

## **PRAYER SERVICE AT APOSTOLATE OF DIVINE MERCY – SEPTEMBER 4, 2016**

I want you to know that Shawn took what I was going to say in my homily. Seriously. And I didn't know, Shawn, that you were such a preacher. I hope you'll consider becoming a Deacon. I've probably said that to you before, right, Shawn? Anyway, we will look for you in the diaconate.

Mother Teresa was once asked: "What is the secret of your life?" She answered: "My secret is quite simple. I pray and through my prayer I become one in love with Christ, and see that praying to Him is to love Him, and that means to fulfill His words... 'I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me'. My poor ones in the world's slums are like the suffering Christ. In them God's Son lives and dies, and through them God shows me His true Face. Prayer for me means becoming 24 hours a day at one with the will of Jesus to live for Him, through Him, and with Him."

I thought these words of Mother Teresa on this day of her canonization and on this occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Apostolate of Divine Mercy in Service of Life, Marriage, and Family. On this day, I invite you to reflect on this secret of Mother Teresa – her prayer, her devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and her devotion to Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor. Your apostolate, like the apostolate of Mother Teresa, is founded in prayer. It was her center. Jesus and her communion with Him. Prayer enlarged her heart, even though she often felt desolation in her prayer. She never gave up. She offered her desolation with Jesus on the cross. And her prayer bore fruit, amazing fruit, in the vineyard of the Lord! This was her secret. May it be your secret! Prayer in the Divine Mercy chapel. You know its power. The abortion mill next door would never be closed if it was not for the power of prayer, recourse to the divine mercy, and adoration of Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Your prayer does not end when you leave the chapel. You carry with you the love and the mercy of Christ to do what He has asked: to do the works of mercy. Your works center on the service of human life, marriage, and the family, causes close to the heart of our new saint.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta heard in her prayer a call within a call. Many of you may know this if you have read her life story. She had already received the call to be a religious sister. She was a Sister of Loreto and taught in a girls' school in Calcutta. But her heart became restless as she saw so many desperately poor and dying people on the streets of Calcutta. With the archbishop's permission, she left the Sisters of Loreto to help the poor while living like them and with them. And by the way, Shawn, her approval was much more difficult to obtain than your's. But she was approved, and she founded a new religious congregation, the Missionaries of Charity, who not only professed the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, but also a fourth vow, to serve the poorest of the poor. Thus began one of the most amazing apostolates in the history of the Church. Saint Teresa of Calcutta, a saint of the slums, and her sisters went out into the streets to care for the poor, the sick, lepers, abandoned children, and the dying. They cared for them. They saw the face of Christ in the face of every poor and suffering person. They brought the light of Christ and His fire of love to people who were discarded, forgotten, and unloved. They brought the tender love and care of God to His suffering children. Amazingly, this new order of nuns grew and expanded throughout the world. Though she

never sought fame, Mother Teresa became famous. When she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, she was called the most powerful woman in the world. But her power was not material or worldly. It was the power of love, the power of charity.

Here in the United States and in Europe, Mother Teresa would say there is so much hunger, not so much for a piece of bread, but a tremendous hunger for love. She spoke of this as a very great poverty and a great disease, where so many people are unwanted, including unborn children, so many unloved, a poverty of the soul and a hunger for God. Mother Teresa said that the poorest people and nations in the world are those that destroy life by abortion and euthanasia. Your apostolate is at the service of human life. I am so grateful for your service of love, love for the unborn children and their mothers tempted to have an abortion, and love even for the perpetrators of this grave evil. This is necessary for the Lord teaches us to love our enemies. And love for women who have had abortions who so desperately need healing and loving care.

The expansion of your mission to include service of marriage and family is very important. After all, the sanctuary of life is the family. Mother Teresa would often speak about how love begins at home. We learn to love in our family. How many children sadly in our society lack this essential gift, the love of a mother and a father united in the unbreakable bond of marriage. I encourage you in your expanded mission to serve the Gospel of Marriage and the Family as you also serve the Gospel of life. It's one and the same Gospel: The Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Gospel of love!

I am going to do something for the Apostolate that Shawn doesn't know about. I didn't tell him I was going to do this. But on this beautiful day in the life of the Church, the day of Mother Teresa's canonization as a saint, I wish to entrust this Apostolate of Divine Mercy to the care and intercession of Saint Teresa of Calcutta. The work you do is a work of charity and mercy. I pray that Mother Teresa will inspire you to serve Jesus in the poor and the vulnerable, including the most vulnerable in our society, the innocent unborn. I pray that she will inspire you to uphold the truth about marriage and its dignity and to serve the cause of the family according to God's loving plan. And in all you do, may you be witnesses of mercy after the example of the Saint of Mercy, Mother Teresa of Calcutta! She teaches you and me so much. She teaches us how to become saints. Your work in this apostolate and my work as bishop, in order to be fruitful, to be all for God and to be beautiful, has to be built on faith and done with love. Saint Teresa of Calcutta, pray for us!