

40 Days of Prayer and Fasting

October 13th

Daily Devotional #13

We Are in the Season of Cleansing

For today's devotional, I am sharing an interview with Mother Teresa from 1988. Why share this in the "Season of Cleansing?" Simply because "cleansing" in the form of care and healing-through-loving-touch was central to Mother Teresa's ministry. She saw the poor, the sick, as beautiful... even as the very presence of Jesus. She chose to love them through tender, meaningful service. This kind of "healing love" is what we talked about yesterday in the sermon. GOD sees us as beautiful and valuable. And we need to find our rest and healing in that incredible and amazing love of GOD. We also need to make that love, that view of people – all people – our own. Mother Teresa did just that. Perhaps we can learn a little about living the empowering, freeing, healing love of GOD in this world by reading and considering this interview...

A Pencil in the Hand of God

*an interview by Edward W. Desmond with Mother Teresa from Time Magazine
(December 4, 1988, pg. 11)*

Q. What did you do this morning?

A. Pray.

Q. When did you start?

A. Half past four.

Q. And after prayer?

A. We try to pray through our work by doing it with Jesus, for Jesus, to Jesus. That helps us put our whole heart and soul into doing it. The dying, the crippled, the mentally ill, the unwanted, the unloved – they are Jesus in disguise.

Q. People know you as a sort of religious social worker. Do they understand the spiritual basis of your work?

A. I don't know. But I give them a chance to come and touch the poor. Everybody has to experience that. So many young people give up everything to do just

that. This is something so completely unbelievable in the world, no? And yet it is wonderful. Our volunteers go back different people.

Q. Does the fact that you are a woman make your message more understandable.

A. I never think like that.

Q. But don't you think the world responds better to a nun?

A. People are responding not because of me but because of what we are doing. I think that before people were speaking much about the poor, but now more and more people are speaking to the poor. That is the great difference.

Before, nobody bothered about the people in the street. We have picked up from the streets of Calcutta 54,000 people, and 23,000-something have died in that one room (at Kalighat).

Q. Humble as you are, it must be an extraordinary thing to be a vehicle of God's grace in the world.

A. But it is His work. I think God wants to show His greatness by using nothingness.

Q. You feel you have no special qualities?

A. I don't think so. I don't claim anything of the work. I am like a little pencil in His hand. That is all. He does the thinking. He does the writing. The pencil has nothing to do with it. The pencil has only to be allowed to be used. In human terms, the success of our work should not have happened, no?

Q. What is God's greatest gift to you?

A. The poor people.

Q. How are they a gift to you?

A. I have an opportunity to be 24 hours a day with Jesus.

Q. Here in Calcutta, have you created a real change?

A. I think so. People are aware of the presence, and so many, many, many Hindu people share with us. Now we never see a person lying there in the street dying. It has created a worldwide awareness of the poor.

Q. Beyond showing the poor to the world, have you conveyed any message about how to work with the poor?

A. you must make them feel loved and wanted. They are Jesus for me. I believe in that much more than doing big things for them.

Q. Friends of your say you are disappointed that your work has not brought more conversions in this great Hindu nation.

A. Missionaries don't think of that. They only want to proclaim the Word of God. Numbers have nothing to do with it. But the people are putting prayer into action by coming and serving the people. Everywhere people are helping. There may not be a big conversion like that, but we do not know what is happening in the soul.

Q. What do you think of Hinduism?

A. I love all religions, but I am in love with my own.

Q. And they should love Jesus too?

A. Naturally, if they want peace, if they want joy, let them find Jesus. If people become better Hindus, better Muslims, Better Buddhists by our acts of love, then there is something else growing there. They come closer and closer to God. When they come closer, they have to choose.

Q. You and Pope John Paul II have spoken out against life-styles in the West, against materialism and abortion. How alarmed are you?

A. I always say one thing. If a mother can kill her own child, then what is left of the West to be destroyed? It is difficult to explain, but it is just that.

Q. Is materialism in the West an equally serious problem?

A. I don't know. I have so many things to think about. Take our congregation: we have very little, so we have nothing to be preoccupied with. The more you have, the more you are occupied, the less you give. But the less you have, the more free you are. Poverty for us is a freedom. It is not a mortification, a penance. It is joyful freedom. This is the only fan in the whole house. It doesn't matter how hot it is, and it is for the guests. But we are perfectly happy.

Q. How do you find rich people then?

A. I find the rich much poorer. Sometimes they are more lonely inside. They are never satisfied. They always need something more. I don't say all of them are like that. Everybody is not the same. I find that poverty hard to remove. The hunger for love is much more difficult to remove than the hunger for bread.