

The Story of Mother Theresa



Mother Teresa, who before she became a nun was called Agnes, was born in Macedonia in 1910. Her family were happy and united. When she was just twelve years old she felt that Jesus was asking her to be his special friend. She had heard about the work of missionaries in India and she thought she would like to go there to spread the good news of Jesus as a sister. She thought and prayed about it for the next six years. When Agnes was eighteen she left her family and her country and went to Ireland to join the Loreto Sisters. It was a big sacrifice to give so much. After six weeks she was sent to India to join the novitiate to train to be a nun, it was there that she was given the name Teresa.

For twenty years Mother Teresa taught in schools in India, she loved teaching and was very happy. One day in 1946 as she was travelling by train through India, she had an experience of God speaking to her in heart. God's message was very clear: it was to leave the convent and go and live with the poor and help them. There were, and still are, many poor people in India. In 1948 Mother Teresa left the Loreto sisters. This was a very hard sacrifice to make for Teresa had been very happy and she knew she was going to have a hard life ahead of her.

Mother Teresa had no home or helpers or money. She spoke often to Jesus; she told him that she trusted him to help her. After a while twelve students she had taught in school came to join her in her mission. They changed their rich silk saris for poor cotton ones. Mother Teresa started a new group of sisters called Missionaries of Charity.

At first Mother Teresa started a school for poor children in the slums of Calcutta. As she walked through the streets she felt so sad to see homeless people lying in the streets dying with no one to care for them. In 1952 she opened a hospital for the dying and she called it the Nirmal Hriday (or "Pure Heart") Home for the Dying. She took in the people no one else would look after and she and her sisters washed and fed these poor people and treated them with great love. Mother Teresa knew that Jesus loved the poor very specially. Later on she went on to care for those with leprosy. Mother Teresa couldn't resist helping anyone who was in need, so today 4000 of her sisters run centres all over the world.

Mother Teresa was awarded many prizes including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979. She was not proud of the prizes, but she was glad that it was recognised that it is important to care for the unwanted, unloved and uncared for. The prize money was useful to help run more centres. Sometimes when good people try to help others they get criticised. Mother Teresa was sometimes criticised but she was not put off. She said that you have to accept unkind comments with a smile and get on with doing what you know is right.

When Mother Teresa died in 1997 everyone was very sad. Many of the poor of India went to her funeral. They knew she loved them all and had treated them with respect and dignity. Mother Teresa's sisters still carry on her good work today: they see the face of Jesus in the poor.

In 2003 Pope John Paul II announced the first step to Mother Teresa being named by the church as a saint. She is now beatified; this means that she is now called Blessed Teresa of Calcutta.