

Life

St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) was born in Skopje in 1910 to a devout Catholic family in Albania. Her former name was Anjezë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu, her father died early. Her mother cared about the poor, and once took in and cared for a homeless sick stranger to her own home. At 12 years old, Anjezë read the "Biography of St. Francis of Assisi" which attracted her very much. At 15 years old, she learned from her parish's Congregation of Our Lady that thousands of people died of hunger every day in India. She was very shocked and began to pay attention to that place. After the priest learned this, he let her communicate with the Sisters of Loreto, an Irish Community of nuns with missions in India. At age 18, Anjezë felt the first call of the Lord and joined the Loreto Order, intending to serve the poorest among the poor in Calcutta. She took the name Teresa after St Thérèse of the Child Jesus. Although she was sent to India to preach, she spent almost 20 years to teach in the elite schools run by her Order and was even promoted to be the headmistress, which did not match her goal in serving the poor.

In 1946, she felt "the second call." She personally experienced a situation of utmost poverty on the train, and in her heart she heard the cry of the crucified Jesus: "I thirst!" She felt that this summoned her to leave the order and start a new mission to live among the poor people and serve them. After two years of application and waiting, her request was approved by the Vatican, so she left the Order to start serving the poorest of the poor. In 1948, she started to wear a white sari with two blue borders, worn by the poorest women in India at the time. After receiving medical training, she moved the slums in Calcutta to run a school and temporary hospice. Some of her previous students also left a comfortable life, put on saris to follow her. In 1950 the Missionaries of Charity was officially established to serve the poorest people in Calcutta. In 1952, the first "Home for the Dying" was established, which let the poor, and the lonely terminally ill patients to die with dignity. Then the ministry expanded its services to care for lepers and orphans. Mother Teresa's name spread far and wide, and she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. She died in 1997 at the age of 87. St. Teresa of Calcutta was called "the saint in the gutters" because she used to pull homeless and sick people right out of the gutters or in the streets of Calcutta to her shelter and serve them. She lived an austere life and had lived in the slums because of her ministry.

Reflection

Some people think that since St. Teresa did not solve India's poverty, nor did she cure the terminally ill patients, they did not understand the meaning of her work. Mother Teresa was not a social worker nor government personnel. The purpose of her serving the poor was not to solve social problems, but to serve Christ. When Jesus was dying on the cross, he was also the poorest and loneliest person when he cried out: "I thirst." This was not a desire for water, but a desire for love. Mother Teresa understood that the hungry needs more than food, and the homeless needs more than a place to live. The poverty-stricken people need love, care, and dignity. Everyone - even those dying and in poverty - have the right to enjoy God's love. Mother Teresa served the poor, used her love and her love to others to satiate the thirst of Jesus. Let's reflect on whether we have noticed Jesus' thirst, and what we have done to satiate his thirst in our lives.

Prayer

In 1985, Mother Theresa visited Taiwan. A reporter recorded her daily itinerary: "She got up at four in the morning and prayed kneeling on her knees which lasted 2 hours. Then she respectfully received the Holy Eucharist from the priest before she started her busy day." From this, we can imagine she received power from her prayers, so that she could keep smiling while serving others in the worst environment in Calcutta. Let her be our role model to develop the habit of praying, so that no matter what our circumstances are, we can preach the Gospel of Christ peacefully in our lives.

May we learn from Mother Teresa to care for the poor, the lonely and the forgotten,
And use deeds of love to quench the thirst of Jesus.
St. Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us.