

Mother Teresa: Faith, Depression, and the Work of God

"I am told God lives in me -- and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul." --Mother Teresa

In 1979, Mother Teresa, a Roman Catholic nun and founder of the Missionaries of Charity received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway. She was instrumental in starting charity missions around the world, teaching people about helping the poor, and traveling to many different countries to help the needy. With the help of donations from the public who believed and supported her faith, she performed humanitarian works in the slums of Calcutta, India. Years ago, Calcutta was a picture of poverty, hopelessness, and distress. Considered as the Saint of the Slums, she treated lepers, beggars, and the poorest of the poor with cleanliness and dignity. These individuals experienced social anxiety because of their infirmities and needed someone to nurture them. Mother Teresa arrived and became an inspiration to the sick, the victims, the discriminated, and the homeless. She gave the world a moral example that was accepted across cultures, classes, and religions. But just like any mortal being, Mother Teresa was not immune to doubts and fears. Recently, reports were released about Mother Teresa's struggles in life. In those reports, it was told that Mother Teresa also felt the absence of God in her life and in her work. Written in the 1950s and 1960s, the letters revealed that she too had troubling and painful times in her life. The challenges led her to question the impact of her work and her faith. The absence of God seemed to have started at the time she started tending to the poor and dying in India. The letters depicted a state of deep and abiding spiritual pain, a clear indication that she experienced stress and anxiety. In some of her letters, she compared the experience in Calcutta to hell. In some of her writings, Mother Teresa expressed her doubts about the existence of God and heaven. Some critics of religion have sensationalized the letters and used it to justify their Atheistic beliefs, as part of their attempt to destroy or weaken the faith of others. It is true that one does not need to live and endure the slums to understand why human beings are being treated as rejects and refuse. Try watching the television and see the unfortunate third-world country dwellers that live under bridges and suffer from malnutrition. Watching news about the number of women being raped and abused throughout the world can only make one question the existence of God. How can a supreme being allow such injustice Can there be a God in the midst of all the pains, deaths, and tragedies in the world Many find it difficult to believe in a God who seemed so distant. But it is also quite unfair to think that there is no merit in faith and spirituality just because a saintly figure such as Mother Teresa had expressed doubts about her own faith. If anything, the story behind Mother Teresa's struggles with faith is proof that we are human and that having doubts and fears is simply part of being human. In fact, almost all believers experience a period of spiritual crisis. Often times, these periods of trial have even become the turning point for a person seeking for greater spiritual enlightenment. After all the pain and depression, doubters become even more fervent believers of the faith. Personal losses, unanswered prayers, abuse of spiritual authority, and natural disasters are only some of the factors that have caused people to doubt their faith or their belief in God. So many questions remain, but one answer remains clear. The God who created the world and the universe exists. History and human experience undeniably points out to a Supreme Being who is all-powerful as well as faithful to those who truly believe.

About the Author

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