

Questions and Reflections for reading *Mother Teresa: No Greater Love*

In his foreword, Thomas Moore writes that for too many people, religion is “lived as a purely spiritual activity, sometimes as a mental exercise in belief and explanation” and that “when religion is largely mental, spiritual attitudes may never get translated into compassionate action in the world community.” But, “in Mother Teresa’s life and words we find religion’s soul, in the sense that her faith is inseparable from her compassion and her compassion is never disconnected from her behavior.”

Questions to ponder: Is your Orthodoxy largely “a mental exercise in belief and explanation” or is it a lived faith that has practical consequences for how you live? To see that what Moore is saying here about Mother Teresa reflects the essence of Christianity and that this is essential for our salvation, read Matthew 25: 31-46 and James 2:14-17.

The secret of Mother Teresa’s life: “My secret is very simple: I pray. If we learn to pray, we will belong to Jesus. I realize that praying to Him is loving Him. Love to pray. Does your mind and your heart go to Jesus as soon as you get up in the morning? This is prayer. We need prayer. Feel the need to pray often during the day. Prayer, to be fruitful, must come from the heart. Prayer enlarges the heart. Let us remember: if we want to be able to love, we must be able to pray. If you want to pray better, you have to pray more. The more you pray, the better you will pray. Prayer is the very life of oneness, of being one with Christ.”

Questions to ponder: Do you feel the *need* to pray during the day? A need is something necessary for our well-being. Do you feel that prayer is *necessary* to your well-being, *necessary* for you to live most fully and most truly? If, as Mother Teresa says, prayer is loving Jesus and belonging to Him, do you see that loving Jesus is *necessary* to your well being? That loving Jesus enlarges your heart, opening you out towards other people? Do you see the connection between prayer and your ability to love deeply and faithfully? Do you pray? How do you pray? If it’s true that in order to pray better, you have to pray more, how often do you pray to Jesus? Do you really want to belong to Jesus?

In His Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus says, “Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Mother Teresa says on page 12: “We must have a clean heart to be able to see – no jealousy, anger, contention and especially no uncharitableness.”

Questions to ponder: What does it mean to be pure in heart, to have a clean heart? Does it make sense to you that our anger, jealousy and lack of love block our ability to see things clearly, blocking our relationship with God and as well as other people? How does one acquire purity of heart?

Saris and rupees, clothes and money: Read the story of the wealthy Hindu lady on pages 46 – 47. In Orange County shopping malls, on TV and in the retail clothing industry, buying and wearing expensive clothes is practically considered a virtue. Is it?

A question to ponder: What can you do to simplify your life and give to the poor?

Mother Teresa, often called a living saint while she was alive, writes: “Holiness is not a luxury for the few; it is not just for some people. It is meant for you and for me and for all of us. The Church of God needs saints today. The first step to becoming holy is to will it. Holiness consists of carrying out God’s will with joy. The words, I want to be holy, mean: I will divest myself of everything that is not of God. I will divest myself and empty my heart of material things. I will renounce my own will, my inclinations, my whims, my fickleness and I will become a generous slave of God’s will. I will opt for Him, I will run toward Him. In our meditations we should always say: Jesus, make me a saint according to Your own heart, meek and humble.”

St. Paul, writing in his *Letter to the Romans*, addresses it “to all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints.” At every celebration of the Liturgy, the people present are addressed as saints. All Christians both are saints and called to be saints.

Questions to ponder: Do you feel loved by God? Do you feel that you are called to be a saint? That holiness is not beyond you, that it is something you must want enough to “become a generous slave of God’s will?” In prayer, do you ever ask Jesus to make you a saint?

Mother Teresa writes: “The other day a man, a journalist, asked me a strange question: Even you, do you have to go to confession? I said: Yes, I go to confession every week. Confession is a beautiful act of great love. It is a sacrament of love, a sacrament of forgiveness. Only in confession can we go as sinners with sin and come out as sinners without sin. Confession is nothing but humility in action. Confession is a place where I allow Jesus to take away from me everything that divides, that destroys.” (Pages 110-112)

Questions to ponder: Do you see the sacrament of confession as “a beautiful act of great love?” Do you see the connection between confession and humility? Do you see yourself as a sinner in need of confession? Or, are you OK, a nice person? Mother Teresa went to confession once a week. How often do you go to confession? Is confession *necessary*?

A final word from Mother Teresa:
***“We need to give Christ a chance to make use of us.
Don’t allow anything to interfere with your love for Jesus.”***