

Beatification

Mary Theresa of Jesus





Commemoration

of the

Beatification

of

Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger

Basilica of St. Peter
Rome
November 17, 1985

Prayer
in Honor of
Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus

Almighty and merciful God, you chose Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus, virgin, as gifted educator to contribute to shaping Christian life in family and society. Through her intercession enable us to proclaim the good news of salvation and to work together for the coming of your kingdom of love in its fullness. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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from the biography by Sister Liobgid Ziegler.

For 150 years School Sisters of Notre Dame have imitated the example of their foundress in carrying out Christ's command: "Go out to the whole world and preach the good news." It was then fitting that on November 17, 1985, approximately 900 sisters from "the whole world" came together in Rome to honor their mother and to hear the Holy Father proclaim her "Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger."

Planes, trains, and buses converged in Rome from November 13 to 17, bringing not only the sisters, but also about 3000 other "pilgrims." The largest contingent — about 500 sisters, 1000 students, and 1000 friends of the sisters — arrived in special trains from Bavaria, Mother Theresa's home province. The sisters from North America extended their pilgrimage to include three days in Germany, where they visited places associated with Mother Theresa.

The focal point of the pilgrimage was, of course, the great day in the basilica of St. Peter. In the tradition of high ecclesiastical feasts, however, the tribute to Mother Theresa also included a vigil and a triduum of thanksgiving. This booklet commemorates the events that made these five days such a significant part of SSND history.

Introduction

Let us not forget our destiny: eternally to adore and love, eternally to rejoice in the glory of God and of his saints.

—Mother Theresa

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Message from Sister Mary Margaret

January 1986

Dear Sisters and other readers,

The beatification ceremony and the events surrounding it have taken place! The event for which we and many others have worked and prayed for over 60 years has become a reality! As participants in the beatification celebrations, we are the recipients of the hope, perseverance, and faith of many who have preceded us. We stand in awe and amazement at this mystery in which we live!

The moment of the unveiling of Mother Theresa's picture in St. Peter's basilica, the words of Pope John Paul II: "We . . . declare with our apostolic authority, that the Venerable Servant of God . . . Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger may henceforth be called by the name of Blessed," and his proclamation that her feast will be celebrated on May 9 will remain powerful experiences for all who participated in the beatification ceremony on November 17, 1985. This commemorative booklet is an attempt to enable all School Sisters of Notre Dame and our friends to share in this important event in the history of our congregation.

"Memory makes present." As we remember the people and happenings that constituted and surrounded this important event, we make these people and happenings present to us again, and we rejoice anew at the power of God that worked so effectively in this woman whom we call "Mother." Without doubt, joy was one of the primary qualities that characterized the beatification celebrations in Rome. The joy of the pilgrims was so evident and so profound that it could not be lessened or even dampened by the constant rain that also characterized the week. It was fitting that joy should be the pervading spirit of the week, since we were celebrating the holiness of the woman who encouraged us to "continue to serve the Triune God with joy all our lives" (Ltr. 714).

"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.

We remember and move into the future together with justifiable pride. Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger is no longer simply the foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame; she belongs now to the entire church in a new way. Frequently during the beatification celebrations, it was said of her that she IS a light, a shining example, for the entire church; through the beatification, this light was placed upon a lampstand and was lifted high so that the entire church, as individuals and as faith community, may see her better and may see better the way to respond to God's call to fidelity and holiness.

This presentation of Mother Theresa to the entire church was evident in two striking moments during the beatification festivities. The first instance was the beatification ceremony itself: Pope John Paul proclaimed Mother Theresa blessed; her picture was unveiled for all to behold; the spontaneous response was continued applause. She has been given to the entire church in a new way. The second instance was equally moving. The parish community of Neunburg had a statue of Mother Theresa carved in wood depicting her with a book in one hand and a small reproduction of our first house in Neunburg vorm Wald in the other. This statue was carried in procession from the local convent to the parish church. Here in Neunburg, where Mother Theresa struggled so intensely to found the congregation, her statue was held high and carried into the church; it will remain there in a place of honor among the larger church community where it can be an inspiration for all.

In both these external expressions — the one in St. Peter's basilica in Rome and the other in the parish church in Neunburg — Mother Theresa has been given to the church in a new way. We rejoice because now, with us, all nations call her blessed.

Gratefully and prayerfully,

Sister Mary Margaret Johanning, SSND
General Superior



Sister Mary Margaret addressed the sisters at the November 16 ceremony, when they celebrated the anniversary of Mother Theresa's first vows by renewing their own.

Beatification Ceremony

God wants me to be happy in him—that is, holy—for this I have been created, redeemed, and sanctified.

—Mother Theresa

“All generations shall call me blessed.” These words from Mary’s Magnificat assumed a new, more personal significance for School Sisters of Notre Dame on November 17, when the spiritual daughters of Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger could say of their mother, as of the Mother of Jesus, “All generations shall call her blessed.” Shortly after 9:30 a.m. that day, Pope John Paul II proclaimed to the assembly in St. Peter’s basilica — and to the world — that this “servant of God” could now be addressed as “blessed.”

For years Mother Theresa’s daughters had considered her “holy,” “blessed,” worthy of veneration. In keeping with church custom, however, their devotion had been of a private nature. Now they rejoiced as the church granted public honor to her, declaring her worthy to be officially named among the “blessed” in heaven and to be venerated here on earth.

The traditional ceremony occurred in the context of a solemn liturgy at which Pope John Paul II and twelve cardinals, bishops, and monsignori concelbrated. With Mother Theresa the Holy Father named two other “beati”: Pio of St. Aloysius Campidelli, a 21-year-old professed cleric of the Congregation of Passionists, and Rebecca Ar-Reyes, a religious of the Lebanese Maronite Order. The two were appropriate ceremonial companions to Mother Theresa: Brother Pio because in this international year of youth he reflects the kind of young people Mother Theresa wanted to educate for Christ; Sister Rebecca because she exemplified in her life the value of suffering in the salvation of souls.

The rite of beatification occurred immediately before the liturgy of the word. Friedrich Cardinal Wetter, Archbishop of Munich and Freising, made the formal request that the Holy Father “inscribe the venerable Servant of God, Mary Theresa of Jesus

Gerhardinger among the Blessed.” He then read the following brief account of Mother Theresa’s life, the basis for her beatification:

Caroline Gerhardinger was born at Stadtamhof near Regensburg on July 20, 1797. Her youth occurred in a time which was marked by indifference towards religion and morality, by the waywardness of youth, and the impoverishment of the ordinary people.

Under the guidance of cathedral pastor George Michael Wittmann — later Bishop of Regensburg — Caroline was trained as a teacher. Striving to be a servant to her children according to the teaching of Christ, she developed the school of her home town until it became a model school. At the same time her longing for religious life increased.

At Neunburg vorm Wald she began religious life with two companions in 1833. On November 16 — 150 years ago yesterday — she made her final vows and took the name Theresa of Jesus.

In 1843 she succeeded in establishing a permanent motherhouse for her congregation at the Anger convent, St. James, in Munich.

In 1854 the Apostolic See approved the community of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame and in 1865 the rule of the congregation received approbation as well. During her lifetime the congregation spread from Munich throughout Bavaria, to Westphalia, Silesia, Austria, Hungary, and even to North America, where the foundress herself took the first sisters.

It was Theresa’s aim to educate young girls, especially those from among the ordinary people, in the spirit of Jesus Christ by forming them to become competent women and mothers; she well knew how great the influence of women was for family, church and society.

(Continued on page 11)



Cardinal Friedrich Wetter reads the brief description of Mother Theresa’s life.

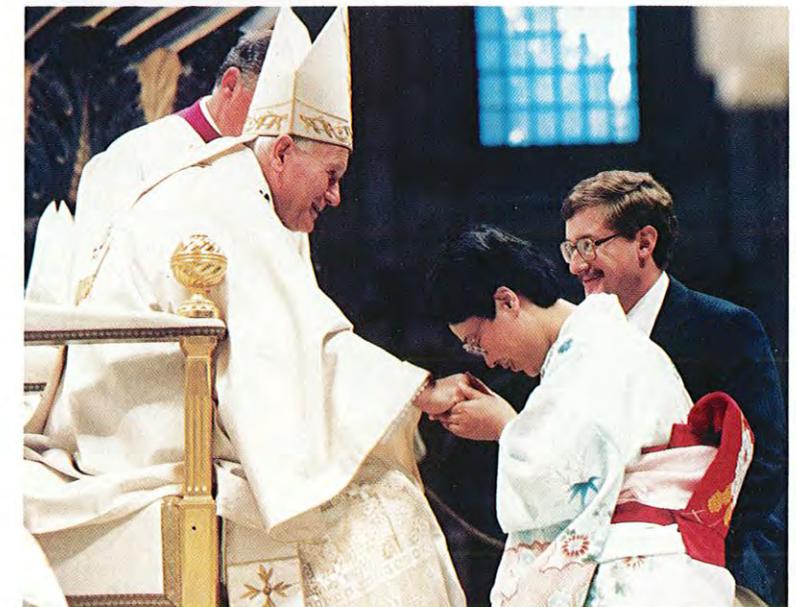


School Sister of Notre Dame occupy many seats in the front sections during the beatification ceremony.



Mother Theresa desired that her congregation be international. Those who presented the gifts during her beatification liturgy demonstrated its continued internationality.

Above: Women from Italy and Ghana present wine and fruit.



Right: This Japanese woman and this seminarian were both former students of SSNDs. Their gifts were, respectively, a bible and a dictionary, symbols of faith and of learning.

Right: The Holy Father moves toward the great "Amen" during the beatification liturgy.



Below: This Austrian boy's official gift — a Tyrolean harvest garland — has already been accepted as he gives the Holy Father an envelope containing his own personal letter and money for the poor, a gift from the townspeople in Freistadt.



Mother Teresa looks down on the Holy Father during his homily in her honor.



The concelebrants join the Holy Father around the altar during the beatification liturgy.

Theresa drew her strength from prayer, and she lived in deep trust in God. Without ever pushing herself to the fore, she overcame many difficulties; selfless and modest, she served her congregation, which she saw as God's work not hers. The church is indebted to her courageous action, flowing from the depth of her faith and her prayer, for an exemplary apostolic institute for the formation of women.

When she yielded her life into the hands of God at the Anger convent in Munich on May 9, 1879, her foundation numbered 2,500 sisters, who carried on the heritage of this great woman.

When Cardinal Wetter had concluded his description of Mother Theresa's life and the Bishop of Rimini and the Patriarch of the Maronites had given their brief biographies of Brother Pio and Sister Rebecca, the Holy Father read in Latin the formula of beatification:

We, granting the wishes of our brothers John Locatelli, Bishop of Rimini, Friedrich Wetter, Archbishop of Munich and Freising, and Anthony Peter Khoraiiche, Patriarch of the Maronites of Antioch, and of many other brothers in the episcopate, and of many of the faithful, and having the advice of the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints, declare, with our apostolic authority, that the Venerable Servants of God, Pio of St. Aloysius, Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, and Rebecca Ar-Rayes, may henceforth be called by the name of Blessed, and that their feast day may be celebrated on the day of their birth into heaven.

The Holy Father then formally established May 9 as the feast of Mother Theresa, thus giving this date even more significance than it already had for School Sisters of Notre Dame.

Immediately after this solemn proclamation, applause broke out through the basilica as the curtain before Mother Theresa's portrait was rolled up and the newly proclaimed "beata" looked down on her daughters and their friends. This portrait by Erich Klimek of Regensburg pictured Mother Theresa and two children against a background of a school, a church, and a small home, symbolic of three of the in-

terests in her life.

The readings in the liturgy of the word blended effectively into the context of the ceremony. Sirach 51 praised God for the gift of wisdom and St. Paul, in his letter to the Romans (12:3-13), described the many gifts that combine to make up the mystical body of Christ, praising especially the love and hope needed by those who work untiringly for the Lord.

From the gospel (Matt. 5:13-16) the Holy Father took the theme for his homily. Starting with Christ's words, "You are the salt of the earth," his introductory comments referred to all three of the new "beati":

In today's liturgy the church reminds us of these words of Christ the Lord, spoken in the Sermon on the Mount.

Salt has its flavor, which it may not lose. Because of its flavor, it is needed on the earth, it is necessary for people. Food without salt is insipid, tasteless. Precisely for this reason salt must retain its flavor. If it loses it, it is good for nothing.

The Lord Jesus speaks these words to his disciples; he says to them, using a parable: "You are the salt of the earth." You must be salt! You must give flavor—evangelical flavor—to the life of humanity. Be salt!

The church applies these words to three people whom she raises to the glory of the altars today: Pio Campidelli, Passionist; Sister Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, Foundress of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame; Rebecca Ar-Rayes de Himlaya, a nun of the Lebanese Maronite Order. Holiness is the specific "flavor" of Christian life. In this sense the saints are the salt of the earth.

Like the good salt, the saints, immersed in various forms of experience of human life and the historical era in which they live, with the intense flavor of their faithful testimony to a heroic degree to the gospel, know how to permeate their environment with the teaching of Christ, contributing to the ongoing fulfillment of the mission of the church in the world.

When the Holy Father directed his attention specifically to Mother Theresa, he emphasized the sec-



The Holy Father delivers his homily during the beatification liturgy: "You are the light of the world."

ond image of the day's gospel text — light — and related this to the mission of education:

"You are the light of the world." Today Christ speaks these words in a special way to our newly beatified Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger. Through beatification the church raises the light of her holy life and work to the lampstand so that from there it can shine before all people. In Mother Theresa it honors a gifted educator and at the same time a remarkable educational institution, which continues to this very day in many countries and continents through the Congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame which she founded.

When Caroline Gerhardinger was only twelve years old, she began to prepare willingly for her vocation as a teacher; when she later founded her educational congregation, she was meeting a great need of her time which she understood as a special call from God. Political and social upheavals had caused a great lack of education and faith, the moral decline of family life, and, most of all, the neglect of youth. With Bishop Wittmann, her spiritual director, she was convinced that wives and mothers best ensure the morals of towns and nations. Therefore blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus and her companion sisters devoted themselves chiefly to the Christian education of young girls in order to contribute to the improvement of society and to the moral well-being of the family through the formation of good mothers and wives.

Caroline Gerhardinger saw her educational vocation as a mandate from Christ to be "the salt of the earth" for others. Her social commitment is a profoundly Christian apostolate, perfectly expressed in total dedication to God in religious life. Her ultimate goal in founding her congregation was to glorify the Lord and to save souls. That is why her sisters were not only to give instruction in school but also to strive to educate the individual to a vital reverence for God and to a Christian life.

The secret of the great fruitfulness of Mother Theresa's educational work, besides her professional



Rev. Anton Weber, postulator for the cause of Mother Theresa, is greeted by the Holy Father at the beginning of Mass.

competence, was the radiance of her own spiritual life: unshakable trust in God and ardent love of Christ and of the poor. Holy Scripture, the Eucharist, and prayer were her source of inner strength. She spent long hours before the tabernacle in the quiet of the night, seeking to know God's will and asking for the strength to fulfill it. She chose Mary as a model for herself and for her sisters, and dedicated the congregation to her. They were to live and act like Mary, directing their entire lives to God and bringing Christ into the world.

Mary Theresa of Jesus, this unassuming but determined and courageous religious, has done great things for human beings and for the kingdom of God. In the founding of her congregation she proved to be a "valiant woman," who was not afraid of sacrifices or difficulties of any kind when this work, which she always called "God's work," was concerned. Her educational congregation did pioneer work for the

development of education in numerous European countries and in America. The spiritual heritage of the new "blessed" lives on in 7,500 School Sisters in Europe, North and Latin America, Asia, Oceania and Africa. Her educational ideal is as real and valuable in the secularized society of our times as it was in hers. May blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerherdinger continue to be a shining model and an intercessor not only for the sisters of her own congregation but also for all Christian educators.

At the conclusion of his homily, the Holy Father blended references to all three scriptural readings, but the image of light remained most prominent:

In the multiplicity of gifts which characterize the lives of these "blessed," we note that the search for wisdom, which the first reading spoke about, is common to all of them. The other gift they have in common

The Holy Father's final blessing is continued as he moves through the congregation after Mass.



is love — that love which has no pretence, which flees from evil and embraces good. . . . Love gives birth to a fervent spirit which helps us to be strong in tribulation, persevering in prayer. Love enables us to be happy in hope (cf. Rom. 12:9-12).

In glorifying them the church reminds the people of our day that the greatest wealth of anyone is an interior life formed in the school of Love, in which every situation in life fosters holiness. There are no little things for those who love God, because everything assumes the dimension of God. God does not leave frustrated those who fully choose him, and he is faithful to them entirely. The consecrated life is a place and a state where all of the aspirations of the human creature can be adequately satisfied.

"You are the salt of the earth" the Lord repeats to us — and the church applies his words to the newly beatified: "You are the light of the world."

Behold, the light of the life of each of these Blessed is today put on the lampstand of the church "so that it gives light to all in the house."

God does not want this light to be hidden "under a bushel." The lamp is necessary in the "house" of the living God; it is necessary for humanity.

Therefore, Blessed Pio, Blessed Maria Theresa, Blessed Rebecca, "let your light shine before all."

Shine "so that they may see your good works" and follow them.

Shine so that "they may give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Yes, the glory of God is the living person: "the salt of the earth" and "light for the world."

As the liturgy moved into the offering of gifts, the internationality of the congregation was manifest in the eight persons chosen to take its gifts to the altar: sisters from Yugoslavia and Brazil, a girl and a boy from Bavaria and Austria, lay women from Italy and Ghana, and two former students of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, one now a seminarian at the North American College in Rome and the other a lay staff member at the sisters' college in Kyoto, Japan. Several of the gifts symbolized the country from which gifts and bearers came — a large amethyst stone from Brazil, fruit from Africa, wines from Italy, food specialties from Bavaria, a harvest garland from Austria; other gifts represented the mission of the congregation — a candle symbolic of prayer, a dictionary suggesting the ministry of educa-

tion, and a bible bearing the message of God to be proclaimed to the world.

After the offertory presentation, the liturgical celebration continued, with a sense of pervasive joy. When the Holy Father had left the basilica amid enthusiastic clapping and the congregation had moved slowly outside, not even the heavy rain could subdue the mood of the crowd. Under dripping umbrellas they listened to the Holy Father's brief address before the Sunday Angelus. Again he praised the new "beata," describing her as "a strong woman of German origin . . . who gave her own charism to the foundation of the Poor School Sisters of Notre Dame."

As the crowd listened to the Angelus message they could again see Mother Theresa looking down at them, this time from above the entrance to St. Peter's. This

portrait had been painted shortly after Mother Theresa's death by a nineteenth-century Austrian artist, Joseph Kastner, whose work reflects his own memory of her. This was also the image selected for prayer cards at the time of the beatification: Mother Theresa, educator, looks into the upturned face of a small child who carries a clearly marked "schule" bag.

Both this portrait and the one within St. Peter's had been photographically enlarged to approximately 8 by 12 feet. A Rome photographer, Francesco Gentile, reproduced the portraits in sections on long strips of photographic paper, which he then combined and attached to a special cloth background so that they could be hung inside and outside the basilica. These larger-than-life images of the new "beata" added to the joy and to the solemnity of the beatification ceremony.



Sisters Erharda, Mary Margaret, and Conceicao admire the enlarged Mother Theresa as her portrait is unrolled before it is taken from the photographer's workroom to St. Peter's.

Beatification Process

How wonderfully and gently the works of God proceed!

—Mother Theresa

When Pope John Paul II publicly proclaimed Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger “blessed,” he climaxed a process that had begun 60 years earlier, in 1925, when Michael Cardinal Faulhaber of Munich-Freising granted Mother M. Bruno Thoma’s petition to open the process of beatification. In the same year the “Frauenbund,” a Catholic women’s organization in Bavaria, had also petitioned Pope Pius XI for the beatification of Mother Theresa. This “grassroots” support of Mother Theresa’s cause continued through the years; the current president of the Frauenbund was among the pilgrims at the beatification ceremony.

In 1929, after four years of preliminary interviews with almost 300 witnesses to Mother Theresa’s virtues and the collection of over 7000 documents written or signed by her, Cardinal Faulhaber initiated the official information process by assembling in Munich an ecclesial tribunal which heard testimony from 98 witnesses. In 1933, examiners appointed by the Congregation of Rites declared the writings of Mother Theresa theologically and morally satisfactory, and in 1936 they confirmed as accurate the minutes of the Munich hearings.

World War II and the death of the postulator delayed the beginning of the apostolic process until 1950, when Dr. Guilio Dante, lawyer for the congregation, brought material from the earlier investigation to the Congregation of Rites. In 1952 Pope Pius XII authorized the opening of this new stage of the beatification process. The “probing of virtues” continued for 30 years. In 1982 Mother Theresa’s virtues were declared “heroic” by a theological commission appointed by the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints and later by a commission of cardinals. In January 1983, a decree of Pope John Paul II declared that Mother Theresa had practiced in a heroic way the

theological and cardinal virtues. This decree closed the apostolic process and opened the way for the next stage, the miracle process.

According to customary procedures, the church requires two authentic miracles before declaring a person “blessed.” In more recent years a report of striking answers to prayer can be substituted for one of the two miracles. School Sisters of Notre Dame have for many years been recording such cases. To document the required official miracle, the postulator for Mother Theresa’s cause, Rev. Anton Weber, SAC, and Dr. Dante turned to Brazil.

In March 1983, the bishop of Tubarao, Brazil, assembled a 12-member tribunal to investigate the



Dr. Guilio Dante and Rev. Anton Weber talk together at the generalate.

cures of two women who had been dying of cancer and who attributed their healing to Mother Theresa’s intercession, Sister Tecla Medeiros and Mrs. Otilia de Solva. Interviews with the two women and with other witnesses, combined with the study of the records, satisfied the tribunal about the validity of the miracles. Since only one miracle needed to be fully documented, the tribunal submitted only the findings on Sister Tecla’s healing for further review. A team of five physicians scrutinized her records and declared that the disappearance of cancer could not be accounted for medically; and a team of five theologians declared that the cure could be attributed to the intercession of Mother Theresa.

In April 1985, a commission of cardinals confirmed these decisions and on May 9 the Holy Father declared the miracle process completed. On November 17, Sister Tecla was among the School Sisters of Notre Dame who heard the official decree that placed their foundress among the blessed.



Early in the miracle process Otilia de Solva and Sister Tecla Medeiros were interviewed about the cures which they attributed to Mother Theresa, their signed depositions becoming part of the preliminary study submitted to the ecclesial tribunal. Above: Mrs. de Solva places her sign on her deposition; her daughters, her husband, and Sister Helena Arns watch.



Left: Sister Tecla signs her deposition for Sister Helena.

Renewal of Vows

Let us give our whole heart to God; it does belong to him.

—Mother Theresa

On the eve of the beatification approximately 850 School Sisters of Notre Dame commemorated the anniversary of a great event in their heritage. Exactly 150 years ago, November 16, 1835, young Caroline Gerhardinger professed her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. On that day, too, she assumed her new name: Mary Theresa of Jesus. The night before the title "blessed" was to be prefixed to that name, Mother Theresa's daughters gathered in the generalate chapel to renew their own vows of "consecrated celibacy, gospel poverty, and apostolic obedience, in community."

Above the main altar, a picture of Mother Theresa looked down on her daughters; 25 vigil lights before her symbolized the provinces and regions to which her congregation had spread. Inviting the sisters to renew their vowed commitment, Sister Mary Margaret reminded them of Mother Theresa's words: "My dear Sisters, renew your holy vows often and each time you do, do it with new and renewed love."

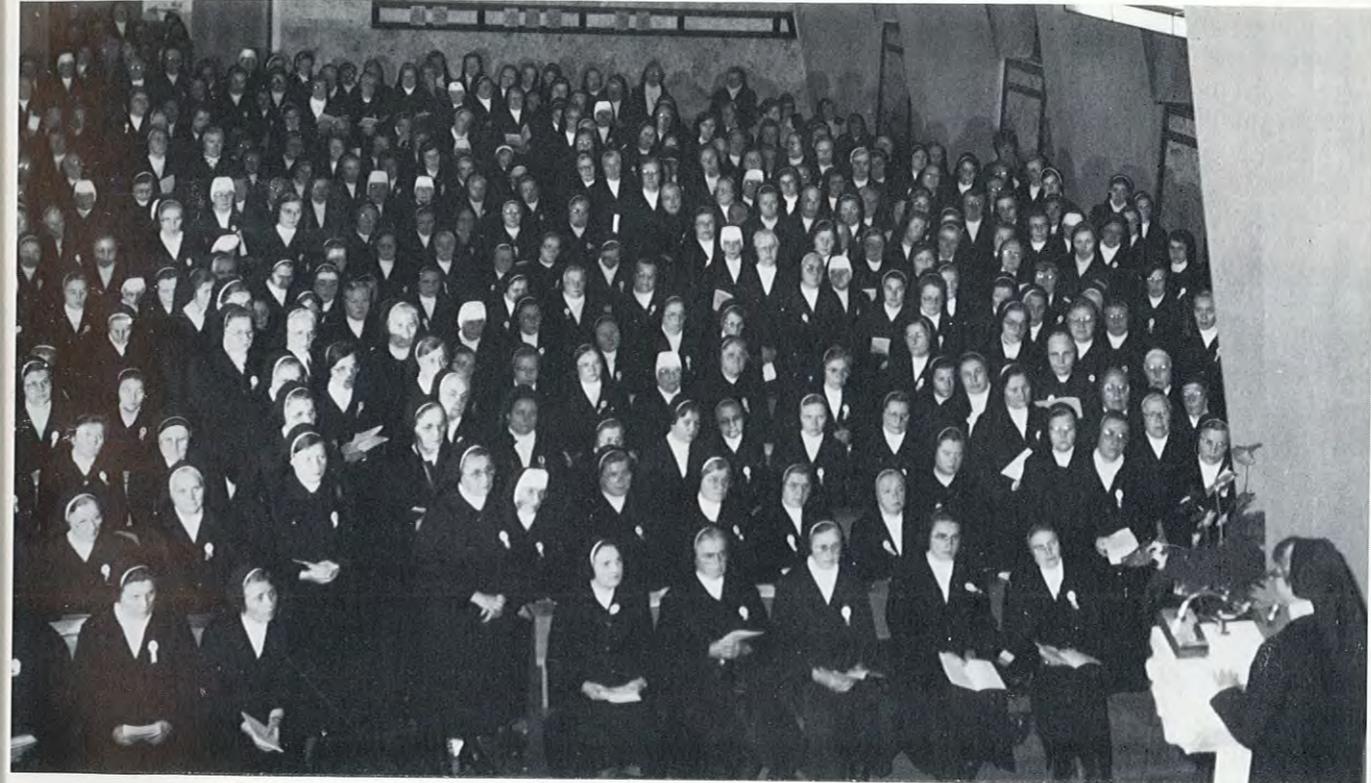
The vow ceremony was repeated twice, the chapel accomodating between 400 and 450 sisters for each service. In welcoming each group, Sister Mary Margaret quoted Mother Theresa: "The Holy Spirit has brought us together and Jesus Christ . . . has knotted the close

bond among us." Noting the diversity of nations and cultures, customs and languages among those present, she called on all to foster the unity which had been Mother Theresa's vision. Smiles, gestures, and full-voiced song in many languages suggested that the "vision" was becoming reality.

Before the renewal of vows, each sister reflected on the passage from John 15:9-17: "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. . . ." From this passage Sister Mary Margaret selected one line on which to base her comments: "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friend." Expanding on this testament of love, she moved from the call of a loving

God and the response of a loving young girl to their mutual giving in love: "A God gives Self in intimate, surprising, and challenging ways: in word, on a cross, through body and blood. . . . A woman gives self in union with God and people: through poverty, chastity, obedience, education of youth, poor, women."

Remembering Mother Theresa's commitment 150 years ago, each sister — in unison with others in her language group — recited the formula for the renewal of vows. Before the multi-lingual singing of "Holy God," Sister Mary Margaret repeated Mother Theresa's words: "In the name of Jesus, dear Sisters, I promise you eternal life if you live faithful to your vows."



Left: One group of sisters rises to read their vow formula.

Above: Different languages blend as sisters sing the love and praise of God before and after the ceremony.

Sisters overflow the chapel as Sister Mary Margaret addresses them before their renewal of vows; this is the second group, mostly from Bavaria.

Triduum of Thanksgiving

God is truly wonderful and worthy of adoration in his ways. Praise and thanks to him forever. —Mother Theresa

The three days following the beatification ceremony became a time of continued celebration and thanksgiving for the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Like true pilgrims, the sisters and their friends moved to a different basilica each day for their eucharistic liturgies in honor of Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus.

On Monday morning Friedrich Cardinal Wetter, Archbishop of Munich-Freising, was the main celebrant and homilist at the basilica of St. Mary Major. This first liturgy in honor of the "beata" centered on the theme of proclaiming the good news, especially through the ministry of education. For the first time the congregation could publicly pray to God who "chose blessed Mary Theresa, virgin, as gifted educator": "Through her intercession enable us, too, to proclaim the good news of salvation."

Mother Theresa's daughters found it easy to see their foundress in the virtuous woman of the first reading (Proverbs 31), a woman who "reaches out her hands to the poor and extends her arms to the needy," one who "opens her mouth in wisdom"; they could say of their mother, too: "Many are the women of proven worth, but you have excelled them all." The gospel image of Jesus welcoming the children (Mk. 10:13-16) was also the image of Mother Theresa as it had been reflected in the two pictures used at St. Peter's for the beatification ceremony: like Jesus, Mother Theresa said by her actions, "Let the children come to me. . . . It is to just such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." Children's clothing and medicines for the poor were among the offertory gifts at this liturgy; these gifts symbolized Mother Theresa's service to those in need.



Left: Cardinal Wetter blesses the congregation as he leaves the basilica of St. Mary Major after the first of the liturgies of thanksgiving. Above: Bishop Manfred Muller delivers his homily at the basilica of St. Paul's outside the Walls.



Sisters from Bavaria coordinate the music of the student groups at the basilica of St. Paul.



Sister Louis Marie directs the congregational singing at the basilica of St. John Lateran.

Plans for the second eucharistic celebration in honor of Blessed Mary Theresa of Jesus came from the minds and hearts of students in Germany and Austria. The spirit of youth pervaded the basilica of St. Paul's outside the Walls. This spirit was especially evident in the singing, in the offertory prayers and gifts, and in the sign of peace.

Young people in traditional dress of Bavaria, Westphalia, and Austria wove rich symbolism into their offertory gifts: a burning torch to signify "enthusiasm for all that is good" and the desire to "be a light to others"; a flower to reflect God's beauty in creation; a stone to represent "all that is hard, difficult and unyielding" but also to symbolize courage and the means of building bridges of unity; a basket heaped with hand-made crosses, which were later given to those present as "a reminder that we ourselves ought to be signs to the world." In a special ritual of peace, a group of young women approached the altar, asking to be sent as messengers of Christ's peace to the world. To symbolize that "sending" they received the sign of peace from the celebrants and then moved through the church to convey this sign to others. Love, peace, service — these were the themes of their liturgy.

As these students of modern SSNDs showed the fruit of Mother Theresa's mission of education, the main celebrant and the homilist suggested the geographical dispersion of that mission. The celebrant, Bishop Joseph Breitenbeck of Grand Rapids, Michigan, represented the many North American dioceses in which SSNDs now serve, and the homilist, Bishop Manfred Muller of Regensburg, came from the diocese in which both Mother Theresa and her congregation were born.

At the basilica of St. John Lateran, Pietro Cardinal Palazzini, Prefect of the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints, celebrated the final liturgy of the thanksgiving triduum; the Most Reverend Jose Mario Stroeher, regional secretary of the national conference of bishops in Brazil, delivered the homily. The theme of taking the message of God's love into the whole world came

through again in the readings: the description of the love and mutual support within the early church (Acts 2) and the prayer of Jesus that through the unity and love of his followers the world might believe that the Father had sent him (John 17). The world-wide missionary thrust of Mother Theresa was symbolically suggested in several of the offertory gifts: a bible from which the message of God can be read; a globe indicating Christ's message going out to the whole world; a set of vestments and materials for use in the baptismal ritual.

The motif of the universality of Christ's message had been implicit in the many languages used in the service. Before the final liturgical blessing, Sister Mary Margaret in a message of thanks to all who had shared in the celebration reiterated the theme of the gospel: "Let us carry one another in our hearts as we live out the words of Jesus and of Mother Theresa: we are sent. Let us go into the whole world."



Bishop Joseph Breitenbeck reads the final blessing at St. Paul's.



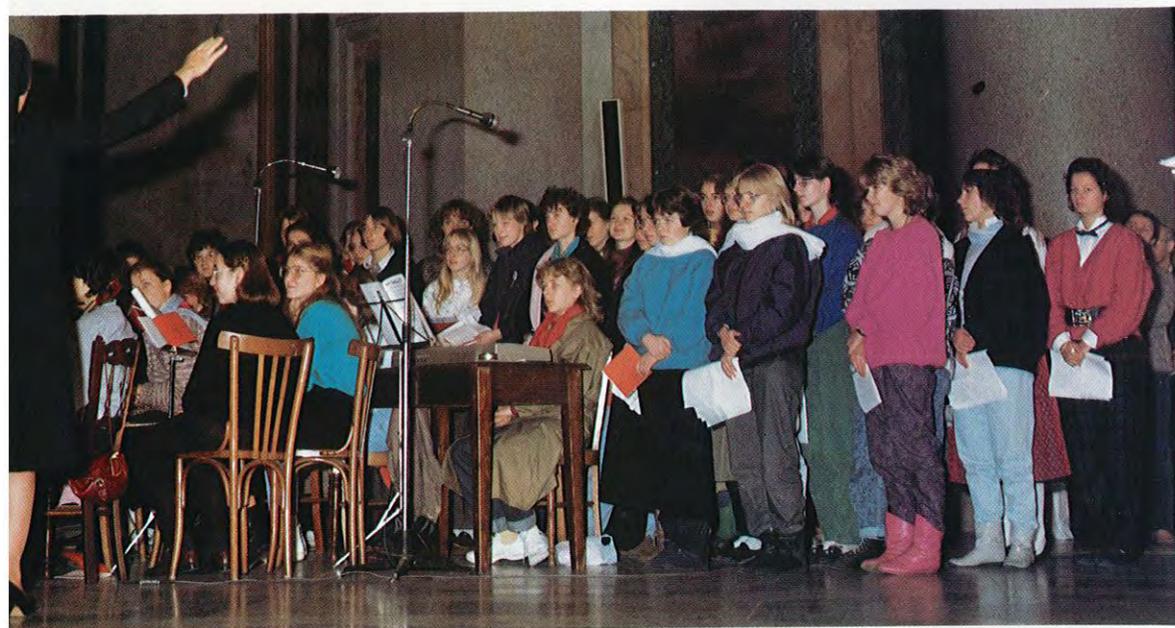
*Scenes during the liturgy at the basilica of St. Mary Major:
Above: Cardinal Wetter raises the chalice during the offertory.
Left: Sister Mary Margaret welcomes the congregation before the liturgy.
Below: The choir from Tegernseer contributes to the liturgical celebration.*





Preceding page: The liturgy at St. Paul's featured young people. Top left: The torch burns as a sign of "enthusiasm for all that is good" and as a prayer to "be a light to others." Top right: The crosses in this basket were later distributed to the congregation. Bottom: Sister Mary Margaret here blesses the student singers; other SSNDs also raised their hands in symbolic blessing of all young people.

This page — right: Cardinal Pietro Palazzini receives the word of God from Sister Mary Ann. Below: Sister Mary Margaret leaves St. John Lateran with the celebrants after the third of the thanksgiving liturgies.



Audience with the Holy Father

To God above all be glory and thanks.

—Mother Theresa

Pilgrims to Rome often remember most vividly any opportunity they may have to see the Holy Father "close up." Those present for the beatification ceremony could all include such an opportunity among their beatification memories.

Immediately after the beatification liturgy in St. Peter's, the Holy Father greeted a small group of sisters, clergy, and dignitaries. The next day, however, he welcomed a larger group. The Mother Theresa button gained admittance for all those who wished to attend a special audience in the Paul VI hall.

Enthusiastic button-wearers travelled from the liturgy at the basilica of St. Mary Major through one of the week's heaviest downpours to hear Pope John Paul II again praise Mother Theresa and congratulate her

supporters. Those fortunate enough to be near one of the aisles as the Pope moved through the hall had the real "close up" experience, but the once-in-a-lifetime mood reached even to the fringes of the crowd.



Above: The Holy Father greets Sister Tecla (Sister Conceicao in the background).

Left: The Holy Father and Rev. Anton Weber exchange a few comments as Sister Mary Margaret looks on.



Above: The Holy Father receives Prince Franz of Bavaria, head of the house of Wittelsbach, and Sister Erna.



Right: Members of the band from Neunburg vorm Wald rejoice in their contact with the Holy Father.



Above: European and American SSNDs all reach out to the Holy Father during his Monday afternoon audience.

Right: Sister Mary Margaret presents to the Holy Father a large medal of Mother Theresa and a specially bound volume of Sister Liobgid Ziegler's biography.



Other Celebrations

Love is the bond that unites us with one another and with God.

—Mother Theresa

St. Peter's, the other basilicas, and the audience hall at the Vatican were not the only places where the School Sisters of Notre Dame celebrated the beatification of their foundress. The generalate house opened its doors three times to welcome those who had come to Rome for the festivities.

After their vow ceremony on the eve of the beatification, sisters filled at least eleven improvised dining areas. A few groups of sisters returned three days later for the second open house, this occasion planned not only for sisters but also for relatives and lay friends. Among this second set of visitors were the two bands from Neunburg vorm Wald, who rejoiced in

being allowed to play in the generalate aula as they had already played in rainy St. Peter's Plaza after the beatification and in the Paul VI hall at the Vatican before the Monday afternoon audience.

On a smaller scale, the general council and the beatification committee entertained at dinner a number of those who had helped to conduct the beatification process and to plan or carry out the ceremonies.

Members of the Regensburg Domspatzen (the cathedral choir) paid tribute to Mother Theresa in a special presentation on Monday night. With the program theme "Praise, glory, and thanks to the Triune God," they sang to a full house in the audience hall.

Msgr. George Ratzinger directs the Regensburg Domspatzen in the Paul VI audience hall; the resurrection symbol rises behind them.





Above, left and right: Two groups of sisters walk with their plates to find a dining area.

Right: One international group has found its way to the improvised library dining room; an Irish Christian Brother plays host in the background.



Above: Sister Mary Margaret expresses her thanks to the guests at the Wednesday night dinner. (Cardinal Arns and Cardinal Wetter are at her right and left.)



Several of the guests at this dinner are being served.

Right: The beatification committee still had work to do after the celebration (Sisters Helena, Erharda, and Henriette).



Behind the Scenes

Let us continue to serve the Triune God all our lives with joy, to obey him, to love him above all.

—Mother Theresa

Every major project involves planning and behind-the-scenes activities. The general council and the beatification committee started last spring to organize the five-day celebration and the various ways in which Mother Theresa could be honored in print, in art, and in music.

As the great day drew near, the general household shared in the more immediate preparations. The sisters also called on friends from outside for their "open house" activities — a caterer and the Irish Christian Brothers, who helped serve 900 and 1200 guests. The brothers also came to "house-sit" when celebrations took the sisters to the city.



Upper right: Caterer friends prepared the pasta, sandwiches, and trimmings for the open house meals. Lower right: Irish Christian Brothers tended the beverage tables. Lower left: Sisters Kenneth Marie and Paula prepared the special dinner.



Many projects needed advance preparation. Above: Sister Lauren prepares the exhibit about SSND ministries.



Right: Relics from Mother Theresa's habit and from her first coffin are carefully folded into protective papers.

Below: Relics, medals, and pictures are enclosed in envelopes for distribution.



Mother Theresa's Message

Jesus, O king, my king, your kingdom is my kingdom, your glory is mine, your paradise is mine. What you are, I will become; I, too, will participate in your glory and bliss. Alleluia.
—Mother Theresa

This booklet documents events of only five days in the history of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, but the effect of these events extends far beyond this brief period.

In many ways the first lines of Mary's Magnificat have been fulfilled in the life of Mary Theresa of Jesus; throughout her life her soul magnified the Lord and her spirit rejoiced in God her Savior. Now, a little more

than 100 years after her death, the Lord has indeed done great things for her, inviting all generations to call her "blessed."

By lifting her up in this way, her God has demonstrated the truth of her own prayer: "Jesus . . . your glory is mine, your paradise is mine." It now remains for each of her daughters to say to her, as she said to Jesus, "What you are, I will become."



Mother Theresa was physically lifted up in the larger-than-life photographic reproduction here being unrolled by the photographer, Francesco Gentile. This is the portrait that was later hung outside the basilica.

