

23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday (C)

4<sup>th</sup> September 2016

'Something Beautiful for God'

Wis 9: *as for your intention, who could have learnt it, had you not ... sent your Holy Spirit?* Philemon: *I am in the chains the Good News has brought me.*  
Lk 14:25–33: the unfinished tower ... the king marching to war ...

Today, Jesus's words to us are certainly very strong, *Anyone who does not carry his cross after Me cannot be My disciple ... None of you can be My disciple unless he give up all his possessions.* But what better way to see the relevance of today's Gospel passage, "give up all your possessions," than to dwell on the life of Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Today she is canonized in Rome, at St Peter's, by Pope Francis — that is, named as a saint in heaven. We celebrate the life of someone who has lived just this teaching of Jesus to the letter — lived out what Jesus tells us, to "give up our possessions and be His disciple" — and this is such an immense encouragement. In our day, then, (for she died only 19yrs ago), in this diminutive little Albanian woman from what today we call Macedonia, Jesus is alive and fulfilling His ideals. Mother Teresa entered religious life at 18 (the sisters of Loreto) and after a year's training in Ireland she went off and taught with the sisters in

India ... but after 18 more years she found that she was being urged by God to do more still ... to leave the relative comfort of her convent and school-teaching, and literally to go out on to the streets, with nothing, to find the poor and embrace them ... to serve the very ones whom no-one else would serve. Her new and more radical call happened on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 1946 as she travelled on a train from Calcutta to Darjeeling: on that day, in a way she would never explain, Jesus's thirst for love and for souls took hold of her heart and the desire to satiate His thirst became the driving force of her life. Two years later, with permission of her Order, she left the Loreto convent, to undertake some basic medical training and then to set up on her own in poverty, exchanging her habit for the distinctive white-and-blue sari, and to live and work amongst the poorest of the poor, as she then did for the next 50yrs. Mother Teresa said: *You and I, we are the Church, aren't we?*

*We have to share with our people.*

*Suffering today is because people are hoarding, not giving, not sharing.*

*Jesus made it very clear. “Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to Me.”*

*Give a glass of water — you give it to Me.*

*Receive a little child — you receive Me. Clear.*

To read up on the words and the life of Mother Teresa is a very moving thing, because what she did was truly “something beautiful for God” — something that I know I don’t do when she has shown us that we can do. For 25+ years she simply did this with her growing band of companions, tending the poor and dying, the ones whom even the hospitals would not care for. Only after all those years did she start to become known to the world, in about 1970, when she was already 60. But that ultimate popularity has helped her to speak up for the poor, and for the teachings of Christ which urge us to be more poor ourselves, and to be of service; to take on the whole package of Christ: faithful love, a care for the weakest including the unborn, a resistance to riches, an attitude of service.

A mini-biography of Mother Teresa which the Vatican published says this, beginning with her own

description of herself:

*“By blood, I am Albanian. By citizenship, an Indian. By faith, I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the Heart of Jesus.”* Small of stature, rocklike in faith, Mother Teresa of Calcutta was entrusted with the mission of proclaiming God’s thirsting love for humanity, especially for the poorest of the poor. *“God still loves the world and He sends you and me to be His love and His compassion to the poor.”* She was a soul filled with the light of Christ, on fire with love for Him and burning with one desire: *“to quench His thirst for love and for souls.”*

Even if we balk at the words of Our Lord, when He speaks of giving up our possessions and following Him completely, we see in saints like Mother Teresa that this is not an impossible calling. Let’s ask Saint Teresa of Calcutta that she pray for us not to be *possessed* by our possessions, and instead to be able to give and give and give, and never to cease giving, out of love for God and His human creation.

*The fruit of Silence is prayer. The fruit of Prayer is faith.  
The fruit of Faith is love. The fruit of Love is service.  
The fruit of Service is peace. ~ Saint Teresa of Calcutta*