

Mother Teresa

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11-12th Grade Category, First Place**

“Keep the joy of loving the poor and share this joy with all you meet.
Remember works of love are works of peace.” -Mother Teresa

Agnesë Gonxhe Bojaxhiu was born on August 26, 1910 in Macedonia. At the age of eighteen, Agnesë joined the sisterhood where she vowed to give “wholehearted and free service to the poorest of the poor” (Mother Teresa Biography). She took on the name Mother Teresa, and on October 7, 1950, she established the Missionary of Charity in Kolkata, India. There, she cared for refugees, the mentally ill, AIDS victims, abandoned and sick children, lepers, alcoholics, and the aging. There are now over 610 houses in 123 countries that Mother Teresa opened to console the sick and dying (Biography). Mother Teresa has also founded many other missions, including the Missionary for Brothers, Missionary for Fathers, Co-Workers of Mother Teresa, Sick and Suffering Co-Workers, Lay Missionaries of Charities, Corpus Christi Monument for Priests and the Missionaries for Charity (Biography).

Mother Teresa strived to bring pride to the less fortunate and lived her life in complete simplicity. In India, she helped fight social injustice while she lived among the destitute (Chawla). Mother Teresa let go of her earthly belongings, so she could live life in unity with the less fortunate. Due to poor living conditions, many people suffered malnutrition. Mother Teresa worked to supply them with the necessities and bring inspiration to their lives (Kolodiejchuk). She helped bring food, clothing, and hope to the poorest of the poor.

The work Mother Teresa performed brought dignity to the underprivileged and hope to the young and desperate. Her own faith and courage were the foundation of her life’s work as she became known as a woman of great deeds. Bharati Mukherjee, a journalist for *Time* Magazine, stated that, “in fighting for the dignity of the destitute in a foreign land, she [Mother Teresa] gave the world a moral example that bridged divides of culture, class and religion” (Mukherjee). Her moral courage, physical courage and emotional courage aided her every move and led her closer to God.

Mother Teresa’s hard work and devotion to the poor made a difference in the lives of thousands of people. However, she was criticized by many for working with the poorest of the poor and helping those dying of leprosy, AIDS, old age, and mental illness (Mother Teresa Criticism). Many people stated that her help was just “infecting” the environment with sick and dying people. Mother Teresa was also criticized for accepting money from “unclean” sources. As a pro-life activist, Mother Teresa was also condemned for protesting abortion and artificial birth control (Mother Teresa Criticism).

I believe that Mother Teresa made a huge impact on the lives of thousands of people. The work and service she has done will continue for many years. I use Mother Teresa as a role model in my every-day life to remember that sometimes even the little things mean the world to people. I try to display this; whether it is smiling at someone in the hallway, serving dinner at the homeless shelter or simply volunteering at a non-profit child care in my community.

I feel that Mother Teresa and I share many common morals. As a Catholic, I am pro-life and stand up for what I believe in. I have volunteered at Essential Pregnancy Services, Precious Memories Child Care, and attended the March For Life: Pro-Life Rally in Washington D.C. last year. I have also enjoyed serving at a local homeless shelter, traveling to the Dominican Republic for an immersion/service trip and spending a week in Louisiana helping with Hurricane Rita relief. In thinking about my small service opportunities, I realize how great Mother Teresa's sacrifices and dedication were to help relieve the injustices suffered by the poor.

Mother Teresa is a source of inspiration for change in my own life. As a senior in high school, I have the opportunity to further my education and make a difference. I aspire to double major in social work and Spanish, so that I may help children in my community grow to become the leaders of our future. I hope that by making a small difference in the lives of children, I can inspire them to make a difference in someone else's life. If each of us has even a small positive effect on those we meet, especially those in need, we will make a positive influence in our community, society, and world. We can all make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate if we share our faith, courage and love. As Mother Teresa said, "We can do no great things, only small things with great love" (Kolodiejchuk).

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