

St. Teresa of Calcutta as a Witnessing Model

Dr. Sinto Jose Porathur¹

PhD, Professor, Marymatha Major Seminary, Thrissur, India

Abstract: *The Catholic Church in India confronts various controversies in recent years. Analysing these controversies, the Indian Theological Association (ITA) found out that these were mainly due to the counter - witness of her members and consequently in the 43rd Annual Conference (from 25 - to 28 April 2021) ITA discussed on the theme, "The Church in India Today: Credibility and Witness". I consider that the first means of evangelization, i. e. witness, has central role in overcoming the controversies within the Church. For promoting witness in the life of the People of God, this article suggests an inspiring witnessing model from our Indian context, namely the witnessing model of St. Teresa of Calcutta.*

Keywords: Witness, Evangelization, St. Teresa of Calcutta, Methods of Evangelization, Church in India

Introduction

'Witness' is the first means of evangelization (EN, § 41). Though we have a lot of methods of evangelization, witness has an important role among them. Mission documents (EN, RM [2], etc.) always instruct the People of God to bear witness to Christ. Without witness other methods of evangelization cannot attain their goal. Nowadays the People of God do not give much importance to this aspect. Modern methods including evangelization through modern media, inculturation, inter - religious dialogue, etc. are getting promoted and witness is side - lined. This is not a good sign. Some of its consequences are seen in our society. Oft we are marked by other religious people as the people without any credibility. Our counter - witnesses cause them to state like this. In such a situation, the Church needs inspiration to regain her witnessing attitudes. For this purpose, I narrate the life of St. Teresa of Calcutta as a witnessing model in this article. We go through different stages of St. Teresa's life and learn how she bore witness to Christ through her life. Gonxha Agnes Bojaxhiu was born in Skopje, (at present Macedonia) on 27 August 1910. On 4th September 2016 Pope Francis called her the saint of the Catholic Church. The life of St. Teresa of Calcutta, between these two events (her birth and canonization), may be familiar to us. *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*, a book written by Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk, MC is a reliable source to know about her. [3] After reading her life history, I noticed certain witnessing attitudes that she had. In this article, I narrate her witnessing life under seven different titles including the woman of simplicity and humility, of patience and obedience, of prayer, of peace and joy, of extraordinary charity, the mother of poor and the zealous missionary.

The Woman of Simplicity and Humility

Sr. Teresa led a simple life. In her letter to the archbishop, she proposed the dress code for the candidates in her new community. She writes, "In the order girls of any nationality should be taken - but they must become Indian - minded - dress in simple cloths. A long white long - sleeved habit, light blue sari, [4] and a white veil, sandals - no stockings - a crucifix - girdle and rosary." This shows her intention to imitate Christ through a simple life. Sr. Teresa and her Sisters in the community led a simple life in appearance and also in their interaction with others. She showed a special

concern towards the poor. The poor felt at ease in dealing with her, because of her simplicity in dealings and also in her appearance.

In one of her letters to the Archbishop Pèrier Sr. Teresa writes, "Please excuse this paper - as I have no other kind. - I am trying a little the Franciscan poverty. It is lovely to be poor and free from so many things." [5] This shows the simple life that she lived. She practiced the vow of poverty. The newcomers to the congregation had many opportunities for doing sacrifices. Living in a crowded house, the lack of privacy, simple food and hard manual labour in serving the poor were some of the hardships that they had to face. These disclose the simple life of the members of the Missionaries of Charity.

Sr. Teresa was a woman of humility. She was very much conscious to avoid her prideful nature. In many of her letters to the spiritual fathers, there were sentences of lamentation (such as "the same proud Gonxha,"), which showed her ardent desire to overcome her pride. On the other hand, her colleagues were impressed by her humility. [6] There are many testimonies about Sr. Teresa's humble and simple nature. So, the lamentation, "the same proud Gonxha", does not depict that she was a very proud nun; instead it shows her innermost desire to follow Jesus more closely by overcoming even the minute defects of her life.

Sr. Teresa did not expect appreciation from the public. There are many examples which reveal this nature. For example, Sr. Teresa had communicated her visions to her spiritual director and to the archbishop. But she did not really want to share her "vision" with the public. She considered "the vision" a personal interaction with God. She shared it only with the spiritual fathers and the archbishop because God wanted it. She writes, "Please destroy any letter or anything I have written. - God wants me to open my heart to you. - I have not refused. I am not trying to find the reason - only I beg you destroy everything." [7] This also shows her desire to live a simple life and to be away from fame.

On another occasion, when Eileen Egan expressed his desire to write a book on Sr. Teresa's activities, Sr. Teresa requested him not to write anything about her, but to mention the work of her sisters. She wrote, "I am going to ask you for a big sacrifice. In the book you are writing -

Volume 10 Issue 11, November 2021

www.ijsr.net

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

please omit anything about me personally. You can tell everything about the Sisters and the work. – I want you to leave me and my family out. [...]. I prefer this to having a single soul not to fix his eyes or her eyes more on me than on God's wonderful work. ” [8] Sr. Teresa gave priority to God and to her mission. She believed that she was only an instrument in God's hand. This simple and humble nature of Sr. Teresa is an adaptable virtue for the modern evangelizers.

The Woman of Patience and Obedience

Sr. Teresa was a woman of patience. The best example is her long waiting for receiving a permission from the spiritual father to write a letter to the archbishop, and afterwards, her waiting for getting a permission from the archbishop to write a letter to the Pope mentioning her 'call within the call'. The spiritual director asked her to remain silent about this. Around five months, he did not give any response to her. It was a long waiting for her. Still she respected the words of her spiritual director and obeyed it. About this Sr. Teresa writes afterwards in her letter to Archbishop Pèrier, "From last Sept. strange thoughts and desires have been filling my heart. They got stranger and clearer during the 8 days retreat I made in Darjeeling. On coming here, I told Fr. Van Exem everything - I showed him the few notes I had written during the retreat. – He told me he thought it was God's inspiration - but to pray and remain silent over it. ” [9] Though such an advice was really painful for the enthusiastic missionary, she was obedient to it.

Afterwards Sr. Teresa got permission from Fr. Van Exem and she wrote to the archbishop. It was not the end of her long waiting experience. She had to wait again to get the permission from the archbishop to start a new congregation with a special purpose. The archbishop responded by saying that he needed time to pray, reflect and consult. Archbishop Pèrier writes, "It may be (...) that for her (Sr. Teresa) everything is as clear as daylight. I cannot claim it is the same for me. ” [10] Sr. Teresa could do nothing but wait. Here after she was involved in the spirited exchange of the letters with the archbishop to convince him her "call within the call". She was confident in God's plan and was patient enough to wait for the approval from the authorities.

Sr. Teresa was a model of obedience. At the beginning of her career as a nun, Sr. Teresa got a transfer from Calcutta to the Loreto community in Asansol which had a reason. Some of the sisters in her congregation had noticed her frequent interaction with Fr. Van Exem and they were suspicious about the nature of their (Sr. Teresa and Van Exem) relationship. Actually, there was nothing wrong in their relationship. It was just because of a misunderstanding that the superiors made such a decision. Though it was painful, she accepted this new transfer without complaining about anything to her superiors. She considered it as a plan of God. Still she was waiting patiently to discern the ultimate will of God regarding her "call within the call. ” Here, her obedience to her superiors are well appreciated.

About the patient and obedient nature of Sr. Teresa, Archbishop Pèrier writes, "In spirit of her trials she has experienced from time to time in religious life, she is very

loyal to the institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary and I have never heard her complaining of superiors, or sisters, even when I knew she had been misunderstood. ” [11] Her patience and obedience were seen as intermingled in such occasions. There are different other occasions where we could experience her patient and obedient nature. But I do not illustrate them here because of the limit of space.

The Woman of Prayer

Sr. Teresa was a woman of prayer. She was in frequent contact with her spiritual fathers to get their advice for the well - being of her spiritual life. Spiritual directors like Fr. Van Exem, Fr. Picachy and Fr. Joseph Neuner appear frequently in any book which mentions the life of Sr. Teresa. It shows her alacrity to flourish in the spiritual life. She went for the Sacrament of Confession frequently and made herself free from all minute sins.

Once Sr. Teresa's spiritual guide, Fr. Van Exem, wrote to the archbishop about the prayer life of Sr. Teresa. He writes,

I knew that Our Lord had raised that nun to the state of higher prayer, ecstasy as such there may not have been but the immediate state before ecstasy has been reached. That had been my conviction, vaguely however, last year and perhaps before..... The state of ecstasy may be reached very soon as the union with Our Lord has been continual and so deep and violent that rapture does not seem very far. Never do I say a word of that but that is surely the way things go. I am a little afraid of this since then things may become more spectacular for her and for me. She is deadly afraid of anything that draws the attention to her person and seems to be very solidly established humility. [12]

This shows the conviction that Fr. Van Exem had about the spiritual life of St. Teresa before she received an official permission to begin a new congregation. According to him, Sr. Teresa was in the immediate state before ecstasy.

It is probable that in her later life Sr. Teresa might have experienced the mystical state of ecstasy. [13] Unfortunately, there are no records for proving it. But analysing the words of St. Teresa, we could realize that there are some hints of such spiritual states. In one of her letters, she revealed the three visions that she had. These three visions are as follows.

- 1) 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."
- 2) Again, that great crowd - I should 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. ”

- 3) 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?" [14]

These narrations of Sr. Teresa help us to consider that she had some mystical state of ecstasy in her spiritual life.

The pursuit of sanctity that Sr. Teresa wanted to attain through her work and prayer is not just for self - glorification; instead it was the expression of the depth of her relationship with God. For her, prayer was an act of intimate relationship with Jesus. She wanted to be in that intimate relation with God through prayer and also serving the poor people; in other words, by being a Saint in the Catholic Church. She writes in April 1952, "I want to become a saint, by satiating the thirst of Jesus for love and souls. - And there is another big desire - to give the Mother Church many a saint from our Society. - These two are only thing I pray for, work and suffer. Please pray for me, that I may fulfill His desires as regards our Society and myself." [15] Sr. Teresa prayed for the grace of God to lead a saintly life and to bring forth saintly Sisters in her congregation.

One of Sr. Teresa's prayers is like this. "Jesus, I accept whatever you give - and I give whatever you take." [16] This small prayer become her oft - repeated exhortation. This prayer summed up the spirit of her congregation. Another prayer goes like this, "Give Jesus a free hand and let Him use you without consulting you." [17] This shows her complete dedication of life to God.

Sr. Teresa's uncompromising fidelity to prayer is impressive. She writes, "I make my holy hour with Jesus straight after Mass - so that I get the 2 hours with Jesus before people and sisters start using me. - I let Him use me first." [18] People were fascinated by seeing the way she prayed. Her loud and clear voice and pious gestures also gave an impression of her intimacy with God in prayer.

Eucharist

Sr. Teresa had a special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. She writes, "The attraction for the Blessed Sacrament at times was so great. I longed for Holy Com. (communion). Night after night the sleep would disappear - and only to spend those hours in longing for His coming. This begin in Asansol in Feb. - and now every night for one hour or two, I have noticed it is from 11 to 1, the same longing breaks into the sleep." [19] This text shows the ardent devotion of Sr. Teresa to the Blessed Sacrament. The very first day of the establishment of the congregation of the Missionaries of Charity, the archbishop gave her permission to keep the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle of the convent chapel. Sr. Teresa was very much happy. She wrote, "Soon Our Lord will be with us. - Everything will be easy then - He will be there personally." [20] Afterwards, she got the permission to expose the Blessed Sacrament for the whole

day of adoration. The Sisters of the congregation were present for adoration at their appointed time and even they found extra time to be with Jesus. Sr. Teresa writes in 1976, "At the Mother House since we have 10 group of Sisters, 8 novices and 2 professed we have 10 hours of Adoration in two chapels. Here lies our strength and our joy." [21] Sr. Teresa has given such an importance to Eucharistic adoration.

Many Sisters of her congregation witnessed Sr. Teresa's great devotion to the Eucharist. One of them writes,

Mother received Holy Communion daily with tremendous devotion. If there happened to be a second Mass celebrated in Mother House on a given day, she would always try to assist at it, even if she were very busy. I would hear her say on such occasions, "How beautiful to have received Jesus twice today." Mother's deep, deep reverence for the Blessed Sacrament was a sign of her profound faith in the Real Presence of Jesus under the appearances of bread and wine. Her adoring attitude, gestures such as genuflections - even on both knees in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed, and that well into old age - her postures such as kneeling and joining hands, her preference for receiving Holy Communion on the tongue all bespoke her faith in the Eucharist. [22]

This testimony of the colleague of Sr. Teresa shows that Sr. Teresa was happy to participate in two Holy Masses in a day. The gestures of Sr. Teresa during the Eucharistic celebration reveal her involvement in the prayers and her conviction of the presence of God at the time of the celebration.

Sr. Teresa's one letter discloses her ardent desire to promote Eucharistic devotion to the whole world. She writes to the archbishop, "May we have the coming year as a "Eucharistic Year" for our society. We will try to spread through the slums the love and the true devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in thanksgiving for our society." [23] She wants to convey the love of the Eucharist to the whole world. The Holy Eucharist and also the priests who celebrate the Holy Mass were very important for her. Sr. Teresa writes, "I asked the Holy Father to give us holy priests if he wants families to be holy." [24] This text reveals that she was well aware of the value of saintly priests in the society.

From the letters of Sr. Teresa, we could recognize more instances of devotion to the Holy Eucharist. She writes, "Some days back - when giving Holy Communion to our Sisters in the Mother house, suddenly I realized I was holding God between my two fingers. The greatness of (the) humility of God. Really no greater love - no greater love than the love of Christ." [25] She could realize the humility of God in the Holy Eucharist where Jesus, the Son of God, appears in the form of Bread and Wine. She wanted to follow His humility. She also instructed her sisters about the presence of God in the tabernacle. She writes, "Tabernacle is the most beautiful sign for you to look at when you feel lonely. Don't be afraid. - He is there - in spite of the darkness and failure." [26] This shows that she realized the

power of the adoration to get rid of the obstacles of her mission.

Some people desired join in Sr. Teresa's congregation, but because of some health issues they could not be involved in the concrete activities of the Missionaries of Charity. Sr. Teresa solved this issue by accepting such suffering members in her mission. She asked them to be her 'the second self' - a spiritual person who offers prayer and suffering for her. Jacqueline de Decker is one among them who joined in the suffering members of the Missionaries of Charity. [27] Like Jacqueline de Decker, there were many suffering members who were praying for the Missionaries of Charity. Sr. Teresa writes, "Every sister has a second self - to pray and suffer for her - and the sisters will share her good works and prayers with her. - Spiritually they are children of the Society - so I have some in England, Brussels, Antwerp, Switzerland, Calcutta who have joined, men, women, and children. They would like some short prayers to say in union with us." [28] These suffering members spent their time in adoration chapels, attended the Holy Eucharist and prayed for the intentions of the congregation of the Missionaries of Charity. Through their spiritual intercessions, they were involved in the charitable activities of the Missionaries of Charity. This also shows that Sr. Teresa depended on God for the success of her mission.

Sr. Teresa showed great devotion to the Eucharist in her final years. The doctor, who treated her, witnessed the influence of the Eucharist in her life. Sr. Teresa wanted the Blessed Sacrament in her hospital room. It gave her strength to suffer pain. The Hindu doctor says, "That box, that temple they bring and put in her room and Mother looks at it all the time. If you bring it and put it in the room Mother will become so quiet." [29] The presence of the Blessed Sacrament gave her courage and strength to suffer with Him. This gave her strength in the midst of suffering.

Rosary

Sr. Teresa had a special devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus. She was aware that without the intervention of St. Mary, she could not satiate the thirst of Jesus. Mother Mary was a model for Sr. Teresa. Like Mary in the annunciation, Sr. Teresa also kept many things in her heart without complaining. She used to pray the novena and the rosary [30] and always remembered the strength that she received for her new mission through the intercession of Mother Mary. She reminded her sisters about this intercession and said, "It was her (the Blessed Mother's) pleading that the Society was born and by her continual intercession it has grown up." [31]

Sr. Teresa also instructed her sisters about the importance of the intercession of Mother Mary. On an occasion she instructs, "Let us always remain with Mary Our Mother on Calvary near the crucified Jesus with our chalice made of the four vows, and fill it with the love of self - sacrifice, of pure love, always held up close to His suffering Heart, so that He may be pleased to accept our love." [32] Mother Mary was a model for her and for her sisters to imitate. Like Mother Mary, they also wanted to follow Jesus closely.

The Woman of Peace and Joy

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. [33]

These lines show the interconnectedness of prayer, faith, love, service and faith. The ultimate end of such inter-related activities is nothing but peace. Sr. Teresa was a woman of peace and joy. The personal vow that Sr. Teresa made did not make her despondent. She was very active and joyful in her community activity. She used to say that 'if somebody is sad, that person refuses something to Jesus.' [34] She believed that the complete submission to Jesus will bring the fruit of inner peacefulness and joy.

Sr. Teresa brought peace and joy to others. Let me narrate an example here. During the Second World War, the students in her school were very much frightened. Since there were not enough teachers in those days, she took the charge of the students from class 4 to 10. She gave the students a lot of activities in order to forget the fear of war. Through her smiling face, she could cure their wounds of fear. One of her students (Sr. Joseph Michael M. C.) explains, "Mother took all the classes and she kept us busy in order to make us forget and overcome our fear." [35] In this way, she brought Christ's joy and peace among her students.

After beginning the novitiate program for the first candidates, Sr. Teresa writes to the archbishop about her great satisfaction with her new mission. She writes, "In spite of everything that has happened these last years, there has always been perfect peace and joy in my heart. - Our Lord knows I am at His service. He can do with me just whatever He wishes." [36] This shows that there were lots of occasions where Sr. Teresa was misunderstood, not accepted, *etc.*, but still, within, she was peaceful and happy. Afterwards, she also realized that the first batch of sisters was involved in everything with good spirit. This also made her happy.

Sr. Teresa was an ambassador of peace to the whole world. She asked the leaders of the different countries to work for the peaceful situations. In 1991, Sr. Teresa wrote an open letter to the heads of the United States and Iraq asking them to bring peace to the world. She writes, "Please, please let your mind and your will become the mind and will of God. You have the power to bring war into the world or to build peace. PLEASE CHOOSE THE WAY OF PEACE." [37] This shows her courage to speak for a peaceful situation in the world. The world recognized her activities for establishing peace in the world and thereby it awarded her the Nobel Prize.

The Woman of Service and Extraordinary Charity

Sr. Teresa was a woman of service. She wanted to dedicate all her life to service of the people. Once she wrote, "I want to be only for Jesus - truly and not only by name and dress. Many times, this goes upside - down - so my most reverend "I" gets the most important place. [...] I would give everything, even life itself, for Him." [38] On another

occasion Sr. Teresa writes, “Don’t look for big things, just do small things with great love.... the smaller the thing, the greater must be our love.” [39] Her desire was to please God through her simple loving activities. The simple acts of love that she did for the poor and the dying proved her love towards Him. Sr. Teresa was very quick in responding to the needs of her fellow sisters and other people.

Sr. Teresa had special care for her hostel students. There were food shortages during the Bengal famine in 1942 - 1943. It also affected the hostel students. Once they had nothing to eat. Sr. Teresa went out asking her students to stay in the chapel and she came back with food items for her hostel children. There were many incidents where Sr. Teresa, even in danger of her own life, went out to meet the basic needs of her children. When there was a Hindu - Muslim conflict in 1946, she went out searching for food for her children. Though the military people asked her to go back, she was not ready for that. She convinced them about the need of food for her 300 students in the hostel. The soldiers drove her back to the school and unloaded rice. Sr. Teresa writes about this incident,

I went out from St. Mary’s Entally. I had three hundred girls in the boarding school, and we had nothing to eat. We were not supposed to go out into the streets, but I went anyway. Then I saw the bodies on the streets, stabbed, beaten, lying therein strange positions, in their dried blood. We had been behind our safe walls. We knew that there had been rioting. People had been jumping over our walls, first a Hindu, then a Muslim... We took in each one and helped him to escape safely. When I went out on the street, only then did I see the death that was following them. A lorry full of soldiers stopped me and told me I should not be out on the street. No one should be out, they said. I told them I had to come out and take the risk; I had three hundred students who had nothing to eat. The soldiers had rice and they drove me back to the school and unloaded bags of rice. [40]

Here, Sr. Teresa herself decided to go and serve her students. She had such concern towards those children. Her love towards God enabled her to act this way.

Sr. Teresa was always service - minded. Before she got permission from the archbishop, Sr. Teresa had tried to convince him about her new mission. In one of her letters she writes, “Don’t delay, Your Grace, don’t put it off. Souls are being lost for want of care, for want of love. Without giving any names, if you ask your Parish Priests, they will tell you the need of such nuns. Look at the appeal of the Holy Father for the children of Europe. What would he say, if he saw your poor, the poor of the slums of Calcutta?” [41] Sr. Teresa was really interested in serving the poor. But she did not get an official consent from the archbishop. The way she tries to convince him shows her ardent desire for serving the poor.

The Loving Mother of the Poor

On Sundays, Sr. Teresa used to visit the poor in the slums. In the slums, people had a pathetic living condition. She writes about the living conditions in those slums. “Each family has only one room, two meters long and a meter and a half wide. The door is so narrow that I hardly could enter, and the ceiling is so low that I could not stand upright.” [42] Though she could not give them any financial help at the beginning of her mission, she visited the poor families and spent time with them. She could bring them peace and joy which made them to wait for her visit.

The Missionaries of Charity Sisters were cooperating with the parish ministries in their region. In each parish, two sisters were appointed with special works. One was caring for the sick and the dying and the other one was involved in the study matters of the children in the slum families. Sr. Teresa writes, “The one who will take care of the sick - she will assist the dying - do all the work for the sick - just as much if not more, what a person gets in a hospital - wash them and prepare the place for His coming.” [43] So, the main concern is towards the poor and the dying. Sr. Teresa was very much aware of the people in the streets who had nothing to eat, no shelter, *etc.* She asked her sisters to care for these outcast and downtrodden people and to satiate the thirst of God.

Sr. Teresa also had a special concern for children and women. She writes, “My Sisters will care for their children - will nurse the sick, the old, and the dying in their homes. - They will teach the young wives how to make their homes happy. There are many places where the priests even cannot get at - but a Missionary of Charity will by her work enter every hole - wherever there is human life, wherever there is a soul for Jesus.” [44] This is the mission that she wanted to do; and she and her sisters later did. She realized that these two groups - the children and the women - received care and concern through her sisters’ activities among them.

Sr. Teresa through her letters and speeches motivated the whole world to care for the poor and the downtrodden. She writes, “The world is too rich for the poor. - We have to be very very poor in every sense of the word to gain the heart of the poor for Christ. - The poor are bitter and suffering because they do not have the happiness that poverty should bring if borne for Christ.” [45] According to Sr. Teresa, “The greatest evil is the lack of love and charity, the terrible indifference towards one’s neighbour who lives at the roadside assaulted by exploitation, corruption, poverty and diseases.” [46] Sr. Teresa was always with the poor by caring for them. She shared the love of Christ with these people. Through her model life, she taught the world the lessons of love and charity.

A Zealous Missionary

Who is a missionary? In her explanation of the original Constitution Sr. Teresa writes, “The missionary must die daily, if she wants to bring souls to God. She must be ready to pay the price He paid for souls, to walk in the way He walked for souls.” [47] So, the work of a missionary is nothing but imitating Christ through his/her life. This is what

we could see in the life of Sr. Teresa. Being with the poor and the dying, she was walking with Christ. She spread the message of the Gospel through her simple and loving activities. This made her an ardent missionary.

Sr. Teresa wrote her archbishop a letter to get the permission for practicing the "Voice of Jesus" that she heard in 1942. She wrote many letters to convince the archbishop. Each time the archbishop asked her to wait for God's decision. After a series of letters, the archbishop wrote her on 7th April 1947. He writes,

For me the will of God is supreme, and all the rest disappears. But to know the will of God for those who have the authority and to act in His Name requires consultation, prayer and reflection. I am quite convinced that you are ready for everything. But my dear Mother, you must also take my side now and then. By representing your request and defending it before the Holy See, I assume a great responsibility. [48]

The archbishop was indirectly asking her to withdraw from sending more explanations through the letters. But she was not ready to withdraw from her mission that she received from God. It is not understood as a sign of disobedience; but as a result of an ardent desire. This shows her zealous nature.

Sr. Teresa was ready to face all the challenges in fulfilling the will of God. She wrote to her Superior General, "But the work is His, not mine and even if I die before it has had (a) chance of starting, still I know I have answered the call and made the step towards His forgotten poor and destitute - Success or failure whatever be His plan - the first is His - the second be mine - It will be all for Him." [49] Through these words, Sr. Teresa shows her strong determination to fulfil the will of God, even if she faces struggles in that journey.

Sr. Teresa does not want to do just social work. She wants to witness Christ through her work among the poor. She writes, "My dear children - without our 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." [50] This shows that the work, she did and wanted to do, was nothing but the work of God. It is the mission of the Church. So, Sr. Teresa and her Sisters are real missionaries.

Conclusion

The article, "St. Teresa of Calcutta as a Witnessing Model", is an approach on the life of St. Teresa from a witnessing point of view. As a missionary in India, St. Teresa of Calcutta lived an inspiring life. More than doing extra ordinary things in life or following modern evangelization methods, she could bring the Good News to different religious people. With her simple life and deeds, she could bore witness to Christ. She was connected with God through community and personal prayers. This gave her spiritual energy to lead a witnessing life. The different aspects of witness which we dealt in this article motivate us to adopt them into our life. I strongly believe that such witnessing attitudes in our lives would bring tremendous result in our act of evangelization and to avoid and overcome the

controversies in the Indian Church. St. Teresa of Calcutta may intercede for us.

References

- [1] Dr. Sinto Jose Porathur is a Catholic priest from the Archdiocese of Trichur. He holds a PhD in Systematic Philosophy and a Doctorate in Pastoral Theology from the University of Innsbruck. Currently he is a professor at Marymatha Major Seminary, Thrissur and visiting professor at other centres of theological and philosophical studies. He has published books and articles on both theological and philosophical topics.
- [2] EN represents *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) and RM represents *Redemptoris Missio* (1990).
- [3] On 26. January 2018, Sr. M. Callisita, MC wrote me a mail by suggesting the book, *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* of Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk, MC as the most reliable book about St. Teresa of Calcutta. She is at present the in - charge - of the Mother Teresa Centre in Calcutta. (Email address: mtcadmin[at]motherteresa. org)
- [4] A typical Indian woman dress.
- [5] Brian Kolodiejchuk, *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 59.
- [6] The companion in Loretto writes about Sr. Teresa, "She is very humble. It costs her dearly to achieve that, but I think that God has chosen her for great things. Admittedly, her deeds are entirely simple, but the perfection with which she does them, is just what Jesus asks of us." Cf. *Ibid.*, 26.
- [7] *Ibid.*, 186. From the letter of Teresa to Fr. Picachy on 26th April 1959. There are more occasions in which Teresa requests the same from her spiritual directors. Cf. *Ibid.*, 199 and 205.
- [8] *Ibid.*, 205. Teresa to Eileen Egan in 1960.
- [9] *Ibid.*, 47.
- [10] Archbishop Pèrier to Fr. Van Exem on October 28th, 1947. *Ibid.*, 90.
- [11] *Ibid.*, 55.
- [12] *Ibid.*, 82.
- [13] Ecstasy is a spiritual state in which a person reaches union with God. In this state, the normal senses activities are interrupted, and intense joy and visions accompany the person. Cf. Footnote in Brian Kolodiejchuk, 83.
- [14] *Ibid.*, 99.
- [15] *Ibid.*, 144.
- [16] *Ibid.*, 225.
- [17] *Ibid.*, 225. From Teresa' instructions on 13th May 1982.
- [18] *Ibid.*, 270. Teresa to Michael van der Peet on 6th March 1976.
- [19] Fr. Van Exem quotes Teresa's words (from her letter to him) in his letter to the archbishop on 4th August 1947. Brian Kolodiejchuk, 83 - 84.
- [20] *Ibid.*, 139. From the letter of Teresa to archbishop on 23rd Sep.1950.
- [21] *Ibid.*, 279. Teresa to Michael van der Peet on 26th Nov 1976. In another occasion Sr. Teresa writes, "Each convent was another shrine where the sisters, nourished with the "Bread of life," were spurred on

to go in search of the “hungry Christ” hidden in the poorest of the poor and offer Him humble service. ” Brian Kolodiejchuk, 286. From Teresa’s speech at Regina Mundi Institute in Rome on 20th Dec 1979.

- [22] Ibid., 213. It is a testimony by a senior sister.
- [23] Ibid., 161 - 62. From the letter of Teresa to the archbishop on 15th Dec.1955.
- [24] Ibid., 294. Teresa to Fr. Michael van der Peet on 18th October 1980.
- [25] Ibid., 283. Teresa to Michael van der Peet on 17th Feb 1978.
- [26] Ibid., 290. Teresa to Fr. Sebastian M. C. on 12th Oct 1979.
- [27] Ibid., 146 - 47.
- [28] Ibid., 153. From the letter of Teresa to the archbishop on 23rd Oct.1953.
- [29] Ibid., 328.
- [30] Cf. Ibid., 196 - 97.
- [31] Ibid., 322. From the Instruction of Teresa to the sisters on 15th May on 1995.
- [32] Ibid., 42.
- [33] Ibid., 315. Teresa to MC members on June 1990. This is even printed her visiting cards.
- [34] In one of her instruction in 1987 Teresa writes, “When I see someone sad, I always think, she is refusing something to Jesus. ” Cf. Ibid., 33.
- [35] Ibid., 36.
- [36] Ibid., 142.
- [37] Ibid., 316 - 17. On 2nd January 1991.
- [38] Ibid., 25.
- [39] Ibid., 34 (October 30, 1981 Instruction to the sisters)
- [40] Quoted in Eileen Egan, *Such a Vision of the Street: Mother Teresa - The Spirit and the Work* (New York: Image Doubleday, 1985), 24. Cf. Brian Kolodiejchuk, 37.
- [41] Ibid., 67. (Letter to Archbishop on March 1947)
- [42] Ibid., 27.
- [43] Ibid., 51.
- [44] Ibid., 62.
- [45] Ibid., 92.
- [46] Ibid., 233.
- [47] Ibid., 139.
- [48] Ibid., 69. (Bishop to Teresa on 7th April 1947)
- [49] Ibid., 130. From the letter of Teresa to Superior General on 9th Nov.1948.
- [50] Ibid., 220. On the first Friday of July 1961 instructed Sr. Teresa to the sisters of the Missionaries of Charity.

Author Profile

Dr. Sinto Jose Porathur is a Catholic priest from the Archdiocese of Trichur. He holds a PhD in Systematic Philosophy and a Doctorate in Pastoral Theology from the University of Innsbruck. Currently he is a professor at Marymatha Major Seminary, Thrissur and visiting professor at other centres of theological and philosophical studies. He has published books and articles on both theological and philosophical topics.