

Saint Cecilia

SAINT CECILIA, VIRGIN AND MARTYR
FEAST DAY 22ND NOVEMBER

PATRON SAINT OF MUSIC AND MUSICIANS
A GIRL MARTYR'S MYSTERIOUS DEATH SEIZES THE
IMAGINATION

The names of the martyrs listed in the Roman Canon include today's saint, Cecilia. From one perspective, that is all we need to know. She lived. She was martyred. She was remembered. Cecilia's name was included in the only Eucharistic Prayer then said at Sunday Mass, presumably because she stood out from the many other martyrs for a particular reason. That reason has been lost. Perhaps a stirring homily, committed to writing, preserved moving details of Cecilia's life and tragic death. But maybe that homily was converted to cinders and slowly floated away when the enormous library of the Monastery of Cluny burned during the French religious conflicts of the 1500s. Perhaps there was a biographically detailed marble epitaph over Cecilia's grave in the catacombs.

Cecilia was likely martyred by cuts to her neck after attempts to steam her to death were unsuccessful. She was then buried in a loculus near the papal crypt in the Catacombs of Saint Callixtus. After being the object of devotion in the catacombs for centuries, Cecilia's remains were transferred by the Pope in the early 800s to her own Basilica in the Trastevere neighborhood of Rome. We don't know the full story of our saint, but we are certain of her end—a generous act of self gift to Christ.

SAINT CECILIA, YOU DIED AN EARLY DEATH, PRESERVING YOUR VIRGINITY
AND CHOOSING CHRIST OVER ALL OTHERS. BE AN EXAMPLE TO ALL
YOUTH OF THE TRUE GOAL OF THEIR LIVES. HELP THEM TO SEEK GOD
FIRST AND THE GOOD AND HOLY PLEASURES OF LIFE ONLY AFTER HIM.



Saint Luke

ST. LUKE, EVANGELIST & GOSPEL WRITER
FEAST DAY – 18TH OCTOBER

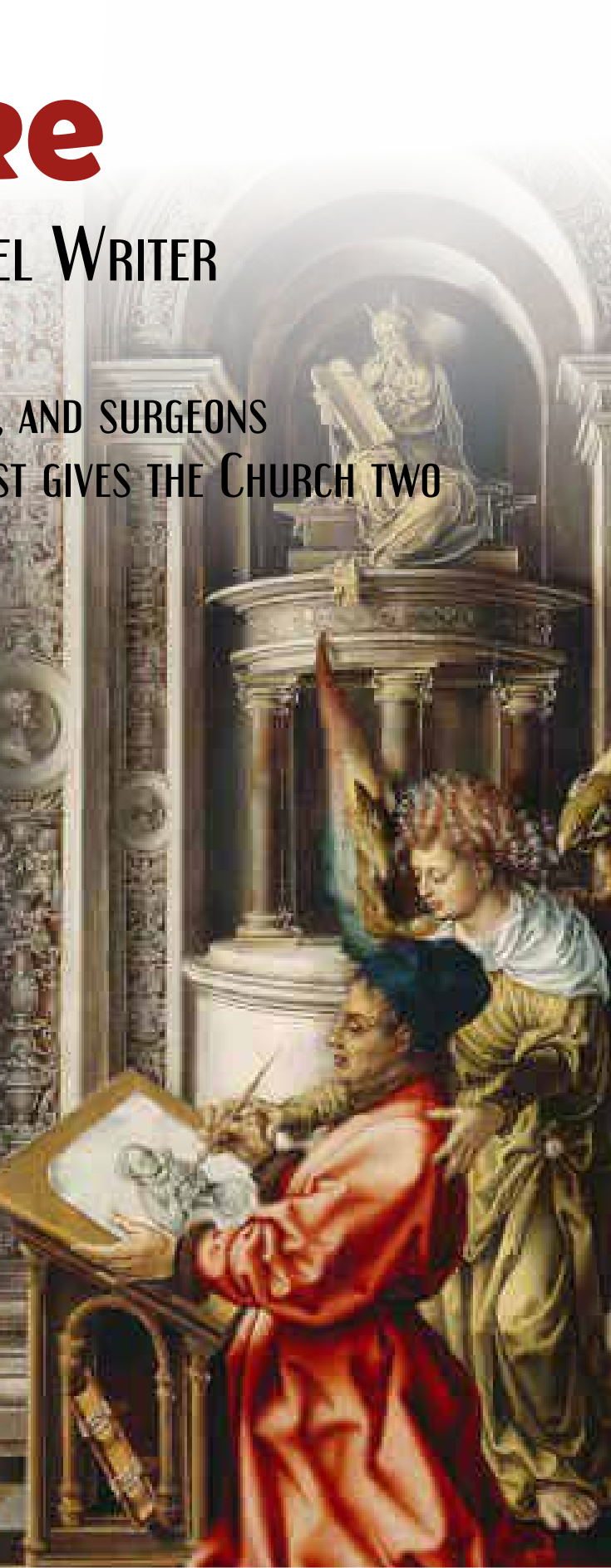
PATRON SAINT OF ARTISTS, PHYSICIANS, AND SURGEONS

A FIRST-GENERATION DISCIPLE OF CHRIST GIVES THE CHURCH TWO
FOUNDATIONAL WORKS

Saint Luke was one of the four Evangelists but not one of the Twelve Apostles. Like Saint Mark, Luke was not among that select group who walked step by step alongside Jesus as he journeyed through Palestine. Luke was more likely a disciple of Saint Paul, who mentions a Luke who accompanies him on his missionary journeys. Little is known with certainty of Luke's life. What is known is that he wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles—over a quarter of the New Testament. The two volumes of Luke and Acts are foundational works for knowing Jesus Christ and the early Church.

Saint Luke likely wrote for a non-Jewish crowd. He translates into the Greek language words that the other Gospels leave in their original language, a hint that Luke's readers were non-Jews who could not read Hebrew and Aramaic. Luke alone tells the story of Lazarus and the rich man who repents of having ignored him. To Luke alone do we owe our knowledge of the Incarnation. It is as if he is just behind the young Mary in the room when the Archangel Gabriel announces that she will be the Mother of God. Only Luke writes down the Virgin's Magnificat and gives us the scriptural basis for the "Hail Mary." Yet in all of this, Luke himself does not appear. He must have been humble, because he recedes into the crowd while the whole cast of the Gospel climbs on stage.

SAINT LUKE, YOUR WORDS PRESERVING THE LIFE OF CHRIST MAKE HIM KNOWABLE
AND LOVABLE TO THE WORLD TODAY. THROUGH YOUR INTERCESSION IN HEAVEN, WE ASK
THAT THE RICHES OF YOUR GOSPEL, ESPECIALLY YOUR WORDS ABOUT THE BLESSED
MOTHER, MAY INSPIRE US TO BE MORE FAITHFUL DISCIPLES.



Saint John Bosco

SAINT JOHN BOSCO, PRIEST : FEAST DAY 31ST JANUARY

PATRON SAINT OF EDITORS, PUBLISHERS, SCHOOLCHILDREN AND JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

HIS PERSON RADIATED THE WARM LOVE OF GOD, DRAWING EVERYONE TOWARDS HIM

Some saints attract the faithful by the raw power of their minds and the sheer force of their arguments. Think of St. Thomas Aquinas or St. Augustine. Other saints write so eloquently, with such grace and sweetness, that their words draw people to God like bees to honey. Think of Blessed John Henry Newman or St. Francis de Sales. Still other saints say and write almost nothing, but lead lives of such generous and sacrificial witness that their holiness is obvious. Think of St. Francis of Assisi or St. Teresa of Calcutta. Today's saint was not a first class thinker, eloquent writer, bloody martyr, or path breaking Church reformer. But he had abundant gifts of equal value.

St. John Bosco was, to put it in the simplest terms, a winner. His heart was like a furnace radiating immense warmth, fraternal concern, and affectionate love of God to every person in the room. His personality seemed to operate like a powerful magnet that pulled everyone closer and closer in toward his overflowing, priestly, and fatherly love. His country boy simplicity, street smarts, genuine concern for the poor, and love of God, Mary and the Church made him irresistible. Don Bosco ('Don' being a title of honor for priests, teachers, etc...) had charm. What he asked for, he received. From everyone.

Morning, noon, and night. Weekday or weekend. Rain or shine. He was always there. Unhurried.

Available. Ready to talk. His life was one big generous act from beginning to end.

St. John grew up dirt poor in the country working as a shepherd. His father died when he was an infant. After studies and priestly ordination we went to the big city, Turin, and saw first hand how the urban poor lived. It changed his life. He began a ministry to poor boys which was not particularly innovative. He said Mass, heard confessions, taught the gospel, went on walks, cooked meals, and taught practical skills like book binding.

Don Bosco did not know what rest was and wore himself out by being all things to all men.

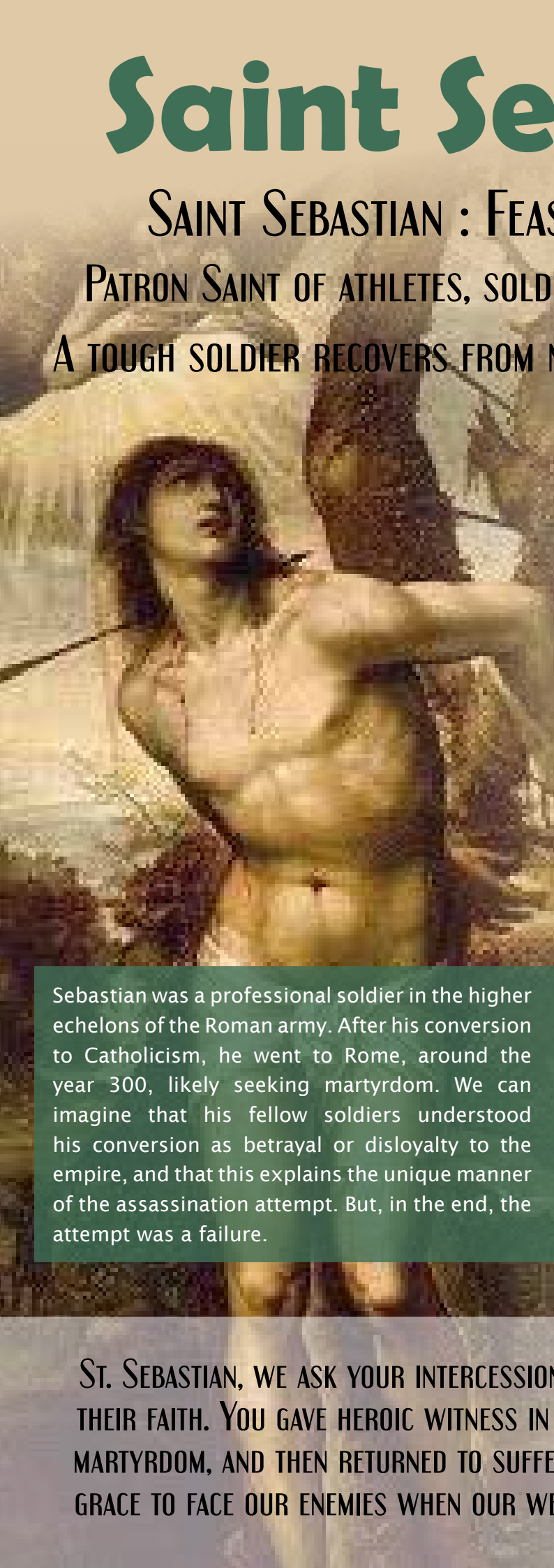
ST. JOHN BOSCO, YOU DEDICATED YOUR LIFE TO THE EDUCATION AND CARE OF POOR YOUTH. AID US IN REACHING OUT TO THOSE WHO NEED OUR ASSISTANCE TODAY, NOT TOMORROW, AND HERE, NOT SOMEWHERE ELSE. THROUGH YOUR INTERCESSION MAY WE CARRY OUT A FRACTION OF THE GOOD THAT YOU ACHIEVED IN YOUR LIFE.

Saint Sebastian

SAINT SEBASTIAN : FEAST DAY 20TH JANUARY

PATRON SAINT OF ATHLETES, SOLDIERS, AND VICTIMS OF THE PLAGUE

A TOUGH SOLDIER RECOVERS FROM NEAR MARTYRDOM, ONLY TO BE
KILLED LATER FOR CHRIST



Saint Sebastian, the tough soldier, survived the arrows, was nursed back to health by a woman known to history as St. Irene, and later earned the martyr's crown by being clubbed to death. By the year 300 A.D., the Roman emperors' attempts to eradicate Christianity were too little too late. Nobles, senators, slaves, cobblers, carpenters, generals, men, women, foreigners, and natives had all converted. Men and women of every class and occupation. By 300 A.D., Christians comprised a significant portion of people at every level of society, up and down and around every Roman road. When high-placed soldiers such as St. Sebastian were willing to die for Christ, it was a sign there was no going back to Rome's pagan roots. All that was needed was a Christian emperor to solidify the change. That would come soon enough in the person of Constantine. Saint Sebastian's heroic death was a harbinger of a world about to change.

Sebastian was a professional soldier in the higher echelons of the Roman army. After his conversion to Catholicism, he went to Rome, around the year 300, likely seeking martyrdom. We can imagine that his fellow soldiers understood his conversion as betrayal or disloyalty to the empire, and that this explains the unique manner of the assassination attempt. But, in the end, the attempt was a failure.

St. Sebastian's martyrdom was so widely known that he was honored through the construction of a Church on the Appian Way just outside of Rome. Saint Sebastian's church is still visited by pilgrims today, along with the Christian catacombs beneath it. His legacy carries on!

ST. SEBASTIAN, WE ASK YOUR INTERCESSION TO FORTIFY ALL THOSE WHO ARE WEAK IN THEIR FAITH. YOU GAVE HEROIC WITNESS IN LEAVING A HIGH STATION TO ACCEPT A NEAR MARTYRDOM, AND THEN RETURNED TO SUFFER AND DIE ONCE AND FOR ALL. GIVE US THE GRACE TO FACE OUR ENEMIES WHEN OUR WEAK NATURE WANTS TO RUN THE OTHER WAY.

Saint Bernadette

OUR LADY OF LOURDES : FEAST DAY 16TH APRIL

In 1858, 14-year-old Bernadette Soubirous told her friends that a beautiful young lady was appearing to her in a rock formation on the outskirts of her small town of Lourdes. A friend asked Bernadette to do her a favor—to take her rosary along the next time she knelt before the beautiful young lady. Bernadette obliged. Later, Bernadette told her friend how the lady had reacted: the lady had noticed that Bernadette was not holding her own rosary, said that she was not there to make relics, and told Bernadette to return next time with her own rosary, not someone else's.

Bernadette's unvarnished recounting of the lady's reaction was blunt, but reasonable and, more importantly, authentic. Over and over again, whenever little, uneducated Bernadette was asked about the beautiful young lady she saw in the grotto, her answers never changed and also included startling but authentic details. Bernadette reported that when she and the lady prayed the rosary together, the lady only said the Our Father and the Glory Be. Mary didn't pray the Hail Mary. How could she pray to herself? Would she say "Hail Me?" Bernadette reported that the lady spoke to her in the Lourdes' dialect which Bernadette herself grew up with, slightly different from standard French.

MARY APPEARS WHEN AND WHERE SHE IS NEEDED AND SPEAKS OUR LANGUAGE

Bernadette stated that a golden rose rested on each of the lady's feet. Of course! And when Bernadette respectfully asked the lady her name, she didn't understand the big words in the response: "I am the Immaculate Conception."

In addition to the miraculous cures associated with the healing waters of Lourdes, the very character of Bernadette, as well as the tone and content of her accounts, removed all doubt that the beautiful young lady she saw was indeed the Virgin Mary. Our Lady of Lourdes is perhaps the most powerful and prolific physical healer in the history of the Church after Christ himself. Through her intercession, and through the waters that flow in her magnificent shrine, many thousands have been cured of their infirmities, as medical records prove beyond any doubt. Holy Mary has appeared at various times and in various places, but mostly to the simple and mostly in the country.



OUR LADY OF LOURDES, GIVE PHYSICAL HEALING TO ALL WHO INVOKE YOUR INTERCESSION. THE SAVING WATERS AT YOUR SHRINE HAVE HEALED THOUSANDS OF PILGRIMS. MAY ALL THE PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS DIRECTED TO YOU BE IMMERSSED IN THE WATERS OF YOUR HOLY BATHS, SO THAT WHAT IS ASKED MAY BE GRANTED THROUGH YOUR INTERCESSION AND ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL.

Saint Mother Teresa

SAINT MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA : FEAST DAY 5TH SEPTEMBER

PATRON SAINT OF CALCUTTA, INDIA

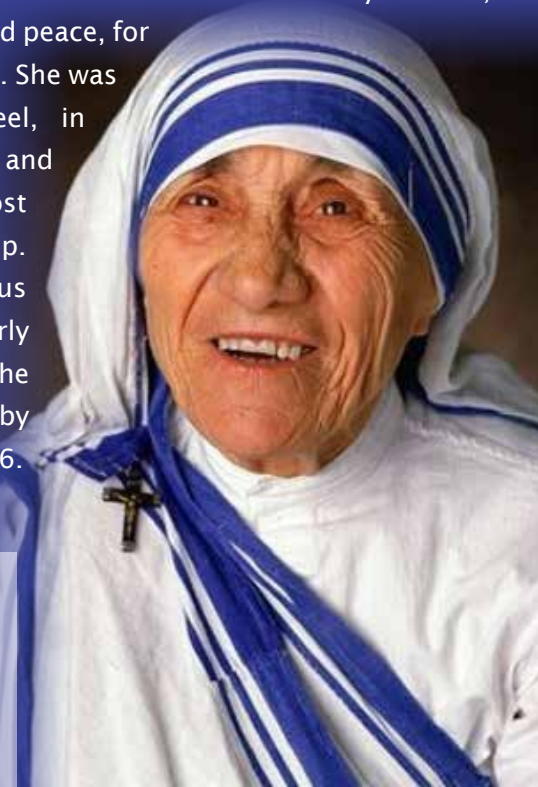
SHE EQUALS IN HOLINESS AND GENEROSITY
THE GREAT 'TERESAS' SHE CHOSE TO EMULATE

Anjezë (Agnes) Gonxha Bojaxhiu was a tiny Albanian woman whose strong-as-iron faith served as a fulcrum to budge the world closer to God. She was born into a devout family in Skopje, in present day Macedonia. Her parent's marriage had been arranged, according to custom, and was happy and fruitful. The family was prosperous and regularly helped the poor and abandoned. There was seldom not a destitute person sharing the family table at lunchtime. Little Agnes benefited from the then recent reforms of Pope Saint Pius X lowering the age of First Holy Communion and thus received the Eucharist for the first time at the very young age of five and a half. After her father died young, Agnes' firm, loving, and religious mother had the greatest influence on her. The vibrant life of her local parish also impacted her faith. The priests there talked about the missionary work of the Church in far away lands, and Agnes internalized every word they spoke.

Feeling the call to serve Christ and the Church, Agnes decided to become a nun with the Loretto Sisters who were based in Dublin, Ireland. So when she was eighteen, a large procession of family, classmates, and parishioners accompanied her to Skopje's train station. After tender farewells, everyone wept and waved handkerchiefs as the train slowly pulled out of the station, and Agnes leaned out the window and wept and waved her handkerchief back at them until the train disappeared around a bend. Agnes would never see her beloved mother again. In the convent, Agnes chose the name Thérèse in honor of the Saint of Lisieux. But another nun had already chosen that name, so Agnes became Teresa, spelling the name in the Spanish style. After learning the rule of her Order and basic English, she sailed on the long voyage to India, arriving in Calcutta in January 1929. India would be her home for the rest of her life.

Sister Teresa taught at a girls' primary school in Calcutta, taking final vows in 1937, and was known warmly as Mother Teresa. But then something happened to alter her life's course, something entirely unexpected. In 1946, while riding on a train to her annual retreat, Mother Teresa received her "call within a call." Jesus told her, by mysterious means, that He desired her to serve Him in the poorest of the poor, who were so ignorant of Him and of His love. She must start a religious order.

Two years of organizing passed until, in August 1948, Mother Teresa donned her famous white and blue sari for the first time. She left the comfort and predictability of the Loretto convent school for a hard life on the street among the slums of the poorest, hungriest, and dirtiest people in Calcutta. Her order, the Missionaries of Charity, was formally established in 1950 and drew its first sisters from among Mother Teresa's former students. The order soon exploded with growth and expanded internationally. Missionaries of Charity sisters worked with AIDS patients, the dying, the starving, in soup kitchens, orphanages, and directly with the poor lying in filthy gutters. By the time of her death in 1997, the Missionaries of Charity had over four thousand sisters serving in about one hundred and twenty countries. Mother Teresa became internationally famous, an icon of charity and peace, for all the right reasons. She was constructed of steel, in perpetual motion, and operated on almost no food or sleep. All of her religious sisters are similarly indestructible. She was canonized by Pope Francis in 2016.



SAINT MOTHER TERESA, YOUR GENEROSITY TO THE POOR AND DESTITUTE
INSPIRED MILLIONS. YOUR LIFE OF DEDICATION TO PRAYER, TO THE CHURCH,
AND TO THE DIGNITY OF ALL LIFE INSPIRES US STILL. MAY WE EMULATE
YOUR LIFE OF TOTAL SERVICE AND TOTAL LOVE BY LOVING GOD FIRST.