

MOTHER TERESA: An Emblematic Figure of *Raham* – the Womb Love

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Abstract: Only a woman can become a mother. Her genes for conceiving, bearing, giving birth, giving attentive care, feeding and nurturing, leading to adulthood is indeed 'womb love' (*raham*), which is called compassion in the Bible. The vision of mother Teresa of Calcutta is based on the very nature of 'womb love' and she used it effectively to embrace the broken Jesus on the cross. That is the reason, every chapel of her convents is furnished with a crucifix and engraved beside the crucifix the loud cry of Jesus from the cross 'I thirst.' She heard this cry as the cry of humanity from the womb to the tomb and her "womb love" longed to satiate this thirst. Through finding Jesus in the hungry, thirsty and naked (Matthew 25:35), and through strengthening the weakest, healing the sick, nursing the injured, bringing back the strayed and searching for the lost (Ezekiel 34:4), Mother became a good shepherd after the model of Jesus. She taught her sisters to see the broken body of Jesus in the appearance of Eucharist bread (contemplation) and to touch him in the broken bodies of the poor (action). She perceives a unified vision and action of seeing and serving the broken body of Jesus in the poorest of the poor and that gives a transforming effect in the society.

Keywords: Contemplation, Crucifix, Eucharist, Jesus, Poor, Sisters, Thirst, Womb Love.

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1. Introduction

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, the woman who later came to be known as Saint (Mother) Teresa of Calcutta was born on August 26, 1910, in the town of Skopje, in Southeastern Europe's Balkan Peninsula. Today, Skopje is the capital of the Republic of Macedonia, but in 1910, the town was part of Turkey. Agnes, her brother Lazar, her sister, Aga and their parents, Kole Bojaxhiu and Drana Bojaxhiu were ethnic Albanians and Roman Catholic Christians, and they were in the minority in Skopje.¹

Kole Bojaxhiu was an affectionate and attentive father and firm believer who always opened his dinner table to the less fortunate neighbours. "Never eat a single mouthful unless you are sharing it with others,"² he often told his children. Drana Bojaxhiu, who shared her husband's strong commitment to assist anyone in need, and regularly took food, clothing, and other items to the destitute and sick of the parish. Mother Teresa recalled that her mother never liked to broadcast her good deeds: "When you do good, do it unobtrusively, as if you were tossing a pebble into the sea."³

I remember how my mother once heard about a poor woman from Skopje, who was suffering from a tumour. She had nobody to look after her. Her family didn't want to have anything to do with her; they refused to help her in any way and threw her out, all because of some trivial business. My mother took her in, fed her, and cared for her till she was cured.⁴

After Kole's death, the Bojaxhiu home continued to be a refuge for the hungry and forgotten. Although there was very less money to spare in the household than when her husband

¹L. C. Slavicek, *Modern Peace Makers: Mother Teresa, Caring for the Worlds Poor*, New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2007, 14.

²K. Spink, *Mother Teresa: A Complete Authorized Biography*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1997, 6; Slavicek, *Modern Peace Makers*, 18.

³D. Porter, *Mother Teresa: The Early Years*, Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1986, 20.

⁴C. Feldman, *Mother Teresa: Love Stays*, New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998, 16.

had been alive, Drana still opened the family dinner table to anyone in need, from distant relatives to complete strangers. Years later, Lazar remembered asking his mother about the steady stream of guests who shared their meals, most of whom he had never met before. "Some of them are relations," she answered, "but all of them are our people."⁵

2. From Loreto to the Foundation of Missionaries of Charity

Mother Teresa, the Saint of the Gutters, first came to India as a missionary nun with the Catholic Loreto Order, when she was still a teenager. For nearly two decades, she lived a secluded and relatively comfortable life, teaching geography to middle and upper class Indian girls in the large Loreto compound in Calcutta. Teresa was stunned by the desperate poverty in the neighbourhoods that lay just beyond the convent walls. In 1946, while travelling to the Loreto convent in Darjeeling, India, her life changed forever. She heard God calling her to work and live among the destitute and forgotten men, women, and children who inhabited Calcutta's slums. It took nearly two years for Sister Teresa to secure the Catholic Church's permission to abandon her cloistered lifestyle as a Loreto Sister and begin her mission of mercy and compassion in the streets of India's most populated city. In 1950, the Vatican officially recognized the small band of women, many of them former pupils, who had gathered around Mother Teresa as a new order: the Missionaries of Charity. For the next 47 years, Mother Teresa, assisted by her Sisters, founded schools, medical dispensaries, orphanages, and homes for the dying. They worked first in Calcutta, then throughout India, and by the late 1960s, in cities and towns all over the world. In recognition of her tireless efforts on behalf of the world's needy and unwanted, Mother Teresa received numerous honours during her lifetime, including the Nobel Peace Prize, granted by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in 1979.⁶ In the course of time Mother Teresa became a symbol of

⁵Porter, *Mother Teresa: The Early Years*, 13.

⁶Slavicek, *Modern Peace Makers*, 10.

compassion and hope for people of all religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Mother Teresa took care of the dying, the lepers, all those who were left alone. She ran towards anyone who is abandoned to accept and serve as she serves Jesus. She endured all the struggles of life in order to take care of the poorest of the poor.⁷ She begged before those who were reluctant to help the poor. Such compassion is denoted by the Hebrew term *raham* in the Bible.

3. Biblical Concept of Compassion: *Raham*

In the Bible there are five important Hebrew terms to explain the multi-faceted concept of mercy. They are (i) *raham* (womb of a mother) points to the motherly love of God,⁸ (ii) *hesed* (loyalty or faithfulness between a husband and wife) points to the covenantal love of God,⁹ (iii) *hen* (favour, kindness) points to the favour of God towards his people,¹⁰ (iv) *hamal* (literally sparing someone) points to graciousness of God,¹¹ and (v) *hus* (mercy and compassion in an affective sense) points to the compassion like that of a husband. All these terms express different shades

⁷Slavicek, *Modern Peace Makers*, 15.

⁸T. Kronholm, *Raham, Theological Dictionary of Old Testament*, vol.13, G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. J. Fabry, eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2004, 454. The most specific Biblical term for "womb" is Hebrew *Raham*, which means "love deeply" "be Compassionate" and is rendered "womb" by Revised Standard Version twenty seven times.

⁹H. J. Zobel, *Hesed, Theological Dictionary of Old Testament*, vol. 5, G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. J. Fabry, eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1986, 44-64.

¹⁰H. J. Fabry, *hen, Theological Dictionary of Old Testament*, vol. 5, G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, H.J. Fabry, eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1981, 22-36.

¹¹Repeated pairing of *hamal* with *hus* (show/ have pity) in the judgement oracles to express Yahweh's repression of any pity toward his people (Ezekiel 5:11, 7:4). M. Tsevat, *hamal, Theological Dictionary of Old Testament*, vol. 4, G. J. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, H.J. Fabry, eds., Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1981, 470-472.

of God's compassion. But the term *raham* is most significant for our study. Mother Teresa who is known as a mother to the whole world lived out the motherly compassion (womb love - *raham*) of God.¹²

Moses had a profound experience of "I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14) and His *raham*, at the burning bush and led people toward their liberation. God "establishes relationship with living humans at the most unexpected places and unpredictable times."¹³ The Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...(Exodus 3:7-8). In fact, "it is this experience which, ... 'from the beginning,' turns the spiritual 'way' into a process of mystical transformation"¹⁴ that converted Moses into a mystical political leader. Moses remained firm in hope and zeal, while leading the people who were frequently mediocre (Numbers 14 and 20). Such a mystical transformation could be observed in the life of Mother Teresa having experienced the divine on the cross and in the Holy Eucharist. It transformed her into a world leader of *raham* appealing the global community to liberate the poorest of the poor with the same *raham*.

4. *Raham*: A Vision of Mother Teresa

The vision of Mother Teresa of Calcutta was based on the very nature of 'womb love.' She used it effectively to embrace the broken Jesus on the cross. Only a woman can become a mother. Her nature for conceiving, bearing, giving birth, giving attentive care, feeding and nurturing, leading a child to adulthood is

¹²A. C. Savarimuthu, *Woman of the Century Mother Teresa*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2000, 54.

¹³K. Waaijman, "Towards A Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality," *Studies in Spirituality* 3, 1993, 55.

¹⁴Waaijman, "Towards A Phenomenological Definition of Spirituality," 56.

indeed 'womb love' (*raham*). That is the reason, every chapel of her Order is furnished with a crucifix and engraved beside the crucifix the loud cry of Jesus from the cross "I thirst." She heard this cry as the cry of humanity from the womb to the tomb and her 'womb love' longed to satiate this thirst:

"I thirst" is something much deeper than Jesus just saying, "I Love you"... this is the source of every part of Missionaries of Charity's life. It gives us our aim, our 4th vow, the spirit of our society, satiating the living Jesus in our midst is the Society's only purpose for existing. "I thirst" and "you did it to me." Remember always to connect the two, the means, and the aim. What God has joined together let no one split apart. Do not underestimate our practical means - the work for the poor, no matter how small or humble- that make our life something beautiful for God.¹⁵

Mother Theresa concretised this vision into their daily life by incorporating it as the fourth vow "free and whole hearted service to the poorest of the poor," in addition to the three traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.¹⁶ By this vowed free and whole hearted service to the poorest of the poor she wanted to satiate the thirst of Jesus, dying on the cross. For he said, "Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me" (Matthew 25:40). Mother Teresa is indeed a visionary and missionary of compassion.

5. Fourth Vow: Expression of *Raham*

Mother's vision of compassion for the lost and the poorest of the poor stems from the very heart of Jesus like a river. This river that radiates can be specified in two directions. First, it is through the mediation of projects and works for justice.¹⁷

¹⁵"Mother's Letter," 25th March, 1993, cited Savarimuthu, *Woman of the Century Mother Teresa*, 146.

¹⁶Missionaries of Charity, *Constitutions of the Missionaries of Charity*, Art 68, Calcutta: 54 Circular Road, Private Printer, 1988.

¹⁷S. Galilea, "*Liberation as an Encounter with Politics and Contemplation*," in *Understanding Mysticism*, Richard Woods, ed., New York: Double Day & Company, 1980, 533.

Secondly, it goes in the line of prophetic pastoral action. Here, charity is channelled into the effective proclamation of the message of Christ about the liberation of the poorest of the poor and the least.¹⁸ Charity becomes effective channel of liberation¹⁹ and the chief motivating cause for courageously witnessing to truth and justice.²⁰ Through charity, the persons experience the consolation of God's love, which reduces egoism and opens the heart to friendship and to willingness to act justly toward the neighbour.²¹ Mother shared this vision of *raham* in service with

¹⁸By giving the poor and the little a privileged place and identifying himself specially with them, Christ called the poor to the Kingdom of God and mobilized them. This is not only a mystic act – 'to intuit' the presence of Jesus in the dispossessed, so discovering their identity but it leads to social commitment and to political consequences. This incorporation of the poor in the kingdom of God passes through history and implies a progressive liberation of the same poor and the little from concrete social systems. Galilea, "Liberation as an Encounter with Politics and Contemplation," 534.

¹⁹The Church cannot neglect the service of charity more than she can neglect the sacraments and the word. One thing is very clear that charitable activity to the poor and the suffering was naturally an essential part of the Catholic Church from the very beginning, based on the principles of Christian life given in the Acts of the Apostles. We are expected to imitate the apostles in the early Church to do the good things for all as one of the greatest responsibilities. Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rules of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. Since the 9th century, an objection have been raised to the Church's charitable activity; later, Karl Marx emphasized that the poor needs justice and not the act of charity. A willingness to engage ourselves for the service of others is recommended by the Church constantly. So, every faithful is obliged to carry out this task. The Second Vatican Council is the best example for promoting this goodness. Benedict XVI, "*Deus Caritas Est*," Encyclical Letter, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 2007, 38.

²⁰T. L. Schubeck, *Love that Does Justice*, New York: Orbis Books, 2007, 124.

²¹Schubeck, *Love that Does Justice*, 204.

her own sisters through the fourth vow.²² She also wished to share this vision of Jesus with the entire world that eventually made her to be honoured with the Nobel Prize.²³ She could reach out to the entire world with the vision of Jesus' 'compassion', a vision that has the power to transform the world and make this world a better place to live in. Mother Theresa spoke to her own sisters about it with full conviction:

We must therefore be proud of our vocation, which gives us opportunity to serve Christ in His poorest. It is in the slums we must seek to go and serve Christ. We must be happy supernaturally to go to Kalighat, to go to Shishu Bhavan, to go to the leper work, to see them and to touch them. We must go to them as the priest goes to the altar full of Joy that the host is the disguise of Jesus. Now in the slums Jesus chooses as His disguise the miseries and poverty of our people. You cannot have the vow of Charity (fourth vow) if you have not got the faith to see Jesus in the people we contact. Otherwise our work is no more than social work. We do it for somebody (Christ).²⁴

Through finding Jesus in the hungry, thirsty and naked (Matthew 25:35), and through strengthening the weakest, healing the sick, binding up the injured, bringing back the strayed and searching for the lost (Ezekiel 34:4), Mother reached out into the world through her *raham* in service.

²²Savarimuthu, *Woman of the Century Mother Teresa*, 132; Missionaries of Charity, *Constitutions of the Missionaries of Charity*, Art 68a; Missionaries of Charity, *Mother's Instructions: Let Us Make Our Society Something Beautiful for God*, vol. 1, 88, vol. 2, 22-23, 75, vol. 3, Supplement 2, 88.

²³She received many awards such as in 1962 Padma Shri award, Pope John XXIII Peace Prize in 1971, Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1972, Albert Schweiter International Prize in 1975, Pacem in Terris award in 1976, Balzon prize Nobel Peace Prize in 1978, Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, Order of Merit in 1983, Medal of Freedom in 1985, Golden Honour of the Nation (Albania) in 1994, Honorary citizenship of USA in 1996.

²⁴Missionaries of Charity, *Mother's Instructions*, vol. 1, 80.

6. *Raham*: A Biblical Urgency

In the Old Testament we have the picture of the Father who comes down because of *raham* towards the people and in the New Testament we have the picture of the Father who runs out because of his Compassion (*raham*) towards his son (Luke 15:11-32). Father with *raham* cannot but run towards his suffering children. Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus is a present reality. It is already here in the *raham* that is at work in present reality.²⁵ The coming of Kingdom is not the result of a scrupulous observance of the Torah as in the case of Rabbinical thinking but it is a matter of being confronted with the power of God at work in the world (Mark 1:15a; Matthew 11:29).²⁶ Again, from 1 Maccabees 2:29-41 we learn that taking action to save one's life on the Sabbath, since it is an urgency, was considered appropriate long before New Testament times. Matthean community defended the right of their leader to heal on the Sabbath day basing on this urgency of *raham* over the law.²⁷ The question asked is "Is it lawful to heal on Sabbath day" (Matthew 12:10b). Jesus defends his actions on the basis of an argument: if assistance could be offered to a domestic animal, and since a person is of more value than an animal, assistance should be offered to a person in need. Here, Hosea 6:6 cited in Matthew 12:7 indicate the obligation of *raham* has the urgency and priority than obligation of the law.²⁸

²⁵C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, New York: Scribner's, 1961, 159. Dodd later modified his view to allow for a real futurity of the kingdom. This he did in response to the criticism of Joachim Jeremias, who regarded this "realized eschatology" as too one-sided and an unnecessary contraction of eschatology.

²⁶Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 38.

²⁷D. J. Harrington, "In the Sabbath in Jewish and Christian Traditions," eds., T. C. Eskenazi, D. J. Harrington, and W. H. Shea, New York: Crossroad, 1999, 60-61.

²⁸R. S. McConnell, *Law and Prophecy in Matthew's Gospel*, Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1969, 67.

One could find such an experience of urgency in the life of Mother Teresa, when she speaks about the urgency of doing the charity today itself:

Charity is for today and justice for tomorrow. Charity begins today. Today somebody is suffering, today somebody is in the street, today somebody is hungry etc. That is our fourth vow. Put this in your mind, our work is for today, yesterday has gone, tomorrow has not yet come. Today, today to make him known, loved, served, fed, clothed, sheltered etc. Today, not wait for tomorrow. Tomorrow might not come. Don't waste your time today. All that you do, do them with whole heart. Poor are Jesus. They are not things or cases. They are the bodies of Christ. We have to do the work really well.²⁹

Mother Teresa was delighted to have the opportunity to meet the princess Diana. Even when there were inconveniences for her, Mother considered the charity towards the poor as the most urgent matter. She announced:

I am coming to Britain to meet Princess Diana. I do not really have the time but I must be there. . . . Everywhere there is a need for giving, and Diana has more influence over the British people than anybody else. If she tells them how important it is to make their families strong they will listen, if she asks them to care for the poor, for the homeless, they will hear her. So I must speak to her while I have the chance.³⁰

Without wasting any chance she made use of every opportunity that she found to actualize the *Raham* with all its urgency. She said that we fear the future because we are wasting the today.³¹

²⁹Missionaries of Charity, *Mother's Instructions*, vol. 3, 15-16.

³⁰A, Sebba, *Mother Teresa: Beyond the Image*, New York: Doubleday, 1997, 245.

³¹B. Kolodiejchuk, *Where There is Love, There is God: A Path to Closer Union with God and Greater Love for Others, Mother Teresa*, New York: Double Day, 2010, 124; M. Green, *Mother Teresa: A Biography*, London: Green Wood Press, 2004, 52. Mother Teresa's urgency is shown in her zeal and enthusiasm in beginning her mission.

7. Three Way Movement of *Raham*: the Dynamism of the Vision

Mother saw an intimate link between the three forms of the presence of Christ in the world. She instructed her sisters to see this close connection of seeing the broken body of Jesus on the cross, contemplate this broken body in the appearance of Eucharistic bread and to touch his broken body in the bodies of the poor. In her words, "Every time we receive Holy Communion we become one with Jesus. This union can be compared to that of the husband and wife in a marriage. So the fruit of this union is our work for the poor and for the souls."³² She contemplated the paschal mystery of Jesus and encountered Him in her activities. She focussed her attention on these three realities concretely and simultaneously and gave her sisters the same mission. Thus, Mother Teresa perceived a unified vision and action of seeing and serving the broken body of Jesus in the poorest of the poor and that gave a transforming effect in the society. When she touched the sick and the needy she was dealing with the body of Christ. She taught her sisters to keep continually the eye of deep faith to see Christ in the broken bodies of the poor. The Eucharist is the centre and culmination of her life.

In the Eucharist the sisters find strength, inspiration, and consolation. It is the incessant source of inner energy. It is the Eucharist that gives them meaning for their life and spiritual stamina to do their humble works. Therefore Eucharist is the heart of their work. Eucharist is the re-enactment and contemplation of the paschal mystery. This participation in the paschal mystery of Jesus enables them to touch Him in their sisters and brothers and in all human beings. She underlined this conviction in many of her letters. For example:

For MCs cannot say that we love Jesus in the Eucharist but 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. We cannot separate these two things... the Eucharist and the poor.³³

³²Savarimuthu, *Woman of the Century Mother Teresa*, 132.

³³Missionaries of Charity, *Mother's Instructions*, vol. 2, 63.

8. Critiques of Mother Teresa

Modern popular culture promotes celebrity. Stirring up controversy or scandal and then talking or writing about it often enhances celebrity status. Mother Teresa was not a celebrity. Yet how did this ordinary woman could receive her place among the great personalities of the age? A woman, an undistinguished teacher, a tiny nun from Albania who never sought or expected recognition, exercised an enormous influence around the world! Mother Teresa had one attribute that is very special to her, a deep abiding faith. Mother Teresa enjoyed universal acclaim as a living saint, and she tried always to use her popularity to the advantage of the poor whom she loved and served. Her interview with the British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge in 1968 exposed her life and ministry to the rest of the world. The public response to her work was more than she ever imagined. Donations poured in. After that interview Mother Teresa became famous for all that she did, and every word that she uttered. So she was no longer merely a devout nun working in obscurity. She had allowed herself to become well known to publicize her cause, like that of a celebrity.

Now some started to think, how could a saint long for popularity? Suddenly, she seemed not only demanding, but also hypocritical.³⁴ At the same time, her strong adherence to the doctrines of the Catholic Church and her traditional view of the subordinate role of women within it made her a target of liberal doctrinaires. Yet, Mother Teresa was strong in her belief that she was an instrument of God. So, for all her apparent simplicity, and with all that has been said and written about her, it is still easy to misunderstand Mother Teresa.

In Bangalore, once at a seminar, in the name of the whole group, one nun got up and said to me, "Mother Teresa, you are spoiling the poor people by giving them things free. They are losing their human dignity. You should take at least ten *naya paisa* for what you give them, then they will feel more their human dignity." When everyone was quiet, she said calmly,

³⁴Green, *Mother Teresa*, 13.

No one is spoiling as much as God Himself. See the wonderful gifts He has given us freely. All of you here have no glasses, yet you all can see. Say, if God were to take money for your sight, what would happen? We are spending so much money for Shishu Bhavan to buy oxygen for saving life, yet continually we are breathing and living on oxygen and we do not pay anything for it. What would happen if God were to say, 'You work four hours and you will get sunshine for two hours.' How many of us would then survive?

Then she also told them: "There are many congregations who spoil the rich, then it is good to have one congregation in the name of the poor, to spoil the poor." There was profound silence; nobody said a word after that.³⁵

People in the United States and Europe mistook her for a social reformer, determined to rid the world of poverty and injustice. They were disappointed to find out that she was not intent to bring about social change. She doubtless wanted to help and comfort the poor. More importantly, Mother Teresa sought to bear witness, to show that even on the wretched streets of Calcutta under the worst imaginable conditions, one could encounter God's grace and love.

Mother Teresa stressed its importance by saying, "What blood is to the body, prayer is to the soul."³⁶ But to enter into prayer, silence is necessary, for "in the silence of the heart God speaks."³⁷ Her aphorism expressing these truths has become well known: "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."³⁸ This simple yet profound saying places silence as the point of departure for practical love, peace, and service. She asserted that silence and recollection are the indispensable conditions for prayer and root of our union with God and with one another. An atmosphere of exterior silence is certainly very helpful, but Mother Teresa, who spent most of her life in large,

³⁵Kolodiejchuk, *Where There is Love, There is God*, 14.

³⁶Kolodiejchuk, *Where There is Love, There is God*, 14.

³⁷Kolodiejchuk, *Where There is Love, There is God*, 9.

³⁸Kolodiejchuk, *Where There is Love, There is God*, 9.

overcrowded cities, learned to be interiorly silent and recollected in the midst of much noise and activity. She shows us that to practice silence one need not flee from the world and live as a hermit. What is necessary is to learn to quiet the mind and heart to dispose ourselves for prayer.

Mother Teresa, in all aspects of her life, was a generous dispenser of divine mercy, making herself available for everyone through her welcome and defence of human life, those unborn and those abandoned and discarded. She was committed to defending life, ceaselessly proclaiming that "the unborn are the weakest, the smallest, the most vulnerable." She bowed down before those who were spent, left to die on the side of the road, seeing in them their God-given dignity; she made her voice heard before the powers of this world, so that they might recognize their guilt for the crime of poverty they created. For Mother Teresa, mercy was the 'salt' which gave flavour to her work, it was the 'light' which shone in the darkness of the many who no longer had tears to shed for their poverty and suffering. Her mission to the urban and existential peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God's closeness to the poorest of the poor.³⁹

Thus, critically looking at Mother Teresa's life, on the one hand her life appears as a simple life devoted to her calling and her faith. On the other hand it is difficult to explain her motives and purposes. Apparently, her life had the popularity like that of a celebrity in the modern world. It can be also mistaken as the life of an ordinary social worker. Her life may not be interesting because there are, no great adventures, no great crises, no great sorrows, no great turning points. Even a list of her numerous accomplishments and awards brings very little to bring about her inner life.⁴⁰ Her life appeared to be mundane and ordinary.

³⁹Homily of Pope Francis on the day of Canonization of Mother Teresa on September 4, 2016 <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20160904_omelia-canonizzazione-madre-teresa.html> (10.09.2016).

⁴⁰Anto Akkara, "Service is the Fruit of Love," *The Tablet*, vol. 270, No. 9166, 3 September 2016, 6-8.

And it is exactly her very ordinariness inspires us, as she found Jesus in the ordinary sufferings of daily life. With the deep love of a woman she embraced Jesus in all those who suffer.

9. Conclusion

God uses human instruments for His purposes and He used Mother Teresa's hands and heart to manifest His *raham* in today's world. By her life, words, and works, she proclaimed that God is real, that He is with us and that He still loves the world through every ordinary person. Specifically called to be a Missionary of Charity, a bearer of His love to the poorest of the poor, indeed to each person she met; she did not think that this was a vocation uniquely hers. She saw Jesus in the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the lepers, the beggars and in short all the poorest of the poor, identified as Jesus needing love and compassion, crying out from the cross 'I Thirst!' She is well accepted all over the world because this vision of hers is not something abstract; it is practical for today and can be called subaltern, down to earth. A way of life, which can be practised by anyone, in their own way even beyond religion: the mothers, fathers, elders, youth, children, and even an atheist can practice this *raham* – the womb love. Every person, she believed, is to be a missionary of charity, a carrier of God's love in their own state of life. She wanted to make others aware of this fundamental vision and call, and invited them to respond generously. Hence the invitation of Pope Francis during his homily on the day of her canonization: "Today, I pass on this emblematic figure of womanhood and of consecrated life to the whole world of volunteers: may she be your model of holiness!"⁴¹

⁴¹Homily of Pope Francis on the day of Canonization of Mother Teresa on September 4, 2016.