

# Saint Teresa of Kolkata



**A**gnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu was born in Skopje (now Republic of Macedonia) on August 26, 1910. She died in Kolkata on September 5, 1997 and was canonized by Pope Francis on Sunday, September 4, 2016, in Rome. Mother Teresa has had a particular relationship with the Congregation. Bill Petrie, the first ss.cc. who came to mission to India, relates :

*“My first visit to India was on July 9, 1973 (**Queen of Peace**). I met Mother Teresa the following morning at the Calcutta Mother House. Mother Teresa had no recollection of the three previous letters written to advise her of my arrival. I was an unexpected, but most welcome guest. Introducing myself as a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus & Mary, the religious community of Fr. Damien of Molokai, brought a smile and complete delight in our first encounter. Mother had a certain excitement, as she was only too happy to make available to our community collaboration with the Missionaries of Charity and their leprosy work. Although there was a certain process we would have to follow, as this was only the initial visit, Mother Teresa believed at that time it was a partnership already settled. There was no priest at the Shanti Negar Leprosy Center, which had recently opened and after a Calcutta orientation, living with the MC Brothers, a visit was made to Shanti Negar.*

*Mother Teresa had recently started a daily hour of Adoration for the Missionaries of Charity Sisters. She was very interested in how our Congregation had Adoration, and curious as to why perpetual adoration was not being continued. During my stay at the Missionaries of Charity Brothers novitiate, Mother Teresa came to give a talk about Adoration. She spoke of the many blessings that had come to the community since the prayer was started and encouraged the MC Brothers to incorporate the same prayer in their daily schedule. She then asked me to speak about Adoration from our Congregation’s experience.”*

In 1984, Fr. Pat Bradley, the Superior General, visited India and informed that a formation program was to be implemented for Africa, Indonesia and India. Mother Teresa recommended that our SS.CC. formation program should not begin until permission from the Indian government was given. On April 15, (**Damien’s Death Anniversary**), we departed for Delhi and met Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in his residence. As Prime Minister Gandhi entered the room with a big smile on his face, he said, “Mother Teresa, whatever you have come to ask,

the answer is yes!" Mother Teresa said, "I have a present for you." He asked, "What is it?" and Mother Teresa pointed to me and said, "Here he is!" When he inquired what it meant, Mother explained about Fr. Damien of Molokai and the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts and the willingness of our community to be involved with leprosy work in India. The Prime Minister was a little hesitant, as, since Indian Independence, they had stopped all foreign missionaries from coming into the country. Mother Teresa stated, "**India needs Fr. Damien's Congregation.**" With that, the Prime Minister initialed the application that was given to him and passed it on to a personal assistant. The application was a request to allow SS.CC. personnel to come to India to assist with the leprosy work and formation of Indian students.

Mother Teresa always manifested a great devotion to Fr, Damian. She wanted him as the patron saint of lepers and model for all the work with them. So she personally asked for it to Pope John Paul II. When Fr. Damien was beatified in 1995 in Brussels, Mother Teresa participated in this joyous celebration.

*"By blood, I am Albanian.*

*By citizenship, an Indian.*

*Regarding faith, I am a Catholic nun.*

*As to my calling, I belong to the world.*

*In regards to my heart,*

*I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus "*

