

Mother Teresa's Spiritual Dark Night

In our newspapers and on TV networks we have heard doubts about whether Mother Teresa should still be canonized since she experienced the absence of God and God's "Silence" in her soul. They feel there is here a hint of hypocrisy since she 'pretended' to believe when she was actually in doubt. In our Catholic tradition we know that this is called, since the time of St John of the Cross, the "Dark night of the soul". She spent many years in a spiritual desert where she could not experience the presence of God. This dark night is reserved for those truly beloved of God whose faith God purifies like 'gold in a refiner's fire'.

Mother Teresa remained faithful throughout her years of darkness. What does this 'darkness' mean? We are human and we need signs, feelings and consolations in order to know that we are doing the right thing, we are loved. Some of us love God only because we feel so good when we pray or we have something to ask. We have nice feelings, good 'vibes' etc. For the saints who go through this dark night there is no such consolation. The darkness comes from a sense of the great distance of God. Even Christ had this experience on the cross when he cried out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

To mature in faith is to love God for himself and not for whatever he can give us. The love that God had for Mother Teresa did not change and the love that Mother Teresa had for God never waned. It was purified from any remnant of self. The revelation of her "dark night" from her personal letters to her spiritual director are, in fact, further proof of her sanctity.

James Martin SJ in his book "My life with the saints" quoted in The Tablet (The International Catholic Weekly) 1 Sept 2007, said "One might argue that Mother Teresa's letters, which she asked to be destroyed, will now help a new group of people. Instead of ministering to the sick and dying in Calcutta, she will minister to the doubtful and the doubting. Could this be one way that God might use her suffering to bring about greater good?"

Here is what Pope Benedict said about it while talking to youth at a gathering in Loreto in Italy on Saturday 1st Sept 2007. This is taken from an article from the news agency Zenit dated 4th Sept 2007. www.zenit.org

'God speaks even when he doesn't say anything, Benedict XVI told 500,000 young people in reference to the "dark night" of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta...

"A book was just published on the spiritual experiences of Mother Teresa, and what we have known is now more openly presented: With all her charity, her strength of faith, Mother Teresa suffered the silence of God," he said.

The Pope was referring to the book "Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light," written by Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, postulator for the cause of canonization of the founder of the Missionaries of Charity. The book, published 10 years after the nun's death, is a compilation of her letters and writings...