



Mother Teresa – Come Be My Light

The Private Writings of the “Saint of Calcutta”

Team Notes For:

- Chapter Ten
- Chapter Eleven

Reading For Dec. 20th:

- Chapter Twelve (33 pgs)
- Chapter Thirteen (34 pgs)
- Conclusion (7 pgs)
- Appendices as desired

“Jesus was sent by His Father to the poor and to be able to understand the poor, Jesus had to know and experience that poverty in His own Body and Soul. We too must experience poverty if we want to be true carrier of God’s love. To be able to proclaim the Good News to the poor we must know what is poverty.”

“Tell Jesus, ‘I will be the one’”

➤ **Commitment to God as experienced by Jesus in the Passion and shared by Mother Teresa, other saints and lay persons**

- Mother Teresa’s commitment to God is ultimately what saw her through her daily struggles in the slums, leading an ever-growing order of sisters and lay, and maintaining faith in God. This unfolded on several levels: 1) she *saw Jesus in those she served in the slums*; 2) she stayed committed to God and her promise to him *even though she felt no consolation from him* – we felt, it must have been like an unrequited love for her; 3) her *incessant requests for prayerful support* from her lay prayer team, from those she routinely re-asked for prayers from, and those that one-by-one, she asked for prayers from, 4) she continued to cultivate more souls for Jesus – from her sisters *and* those she encountered in the slums – all this, despite her lack of consolation from Jesus – she could no longer ‘see’ or ‘feel’ Jesus in her life. Christ, too, felt alone and without consolation. He persevered to do God’s will, to redeem mankind – to bring souls to God. This was Mother Teresa’s mission, in her own way, to bring souls to God. She willingly accepted her part of the agony and isolation that Jesus had felt.
- Through spiritual guidance, Mother Teresa came to fully recognize the darkness she experienced as the spiritual side of her work *“I have come to love the darkness.”* (p 214), to share *“in Christ’s redemptive suffering.”* (p 215). *“Her darkness was an identification with those she served: she was drawn mystically into the deep pain they experienced as a result of feeling unwanted and rejected and, above all, by living without faith in God.”* (p 216) We felt that perhaps Jesus wanted her to truly identify and feel the pain of those she served – not just to serve them through generous acts but rather to deeply understand their physical, communal, and spiritual loneliness so that she could effectively reach their hearts. This is what Jesus did: he became like us to live like us, to experience what we, as humans, unleash on each other. He did this to identify with us, meet us where we are and show us a better way. *“Jesus wanted to help us by sharing our life, our loneliness, our agony and death. All that He has taken upon Himself, and has carried it in the darkest night. Only by being one with us He has redeemed us... Yes, my dear children – let us share the sufferings – of our poor – for only by being one with them – we can redeem them, that is, bringing God into their lives and bringing them to God”* (p 220) *“...without suffering, our work would just be social work, very good and helpful, but it would not be the work of Jesus Christ, not part of the redemption.”* (p 220) We felt this was incredibly insightful and brings much meaning to why and how we are to serve others.
- Through the poor, she connected with Christ: *“The reality of her relationship with Jesus was truly a paradox. He was living in and through her without her being able to savor the sweetness of His presence... But it was only when she was with the poor that she perceived His presence vividly. There she felt Him to be so alive and so real.”* (p 212-13)
- Despite the darkness she experienced, Mother Teresa never stopped longing for God: *“Yet deep down somewhere in my heart that longing for God keeps breaking through the darkness.”* *“I loved God with all the powers of a child’s heart.”* (p 211). *“No one can long for God unless God is present in his/her heart.”* (p 214).
- We noted that after all that Jesus had been through, after all that she had been through, she was, in fact, uniting closer and closer to him. She experienced the loneliness of Jesus’ Agony in the Garden and his acceptance of his role in salvation: ‘not my will, but yours, be done’ (Luke 22:42). And Mother Teresa: *“Let Him do with me whatever He wants, as He wants, for as long as He wants.”* (p 212). We could only imagine what, as a human being, Mother Teresa was bearing. So much day-to-day hard work, so many responsibilities (to her sisters, those in the slums and others who reached out to her)... all while bearing a deep spiritual dryness – how did she not fall apart?! How did she accomplish so much? It is a worthy concept to meditate on. Our only answer was: she truly trusted in God, she genuinely placed all in his hands and became a willing instrument of his work. *“This complete trust in divine providence for everything, even for her spiritual needs, was a hallmark of her life.”* (p 217).
- We found her insights shared with one of her sisters helpful as a daily reminder to us in our lives: *“there was no need to*

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‘find the way’ but rather to ‘follow the way’ that Jesus had already walked... ‘What did Jesus say, to carry the cross in front of Him or to follow Him?... So I asked her, ‘Why are you trying to go ahead of Him?’ She left my room smiling. She had understood the meaning of following Jesus.” (p 221)

- Jesus on the cross stated his thirst: ‘After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”’ (John 19: 28)). We appreciated this view of ‘thirst’ and agreed that Mother Teresa was a ‘tortured traveler’: “Thirst is more than absence of water. It is not experienced by stones, but only by living beings that depend on water. Who knows more about living water, the person who opens the water tap daily without much thinking, or the thirst tortured traveler in the desert in search for a spring?” (p 216)
- “‘the dark night’... It can be borne only in the assurance of God’s hidden presence and of the union with Jesus who in His passion had to bear the burden and darkness of the sinful world for our salvation. The sure sign of God’s hidden presence in this darkness is the thirst for God, the craving for at least a ray of His light. No one can long for God unless God is present in his/her heart. Thus the only response to this trial is the total surrender to God and the acceptance of the darkness in union with Jesus.” (p 214)

➤ St. Thérèse of Lisieux is recalled... again

- We learned from St. Thérèse that a true gift is given without anything expected in return, even something as simple as a smile. And that we are to accept all that is given to us with grace: if everything is given from us, nothing is taken from us. Mother Teresa developed a prayer of similar notion: “Take whatever He gives and give whatever He takes with a big smile.” (p 225) “This prayer, expressing the spirit of her congregation – total surrender, loving trust, and joy – summed up her manner of living through darkness.” (p 225) If Jesus gives us something, it is something to be valued and accepted. If Jesus takes something, give it willingly to him. It may not feel like what we’re giving a gift – perhaps the death of a loved one, failing a test or another struggle – any number of things that happen that don’t feel so good. But we are called to dig deeper and understand the greater grace of God: there may be a greater good that comes or maybe the sublime, an opportunity to share in Jesus’ redemptive suffering.

➤ The truth of the world today and the Truth that is needed

- “The greatest evil is the lack of love and charity, the terrible indifference towards one’s neighbor who lives at the roadside assaulted by exploitation, corruption, poverty and disease” (p 233)
- (Underline added) “Not only did she meet their material needs; she offered more, for she knew that ‘people today are hungry for love, for understanding love which is much greater and which is the only answer to loneliness and great poverty. Those she served knew that she loved them, understood them, suffered with them. They felt that for her, they were the only person in the world at that moment. It was not just the material help, but especially her love that made the difference.” (p 233) This is, in fact, what Jesus did and does for us. This is what we are called to do as well. As St. Thérèse noted – Jesus requested that we love our neighbor as He has loved us. We discussed we’d all do well with fewer ‘things’, less focus on the material items that shimmer and take our focus away from true love.
- We also found other parallels with Mother Teresa and Jesus’ Passion. Mother Teresa frequently reaches out to her friend, Eileen, seeking prayer and simply leaning on her. We discussed that we all need a friend, someone to lean on and confide in – this can be found in a friend, a spouse, Jesus. When Jesus carried the Cross, he had help when the burden of the cross became very great – he had the help of Simon of Cyrene. We need to be Simon of Cyrene.
- “Tell Jesus, ‘I will be the one.’ I will comfort, encourage, love Him... Be with Jesus. He prayed and prayed, and then He went to look for consolation, but there was none... I always write that sentence, ‘I looked for one to comfort Me, but I found no one.’ Then I write, ‘Be the one.’ (p 260) We need to be there for Jesus and for our neighbor.

➤ Conviction dispels doubt

- We found this insight from Mother Teresa very calming – being able to let go, to surrender. This changes everything. “A journalist persistently digging into the extraordinary experience of ‘someone to whom God had personally spoken’ inquired: ‘Were you not for a second in doubt? After all, Christ himself had moments of doubt. In Gethsemane.’ Mother Teresa responded with conviction: No. There was no doubt. It was only for a moment that He felt unsure. That was as a human being. That was natural. The moment you accept, the moment you surrender yourself, that’s the conviction. But it may mean death to you, eh? The conviction comes the moment you surrender yourself. There there is no doubt. The moment Jesus said, “Father, I am at your disposal, Thy will be done,” He had accepted. That was His agony. He felt all the things you and I would feel as human beings. That’s why He was like us in all things, except sin. [If uncertainty remains] that’s the time to go on your knees, eh?... In that prayer, God cannot deceive you because that prayer comes from within you... You have to be completely empty to let Him in to do what He will.” (p 259-60)