

MOTHER
TERESA



A
SIMPLE
PATH

*Compiled by
Lucinda Vardey*

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ning. Death is a continuation of life. This is the meaning of eternal life; it is where our soul goes to God, to be in the presence of God, to see God, to speak to God, to continue loving Him with greater love because in Heaven we shall be able to love Him with our whole heart and our soul. We only surrender our body in death—our heart and our soul live forever.

When we die we are going to be with God, and with all those we have known who have gone before us: our family and our friends will be there waiting for us. Heaven must be a beautiful place.

Every religion has an eternity, another life. People who fear death are the ones who believe this is the end. I have not known anyone to die in fear if that person has witnessed the love of God. The person has to make peace with God, as do we all. People die suddenly all the time, so it could happen to us too at any moment. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow has not yet come; we must live each day as if it were our last so that when God calls us we are ready, and prepared, to die with a clean heart.

LOVE



THE
FRUIT
OF
FAITH
IS
LOVE



The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for. We can cure physical diseases with medicine, but the only cure for loneliness, despair, and hopelessness is love. There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread but there are many more dying for a little love. The poverty in the West is a different kind of poverty—it is not only a poverty of loneliness but also of spirituality. There's a hunger for love, as there is a hunger for God.

It is impossible to respond to this need unless you have God's grace to help you. First Sister Dolores and then Sister Kateri explain this further:

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"We must be loved by God first, and only then can we give to others. For us to want to give love to others we must be full of love to give. God acts in this way. It is He who moves us all to do what we are doing, and if we feel His love for us then this love emanates from us. His love has no boundaries."

"There is only one love and this is the love of God. Once we love God deeply enough we will love our neighbor to the same extent because, as we grow in our love for God, we grow to respect all that He has created and to recognize and appreciate all the gifts He has given us. Then naturally we want to take care of all of them.

"God made the world for the delight of human beings—if only we could see His goodness everywhere, His concern for us, His awareness of our needs: the phone call we've waited for, the ride we are offered, the letter in the mail, just the little things He does for us throughout the day. As we remember and notice His love for us, we just begin to fall in love with Him because He is so busy with us—you just can't resist Him. I believe there's no such thing as luck in life, it's God's love, it's His."

When you know how much God is in love with you then you can only live your life radiating that love. I always say that love starts at home: family first, and then your own town or city. It is easy to love people

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who are far away but it is not always so easy to love those who live with us or right next to us. I do not agree with the big way of doing things—love needs to start with an individual. To get to love a person, you must contact that person, become close. Everyone needs love. All must know that they're wanted and that they are important to God.

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you." He also said, "Whatever you did to the least of my brethren, you did it to me," so we love Him in the poor. He said, "I was hungry and you fed me . . . I was naked and you clothed me."

I always remind the sisters and brothers that our day is made up of twenty-four hours with Jesus. Sister Theresina explains this more; and then Father Bert White provides his views.

"We are contemplatives in the world and so our lives are centered on prayer and action. Our work is an outflow of our contemplation, our union with God in whatever we do, and through our work (which we call our Apostolate) we feed our union with God so that prayer and action and action and prayer are in continual flow."

"Gandhi said, 'Act, but seek not the fruit of your actions.' Your actions flow out of who you are, that's the fruit. It's a bit like being in love—when love just flows out to the person you are in love with."

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The following prayer is the prayer every Missionary of Charity says before leaving for his or her Apostolate. It is also used as the Physician's Prayer in Shishu Bhavan, the children's home in Calcutta:

Dear Lord, the Great Healer, I kneel before You,
Since every perfect gift must come from You.
I pray, give skill to my hands, clear vision to my mind,
kindness and meekness to my heart.
Give me singleness of purpose, strength to lift up a part
of the burden of my suffering fellow men, and a
true realization of the privilege that is mine.
Take from my heart all guile and worldliness,
That with the simple faith of a child, I may rely on You.

THE
WARMTH
OF
OUR
HAND



Love is not patronizing and charity isn't about pity, it is about love. Charity and love are the same—with charity you give love, so don't just give money but reach out your hand instead. When I was in London, I went to see the homeless people where our sisters have a soup kitchen. One man, who was living in a cardboard box, held my hand and said, "It's been a long time since I felt the warmth of a human hand."

Mary, one of our volunteers, has more ideas for reaching out to people:

"I've found that practical help can actually put people down unless it's done with love. No one wants to have things done for them, or be done to. I've also found trying to make contact with people has come in

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stages and that it has helped to do this in an organized way, like going to give the sisters a hand at the soup kitchen. Then it's best to try not to get too busy with giving out the food and clearing up the plates but to try to make a point of talking to somebody while you're there, or sitting down beside somebody—trying to make one-to-one contact. A lot of people carry photographs with them and so you can ask to see their photographs—or make a joke about their hairstyle—anything!

"The important thing is to find some point of contact even if it's just saying, 'Did you enjoy your meal?'" Instead of standing in the background doing the dishes, you can make sure you're the one who collects the plates. I think if you find this sort of thing difficult it's probably better to do it gradually—if you see somebody standing, or walking or sitting alone, then take the opportunity to reach out to them."

Here is a different story, also from Mary, that shows another way to make contact with people in need:

"A group of us went to Albania a while ago, and visited the sisters there. We heard about a home for handicapped children and so went to see them—but it was just a disaster. Apparently, the place had been given loads and loads of aid, but every time this happened, the people in the area came and ransacked it because they also needed things. Also, what struck me was that a lot of stuff was being flown in and there

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were warehouses packed full of aid—but it wasn't getting to people. So we went back with a box of apples and made a point of giving one to each child because we knew that if we just left the box, probably the other people around would also need the apples for their children too and the ones in the orphanage might not get them."

Love has no meaning if it isn't shared. Love has to be put into action. You have to love without expectation, to do something for love itself, not for what you may receive. If you expect something in return, then it isn't love, because true love is loving without conditions and expectations.

If there is a need God will guide you, as He guided us to serve those with AIDS. We don't judge these people, we don't ask what happened to them and how they got sick, we just see the need and care for them. I think God is telling us something with AIDS, giving us an opportunity to show our love. People with AIDS have awakened the tender love in those who had perhaps shut it out and forgotten it.

Sister Dolores shows how simply being there with love is often enough:

"There is a lot of fear at the beginning for those who come to us with AIDS. It is hard for them to cope with the fact that they are going to die. But being there with us and seeing us with others in their last

moments makes a difference. I remember in New York that the mother of a man from Puerto Rico offered to nurse him if he came home. He thanked her but said he would remain with us, though he would visit her. One day he told me, 'I know when I am dying you will be there holding my hand,' because he had seen us doing it with others and knew that he wouldn't die alone.

"It's quite simple really. The dying are moved by the love they receive and it may be just a touch of my hand, or a glass of water, or providing them with some kind of sweet they desire. You just take that to them, what they ask for, and they are satisfied and know someone cares for them, someone loves them, someone wants them—and that, in itself, is a great help to them. Because of this they believe that God must be even kinder, more generous, and so their souls are lifted up to God. As we don't preach, we just do what we do with love, they are touched by God's grace."

Brother Geoff, General Servant of the Missionaries of Charity Brothers, also comments on the best way to offer love:

"When people who are used to being rejected and abandoned experience being accepted by others and being loved, when they see people are giving their time and energy for them, that conveys a message that, after all, they are not rubbish.

"Certainly, love is expressed first in being *with* before doing *to* someone. We have to continually renew our awareness of this because we can get caught up in a lot of the doing for. You see, if our actions do not first come from the desire to be with a person, then it really becomes just social work. When you are willing to be with a poor person you can recognize his need and if your love is genuine you naturally want to do what you can as an expression of your love. Service, in a way, is simply a means of expressing your being *for* that person—and often with the poorest people you cannot completely alleviate their problem. But by being with them, by being for them, whatever you can do for them makes a difference. The message we try to convey to the poorest of the poor is: We cannot solve your problems but God loves you even while you are handicapped or alcoholic or have leprosy, and whether or not you become cured, God loves you just as much and we are here to express that love. And if we can help relieve their pain a bit all well and good, but it is more important for us to remind them that even in the midst of pain and suffering, God loves them. It's a difficult message to communicate, obviously, but we believe that being for them is the first thing. If you spend time with a person then that is as much an expression of love as what you can do for them."

Here, one of our volunteers, Nigel, describes his experience at our home for the dying and destitute in Calcutta:

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"When I went to help at Nirmal Hriday I hated the place because of the suffering, and I felt absolutely useless. I thought, What am I doing here?"

"Later, when I got back to Britain, I had a long conversation with one of the sisters about it. I told her I'd quickly learned sign language so I could sort out the difference between someone asking for a drink of water or for a bedpan and get it the right way round. But, apart from that, I hadn't done a lot. I mostly sat on people's beds and stroked them or fed them. You got some recognition sometimes, but not a lot other times, because they're on their last legs. So when the sister asked me how I'd got on I said, 'I was there.' And she said to me, 'What was St. John or Our Blessed Mother doing at the foot of the Cross?' "

Do we look at the poor with compassion? They are hungry not only for food, they are hungry to be recognized as human beings. They are hungry for dignity and to be treated as we are treated. They are hungry for our love.

EVERY
ACT
OF
LOVE
IS
A
PRAYER



It is not how much you do but how much love you put into the doing and sharing with others that is important. Try not to judge people. If you judge others then you are not giving love. Instead, try to help them by seeing their needs and acting to meet them. People often ask me what I think about homosexuals, for example, and I always answer that I don't judge people. It isn't what anyone may or may not have done, but what *you* have done that matters in God's eyes.

We have the following words in a sign outside our chapel at the Mother House. They were written by Father Edward Le Joly after we had talked in 1977, and explain exactly what our work is about:

We are not here for the work, we are here for Jesus. All we do is for Him. We are first of all religious,

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we are not social workers, not teachers, not nurses or doctors, we are religious sisters. We serve Jesus in the poor. We nurse Him, feed Him, clothe Him, visit Him, comfort Him in the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the orphans, the dying. But all we do, our prayer, our work, our suffering is for Jesus. Our life has no other reason or motivation. This is a point many people do not understand.*

Here are some words and examples from Sister Dolores, Brother Geoff, and a volunteer, Linda, on this kind of love in action:

"In the West there is so much loneliness. Most lonely people just need someone to sit with them, be with them, smile at them, because many do not have any family left and are living alone, are shut in. So on different occasions during the year, when I was working in one of our homes in New York, we would bring these people all together for a social gathering so that they could meet others, and they really looked forward to that. We'd organize a special day for them—we'd give them a good lunch and some cakes—and just by having them come out of their homes and mix with others we brought happiness into their lives.

"In our soup kitchens we provide for people who are drifters. They come for a meal, and some of them

* Edward Le Joly. *We Do It for Jesus: Mother Teresa and Her Missionaries of Charity* (Queens Village, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977).

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don't eat at all. They just want to be there in an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity and usually after we share a prayer or something, they leave. Most people don't just want soup, they want contact where they are appreciated, loved, feel wanted, and find some peace in their hearts. It's the personal touch that matters."

"In the West we have a tendency to be profit-oriented, where everything is measured according to the results and we get caught up in being more and more active to generate results. In the East—especially in India—I find that people are more content to just *be*, to just sit around under a banyan tree for half a day chatting to each other. We Westerners would probably call that wasting time. But there is value to it. Being with someone, listening without a clock and without anticipation of results, teaches us about love. The success of love is in the loving—it is not in the result of loving. Of course it is natural in love to want the best for the other person, but whether it turns out that way or not does not determine the value of what we have done. The more we can remove this priority for results the more we can learn about the contemplative element of love. There is the love expressed in the service and the love in the contemplation. It is the balance of both which we should be striving for. Love is the key to finding this balance."

"Helping the children at Shishu Bhavan in Calcutta was very special for me. I felt very moved by

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them. One morning we sat upstairs in a circle—we'd do that a lot and sit and sing—and I was holding a little handicapped boy who just looked at me with complete joy and love in his eyes. He had a very deep serenity in him. I remember this as a deeply spiritual experience."

LOVING
UNTIL
IT
HURTS



We must grow in love and to do this we must go on loving and loving and giving and giving until it hurts—the way Jesus did. Do ordinary things with extraordinary love: little things like caring for the sick and the homeless, the lonely and the unwanted, washing and cleaning for them.

You must give what will cost you something. This, then, is giving not just what you can live without but what you can't live without or don't want to live without, something you really like. Then your gift becomes a sacrifice, which will have value before God. Any sacrifice is useful if it is done out of love.

This giving until it hurts—this sacrifice—is also what I call love in action. Every day I see this love—in children, men, and women. I was once walking down the street and a beggar came to me and he said,

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"Mother Teresa, everybody's giving to you, I also want to give to you. Today, for the whole day, I got only twenty-nine paise and I want to give it to you." I thought for a moment: If I take it he will have nothing to eat tonight, and if I don't take it I will hurt him. So I put out my hands and I took the money. I have never seen such joy on anybody's face as I saw on his—that a beggar, he too, could give to Mother Teresa. It was a big sacrifice for that poor man who'd been sitting in the sun all day and had only received twenty-nine paise. It was beautiful: twenty-nine paise is such a small amount and I can get nothing with it, but as he gave it up and I took it, it became like thousands because it was given with so much love.

The other day I received a letter from a small child in America. I knew he was little because he wrote in big handwriting, "Mother Teresa I love you so much I'm sending you my pocket money," and inside the letter there was a check for three dollars. Also, one of the sisters in London told me that, one day, a little girl came to the door of the home in Kilburn with a bag of pennies and she said, "This is for the poor men." She didn't say, "This is for Mother Teresa" or "for the Missionaries of Charity." She lived down the road and had seen all the residents walking around—and so she said, "This is for the men." She'd just seen with her eyes and I think it's like that for so many people. They see something and they're attracted towards it because it's good.

A young couple got married here recently. They

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decided to keep their wedding simple—she wore a plain cotton sari and there were just his and her parents' present—and they gave us all the money they had saved from not having a big Hindu wedding ceremony. They were sharing their love with the poor. Something like this happens every day. By becoming poor ourselves, by loving until it hurts, we become capable of loving more deeply, more beautifully, more wholly.

One of our volunteers, Sarah, gives her experiences of this kind of love while working in one of our homes in San Francisco:

"What I perceive as loving until it hurts is loving even if you don't understand the situation, the people, anything. It's easier said than done, but there are periods of time when I can do it. The result of getting close to people, on the other hand, is that when one of the residents—Chris—died it was really hard for me. I didn't want to go back—in fact I didn't for two or three weeks. I'd get up in the morning and get ready—and then I didn't go. The sisters understood this so well. That's how they helped me, because there's no judgment or condemnation from them. They said, 'That's fine—come back whenever you want.' When I mourned and cried for Chris after he died, I was told, 'This house is here for men to die. It would be selfish for us to cry because we're then thinking of ourselves and not thinking about where

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they are—with God. We should be happy for them.' That's their attitude.

"I'm not even a full-time volunteer and the people who do that work at the house day by day must know much more about this loving until it hurts. If you are in that environment and give all the time, you're going to become more fine-tuned in the art of loving and become a spiritual resource for God. These full-time volunteers are special—God fills them up every day. It's so much easier to fake love in the world because nobody really demands that you give until it hurts—until they are sick."

A CHEERFUL SUFFERER



The spirit of a Missionary of Charity is total surrender to God, loving trust in others, and cheerfulness with everyone. We have to accept suffering with joy, we have to live a life of poverty with cheerful trust and to minister to Jesus in the poorest of the poor with cheerfulness. God loves a cheerful giver. She or he gives best who gives with a smile. If you are always ready to say Yes to God, you will naturally have a smile for all and be able, with God's blessing, to give until it hurts.

Two of our volunteers, Sarah and Dave, discovered the value of this approach in our homes in San Francisco and London:

“What I really like about the sisters is that when things get difficult they keep a sense of humor about it. And, when mistakes are made, they're rectified and

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then we go on. But again, some of them have told me that their lives are sometimes very hard and they are sorrowful and they do cry for their own families. You know they have brothers, sisters, parents who have problems or are sick and they can't do anything to help them in this world except to pray. So they have feelings, they cry too. They are human—they love God and they love people."

"I found out from working with the sisters that they are just who they appear to be. I have a lot of daily contact with them, doing the ordinary things we do, like working in the kitchen and scrubbing the floors, serving meals, driving to the supermarket and then taking people to the doctor or to a psychiatric unit in the hospital, and dealing sometimes with some very unpleasant people on the way. And they are always so cheerful. It's not that gritted-teeth cheerfulness, it's the real thing.

"I'm convinced that the external cheerfulness is the manifestation of an inward joy that they feel. I know that anyone who works with them is aware of the time they spend in the chapel on their knees, and they are very happy because of it. Their happiest time is when they pray—they look forward to it, they are eager to pray and to refuel and they are equally eager to come out of that refueling and give away the energy that they receive. This is not a fanaticism, it is a genuine joyful desire to share what they have. Just as

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they don't keep any of the material things that they have: anything that's given to them, clothing or food or money or whatever it may be—paper bags, rubber bands, you name it—they give it away. Everything that comes in goes out.

"I think how much God gives them and how much He must love them. I love them, and I am drawn to them by how pleasing they must be to God. Their grace and their energy are given to them by Him—it's reciprocal love, which they then show to us. I see this in every single one of the sisters, and yet they are not clones, they are their own individual selves, they have their own personalities."

The password of the early Christians was joy, so let us still serve the Lord with joy. Sister Kateri explains how this feels:

"I was working at the cerebral palsy center in New York and I was praying daily. One day somebody asked me what I was so happy about, intimating that I might have fallen in love with someone. But it wasn't exactly that—it was just feeling the love of God. I was so happy and so fulfilled as my relationship with God was growing. This made me full of joy."

Joy is love, joy is prayer, joy is strength. God loves a person who gives joyfully, and if you give joyfully you always give more. A joyful heart is the result of a heart burning with love.

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Works of love are always works of joy. We don't need to look for happiness: if we have love for others we'll be given it. It is the gift of God.

SERVICE

