



## **Mother Teresa – Come Be My Light**

### **The Private Writings of the “Saint of Calcutta”**

#### **Team Notes For:**

- Chapter Eight
- Chapter Nine

#### **Reading For Dec. 6<sup>th</sup>:**

- Chapter Ten (27 pgs)
- Chapter Eleven (32 pgs)

***“Be kind to each other.—I prefer you make mistakes in kindness –  
than that you work miracles in unkindness.”***

The Book Club felt similarly: these chapters were incredibly powerful and difficult to read and absorb. In these chapters we get a much clearer understanding of the reality of the darkness Mother Teresa experienced – it’s pain and loneliness. Yet, through faith, which she seemed to feel she had lost, Mother Teresa stayed bound to God, to her Lord Jesus Christ. Through her trust and devotion to Jesus, despite her sense of separation from God, she was able to continue serving him. She leaned on Mary, the Mother of God, to help her through. Through these very deep interior challenges, she revealed nothing to those around her. Her strength and devotion enabled an order of nuns and volunteers to remain focused, strong, passionate and cheerful through the struggle and reality of their work in the slums. We strongly encourage all to read her letter to Jesus which begins on the bottom of [page 186](#).

**Due to the number of important references – too numerous to retype in these notes – we encourage all to read both chapters in full.**

#### ➤ **Ponder and Silence for the Strength to Love; The Proof of Love is Works.**

- Mary was Mother Teresa’s role model. She learned the grace of silence from Mary. Mother Teresa emulated Mary’s nature to be silent, to ponder and pray. It is in the silence of prayer that we open our hearts to Jesus and are more easily able to hear him reach out to us. Mother Teresa devoted much time to prayer and constantly sought it for her and her team. *“Mary, who ‘kept all these things in her heart,’ was her model”* (p 197)
- We again discussed the different roles of prayer and works, noting that some people are more contemplative and focused on prayer (like St. Thérèse of Lisieux) and others very focused on works, like Mother Teresa. However, what we noted is that prayer is vital, regardless of an individual’s calling. We noted the extent to which Mary ponders in Scripture and, similarly, the prayer filled life of Jesus. He is often noted ‘going off to pray’ – beyond quick prayer; more similar to a retreat – a need to reflect and talk with God; to stay on course. We see his brought to a climax during the Passion – in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross. Despite the anticipation of suffering, the abandonment by his friends, torture by others and the agonizing crucifixion, Jesus continued to talk with his Father.
- Silence played a second role in Mother Teresa’s life. She, like her namesake, St. Thérèse of Lisieux, understood and accepted that withholding unkind comments, whether they be justified or not, allows greater harmony to blossom and more important elements of love to take root. *“Please be careful how & what you say to those around you”* (p 189)
- Silence played a third role in her life and work: she had the grace to keep her suffering silent, not to burden others with it. *“She did all she could not to burden others with her sufferings; even less would she wish her sufferings to be a burden to her spouse, Jesus. Compared to His sufferings and to those of His poor, she did not consider her pain worth calling attention to. She aspired instead to console His Heart through joy. For this she counted on Mary’s support.”* (p 172)
- Mother Teresa managed through her desolation by *suffering with love*. We noted that Jesus invites each of us to pick up our cross; we must do so joyfully. *“So smile – smile at the Hand that strikes you – kiss the Hand that is nailing you to the Cross... Be like a little lamb – smile at everyone.”* (p 157).
- We felt she shared love at her soul’s level, not just through her human abilities. *“Mother Teresa continued to be cheerful and enthusiastic. Hers was no mere superficial joy but a deeply spiritual one.”* (p 159) *“...for to be a real [Missionary of Charity] you must be a cheerful victim.”* (p 159)
- Mother Teresa and her Missionaries of Charity served the lowest level of society in a strong caste-based system. Those they served had no rescue available to them – they were/are literally on their own, living a life of misery. Mother Teresa entered their lives and loved them on their level. She opened her heart to them in the most genuine of ways and they loved her back. She brought them peace and joy: not through gifts of things but through the gift of love expressed as simply as a smile, but also by being with them, talking with them, and serving them.
- *“Immersed in the pain of rejection, she was extremely sympathetic to the lepers’ experience of being rejected, unwanted, and unloved.”* (p 175)

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## The Private Writings of the “Saint of Calcutta”

## Team Notes

- “My second resolution is to become an apostle of joy—to console the Sacred Heart of Jesus through joy.” (p 171) “To commit herself to becoming ‘an apostle of joy’ when humanly speaking she might have felt at the brink of despair, was heroic indeed.” (p 171)
- Mother Teresa:
  - The fruit of SILENCE is Prayer.
  - The fruit of PRAYER is Faith.
  - The fruit of FAITH is Love.
  - The fruit of LOVE is Service.
  - The fruit of SERVICE is Peace.
  - Mary, Mother of Jesus, be a Mother to me now.

### ➤ Connection to His Loneliness and Desolation

- Mother Teresa had asked Jesus to allow her to join in the desolation of his Passion; had accepted his request to do so. After reading her letter to Jesus (p 187), we felt that she had, in fact, received a glimpse at the loneliness and desolation that Jesus experienced in his Passion. Jesus allowed her into his desolation; he bound her very close to himself. Through the grace of Jesus, she was invited into a very deep unity with his Sacred Heart. “When you asked to imprint Your Passion on my heart—is this the answer?” (p 187)
- “...for there is such terrible darkness within me, as if everything was dead. It has been like this more or less from the time I started ‘the work’.” (p 149) “There is so much contradiction in my soul.—Such deep longing for God—so deep that it is painful—a suffering continual—and yet not wanted by God—repulsed—empty—no faith—no love—no zeal.—Souls hold no attraction—Heaven means nothing—to me it looks like an empty place—the thought of it means nothing to me and yet this torturing longing for God.” (p 170)
- “Thus the battle continued between the temptation to refuse and the determination to accept... ‘Pray for me—that I may not refuse God.—It comes to the breaking point & then it does not break’.” (p 190)
- “In spite of all—this darkness & emptiness is not as painful as the longing for God.—The contradiction I fear will unbalance me.” (p 187)
- (Underline added) “She never let the hurts and sufferings interfere with her love of Jesus. That love gave her so much joy. She was able to hold it all.” (p 188)
- Mother Teresa anchored herself in many ways: “As her interior darkness became harder to bear, anniversaries of significant dates stood as reminders of God’s ‘interventions’ in the little group’s short history. On such occasions, Mother Teresa could no help but recognize the results of her ‘yes’ to God and express her deep gratitude.” (p 154).
- We discussed that there is a very big difference between desolation with God and desolation without God. With God, we are able to share in his pain, *be united with him*, and recognize our suffering as a sacrifice towards *reparation of sin*. To find joy in helping Jesus. Without God, we are alone – utterly alone and not aiding the work of Jesus to bring more souls to heaven.
- We felt that even now, having a glimpse at the depths of her sorrow and emptiness, we may never know the depths of her desolation.
- We were reminded that *every minute* we must make a choice: we must trust in either our own will—our emotions or the will of God. We are often confronted with temptation, Mother Teresa fought temptation to nearly her breaking point. But even when brought to her breaking point (see above; p 190), she remained with Jesus.
- (Underline added) “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.” (p 165)
- “Not knowing when the light would appear again, she clung to Mary, trusting that with her help she would not lose this way.” (p 177)
- “She recognized that whatever her interior state, God’s tender care was always there, manifested through the small favors others did for her or unexpected conveniences that accompanied her undertakings.” (p 185)

### ➤ Different Ways to Suffer and Sacrifice for Love

- We noted Mother Teresa’s guidance to her sisters – to ensure that they had time for prayer, sleep and nourishment. That depriving themselves of rest and food would not be the right penance or form of suffering for them. Their work was and is a form of suffering: long days on their feet in basic shoes, bent over, in dirty environments, surrounded by gravely ill people... The best way to serve those people was to be healthy themselves – in spirit and body.
- “Love is proved by deeds; the more they cost us, the greater the proof of our love.” (p 201)