

## **DAY 16: 'The Gift God Gave September 10<sup>th</sup>'**

In the overview of Mother Teresa's life that we reflected on yesterday, recall that one crucial event changed everything: the September 10th "call within a call," the experience of Jesus' thirst for love and for souls. For many years, Mother Teresa did not speak about this experience to anyone except her spiritual director. Then, four years before her death, on March 25, 1993, after reading a Lenten message of Pope John Paul II on "I Thirst," she felt moved to reveal her secret in a letter to her Missionaries of Charity. Because this letter seems to reveal the heart of Mother Teresa better than anything else, I'll now cite it at length, and it will constitute our entire reflection for today:

After reading Holy Father's letter on "I Thirst," I was struck so much — I cannot tell you what I felt. His letter made me realize more than ever how beautiful is our vocation. ... [W]e are reminding [the] world of His thirst, something that was being forgotten. ... Holy Father's letter is a sign ... to go more into what is this great thirst of Jesus for each one. It is also a sign for Mother, that the time has come for me to speak openly of [the] gift God gave Sept. 10th — to explain [as] fully as I can what means for me the thirst of Jesus. ...

Jesus wants me to tell you again ... how much love He has for each one of you — beyond all you can imagine. I worry some of you still have not really met Jesus — one to one — you and Jesus alone. We may spend time in chapel — but have you seen with the eyes of your soul how He looks at you with love? Do you really know the living Jesus — not from books but from being with Him in your heart? Have you heard the loving words He speaks to you? Ask for the grace, He is longing to give it. Until you can hear Jesus in the silence of your own heart, you will not be able to hear Him saying "I thirst" in the hearts of the poor. Never give up this daily intimate contact with Jesus as the real living person — not just the idea. How can we last even one day without hearing Jesus say "I love you" — impossible. Our soul needs that as much as the body needs to breathe the air. If not, prayer is dead — meditation only thinking. Jesus wants you each to hear Him — speaking in the silence of your heart.

Be careful of all that can block that personal contact with the living Jesus. The Devil may try to use the hurts of life, and sometimes our own mistakes — to make you feel it is impossible that Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is a danger for all of us. And so sad, because it is completely opposite of what Jesus is really wanting, waiting to tell you. Not only that He loves you, but even more — He longs for you. He misses you when you don't come close. He thirsts for you. He loves you always, even when you don't feel worthy. When not accepted by others, even by yourself sometimes — He is the one who always accepts you. My children, you don't have to be different for Jesus to love you. Only believe — you are precious to Him. Bring all you are suffering to His feet — only open your heart to be loved by Him as you are. He will do the rest.

You all know in your mind that Jesus loves you — but in this letter Mother wants to touch your heart instead. ... That is why I ask you to read this letter before the Blessed Sacrament, the same place it was written, so Jesus Himself can speak to you each one.

... His words on the wall of every MC chapel ["I Thirst"], they are not from the past only, but alive here and now, spoken to you. Do you believe it? If so, you will hear, you will feel His presence. Let it become as intimate for each of you, just as for Mother — this is the greatest joy you could give me. Mother will try to help you understand — but Jesus Himself must be the one to say to you "I Thirst." Hear your own name. Not just once. Every day. If you listen with your heart, you will hear, you will understand. Why does Jesus say "I Thirst"? What does it mean? Something so hard to explain in words — if you remember anything from Mother's letter, remember this — "I thirst" is something much deeper than Jesus just saying "I love you." Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you — you can't begin to know who He wants to be for you. Or who He wants you to be for Him.

... [Our Lady] was the first person to hear Jesus' cry "I Thirst" with St. John, and I am sure Mary Magdalen. Because Our Lady was there on Calvary, she knows how real, how deep is His longing for you and for the poor. Do we know? Do we feel as she? Ask her to teach ... Her role is to bring you face to face, as John and Magdalen, with the love in the Heart of Jesus crucified. Before it was Our Lady pleading with Mother, now it is Mother in her name pleading with you — "listen to Jesus' thirst." Let it be for each ... a Word of Life.

How do you approach the thirst of Jesus? Only one secret — the closer you come to Jesus, the better you will know His thirst. "Repent and believe," Jesus tells us. What are we to repent? Our indifference, our hardness of heart. What are we to believe? Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor — He knows your weakness, He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you. He is not bound by time. Whenever we come close to Him — we become partners of Our Lady, St. John, Magdalen. Hear Him. Hear your own name. Make my joy and yours complete.

Today's Prayer:

*Come, Holy Spirit, living in Mary.*

*Help me listen to Jesus' thirst.*