
SAINTS EXPERIENCE AND EMULATE

Faith Formation Series Additional Text

STD VIII

- 1. St. Maxmillian Kolbe**
- 2. St. Vincent De Paul**
- 3. St. Damian of Molakai**
- 4. Bl. Mother Theresa**



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MESSAGE

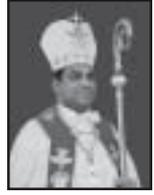
I am very happy to know that the Catechism Department of the Delhi Syro Malabar Mission publishes the life histories of saints as a supplementary to the catechism regular texts.

Saints are our life models. Their life histories are inspiring forces to all who like to grow in faith. The lives of saints teach us how they experienced God in their lives. Study of these life histories enables us to be faithful to the Word of God as well as to the teachings of the Catholic Church which we transmit to the next generation through catechism books. I pray that all who read these lives of saints may be inspired to follow them in their footsteps aspiring for sanctity of life to which every Christian is called by God.

I congratulate all who worked to bring out these books and pray that their efforts may bear fruits of holiness in the lives of many.

+ Varkey Vithayathil

Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil
Major Archbishop of the Syro Malabar Church



Date : June 19, 2012

MESSAGE

I am pleased to learn that our Catechism Department is preparing a new edition of the life histories of saints as a supplement syllabus to the catechism text books. This is all the more pertinent as the first version after the erection of the new Diocese of Faridabad. First of all, I congratulate our Director of Catechism, his team and all who cooperated in this venture.

Role models are necessary in our life, especially for those who are trying to give shape to the foundation of their religious life. Saints are those inspiring personalities who practiced the divine virtues of faith, hope and charity in a heroic manner. Their examples of deep faith and selfless love teach us how to give witness to gospel values in modern times. Saints are not extraordinary men and women, but who lived an ordinary life, but practiced these virtues in an extraordinary manner. Already in their childhood, saints were exemplary and it goes without saying that our boys and girls can take them as role models in Christian life.

Parents, grandparents as well as elder members of the family should foster devotion to saints in the children and try to introduce their inspiring stories to them. Teachers of catechism have a special responsibility to inculcate devotion to saints to the pupils and the current publication will be a useful instrument in that attempt. May the contents of this book inspire the readers and enable them to practice faith, hope and charity in their daily life.

The quintessence of sainthood is the attempt “to become perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect”. May this booklet facilitate forming little saints among the catechism boys and girls of newly erected Diocese of Faridabad.

The image shows a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read 'K. Bharanikulangara'. The signature is positioned above the printed name of the Archbishop.

Archbishop Kuriakose Bharanikulangara
Bishop of Faridabad

GREETINGS

Faith formation of the People of God is an important ministry of the Church. It is through faith education the young generation is integrated into the faith and faith life of the Church. In such an education the introduction of the life histories of saints who lived the Christian faith is very important. Such an introduction will help them to personalize the values and models of the saints. It is with this objective the Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamally had published the life-history series of the saints named, *Vishudhare Ariyan Anukarickan*, as subsidiary textbooks for faith formation from Std. IV to IX. Now I am happy to know that the Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical Centre is publishing an English edition of these textbooks. I am sure that this will benefit the children to know the saints, to love them and to imitate them in their lives. I appreciate this venture and congratulate all who contributed to the publication of these text books. I wish and pray that let the publication of these books help to inspire our children to lead a model Christian life.

Once again wishing every success,

Kochi
3.7.2006

Fr. Jose Puthiyedath
Secretary, Syro-Malabar Catechetical Commission



Catechesis is the primary duty of the Church. It is the process by which church permeates its life to the generations to come. The child initiated to the church by baptism always looks for role models in their spiritual and social life. They get enough role models in politics, social work, films, sports, music, arts etc. Church has to be genuinely serious about presenting role models so that the children may be enabled to take Christian life as a big challenge. Individuals who have responded to the invitation of Jesus and spent their life as a sacrifice are presented as saints to be loved, admired and imitated. So we have selected a few of them for our young children to love, appreciate and imitate. This is a beautiful step in the modern times and I do advise the teachers to learn about the saints seriously and present them as role models for the children.

Wishing every success in this beautiful mission,

New Delhi
4. 7. 2006

Fr. Jose Edassery
Coordinator, Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission

P R E F A C E

Saints are the guiding lights of Christian life. Their way of life stands as sign and motivation to us. Their intercession gives us strength. Learning more about the life and history of saints encourages us to follow their example. Children have a tendency to imitate others. Learning about saints at an early age will help the children to emulate the saints.

The Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical centre is publishing the English Edition of “*Visudhare Ariyan, Anukarikan,*” an additional catechism text for use in the Personal Parishes under the Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission. This is to help children learn and adapt the lifestyle of these venerable persons, who are shining examples of Christian life. The life story of 24 holy persons is included in six books, which are meant for the children of classes IV to IX. For each class, the life stories of four saints are included. I have no doubt these books will have a lasting impact on the faith formation of children. Catechism teachers are requested to understand the usefulness and importance of the short biography of these blessed saints in the faith formation of children. You are requested to take extra care to introduce these books to children to achieve the desired result.

This Additional Text book, *Saints - Experience and Emulate* - was originally written in Malayalam by a catechism teacher Shri Shaji Malippara and was published by the Catechetical department of Ernakulam-Angamally Archdiocese. I express my wholehearted thanks to Shri Shaji and Fr. Jose Puthiyedath, Director, Department of Catechesis, Archdiocese of Ernakulam – Angamally, for permitting us to publish its English edition. I extend my sincere thanks to Mr. Ulahannan V.K., Mr. Jose Kaviyil and Mrs. Marys Antony for their sincere support in publishing this book. I also remember with gratitude each and every person who have extended their help and support in many ways in brining out this book. I wish that by using this book, children will know about saints and will get motivated to adapt their lifestyles. I dedicate these books to the children of the Delhi Syro-Malabar Mission and pray that the almighty God may help us to succeed in all our endeavors.

7 – 7 - 2006

Fr. Joshy Vezhaparambil
Director, Delhi Syro-Malabar Catechetical Centre

MAXIMILLIAN MARY KOLBE (1894-1941)



Our Lady loves little children in a special way. Children's faith is simple and chaste, their hope is aspiring and inspiring, their charity is warm and sincere. Our Lady could not help but love them above the rest of humans. This is the reason why She often chooses children to convey Her heavenly messages to the world.

But sometimes Her apparitions to children are meant to be private and intimate. One such highly personal visitation occurred shortly after the turn of the 20th century. It happened in Poland. A 10-year-old mischievous child received this exceptional blessing. His name was Raymond Kolbe.

Raymond was born on January 8, 1894, to a family of German origin in Zduńska Wola, at that time part of Russia. He was the second son of Juliusz Kolbe and Marianna Kolbe (née D^lbrowska).

His parents moved to Pabianice, where they worked first as weavers, then ran a bookstore. Later, in 1914, his father joined the Polish Legions of Józef Piłsudski, who fought for the independence of Poland from Russia. He was captured and executed by the Russians.

Raymond was sometimes considered a wild child. However, in 1906 at the age of 12 and around the time of his first Communion, he received a vision of the Virgin Mary. It totally changed his life.

Let us hear how Raymond narrates that experience. “I asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. Then she came to me holding two crowns, one white, the other red. She asked if I were willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that I should persevere in purity, and the red that I should become a martyr. I said that I would accept them both.”

During those days, the Franciscans conducted a retreat in Raymond’s parish. After the retreat Raymond and his brother Francis decided to join the congregation.

Raymond entered the Franciscan junior seminary in Lwow, Poland in 1907. Since he was only 13 years, the authorities asked him to study science in a college adjacent to the seminary. He excelled in mathematics and physics. For a while he wanted to abandon the priesthood for military service but eventually relented to the call to religious life, and on September 4, 1910 he became a novice in the *Conventual Franciscan Order* at age of 16. He took the name Maximilian, made his first vows on September 5, 1911 and his final vows on November 1, 1914.

The congregation decided to send Maximilian to Rome for further studies in preparation for priesthood. He studied philosophy at the Jesuit Gregorian College from 1912 to 1915, and theology at the Franciscan Collegio Serafico from 1915 to 1919. While in Rome he learned Italian language. On November 1, 1914 he made his perpetual profession at Gregorian University itself at age of 21.

Founding the Sodality

On October 16, 1917, being in seminary, Raymond and six friends founded the *Immaculata Movement (Militia Immaculatae, Crusade of Mary Immaculate)*. The association was devoted to the conversion of sinners and opposed free masonry (which was extremely anti-Catholic at the time). It also tried to spread of the Miraculous Medal (which they wore as their habit), and devotion to Our Lady and the path to Christ.

Meanwhile, tuberculosis struck Raymond that nearly killed him. It left him in frail health the rest of his life. He was ordained a priest on April 28, 1918 in Rome at age of 24. He received his *Doctor of Theology* degree on July 22, 1922.

Maximilian returned to Poland on July 29, 1919 to teach history in the Crakow seminary. He had to take a medical leave from August 10, 1920 to April 28, 1921 to be treated for tuberculosis at the hospital at Zakpane in the Tatra Mountains.

In January 1922, he began the publication of the magazine 'Knight of the Immaculate' to fight religious apathy; by 1927 the magazine had a press run of 70,000 issues. He was forced to take another medical leave from September 18, 1926 to April 13, 1927, but the work continued.

The friaries from which he had worked were not large enough for his work, and in 1927 Polish Prince Jan Drucko-Lubecki gave him land at Teresin near Warsaw. There he founded a new monastery of Niepokalanow, the *City of the Immaculate* which was consecrated on December 8, 1927. At its peak the Knight of the Immaculate had a press run of 750,000 copies a month. A junior seminary was started

on the grounds in 1929. In 1935 the house began printing a daily Catholic newspaper, *The Little Daily* with a press run of 137,000 on work days, 225,000 on Sundays and holidays.

Not content with his work in Poland, Maximilian and four brothers left for Japan in 1930. Within a month of their arrival, penniless and knowing no Japanese, Maximilian started printing a Japanese version of the *Knight*; the magazine, *Seibo no Kishi*. It grew to a circulation of 65,000 by 1936. In 1931 he founded a monastery in Nagasaki, Japan comparable to Niepokalanow. It survived the war, including the nuclear bombing, and serves today as a centre of Franciscan work in Japan.

Kolbe's Indian Mission

Raymond, who was called Fr. Kolbe, reached Kochi through Sri Lanka in 1932 and met Archbishop Mar Augustine Mar Kandathil of Ernakulam. The archbishop promised him all help to start his "Immaculate Town" in Alwe, near Kochi. Father Kolbe planned to start the magazine "Immaculate Soldier" in Malayalam, but due to certain reasons this desire could not be fulfilled and he returned to Japan.

However, in 1983, a Kolbe Ashram was opened at Aluva, near Mangalappuzha Seminary and in 1985 another ashram called *Nirmalaram* was started at Chotti near Kanjirappally.

Japanese Mission

In his Japanese mission, he was able to acquire some land and named it "Immaculate Garden and built a church and a nuns' novitiate. In 1936 he had to attend the General Chapter of Conventual Congregation in Poland. As he became very weak to return to Japan,

he was asked to take charge of the Immaculate Town he founded years ago.

On December 8, 1938 the monastery started its radio station. By 1939 the monastery housed a religious community of nearly 800 men, the largest in the world in its day, and was completely self-sufficient including medical facilities and a fire brigade staffed by the religious brothers.

Days of Suffering

Fr. Kolbe was arrested with several of his brothers on September 19, 1939 following the Nazi invasion of Poland. Others at the monastery were briefly exiled, but the prisoners were released on December 8, 1939, and the men returned to their work.

Back at Niepokalanow Father Kolbe continued his priestly ministry. The brothers housed 3,000 Polish refugees, two-thirds of whom were Jewish, and continued their publication work, including materials considered anti-Nazi. For this work the presses were shut down, the congregation suppressed, the brothers were dispersed, and Maximilian was imprisoned in Pawiak prison, Warsaw, Poland on February 17, 1941.

On May 28, 1941 he was transferred to Auschwitz and branded as prisoner 16670. He was assigned to a special work group staffed by priests and supervised by especially vicious and abusive guards. His calm dedication to the faith brought him the worst jobs available, and more beatings than anyone else. At one point he was beaten, lashed, and left for dead. The prisoners managed to smuggle him into the camp hospital where he spent his recovery time hearing confessions. When he returned to the camp, Maximilian ministered

to other prisoners, including conducting Mass and delivering communion using smuggled bread and wine.

In July 1941 there was an escape from the camp. Camp protocol, designed to make the prisoners guard each other, required that ten men be slaughtered in retribution for each escaped prisoner. Francis Gajowniczek, a married man with young children, was chosen to die for the escape. Maximilian volunteered to take his place, and died as he had always wished - in service.

On October 17, 1971 Pope Paul IV beatified Maximilian and on October 10, 1982, Pope John Paul II canonized him as martyr saint. It was a heroic life and death for others as Jesus taught us to live.



LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth	: January 8, 1894
First Holy Communion	: June 29, 1902
Confirmation	: August 18, 1907
Vestition	: September 4, 1917
Marian Soldiers Society	: October 16, 1917
Ordination	: April 28, 1918
Death	: August 14, 1941
Sainthood	: October 10, 1982

Feast Day: August 14

Gems

“I am ready to die for the lives of others”

Message

There is no greater love than sacrificing one’s life for others.

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL (1576-1660)



Each one has a mission in the world. The Church recognizes saints according to their God given special charismas. St. Vincent De Paul is the patron of universal charity according to the life of Christ Jesus who was not for him but for others. We have heard about St. Vincent De Paul Society rooted in all the Churches of India founded by Blessed Federic Ossanam.

He was born in 1576 at Lantis a small village of France, to Jean De Paul and Betrance. Vincent was the third among the six children of a poor farmer family.

As children of family do, Vincent used to feed sheep with other children. As he had a special nature of leadership from the beginning, he would be their leader. Because of his ability to lead his friends, people used to tell him that he would become a leader in all ways. As he was from a poor family the only teaching he got was the guidance, teachings and prayers imparted by his family members. Betrance was literate and so Vincent took his basic studies from her.

Why Should He Become a Priest? Make Money?

The desire of his parents was to make him a priest, as he was laudable, pious and clever. Franciscan community was conducting a Society with the school. They had to work hard to meet the expenses of their son Vincent as boarding fees. In a short time he learned Latin, German and French. Vincent became famous as a fast learner and he got chance in taking tuition to the children of Mr. De Comet. De Comet paid his fees and other expenses and provided accommodation at his residence. The lavish life at De Comet's residence entirely changed the life-style of Vincent and he thought of making money at any cost and removing the poverty of his family. Later on he started leading the state of poverty and at one stage, when his father visited him he refused to speak to his own father because his father was poor.

He wanted to become a priest, the Vicar of a rich parish. He knew that to attain this goal he had to learn further. He had his university studies at Tulbox. His father had to sell his ploughing oxen for his studies. His rich companions made him ambitious to make more money. So he started taking tuition classes with the help of De Comet. By that time his poor father died and so he had to stop his studies. Then he decided to study after priesthood according to his cherished dream. He was ordained as a priest on September 30, 1600 with a humble celebration with the closest people. He found few days time to pray in the church. On Mr. De Comet's recommendation, he met the Bishop hoping to get a post of parish priest (Vicar). But he did not get the post, so helping other priests and tuitions in different centers he helped him to finance his studies. By the time he was qualified in all levels, he had degrees in canon law and theology. It was a period when lords and kings decided bishops.

Lord Apron promised to make Fr. Vincent as a bishop in recognition of his help in the form of tuition to his children, but the lord did not fulfill his promise. When all his hope perished, he left for Selos by a boat. The ship journey through the Mediterranean Sea was very dangerous at that time. Robbers attacked the boat, looted everything, put him in jail, thus he suffered a lot on his Turin journey. A fisherman purchased Vincent from the slave market. But he found him unfit for his job and he sold Vincent to a Turkish magician. This magician tried to convert Vincent into Islam which he refused. Again Vincent was sold to a French man where Vincent taught Christianity to the wife of the French man. With her help Vincent fled to a place called Avinjon in a small boat taking great risk. First he met the cardinal and restored his priestly function with joy. There he really understood his vocation to the poor. He prayed for help to live like the poor and humble. It was a new beginning. Cardinal took him to Rome, introduced him to the higher hierarchy. He remained there in work and study and later on he left for Paris. Though he got a job at the Palace of King Henry IV he was not happy with the lavish palace life.

Hospital Ministry – First Station –

At this point of time Fr. Vincent got accommodation in a small room adjacent to a big hospital. There was not enough money even to pay the room rent. However, he started visiting the sick and needy and offered help and solace to the dying as a priest by offering sacraments. In between Fr. Vincent happened to meet one Bishop Belluri who was impressed by the zealous nature of Fr. Vincent and later on they became very close friends and started living together.

St. Vincent started praying ardently “Lord, help me to lead a humble

and poor life according to your word.” Once a doctor shared his problem related to faith with Fr. Vincent. Fr. Vincent started praying for this doctor accepting the crosses of the doctor. Doctor was relieved from his problem but Fr. Vincent started experiencing problem! But here we find his sincere providence in the good Lord. He accepted Credo in all his trails, keeping the Credo always with him in his pocket. He took a personal vow to care the poor seeing Jesus through them. By his dedication and faith he was relieved from all problems.

To the Ministry again

Fr. Vincent worked as parish priest in a local parish where he was respected and loved by the people. Here, he adopted the humble and calm life of St. Francis de Sales. While he was in Klishi Parish he was a solace to all the poor people. Gradually, the believers and priests came to Fr. Vincent for advice, but he was again called back to Paris.

At this stage a great personality of Paris Mr. Messario and Madam De Gondi requested Fr. Vincent to counsel their notorious children.

He was successful in bring them back to normal life. These families appreciated his help and Madam Gordy wished to be his disciple, but Vincent prevented her and instead asked her to start the work of charity. This beginning of acts of charity turned into international acclamation.

One day, Madam De Gordy took Fr. Vincent to a dying patient so that he could prepare the sick to make a good confession. By this incident Fr. Vincent began to preach about Sacrament of Confession (Reconciliation), salvation of the soul was his primary aim of all activities. But he was transferred to Chatiloni parish. Through the good works he became an inspiration to some lazy priests. Fr. Vincent was able to convince Lord Rollmonte to give away the sinful life and

advised him to do good for others as penance. He sold all his property and contributed the proceedings for the works of charity. Two other rich women also sold their property and offered them for charity work and joined the society of charity. As a continuity of this small beginning Fr. Vincent started a society, “Sisters of Charity” and for those who helped such charity works he started another society, “Ladies of Charity”.

New Pastoral Fields

when the parish of Châtillonie grew into a model parish he was called back to Paris. Goldy family helped him in his works. In between he visited a jail and the deplorable condition there made him very sad. The suffering and loneliness in the jail made him to work among them to give much relief and compassion. Many priests came forward to help him in this noble mission.

Hearing about the jail ministry, King Louis XIII appointed him in his ship. The work in the Jail Ministry made Fr. Vincent very famous. The Archbishop asked him to take up the charge of Missionary work. So he made a humble beginning with few members and a team of priests. They preached the word of Lord at various villages and towns. Normally they used to spent 9 months in preaching ministry and the rest three months in prayer and fasting in their actigious home.

Congregation of the Missions (CM)

In March 1625, the Missionary Congregation was formed with Fr. Vincent as Superior. Within a limited time 33 members joined the mission. Pope Urban VIII approved the Congregation of the Mission (MC) in 1652. They felt the Gospel speech should be simple, and it should touch the hearts of masses who listen to it.

During this period Fr. Vincent got the charge of St. Lazar Ashram and the Vincentian congregation made it as their mother house. So he began to prepare seminarians and trained them to preach the Gospel through the medium of their humble role model life. He used to tell his members that “if they lived in purity of heart people would see Gods presence in them.” Sisters of Charity and Ladies of Charity helped Fr. Vincent and team in all their divine efforts.

“One of these Little Men”

The idea behind Fr. Vincent becoming thoroughly changed to seek and find the little men in the society was that he had so many young men to work with him and started 60 seminaries in France alone. Priests of the mission preached retreats in different parishes- a team of three each - Rejuvenation of the whole parishes was the motive. “If you want to be perfect, sacrifice yourselves” the way Jesus preached, they look into their apostolate. So many women came forward to cooperate with the Sisters of Charity and Ladies of Charity was started in almost all parishes.

Vincent used to say only one thing. “This was not of men but of God.” In the hospital ministry a through change was seen in their services. The mentality of the sisters to them was “God’s little children and servants of the poor.”

Fr. Vincent asways took over the welfare of the orphans and he loved to serve the little ones in their orphanages. He spent all his money received as donation or presents to the welfare of the poor children.

Also as a scholar in the Church with German studies, he had to fight with the false philosophy spread in France known as “Jausinesm as a true soldier of the Catholic Church” and he succeeded. We find him

as a bold and a creative person as he was firm in his commitment and vision. He had to fight with the authorities for the cause of common good. He fought with deep faith in God and love for the poor and survived in all challenging situations during his service to the humanity and God.

In 1658 Vatican approved the bylaws of the “Congregations of Mission” and “Sisters of Charity” founded by Fr. Vincent. As he was seriously ill, in 1660 he called a general conference of all his missions. It was his last conference. On 27th September 1660 he had his final consignment to God, by his death.

He was finally raised to the Blessed after 69 years on 14th July 1737 by Pope Clement XXII. He spread the message of charity as the torch of our faith to the universal Church.



LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth	:	1576
Ordination	:	September 23, 1600
Founded VC	:	1625
Death	:	September 27, 1660
Canonization	:	July 14, 1729
Sainthood	:	June 6, 1737

Feast Day: September 27.

Gems

“Proclamation of the Word of God is not through knowledge but through life models”.

Message

We witness to God’s goodness while doing good to others.

ST. DAMIEN OF MOLAKAI (1840-1889)



Damien's Mission was quite different in the world of the dreaded disease called leprosy, giving it a new human dimension, hitherto unheard of unlimited mercy towards such human suffering and finally he too became a brother leper!

He was born in Tremeloo in Belgium on January 3, 1840 to Franko Vyaster and Matherine Franko who were managing with a small grocery store in the town with a family of eight children. His baptismal name was Joseph and pet name Job. According to his neighbours, he was quite an ordinary boy. When he was found naughty and got scolding by a driver of the horse cart, he went to the church, prayed and his parents brought him from the church! Once when he heard about a sermon on 'LOVE FOR OTHERS', he took the whole food prepared at home and gave to a hungry family!

When he was eight years old he was admitted in a school. He enjoyed the walk all the way to his school. His father Franco wanted his son Job to be a merchant like him and sent him to study business. On

that day he attended a sermon in the church and that made him to think otherwise. In the meanwhile one of his sisters joined a convent and a brother to a certain religious congregation. As he wrote to his parents about his future plan of becoming a priest they approved him after sharing with their Vicar.

A Call to Jesus Way

On his 20th Birthday Joseph joined a religious congregation with the support of his brother. At that time the candidates were given chances to practice prayer and meditation. On February 2, 1859 Joseph made his first profession taking the name of Damien, a Cilisian martyr of the fourth century.

Later he was sent to Leuven University to study philosophy and theology. By that time his brother had become a priest. Fr Panefille, the new priest was asked to join mission in Hawai Islands with other nine priests. As he got sick, Damien requested the Superior to send him to Hawai in place of Fr. Panefille though he had not ordained as a priest. Though was customary to send only priests was the Superior General of the congregation was pleased with his great desire and agreed to send him to Hawai.

Mission Across the Sea

With renewed enthusiasm and vigour he came back from Leuven seminary, bid farewell to his dear and near ones at home and started his voyage to the Hawai Island. On March 18, 1864 he and his companions landed at Honolulu harbour. There were 18 priests, 12 preachers and 12 sisters in his mission. To fulfill his ambition, he was ordained as a priest on 21st May, 1864.

His first appointment was at the province of Punoe. It was a hilly,

marshy place with forests and volcanoes. There was no church and the people were away from faith and without priests for the past eight years. Fr. Damien offered Holy Mass at many places with limited facilities. As a good shepherd he travelled long distances by foot to be with the flocks and finally built a small church and gradually the local people began to welcome the white man, Fr. Damien. His companion Fr. Clement became sick. The parish of Fr. Clement was very large which requested more efforts and time. So Fr. Damien took charge of that big parish and Fr. Clement took over his parish as there was less work. Though there were about 3,000 people, all were not true to their faith. He walked long distances, drove on horse, climbed hills and rocks to reach to all the families and finally he was able to bring all those families even more closely in faith.

Idol worshiping and black magic were common among these people. He challenged that practice. They made human sacrifices (narabali) to terrorise Fr. Damien, but he challenged those satanic acts and finally succeeded in stopping that evil practice. Seeing his good work the parishioners wholeheartedly supported Fr. Damien and he was able to build chapels and schools. He used to walk about 15 kms. from one centre to another for offering mass on Sundays.

Towards Cemetery (The Island of Death)

In 1853, leprosy was detected in Hawai. The dreaded disease had no remedy but only suffering and death. In 1866 the Government deported 140 lepers to the Molocco Island and later on as the number of lepers increased gradually that became a place of suffering and death to the people afflicted with leprosy in Hawai Island! So Molocco, a small island became like a cemetery for the lepers.

During a blessing ceremony of a church in Hawai Island the bishop

discussed the issue of pastoral care, especially to the lepers of Molocco Island where three priests paid visits occasionally. The Bishop also told them that the health authorities of Hawaii had made a rule that those who went to Molocco would never come back. Hearing this, four priests expressed their desire to go to Molocco. Fr. Damien, after prayers, requested to the Bishop for this post. In May 10, 1873 the Bishop took Fr. Damien to Molocco in a ship filled with 50 lepers. On reaching there, they could only find lepers with mutilated limbs and the Bishop told them “I brought Fr. Damien to become your Father”.

Everywhere he could see only lepers with fear and despair and above all the sufferings like animals and nobody to hear them or call them. He first went to a dilapidated chapel, prayed there to gain strength and providence for him and his beloved lepers. Then he cleaned the church. The first time he took the food given by a leper gladly. It was a new experience for the lepers that a white priest came to live with them.

At the very first day Fr. Damien had to do the last rites to a leper. He had to virtually do everything by himself because most of the lepers had no limbs. There was no place for him to live and so he rested under a tree till the time he made a small hut for him. He was the one who did not fear leprosy or lepers. He tried to live fully one among them caring them as his own with deep presence of God with him always and everywhere.

He used to write letters to his authorities, friends and relatives explaining the situation of the lepers. Those depressed lepers found little means of enjoyment sometimes out of the ways. Scarcity of water prevented them from cleaning their dress and surrounding. He

was able to build a small water reservoir and brought pipe water with the help of lepers. He had to make the coffins by himself for burying the dead. At the beginning he built about 2000 coffins and he had to dig the pits by himself. It is important to note that nobody except the lepers were brought into that island of cemetery.

As there was no doctor or nurse, Fr. Damien had to do most of the services to the lepers himself. There were not even sufficient wood to make coffins. Damien requested the Bishop and the authorities for help. After repeated requests the health authorities sent a ship-full of wood and the Bishop offered help in cash and kind. With the funds received from Bishop and using the wood he started building small houses with the active cooperation from the lepers. Later on the lepers became experts in this job. Thus he built about 300 houses in a planned way and along with the houses small kitchen gardens were also made, especially for growing vegetables. He made a small house for himself near the cemetery. He used to visit each hut, enquire about each of them and was ready to attend to their confessions and he encouraged them and was able to bring them to the level of salvation.

Story of a Confession

The Health Department was not permitting anybody from outside to visit Molocco, not even priests. Fr. Damien was the only priest at the island. He requested for confessional facility. At that time, the Provincial wanted to come there for a short visit, but the captain of the ship did not permit him. Seeing the boat Fr. Damien followed the ship in a small boat with few lepers and wanted to enter the ship for confession, but he was denied permission. Finally, Fr. Damien made his confession standing on the steps of the boat and the provincial

standing at the side of the railing. Fr. Damien thanked the provincial and came back with God's mercy through the sacrament of reconciliation after a long time!

‘I’m One among You

On first Sunday of June 1885 Fr. Damien at his Holy Mass addressed them “we lepers” instead of “we brothers and sisters”. He too had become a leper after 12 long years of service among the lepers. He realized that one day when boiling water accidentally fell on his feet he did not feel that hot. That was a sign of leprosy in him! When the Bishop realized that Fr. Damien was seriously ill, he called him back for treatment, but after three months of treatment, Fr. Damien returned to the company of leper flock to live and die with them.

The world came to know about Fr. Damien's good works among the lepers and the authorities relaxed the rules. Few other priests joined to help him. The rulers discussed the plight of the lepers, the media started reporting about the news of Molocco. The Regent visited Molocco and that brought some promising changes in the life of the lepers.

Once the Bishop sent some musical instruments and Fr. Damien organized a choir of lepers and on most of the evenings there was a feast of music in the shade of a tree near the church.

Hearts Open for Fr. Damien

Fr. Damien's leprosy was in an advanced stage. But he was in a peaceful and quite mood. Many people came forward with help, greetings and appreciation to a great missionary in his efforts which were yet unheard of. The Bishop sent Fr. Mendell to assist Fr. Damien. They made their confession to each other and Fr. Damien asked the

choir to sing his favourite song. Before his last days Fr. Damien called his co-workers and entrusted the welfare of the sick with them. One day before the Palm Sunday in 1889 he received his last Holy Communion. On the next day, on April 15, 1889 he closed his eyes for ever at the age of 50. His selfless and dedicated service was an eye-opener to the world leaders towards doing everything possible to mitigate the sufferings of the lepers.

Even before his death he was honoured with the “*Order of Knight Commander of the Royal Order of Kalakua by Her Majesty, the Queen of Hawai, Princess Liliukalam*” in 1881.

The mortal remains of this great angel of mercy were initially laid to rest beside the church near his favourite three ‘Pantanas’ in Molocco and in 1986 the Belgian Government succeeded in shifting that to his homeland. It was edifying to note that the King of Belgium Leopold III himself led his people in honouring this saint. A portion of the mortal remain was, however, returned to the Hawain brothers as a goodwill gesture, after he was beatified by Pope John Paul II on June 4, 1995. On October 11, 2009 Pope Benedict the XVI canonaized him as a saint.

LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth	:	January 3, 1840
Vestition	:	February 2, 1859
Arrival in Hawai, Island	:	March 18, 1864
Ordination	:	May 21, 1864
Arrival in Molocco Island	:	May 10, 1873
Death	:	April 15, 1889
Beatification	:	June 4, 1995
Canonization	:	October 11, 2009

Feast Day: May 10

Gems

“We all should strive diligently to alleviate the struggles of the humankind as a follower of Christ”.

Message

We should become one with others except in sin to gain their souls.

BL. MOTHER THERESA (1910-1997)



“By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.”

This was how Blessed Teresa of Kolkata used to describe herself.

Small of stature, rocklike in faith, Blessed Teresa of Kolkata was entrusted with the mission of proclaiming God’s thirsting love for the humanity, especially for the poorest of the poor. *“God still loves the world and He sends you and me to be His love and His compassion to the poor.”* She was a soul filled with the light of Christ, on fire with love for Him and burning with one desire: *“To quench His thirst for love and for souls.”*

Mother Teresa was always her own person, startlingly independent, obedient, yet challenging some preconceived notions and expectations. Her own life story includes many illustrations of her willingness to listen to and follow her own conscience, even when that seemed to contradict what was expected.

This strong and independent woman was born Gonxha (Agnes)

Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Yugoslavia, on August 26, 1910. Five children were born to Nikola and Drona Bojaxhiu, yet only three survived. Gonxha was the youngest, with an elder sister, Aga, and brother, Lazar. This brother describes the family's early years as "well-off," not the life of peasants reported inaccurately by some. "We lacked for nothing." In fact, the family lived in one of the two houses they owned.

Nikola was a contractor, working with a partner in a successful construction business. He was also heavily involved in the politics of the day. Lazar tells of his father's rather sudden and shocking death, which might have been due to poisoning because of his political involvement. With this event, life changed overnight as their mother assumed total responsibility for the family, Aga, only 14, Lazar, 9, and Gonxha, 7. Agnes received her First Communion at the age of five and a half and was confirmed on November 16, 1916.

Agnes was an active member in Marian Sodality in her parish. She came to know about India, especially Bengal and its slums from the letters of some Jesuit priests working in eastern India. Those letters prompted her to become a nun to work in India. She expressed her desire to her mother at the age of 18. Her mother blessed her desire.

Called to Religious Life

At 18, Gonxha decided to follow the path that seemed to be unconsciously unfolding throughout her life. She chose the Loreto Sisters of Dublin, missionaries and educators founded in the 17th century to educate young girls.

In 1928, the future Mother Teresa began her religious life in Ireland, far from her family and the life she had not known, never seeing her

mother again in this life, speaking a language that only few understood. During this period a sister novice remembered her as “very small, quiet and shy,” and another member of the congregation described her as “ordinary.”

Mother Teresa herself, even with the later decision to begin her own community of religious, continued to value her beginnings with the Loreto sisters and to maintain close ties. She was unwavering in her commitment and self-discipline.

One year later, in 1929, Gonxha was sent to Darjeeling to the novitiate of the Sisters of Loreto. In 1931, she made her first vows there, choosing the name of Teresa, honouring both saints of the same name, Teresa of Avila and Therese of Lisieux. Sister Teresa was sent to St. Mary’s, a high school for girls in Calcutta.

Here she began a career teaching history and geography, which she did with dedication and enjoyment for the next 15 years. It was in the protected environment of this school for the daughters of the wealthy that Teresa’s new “vocation” developed and grew. This was the clear message, the invitation to her “second calling,” that St. Teresa heard on that fateful day in 1946 when she travelled to Darjeeling for retreat.

The Call within a Call

On September 10, 1946 during the train journey from Calcutta to Darjeeling for her annual retreat, Sr. Teresa received her “*inspiration*,” her “*call within a call*.” On that day, in a way she would never explain, Jesus’ thirst for love and for souls took hold of her heart and the desire to satiate His thirst became the driving force of her life.

Over the course of the next weeks and months, by means of interior

locutions and visions, Jesus revealed to her the desire of His heart for “*victims of love*” who would “*radiate His love on souls.*” “***Come and be My light,***” He begged her. “*I cannot go alone.*” He revealed His pain at the neglect of the poor, His sorrow at their ignorance of Him and His longing for their love. He asked Mother Teresa to establish a religious community, ‘Missionaries of Charity’, dedicated to the service of the poorest of the poor. Nearly after two years of testing and discernment Mother Teresa received permission from authorities to begin.

During the next two years, Teresa pursued every avenue to follow what she “never doubted” and followed the direction God was pointing to her. She “to gave up even Loreto where she was very happy and went out in the streets. She heard the call to give up all and follow Christ into the slums to serve Him among the poorest of the poor.”

Technicalities and practicalities abounded. She had to be released formally, not from her perpetual vows, but from living within the convents of the Sisters of Loreto. She had to confront the Church’s resistance for forming new religious communities, and receive permission from the Archbishop of Calcutta to serve the poor openly on the streets. She had to figure out how to live and work on the streets, without the safety and comfort of the convent. As for clothing, Teresa decided that she would set aside the habit she had worn during her years as a Loreto sister and wear the ordinary dress of an Indian woman: a plain white sari and sandals.

On August 17, 1948, she dressed for the first time in a white, blue-bordered sari and passed through the gates of the Loreto convent to enter the world of the poor.

Teresa first went to Patna for a few months to prepare for her future work by taking a nursing course. In 1948 she received the permission from Pius XII to leave her community and live as an independent nun. After coming back to Calcutta she found a small hovel on rent to begin her new undertaking.

The Streets of Calcutta

Mother Teresa started her mission by teaching slum children. Though she had no proper equipments, she made use of what was available—writing in the dirt. She strove to make the children of the poor literate, to teach them basic hygiene. As they grew to know her, she gradually began visiting the poor and ill in their families and all crowded together in the surrounding squalid shacks, inquiring about their needs.

Teresa found a never-ending stream of human needs in the poor she met, and frequently was exhausted. Despite the weariness of her days she never omitted her prayer, finding that the source of support, strength and blessing for all her ministry.

She visited families, washed the sores of many children, cared for an old man lying sick on the road and nursed a woman dying of hunger and Tuberculosis B. She started each day in communion with Jesus in the Eucharist and then went out, rosary in her hand, to find and serve Him in “*the unwanted, the unloved, the uncared for.*”

A Movement Begins

Teresa was not alone for long. After some months, her former students joined her one by one. Many seemed to have been waiting for her example to open their own floodgates of charity and compassion. Young women came to volunteer their services and later became the core of her Missionaries of Charity. Others offered food, clothing,

and use of buildings, medical supplies and money. As support and assistance mushroomed, more and more services became possible to huge numbers of suffering people.

On October 7, 1950 the new congregation of the Missionaries of Charity was officially established in the Archdiocese of Calcutta. By the early 1960s, Mother Teresa began to send her Sisters to other parts of India. The Decree of Praise granted to the Congregation by Pope Paul VI in February 1965 encouraged her to open a house in Venezuela. It was soon followed by foundations in Rome and Tanzania and eventually on every continent. Starting in 1980 and continuing through the 1990s, Mother Teresa opened houses in almost all of the communist countries, including the former Soviet Union, Albania and Cuba.

To respond better to the physical and spiritual needs of the poor, Mother Teresa founded the *Missionaries of Charity Brothers* in 1963. In 1976, she opened the *contemplative branch* of the Sisters and in 1979 the *Contemplative Brothers*, and in 1984 the *Missionaries of Charity Fathers*.

Yet her inspiration was not limited to those with religious vocations. She formed the *Co-Workers of Mother Teresa* and the *Sick and Suffering Co-Workers*, people of many faiths and nationalities with whom she shared her spirit of prayer, simplicity, sacrifice and her apostolate of humble works of love. This spirit later inspired the *Lay Missionaries of Charity*. In answer to the requests of many priests, in 1981 Mother Teresa also began the *Corpus Christi Movement for Priests* as a “*Little Way of Holiness*” for those who desired to share in her charism and spirit.

From their birth in Calcutta, nourished by the faith, compassion and

commitment of Mother Teresa, the Missionaries of Charity have grown like the mustard seed of the Scriptures. New vocations continue to come from all parts of the world, serving those in great need wherever they are found. Homes for the dying, refuges for the forlorn and teaching of orphans and abandoned children, treatment centres and hospitals for those suffering from leprosy, centres and refuges for alcoholics, the aged and street people—the list is endless.

Until her death in 1997, Mother Teresa continued her work among the poorest of the poor, depending on God for all of her needs. Honours too numerous to mention came her way throughout the years, as the world stood astounded by her care for those usually deemed of little value. In her own eyes she was “God’s pencil—a tiny bit of pencil with which he writes what he likes.”

Despite years of strenuous physical, emotional and spiritual work, Mother Teresa seemed unstoppable. Though frail and bent, with numerous ailments, she always returned to her work, to those who received her compassionate care for more than 50 years. Only months before her death, when she became too weak to manage the administrative work, she relinquished the position being the head of her Missionaries of Charity. She knew the work would go on.

Finally, on September 5, 1997, after finishing her dinner and prayers, her weakened heart gave her back to the God who was the very centre of her life.

During the years of rapid growth numerous awards, beginning with the Indian Padmashri Award in 1962 and notably the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, honoured her work. An increasingly interested media began to follow her activities. She received both prizes and attention *“for the glory of God and in the name of the poor.”*

The whole of Mother Teresa's life and labour bore witness to the joy of loving, the greatness and dignity of every human person, the value of little things done faithfully and with love, and the surpassing worth of friendship with God.

But there was another heroic side of this great woman that was revealed only after her death. Hidden from all eyes, hidden even from those closest to her, was her interior life marked by an experience of a deep, painful and abiding feeling of being separated from God, even rejected by Him, along with an ever-increasing longing for His love. She called her inner experience, "*the darkness.*" The "painful night" of her soul, which began around the time she started her work for the poor and continued till the end of her life and that led Mother Teresa to an ever more profound union with God. Through the darkness she mystically participated in the thirst of Jesus, in His painful and burning longing for love she shared in the interior desolation of the poor.

During the last years of her life, despite increasingly severe health problems, Mother Teresa continued to govern her Society and respond to the needs of the poor and the Church.

By 1997, Mother Teresa's Sisters numbered nearly 4,000 members and were established in 610 foundations in 123 countries of the world. In March 1997 she blessed her newly-elected successor, Sister Nirmala Joshi, as Superior General of the Missionaries of Charity and then made one more trip abroad.

After meeting Pope John Paul II for the last time, she returned to Calcutta and spent her final weeks receiving visitors and instructing her Sisters. On September 5, 1997 Mother Teresa's earthly life came to an end.

The Government of India honoured her with a state funeral. Her body was buried in the Mother House of the Missionaries of Charity. Her tomb quickly became a place of pilgrimage and prayer for people of all faiths, rich and poor alike. Mother Teresa left a testament of unshakable faith, invincible hope and extraordinary charity. Her response to Jesus' plea, **“Come and be My Light,”** made her a Missionary of Charity, a “Mother to the poor,” a symbol of compassion to the world, and a living witness to the thirsting love of God.

Less than two years after her death, in view of Mother Teresa's widespread reputation of holiness and the favours being reported, Pope John Paul II permitted the opening of her Cause of Canonization. On December 20, 2002 Pope John Paul II approved her heroic virtues and miracles and on October 19, 2003 Mother Teresa was beatified.



LIFE AT A GLANCE

Birth	: August 26, 1910
Arrival in Calcutta	: January 6, 1929
Religious Profession	: May 24, 1931
Founded Missionaries of Charity	: October 7, 1950
Nobel Prize	: December 10, 1979
Death	: September 5, 1997
Beatification	: October 19, 2003

Feast Day: September 5.

Gems

A family that prays together stays together.

Message

The Love of Christ is stronger than the forces of evil in the world.

GLOSSARY

1. Adversary - difficulty.
2. Apportion - distribute.
3. Appreciate - recognize the value of something.
4. Atrocity - cruel act.
5. Consign - deliver something to someone.
6. Counsellor - a person trained to give advice on personal or psychological problems.
7. Credo - a statement of a person's beliefs or aims.
8. Deplorable - shockingly bad.
9. Dilapidated - old and in poor condition.
10. Edify - teach someone something that is educational.
11. Laudable - deserving praise and commendation.
12. Lavish - very rich, given in great amount.
13. Mitigate - make less severe or serious.
14. Notorious - famous for something bad.
15. Penance - a religious act in which a member of the Church confesses sins to a priest and is given formal forgiveness.
16. Persuade - use reasoning or argument to make someone act.
17. Reconciliation - the end of a disagreement and the return to friendly relations.
18. Scorch - burn on the surface or edges, dried out as a result of extreme heat.
19. Solace - comfort in difficult time.
20. Whims - Sudden desire or change of mind.