

MOTHER TERESA'S BLESSINGS

Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ

An Ahmedabad daily published an article on the canonization of Mother Teresa on August 31st. The writer-columnist held that the Christians promoted blind faith in declaring Mother Teresa as a Saint. Do the Christians practice blind faith? What is canonization? Why is Mother Teresa canonized?

Canonization is the official declaration in the Catholic Church by the Pope that a person is a saint. Canonization is the end of a long process. A saint is a person, who lived a holy life on earth and now can intercede on behalf of the devotees before God. Catholics do not worship saints. Worship belongs to God and God alone. But Catholics pray for the intercession of the saints, who, the Catholics believe, are with God.



Mother Teresa died on September 5, 1997. World leaders like Presidents, PMs and other eminent personalities from all walks of life gathered at Kolkata to pay their last respect as her body lay in state in the Mother House of the Missionaries of Charity (MC) before it was consigned to the earth on September 13, 1997. At that time there was clamoring from many quarters that Mother Teresa should immediately be declared a saint. The people through both the print and the audio-visual media were voicing their demand to the Catholic Church and the Pope to officially declare Mother Teresa as a saint without delay.

At that time I held the opinion that Mother Teresa should not immediately be declared a saint. And I also wrote a newspaper column article on Mother Teresa that she should not be declared a saint so soon. Even while Mother Teresa was alive the people were holding the belief that she was a living saint. I have no quarrel with it. But the official Church should not rush to declare her a saint. I then saw Mother Teresa from two perspectives: the Mother Teresa of the mass-media and the real Mother Teresa. I believed the real Mother Teresa is different from the Mother Teresa presented by the mass media.

The real Mother Teresa is close to the media-projected Mother Teresa and yet still very different. The mass media projected her as an unearthly person flying around the world receiving more than a hundred awards and honours. People supported her works of Charity for the poor, some with their personal services and many with an abundance monetary help. She was labeled as the Saint of the gutter, the Messiah of the abandoned and the neglected. This Mother Teresa was created by the media.

In real life Mother Teresa was a true disciple of Jesus who strove to live in her life the message of love and service as shown by Jesus. She often spoke unpleasant things like abortion is wrong; killing girl child is a grave crime. She was a saintly person living a very simple life and fighting the cause of the needy people with unusual dedication and commitment. She was a true follower of Jesus in the world of great inequalities and injustice.

I believe that as that time passes the Mother Teresa of the mass media will disappear; and the true Mother Teresa will emerge. The real Mother Teresa walked the path of love and service as lived by Jesus. Till that the Mother Teresa

emerges, the Church should not declare her officially as a saint. (See “Vishvavibhuti: Mother Teresa” by Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ, p.28-31).

In the Catholic Church there is a long process to declare a person as a saint after his/her death; and it should not be abandoned. In the process, the saint’s life is studied from all angles. What she did and what she said, etc are examined minutely. Everything written about her is documented. These documents are studied and evaluated by an expert committee of eminent persons including a person called the Devil’s Advocate. His job is to find objections to every possible.

Such an expert committee concluded beyond doubt that Mother Teresa in spite of her weaknesses and short comings as a human person lived the life of a true disciple of Jesus and her life is worth emulating. So the committee recommended to the Pope that the Mother Teresa can be raised to the honours of the altar in the universal Church. On Sunday, September 4, 2016 in a gathering of more than one lakh people in Rome Pope Francis officially declared Mother Teresa as the Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

Here I would like to quote a personal testimony which I read some years back in a national periodical. Now it has appeared again in social media like face book and WhatsApp. Please read this verbatim quote from the testimony of Kapil Dev. He was the captain of the Indian Cricket Team which won the World Cup in 1983.

“Like everyone else I, too, had heard of Mother Teresa but never met her till the very end of her life. I wonder why. Some things have no explanation. The Indian cricket team won the Prudential Cup in 1983. It was a great victory. I was married to Romi, a Pakistani, and leading a life of fulfillment. But the happiness of having a child eluded us. Even 14 years after marriage, we remained childless. We were written about in newspapers, and we appeared happy. But no one saw one aspect of our life that had created a vacuum.

“In 1995, we visited Kolkata for some work. It was then that a friend of mine took us to meet Mother Teresa. The friend introduced us to Mother. She appeared frail. Despite her health issues, the meeting made us very happy. Our friend informed Mother about the unhappiness in our life. She blessed us and then said, “Do not worry, God is kind.” I felt as if she would allow us to adopt a child from one of her orphanages. She spoke in such a peaceful manner and kept saying that God would look into the matter. I felt at peace.

“Months passed and I forgot about the visit. Suddenly, one day the same friend from Kolkata called. She said that Mother had inquired about Romi. I was happy because by then Romi was five months pregnant. We had not informed Mother about her pregnancy. I realized then that Mother must have inquired about Romi because she had knowledge of Romi’s pregnancy.

“A growing feeling inside told me that the pregnancy was occasioned by Mother’s blessings. It was a unique and spiritual experience. Our daughter was born a few months after that. I did not return to see Mother after her birth, but I always tell my friends that Mother knew all along of Romi’s pregnancy. Mother passed away a year later in 1997. I am thankful that I got an opportunity to meet Mother and be blessed by her. My daughter, Amiya, is a gift from Mother Teresa.”



