

Reading
with
Leader's
Guide

VINTAGE Saints & Sinners

What images come to your mind when you hear the name Mother Teresa?
In what ways are you like Mother Teresa? How are you different?

Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

"Let us keep that joy of loving Jesus in our hearts and share that joy with all we come in touch with. That radiating joy is real, for we have no reason not to be happy because we have Christ with us. Christ in our hearts, Christ in the poor we meet, Christ in the smile we give and the smile we receive." --upon receiving the Noble Prize for Peace:

Have you experienced the joy of loving Jesus? What were the circumstances? Were there other people involved? Mother Teresa says, "We have no reason not to be happy because we have Christ with us." What is your response to that statement?

It is not enough for us to say: 'I love God,' but I also have to love my neighbor. **St. John says that you are a liar if you say you love God and you don't love your neighbor.** How can you love God whom you do not see, if you do not love your neighbor whom you see, whom you touch, with whom you live?

And so it is very important for us to realize that love, to be true, has to hurt. I must be willing to give whatever it takes not to harm other people and, in fact, to do good to them. This requires that I be willing to give until it hurts. Otherwise, there is no true love in me and I bring injustice, not peace, to those around me.

It hurt Jesus to love us. We have been created in His image for greater things, to love and to be loved. We must 'put on Christ' as Scripture tells us. And so, we have been created to love and to be loved, and God has become man to make it possible for us to love as He loved us. Jesus makes Himself the hungry one, the naked one, the homeless one, the unwanted one, and He says, 'You did it to Me.' On the last day He will say to those on His right, 'Whatever you did to the least of these, you did to Me,' and He will also say to those on His left, 'Whatever you neglected to do for the least of these you neglected to do it for Me.'

I was surprised in the West to see so many young boys and girls given to drugs. And I tried to find out why. Why is it like that, when those in the West have so many more things than those in the East? And the answer was: 'Because there is no one in the family to receive them.' Our children depend on us for everything – their health, their nutrition, their security, their coming to know and love God. For all of this, they look to us with trust, hope and expectation. But often father and mother are so busy they have no time for their children, or perhaps they are not even married or have given up on their marriage. So the children go to the streets and get involved in drugs or other things. We are talking of love of the child which is where love and peace must begin....

When I pick up a person from the street, hungry, I give him a plate of rice, a piece of bread. But a person who is shut out, who feels unwanted, unloved, terrified, the person who has been thrown out of society – that spiritual poverty is much harder to overcome. ---at the U.S. National Prayer Breakfast 1994

Mother Teresa says that "love, to be true, has to hurt." How might this be true? How might this be problematic? Talk about Mother Teresa's analysis of Western children; what thoughts come up for you? What is spiritual poverty? How is it different from physical poverty? Where have you seen spiritual poverty? How is it overcome?

We are going to read a series of brief quotes from Mother Teresa.

The first time through, I will read the words out loud—and then we will pause to consider them in silence.

(note: as you read, leave plenty of time between quotes; let them sink in!)

Do not think that love, in order to be genuine, has to be extraordinary.

We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But if that drop were not there, I think the ocean would be less by that missing drop.

Stay where you are. Find your own Calcutta. Find the sick, the suffering, and the lonely right where you are—in your own homes and in your own families, in your workplaces and in your schools.

It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home for this is where our love for each other must start.

We can do not great things. Only small things with great love.

If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.

I am not sure exactly what heaven will be like, but I know that when we die and it comes time for God to judge us, he will not ask, ‘How many good things have you done in your life?’ rather he will ask, ‘How much love did you put into what you did?’

If you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are.

Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest you.

We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love.

Joy is the token of a generous personality. Sometimes it is also a mantle that clothes a life of sacrifice and self-giving. A person who has this gift often reaches high summits. He or she is like sun in a community.

Quotes from www.rd.com/true-stories/inspiring/mother-teresa-quotes/

Now let’s take time to talk about the statements (above) that speak to vividly to you. Is there a quote that stands out or that really caught your attention? Read it out loud now. Talk about what it might mean to you, how you might agree or disagree, what questions emerge...Do you think of any particular people or situations when you have seen these insights play out?...How do these words add to your understanding of Mother Teresa’s approach to life or spirituality?

Mother Teresa tells us to find our own Calcutta. What could that mean to you in your life right now?

Where have you seen love that is genuine—without being extraordinary? Where can you demonstrate that kind of love?

When has it been hard to love someone close to you? How does Mother Teresa help you understand that experience?

If you asked Mother Teresa the question, “How can I have joy?” what do you think she would say?

The fruit of SILENCE is Prayer. The fruit of PRAYER is Faith.
the fruit of FAITH is Love. The fruit of LOVE is Service. The fruit of SERVICE is Peace

This series of statements sounds simple enough. Let's read it again and break it down phrase by phrase, talking about how each might work. (How does prayer produce silence? etc.)

The following passages were made public after Mother Teresa's death. They are private writing shared only with her personal spiritual director. As you listen, imagine Mother Teresa as she writes these words. Notice what you feel.

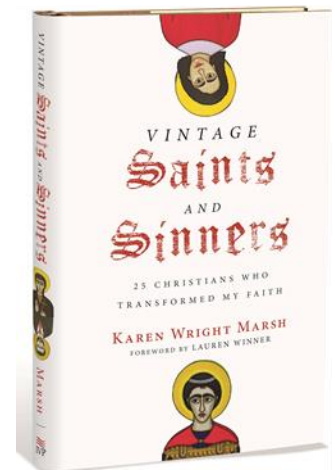
Darkness is such that I really do not see – neither with my mind nor with my reason. – The place of God in my soul is blank. – There is no God in me. – When the pain of longing is so great – I just long & long for God – and then it is that I feel – He does not want me – He is not there...

Do not think that my spiritual life is strewn with roses – that is the flower which I hardly ever find on my way. Quite the contrary, I have more often as my companion 'darkness'. And when the night becomes very thick – and it seems to me as if I must end up in hell – then I simply offer myself to Jesus. If He wants me to go there – I am ready – but only under the condition that it really makes him happy.

Lord, my God, who am I that You should forsake me? [...] I call, I cling, I want – and there is no One to answer – no One on Whom I cling – no, No One. – Alone. The darkness is so dark – and I am alone. – Unwanted, forsaken. – The loneliness of the heart that wants love is unbearable. – Where is my faith? – Even deep down, right in, there is nothing but emptiness & darkness. – My God – how painful is this unknown pain. – It pains without ceasing. – I have no faith. I dare not utter the words & thoughts that crowd in my heart – & make me suffer untold agony. So many unanswered questions live within me – I am afraid to uncover them – because of the blasphemy. –
If there be God, please forgive me. – Trust that all will end in Heaven with Jesus...

"If I ever become a saint -- I will surely be one of 'darkness.' I will continually be absent from Heaven — to light the light of those in darkness on earth."

What thoughts or questions are coming up for you right now? How do you reconcile this private Mother Teresa with the public Mother Teresa? How would you answer people who might accuse her of being a hypocrite/saying one thing while feeling another? How important are actions over feelings? Can you make the case that Mother Teresa is faithful to her calling—even in her pain? How does this insight into her experience add to your understanding of Mother Teresa? What might it shift how you see your own life?



Read about Mother Teresa in *Vintage Saints and Sinners* by Karen Wright Marsh (IVP, 2018)
More free small group readings and guides at www.karenwrightmarsh.com