of God, but also the inner workings, the self-emptying and self-gift of the Three divine Persons. It reflects the dynamic of love that is the inner life of the Trinity. The Trinity has its own dynamic of "thirsting" love: the divine act of self-emptying and self-gift that draws the other Persons into full communion.

The **Father** eternally thirsts to give of Himself infinitely and to receive an infinite self-gift in return. The Father eternally pours out his total gift of self into the Son. The **Son** is the reservoir and expression of the Father's thirst, eternally receiving the Father's total gift of self. The Father's thirst for the Son and the Son's thirst for Father eternally brings forth the **Holy Spirit**, Love personified. He is the infinite thirst between F and S, the eternal bond of love between them. It is very significant that the Holy Spirit is often symbolized by water and fire. The Holy Spirit expresses both the quenching of love and the passionate, burning desire to love and to be loved.

The Holy Trinity is defined by relationship - each divine person in eternal relationship with the other divine persons. There can be no eternal Father without an eternal Son, nor an eternal Son without an eternal Father. There can be no eternal relationship of love between Father and Son without the HS. We say that the HS proceeds from the Father and the Son, but not in a temporal sense. It's a procession not conditioned by

time. From all eternity the HS proceeds from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father.

To speak of a divine “thirst” is not to imply any lack or need in the Godhead. On the contrary, it expresses God’s being, who is Love. It’s an image of the overflowing fullness of God’s love. St. Bonaventure: “Indeed in Jesus is revealed precisely God’s thirst to pour forth life. He thirsts, not out of lack, but out of superabundance. The love of God by nature is effusive of itself.” MT speaks of “the depths of God’s infinite longing to love and to be loved”.

God’s thirst “ad extra”

God’s thirst exists from all eternity “ad intra”, but since, as St. Bonaventure says, the love of God by nature is effusive of itself, God wished to express His love “ad extra”. He did this in His loving work of creation and redemption. God’s thirst “ad extra” is the Trinity’s love for us, His creatures. In His loving thirst, God wanted the universe to exist, the stars and galaxies and planets. He wanted the elements and the animals to exist. And He wants us human beings to be, to exist in Him, through Him and for Him, as the crowning work of creation. He wants us to share in His love, to be in communion with Him. Fr. Joseph describes creation as a “spilling over” of God’s infinite thirst. Only God’s Thirst can explain creation. It is an infinite urge to share His love, a divine expansiveness of love that the Godhead does not wish to contain even within the infinite bounds of the Trinity. This means that we should look upon the angels, the universe, the creation of man, our own unique creation as expressions of God’s infinite Thirst to love and to be loved. Every birthday we celebrate should remind us of God’s Thirst for us personally. MT: “He loves you and He loves me. He has made all the beauty of creation out of love for people. He has created us in His image. The purpose why God exists is to love and He wants us to love and to be loved. Did any of you come here to be just a number, to do a little work? The real reason for us to be here is to love. The real vocation is “I belong to Jesus, I have been chosen”, with a purpose to satiate His thirst for love by loving Him, by putting this love for Him in action.”

“I thirst” points to the “good news” of that which is deepest, most unknown, and seldom believed about God’s love: in its boundlessness, and in its ardent longing for us His creatures. In this sense, as Mother affirms, thirst goes beyond our normal discourse and our conventional categories regarding divine love: “I thirst is something much deeper than just Jesus saying “I love you” – “much deeper” than our customary use of the affirmation that God is love, or that God loves us.

“I thirst” expresses something unique about the **quality of God’s love**. Fr. Joseph says that within this vocabulary of love represented by the thirst of Jesus are included the qualities of longing, ardent desire to love and be loved, boundlessness and infinity, compassion and mercy, tenderness, lowliness and humility, self-emptying and self-gift, intimacy and union, and love unto death on a cross. “God thirsts to be thirsted for... [Deus sitit sitiri]” (Augustine). MT: “God loves each one of us with a most tender and personal love. His longing for me is deeper than my longing for Him.” “Right now, today, and everyday, Jesus is ... longing for me!” In examining Mother’s vocabulary of thirst, the question may arise as to whether thirst and mercy represent the same reality in the heart of God. For Mother there would seem to be a distinction. This is borne out by her use of the two terms in parallel, connoting a difference in meaning, as when she speaks of the “merciful thirsting Love of Jesus.” Again, the common conception of mercy as the according of benevolence to the undeserving falls short of Mother’s idea of thirst. By definition, a merciful judge does not thirst for the prisoner he has set free, nor does a merely merciful God need thirst for the pardoned sinner. Thirst represents mercy to the

extreme – the utmost expression of mercy. Thirst is far greater than longing. In human experience, thirst is something unbearable, making it impossible to carry on without being sated, most painful, stretching one to the breaking point. Just as in human thirst, a divine thirst cannot be quenched with anything else but with its object – love and souls.

For MT, this infinite thirst of God that exists from all eternity “ad intra” and is revealed to us “ad extra” in God’s loving work of creation and redemption is not only something we should ponder on with our intellects, but above all something we are called to experience very personally deep down in our hearts, because it is in our hearts that we concretely respond to and answer God’s thirst. We respond to it first of all in prayer and then in wholehearted service. She says: ““Do we know it? Have we experienced His thirst? Have we done something to satiate His thirst? Our whole life revolves on that.” “Pray as if Jesus is saying it to you now. What does it mean in my life, in your life? Let it touch you.”

We can only truly experience God’s thirst, His ardent desire to love and to be loved, in prayer. This shows us the **primacy of prayer** in our relationship with God. The CCC speaks very beautifully of the nature of inner prayer, alluding to Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the gift of God.” The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God’s desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. (Augustine) “You would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” Paradoxically, our prayer of petition is a response to the plea of the living God: “They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that hold no water.” Prayer is the response of faith to the free promise of salvation and also a response of love to the thirst of the only Son of God.” “Jesus Christ has told that we ought “always to pray and not to faint” - That is, not to grow weary of so doing. St. Paul says “pray without ceasing.” God calls all the world to this disposition of heart of praying always. Let the love of God once take entire and absolute possession of a heart, let it become to that heart like a second nature, let that heart suffer nothing that is contrary to it to enter, let it apply itself continually to increase this love of God by seeking to please Him in all things and refusing Him nothing that he asks, let it accept, as from His hand, everything that happens to it, let it have a firm determination never to commit any fault deliberately and knowingly, or if it should fall to be humbled for it and to rise up again at once, such a heart will pray continually.”

“I Thirst” as Logos and Rhema

Fr. Joseph points out that “I thirst” is a **Logos** for our understanding, a “grace of light” that opens us onto the mystery of God as Love. He cites MT’s words: ““Let us deepen our knowledge of ‘I thirst’. We cannot love what we do not know.” “Deepen your knowledge for when we know, we will love, and when we love we will serve, all arriving at that one thing: to satiate the thirst of God”. “This knowledge will help us to be holy like Jesus and Mary.” “The better we understand Jesus’ thirst, the more close we get to Him and the more close we are to Him, the more holy we become.” This knowledge is to be understood in a biblical sense. It’s not the result of mere study. It’s a knowledge that comes from contact and familiarity. It’s the fruit of faith.

That points us to a second dimension of “I thirst”. It is not just a “Logos”, a grace that enlightens our intellects and strengthens our faith; it is also a **Rhema** to be experienced, a “grace of love” that sets our hearts on fire. This “Logos”, this living Word,

communicates the love it proclaims. Fr. Joseph says that the practical and extraordinarily important consequence of approaching Jesus' word of thirst as rhema is that it opens for us the possibility of encountering the thirsting Jesus in the present, mediated by the anointing of grace on the divine word. The word as rhema renders present and active the reality it indicates (in this case the thirst of Jesus, or more accurately, the thirsting Jesus) when approached in faith, as Mother clearly did. "The most important thing is that we must encounter the thirst of Jesus, but the encounter with Jesus' thirst is a grace. To beg from Him is a grace. How do you get that grace? We hope that Our Lady will get that grace for us." Even though the grace of this word is freely offered, it must be asked for, meditated on, and listened to actively. It is interesting to note that Mother does not speak of listening to a word, but of listening to Jesus himself speaking in the present moment: "All the Superiors made copies for each Sister of my letter about 'I thirst'. He wants us to satiate His thirst. We must take that letter and really pray...Jesus is thirsting for us right now, Sisters. Do we listen to Him saying, "I thirst for your love"? Just think of His thirst. Do we really hear Him? Here in this chapel His mouth is open and we know He is saying it right now." Mother experienced, and invited others to experience, this word as spoken personally and directly, and requiring an attitude of perseverance in listening: "How to satiate His thirst? Try to hear that "I Thirst, I Thirst." Try to hear Jesus in your heart." For Mother, the fruit of this prayerful listening was, in some way, to actually "experience," even to "feel" the thirst of Jesus in a way that she often described as being too intimate to convey in words: Jesus' thirst, for Mother Teresa, is not yesterday, not a memory. It is today and always.

She discovered his inviting presence particularly in three areas that reflect and continue his kenosis; and there she sought to listen and respond to him: in the poverty ("nothingness," as she would often say) of her own heart, leading her to the poverty of the Eucharist, in turn leading her to serve him in the poorest of the poor. (This is what I would call MT's awareness of Jesus' Thirst „ad intra“, in her own heart, and „ad extra“ in every human heart).

Sacred Scripture reveals to us in the book of Genesis that man and woman are created in God's image and likeness. That's what makes us unique among all created things on earth. And what it means to be created in God's image and likeness is to be created with the vocation TO LOVE AND TO BE LOVED. Like God, we are called to a thirsting love. God has put into our hearts a thirst to love and to be loved. With the dignity of personhood, we too are defined by relationship. Vatican II confirms that we discover our true selves only in deep relationship with God and authentic relationship with others. God has put within us a desire, a longing, a thirst for God's life and love, without which we cannot live. It is interesting that in biblical Hebrew the word for "thirst" and "soul" are one and the same: "nefesh". For the Jews the soul itself was looked on "as the seat of thirst". The experience of thirst in the cultural setting of ancient Israel carried with it a spiritual connotation and a metaphorical dimension.

"I Thirst" – the Society's one Aim

Something very beautiful about St. Ignatius' Principle and Foundation is that it brings us back to the basics, back to simplicity, which is where perfection is found. Perfection is found in being and doing one thing in depth. The greatest musicians in the world became perfect in music because they focused their lives on that. Athletes become perfect in their sport because they focus everything on that. In a similar way, every man, woman and child can become a saint if they focus their lives on Jesus.

Through a unique gift of the HS, MT focused her own prayer life and the work of the Society on one single aim: to satiate the thirst of Jesus Christ on the cross for love and souls by laboring at the salvation and sanctification of the poorest of the poor. MT's heroic dedication to this one aim gave her great focus and sense of purpose. Towards this one aim was directed all her generosity and zeal. All other aspects of the Sisters' life and work served this single purpose. "The very aim of our life is to satiate the thirst of Jesus. Put your whole heart and soul in it for this is our very life." Ultimately, in MT's mind, all would rise and fall with this inner motivation of satiating the Lord. (i.e. to live in constant relationship with God, in a state of continuous burning love.)

If someone were to ask MT why she exists and why the MC Society exists, she would immediately respond "to satiate the thirst of Jesus on the cross for love and souls. She even prays that the Society cease to exist if it loses sight of this one aim: "If our Society ceases to fulfill the reason of our existence, to satiate the Thirst of Jesus on the Cross for souls, then let it die in front of me. There is no need to exist, no need to be one more Congregation." And when the Sisters make their religious profession, the one motivation is to satiate the thirst of Jesus: "For the honor and glory of God and moved by a burning desire to quench the infinite thirst of Jesus on the Cross for love of souls, I vow..." This one aim also becomes the one path to holiness and salvation: "To satiate His thirst is the principal way to heaven for us."

II. Conversion

In our last talk I mentioned how MT speaks of knowing God's thirst, experiencing it and responding to it. To know and experience His thirst is just one side of the coin, certainly a very important side of the coin, but nevertheless only one side of it; that knowledge and experience can only bear rich fruit in our lives when we respond to it. Our free, loving response to God's thirst is the other side of the coin. The revelation of God's thirst, what we called "Logos", is a gift, a free initiative of God's love allowing us to understand, though in a very limited way, the immensity of His love for us. The grace to experience His thirst, what we called "Rhema", is also a gift. But created as we are with free will, we are called to give God a response. This ability to respond that God has also gifted us with is where our responsibility enters into the picture. We have a responsibility and a duty to respond wholeheartedly. This is expressed in the greatest Commandment to love God with all of our heart, all of our soul and all of our mind (cf. Mt 22:37).

But here is where we in all humility and honesty have to admit that our response often leaves a lot to be desired. Aware as we are of our often limited response to God's thirst, we can only turn to the Lord in His infinite mercy and ask Him to grant us the grace of a deep conversion of heart. As in the case of the Samaritan woman, we have to see Jesus sitting at the well of our life, aware of the many desires and longings that tug at our hearts, aware of the many different ways, including all the false, selfish ways, we try to quench our thirst. We have to allow Jesus to speak to us, to speak to us about the concrete details of our life, about the things, persons, positions or places we get attached to ("you have had 5 husbands..."). We have to allow Jesus to purify our thirst and make us long for the living water that only He can give. "Lord, give me some of that water".

After beginning the retreat by contemplating God's love and the reason why we are created, St. Ignatius has us take a look at sinfulness and disordered attachments, so that we experience true contrition of heart and, by taking our refuge to God's mercy, become truly free to love fully and wholeheartedly.

In the Principle and Foundation St. Ignatius briefly mentions why other things are created. They are created to help us attain the end for which we are created, which is to praise, reverence and serve God. Fr. Joseph points out that in God's loving plan, people, places, things, every pleasure, pain, every circumstance in which we find ourselves, every thought and desire, every sight we see or sound we hear are all intended to be so many graces leading us to heaven. The key is to see the hand of God in everything and not to make the mistake of thinking anything merely happens. In this sense, even the poor and suffering help us praise and serve God. By serving the poor and suffering, we help satiate Jesus' thirst for love and for souls, for whatever we do to the least of our brethren, we do to Jesus.

But in our dealings with ourselves and other people and in our use of things, St. Ignatius says it is very important to have a realistic awareness of original sin and its consequences in us and in the world. One of those consequences is that concupiscence inclines us to what we want and not necessarily to what we really need. What we want is often self-centered and not Christ-centered. Or as St. Paul writes in

the Letter to the Romans (ch. 7), we often do not do the good we want to do, and do the evil we do not want to do.

In the 30-day “I Thirst” retreat that Fr. Joseph put together, he speaks of how important it is to see the consequences of our false self-centered thirst. Every time we quench our thirst in a self-centered way, we reject God’s Thirst and give Him “vinegar to drink”. It is very important for our conversion to come to this awareness. MT speaks often of Jesus’ “painful thirst”. Our sins and disordered attachments bring pain to the Heart of Jesus, like a lance being thrust into His side. What we need to pay particular attention to are the patterns of sin in our lives, the predominant sinful tendencies and their concrete manifestations, which are at the source of our self-centered thirst.

Ignatius urges us to approach OL and beg her to obtain for us from her Son “an understanding of the disorder of our actions, that filled with horror of them we may amend our lives and put them in order” (SE 63). We also need to beg for the grace to see how sin is hurting the world and harming souls. Blessed Pope JP II said that “never in the history of humanity has man so totally and so systematically rejected God as he has today.” This is an important awareness for us priests, who celebrate the Holy Eucharist daily and are ministers of God’s mercy, called to reconcile souls with God. Fr. Joseph says that in all human history God’s Thirst has never been greater than it is now. Never in history has His cry of Thirst been more urgent. “This is the hour of darkness.” But the hour of the maximum rejection of love is also the hour of the maximum expression of love.

Ignatius speaks therefore of the importance of holy indifference. Through a spirit of growing indifference we give in less and less to our spontaneous inclinations and become more and more inclined to will what God wills; MT put it this way: – we begin to “take what He gives and give what He takes with a big smile”.

This growing sense of true freedom is what conversion is all about. Conversion of heart was a very important theme for MT. She would often invite her Sisters to examine themselves, especially in a time of retreat. MT would say the same to us if she were present with us at this retreat. I would like to point out a few specific areas that MT wanted her Sisters to focus on. I think that can help us in our own examination today.

Gift of renewal – Is 58:9-24; Ps 42; Ps 62

1) Place and meaning of Jesus’ thirst in our lives

MT often asked her Sisters to examine themselves as to the place and meaning of Jesus’ thirst in their lives. She herself examined herself daily on this point. She would often say: “We have read the word maybe so often... seen it (on the chapel wall), but have you heard His cry, “I Thirst”? If not, examine yourself and ask, “**Why I could not hear?**” Our sins and attachments are what block us from a living encounter with Jesus’ thirst. That is why MT also said: “Get rid of sin quickly so we can hear Jesus say, “I thirst for your love.”

2) Firm will to become holy with the help of God’s grace

This was a very big theme for MT. Mother was keenly aware that holiness was not the fruit of empty desire, of half-hearted commitment. She was gifted with an extraordinarily strong will and put the force of her will to the accomplishment of the goal the Lord had set out for her, the goal that sprang from her own heart as well: union with God. While all depended on His grace, it was not grace that was lacking along the path to holiness, but rather our own resolve. St. Teresa of Avila also speaks of the need for strong determination if we are to reach the innermost chamber of the Interior Castle of our

soul, where we arrive at perfect union with the Holy Trinity, who dwells within us. Let me cite MT's own words:

"Often under the pretext of humility, of confidence, of abandonment have we not forgotten the use of our strong will? We must have a real living resolution to reach holiness. St. Teresa says that Satan is terribly afraid of resolute souls. Everything depends on these two words: I WILL or I WILL NOT. Into this 'I will' I must put all my energy. 'I will' said St. John Berchmans, St. Stanislas, St. Margaret Mary and they did become Saints. What is a saint but a resolute soul, a soul that uses power plus action? Was not this what St. Paul meant when he said: 'I can do all things in Him who strengthens me'? With you my sisters, I will not be satisfied by being just good religious. I want to be able to offer God a perfect sacrifice. Only holiness perfects the gift." And so a big question is: How much do we really want holiness? How much do we really want perfect union with the Lord? How much do we really want to become saints? When we were young, we tended to have very great desires. Most of our life was still ahead of us and we had great ideals, but as time goes by, what often happens is that we have a more realistic awareness of our limits and all those ideals for great holiness can give way to a sense of resignation. We sometimes feel that we just can't do what the saints did. And in a sense that is true if we are trying to do it on our own. Only Jesus can make us holy. He is our holiness, so our firm resolve should focus on going to Him to draw the strength and resolve we need.

One thing that can startle us a bit is the price we have to pay. This firm resolve to become holy necessarily entails a spirit of sacrifice and self-renunciation and reminds us of Jesus' words: "If anyone wants to be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross each day and follow Me." Here Jesus appeals to our freedom, and that's why MT speaks of having a firm resolve to follow Jesus, even at the cost of sacrifice: "To resolve to be a Saint it costs much. Renunciation, temptations, struggles, persecutions and all kinds of sacrifices surround the resolute soul. One can love God only at one's own expense." We often shrink away from this renunciation and sacrifice, because we are afraid of letting go.

Sometimes the spirit of sacrifice means letting go of whatever is standing between me and God. It means emptying ourselves so that God can fill us. It means becoming more poor and detached from things and more attached to God. Often we are afraid of the emptiness that comes from letting go, but MT insists that this is the only way God can fill us with His love and grace: 'I will be a Saint' means – I will despoil myself of all that is not God; I will strip my heart and empty it of all created things; I will live in poverty and detachment. I will renounce my will, my inclinations, my whims and fancies and make myself a willing slave to the will of God. Yes my children this is what I pray for daily – for each one – that we may become a slave to the will of God."

It is encouraging to know that even the least desire to be holy already helps to quench the thirst of Jesus: "I want to be holy, with God's blessing, I want it. This is really satiating the thirst of Jesus. It is like driving a car: this "I want, I will" will keep you on the right path. This is really satiating the thirst of Jesus." Very often in the spiritual life it helps to concentrate on the little steps, rather than to look at the entire journey at once. It's easier to say: "I will and I want to take that next little step to closer intimacy with Jesus", than to say: "I will and I want to reach the peak of perfection."

In any case, the secret lies in those little acts of love for Jesus: "If we have an intimate personal love for Jesus, that complete oneness with Christ will be a living reality. Jesus offers us his lifelong, faithful and personal friendship... I don't want you to imagine all this, it is a matter of reality and of the will: 'I want.'"

“Take the trouble to be really holy...Everyday examine yourself: “What did I do today to satiate the thirst of Jesus?” I will, I will, I will satiate the thirst of Jesus...Let us ask Our Lady to help us to be really holy.”

3) True intimacy with Christ

MT often uses the word “intimate” or “intimacy” in describing the relationship we should strive to have with Christ. She once said to a group of Sisters preparing for a retreat: “Do we have that intimate love for Jesus? During the retreat we will hear many beautiful talks, but how do I talk personally to Jesus?” “Allow Jesus to penetrate your love. Allow Jesus to penetrate you, to be intimate, the center of your life.”

“The more you are intimately in love with Him, the more you are specially attached to Him, the more He is really that intimate love in your heart, it is really something beautiful.”

“What's your intimate love and union with Jesus? You will be one heart with Him, spouse of Jesus Crucified. Don't forget that word spouse. That is the thing, like the woman for her husband. I vow for life. Are we really, really, really deeply, intimately in love?”

“Whatever it may be, make use of the time to grow in that intimate love of Jesus. Do you know the meaning of 'intimate'? Not just a number, not just a name but real intimate love for Him. He is not only our Spouse, He is our God. So let us ask Him to grant us that grace of that intimate love for Him so that we may really become holy. If we do not have the desire in our hearts to be holy, we will never be holy. Have that strong desire to love Him, to be one with Him; that is why you are here: to grow in that intimate love for Jesus. How many long to have this chance, but do not have it.”

Speaking to some Tertians, i.e., to Sisters going through the final stage of formation in preparation for final vows, MT asks: “What has been this year of Tertianship? What have you profited most? You may have had many beautiful talks, new ideas, but what is your intimate attachment to Jesus?”

“Don't waste one single day of your preparation. You must work hard to really deepen that intimate union, that personal attachment to Him.”

“There is no meaning in being a religious just by name. Our consecration is that intimate attachment, that union, that love for Jesus, as He loves us.”

“I think we need to understand that 'intimate' better. Now you will have eight days alone with Him, don't allow any distraction to preoccupy your mind. Deepen that intimate connection with our Lord.”

In another place she describes intimacy as not letting anything or anyone get between us and Jesus: “You must be so in love with Jesus that nothing and nobody will ever separate you from Him.”

The key to such intimacy is to use our freedom to fix our gaze on Christ, to look at Him who is always looking at me. This is, by the way, the way St. Ignatius would begin his prayer. He would always begin by placing Himself in the Lord's gaze, by becoming fully aware of how God looks upon him with infinite love. But this is a conscious choice we have to make as we begin prayer. Fr. Joseph: “Very often we don't know how to recognize, distinguish and discern God's voice, because we are listening to thousands of other voices. There are hundreds of channels on TV. We have the remote and can decide what we want to look at and gaze upon. We have that same freedom in the

spiritual life. There's a channel, a frequency where God is always communicating His personal love to us, where He is saying: "You are my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We need to hear that voice, to tune in to it. Even Jesus, who never sinned, needed to hear that voice of the Father. When He had finished a day of preaching and healing and when everyone else had gone to bed, Jesus often spent the night in prayer, in the Father's arms, in order to hear those words. These words are not information, but rather transformation. These words transform us! We need to hear God calling us by name and telling us that we are His beloved children. Like Jesus we need to live "pros", i.e. turned towards God. This is the meaning of conversion. It means turning away from my problems and my superficial desires (that cannot satisfy me and that do not arise from the depths of my being) and turning toward my deepest identity, this desire of God that fills me with peace, light and love. It means turning towards Him, to seek His face. When Andrew and John first turn to Jesus and follow Him, Jesus asked them: "What are you looking for?" What are our true desires? What desires reign in our hearts? Until my desires are in harmony with my identity, I cannot follow Jesus, except in a superficial way. I cannot experience this "gravitational pull", this deepest longing of my heart. We have to decide who will be the source of our security. If I seek this security in things or persons, they will fail me. Conversion means to let God be God. When God made a covenant with Israel, He said: "I will be your God", not your armies, your weapons, your politicians, your king. Who is my God? What am I looking for? Andrew and John might have had thousands of desires, but through God's grace they opt for the desire that best corresponds to their deepest identity: "Master, where are you staying?" "Come and see!" What causes us the greatest struggle is not obeying this gravitational pull, but rather disobeying it and refusing to let God draw us to Himself. Nothing and no one besides Jesus, besides God, can love me as He does! Created in God's image, who is Love, our greatest desire is to be love, to experience ourselves as loveable. God has put His thirst in us. And this thirst of God that I find in myself is my true, eternal identity, the reason for my existence. He is drawing me to deeper intimacy with Him as a foretaste of heaven, as a preparation for heaven. But He wants me to believe in the Gospel and convert, and this conversion means to seek Him who is seeking me. It means to choose God's thirst, to let myself be drawn by the God who loves me."

The opposite of intimate for MT is a lukewarm heart, a lukewarm relationship with Jesus. Lukewarmness means that there is no burning love, no deep, personal relationship with Jesus, and this adds to Jesus' painful thirst: "The greatest pain Jesus had in his heart was the lukewarmness of consecrated souls. Let us ask Our Lady to deepen our personal love for Him." The theme of this retreat "Burning with love at the foot of the Cross" has to do with this intimacy MT insisted on so much.

An intimate relationship with Jesus will make everything we say and do fruitful. It will draw the people we serve to want to have that same intimacy with Christ: "I want to make my sisters saints. I want to give the Church saints", and she was very serious. She was very serious also in telling the priests - "Be holy, as God in heaven is holy." Holiness was for her most important because only holy people can change the world."

"The more you are in love with Him, the more you are attached to Him, the more you will be His love and His compassion and His presence in your community and to the people that you serve."

4) Don't do it alone; take your refuge to God's mercy; let Him love you

One certain thing about God's love is that it never wavers, it never lacks in divine intensity. His love is always faithful despite our own unworthiness, sinfulness or failings.

In His eyes we will always be beloved children. But this is precisely the point that Satan, the enemy of our human nature, attacks the most. He will do anything to make us doubt God's love for us.

Fr. Joseph: "God's thirst for me and my thirst for God is my deepest identity, my eternal identity. The devil reminds us of our faults, of our sins in the past and present and of possible sins in the future, and tries to convince us that these sins are our identity, that we are the accumulation or sum total of our faults and failings. But God says otherwise. Our sins are temporal, but what lasts forever is our thirst for God and His thirst for us. Our sins do not define us; they do not constitute our identity. They are part of our history, which God is able to save and change into mercy, into another encounter with His thirst."

Mother Teresa was aware that, in order to love Jesus intimately, she and her followers had first to open themselves to be loved by him, that this too was satiating his thirst – his thirst not only to be loved but to love us, to possess us.

"Today let us not read much, or even meditate much but just allow Jesus to love you. We always want to say, "Jesus, I love you" but we don't allow Jesus to love us. Today say often, "Jesus I am here, love me."

"In the silence of our hearts God speaks of His love, with our silence we allow Jesus to love us."

"Though a mother forgets her baby, I will never forget you!" That is how God is speaking to you sisters! I think that God is even more hungry for our love than we are for His! He is more hungry to give us His love than we are to receive it!"

I want to share with you a beautiful experience that Fr. Joseph had when he was a young teenager. It's an experience he never forgot and one that helped him experience the power of God's forgiving love and mercy. He shared this experience in a very humorous way with a group of MC Sisters in Australia:

"When I was in eighth grade I had a bit of an experience like this with a Sister who was teaching us, and at that time I had a true and deep allergy to nuns. I'm getting over it! She taught Geography, and since I'm from California, what need do I have of Geography? Everything begins and ends there – Australia is someplace west of Los Angeles and that's all I needed to know. I spent my year that year trying to make her life as miserable as possible, and I think I did a very respectable job. When she turned to write on the board, I would arrange or organize my little *mafia* companions, little hoodlums that we were, to drop our books and our pencils on the floor all at the same time. So there was this immense ruckus behind her. She can see who did it. She knows I organized it but she can't catch me because she hadn't developed eyes in the back of the head that comes when you're what – 50? I think you nuns have secret mirrors everywhere – be careful. So there is no one to punish. One day I come into class merrily waiting to work my inestimable pranks and all of a sudden everyone is quiet, and I want to have a good time and everybody is quiet. "What's going on? Why is everybody quiet? This is school." "It is the test." "The test? What test?" The test! So Sister is going around, passing around pages of questions and questions about geography, of which I know nothing, and what happened is that the Friday before, this is on Monday, she had told every one we were having this huge examination and being the attentive student I was, I didn't hear a word of what she said; so I came totally unprepared and unable to draw my best knowledge of geography outside of my own home town. I did not do it very well, so, I don't know how you grade things here in

Australia but we have letters as grades, so, one of the letters that I've never seen in my life, and my parents will not be very happy to see, came back later that week with a big red "D", which stands for "*death*" for me, because I had to bring this home, get it signed by my parents, which meant I wouldn't be sitting down for a long time!

So, little hoodlum that I was, trying to get out of this death sentence, I said, well, I will wait until everybody leaves the class, which they did and I came very sheepishly to the front. Sister is standing there and I thought, "well let's get this over with" and so, basically I said, 'Sister, OK' -I don't know what I said, but basically my little speech was going to be, "I know, I have caused you *hell* for the last 9 months and I deserve an "F", another "D", however, the fact of the matter is *I didn't know* that we would have this exam so, could I perhaps stand on my head for 3 years or something, write 10 million times on the board or something so I don't have to take this home to my parents, it wouldn't be pretty!" So I, I don't know how many words I got out but anyhow, she takes the paper from my hand, looks at the "D", looks at me and this should had been the time she must have been *dreaming* all that night, "wait for that little monster to mess up! And share all the 'secret manuals' that nuns get when they become teachers says, "that little guy on the class that you can't catch, just wait, give him time, sooner or later and then tear him to pieces." So, here I'm getting ready, I'm sort of raising myself and nothing happens. I think, "Is this heaven?" No, I'm still here, I can hear birds, I can feel the air, I'm still here; I look up and instead of being scolded, she looks at me, looks at the 'D' and tears it up! "This nun is nuts!" She tears it up! I'm ready for anything, I'm ready to defend myself, I'm ready to... but I'm not ready for *that!* So she packs her nun's stuff and her nun equipment and goes to the nun-house and I am just standing there, totally at a loss. Before she walks away I say 'Sister, what about in your nun-book that has all this? - She takes it out and erases the 'D' in her book, and I said, "good, what do I have to do?"

-“Nothing.”

-“I mean, what about taking the test again?”

-“No, no, you don't have to take the test again.”

- “I mean, what is my punishment? Where do I go? Who do I see? Where do I sign up?”

-“No.” and then, she takes off and starts to walk away. So, from that afternoon onward what I did instead of riding my bicycle home again with all my hoodlum friends –future convicts, prisoners of Mother America- I chose to stay back in the classroom after class and clean the erasers and the board and sweep! I had finished before she got there, *I had to do that* because someone had just crushed me, overwhelmed me, bulled me over with the love I did not deserve, she loves me most when I deserve it least! On the cross, God took our 'D', and we need to know what a surest thing that is. Let us say that before we even begin to think about loving Him or satiating Him, we need to be loved, we need to be satiated ourselves.”

Sometimes our sins and failings discourage us and make us doubt whether God can really love us, but MT assures us so beautifully: “He knows your weakness, He wants your love. He wants only the chance to love you..”

“To possess Him we must allow ourselves to be possessed by Him first.” Fr. Joseph points out that this is a unique thing about Jesus' thirst: “Not only does He accept us as we are, but He thirsts for us precisely, and especially, in all our weakness, poverty and

sin." Where we are weakest, that is where God loves us the most. That is where His love sustains us in our weakness. Jesus told St. Paul, who had complained to the Lord about his own weakness: "My grace reaches perfection in weakness. My grace is enough for you." St. Paul was so consoled by this that he wrote: "It is when I am weak that I am strong."

Fr. Joseph says that MT urged her sisters to confidence in the tenderness and transforming power of God's love for them, knowing that the more they believed, the more they would open their hearts to him. 'Tenderness' would become one of the most favorite and common expressions in Mother's vocabulary of love, used to describe something deep and essential in her experience of the love of God, and consequently, essential as well to her way of showing his love to the poor.

"Mother used to tell us, "He will perform the divine work of sanctity, not you, and He asks only for your docility. Give yourself fully to Jesus. He will accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in His love than in your weakness."

"We must connect every bit of our life with Jesus in the Eucharist. Bring it all to Jesus: all our failures, our miseries, our weakness, even our sins. He has carried all to Calvary."

5) Fidelity to prayer

This was a very important thing for MT. She herself experienced the power of prayer and urged the Sisters, Brothers and Fathers to make prayer an absolute priority in their lives. Speaking to novices and tertians, MT used to say: "During this whole year if you learned just this one thing - to pray - then I am not afraid for you. If you did not learn how to pray during this one year, then you have wasted your time... If you learned just one thing - how to pray - then Mother is not afraid for you. I can send you anywhere in the world, in any place, to do any work, even if you are surrounded by temptations, yet I am not afraid for you if you have learned how to pray." Why would MT not be afraid to send her Sisters anywhere in the world, even in the most dangerous places? She knew that through a deep prayer life her Sisters would live in intimacy with Jesus and relate everything to Him. They would find strength in Him. And so she would often ask her Sisters:

"Do you know how to pray? Do you love to pray? Just ask these questions and write it down before the Blessed Sacrament. Then, you can also ask: Do I need to pray? Do I want prayer? Keep on revolving around those three questions: Do I pray? Do I know how to pray? Do I love to pray? Just examine this one point about your life today: how you prayed during these past years." These are important questions for us during this retreat.

"As soon as you get up in the morning, do your mind and your heart first go to Jesus? This is prayer, that you turn your heart and mind to God. In times of difficulties, in sorrows, in suffering, in temptations, and in all things, where did your mind and heart turn first of all? How did you pray? Did you take the trouble to turn to Jesus and to pray or did you seek consolations? From where and how often did you seek consolations? Examine all this and when you come to see me you can ask me or tell me anything regarding your life of prayer. Here Jesus is close to you, spend your time with Him. Spend as much time as you can in being with Jesus now." Prayer for MT meant above all taking the time just to be with Jesus. Learning to be with Jesus would give her Sisters the grace to do the work for Jesus and with Him.

“We must fix our gaze on Jesus and if we work together with Jesus we will do much better. We get anxious and restless because we try to work alone, without Him.”

MT was very aware that prayer is not always easy. She herself went through a very long experience of darkness, even feeling rejected by God at times. But she never gave up prayer. And she urged her Sisters to persevere in prayer and to never grow discouraged whenever they faced difficulty in prayer: “It is true we want so much to pray properly, and then we fail. We get discouraged and give up prayer. God allowed the failure, but he did not want the discouragement. He wants us to be more childlike, more humble, more grateful in prayer, and not to try to pray alone, as we all belong to the mystical body of Christ, which is praying always. There is always prayer. There is no such thing as I pray, but Jesus in me and Jesus with me prays; therefore, the body of Christ prays.”

6) Wholeheartedness: “Little Things with Great Love”

Another key theme for MT was wholeheartedness, which has a lot to do with the firm will to become holy. She emphasizes the importance of doing little things with great love: “Wholehearted: Jesus is not looking at how much we do but how much we love.”

“Don't miss the chance to do small things with great love. We are so privileged to give wholehearted and free service, not slapdash work. Not that I have to do but I love to do. Do wholeheartedly at that moment what you are doing.”

Fr. Joseph says that essential to Mother Teresa's way of loving and serving was the totality, the radicality, the wholeheartedness with which she gave herself to Jesus and the poor. There were no peaks and valleys in her commitment. This totality of gift, this engagement of all her heart in what she did, was constant: in good health or sickness, at home or traveling the world, at any time of the day, and in any and every condition. All her heart was given to her Lord all the time. This naturally led her to another pillar of her way of loving: making use of the smallest moments, and the least significant tasks or situations, as opportunities for putting love in action. She made her own, and expanded on, Thérèse of Lisieux's motto in teaching her sisters: “Little things with great love, ordinary things with extraordinary love.”

“Not just wholehearted service but, wholehearted prayer. Use that word wholehearted for everything...”

“Don't miss the chance to do small things with great love. If you don't do wholeheartedly you have to confess. Understand that Wholehearted... Ordinary things with extraordinary love.”

“That fidelity to small things is the sign that you are living in the presence of God.”

Those who knew or spent time with Mother Teresa were struck by the obvious love, attention, delicacy, and care with which she undertook the simplest of tasks: signing prayer cards in the airport waiting for her plane, cleaning, putting things in order, picking up her prayer book. All was suffused with the presence of God as she carried out these “little things with great love.” They were a means of keeping her heart and attention focused actively on Jesus, and in fact constituted for her the incomparable means of remaining in his presence: not by thinking of him but by doing for him, by love in action, in little things.

One of her Sisters said of MT: “She didn't believe that God required great things to be done. For her, ordinary things would do, whether it be talking to somebody, smiling at someone, helping a person, giving some food to somebody. All that had tremendous

supernatural value, and therefore the ordinary things of life were the means by which souls were saved and the glory of God proclaimed. That spirituality of the ordinary day-to-day living and living it well, each act being infused with God's love – most probably this was the message she gave to her Sisters. Most of her Sisters were not doing anything extraordinary or spectacular. They were doing just ordinary day-to-day work for simple poor people who were anonymous. And she instilled into them the understanding that these ordinary things were full of possibility to save souls, to promote God's glory, had the seeds of sanctity within them, and she herself practiced the same."

7) Thoughtfulness and faithfulness

"Thoughtfulness is doing small things with great love for each other."

Fr. Joseph points out that another aspect of Mother Teresa's wholeheartedness was a love that began already in one's thoughts – in one's attitudes and way of seeing, of noticing, and responding to others. It was a love that had eyes to see and ears to hear the least sign of need or want or pain in another, a kind of prevenient compassion that anticipated the requirements of charity before being asked, often even before others were aware of their own need. Another Saint who mastered this inner attitude of charity was St. Therese of the Child Jesus, who as we know was a great inspiration for MT. Fr. Joseph notes that this inner attitude of charity was for MT the seedbed of love, the cradle of a creative love that mirrored God's own – the "beginning of great sanctity," and the chance to love Jesus in return with the same inventive and delicate love she had received from him and discovered in the gospels.

The simplicity of the Eucharist was a constant source of inspiration for her in this: "We must be faithful to that smallness of the Eucharist. That simple piece of Bread that even a small child can take in. The Passion and the Eucharist should open our eyes to that smallness, that giving of a bath to a patient, that smile, that sister next to me, do I know that she is feeling lonely? Or that she has a headache? Do I know? This is love: that thoughtfulness that she needs water in the glass, that gentleness not to make noise because she is sick and in bed."

"We all can become great saints if we take the trouble to do small things with great love: that little silence, that little obedience, that little thoughtfulness. We can all become very holy if we want it and yet we pass by so many opportunities."

"Through your thoughtfulness, your compassion, can the Sisters feel the presence of Jesus when you are in the community? Are you His love, His compassion, His presence? They are three for the Blessed Trinity. I always show with my fingers. Take this point for your meditation. You must avoid Sisters any kind of uncharitable thoughts, words and actions. Jesus would never do that. After three days Jesus multiplied bread for the five thousands. That is compassion, thoughtfulness, love. Be more loving, more kind, more compassionate; be His love, His compassion, His presence. Take it for your particular examination of conscience and examine yourself every day."

"Also all the small works you do to each other, you do them for Him, and to Him! Do it all with more concern, thoughtfulness, and understanding."

"Thoughtfulness is the beginning of great sanctity. If you learn this art, of being thoughtful you will become more and more Christ-like, for His heart was meek and He always thought of others – our vocation to be beautiful must be full of thought for others. Jesus went about doing good. Our Lady did nothing else in Cana – but thought of the needs of the others and made their need known to Jesus. The thoughtfulness of Jesus

and Mary and Joseph was so great that it made Nazareth the abode of God most High. If we also have that kind of thoughtfulness for each other, our communities would really become the abode of God most High. How beautiful our Convents will become – where there is this total thoughtfulness of each others needs.” What MT says here of the convent can also be said of our parishes!

“Mother noticed every little detail that concerned the Sisters’ well being. She made sure they ate properly, saw who needed another blanket, noticed at once when a Sister was sick or sad or disturbed. She called this quality of charity “thoughtfulness” and frequently exhorted us to grow in delicate thoughtfulness toward one another.”

“All these little caring ways Mother had. If sisters came from another house, she would always make sure to give them a Miraculous Medal each, or she would look around her table for something she could give them. If the sisters were in hospital and if she knew you were going to see them she would send a little note or a picture or something to let the sister know that she was thinking of her.”

Faithfulness

The final attribute of Mother’s concept and practice of love, one that she would apply both in her personal life of intimacy with Jesus and in her charity to the poor and her own sisters, was that of fidelity or faithfulness.

This was intimately tied in with the doing of “little things with great love,” as faithfulness guaranteed the constancy of practicing that “love in action.” As her concept of love was universal, all things little or great offering the opportunity to love, so too was her concept and practice of fidelity: in her vows first of all, to small acts of love, to her prayer life, to the observance of her constitutions, to the community schedule, to penance and sacrifice, to her duties as superior general, to her fourth vow of wholehearted service to the poor. But most essentially, and in all these above, fidelity meant faithfulness to her call and commitment to satiate her Lord in his thirst for her love and for the souls of the poor.

“Fidelity in small things is that intimate sign of love for Jesus.”

III. MC Spirit – loving trust, total surrender, cheerfulness

At the core of MT's spirituality is what she herself calls the MC spirit. Fr. Joseph says that since every charism contains two elements – a specific mission and a particular spirit – it follows that, in that moment of grace, not only the Aim (as shown earlier) but also the Spirit of the Society was communicated to MT. This Spirit of the Society was, therefore, the result and response of Mother's encounter, in the company of Our Lady, with the ardent love of God revealed and given in the thirst of Jesus. This response was a threefold spirit of Loving Trust, Total Surrender, and Cheerfulness (Cheerful giving) – three states of soul that proceeded one from the other, and so came to be seen by Mother Teresa as forming a single "Spirit." As one of her Sisters testified: "The Spirit our Society – loving trust, total surrender and cheerfulness – was born of Mother's experience of the Thirst of Jesus." What happened to MT, can and will happen to us if we open ourselves up to Jesus' Thirst. Our own deep, personal experience of Jesus' Thirst will also lead us to a deep inner spirit of loving trust, total surrender and cheerfulness, which will influence everything else we do and say.

MT discovered this spirit in Christ Himself and she wished to be imbued with that same spirit. "Why did Jesus say, again and again, "Unless you become like little children." If people are not used to that, it is very difficult to understand. Yes, you have ... to grow in the likeness of Christ in that total surrender, that loving trust, and that joy at having nothing and being nobody." She speaks here of growing in the likeness of Christ. That reminds me of St. Paul's words to the Galatians: "No longer I live, but Christ lives in me." The more our minds and hearts are centered on Christ, the more He himself transforms us from within. It's also interesting how she qualifies cheerfulness as a special form of humility - "joy at having nothing and being nobody". This is directly contrary to the world's notion of joy - "having everything and being somebody".

In any case, MT makes it clear that this MC spirit can only come from contemplating Christ. That is why MT invites us to keep our minds and hearts fixed on Jesus. That is the key to learning how to grow in His likeness and to be filled with His loving trust, total surrender and joy. In one of her annual letters to her Sisters in the Lenten season, she writes: "Lent is once again with us, a precious time when Jesus, through His Church, asks us to keep our minds and hearts fixed on His deep longing for our loving trust in His love, expressed by our total surrender to His loving will, so as to be able to share His joy of being one with the Father." Notice how she says that we are sharing in Jesus' loving relationship of trust in the Father, His total surrender to the Father's will and His joy in being one with the Father. Jesus is taking us here into the life of the Trinity. He is our Way to the Father through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' own trust, surrender and joy flow from His experience of being loved by the Father. And the same inner dynamic takes place in us. Trust, surrender, and joy become the fruit of our own personal experience of being loved by the Father, a love that is revealed most perfectly and completely in the Thirst of Jesus. And there's a certain inner connection between these virtues of trust, surrender and joy. MT did not pick these virtues randomly out of a hat. She herself experienced that one virtue leads to the next. The Spirit of the Society is not a composite of three separate virtues, but one three-fold response to the experience of Jesus' thirst that begins with loving Trust,

continues to grow through total Surrender and blossoms fully in Cheerfulness or cheerful, joyful giving to others. Total surrender expresses the total giving of ourselves to God, whereas cheerful giving expresses the charitable giving of ourselves to others in service.

When we look closely at MT's experience of Jesus' Thirst, we see how she first of all grew in a relationship of loving trust in Jesus. MT was not by nature an extrovert exuding self-confidence. It is said of her that while she was still a novice with the Loreto Sisters, she could hardly light the candles on the altar before Mass, since she was so nervous that her hands were shaking. But MT's growing union with Jesus helped her to cast away her fears and natural timidity and open herself up to loving trust. The more MT experienced the embrace of Jesus' love, the more she was strengthened in trust. And the more her loving trust grew, the more she felt drawn to totally surrender herself to God's will, just as Jesus surrendered to the Father's will. She began to renounce her will more and more and let herself be shaped and formed and guided by God's loving will, in which she put all of her loving trust. She trusted that God only wills what is best for us, and so God's will became the guiding force of her life. Through God's inspiration already as a Loreto Sister she made a vow never to refuse God anything. God was already at work forming in MT what she herself would eventually call the MC spirit. And as MT grew in total surrender, she discovered a new joy and cheerfulness that she had never known before. Many of us were witnesses of her smile and joyful countenance. No one ever left MT without feeling uplifted and encouraged. MT was a beaming reflection of God's joy. Even during all those years of inner darkness she went through, she never stop reflecting the light of Jesus' love and joy. Jesus' words "Come, be My light" were bringing about a wonderful transformation in MT and became a source of blessing and anointing for everyone she met.

MT grew in this spirit by keeping her mind and heart fixed on Jesus. But we also know that she constantly gazed upon the Blessed Virgin Mary. MT noticed that Our Lady was filled with this same spirit of Christ, so she also turned to OL to grow in the MC spirit. Or we could say that the MC spirit was also a unique fruit of MT's very close relationship with OL. She consistently presents the Spirit of the Society as being an extension, a participation in Our Lady's spirit: "If we stand with Our Lady, she will give us her spirit of loving trust, total surrender and cheerfulness." Standing with OL, *iuxta crucem cum Maria*, is a crucial condition for growing in the MC spirit.

OL's loving trust, total surrender and spirit of joy were the fruit of her own very deep, personal union with God. It is hard for us to imagine the depth of that union. It began in an altogether unique way through the grace of the Immaculate Conception. And Mary was ever faithful to this grace, which united her very deeply and intimately with the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. Already in her childhood and early adulthood, Mary lived this spirit perfectly. We see this very clearly in the first Scripture passages referring to Mary. Fr. Joseph points out that Luke's account of the Annunciation and Visitation allows us to observe this triple response in Our Lady: we contemplate there her loving trust (St. Elizabeth praises her soon after the Annunciation, saying: "Blessed is she who believed, who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled"); we see her total surrender ("Be it done unto me according to your word"; *Fiat* sums up the total surrender of Mary); we also see her joy, especially in her canticle of praise, the Magnificat ("My spirit rejoices in God my Savior"); this inner joy of Mary became a gift for others – what Mother Teresa calls cheerfulness – ("The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy"). These are passages we should bring to deep prayer today.

MT often commented on these passages of the Annunciation and Visitation, which shows us that she often meditated upon them: “Loving Trust and Total Surrender made Our Lady say “Yes” to the message of the angel, and Cheerfulness made her to run in haste to serve her cousin Elizabeth. That is so much our life – saying “Yes” to Jesus and running in haste to serve Him in the poorest of the poor. Let us keep close to Our Lady and she will make that same spirit grow in each one of us.”

An important parallel theme in Mother Teresa’s teaching is that of acceptance, repeated often in one of her most cherished formulas: “Accept whatever He gives, and give whatever He takes, with a big smile.” She returned often to this theme of acceptance, or surrender, throughout her life, and saw it as the summit of one’s relationship to a crucified Lord. Here we see how the MC spirit grows through the contemplation of the life of Jesus and Mary, but reaches its culmination iuxta crucem cum Maria. Mary herself shows the greatest trust and surrender at the foot of the Cross and the greatest joy in the Resurrection: “At the foot of the Cross, OL saw only pain and suffering – and when they closed the tomb, she could not even see the Body of Jesus. But it was then that OL’s faith, her Loving Trust and Total Surrender were greatest. We know that before, in Nazareth, Jesus could not work any miracles because they had no faith. Now, to work His greatest miracle – the Resurrection – He asks the greatest faith from His own Mother. And because she belonged completely to God in Loving Trust and Total Surrender, He could bring to us the joy of the Resurrection, and Mary would be the Cause of our Joy.”

The great emphasis that MT put on being close to Mary, in order to grow in the spirit of loving trust, total surrender and cheerfulness, draws us to the importance of consecration to Mary, or as St. Louis de Montfort put it, consecration to Jesus through Mary.

Consecration to Mary, to Jesus through Mary

Fr. Joseph says that the desire of Mother Teresa that she and her sisters live their life of union with Jesus in and through the Immaculate Heart of Mary expressed itself concretely in the practice of Marian consecration. Besides the formal consecration made by all and set out in the institute’s book of prayers, this total entrustment to Our Lady was embodied in Mother’s most well-known and often repeated prayer, used throughout the day, almost as a consecration in miniature, at the end of every act of common prayer: “Immaculate Heart of Mary, Cause of our Joy, pray for us.” Time and time again Mother would exhort her followers to take Our Lady into their hearts and lives, as John the beloved disciple had done on Calvary. This day of retreat would be a great occasion to renew our consecration to Jesus through Mary, and like John, the priest and Apostle, the beloved disciple, who was led by OL to stand at the foot of the Cross, to hear the words of Jesus “Behold, your Mother”, words He spoke before saying “I thirst”. It was certainly true of MT’s experience that hearing the words “Behold, your Mother” helped her to hear the words “I thirst”.

MT discovered in true devotion to Mary what St. Louis de Montfort taught way before MT - it is a quick, sure, easy and safe path to great holiness. One of MT’s Sisters bore witness during Mother’s cause for beatification: “Our Mother encouraged us to make the Total Consecration to Our Lady with 30-days preparation according to St. Louis de Montfort. We do that very faithfully and renew our total consecration to Our Lady every year... Mother taught us that when we go to Our Lady with childlike confidence, everything becomes easy. Mother always led us to Our Lady and continually gave Our Lady as an example for everything.” MT herself says: “Holiness, very great holiness, becomes very simple if we belong fully to Our Lady. Our sanctification is Her main

duty.” This last statement is powerful – it is OL’s main duty to help us become saints. An awareness of that is very encouraging. In MT’s Original Rule Explanation she speaks of the essence of this consecration to Mary, which consists in imitating Mary’s virtues and abandoning ourselves completely into her hands, and then she adds: “With Mary, we make more progress in the love of Jesus in one month than we make in years while living less united to this good Mother.”

MT experienced OL as her constant companion, and so she made every effort to be a childlike companion of Mary: “All we do, washing, sweeping, feeding, whatever you do, do with your whole heart, all for Jesus through Mary. Don’t do anything without Our Lady. She is our Mother, guide and protector. “Jesus, I offer you this prayer, this sacrifice through Mary.” Jesus’ Mother is our Mother. “Mary, Mother of Jesus, be a Mother to me now.” Not tomorrow. She will be your protector, and you will be holy. Many saints became holy through her.” MT was convinced that if it worked for them, it will also work for us. And so, as Fr. Joseph says, “OL became a core element in MT’s own self-awareness. OL was the unseen foundation for all that MT would accomplish in the Church and in the world.”

MT called OL the “first MC” and therefore constantly observed Mary in order to be a true MC. “She as first MC went in haste to help Jesus sanctify John – and so it will be with you and me if we only love her unconditionally and trust her fully. The more we abandon ourselves to her totally and without reserve, the greater will be the number of great saints in our Society – for nothing is impossible for those whose Mother she is. Often during the day, let us raise our heart to her and ask her how she would do this or that now if she was in our place – and above all how to love God as she loved him, that we too may love him with her heart.”

In her relationship with OL and also with Jesus, MT often uses the verb “to cling”, which describes a child holding very close to its mother or father: “If you cling to Our Lady, She will protect you, guide you, as She took care of Jesus...The more we deepen our love for Mary, the closer we come to Jesus.” One would often see MT holding a rosary in her hand. That practice became a tangible way of clinging to Mary with one’s mind and heart. Fr. Joseph says that “the way that we ‘cling to OL’, in MT’s mind, is by establishing a personal covenant of life with her.” This was the kind of covenant Jesus himself established between His mother and St. John on Calvary, when He said to John, ‘She will be your Mother, and you will be her son’.

As priests, who have the grace to celebrate the Holy Eucharist and therefore be sacramentally and truly present with Mary at the foot of the Cross, we have the grace to hear Jesus’ words “Behold, your Mother”. “Could Jesus, during the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, say the same to me – “Behold your Mother”? Is my love so tender – my heart so pure as to take Her to my heart as John did? With what tenderness John took Her to his own - At every Holy Mass, I too have a chance to take Her to my own – if only I believe. When we receive Jesus in Holy Communion let us ask Her to come with us and teach us how to take care of Him as She took care of Him in Nazareth.”

Fr. Joseph emphasizes very strongly the role of OL in MT’s life. He brings all of that together in his beautiful book, which I highly encourage you to read: “Mother Teresa: In the Shadow of Our Lady. Sharing Mother Teresa’s Mystical Relationship with Mary”. Some of us had the grace to hear Fr. Joseph’s reflections on this before he published this book. He shared those reflections with us at the CCM retreat in Guadalupe. There we were truly in the shadow of OL as we prayed over this in OL’s shrine. Here again we are in the shadow of OL as we pray here at the Shrine of Czestochowa. Fr. Joseph points out that everything in MT’s life depended on OL. Without her, Mother would not

have understood the depths of meaning that the words “I thirst” contained; and without her, she would not have been able to respond to that thirst in the wholehearted gift of herself to Jesus in the Eucharist and the poor. Mother’s life was, as she was so fond of repeating, “All for Jesus, through Mary.” Far from being saccharine or pious, on Mother’s lips this motto reflected the solid basis for all she did, the confidence to undertake “this most difficult task” for the sake of the poorest of the poor, and the perennial “cause of her joy.”

“Be only all for Jesus through Mary - this is the best way to Satiare His thirst.”

In his book Fr. Joseph speaks of four important attitudes of soul necessary for OL to intervene in our lives. I think it is worth mentioning those here:

1. Humility, poverty of spirit, simplicity = that childlike littleness Jesus speaks of, without which we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.
2. Trust = simple faith in the presence, power and role of OL in God’s plan, with total trust in her, the trust of a child.
3. Humble obedience.
4. Contemplation = a sense of childlike wonder at the beauty of God’s creation and the majesty of His being, an ability to marvel at His gifts and blessings, and to take nothing for granted.

Fr. Joseph also speaks of stages of growth in our relationship to OL. This relationship begins with an encounter in faith with Mary. It is deepened through our attentive listening to Mary, which includes docility of will before her. And it reaches its perfection in consecration, the gift of self to OL. Through this consecration we put ourselves entirely at OL’s disposal every day. This requires interior discipline. “We need to give to OL, repeatedly through the day and over the course of the years, our worries, doubts, pains, problems and all self-reference. This is the key, the last step that will bring full relationship with her and allow her fully to intervene in our lives, to act on our behalf as she did for MT, for Juan Diego, and for many other hidden ones whom history will never know. Without this commitment, without the gift of our willing permission, Mary is not free to act. But once we take even the first halting steps of consecration, OL begins to enter our lives in a perceptible way.” Blessed Pope JP II, who lived *Totus Tuus* heroically, and is one of the best examples of how OL leads us priests to great holiness, wrote that consecration to OL produces “a life of intense communion and familiarity with the Blessed Virgin, as a new way of living for God.”

Fr. Joseph was convinced that the only path to sharing in the depth of MT’s relationship with Jesus crucified is to share in MT’s relationship with OL. Mary must become for us, as she was for MT, “the spiritual atmosphere” in which we live, work, pray and love. In that way, we too can become, as MT was for everyone she met, a “kind of extension of OL’s presence”.

Fr. Joseph: “Our consecration can be summarized in this way: it is the resolution to remain always in her heart, carefree, without attachments or worries, in constant prayer and docility of will.” And he goes on to point out some essential components of this consecration that I would like to summarize.

1. Total faith and confidence that Mary is always with us, always hears us, that her loving gaze always penetrates our soul. Absolute trust in all that she is doing in our life in the present moment, and in all that concerns our future, expecting everything from her at all times and in every situation, knowing that all is being arranged by her for our good.
2. Total abandonment - allow ourselves to be led by her, giving to her all attachments, worries, expectations, and desires, and offering her the gift of interior and exterior docility.
3. Conscious dwelling in her heart, sharing her prayer, following the movement of her Immaculate Heart to God.
4. Sharing her mission, following the movement of her Immaculate Heart to serve others, living at the foot of the Cross with her, bringing Jesus with her to others

In order that this consecration may grow and bear fruit, we need to spend personal time each day with OL. The Rosary is one privileged way of doing so, as the examples of MT and Blessed Pope JP II and countless other saints attest, but we can also do it through simple ejaculations, which MT loved so much: "Mary, be a Mother to me now!"

IV. The Passion of Jesus perpetuated in the Eucharist, prolonged in the poor

One thing that all biblical commentators, theologians, saints and mystics agree on is that Jesus' cry of thirst on the cross was not primarily a physical desire for water, even though his physical thirst must have been tremendous, especially due to the great loss of blood. With these words, Jesus was pointing to a mystery beyond the physical pain of His passion.

The evangelist John, who was standing next to Mary at the foot of the Cross and therefore heard these words, which were then imprinted in his memory and in his heart forever, introduces these words in a very unique way. Fr. Joseph says that of all Jesus' words spoken on Calvary, these are the only ones John set apart, as it were, with their own preface concerning Jesus' inner awareness and his intention in pronouncing them: "and Jesus, knowing that all was now completed, said to fulfill the Scripture, "I thirst." Scripture scholars agree that, among other possible references, John is pointing to the passage in the messianic Psalm 69: "I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but I found none. Instead... in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

Fr. Joseph writes that the first conclusion to be drawn from this verse in relation to Jn.19:28 is that Jesus' thirst on the cross is primarily addressed to humanity. The psalm, which John is directly connecting to the passion of Jesus, refers prophetically to the sufferings the Messiah would undergo. The first part of the couplet in question tells of his longing for the love of his people: a selfless love, a love expressed as "sympathy" or "compassion". The second part of the verse compares the suffering and rejection the Messiah would endure to the denial of water to a thirsty man, added to by offering him vinegar in its place: "Instead, in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

Jesus is doing here what many of the prophets were inspired by God to do when God asked the prophets to reveal something to the people. In communicating God's word to Israel the prophets both spoke God's message and acted it out symbolically. They used words and gestures, words and symbols, just as we do in the Liturgy. Jesus does the same. The first part of this "word" he speaks. "I thirst." The second part he acts out, to more clearly express the word he has spoken:

"A jar of vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a hyssop branch, and put it to Jesus' lips" (Jn.19:29). And immediately after that in the next verse, we read: "Then, one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there flowed out blood and water" (Jn.19:30).

Blessed Pope John Paul II commented on these words, saying:

"With those words ("I thirst") Jesus confirms the ardent love of the Savior, and reveals the depth of His desire to "open to all of us the fountain of water" to quench man's thirst for God...". The opening of His side by a lance symbolizes the opening to all of us the fountain of water. The history of salvation is in a sense like the digging of a well in search of life-giving water. The patriarchs and prophets did a great deal of digging, but

the wellspring of salvation burst forth with life giving water on Calvary, when blood and water flowed from the side of Christ.

The Holy Father continues: “Christ asked the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well: “Give me to drink” (Jn 4:7). His material, physical thirst symbolizes a far deeper reality: it expresses his ardent desire that his dialogue partner and her fellow-citizens open themselves to the gift He is offering – the gift of faith. The Samaritan Woman, when she asks Christ for water, is basically revealing the need for salvation present in every heart. And the Lord is revealed as the one who offers the living water of the Spirit that satisfies forever the infinite thirst (sic) of every human being.” Jesus’ cry “I thirst” and his humble request “Give me to drink” are meant to stir up in our own hearts a realization of our own need for salvation and an ardent longing for the gift of salvation Jesus is offering.

Pope JP II says further: “The liturgy for this Third Sunday of Lent presents a splendid commentary on the Johannine episode when it says in the preface that Jesus “so deeply thirsted” for the salvation of the Samaritan woman that “he set on fire in her the flame of God’s love.” This is the grace we are yearning for in this retreat – to be set on fire with the flame of God’s love and thus burn with love at the foot of the Cross, like the vigil lamp that burns day and night next to the Tabernacle.

These words of Blessed Pope JP II moved MT very deeply. But the papal intervention that most touched Mother Teresa was contained in the Holy Father’s Lenten message of 1993, which in turn inspired MT to write a letter to her Sisters during that same Lent of 1993. That letter has become very famous. Pope JP II wrote:

“I invite you during this Lent to meditate upon the Word of life which Christ left to His Church in order to enlighten the journey of each of her members. Recognize the voice of Jesus who speaks to you especially during this Lenten season. Listen to the voice of Jesus who tired and thirsty says to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well: “Give me to drink” (Jn.4:7). Look upon Jesus nailed to the cross, dying, and listen to his faint voice: “I Thirst” (Jn.19:28)...” Three times the Holy Father implores the whole Church to hear the voice of Jesus. This would inspire MT to question her own Sisters: “Do you hear His cry of thirst?”

For MT this cry of Jesus rises from two sources: 1) obviously from the parched lips of Jesus, dying on the Cross to save us; 2) but Jesus continues to cry out “I thirst”, first of all in the Holy Eucharist, which makes the words and work of Jesus on the Cross truly and really sacramentally present. 3) Another privileged place where we continue to hear His cry “I thirst” is in the poor and suffering, who are a kind of quasi-Sacrament of Jesus crucified. The poorest of the poor, in particular, reflect the extremity of humanity’s suffering and the extreme sharing in that suffering undertaken by Jesus crucified. Jesus’ complete solidarity with mankind is exemplified on the cross, and continued in the poor in whom He dwells: two presences which for Mother Teresa are mysteriously one, and both of which resound with his cry of thirst.

The Poor – Christ’s Hidden Passion

MT gives us an insight into her very contemplative approach to her wholehearted and free service to the poorest of the poor when she says: “In beholding the face of the poor we behold the face of Jesus.” (I had a profound experience of this one day in the Home for the Dying in Kalighat. It was a Sunday morning and I was about to celebrate Mass in that place which MT called “her first love”. Before Mass I went around to greet and bless the patients. In the far back corner of the men’s ward I met a young man lying on a mat. His arms and legs were so twisted that he could not move them. He could only move his head. I greeted him and he looked up at me and gave me one of the most beautiful

smiles I have ever seen. I felt like I was truly looking into the face of Jesus. That took me by surprise and till today I can still see the radiance on that man's face. Jesus gave me the grace to experience what MT is saying here: "In beholding the face of the poor we behold the face of Jesus.") MT continues, describing how this revelation of Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor is also a revelation of the Father: "By revealing himself and His true glory (the glory of love) in the distressing disguise of the poor, we who have seen Jesus have also seen the Father. We, who have understood Jesus' thirst, have discovered and begun to understand the Love of the "One who sent Him." Jesus present in the poor and suffering reveals to us the compassionate Love, the "thirst" of the Father. As the reality and magnitude of this mystery "hidden from the wise and the clever, and revealed to the small and simple" (Mt.11:25) begins to penetrate us, we are moved to exclaim with the apostle Philip: "It is enough for us, Lord" (Jn.14:9); for through His presence in the poor, Jesus has shown us the Father's face."

For Mother, the poorest of the poor were a reflection of Jesus and his mystery, but especially the mystery of his cross. They were a mirror of the suffering servant who bore our wounds, and of the divinity itself who stoops down to dwell there. For her, God's thirst for man was not theological theory, it was a living reality, one that took flesh in the passion of Jesus on Calvary, and continued to "take flesh" in the passion of His Mystical Body in the poor.

I don't know how it is for you when you celebrate Mass, but as time goes on I find myself bringing all of the sins and sufferings of the entire world to the altar each time I celebrate Mass. At every Mass Jesus is offering Himself to the Father, interceding for every human heart struggling with sin and undergoing suffering. We have the grace and privilege and tremendous responsibility through our priestly ministry to be the instruments through which Jesus continues to do this. An awareness of this will make us want to celebrate Mass every day, even if we are traveling or no one is present to pray with us. St. Padre Pio said that it is easier for the world to exist without the sun than for it to exist without the Eucharist.

Centrality of the Eucharist

MT placed so much emphasis on the centrality of the Eucharist in our lives. Mother Teresa's love, devotion, and reverence for Jesus in the Eucharist was, in the eyes of all who knew her, exceptional and memorable. For her, the Eucharist was the center of the world; the Eucharist was everything, because the Eucharist was Jesus; the living, acting, present and still-thirsting Jesus. That is why Holy Mass and Eucharistic adoration meant everything for MT. Without the Eucharist, all the works of mercy MT and her Sisters did would have been mere social work, *philia* statt *agape*.

The first theme that appears in Mother's instructions on the Eucharist, and in the example of her own devotional life, is the connection between the Eucharist and the passion of Jesus. For Mother, the Eucharist contained the ongoing mystery of love given on Calvary, present in every time and place.

"If you look at the cross, you will see how much Jesus loved me. If you look at the tabernacle you will see how much Jesus loves me. The Cross: past tense, "loved me" with a "d". The tabernacle: present tense, "loves me" with an 's'..."

"The Eucharist is connected with the Passion. If Jesus had not established the Eucharist we would have forgotten the Crucifixion. It would have gone into the past and we would have forgotten how Jesus loved us. They say that far away from the eyes is far away from the heart. To make sure that we do not forget this Jesus gave us the

Eucharist as a memorial of His Love, and to make sure that we keep on loving Him, and so satisfy His hunger for us.”

“I have a picture of the terrible scourging of Jesus; it is frightening to look at. On one side you have the scourging of Jesus, on the other side of the picture, you have adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. They are beautifully connected together. Do we really understand? Do we really satiate the thirst? Keep the picture in the prayer book. First thing when you open the book, kiss it, either this side or that side.”

“Jesus who was rich has become so small and helpless. Jesus has made Himself so helpless that they could nail Him to the cross. And yet, Almighty God has given everything, even the mind to the man who made the nails. Jesus could not come down, He couldn't do even that, He made Himself so helpless. And now He has become even smaller in the Bread of Life. We have to see Him only by faith.”

Jesus in the Eucharist was not only the focus of Mother's prayer life, but, in her simplicity and directness of spirit, became her constant point of reference in all things, especially in moments of need.

One Sister shared how she approached MT with some matter that concerned the community: “As we sat there, she said, very naturally, “Just a moment. Let me go ask Jesus.” Well, the parlor doubled as a sacristy and not ten feet away was the chapel. There was no one in it at the time. We were left sitting at the table. She gets up, goes into the chapel, kneels in front of the blessed sacrament for two, three minutes, comes back, and sits down and very matter-of-factly states, “Jesus says, ‘One day it will be but not now.’”

“She talked about... a novice coming one day to her office in Calcutta and telling her, “Mother, you know, we have no more flour for preparing lunch.” And this is the time when there were almost four hundred sisters living in the Mother House in Calcutta, and they were out in the streets and coming back hungry and needing to be nourished to go back out. And in her simplicity Mother told her, “Sister, you're in charge of the kitchen?” “Yes, Mother.” “Then you go into the chapel and tell Jesus we have no flour.” Instead of picking up the telephone and talking to a minister in the government in getting it taken care of, no, this is the one God has indicated. “You're the novice in charge of the kitchen. Go tell Him and go tell Jesus.”

So the novice goes and trembles in front of the Blessed Sacrament for a while. Then Mother tells of receiving a phone call letting her know that the municipal government of Calcutta had cancelled school for that day for whatever reason, and that they had seven thousand lunches that they did not know what to do with. Could she help distribute them?”

The Eucharist was her primary meeting place with Jesus, and with the living mystery of his thirst for love and souls.

“We will grow more and more into the sunshine of God's love if the Eucharist becomes really the Bread of Life for us if we really come so close that we can satisfy the hungry Christ. He is hungry or He wouldn't stay in the Tabernacle.”

“We have Jesus 24 hours in the Tabernacle, do we think of His longing for us, His loneliness for us? ... Here, He is here, always waiting. Make it a point: never go out of the house or come in without visiting Jesus. Just a few steps, it is easy. Go always after meals. Don't begin anything without going to Him. What a gift of God, this presence of Jesus. Let us appreciate it.”

It was by contemplating Jesus in the utter poverty of the Eucharist that Mother so clearly saw him in the poverty of those around her, that she understood the connection, the oneness of the broken bread of the Eucharist with the sufferings of the broken Body of Calvary.

What is more, the spiritual dynamic that took place around the cross with Our Lady and St. John she understood to be continued and extended, without limit or diminution, in this sacrament. This allowed Mother and her sisters to become 'contemporaries' of Calvary, companions and comforters of the crucified One – first of all in the Eucharist, and from there, in going out to him in the poor. Herein is the source of the intimate, almost inseparable, connection between the Eucharist and the fourth vow of the Sisters to offer wholehearted and free service to the poorest of the poor.

“Our whole life must be simply woven with Jesus in the Eucharist! Jesus in the Eucharist, Jesus in my sisters and Jesus in the poor is the same Jesus.”

“Jesus was not satisfied with just feeding us with Bread of Life, but He made Himself the hungry One in the distressing disguise of the poor. For us, Missionaries of Charity, we cannot say that we love Jesus in the Eucharist but that we have no time for the poor. If you really love Jesus in the Eucharist, you will naturally want to put that love into action by serving Him in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor. We cannot separate these two things: the Eucharist and the Poor...”

“We can't be holy without Him, so He made Himself the Bread of Life. There He is present! He has made Himself Bread of Life to satisfy our hunger for God, for holiness, deep within our hearts. Where is God? There, in the poorest of the poor, in my sister too, and I can satisfy my hunger to love and serve Him. Our vocation is so beautiful! He satisfies my hunger in the Eucharist and I satisfy His hunger for love, in the poor...”

“We must be faithful to that smallness of the Eucharist. That simple piece of Bread that even a small child can take in. The Passion and the Eucharist should open our eyes to that smallness, that giving of a bath to a patient, that smile, that sister next to me, do I know that she is feeling lonely?”

“What are the characteristics of Mother Teresa's spirituality? Ad. Her spirituality was centered around the Eucharist, and Jesus in the human person. So the personality of Jesus or the person of Jesus guided her. You could not separate the Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament from the Jesus in the poor. The two were fused in her own spiritual life, and therefore whenever she looked at people, she somehow was able to relate to them as belonging to Jesus, because Jesus was there. And when she looked at Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament she also saw the millions of poor who were suffering. I think between the two was her great understanding of spirituality.”

“You cannot enter into that faith in the distressing disguise unless you have contact through meditation, through prayer, especially through the Eucharist. And then she would say, “The Jesus whom I receive in the Eucharist, is the same Jesus whom I serve. It is not a different Jesus.” So that great devotion for the Eucharistic presence of Jesus was something very special in Mother's life, and which has brought that special presence of Jesus in the poorest of the poor.”

“Mother herself told us that she got all her strength from Jesus in the Eucharist. Mother started the day with the Holy Mass and ended it with Adoration of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.”

"Mother had deep love for Jesus in the Eucharist. She encouraged us to make as many visits as possible to the Blessed Sacrament. She taught us to say the Litany of the Blessed Sacrament, which we pray especially on Thursdays when we are making our beds. In March 1973, Mother gave us the beautiful gift of one-hour daily adoration. In her letter of 26/3/73 she wrote: "I would like every house to have one hour adoration daily, before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, at a time that is convenient to you". She herself faithfully adored Jesus for one hour every day, saying the Rosary and spending the rest of the hour in silent prayer. Mother also urged the Parish Priests to have at least one hour of adoration a week in their parishes. Whenever she spoke to the people I heard her say, "Ask your Parish Priest for the gift of one hour adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in your Parish Church."

The Eucharist and the Poor

"Her spirituality was based on the Gospel which is the Eucharist and the poor. So, from the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist to go to the presence of Jesus in the poor man – a two-fold, real presence. Actually in one place she says, "It is not two but one. Because it is one sheet of paper, two pages; one coin, two sides - inseparable." And based on that spirituality of the poor man – that the poor man is Christ – that is always the center of her spiritual life. And every thing - her work, her development, and all the teaching, centered around that – Eucharistic adoration, and through this poor man who is Christ for her."

"Satisfy the thirst of Jesus in the Bread of life and in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor". Jesus in the Bread of Life is there to satisfy our hunger for God in prayer by our oneness with Christ. Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poorest of the poor is there so that we can satisfy His hunger for our love for Him. We must be able to unite both of these."

"Never separate the poor from the Eucharist and then you will be a true Missionary of Charity. When you go to the poor you take Jesus with you. This morning He satisfied my hunger for Him and now I go out to satisfy His hunger for love and for souls."

"Are you able to see Jesus in the hungry, the thirsty, the lonely, and the poor? He is the same Jesus whom we receive in Holy Communion!"

"The beautiful part of our vocation is that as Missionaries of Charity we can be all the time with Jesus: Jesus in the tabernacle and Jesus in the poor. When we go to God, Jesus will say, "Come blessed of my Father... when I was hungry you gave me to eat; when I was thirsty you gave me to drink... I was homeless and see how full are our homes now; when I was sick, how many families you visited."

"Our vocation is very sacred. ... We have Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Jesus in the poor. Never forget Matthew chapter 25, exactly MC. That gospel has been made for us. Live up to that."

V. Iuxta Crucem cum Maria

MT insisted on staying near OL in prayer

- a. In some mysterious and important way, the founding grace of the MCs was channeled through OL, who was present and part of the grace. It was at OL's pleading that the Society was born.
 - a. Triple Tableau – the only graphical representation of MT's "call within a call" and of the MC charism.
 - i. "I saw a very big crowd – all kinds of people - very poor and children were there also. They all had their hands lifted towards me – standing in their midst. They called out "Come, come, save us – bring us to Jesus."
 - ii. "Again that great crowd – I could see great sorrow and suffering in their faces – I was kneeling near Our Lady, who was facing them - I did not see her face but I heard Her say "Take care of them – They are mine – bring them to Jesus – Carry Jesus to them – Fear not. Teach them to say the Rosary – the family Rosary and all will be well - Fear not – Jesus and I will be with you and your children."
 - iii. "The same great crowd – they were covered in darkness. Yet I could see them. Our Lord on the Cross. Our Lady at a little distance from the Cross – and myself 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. Our Lord said – "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?"
 - b. Let me share with you Fr. Joseph's reflections on this. We see in these images the great spiritual axis of Mother's call, in her inner life as well as her external work: the Poorest of the Poor, the role of Our Lady at the foot of the Cross, and the presence of Jesus Crucified and in particular His ongoing Passion in His Mystical Body. These three, and in this order, constituted for her a pedagogy by which the Lord led her and trained her in his plan, as well as a process, or methodology, by which she lived out her call in a deepening cycle of charity and grace. Her life's mission would be to go to the poor of every kind and place, with Our Lady, to behold and to serve the crucified Lord.
 - i. The Poor - Each of the three scenes described above begins with a "great crowd" of the poor bearing "great sorrow and suffering in their faces," and end with the presence of the crucified Jesus in their midst. This hidden presence of the Lord in the poor and suffering was for Mother the reason for their dignity, even 'greatness.' In their likeness to Christ crucified they were, even if unknowingly, his specially chosen tabernacles – bearers of his

passion, mirrors of his glorious countenance under the “distressing disguise” of human suffering. And so, from the first days of her work, the poor and the suffering would be for Mother and her followers a privileged place of grace, of conversion, and of encountering Christ. In serving and caring for the poor, she would serve and satiate her Lord. But also, in serving them, the poor would discover their dignity reflected in her eyes, and experience the presence and compassion of God in her touch. This was Jesus’ own purpose in sending her.

- ii. Our Lady - In the next two scenes, Our Lady is shown in the same central role she would play in every aspect of Mother’s life and charism. She is presented to Mother both as a provider and a companion in her work for the poor, in “bringing them to Jesus.” Our Lady becomes a kind of bridge, a liaison – both between Mother and the poor who cry out to her, and between that “great crowd” of the poor and the crucified Jesus who longs for them. Our Lady says of the poor, “They are mine.” Mother will share in Our Lady’s grace and exercise of motherhood towards these neediest of her children, and in her intimate connection with those who most share Mary’s blessed lowliness. In all her work Mother will strive to remain enclosed “in Our Lady’s most pure Heart,” even as we see her ‘enclosed’ by Our Lady’s arms in the third tableau. It is with Our Lady, as portrayed in this final scene, that Mother will find the grace and courage to stand at the calvaries of the world – knowing by the same faith that sustained Our Lady in that darkest hour, that beneath this mystery is hidden the Son of God. In her need for robust and unflagging faith in carrying out “this most difficult task,” Our Lady will be Mother’s constant reference, model, and support.
 - iii. Jesus Crucified - The triple tableau shown to Mother begins with Jesus’ hidden passion in the poor, and ends, in the company of Our Lady, before Jesus’ open passion on the cross. For Mother, Jesus’ gift of self on the cross, continued at the calvary of the poor and needy, is the gateway to understanding and living her charism, to putting the love received from him at the cross into a “living action.”
- b. As mentioned above, in Mother’s first graces of call she experienced standing with Our Lady next to Jesus’ cross, surrounded by the poor in whom his crucifixion is prolonged. This scene was to become a cameo and model for her life and mission. She reminded her sisters of this, not only in the period following these graces (cited above in her Original Rule Explanation), but throughout her life. Living “juxta crucem” with Our Lady became a constant theme, and gave her and her sisters their “stance,” their identity and place before the Lord and within the Church. “Mary will help us, She who was there, who stood by the Cross. She could not take out the thorns, but her presence relieved the pain of Jesus.” Often stand in spirit at the foot of the Cross with Our Blessed Mother and contemplate with her the price Jesus paid ...” “But we ask for the most important thing, to stand beside Our Lady under the Cross of Jesus... to learn from her to quench His thirst.” “Cling to the Rosary as the creeper clings to the tree - for without Our Lady we cannot stand.” (Original Rule Explanation) Of special importance in her prayer life was the rosary said in union with Our Lady. In fact, it can be said that Mother Teresa's one great method and means of prayer was the rosary, to which

she clung with all her heart, whether before the Blessed Sacrament, or walking the streets of Calcutta. Our Lady's heart was her school and her "place," her "atmosphere" of prayer – staying with her at the cross of Jesus to hear and satiate his thirst. Mother Teresa saw the rosary as the means par excellence for penetrating prayerfully the mysteries of God's love, in particular the thirst of Jesus, hand in hand with Our Lady. This was her preferred prayer, even in times of silent adoration, when others would have opted for a more contemplative form of prayer. But for Mother Teresa, the rosary was itself eminently contemplative. It was the simple prayer of the poor – the very poor she had seen gathered around the cross with Our Lady years before. It was the prayer OL asked MT to teach to the poor. Through the rosary she relived that tableau and renewed its grace. It was through the rosary that Mother Teresa applied to her prayer life her request that Our Lady lend her her heart – so that in the praying of the rosary she and her sisters would be entering the mysteries of Jesus with and through the heart of Our Lady, who had lived and "turned them over in her heart" as no one else. Through the rosary, they shared in her sharing of the mystery of "God's thirsting love." For this reason, she held fast to this practice, both for herself and for her sisters.

- c. The role of Our Lady in the life and charism of Mother Teresa cannot be overstated – and, to understand the secret to her sanctity and apostolic fruitfulness, may not be underestimated. Our Lady was Mother's path, companion, and support in hearing and answering Jesus' cry of thirst on the cross. For this reason, not for piety or mere devotion, she resolved to spend her life, and place all of her followers with her, next to Our Lady in spirit at the foot of the cross. MC life would be a life lived *juxta crucem cum Maria*. To share in her understanding of the "depth of divine love being revealed" in Jesus' cry of thirst. MT speaks of begging OL "to teach us to listen deeply in fervent prayer to the cry of her Son Jesus on the Cross 'I thirst'." "But we ask for the most important thing, to stand beside Our Lady under the Cross of Jesus, to hear Him say "I thirst", and to learn from her to quench His thirst. This is where we belong as Missionaries of Charity." Recognizing that Our Lady was the one who "pondered all these things in her heart," it reflects Mother's desire to share in Our Lady's grace of hearing and understanding, being touched and penetrated by, her Son's cry of thirst from the cross. Secondly, it is the desire to share in the grace of Our Lady's response to his thirst, with wholehearted and undivided love (i.e., with her immaculate heart).
- d. She placed "all her confidence" in Our Lady, but not simply as an external guide or intercessor, though Our Lady was surely these for her. Rather, the key to understanding this unique spiritual (yet eminently practical and functional) relationship to the Mother of God lies in Mother Teresa's conception (and conviction) of sharing in the mystery and grace of Our Lady's "Immaculate Heart." For Mother Teresa, Our Lady's Heart, that is to say, the mystery of her interiority – especially in function of her love for God, as indicated by its symbolism – represented mankind's maximum response to God's thirst to love and be loved. Further, by living united to her and asking Our Lady to "lend us her heart," the mystery of her Immaculate Heart would provide Mother and her followers their own greatest opportunity, and a sure and path, to satiate Jesus' thirst. "Stay very close to Our Lady. If you do this, you can do great things for God and the good of people." They would be guided, purified, supported, and enriched by Our Lady's own heart, in a kind of spiritual symbiosis forged by the call and grace of September 10th. The heart of Our Lady would become for them

a kind of spiritual locus, a milieu or atmosphere in which they would live, pray, and serve. "Let us ask Mary Immaculate to lend us Her Heart, so beautiful, so pure, so Immaculate, Her Heart so full of love and humility. That we may receive and carry Jesus in the Bread of Life and love Him with the same sentiments as She loved Him and serve Him in the distressing disguise of His poor." "I entrust you all to Our Lady, the Virgin Mother of God, whom Jesus on the Cross gave us to be our Mother also. May she give her heart, so beautiful, so pure, so immaculate, so full of love and humility." The fruit of this intimate union with Our Lady's heart in her interior life would allow Mother to become, in her external work for the poor, a kind of "extension" of Our Lady at the hidden calvaries of today's world. The sisters learned this about her (and about what their own connection to Our Lady could be) not so much from listening to, as from simply observing, their foundress. "I felt Mother was like an "embodiment" of Our Lady; Mother did nothing without Mary."

- e. The MC charism was understood by Mother as being a share in Our Lady's own anointing and call, a sharing in what Our Lady is and does. Mother saw Our Lady as intimately and personally involved in this charism and work by virtue of her own mission. She herself had lived on earth all the elements of this charism, especially standing at the foot of her Son's cross, and wished to live them mystically now from heaven, in some way, through Mother and her followers. For this reason Our Lady is so often referred to as the "first MC" in Mother's writings.
- f. "Mother used to say to all of us: "With you Sisters, I am not satisfied with your becoming just good Sisters. I want you to be holy. I want you to stand close to Jesus with Our Lady at the foot of the Cross." "As a preparation for a joyful celebration of this Golden Jubilee of "Inspiration Day" ... I cannot think of a better way than to turn to Our Lady ... and to beg Her, one in mind and heart, to teach us to listen deeply in fervent prayer to the cry of Her Son Jesus on the Cross "I Thirst", so that with Her and like Her we learn to stand by the distressing disguise of Jesus in the world to-day."
- g. This is the place of fullest revelation; the place of "greatest love", the place of our redemption and sanctification. This is where the Church was born, where we were born. This is the source of every charism, including the MC/CCM charism. This is where we draw water abundantly from the spring of salvation. This is where water flowed from the rock, not after Moses' staff hit the rock, but after the staff of Jesus' Cross was raised on the rock of Calvary.
- h. It is here that Jesus' freely-chosen extreme poverty and self-emptying is poured out to fill the "dark holes" of poverty and emptiness in mankind. Here at the cross God and man are again made one. Here God's thirst for man's thirst for God is redeemed.
- i. The cross is the great place of encounter with the incarnate reality of God's love and mercy.

This is not the fruit of study alone, but rather the fruit of experience - Logos and Rhema. "We cannot know or satiate the thirst of Jesus if we do not know, love and live the Cross of Jesus." "Today, I want you to read through it [the Passion] slowly. Don't try to imagine too much or meditate but to experience that deep love Jesus has for you, a love that knew no limits and that led Jesus to the Cross."

VI. Special devotion to Sacred Heart – Heart to heart relationship

One special grace that prepared MT for her very unique, deep and personal encounter with the Thirst of Jesus on the Cross was the great devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus that she was blessed with from a very early age.

Let us take a moment to go back to the Saint who was the recipient of the revelation of the Sacred Heart - St. Margaret Mary Alaçoque. Jesus appeared to her in 1673 and 1674, asking her to make known to the world the ardent, burning love of His Heart for us. The first apparition of the Sacred Heart took place on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, Dec. 27. *“He said to me: ‘My Divine Heart is so passionately inflamed with love for men and for you in particular, that, not being able any longer to contain within Itself the flames of Its ardent charity, It must needs spread them abroad through your means, and manifest Itself to men, that they may be enriched with Its precious treasures which I unfold to you, and which contain the sanctifying and salutary graces that are necessary to hold them back from the abyss of ruin. And I have chosen you, an abyss of unworthiness and ignorance, for the accomplishment of this great design, that all this may be My work.’ Thereupon He demanded my heart, which I entreated Him to take. He took it from my breast and plunged it into His own adorable Heart where it appeared as but an atom in the midst of an immense ocean of fire. Then drawing it forth, in appearance like a flame in the shape of a heart, He replaced it in my breast, saying as He did so: ‘Behold, My beloved, a precious pledge of My love; it contains within your breast a little spark of Its most ardent flames, to serve you as a heart and to consume you up to your last moment ...”*

We see here what Jesus can and will do to our own hearts when we entrust them to Him as St. Margaret Mary did and as Blessed Teresa of Calcutta did 300 years later. He plunges our own feeble hearts into His own Heart and sets them on fire. This is Jesus’ ardent desire for each one of us. But notice how He demands the heart of St. Margaret Mary. Here He appeals to our freedom. He does so with insistence – He demands. But He does not force. But once we make that act of freedom and love and, as St. Margaret Mary did, entreat Him to take our hearts, then the miracle of transformation takes place. A beautiful liturgical image of this is the Easter Candle. In this most precious liturgy during the Easter Vigil the Easter Candle is carried in solemn procession into the still dark church. After the priest or deacon sings “Lumen Christi” for the second time and the people respond “Deo gratias”, everyone lights their candles from the Easter Candle. The light of the Easter Candle does not diminish, but ends up lighting the candles of all present. What happens by way of sign in the liturgy happens to us interiorly when we cast ourselves into the Heart of Jesus. Jesus sets our hearts on fire and makes us capable of setting other hearts on fire.

The second apparition to St. Margaret Mary took place shortly after the first apparition, probably on a first Friday of the month in 1674: *“After that, this Divine Heart was shown to me as on a throne of flames, more dazzling than the sun and transparent as crystal, with that adorable wound, and surrounded with a crown of thorns signifying the pricks caused to It by our sins; and above there was a cross, which meant that from **the first moment of His Incarnation**, that is, as soon as this Sacred Heart was formed, the cross was planted in It, and that It was filled at once with all the bitterness which humiliations and poverty, pains and scorn, would cause to It, and which His Sacred Humanity was to suffer throughout all His lifetime and in His Sacred Passion.”*

“One of my greatest sufferings was caused by the divine Heart addressing to me these words: ‘I thirst with such a terrible thirst to be loved by men in the Blessed Sacrament that this thirst consumes Me. Yet I find no one trying to quench it according to My desire by some return of My love.’” (St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in MCF, Charism Statement (Tijuana: Mexico, 1990),

MT was very moved by these revelations and longed for deep union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus and for the salvation of souls. After Inspiration Day and her own experience of apparitions of Jesus and Mary, MT’s love for the Sacred Heart took on a very special characteristic. She experienced the thirst of the Heart of Jesus, His thirst for love and for souls, and her one great desire was to satiate His thirst. Her heart was set on fire, the fire of Jesus’ thirsting love, which would consume her up to her last moment. Her entire prayer life, religious life in community and apostolate had this one aim.

13 January 1947: “– your vocation is to love and suffer and save souls and by taking this step you will fulfill my Heart’s desire for you - That is your vocation.”

Even in the terrible darkness MT went through for so many years, she found her refuge in the SH. On 27 March 1956 she writes: “For sometime the agony of desolation is so great and at the same time the longing for the Absent One so deep, that the only prayer which I can still say is – ‘Sacred Heart of Jesus I trust in Thee – I will satiate Thy thirst for souls’.”

MT often speaks of consoling the SH of Jesus. She speaks of being a victim of crucified love and desires ardently to make reparation to the SH. She desires oneness and identification with Jesus in His mission of saving souls. This explains her desire to share in the sufferings of Jesus.

Undated 2 (most probably 1959): “My own Jesus do with me as You wish – as long as You wish without a single glance at my feelings and pain. I am Your own. Imprint on my soul and life the sufferings of Your Heart.”

31 December 1963: “This morning I finished my 5 days retreat with one resolution – to use every grace & help to help our Sisters & Brothers draw closer to the Sacred Heart.”

24 July 1967: “Father, can you explain to me - when you have time - how to grow in the ‘deep personal union of the human heart with the Heart of Christ.’ From childhood the Heart of Jesus has been my first love - Every Friday is the feast of the Sacred Heart for me. I love the Mass of the Sacred Heart - for in the words of the offertory re-echo the words of 10th Sept. - ‘will you do this for Me’.”

“That we too like her [Our Lady] can become holy and come closer to the Sacred Heart by satiating His thirst for love, for souls.”

“In your prayer, try to get as close (as possible) to Jesus’ Heart – to know Him, to love Him better, and to serve Him better by satiating His thirst for love, for souls.”

Oneness and Identification with Jesus

MT’s relationship with Jesus was a Heart to heart relationship. There was something uniquely spousal about this relationship, symbolized by the exchange of hearts. If already in human marriage God unites man and woman in such a way that they become one, how much more must this oneness with Christ be. The fruit of Mother Teresa’s spousal attachment to Jesus was a growing oneness and identification with him: in his exterior mission and physical sufferings, be it in his passion or in the poor, as

well as in his interior states of soul, in the movement of his heart towards the Father and towards the world.

Oneness was for her a further step in intimacy. In turn, this oneness that was a blending of two loves, of two wills, tended more and more to become identification with Jesus, as in St. Paul's famous phrase which Mother loved to cite: "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ living in me."

We priests urgently need this kind of oneness and identification with Jesus. We act in His person at every Mass and in the confessional, but that sacramental oneness must continue throughout the day. That's why MT had such a great love for priests and prayed for them in a special way.

"We must pray much for priests. I did not realize it before so much as during the Synod. Nearly every Bishop and Cardinal Hume himself came to thank me for what I said about priests, "Give us holy priests, then families will be holy!" In India Cardinal Picachy sent a telegram after the conference for the Bishops; there I told them, "Love your priests, love them and want them!" No one had told them that they were lonely, it opened their eyes to hear something so simple and yet so true! Help priests with your prayers and sacrifices. Now Our Holy Father has blessed the Priest Co-workers. They share in our spirit and Charism but as priests living the life of the Gospel and of that deeper oneness with Christ. Pray that it grow and help priests to really grow in holiness. They will help us all to become holy. The sanctity of your life will bring souls to God. Sisters pray for holy priests, especially our priests co-workers."

"I would think it is very deeply linked to her spirituality in which she had a personal understanding of the thirst of Jesus - that Jesus depended upon human persons to continue his life and ministry in the world, and those human persons were priests. And somehow therefore, for Mother Teresa, the priest became an important person in the implementation of quenching the thirst of Jesus. I don't know if she theologically came to that conclusion, because I have not read anything in her writings in which she linked the thirst of Jesus to the life of the priest. But I think it was part of a supernatural growth within her – that having understood the thirst of Jesus for the poor and the needy, and having seen that that thirst comes to human persons through the ministry of priests..."

Thirst for Souls – entering into Jesus' experience

One of the unique fruits of very deep devotion to the Sacred Heart is a sharing in Jesus' experience, in his thirst for souls. "We have been chosen for a purpose: To quench the thirst of Jesus for love and souls. "I have chosen you" Jesus said in St John's Gospel. Sisters, never get tired of repeating that sentence. We have been chosen for a purpose: to quench the thirst of Jesus for love, for souls..."

The ultimate source of Mother Teresa's tremendous apostolic energy and zeal is to be found in the thirst of Jesus for souls. It should be noted that, contrary to many public perceptions, Mother's concern was not primarily the material relief of the poor and suffering, but through the human touch of compassion, her one focus was the salvation and sanctification of their souls. Jesus himself schooled her in this great cause of his heart during her period of founding graces, and this conviction would continually direct her thoughts and energies from that time onwards, as she in turn schooled her sisters in this same divine cause.

"The reason for the existence of our Society is to satiate the thirst of Jesus on the Cross for love of souls. How to satiate the love of God? God has a tremendous love for souls; so much is His love for souls that He died for us."

“Jesus came into this world to draw souls closer to His Father. We are here to satiate His thirst for love of His Father.”

“The work is suffering much because there is not that intimate union – For Jesus – with Jesus. There is not that thirst for souls – that living desire to satiate the thirst of Jesus for souls.” St. Catherine of Siena: “Oh sweetest, boundless, beloved charity! It was your infinite hunger and thirst for our salvation that made you cry out that you were thirsty! Though your agony there caused you intense physical thirst, your thirst for our salvation was greater. Ah, ah me! There is no one to give you anything to drink except the bitterness of sin upon sin! How few there are who give you a drink freely and with pure loving affection!” “There [on the cross] we find the Lamb slain and opened up for us with such hungry desire for the Father’s honor and our salvation that it seems he cannot effectively show by his bodily suffering alone all that he longs to give. It seems this is what he meant when he cried out on the cross, ‘I am thirsty!’ as if to say, ‘I have so great a thirst for your salvation that I cannot satisfy it; give me to drink!’ The gentle Jesus was asking to drink those he saw not sharing in the redemption purchased by his blood, but he was given nothing to drink but bitterness. Ah, dearest, not only at the time of the Crucifixion, but later and even now we continue to see him asking for this kind of drink and showing us that his thirst persists. It seems to me that people give him nothing but bitterness and the stench of sin.”

St. Therese of Lisieux: The Little Flower’s experience occurred on a Sunday as she gazed on a picture of Jesus Crucified. Years later she would write that the cry of Jesus’ Thirst had penetrated her soul in that moment, and that the words “I Thirst” had: “set aflame in me a lively and unknown ardor.... I wanted to satiate my Beloved, and I felt myself devoured by His same thirst for souls... I seemed to hear Jesus saying to me as to the Samaritan: ‘Give Me to drink’; and the more I gave Him to drink the more the thirst of my soul grew...”

St. Therese of Lisieux made it her special aim to pray for priests. She will help us to have this deep encounter with the Thirst of Jesus, which will also set our hearts on fire.

„Painful Thirst“

Mother Teresa was always acutely aware of what it cost Jesus to express his thirst for us on the cross – that his thirst, much more than the heart’s sentiment, was united to an unspeakable pain borne solely out of love. Increasingly in later years, Mother would refer not only to the passion but also to Jesus’ present thirst in the world and the Church today, torn by strife and disobedience, in the same terms: as a most “painful thirst.” “In the heart of Jesus I am sure there is a painful thirst for love...” “There [on the cross] they [the saints] found the Lamb slain with such a fire of love for our salvation, seemingly insatiable. He even cries aloud that he is thirsty, as if to say: I have more Zeal, thirst, desire for your salvation than I can show you with this finite suffering.”

She says that one of the causes of Jesus’ painful thirst is the lukewarmness of religious and priests: “To Sate Jesus’ painful thirst caused by religious and Priests”... do everything in his power with the help of God to grow in holiness so as to be able to satiate the painful thirst of Jesus. Again & again He is asking for the same thing “Give Me Holy Priests that they may satiate My painful thirst in us.” What will we answer Jesus...”

As spouse of the Lamb of God, called to satiate and share his painful thirst for love and souls on the cross, suffering and voluntary sacrifice were a major part of Mother

Teresa's spiritual life, and a major theme in her teaching. She was called not only to stand with Our Lady at the cross as observer, but to be a participant in the mystery of love and redemption taking place there. This sharing united and conformed her unto her Spouse, and allowed him to continue his passion in her, even as he did in the poor she served. Together they were united at and in the cross – Jesus, Our Lady, Mother Teresa, and the poor – in this one and ongoing mystery of “no greater love.”

In this too, it was Jesus himself, during her particular graces of 1946-1947, who invited her to this kind of sharing in his sufferings. It was to be a sharing that urged her to give as he did, “without counting the cost.” As Mother was fond of saying: “The joy of loving is the joy of sharing, of giving until it hurts.” Jesus asked her to:

“Come be their victim - 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.”

By word and example, Mother Teresa invited her followers to the same kind of generous sharing in the crosses of daily life that Jesus had asked of her. Again, this was for the sole purpose of being united with him in love, so to console him and satiate his thirst for the souls redeemed by his blood.

“Without suffering, your work would be social work, very good and helpful, but it would not be the work of Jesus Christ, not part of the redemption.”

“Jesus showed His Heart to St. Margaret Mary. Jesus said again and again, "Love Me as I have loved you!" "Impossible!" she said, "the only way I can do it is if you take mine and give me your Heart". Let us ask sincerely from the depth of our hearts, "Let me share Your loneliness, Your being unloved, and uncared!" In our lives right from our birth we all have our share in the Passion, in the best of the families and in the best of the communities. Do something today to share in the Passion.”

Deep faith and love for Jesus will permit us to see our own sufferings as a gift: “Suffering will come in our life and what will be our attitude; will we cling to Him? If we really are in love with Jesus, suffering is a gift. Still we can bear that physical suffering, but when there is something inside, a hurt, bitterness, something difficult to forgive and forget... Am I really in love with our Lord? Then, let me share with you that pain, let me feel as you have felt: that is complete oneness, that is what you and I profess. That is what you are doing when you renew your Vows.”

“We forget that you and I, we are the spouses of Jesus crucified. If I am the spouse of Jesus crucified, then I must have some resemblance to Him, some sharing to identify with Him, to show that we belong to Him. This is the time to share His Passion and whether I am to become a good religious, a holy religious, all will depend on the acceptance of these daily pin pricks, which can make me holy or destroy me. Here we need that fidelity to that pure love!” St. Padre Pio was so one with Christ crucified that he bore the stigmata in his body. Very few people in history have had this grace, but we are all called to a spiritual stigmata – to bear the wounds of Christ in our hearts by joining any suffering or sacrifice to those of Christ.

And this is to be done cheerfully: “Be happy and at peace, accept whatever He gives, and give whatever He takes with a big smile. You belong to Him - tell Him - I am Yours - and if you cut me to pieces, every single piece will be only all Yours. Let Jesus be the Victim and the Priest in you.”

“It is not enough just to suffer. We must be united with Jesus in our suffering, with our hearts full of love for the Father and love for souls as His was. Let us ask Our Lady to teach us this. She stood by the Cross of Jesus and shared His Passion fully with her whole heart. She did it all willingly and for souls.”

Mother was aware of the resistance and inertia of human nature before the cost of the cross. She exhorted her sisters not only to accept inevitable sufferings and those built into the MC way of life, but to “grab with both hands” the chance to give greater love, for and with Jesus, when offenses or humiliations came one’s way.

“Grab the chance to be like Him, to let Him live His Passion in us!”

“When you are blamed for something you have not done, then grab the chance and offer it to Jesus as a share in His Passion.”

“Prayer cannot live by itself. It cannot be a prayer unless it is fed by sacrifices. When we see the Gospel, there the continual connection of prayer is always with sacrifices.”

Mystery of Loneliness

One unique aspect of the thirst of Jesus on the Cross, in which we too are called to share in, is the mystery of loneliness. Loneliness is defined as an experience of sadness resulting from having no friends or companions. Jesus experienced this when one disciple betrayed Him, another denied Him, while the others ran away. He experienced this when the priests, the Scribes and the Pharisees and the people rejected Him.

MT shared in this experience of Jesus. In that mysterious darkness she went through for so many years, she felt as if God had rejected her. It took her some time to realize that she was experiencing the rejection that Jesus felt on the Cross and also the rejection that the poorest of the poor experience in today’s society.

This loneliness, which Mother describes in relation to the pain of the poor as the experience of being “unwanted and unloved, uncared, rejected, the throw-away of society,” she applies to Jesus’ own experience of thirsting for mankind in vain in the face of rejection and indifference. This phenomenon of rejection, which marked Jesus’ life from the beginning, as he came unto his own who in turn rejected and despised him, had particular weight and poignancy for Mother.

Loneliness represents the direct opposite of the communion of love within the Trinity, into which Jesus so thirsted to bring mankind. In this sense, for Mother, loneliness points to the greatest poverty of the human soul – separation, being apart from the divine source of Love. This pain of distance and being unwanted is experienced in the human loneliness which Jesus takes on by assuming our condition of sin. He experiences separation not only from the Father, but from the creatures he so vehemently loves, and for whom he longs.

“I thirst” expresses that loneliness of Jesus on the Cross... He is longing for our love. What do we do? We satiate the thirst of Jesus by our life of fervent Charity. We make reparation. By our every act that we do, we make reparation. Jesus cannot suffer now. But already our sacrifices, the little penance we do, they were a cause of joy and consolation to Jesus in His terrible suffering...”

“The greatest suffering of Christ was His abandonment. It was more painful than the crucifixion. He cried, “My Father, My Father!” three times, “My Father, take away this chalice!” That is the time He began “I thirst.” He was thirsty for love; He was thirsty for souls!”

“He went three times to the apostles for consolation. He felt so unloved, unwanted, longing for some human care...”

Prayer becomes all the more important in times of loneliness and isolation: “And what did Jesus do when He was so lonely? He prayed the longer. Three times He went out for a little love from His apostles and found them sleeping. Blood poured out, blood not water, and why? For you, for me. We just read it in the Gospel and then close the book and it is finished. We can't imagine what it really was for Jesus. His thirst for love burst out and blood poured out. This is the thirst of Jesus. On the Cross He said it in words. In Gethsemane He said it in an action. This is His longing for love, for my love.”

“I Looked for One to Comfort Me:” “Be the One”

“I looked for one to console me, and I found none...”(Ps.69:21)

“When we feel lonely, unwanted, misunderstood or set aside – let us accept whatever Jesus gives and give whatever he takes with a big smile, as our Constitutions say. This is the time of Greater Love, of Greater Sharing in His Passion. This is the time when Jesus in His Suffering looks for One to comfort Him - as we read “I looked for one to comfort Me and I found none.” Be you the one to comfort Him by accepting willingly that pain, that humiliation, that feeling of being unwanted, unloved...It is a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can share His Passion with you – that He has found you to be the one to comfort Him, by your acceptance.”

What is Jesus teaching us by His wounds? He surrenders to the wickedness of man to teach us, to win for us grace and strength, and the **desire** to surrender to the goodness of the Father. These wounds are your thirst for Him, your union with Him. This surrender is your **only path to holiness**. Satan knows this, and he **fears your surrender to God above everything else**, above every other virtue or good work, and he will fight it with unceasing energy and with all the most logical and holy arguments. We, like Jesus, have to say: “Get behind me, Satan, I wish to think as the Father and not as man.” Jesus kept Himself **focused on the Person of the Father** in all that befell Him; He did not allow Himself to be lost in events, in the injustice, in this or that person, in the **means** or the instruments of His suffering. As this was the key for Jesus, so it is for us. This is where Satan fools us, and where we fall most often. If we **look at the instrument** and fail to see the Father, it is **impossible** to surrender. God is not asking us to surrender to the event or to another person. The object of our surrender is **Jesus**. Jesus in the event. **To embrace the wood of the Cross is to embrace the Crucified One fastened there**. Very often our failure in surrendering is due to the fact that we mistake the **object** of our surrender. One must surrender to the Father **through** that suffering, **through** that injustice, **through** that person, **through** that event. True surrender always ends up with an encounter with the Father in Jesus, not with the instrument. That is why Jesus at every moment of His Passion is **standing face to face with His Father**. This is the heart of everything. We lose our peace when we focus on this or that. View your surrender as Jesus did. You are not called to surrender to a thing or to a person; they are not worthy of you. It will **free you** if you focus your surrender on the person of Jesus. You are invited and called to embrace Jesus, your Lord and God, your Father. Allow your provident Father, Who thirsts for you, to bring forth your thirst, to bring forth surrender from you through the cup He has chosen, and the vision of His Face **through** that cup.

The Mystery of Darkness

Mother Teresa's sharing in the passion and cross of Jesus was not limited to the acceptance of physical suffering, as generous and constant as that was, nor even to the embracing of moral sufferings in the form of contradictions and humiliations. In the mystery of God's plan for union with her, he led her to share deeply from the cup of his own inner abandonment and anguish before the Father, in his own interior sufferings of Gethsemane and Golgotha – once again, for the sake of “greater love.” He seems to have alluded to her coming interior trials as part of her mission and condition as spouse in her first graces of 1946-1947, as he speaks not so much of her material deprivations as of the “torments of her heart:”

“You have been always saying ‘do with me whatever you wish’. Now I want to act, let me do it - My little Spouse, My own little one – Do not fear – I shall be with you always. You will suffer and you suffer now – but if you are My own little Spouse – the Spouse of the crucified Jesus – you will have to bear these torments in your heart - Let me act - Refuse me not, trust me lovingly – trust me blindly.”

This deep “darkness” (a darkness more of the heart than the intellect – more a deep loneliness for God than a trial of faith), this sense of inner abandonment, of distance and even of rejection by the God she loved and knew loved her, began soon after the extraordinary graces of 1946-1947 finished. These graces had provided the necessary preparation and interior support for the unique and daunting mission she was to undertake, alone and a foreigner, in the midst of Calcutta's teeming slums.

Her darkness served two apparent purposes in God's plan: first, to lead her to a deeper union with him, crucified and alone on the cross; and second, to increase her fruitfulness for souls, for the “salvation and sanctification” of the poor. The poor, due too often to the poverty and social rejection they endured, blamed a God whose evidence for existing they could not see, nor believe him to be loving – since no one and nothing around them spoke of his presence or his love. “They don't know me, so they don't want me,” Jesus had complained to her in 1946.

As Jesus had emptied himself to embrace the condition of our broken humanity and the consequences of our sin in order to redeem us, so Mother was led to empty herself – not only of material goods, but of all she held most dear in her interior. She accepted willingly, as her letters to her spiritual directors attest, to bear in her own heart and soul the same loneliness, the same sense of God's absence and indifference, the same darkness of mind concerning him, that the poor often suffered in helpless silence.

Her darkness was not only solidarity with Jesus, who had borne this inner agony before her and for love of her; but, moved by the same Spirit that had moved him to the cross, became solidarity with the inner unknown poverty of the poor – precisely the poverty she had been sent to remedy, which now in her own shared darkness she would carry and redeem.

“The physical situation of my poor left in the streets unwanted, unloved, unclaimed - are the true picture of my own spiritual life, of my love for Jesus, and yet this terrible pain has never made me desire to have it different. What is more, I want it to be like this for as long as He wants it.”

“For the first time in these 11 years I have come to love the darkness; for I believe now that it is a part, a very, very small part, of Jesus’ darkness & pain on earth. ... Today really I felt a deep joy that Jesus can’t go anymore through the agony but that He wants to go through it in me. More then ever I surrender myself to Him. ... Now I feel that it is He, not I, who helps these Sisters. Yes, they are my treasure, my strength and God’s gift to me – they are His.”

“I need not force myself to be happy or to keep up a smiling face to others; I am very happy. For the good God has given me one big grace. I have surrendered completely, I am at His disposal: ‘A hearty ‘Yes’ to God and a big smile for all.’ Pray that I live up to His desire.”

27 March 1956:

“On the 3rd Apr. the Novices, the postulants and myself will begin our retreat. Rev. Fr. Rector is giving it to us. Please pray for me, that it may please God to lift this darkness from my soul for only a few days. For sometimes the agony of desolation is so great and at the same time the longing for the Absent One so deep, that the only prayer which I can still say is – Sacred Heart of Jesus I trust in Thee – I will satiate Thy thirst for souls.”

26 April 1959:

“Please Father pray very much for me, that I may not spoil His work. Pray for me that I may forget myself completely in that absolute surrender to God’s Holy Will – I use the retreat resolution as a prayer. - I do not know how deeper will this trial go – how much pain & suffering it will bring to me – this does not worry me any more. I leave this to Him as I leave everything else. I want to become a Saint according to the Heart of Jesus – meek humble. This is all that really Matters to me now. The Sisters made a real fervent retreat – now the fruit is coming – one virtue that is coming very much forward – since the retreat – is humility. Thank you Father for all you did. – The only way I have to show you my gratitude is by offering everything in me for your intentions. The darkness - the loneliness & pain – the loss & the emptiness – of Faith – love – Trust – these are all I have and in all simplicity I offer them to God for your intention as a token of gratitude. Pray for me - that I may not ‘refuse God’ to accept anything & everything in absolute surrender to God’s Holy Will – now -- and for life. ...Don’t take the trouble to write.”

Undated (but probably 1958 or 1959):

“In the darkness...Lord, my God, who am I that You should forsake me? The child of your Love, - and now become as the most hated one - the one - You have thrown away as unwanted - unloved. I call, I cling, I want - and there is no One to answer - no One on Whom I can cling - no, No One. - Alone. The darkness is so dark - and I am alone. – Unwanted forsaken - The loneliness - of the heart that wants love is unbearable - Where is my Faith - even deep down right in there is nothing, but emptiness & darkness - My God - how painful is this unknown pain. It pains without ceasing - I have no Faith - I dare not utter the words & thoughts that crowd in my heart - & make me suffer untold agony. So many unanswered questions live within me - I am afraid to uncover them - because of the blasphemies. - If there be God - please forgive me - Trust that all will end in Heaven with Jesus – When I try to raise my thoughts to Heaven – there is such convicting emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives & hurt my very soul - Love - the word - it brings nothing - I am told God loves me – and yet the reality of darkness & coldness & emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul. Before the work started - There was so much union - love - faith - trust - prayer - sacrifice. - Did I

make the mistake in surrendering blindly to the Call of the Sacred Heart? The work is not a doubt - because I am convinced that it is His not mine – I don't feel – not even a single simple thought or temptation enters my heart to claim anything in the work.

If this brings You glory, if You get a drop of joy from this – If souls are brought to You – If my suffering satiates Your Thirst – Here I am Lord with joy I accept all to the end of life – & I will smile at Your Hidden Face – always.”

VII. Come, be My light

A very common theme we find throughout Sacred Scripture is the theme of light. The first creative act of God recorded in Gen 1 is the creation of light. The very first words of God recorded in the story of creation are about light. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said: "Fiat lux", "Let there be light", and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. At the beginning of this creation account, the earth was dark and in disarray (formless and void). At the end, it has light and is ordered. The progress is from darkness to light and from disorder to order.

Benedict XVI made a reflection on the meaning of the creation of light during the Easter vigil. The creation of light, he said, "means that God created the world as a space for knowledge and truth, as a space for encounter and freedom, as a space for good and for love." "What the Church hears on Easter night is above all the first element of the creation account: 'God said, "let there be light!'" The creation account begins symbolically with the creation of light. The sun and the moon are created only on the fourth day. The creation account calls them lights, set by God in the firmament of heaven. In this way he deliberately takes away the divine character that the great religions had assigned to them. No, they are not gods. They are shining bodies created by the one God. But they are preceded by the light through which God's glory is reflected in the essence of the created being."

The Holy Father proposed that the meaning of this is that "light makes life possible. It makes encounter possible. It makes communication possible. It makes knowledge, access to reality and to truth, possible. And insofar as it makes knowledge possible, it makes freedom and progress possible. Evil hides. Light, then, is also an expression of the good that both is and creates brightness. It is daylight, which makes it possible for us to act. To say that God created light means that God created the world as a space for knowledge and truth, as a space for encounter and freedom, as a space for good and for love. Matter is fundamentally good, being itself is good. And evil does not come from God-made being, rather, it comes into existence only through denial. It is a 'no.'"

Then, applying this to the celebration of Easter he says: "Easter is a re-creation, a time for God to say again: "Let there be light". Jesus rises from the grave. Life is stronger than death. Good is stronger than evil. Love is stronger than hate. Truth is stronger than lies. The darkness of the previous days is driven away the moment Jesus rises from the grave and himself becomes God's pure light." The Holy Father affirmed that this applies not only to the darkness of those days, but means that "light itself is created anew."

"He draws all of us after him into the new light of the resurrection and he conquers all darkness. He is God's new day, new for all of us." He even says that "light itself is created anew", because Jesus "draws us after Him into the new light of the resurrection...He is God's new day, new for all of us".

In the Psalms, light and darkness are used symbolically. Light becomes the symbol for salvation (27:1), life (36:9; 49:19; 56:13), righteousness (37:6), truth (43:3), the Word of God (119:105, 130), 108 and God's splendor and presence (104:2; 44:3; 89:15; 90:8).

Proverbs speaks of the conduct of the godly using the imagery of light, while using darkness in reference to the wicked:

But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, That shines brighter and brighter until the full day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble (Proverbs 4:18-19).

It is in Isaiah, however, that the symbolism of light and darkness becomes most prominent in the Old Testament:

Come, house of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of the Lord (2:5).

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness (5:20)

To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to His word, it is because they have no dawn (8:20).

The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them (9:2; see Matthew 4:15-16).

And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame, And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day (10:17).

“I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the dungeon, And those who dwell in darkness from the prison” (42:6-7).

“And I will lead the blind by a way they do not know, In paths they do not know I will guide them. I will make darkness into light before them And rugged places into plains. These are the things I will do, And I will not leave them undone” (42:16).

“He says, ‘It is too small and thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth’ (49:6).

“Who is among you that fears the LORD, That obeys the voice of His servant, That walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God (50:10).

“Pay attention to Me, O My people; And give ear to Me, O My nation; For a law will go forth from Me, And I will set My justice for a light of the peoples” (51:4).

“Then your light will break out like the dawn, And your recovery will speedily spring forth; And your righteousness will go before you; The glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.” ... And if you give yourself to the hungry, And satisfy the desire of the afflicted, Then your light will rise in darkness, And your gloom will become like midday” (58:8, 10).

Therefore, justice is far from us, And righteousness does not overtake us; We hope for light, but behold, darkness; For brightness, but we walk in gloom (59:9).

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise

upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising (60:1-3).

“No longer will you have the sun for light by day, Nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And your God for your glory. Your sun will set no more, Neither will your moon wane; For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, And the days of your mourning will be finished” (60:19-20).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives, And freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD, And the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn (61:1-2).

Those who love God’s Law and follow His commandments are called lamps in Israel. Love for the poor, the aliens and the widows stands out in particular as a bright beam of virtue.

This theme of light is carried into the NT. The prophet Simeon praises Jesus as the “light of revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel” (Lk 2:32) The theme of light is especially prevalent in John’s Gospel. John begins his prologue speaking of creation through the Word. “What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:4-5).

Speaking to Nicodemus, Jesus says: “Whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God” (Jn 3:21).

After pardoning the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12).

Before curing the man born blind, Jesus said: “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (Jn 9:5). He then gave the man born blind the gift of sight, but not only that. He gave him the gift of faith. After the priests and Scribes cast the cured man from their presence, Jesus went up to him and asked: “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” The man replied: “Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” Jesus said: “You have seen Him and the one speaking with you is He.” The man then replied: “I do believe, Lord”, and he fell down and worshiped Jesus.

Jesus calls for faith in Him, because it is through faith in Jesus that His light begins to shine through us: “While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of the light” (Jn 12:36). Deep faith in Jesus scatters the darkness in our own hearts: “I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in Me might not remain in darkness” (Jn 12:46).

Light is a sign of God’s ultimate victory over darkness. After the utter darkness of Good Friday, when it seemed that the enemy had won, came the resplendent light of Easter Sunday. Now Jesus is calling us as His disciples and priests to be His light. This is a central theme in the Sermon on the Mount, which is a kind of compendium of the entire Gospel: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (Mt 5:14-16). We see here how Jesus expects our light to shine before others.

Walking in the light is a major theme in St. Paul's letters: "You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason it says, "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you" (Eph 5:7-14). Paul's own radical conversion resulted from our Lord's appearance to Him in a blinding light (Acts 9:3-4). And Jesus called Paul to be a light: "I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles that you should bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).

Paul's speaks of Christians having undergone a dramatic transformation, which is a kind of resurrection from the tomb of sin and death. There is a radical change from darkness to light. It is our heavenly Father who brings about this transformation in Christ: "He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13-14). It is now our call to walk as "children of light". "God, who said: 'Light shall shine out of darkness', is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). "You are all sons of light and sons of day" (1 Thess 5:5).

So Jesus wants us to be a light to the world. It is not surprising that Jesus would ask the same of MT: "Come, be My light". But MT was asked to be the light of Jesus in a specific place: "My little one – come – come – carry me into the holes of the poor - Come, be My light – I cannot go alone – they don't know Me - so they don't want me. You come – go amongst them, carry Me with you into them – how I long to enter their holes – their dark unhappy homes.

"Come be their victim - 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."

Jesus asks MT to be His light in a specific way – through her ardent love for Jesus. Her love for Jesus would be perceived by others. It would be somehow evident to them. Her love for Jesus would allow the poor to see Jesus, to know Him, to want Him. Her love would be evident through the sacrifices she would make for the poor. It would be evident through her tender smile, her cheerfulness and cheerful giving, and through her fervent prayer.

MT learned from Jesus that her love for Him could not be locked up in her heart. Her love had to be put into "living action". She learned to give expression to her love for Jesus in deeds, through a love constantly applied. Her love was always concrete, practical, incarnate: "love in action."

Our love for Jesus must also be expressed concretely, but in a very specific way as priests, through our pastoral charity, through our priestly ministry. We have our own specific call as priests to bring Christ's light to others. We, too, are to bring light into the darkness, to bring Jesus where He is not known and not wanted, either because of ignorance or because of sin. But we can only radiate His presence if we are united intimately to Him. Note that Jesus says to MT: "In your love for Me they will see Me, know Me, want Me."

This requires deep prayer. Jesus asked MT to “pray more fervently”. This is something worth looking at more closely. Fr. Joseph: “And you and I know in our priesthood how difficult that is! To be teachers of prayer, but not practicers of prayer....MT asks us to be contemplatives...This doesn’t mean that we simply pray a little bit more than we used to, but rather seek to pray qualitatively deeper, at a deeper place in our soul. We have to make prayer a priority. The CCM is made for diocesan priests who do not have the benefit of a Rule and a community and a cloister where there is no noise.

MT consistently teaches two things about prayer – 1) silence of the heart; 2) a spirit of solitude. It’s not enough simply to not speak. It’s not enough to turn off the TV, the radio, the cell phone or computer. We have to take time to enter into what Jesus calls the “inner room”, that place behind closed doors where like Jesus we are alone before the Father. Silence alone is not enough. Creating an empty space is not enough, as a Bhuddist monk might do. We need the awareness of God’s presence. MT brings this together by saying: “In the silence of the heart God speaks.” That inner silence exists in order to listen to God.

We need that time of silence before God to be with Him, to hear His Word. This is one of the greatest services we can do to the people entrusted to us. They will benefit from the time we spend with God alone in the silence of our hearts. Fr. Joseph reminds us that we are not the Savior; we are not the ones our people need. They need Jesus. Too much reliance on human activities and initiatives, which neglects the primacy of personal union with God as the foundation for all apostolate, leaves our people bereft of the fullness of God’s presence and gifts through us. The holiness of the individual minister is the greatest, most efficacious pastoral tool. That patron saint of parish priests, the Curé of Ars, St. John Maria Vianney, is proof of this. Satan once said of him: “If there were three priests like him in the world, my kingdom would be finished.”

Jesus made it very clear to MT that she was to be His light to those in darkness. He said: “You are to be so united to Me as to be My radiance.” We are to make our own the prayer of Blessed Cardinal Newman, who prayed that “people can look up and see no longer us, but Jesus.”

I recently read a book written by a Cistercian monk in Heiligenkreuz, Austria, Fr. Karl Wallner. He related a personal experience he had one day as he was on his way to Slovakia to visit a priest friend of his. He had to stop at a gas station to buy a vignette for the highway. He was wearing his Cistercian habit, which caught the eyes of those around him. And he is a big man – a good 2 meters tall. A Slovakian man came up to him and asked who he was, as if he couldn’t believe his eyes. Fr. Karl said he was a Catholic priest. “Are you for real?” “Yes, I’m from Austria and I’m on my way to visit a priest friend of mine.” “Do you swear that you are a priest?” “Yes, do you think I dress like a priest for fun?” “In that case, I can’t do what I was about to do.” Then the man explained that his marriage was in crisis and he had fallen in love with another woman and was on his way to her and was about to betray his wife. He thanked Fr. Karl and asked for his blessing. Fr. Karl said: “God is good. See how He loves you? It’s better to put on the brakes and turn around than have to get into a spiritual accident and have to look at one’s own spiritual wreck.” Fr. Karl was a light for that man in that moment.

Contemplatio ad Amorem

St. Ignatius of Loyola has a key prayer exercise at the end of his book on the Spiritual Exercises, which he calls the “Contemplatio ad Amorem”, the Contemplation to attain love. What he calls our attention to in this prayer exercise is the secret to becoming truly contemplative in action. It is the key to a deep contemplative spirituality even in the midst of normal, busy everyday life. It is very helpful for us priests in particular, who have a very active apostolate. MT herself drew a lot of inspiration from this prayer exercise.

We have to remember that MT was formed in Ignatian spirituality right from the beginnings of her religious life. The Loretto Sisters, whom she joined at the age of 18, have an Ignatian spirituality.

Contemplative in the Heart of the World

Fr. Joseph notes that MT insisted that she and her Sisters, and those who wished to live her charism, were called to be contemplatives in the heart of the world, contemplatives in the midst of action. To do so, they had first to learn what it meant to be contemplatives.” For St. Ignatius, being contemplative in the midst of action means seeking and finding God in all things. We must not forget that as a Loreto Sister MT was formed in the spirituality of St. Ignatius.

The goal she set for herself and her sisters, inherent in the contemplative nature of their vocation of being with Our Lady before the cross in the Eucharist and in the poor, was to become true “contemplatives in the heart of the world.” As such, her prayer overflowed into her work and assumed it, allowing her to live “24 hours with Jesus.”

“A Missionary of Charity is a contemplative in the heart of the world. You see now Sisters, how that fourth King [referring to a play the sisters had performed] put his love into a living action by serving the King in all those people he met. He served without having the satisfaction of seeing the King. It is the same for us. We serve Jesus without seeing Him face to face.”

“A Missionary of Charity is not a social worker, but she is a Contemplative in the heart of the world. Really, more and more I am convinced that we must be Contemplative: [in]how we touch the poor, how we are kind to them.”

“We have Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Jesus in the Poor. We are really contemplative in the world.”

“What is missing when we do not do our work well, is a deep love for prayer. Before we are anything else, we must be deeply contemplative.”

“Very often our Sisters who are sick, lonely. Are we there to share their suffering? This is what can really make us contemplative: when we do it to Jesus, with Jesus, for Jesus.”

“For her she could pray in any situation, any place. She would be almost in a very deep recollection, even in the busiest place. That was the deepest characteristic of her spirituality.”

One of the keys to the Contemplation to Attain Love is that it leads us to the level of the heart, to the place of deep prayer. St. Ignatius speaks of pondering “with great affection” on the many beautiful ways God reveals His love to us concretely each day and wishes to give Himself to us. This affective pondering, which is similar to OL’s manner of keeping everything in her heart and pondering on it, leads to gratitude (Magnificat), praise, joy, and the firm desire and resolve to serve.

She then told the story of a young child in Calcutta who needed a specific kind of medicine that was not made in India; it had to come from England. Just as the father of the child was telling Mother of his need, a truck pulled up loaded with medicines, and as they were being unloaded, there was the exact medicine in the exact amount that the doctor ordered sitting by itself right on top of all the others. She said, *“Do you see the tenderness of God – the tenderness of God’s love? Of all the millions of children in Calcutta, Jesus cared so much about that one little child to show His tenderness for him.”*

You did it to ME

God’s love, expressed within the Trinity in the oneness between Father and Son, finds expression outside the Trinity in oneness and identification with sinful humanity in Jesus who “emptied himself and took on the condition of a slave, appearing in human form.”

And since Jesus has joined humanity to himself by his incarnation, all those who suffer or are deprived, are poor or lonely, rejected or unwanted, all who carry the burden and wounds of sin in soul and body, are in some mysterious but real way a particular presence of the thirsting Jesus in our midst. “I was hungry, I was thirsty, alone, and in prison... and you did it to me.” This was the great lesson left to her followers, and cherished by those who knew her:

“I thirst - You did it to me were one for Mother. She said that there are no two loves but one. ...Every fiber of Mother's being, every cell soaked in love and resounded these words: I thirst - You did it to me.”

“In my opinion, the biggest charismatic gift Mother received was the charism given her for the Society. Jesus' words, "I Thirst" penetrated her heart and, with a faith illumined by the Spirit's gift of Understanding, she grasped the profound connection between "I Thirst" and "You did it to Me.”

Mother’s own words throughout her life were strong and clear on this declaration of Jesus, “You did it to me,” which she set as a cornerstone for her spirituality and work.

“Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you did it to Me”. We should write that sentence with golden letters for it is the greatest means of sanctity.”

The one explanation she offered for her energy and joy in serving the poorest was simply that, “we do it for Jesus.” The Jesus who filled her with love in the Eucharist, begged in return her compassion and love to satiate his thirst in and for the poor: for their love, for their salvation, and even for their sanctification. It was they who continued his Calvary, they who bore his wounds within his mystical body, they who were the living echo of his thirst in the world.

The Daily Examen

Fr. Joseph: "This is more than just an examination of conscience. It is a prayerful examination of what God has been doing and giving me this day. We go back to recover the gifts and graces overlooked (Emmaus disciples!) yet still active in the events of the day (were not our hearts burning...?)...The Examen is a means that MT used to enter into OL's practice of "pondering" the great and small doings of God on a daily basis."

"One practical way of doing the Examen is to prayerfully consider five gifts or blessing we have received during that day. Doing this daily, we become more aware of God's gifts, and of God himself as a giver of gifts, rather than only as a judge. We begin to see His goodness where before we saw only His supposed absence. Like MT, we can make this Examen with OL, who will help us to see, through her eyes, the plan and presence of God all around us. OL helps us to see and experience the constant love of God. The more we see with our eyes, the more we can experience with our heart. And the more we experience with our heart, the more we become capable of seeing with our eyes on the next occasion."

"From here we can move to the second part of the Examen, in which we discover five moments when we were invited to give of ourselves, five occasions in which grace was inviting us to generosity. We then thank God where we have succeeded, and ask for healing and forgiveness where we struggled and failed. This practice helps us to refocus our thirst for God, the only one who can truly satisfy us. God's thirst for us is only repaid by our thirst for Him."

a way of being aware of what God is being doing and saying during her day that she might have forgotten or not noticed. It is a little bit like when Jesus feeds the five thousand and they are all gone home. Jesus says to the disciples, "Go out into the fields and pick up all the pieces that are left over so that nothing be lost". God's gifts to us each day are so great and they are scattered throughout the hours of our day! And so often, like the apostles, we are breaking the bread of the Word for the people and we do not notice how much is there left in the field of our day. And so at least, once a day, to go back and collect, to make review. What I like you to do is to look for five gifts of grace, of love, that God has given through my day. Not just to note them, I cannot pick up a piece of bread and say, "oh! OK! This is just exhibit 'a', and this is exhibit 'b'" but to savor it, to taste it, to savor the love of the Father put in that grace for me.