

Pray More Lenten Retreat - Transcript

Radical Love – St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

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Hi everyone. Thanks so much for joining me. My name is Mary Lenaburg, and we're going to talk about radical love – lessons from St. Teresa of Calcutta. But first, we're going to begin with prayer. So we're going to ask our Lady into our time together, and we're going to pray the Hail Mary. So join me please.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So today we're going to talk about St. Teresa of Calcutta, also known as Mother Teresa. She was born in 1910 in Albania, and Mother Teresa taught in India. She became a nun in her early life, and she taught in India for 17 years before she experienced a call within a call in 1946. And this call within a call was to devote herself to caring for the sick and the poor.

Her order, the Missionaries of Charity, established a hospice, centers for the blind, aged, and disabled, and also a leper colony. Pretty amazing stuff! In 1979, she received the Nobel Peace Prize for her humanitarian work. She died in September of 1997, and was beatified in October of 2003. In 2015, in December of 2015, Pope Francis recognized a second miracle attributed to Mother Teresa, clearing the way for her to be canonized as St. Teresa of Calcutta on September 4th, 2016. So just last fall. She's a brand new saint!

This woman was a warrior for God. I mean, a warrior for God. And she was a petite little thing. I think she was like 4' 11", 5 feet maybe. Just... just a warrior. I first came to know her I guess in the 1990s, when I would see her with now Pope St. John Paul The Great, or John Paul II. She was a champion for the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable among us.

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There was nothing she wouldn't do, including picking up a homeless man from the gutter, bathing and caring for him, and providing a clean place to rest his head as he took his last breath. She opened orphanages for the children abandoned in the streets of Calcutta, she believed every person had a God-given purpose, and it was our job to lift those in need out of poverty. She believed in a radical love, an extreme love, giving her very life in service and in love.

And I wanted to share with you a few of my favorite quotes from her, and sort of break them down maybe a little bit into some steps that can be taken today to help us love those whom God has placed in our paths.

One of her famous quotes is "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family." It's a beautiful sentiment. Go home and love your family. It doesn't sound so hard to do. But what if our families are broken? What if there is discord in the family? How are we, pardon me, supposed to love people we don't even like? Well, pardon me, we do it in small steps my friends.

As Mother Teresa would say, "I'm not meant to do great things, only small things with great love." So you love in little ways that will eventually break down that strife. Maybe it's doing the dishes for your husband or your wife. Helping to clean. Going to do the pickup from basketball when all you want to do is be in your pajamas, babysit a sibling, clean a bathroom.

I mean, you know, or for my husband, for him, bringing flowers. He thinks flowers, fresh flowers, are a waste of time and resources because they just die, but I love fresh-cut flowers. They're just... I love them. God placed that as part of my DNA, so when he brings me flowers I know the sacrifice that that requires from him to do that. And it is an act of love. To love is to sacrifice. If we do these small things with great love and keep serving one another, then I guarantee you'll begin to see a difference in your relationships.

Mother Teresa also said "It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. It is easier to give a cup of rice to relieve hunger than to relieve the loneliness and pain of someone unloved in our own home. Bring love into your home, for this is where our love for each other must start. It all begins at home." For me, this took on deep significance about 10 years ago. I was

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one of those super volunteers. You know the ones. The ones that are serving at church all of the time, or the PTA, or at the Rotary Club or whatever. Most of my work was done at church, or at my daughter's school, and Jerry would come home from work and I would leave to go do my volunteering.

And I realized over time there was strife in my house, because I was never there at the same time my spouse was. I'm fighting a little cold, so I apologize. I realized my first vocation, my vocation, is as wife and mother. So my first job was to make sure my family was cared for. So I came home and, you know, I haven't won volunteer of the year in over a decade. I still volunteer, you know, I still go. I'm very... I'm much more purposeful about those choices now. But my home is one of peace most of the time, and I aim to keep it that way by doing small things with great love.

If we love our families, we can change the world. Through our example of sacrificial love, our kids, our siblings, our neighbors will know they are loved. They will know they have worth and value; that someone cares. That's what Mother Teresa did. She valued life and valued the uniqueness of each human person. She loved without fear or expectation. She didn't care what the person did for a living, how educated they were, where they lived, what they wore. She didn't give a flip about that.

She saw each person as a unique individual created in the image and likeness of God, so much so that one of her quotes is "Each person is Jesus in disguise." Wow! Can you imagine the change that would occur in the world if each of us treated each other that way? If each of us saw Jesus in disguise in every single person walking this earth? It gives me chills to think about it.

And we don't have to wait to do it. We don't have to wait for someone to tell us to love in this manner. Again, Mother Teresa said, "Do not wait for leaders. Do it alone, person-to-person." We don't need to wait to be asked or instructed to go out and love you guys, we just don't. Because we're all children of God, loving others is part of our DNA.

Another one admonishment or instruction that she would give would be to smile at people. To get your head out of your phone, take the ear buds out, look around and

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engage in the world about you. Mother Teresa said, “Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love. A gift to that person. A beautiful thing.” Who knew a smile was an action of love? St. Teresa of Calcutta did. How wonderful is that? Smile more. Complain less. Encourage more. Criticize less.

St. Teresa of Calcutta lived out of the love of Christ in every single act of service she was a part of. She didn’t do it for any other reason other than her love for Jesus. Her love and commitment to her beloved Jesus was so strong, she knew she could not live her life any other way than the way she was called to within her call within a call. But that’s not the most amazing part of her life, at least not for me.

She did all of this without any consolation from God. He had placed that call within a call on her heart, been in conversation with her for I think 2 years, all of this, He was pouring all of this information and hope and encouragement into her, and she moved heaven and earth to make all that God placed upon her heart happen. And then as she began to truly serve the poor in Calcutta, began working through this call, God... it’s like God stopped talking to her. She lived in deep darkness and silence for almost 60 years. A holy silence.

Yet she continued to do the work the Lord had given her. She was His faithful servant for her entire life. She did not waver. She was a modern day Job – Always faithful no matter the difficulties she faced. God was her best friend, and in her letters only released after her death did we find out about this holy silence.

So she’s living her life, she’s doing what God asked her to do, and she’s smiling, and she’s loving, and she’s serving, and what we come to know later is that she did it all without ever having consolation of her Best Friend. Without one “Good job.” Without “Yes, you did what I asked you to do. Job well done, good and faithful servant.” Without one encouragement.

I mean, to me, that takes her to superhero status. To holy superhero status. Can you imagine what that was like? No consolation, no “Good job sister. Keep going.” I mean, I rely on those consolations in my own life whether it be in my spiritual life or in my physical life. You know, “Good job Mary.” Would I keep going if I stopped receiving those? Would I keep stepping out in faith if that weren’t to happen, trusting that I’m still doing God’s work?

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My last quote that I want to share with you is all about poverty and charity. Mother Teresa says, “Our life of poverty is as necessary as the work itself. Only in heaven will we see how much we owe the poor for helping us to love God better because of them.”

We’re in Lent. One of the tenets of Lent is alms giving, charity, to be charitable. But I’m going to challenge you to even give a twist to this. It’s not just about giving money, or serving them, but it’s about being charitable in our words and our actions to all that we come in contact with. Not only that, it’s humbling ourselves in our need. To say to others “I need your help. Please walk with me in this.” In humbling ourselves and allowing others to be charitable towards us as well, then love is served in that interaction. In that transaction of service and grace.

God asked something of Mother Teresa that many of us cannot comprehend. He asked her to love His children in a real, radical way, and she said, “Yes”. She said, “Yes” every single day of her life. So the question isn’t “Are we going to leave our families and give up everything we have to the poor as Mother Teresa did?” That might not be our call in life. It may be our call in life, but it might not be. Our call may be to go home and love our children, love our spouses, love our families, care for our neighbors.

So, the question is: Are we going to say “Yes” to whatever unique calling God has put upon our own hearts? The only way we can know for sure is if we’re in conversation with our Lord. If we’re in prayer with our Lord. So, whatever calling He’s placing upon your heart right now, know this and know it well: Loving others will be at the heart of it. Loving others will be at the heart of it.

That is our challenge, not only in this Lenten season, but in our lives. To do small things with great love. Go home and love our families, serve the poor, and be charitable. And remember that every person is Jesus in disguise. Amen. Amen. Let’s close in prayer, shall we? As we speak the prayer that Jesus taught us.

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our

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trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.