



Remembering Mother Theresa's Beatification

On November 17, 1985, approximately 900 School Sisters of Notre Dame from around the world came together in Rome to honor the woman who founded their congregation and to hear the Holy Father proclaim her Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger.

Another 3,000 pilgrims who went to Rome for the beatification were students and friends of the sisters. The largest group arrived in special trains from Bavaria, Mother Theresa's home province. Following the ceremonies in Rome, the sisters from North America went to Germany, where they visited important places connected with Mother Theresa.

Sister Mary Margaret Johanning, SSND, who was General Superior of the School Sisters of Notre Dame at the time of the 1985 beatification, highlighted the importance of remembering in this excerpt from her January 1986 letter in a commemorative book about the beatification.

"Memory shared is community begun. When we share our memories of the beatification celebrations and of our personal and communal histories that have brought us to this point, unity and joy increase and deepen because we touch again the common history that is a part of each of us. Let us together consciously remember — in a word and deed — this woman whom God has called to be holy and whom the church has now publicly proclaimed 'blessed.' We are called to be and to do together what she has been and done; we do so in memory of her."

Five sisters responded to an invitation to share their memories on the 30th anniversary of Mother Theresa's beatification.



Mine was one of the lucky seven names drawn from the hat – the sisters sent from the former Milwaukee Province to the Beatification of our Theresa of Jesus. It was my first international SSND experience. I was doing vocation ministry at the time, so the thing that so impressed me was that people came to Rome from all over the world.

We were about 60 sisters in our contingent from the North American provinces, mixed with thousands of pilgrims from Europe, Latin America, Africa and Japan. Our Mother Theresa's life, the charism of unity and transformational education had touched the corners of the world. Although I don't think I knew the word "ethnocentrism" at that time – it began to crumble. I had lots more to learn about Theresa. From the people who came from Bavaria, I learned that Theresa was known as a "woman of love." With the gift of that wonderful experience, I continued to grow in understanding Theresa in her historical context and to see how her love has translated into so many different cultures.

– Lucy Nigh, SSND, is a volunteer with the Border Ministry in Douglas, Arizona and a member of SSND's North American Vocation/Affiliate Team.



The days of pilgrimage in Germany touched me deeply. Visiting the places important to Mother Theresa and to the beginning days of the congregation helped to make our foundress much more real to me. It became clearer to me how her strong prayer life supported her efforts to dedicate herself to the education of children and to put the congregation on a firm and holy foundation.

While in Rome for the beatification ceremony I was amazed at the many lay people who came with sisters from many provinces, and how much they knew about Mother Theresa and how they loved her and shared the joy of the sisters.

I remember how I felt as the large banner of Mother Theresa was unfurled to the sound of much cheering, clapping and joy. It was overwhelming!

– Maureen Murray, SSND, is 91 years old and "retired." She recently moved to Our Lady of Good Counsel campus in Mankato, Minnesota.

Remembering Mother Theresa's Beatification (continued)



Having lived through Hurricane Katrina and losing everything, I share a story of how Mother Theresa helped me.

In 2000, when Mother Georgianne Segner died, I was asked to assist with her evening prayer service and funeral, since I had worked closely with her at the beginning of the former Dallas Province. I was touched when Sister Elizabeth Newman asked me to help with the ceremonies. After the funeral, Sister Liz gave me the Blessed Theresa medal that Mother G received at the beatification. I treasured that with all my heart.

Then came the hurricane and all was lost! I searched and searched and no medal was found. Of all the things that I lost, that medal meant more to me than all the other stuff. As time went on, we had a meeting at Chatawa, Mississippi, where I shared my story of the lost medal with Sister Pat Flynn. The next morning she came up to me in the chapel and handed me a Notre Dame pin. She said, "This was Mother G's and I'm sure her fingerprints are still on it." I can't tell you how that also touched my heart. Eventually, I did get another Blessed Theresa pin from Rome. I treasure both these keepsakes and I do believe that Mother Theresa helped me out!

– Marie Jo Lazzeri, SSND, is the assistant principal at St. Dominic School in Metairie, Louisiana.



What precious memories flood my spirit as I remember Mother Theresa's beatification! Many of us went to St. Peter's, proudly wearing her picture attached to a blue ribbon. Whenever we spotted another sister wearing it, we would run to her with arms open for hugs. We could not speak the languages of many, but that was not a problem. We were sisters to one another...and so proud to be!

When Mother Theresa was called "Blessed," her huge banners inside and outside of St. Peter's were unfurled. We cheered and cried with pride. On boarding our buses in pouring rain after the liturgy, some of our sisters from Brazil, could not find their bus. We invited them to join us. One older sister said, "I'm the one!" [It was Sister Tecla Medeiros – one of the women cured by a Mother Theresa miracle.]

Our pilgrimage followed by train to Munich and more precious places of our founding history. Those of us who spent that time together, continue to celebrate when our paths cross today. That we are daughters of Theresa, sisters of one another and School Sisters of Notre Dame, will always be a source of our unity and pride.

– Mary Caroline Jakubowski, SSND, is the community leader at Our Lady of the Angels Convent in Greenfield, Wisconsin.



"The candle consumes itself as it serves others by its shining."

There have been times in my life when I have reached out to others when life has felt unbearable for them. Seeing people when they need someone just to be with them is a very humbling experience. It has been at these times that I felt like a candle consuming itself as it serves others by its shining. How much I can give of myself at any one time is not my choosing. It is God's decision and he is the one that provides what I need and for how long.

Blessed Theresa relied on God for the times she needed to provide for others. Being a daughter of Blessed Theresa means reaching out to others in their educational needs.

At the time of the beatification, I was in Jackson, Mississippi, where we celebrated with a special German meal which was provided by a lady in our parish.

– Gayle Hurban, SSND, is a Montessori teacher at Immaculate Conception School, Rio Grande City, Texas.