



# Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light

Mother Teresa & Brian Kolodiejchuk

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## About the Author

Born in Skopje in 1910, Mother Teresa joined the Sisters of Loreto in Dublin in 1928 and was sent to India, where she began her novitiate. She taught at St. Mary's High School in Calcutta from 1931 to 1948, until leaving the Loreto order to begin the Missionaries of Charity. Through her sisters, brothers and priests, her service to the poorest of the poor spread all around the world. She won many awards, including the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. After her death in 1997, the process for her sainthood was quickly begun and she was beatified in 2003.

Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk, M.C., Ph.D., was born in Winnipeg, Canada. He met Mother Teresa in 1977 and was associated with her until her death in 1997. He joined the Missionaries of Charity Fathers at the time of their foundation in 1984. Fr. Brian is postulator of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and director of the Mother Teresa Center.

## Praise for Mother Teresa & Brian Kolodiejchuk

'Mother Teresa's *Come Be My Light* will come to rank with St Augustine's *Confessions* and Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain* as an autobiography proving that great religious figures must first climb through grave doubts.'

*Daily Mail*

'*Come Be My Light* is that rare thing, a posthumous autobiography that could cause a wholesale reconsideration of a major public figure - one way or another. It raises questions about God and faith, the engine behind great achievement, and the persistence of love, divine and human.'

*TIME*

'Nothing makes Mother Teresa's potential sainthood a more intriguing prospect than the collection of her private papers published on the recent anniversary of her death... These writings reveal a soul that lived through most of adulthood not only in the shadows, but in profound, spiritual darkness and pain.'

*The Post-Tribune*

*Mother*  
**TERESA**

COME BE MY LIGHT

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THE REVEALING PRIVATE  
WRITINGS OF THE NOBEL PEACE  
PRIZE WINNER

*Edited and with Commentary by*

Brian Kolodiejchuk, M.C.



RIDER

LONDON · SYDNEY · AUCKLAND · JOHANNESBURG

For those, especially the poorest of the poor, who find themselves in any form of darkness, that they may find in Mother Teresa's experience and faith, consolation, and encouragement.

St. Mary's Convent.  
13<sup>5</sup> Jan. 47.

Your Grace,

From last Sept. strange thoughts and desires have been filling my heart. They got stronger and clearer during the 8 days retreat I made in Dayeeting. On coming here I told Fr. Van Buren everything - I showed him the few notes I had written during the retreat - He told me. He thought - it was God's inspiration - but to pray and remain silent over it. I kept on telling him whatever passed in my soul - in thoughts and desires. Then yesterday he wrote this "I cannot prevent you from talking or writing to His Grace. You will write to His Grace as a daughter to her father, in perfect trust and sincerity, without any fear or anxiety, telling him how it all went, adding that you talked to me and that now I think I cannot in conscience prevent you from expressing everything to him."

Before I begin I want to tell you that at one word that Your Grace would say I am ready never to consider again any of those strange thoughts which have been coming continually.

During the year very often I have been longing to be all for Jesus and to make other souls - especially Indian, come and love Him fervently - to identify myself with Indian girls completely and so love Him as He has never been loved before. I thought - was one of my many mad desires. I read the life of St. M. Cabrini - She did so much for the American's because she became one of them. Why can't I do for India what she did for America. She did not wait for souls to come to her. She went to them with her robes

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First page of Mother Teresa's letter to Archbishop P rier,  
found [here](#).



Don't mind my feelings - Don't mind even - my pain  
of my separation from You - brings others to You  
and in their love and company - You find  
joy and pleasure - why Jesus, I am willing with  
all my heart to suffer all that I suffer - not  
only now - but for all eternity - if this was possible.  
Your happiness is all that I want - for the  
rest - please do not take the trouble - even  
if you see me faint with pain - All this is  
my Will - I want to satiate Your thirst with  
every single drop of blood that you can find  
in me - Don't allow me to do you wrong  
in anyway - Take from me the power  
of hurting You - Heart and soul I will  
work for the Sisters - because they are Yours. Love  
and everyone - are Yours.  
I beg of You only one thing - please do not take  
the trouble to return soon - I am ready to  
wait for You for all eternity -  
Your little one.

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Last page of Mother Teresa's letter to Jesus, found [here](#).

If I ever become a Saint—I will surely be one of “darkness.”  
I will continually be absent from Heaven—to light the light  
of those in darkness on earth—

—*Mother Teresa of Calcutta*

## *PREFACE*

For decades, Mother Teresa and her work received extensive public interest. In view of all the attention she garnered during her lifetime, and particularly at the time of her death at the age of eighty-seven, the question arises: What was the source of this attractive force drawing so many people to her? She would have certainly preferred to remain unnoticed. She considered herself just “a pencil in God’s hand”<sup>1</sup> and was convinced that God was using her “nothingness” to show His greatness. She never took credit for her accomplishments and always tried to divert the attention she received to God and “His work” among the poorest of the poor. Yet it was not in God’s providential plan for her to remain unknown. People of all creeds and walks of life recognized her selfless love and compassion for the poor; they admired her simplicity and genuineness and were attracted by the joy and peace that radiated from her. At the same time, all those who met her, even just once, were left with the sense that there was something more behind her penetrating gaze.

Mother Teresa could not hide her work among the poor, but what she did manage to keep hidden—and with astonishing success—were the most profound aspects of her relationship with God. She was determined to keep these secrets of love far from mortal eyes. The late archbishop Ferdinand Périer of Calcutta and a few priests were the only ones who had some insight into the spiritual wealth of her interior life, and even with them she constantly begged that they destroy all her letters

regarding it. The reason for such insistence can be found in her deep reverence for God and His work in her and through her. Her silence now stands as a testimony to her humility and the delicacy of her love.

Providentially, Mother Teresa's spiritual directors preserved some of her correspondence. Thus, when testimonies and documents were gathered during the process for her beatification and canonization, the remarkable story of her intimate relationship with Jesus, hidden from even her closest collaborators, was discovered. In contrast to her "ordinariness," Mother Teresa's confidences reveal previously unknown depths of holiness and may very well lead her to be ranked among the great mystics of the Church.

Her life and message continue to fascinate. This book, then, is a response to the plea of many who knew, loved, and admired her and who desire to know the motive of her action, the source of her strength, the reason for her joy, and the intensity of her love. These pages unveil her interior life, with all its depth and drama, and add unsuspected riches to the spiritual heritage Mother Teresa offers to the world.

*Father Brian Kolodiejchuk, M.C.*

*Postulator, Cause of Canonization of Blessed Teresa of  
Calcutta*

*Director, Mother Teresa Center*

## *Introduction*

“If I ever become a Saint—I will surely be one of ‘darkness.’ I will continually be absent from Heaven—to light the light of those in darkness on earth.”<sup>1</sup> Taken as a kind of “mission statement,” these words of Mother Teresa provide a key to the understanding of her spiritual life, and indeed of her whole life. “Come be My light,” Jesus had requested, and Mother Teresa strove to be that light of God’s love in the lives of those who were experiencing darkness. For her, however, the paradoxical and totally unsuspected cost of her mission was that she herself would live in “terrible darkness.” In a letter to one of her spiritual directors she wrote:

Now Father—since 49 or 50 this terrible sense of loss—this untold darkness—this loneliness—this continual longing for God—which gives me that pain deep down in my heart.—Darkness is such that I really do not see—neither with my mind nor with my reason.—The place of God in my soul is blank.—There is no God in me.—When the pain of longing is so great—I just long & long for God—and then it is that I feel—He does not want me—He is not there.—... God does not want me.—Sometimes—I just hear my own heart cry out—“My God” and nothing else comes.—The torture and pain I can’t explain.—<sup>2</sup>

## *Aim of the Book*

This book plumbs the depth of Mother Teresa's interior life seen from the perspective of this "mission statement." Rather than a theological study, this work is a presentation of the previously unknown aspects of her interior life, through which we gain greater insight into her resolute faith and intense love for God and neighbor.

Three aspects of Mother Teresa's interior life revealed during her cause of canonization are the private vow made while she was still a Loreto nun, the mystical experiences that surrounded the inspiration to found the Missionaries of Charity, and her intimate sharing in the Cross of Christ through the long years of interior darkness. Each of these elements is connected: the private vow laying the groundwork for the call to serve the poorest of the poor, the new call inviting her to embrace the spiritual reality of those she served, and the vow again supporting her heroic living of the painful darkness.

The book is divided into three parts. [Chapters 1](#) and [2](#) cover her interior life prior to her "call within a call." Love for God and neighbor had been planted in her heart since her early childhood. Her generous response already as a youth in Skopje, and particularly as a dedicated and self-sacrificing Loreto nun, reached its peak in a private vow she made in 1942. This vow proved to be not only the driving force behind her actions, but also a providential preparation for what lay ahead.

[Chapters 3](#) through [7](#) deal with the inspiration she received on September 10, 1946, to found the Missionaries of Charity, the drama of waiting to start her new mission, and, finally, her leaving the Loreto order and beginning the work in the slums. Both in answering the "call within a call" and in the slow process of discernment that followed, she faced bravely the many sufferings that came her way and held firmly to her new mission.

When all seemed to be in place, the worst of her ordeals was only just beginning. From the time she received the

call, she was convinced that her mission was to bring the light of faith to those living in darkness. Little did Mother Teresa realize that “darkness” would become the greatest trial of her own life, and a fundamental part of her mission. The depth of this mystical experience and the cost of living out this new call and mission are the themes of [Chapters 8](#) through [13](#).

### *Her Legacy*

Initially, the experience of darkness took her off guard. Since she had experienced a high degree of union with God, the change was not only surprising but also agonizing: unable to feel His presence as she had earlier, she was bewildered and afraid. Was she going the “wrong way”? Seeking possible reasons for God’s apparent absence, when His presence to her had seemed so real, she at first attributed this absence to her sinfulness and weakness, concluding that the darkness was purification of her imperfections.

With the help of her spiritual directors, she progressively came to grasp that her painful inner experience was an essential part of living out her mission. It was a sharing in the Passion of Christ on the Cross—with a particular emphasis on the *thirst* of Jesus as the mystery of His longing for the love and salvation of every human person. Eventually she recognized her mysterious suffering as an imprint of Christ’s Passion on her soul. She was living the mystery of Calvary—the Calvary of Jesus and the Calvary of the poor.

Her living of this inner experience was an integral aspect of her vocation, the most challenging demand of her mission, and the supreme expression of her love for God and for His poor. Beyond providing care for the downtrodden and outcasts of human society, she was

willing to embrace their material and spiritual suffering, their state of being “unwanted, unloved, uncared for,” of having no one.

Although this intense and ongoing spiritual agony could have made her despondent, she instead radiated remarkable joy and love. She was truly a witness to hope, an apostle of love and joy, because she had built the edifice of her life on pure faith. She glowed with a kind of “luminosity,” as Malcolm Muggeridge described it,<sup>3</sup> which flowed from her relationship with God. In this book I hope to explore and illuminate the hidden dynamics of this relationship.

### *The Documents*

Mother Teresa herself was well aware of the uncommon circumstances of her calling and the extraordinary way in which she was challenged to live it out. She always insisted that all documents revealing the inspiration behind the founding of the Missionaries of Charity be destroyed, for fear that she would be given a prominence that she believed was due to God alone.

Father [Van Exem] has also many letters I wrote to him re—the work while still a Loreto Nun.—Now that the plan of Jesus entrusted to us is in the Constitutions—those letters are not necessary. Please may I have them—as these were the very expression of my soul in those days. I would like to burn all papers that disclose anything of me in them.—Please Your Grace I ask, I beg you to grant me this desire—I want God’s secret to me to remain ours—the world does not know and I want it to remain so.—Anything re—the Society<sup>fn1</sup> you have plenty—I have never told—not even in Confession—of how the Society started.—You and Father [Van Exem]



know it—this is enough. I was His little instrument—now His will is known through the Constitutions—all those letters are useless.<sup>4</sup>

When after a year, in 1957, Archbishop P erier had not yet complied with her request, she found another opportunity to repeat her appeal. This second request was similarly not agreed to. As time went on and interest in her work increased, the possibility arose that she and the work would be the topic for articles and books. This proved to be yet another trial for her. Again she feared that Archbishop P erier and Father Van Exem, her spiritual director since 1944, might make the documents available:

I went this morning but you were not there. I have a very big request to make to you.—I have never asked you for anything personally.—From Monsignor E. Barber I heard that Cardinal Spellman wants to write about me & the work. Bishop Morrow is going to come and ask you for all the documents.—With you and Fr. Van Exem I have entrusted my deepest thoughts—my love for Jesus—and His tender love for me—please do not give anything of 1946. I want the work to remain only His. When the beginning will be known people will think more of me—less of Jesus. Please for Our Lady’s sake do not tell or give anything. I know they want to help the Society financial[ly]—I do not want money—my trust in God is blind—I know He will never let me down. In these few years lakhs<sup>fn2</sup> of rupees have passed through my hands.—I do not know how they came. I am perfectly happy and grateful to God for what He gives—I [would] rather be and remain poor with Jesus and His poor.—I prefer to beg & struggle with little—Let him write about “the work” and our poor suffering people—help me to pay for the schooling of our poor children & give the clever ones a chance in life.

Rev. Fr. Martindale S.J. wants also to write & he sent word through [Captain] Cheshire—I have said no.—I am only His instrument—why so much about me—when the work is all His. I hold no claim to it. It was given to me.

...<sup>5</sup>

Three years later she had yet another occasion to request that the documents be destroyed. To obtain pontifical recognition of the Missionaries of Charity, the archbishop of Calcutta had to present a formal application to the pope, outlining the history and work of the congregation under his care. This new scrutiny concerned her.

Your Grace,

Now that you are looking through the file of our Society—I beg you to destroy any letter which I have written to His Grace—not connected with the Society.—“The Call” was a delicate gift of God to me—unworthy—I do not know why He picked me up—I suppose like the people we pick up—because they are the most unwanted. From the first [day] to this day—this my new vocation has been one prolonged “Yes” to God—without even a look at the cost.—My conviction that “the work is His”—is more than the reality.—I have never doubted. It hurts me only when the people call me foundress because I know for certain He asked—“Will you do this for Me?” Everything was His—I had only to surrender myself to His plan—to His will—Today His work has grown because it is He, not I, that do[es] it through me.

Of this I am so convinced—that I would give my life gladly to prove it—<sup>6</sup>

Even so it was the conviction of Archbishop Périer and his successors in office that the documents should survive, although Mother Teresa did manage to destroy a good

number. Father Van Exem likewise struggled for years against Mother Teresa's insistence to destroy the documents. He tried to persuade her to keep them for the benefit of the future generations of her followers. In 1981 he wrote to her, "A last point for me has been a shock: I do not know what happened to the documents kept by Fr. Henry. When I went to St. Teresa's last year, I could find nothing anymore. Where are the documents now? I surely do not want this to happen in my case." Finally he gave in. Shortly before his death in 1993, Father Van Exem described the details to Archbishop Henry D'Souza, the archbishop of Calcutta at that time:

Your Grace,  
I am returning with thanks the documents you sent to me before leaving for Hong Kong.

Re the copy-book of Mother Teresa I add the following:

Mother wrote this herself. It is apparently a diary but it is not. It was surely written in part some time after the events. Did Mother have any notes I do not know. It is possible since she puts so many dates. In some places I added the month and the year. At the beginning of the Congregation Mother after answering the letters she received used to give them to me to keep them for her.

After some time—it may have been in Creek Lane—she wanted to burn all the letters I had received from her. I had by then two trunks of letters from her, one trunk of letters from benefactors and one of other correspondence. I refused to give permission to destroy the letters and told her she should apply to Archbishop Périer superior general of the M.C.'s [Missionaries of Charity]. Mother went to Archbishop Périer who told her: "Mother, write the history of the Congregation and Fr. Van Exem will give you all the letters." Mother started writing the present book with data from 21<sup>st</sup>

December 1948 till the 11<sup>th</sup> June 1949. In the evening she was so tired that she could not continue the history for long.

When Archbishop Dyer took over from Archbishop P erier Mother went to him for the same permission. He asked her what Archbishop P erier had decided and told her to do that. Then came Archbishop Albert Vincent who was emphatic in his refusal. In 1969 Archbishop Picachy came to Calcutta and Mother told me not to mention anything about her letters to him. She knew what he would say.

In the seventies and the eighties she continued to insist on destroying the letters. Mother was the elected General Superior of a Pontifical Congregation since 1965 and there was no ruling from any Archbishop. So I sent the trunks of letters to Mother but in a long letter I explained to her that some of the letters did not belong to her but to her Congregation.

The copy-book of Mother remained with me till I sent it to Your Grace.

Today I send back the documents I received from you.<sup>2</sup>

Although knowledge of her inspiration remained the privilege of Father Van Exem and Archbishop P erier, a number of priests over the years came to know of Mother Teresa's spiritual darkness. She revealed her interior state only because she felt God urging her to do so. Her own personal preferences did not matter; Him she could not refuse. These priests proved to be valuable helpers—real "Simons of Cyrene" on this "way of the Cross."

The recipients of these letters were the first ones to realize that the darkness was an essential element of her vocation, and they foresaw that making it known would offer precious testimony of Mother Teresa's holiness and

help continue her mission beyond her lifetime. Father Neuner explained:

Against her explicit request to burn these pages after I had read them I felt I had to preserve them as they revealed an aspect of her life, the real depth of her vocation, of which no one seemed to be aware. All saw her courageous struggle in establishing her work, her outgoing love for the poor and suffering, the care for her Sisters; but the spiritual darkness remained her secret. She seemed cheerful in her daily life, tireless in her work. The inner agony would not weaken her activities. With her inspiring leadership she guided her Sisters, started new centres, became famous, but inside she was in utter emptiness. These pages reveal the supporting power on which her mission rested. It would be important for her Sisters, and many others, to know that her work had its root in the mystery of Jesus' mission, in union with him who dying on the cross felt abandoned by his Father.

On some of the letters and notes about her interior darkness, Mother Teresa had written "matter of conscience." For Mother Teresa every word she wrote about her interior darkness (whether indicated or not) would fall into this category. One of the priests who knew about her darkness sheds light on the reasons for preserving and revealing these documents:

Would Mother, now that she is no longer with us on earth, still object to these letters having been preserved by Cardinal Picachy and now, after her and his death, brought into the open? By now she no doubt has understood that she belongs to the church. It is traditional teaching that the mystical charism of God's close friends is meant not primarily for themselves but

for the good of the whole church. Many people who go through similar trials may gain courage and hope from these letters. There are probably many more such persons than we think—though in various degrees of intensity.<sup>8</sup>

As to Mother Teresa's expression "Part of my Confession," it should be understood that what she meant was not part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. One cannot make a sacramental confession by writing one's sins on a piece of paper and sending it to a priest. The priests, recipients of her letters, understood her well—she had written what she was not able to say when she went to meet them for spiritual direction. It was her way of indicating that the matter was confidential; for her it meant the same as "matter of conscience."

In addition to the letters, excerpts from Mother Teresa's other writings are also quoted here, among them the journal she kept at the beginning of her work in the slums, her instructions to the sisters, and her public speeches. Other sources have also been used: excerpts of letters written during the time of discerning whether her "call within a call" was of divine origin, mainly those of Archbishop Périer, Father Van Exem, and her superiors; testimonies gathered during Mother Teresa's process of canonization, for the most part from her surviving spiritual guides and members of the Missionaries of Charity; and testimonies about her from published sources.

### *Organization*

The documents have been organized chronologically. As a result the same or similar expressions reappear, but these repetitions, especially in her writings regarding her interior state, are precisely what reveal the progression, intensity,

and duration of her darkness. They are, therefore, invaluable. For her part, Mother Teresa could only speak of the reality within her and her repeated mention of her pain and darkness with requests for prayer reveal an understandable need for support. Ideas that are repeated in the writings are often enriched as time went on with a new detail or aspect that indicates a deepening in her understanding or living of a particular facet of her spirituality and mission.

Mother Teresa's writings have been edited as little as possible. Although almost all of them were written in English, it must be kept in mind that English was not Mother Teresa's first language. Her mother tongue was Albanian. Her education and much of her everyday communication while growing up in Skopje was in Serbo-Croatian. The early letters from India to her friends and confessor back in Skopje were written in Serbo-Croatian. The most literal translation has been provided here. For the texts written in English, even if at times the grammar is incorrect or an improvement could have been made, they have been left as she wrote them. Her spelling mistakes have been corrected and the words that she obviously omitted in error have been added in square brackets.

Capitalization is an important part of Mother Teresa's writing style. She had the custom of capitalizing words that would not be capitalized in common English usage. Besides capitalizing "God" and the personal pronouns referring to Him, she also capitalized what was related to the sacred and holy, as well as terms that were important to her, such as "Confession," "our Young Society," "our Poor," "a big Smile," and so on. This was her way of expressing respect for the sacred and emphasizing a particular reality that struck her. However, she was not always consistent in her use of capitals, and most of these have been corrected to standard English usage.

A word about punctuation: Mother Teresa's writings presented here are personal communications to her close associates, not intended for publication. In this "informal writing" the dash is a punctuation mark that characterizes her style. At times, even in her letters, but especially in her journals and notes, the dash replaces every other punctuation mark: it stands for a period, comma, colon, and semicolon, for an exclamation or question mark, and finally for a dash as well. In short, every break of thought was marked with a dash. This particularity of her style is expressive of the dynamism and vivacity of her personality, a certain "haste" to do the next thing and not be busy with the "nonessential." Though the dashes could be a distraction to reading, for the sake of authenticity these have almost always been left in the text as she placed them. In a few instances, however, when a dash would have interfered with the meaning or flow of the text, it was either removed or replaced with the conventional punctuation marks.

Frequent use of uncommon abbreviations is another typical feature of Mother Teresa's writing, another expression of her characteristic hastiness. Some examples of these are "Holy Com." (Communion), "H.G." (His Grace), "Bl." (Blessed) Sacrament, "Cal." (Calcutta), "Nov." (Novices or Novitiate), and so on. The corresponding words have been provided in brackets after the abbreviations.

It is my hope that many will be inspired by Mother Teresa's heroic living of her mission of "[lighting] the light of those in darkness" and will carry it on according to their own call and possibilities. In those parts of our hearts where darkness still abides, may a bright light shine through her example, her love, and now also her intercession from heaven.

[fn1](#) The Society refers to the Congregation of the Missionaries of Charity.



[fn2](#) One lakh is equal to 100,000 rupees. Here Mother Teresa is acknowledging that a large sum of money has passed through her hands.

ONE

*“Put Your Hand in His Hand, and Walk Alone with Him”*

MISSIONARY

*Jesus, for You and for souls!*

*—Mother Teresa*

“PUT YOUR HAND in His [Jesus’] hand, and walk alone with Him. Walk ahead, because if you look back you will go back.”<sup>1</sup> These parting words from her mother were engraved on the heart of eighteen-year-old Gonxha Agnes Bojaxhiu, the future Mother Teresa, as she left her home in Skopje to commence her life as a missionary. On September 26, 1928, she journeyed to Ireland to join the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (the Loreto Sisters), a noncloistered congregation of women religious primarily dedicated to education. She had applied to go to the missions in Bengal. Such a venture demanded abundant faith and courage, for she and her family knew well that “at that time, when missionaries went to the missions, they never returned.”<sup>2</sup>

Young though she was, Gonxha had taken six years to decide on her vocation. She had been raised in a family that fostered piety and devotion, and in a fervent parish community that also contributed to her religious

upbringing. In this setting, Mother Teresa would later reveal, she first felt called to consecrate her life to God:

I was only twelve years old then. It was then that I first knew I had a vocation to the poor, in 1922. I wanted to be a missionary, I wanted to go out and give the life of Christ to the people in the missionary countries. At the beginning, between twelve and eighteen I didn't want to become a nun. We were a very happy family. But when I was eighteen, I decided to leave my home and become a nun, and since then, this forty years, I've never doubted even for a second that I've done the right thing; it was the will of God. It was His choice.<sup>3</sup>

Thus her decision was not a whim of her youthful years but rather a considered choice, the fruit of her profound relationship with Jesus. Many years later she would disclose, "From childhood the Heart of Jesus has been my first love."<sup>4</sup> She made her determination clear in the application letter to the superior of the Loreto nuns:

Reverend Mother Superior,  
Be so kind to hear my sincere desire. I want to join your Society, so that one day I may become a missionary sister, and work for Jesus who died for us all.

I have completed the fifth class of high school; of languages I know Albanian, which is my mother tongue and Serbian<sup>fn1</sup>, I know a little French, English I do not know at all, but I hope in the good God that He will help me to learn the little I need and so I am beginning immediately these [days] to practice it.

I don't have any special conditions, I only want to be in the missions, and for everything else I surrender myself completely to the good God's disposal.

IN SKOPLJE, 28-VI-1928.  
*Gonda Bojadijević*<sup>5</sup>

An exceptional grace she had received on the day of her first Holy Communion had fueled her desire to take this daring step into the unknown: “From the age of 5½ years, —when first I received Him [Jesus]—the love for souls has been within—It grew with the years—until I came to India—with the hope of saving many souls.”<sup>6</sup>

Sailing across the Mediterranean Sea, the zealous young missionary wrote to her loved ones at home: “Pray for your missionary, that Jesus may help her to save as many immortal souls as possible from the darkness of unbelief.”<sup>7</sup> Her hope to bring light to those in darkness would be fulfilled, but in a way she could not have anticipated as she traveled to her chosen mission land.

While at sea, in moments of solitude and silence, as joy and pain mingled in her heart, Sister Teresa (named after Thérèse of Lisieux when she joined the Loreto order)<sup>fn2</sup> collected her sentiments in a poem:

FAREWELL<sup>8</sup>

*I'm leaving my dear house  
And my beloved land  
To steamy Bengal go I  
To a distant shore.*

*I'm leaving my old friends  
Forsaking family and home  
My heart draws me onward  
To serve my Christ.*

*Goodbye, O mother dear  
May God be with you all  
A Higher Power compels me  
Toward torrid India.*

*The ship moves slowly ahead  
Cleaving the ocean waves,*

*As my eyes take one last look  
At Europe's dear shores.*

*Bravely standing on the deck  
Joyful, peaceful of mien,  
Christ's happy little one,  
His new bride-to-be.*

*In her hand a cross of iron  
On which the Savior hangs,  
While her eager soul offers there  
Its painful sacrifice.*

*"Oh God, accept this sacrifice  
As a sign of my love,  
Help, please, Thy creature  
To glorify Thy name!*

*In return, I only ask of Thee,  
O most kind Father of us all:  
Let me save at least one soul—  
One you already know."*

*Fine and pure as summer dew  
Her soft warm tears begin to flow,  
Sealing and sanctifying now  
Her painful sacrifice.*

On January 6, 1929, after a five-week journey, Sister Teresa arrived in Calcutta. In a letter she sent back home, she shared with her readers her arrival to the city that would become inseparably linked with her name:

On January 6th, in the morning, we sailed from the sea to the river Ganges, also called the "Holy River." Travelling by this route we could take a good look at our new homeland Bengal. The nature is marvellous. In

some places there are beautiful small houses but for the rest, only huts lined up under the trees. Seeing all this we desired that we might, as soon as possible, enter among them. We came to know that here are very few Catholics. When our ship landed on the shore we sang in our souls the "Te Deum."<sup>9</sup> Our Indian sisters waited for us there, with whom, with indescribable happiness, we stepped for the first time on Bengal's soil.

In the convent chapel, we first thanked our dear Saviour for this great grace that He had so safely brought us to the goal for which we had been longing. Here we will remain one week and then we are leaving for Darjeeling, where we will remain during our novitiate.

Pray much for us that we may be good and courageous missionaries.<sup>10</sup>

Shortly after her arrival in Calcutta, Sister Teresa was sent to Darjeeling to continue her formation. In May she began the novitiate, a two-year period of initiation into the religious life that precedes the first profession of vows. The first year concentrated on spiritual formation of the candidate, emphasizing prayer and the spirituality of the order, while the second year emphasized the mission of the institute and offered some training in its apostolic works. Having completed her formation, she made her first profession of vows on May 25, 1931,<sup>11</sup> promising to live a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and to devote herself with particular care to the instruction of youth. This was an occasion of immense joy, as her longing to consecrate herself to God became a reality. She confided to a friend:

If you could know how happy I am, as Jesus' little spouse. No one, not even those who are enjoying some happiness which in the world seems perfect, could I