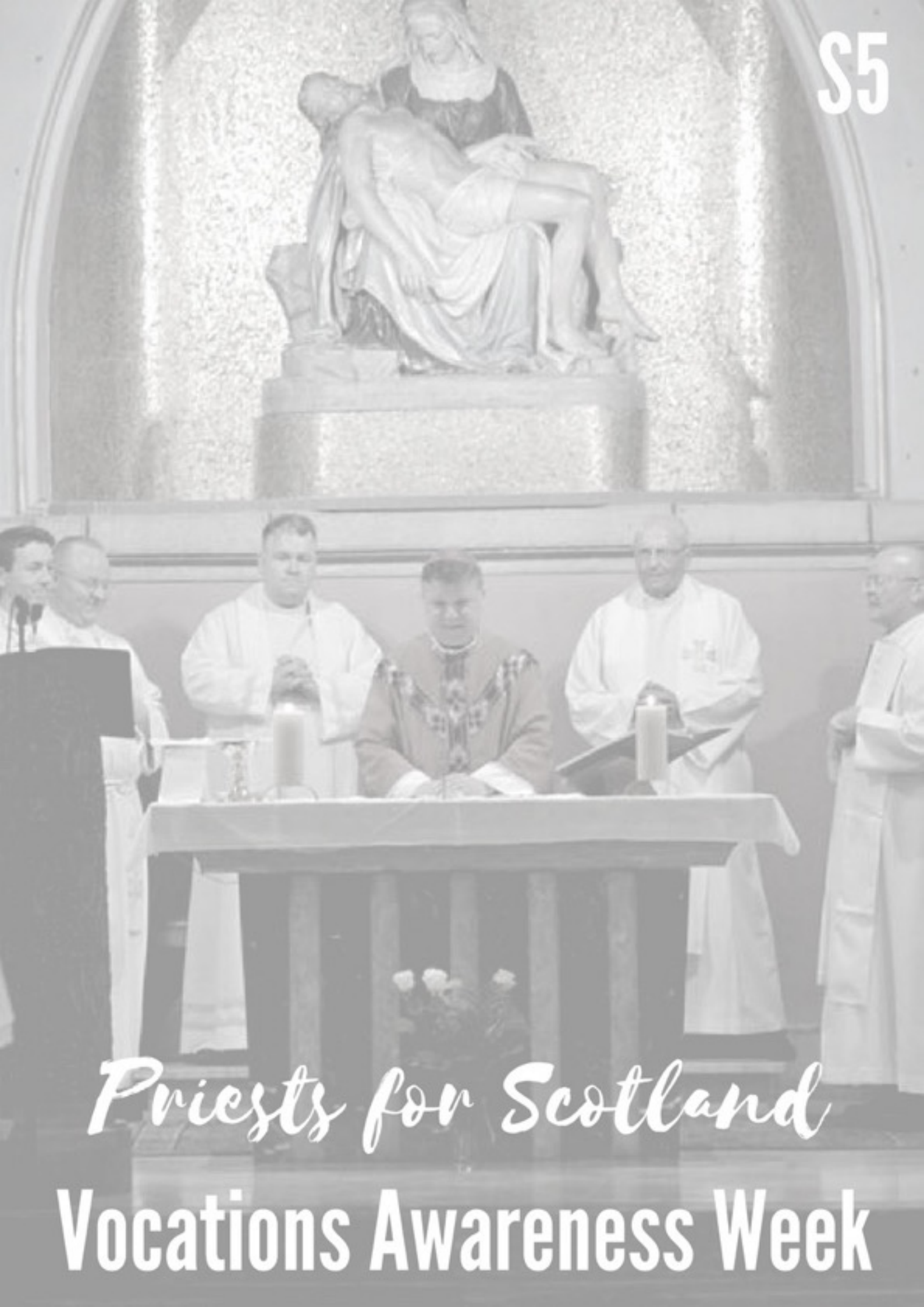


\$5



Priests for Scotland

Vocations Awareness Week

Mother Teresa: The Hands and Heart of God

Introduction

This week the Catholic Church in Scotland celebrates Vocations Awareness Week. 'Vocation' means 'calling', specifically a calling from God. During this week we're going to consider the lives of six people – three men and three women who responded to God's call with generosity, courage and determination.

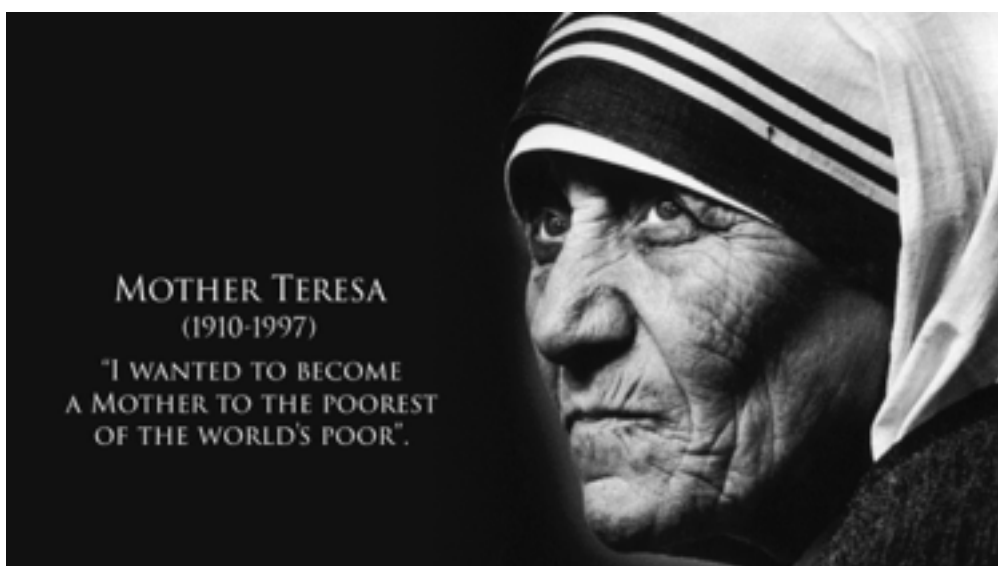
In s5 we consider the life, vocation and legacy of Saint Mother Theresa

Prayer

Saint Teresa of Calcutta, longing to love Jesus

Saint Teresa of Calcutta you gave your life entirely to God. You accepted His call to become a carrier of His love to the poorest of the poor. With loving trust you fulfilled His plan for your life.

Saint Teresa, you promised to continuously bring the light of love to those on earth; pray for us that we may serve God in our brothers and sisters, especially those most unloved and unwanted. Amen.



Background

Troubled Times

Mother Teresa of Calcutta was born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu in Skopje, Macedonia, on August 27, 1910. She was the third child of Nikola and Drana. Nikola, with the vhelp of his wife, ran a grocery business in central Skopje.

Skopje is now the capital city of Macedonia but in 1910 it was simply another city in the vast Ottoman Empire, a state that controlled vast areas of land in Southeast Europe, Western Asia and North Africa.

By 1910, the Empire was in difficulty and was dealing with much internal unrest. Many different regions, including Macedonia, wanted to break away and form their own independent countries.

In 1912, war broke out (the First Balkan War) and Macedonia was taken over by Serbia. Only two years later, in 1914, the region was affected by another war with the outbreak of World War One.

A Minority within a Minority!

Although born in present day Macedonia, Mother Theresa' parents were Albanian. At that time around 20% of the population in Skopje were of Albanian descent. The vast majority of Albanians are Muslim with only about 10% being Catholic. This would have meant that Mother Theresa would have belonged to a very small minority within a small minority!

The Faith Matters

In her later years, Mother Theresa frequently wrote about how important faith was to her family. The family prayed together, attended Mass together and even fasted together! Faith wasn't just for Sundays or for special times - it was a major part of the family's everyday life!



Early Tragedy

Mother Theresa had a very stable, loving and happy home life. Her father, Nikola, ran a grocery business in the city. He was very successful and acquired considerable wealth. By the time of his death, he had financed the construction of the first theatre in Skopje and had also managed to pay for the construction of railway lines throughout the region. He was also very involved in local politics. He campaigned for the rights of the Albanian community in Skopje and became the first Catholic to serve on the city council.

In November of 1919, when Mother Theresa was only nine years old, Nikola attended a meeting of community representatives. He returned from the meeting gravely ill and died a few days later. There was much suspicion that he had been poisoned by agents of the Serbian government.

Incredibly popular, his funeral was attended by large numbers of people and representatives of all the local religious communities. After his death, Nikola's business partner took all of his assets and left nothing to Theresa's family. In the course of a few weeks, Theresa's family went from having great wealth to having almost nothing.

For Reflection/Discussion

Troubled Times: Mother Theresa was brought in a time of war in Macedonia and throughout the world. How do you think this might have moulded and shaped the person she became?

A Minority Within a Minority: Mother Theresa was from an ethnic and religious minority. What challenges do you think she may have encountered as she grew up?

Faith Matters: Faith mattered to Mother Theresa's family. Is faith a major part of your life and the life of your family?

Early Tragedy: With her father's sudden death, Mother Theresa's life was dramatically changed. Any type of change is difficult. How do you cope with change in your life? Can you think of any changes you've had to deal with?

Mother Teresa: The Hands and Heart of God

The Call

Mother Teresa would often speak about four different factors that strongly influenced her decision to become a religious sister:

Mum

After Nikola's death, Theresa's mother, Drana, became solely responsible for raising Theresa and her siblings. Drana had a great commitment to her faith. Mother Teresa often told how her mother taught her to share her food and belongings with the poor - even though she had very little herself! Following the war, there were many injured ex-servicemen who begged in the streets of Skopje. Drana and the children would often go out and feed them. Mother Teresa said of her mother 'She taught me everyday the true meaning of charity'.

The Parish

Through Drana, Theresa became very involved in her local parish. She sang in the choir and was involved in several drama productions organised by the Church. She went on Pilgrimage with the Parish every year to a shrine in Albania dedicated to Our Lady. She reflected that her involvement in the parish and her experiences of pilgrimage played a major role in her decision to become a religious sister.

Friends

Through her parish, Theresa became involved in a Catholic youth group. In this group, she made many friends. When she first thought about becoming a religious sister, she asked for her friends advice. They gave her great encouragement and support in following her vocation.

Heroes

The parish Theresa attended was operated by Priests who had worked as missionaries. They would often tell stories of their times in far away lands preaching the Gospel. Theresa had an enormous respect for them and became fascinated by the idea of working as a missionary in India. By the time she was 14 she decided that she wanted to be a missionary in India.

For Reflection/Discussion

Mum: Mother Theresa's mum taught her the 'true meaning of charity'. What does charity mean for you? How can you be more 'charitable' in the way you act everyday?

The Parish: Mother Theresa's parish was a really important part of her life. What's your parish? What does it mean to you?

Friends: Mother Theresa found in her friends great encouragement and support for her vocation. How would you react if one of your friends told you they wanted to serve God as a religious sister or priest? Would you support their choice?

Heroes: Mother Theresa had tremendous respect and admiration for the Priests in her parish. Do you know the Priest in your parish? Who are priests you respect and admire?

'A Call within the Call'

Beginnings

At the age of 18, Mother Theresa left home to join the Sisters of Loreto. To work in India, Mother Theresa had to learn English so she was sent to training school in Ireland. After leaving home, she never saw her family again. She arrived in India in 1929 and spent the next twenty years as religious Sister teaching in Catholic schools. The schools run by the sister's were, however, fee paying and tended to only attract pupils from more affluent backgrounds. While working in a school in Calcutta, Mother Theresa became increasingly aware of this problem. The school Mother Theresa worked in was located next to some of the worst slums in the city but none of the kids who lived there could afford to come to the school.

'A Call within the Call'

After a time of prayer and reflection in 1946, Mother Theresa decided to leave the Sisters of Loreto and dedicate her life to serving the poorest of the poor in the slums of Calcutta. She described this 'a call within the call'. She later said: "I knew God was directing me to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them. It was an order. To fail would have been to break the faith." One of her biographers, later wrote, "Though no one knew it at the time, Sister Teresa had just become Mother Teresa".

'Poorest of the Poor'

She began missionary work with the poor in 1948. Teresa adopted Indian citizenship, spent several months receiving basic medical training and ventured into the slums. She founded a school before she began tending to the poor and hungry. At the beginning of 1949 Teresa was joined in her effort by a group of young women, and she laid the foundation for a new religious community helping the "poorest among the poor". The group became known as the 'Missionaries of Charity'. Her efforts quickly caught the attention of Indian officials, including the prime minister.

A Ministry to the Dying

In 1952, Teresa opened her first hospice with help from Calcutta officials. She converted an abandoned Hindu temple into the Kalighat Home for the Dying, free for the poor, and renamed it Kalighat, the Home of the Pure Heart. Those brought to the home received medical attention and the opportunity to die with dignity in accordance with their faith: Muslims were read the Quran, Hindus received water from the Ganges, and Catholics received the Sacrament of the Sick. "A beautiful death", Mother Teresa said, "is for people who lived like animals to die like angels—loved and wanted."

For Reflection/Discussion

Beginnings: At the age of 18, Mother Theresa led home to follow her vocation. She never saw her family again. What do you think this says about Mother Theresa's dedication to her vocation? In what ways do priests and religious sisters you know show dedication?

A Call within a Call: After a time of prayer and reflection, Mother Theresa made a huge decision that would impact the rest of her life. Do you think its important to pray before making decisions? Do you ever pray before making decisions?

'Poorest of the Poor': Mother Theresa knew that she could accomplish very little by herself. Yet with God's help and the support of a community of religious sisters, she made a huge difference to tens of thousands of people. Can we learn any lessons from this? Why does God always call us to do His work with other people?

A Ministry to the Dying: Mother Theresa sought to provide comfort to the dying. Do you think this would have been a difficult task? Are there any hospices in your area? What do you know about their work?

Mother Teresa: Key Moments

'Immaculate Heart'

In 1955 Mother Teresa opened the Children's Home of the Immaculate Heart, as a haven for orphans and homeless youth

Awards

In 1962, Teresa was first recognised by the Indian government and received a special award. In 1969, she received the Nehru Award for International Understanding. She later received other Indian awards, including the Bharat Ratna (India's highest civilian award) in 1980. Teresa's official biography, by Navin Chawla, was published in 1992.

The Nobel Prize - Smart Small!

In 1979, Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize "for work undertaken in the struggle to overcome poverty and distress, which also constitutes a threat to peace". She refused the conventional ceremonial banquet for laureates, asking that its \$192,000 cost be given to the poor in India and saying that earthly rewards were important only if they helped her to help the world's needy. When Teresa received the prize she was asked, "What can we do to promote world peace?" She answered, "Go home and love your family."

The End

On 13 March 1997 Teresa resigned as head of the Missionaries of Charity, and she died on 5 September. At the time of her death, the Missionaries of Charity had over 4,000 sisters and an associated brotherhood of 300 members operating 610 missions in 123 countries.[70] These included hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's- and family-counselling programmes, orphanages and schools. The Missionaries of Charity were aided by co-workers numbering over one million by the 1990s.

The Path to Sainthood

Shortly after her death, the Church began the process of making Mother Theresa a Saint. In the Catholic Church, a person is only declared a Saint when two miracles can be said to be due to their intercession. In 2015, Pope Francis recognised that Mother Theresa's intercession had to the cure of an Indian woman from stomach cancer and the cure of a Brazilian man from a brain tumour. Francis canonised her at a ceremony on 4 September 2016 in St. Peter's Square in Vatican City. Tens of thousands of people witnessed the ceremony, including 15 government delegations and 1,500 homeless people from across Italy. It was televised live on the Vatican channel and streamed online; Skopje, Teresa's hometown, announced a week-long celebration of her canonisation! In India, a special mass was celebrated by the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta

For Reflection/Discussion

Immaculate Heart: Mother Theresa named her first orphanage 'Home of the Immaculate Heart'. 'Immaculate Heart' is one of the many titles Catholics give to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. What do you think it means? Why is the heart such an important symbol?

Receiving Awards: Throughout her life, Mother Theresa received many awards. They seemed, however, to mean very little to her. We might say that she had 'other priorities'. What are your priorities over the next year? How do you want to progress in school over the next year?

Start Small: Mother Theresa often said that we can feel overwhelmed by all the problems in world. We feel we can't do anything to end war or poverty or hunger. She said that we should never feel overwhelmed or powerless. We can always do something and that something is generally about changing the way we think, act and behave. If you want to end world hunger - begin by sharing your food! If you want to work for world peace - don't get into fights at home or in school. If you want to end poverty - give to the poor. For Mother, the solution to big problems is always found in taking small steps. Do you agree? If so, why?

The End: Mother Theresa left a tremendous legacy. She is remembered for her dedicated service of the poor. How would you like people to remember you?

The Path to Sainthood: Pope Francis made Mother Theresa a Saint in 2015. Both Pope Francis and Mother Theresa had a great devotion to St. Francis of Assisi, a Saint who lived in the 13th Century. What Saints inspire you? What Saint's name did you choose for Confirmation? What appealed to you about that Saint?

Mother Theresa - Key Ideas

Encounter Christ in Everyone

Mother Theresa was determined to see Christ in everyone she encountered, particularly the poor and those who live on the margins of society. She said this attitude always challenged her to be more giving and loving.

The Value of Human Life

Mother Theresa often complained that modern society devalued human life. She claimed it offered little protection to the poor, the weak and the vulnerable. She said that the most fundamental human right is the right to life.

Persevering in Prayer

After her death, Church authorities gained access to Mother Theresa's diaries. In the diaries, Theresa spoke extensively about her interior spiritual journey. To the surprise of many, Theresa expressed, at some points in the diary, grave doubts about God's existence and pain over her lack of faith. The Church, however, advised that this not unusual - faith, even in the lives of the Saints, is never free of doubt, indeed, its by going through periods of doubt that our faith grows and matures. Despite her doubts and times of spiritual dryness, Mother Theresa always persevered in saying her prayers.

Ego is the Enemy

Throughout her life Mother Theresa received many awards but she also received a lot of criticism, particularly for her views on topics such as abortion and euthanasia. When a book that was highly critical of her was published, many of her supporters urged her to take legal action to safeguard her reputation. Mother Theresa simply shrugged her shoulders and said - 'Well if my reputation has gone that is at least one less burden I'll have to carry!'. For Mother Theresa 'humility' was one of the most important values a person might have. In her opinion, 'Ego', 'upholding a reputation' and 'being respected' often stopped people from being a true disciple of Jesus.

For Reflection/Discussion

Value of Life: Would you agree with Mother Theresa's opinion that modern society has de-valued human life?

Encounter Christ in Everyone: Do you think this is easy or difficult? Can you 'see Christ' in other people? Could you see Christ in people whom you don't like?

Perseverance in Prayer: Mother Theresa went through periods in her life when she found it difficult to believe in God. Do you find this surprising? Have you encountered similar times in your life? Do you agree that faith grows and matures through questioning and doubting?

Ego is the Enemy: How do you understand 'humility'? Do you think its an important virtue for a Christian? What are the kind of problems encountered by people who have a lack of humility?



Extension Activities

#goprayer

Mother Theresa was a great supporter of Eucharistic Adoration. She said this practice truly changed lives. Eucharistic Adoration is a Catholic devotion in which the Blessed Sacrament is adored by the faithful. This practice may occur either when the Eucharist is exposed in an object called a Monstrance or reserved in the Tabernacle. Taking a passage from the Bible (for example the readings at Sunday Mass) go to your school oratory and spend five minutes before the Blessed Sacrament in silent prayer.

Mother Theresa also frequently said the Rosary. Could your class say a decade of the Rosary together? You could perhaps have a different prayer intention before each Hail Mary. If it's been a while since you said the Rosary it may be useful to remind yourself of how the prayers are recited.

#godiscover

Mother Theresa passed away in 1997. The religious community she founded, however, remains very active. The Missionaries of Charity are found in over 100 countries throughout the world including Scotland! Find out about their work in Scotland and beyond!

#goquote

Mother Theresa gave many speeches and talks throughout her life. As a result, she's probably one of the Church's most quoted Saints! Reflect on the following five quotes and think about the point Mother Theresa is trying to make:

"If you can't feed one hundred people, feed just one"

"Live simply so that others may simply live"

"It's not how we give but how much we put into giving that really matters"

"One of the greatest diseases is to be nobody to anybody"

#gomeet

Mother Theresa had a remarkable vocation. Why don't you invite a priest or religious sister to come into your class and speak about their vocation.