

# Why Mother Teresa Does Not Deserve To Be A Saint

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A file photo dated March 1982, shows Haiti's former president Jean-Claude Duvalier (Photo credits-AFP/Getty Images).

One of the characters in her inner circle was Jim Towey, who became her legal counsel in the late 1980s. In February 2002, President George W. Bush violated both the letter and the spirit of the American constitution by setting up the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to further the cause of fundamentalist churches and religious conversions worldwide. Towey was appointed director of this office.

## Anti-Reformist

Teresa was a faithful servant of the Vatican. In an article on Slate.com, author Christopher Hitchens says, *"During the deliberations over the Second Vatican Council, (Teresa) was to the fore in opposing all suggestions of reform. Her position was ultra-reactionary and fundamentalist even in orthodox Catholic terms."* In fact, while receiving the Nobel Peace Prize she told a dumbfounded audience that abortion is *"the greatest destroyer of peace."*

(Nobel Prize winning economist and author Steven Levitt has demonstrated in his brilliantly written book, *Freakonomics*, how the legalisation of abortion contributed to the sharp – and unexpected – drop in crime in the United States. Abortions prevented the birth of unwanted children in families where they would have been disproportionately likely to grow up as criminals.)

## Insider Reveals

One of the most compelling accounts of the macabre world of Teresa's order, the Missionaries of Charity, is by the Australian, Collete Livermore. A nun who worked in Teresa's order for 11 years, she ended up sick and disillusioned. In 1984 she quit and wrote the book

Hope Endures, where she talks about a little known but disturbing side of Teresa, which she says hurt the truly needy.

Livermore explains how the nuns were not provided with medical advice, the use of mosquito repellents, or information about malaria and vaccinations because Teresa believed “God” would look after the nuns. Livermore got into trouble with the order for helping a man with dysentery who was in danger of dying.

*“The order cared more about obedience than doing the right thing,”* she writes. Teresa quoted the Bible (Peter 2:18-23) which orders slaves to obey their masters even if they are abusive and difficult, and used this text to urge her nuns to obey superiors without question.

In Manila, Teresa wouldn’t let the nuns have a washing machine, which forced them to wash the underwear of the incontinent with brushes. Livermore felt the order was more concerned about inflicting hardship on the nuns than on helping the sick. More angst was in store for Livermore when she was forbidden to help a sick boy named Alex. That’s when Livermore decided to leave the order because she didn’t like the way she was expected to let the poor suffer.

### **Pain Is Beautiful**

Before she died, Teresa had opened over 600 missions in 123 countries. Some of these missions have been described as “homes for the dying” by visiting doctors. The doctors observed a significant lack of hygiene, even unfit conditions, as well as a shortage of actual care, inadequate food and no painkillers. “There is something beautiful in seeing the poor accept their lot, to suffer it like Christ’s passion. The world gains much from their suffering,” was her reply to criticism, cites Hitchens.

It would be pertinent to mention here that each time Teresa herself fell sick she sought the finest medical care. Despite the fact that medical tourists from the West travel to India for treatment, Teresa reckoned India wasn’t good enough for her. She was admitted to California’s Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation.

### **Canonisation Capers**

Shortly after her death in September 1997, the pope nominated Teresa for beatification, the first step towards sainthood. However, by doing this the pope violated a Vatican tradition that allowed a cooling off period of five years to guard against dubious characters.

Writes Hitchens-

*As for the ‘miracle’ that had to be attested, what can one say? Surely any respectable Catholic cringes with shame at the obviousness of the fakery. A Bengali woman named Monica Besra claims that a beam of light emerged from a picture of (Teresa), which she happened to have in her home, and relieved her of a cancerous tumour. Her physician, Dr Ranjan Mustafi, says that she didn’t have a cancerous tumor in the first place and that the tubercular cyst she did have was cured by a course of prescription medicine. Was he interviewed by the Vatican’s investigators? No.*

But then, dubious characters are part of the Christian pantheon. The most famous of these is Saint Dismas, the thief who supposedly died on the cross alongside Jesus. According to Christian legend, Dismas repented only minutes before his death, gaining him entrance to heaven.

Tia Ghose, a senior writer at LiveScience, writes about the near sainthood of Jacques Fesch, a French playboy, bank robber and murderer-

*The dissolute and wicked man had fathered two children and abandoned both, then planned a bank heist when his parents refused to foot the bill for a yacht to sail to Tahiti. He shot and killed a police officer in his escape from the heist, and his complete lack of contrition (and general obnoxiousness) spurred the judge to sentence Fresch to death.*

In 1957, the charlatan had a fervent change of heart while in prison awaiting the guillotine-

*Even in prison, he spent his first months utterly unapologetic, until he had a powerful conversion experience and began to repent his actions. When he was guillotined, his last words were "Holy Mother Mary, have mercy on me."*

Though Fesch hasn't been officially canonized, a French Cardinal did recommend the man for sainthood. Another unsavoury character that John Paul II put up for sainthood was Pius IX, who reigned as pontiff from 1846 to 1878, and who referred to Jews as "dogs".

### **Shaky Faith**

Though she was an arch-conservative member of the Catholic Church, Teresa lacked faith, which should effectively debar her from being canonised as a "Christian" saint. Her diaries, investigated by Catholic authorities in Kolkata, revealed that she had been racked with doubts: *"I feel that God does not want me, that God is not God and that he does not really exist."*

People think *"my faith, my hope and my love are overflowing and that my intimacy with God and union with his will fill my heart. If only they knew,"* she wrote, *"Heaven means nothing."*

Il Messaggero, Rome's popular daily newspaper, commented: *"The real Mother Teresa was one who for one year had visions and who for the next 50 had doubts – up until her death."*

### **Poverty Hugger**

What did Teresa and her charity achieve in the last six decades? Not even a dent has been made in the sum total of suffering because of Teresa. Take Kolkata. Virtually nothing has changed there, except that Teresa has given that metropolis a rank bad name.

Today, large expanses of India are entering the First World thanks to rapid industrialisation and high economic growth generated by free enterprise. On the other hand, Kolkata, virtually alone among India's cities, seems stuck in LDC (least developed country) mode.

While its long association with Marxism, another despicable import, may have something to do with the lack of progress, the presence of the poverty mongers ensures the city finds it impossible to shake off its Third World image.

Teresa's fundraising sermons have drilled into people's mind that it is a city of lepers and beggars. As Hitchens said, *"On one instance the nuns claimed, untruthfully of course, that (Kolkata) had 450,000 lepers, knowing that the rich have a poor conscience and would promptly despatch their dollars."*

### **Making of a myth**

Despite these disturbing facts, how did Teresa succeed in building an image of holiness and infinite goodness? According to the three Canadian researchers, her meeting in London in 1968 with the BBC's Malcom Muggeridge, an anti-abortion journalist, was what catapulted her to superstardom.

In 1969, Muggeridge made a eulogistic film about the missionary. During filming, the interiors of Teresa's mission in Kolkata were too dark, and he thought the scene wouldn't come out well. But when the film was developed it turned out to be amazingly bright. Muggeridge trumpeted it as the *"first photographic miracle"* when it should have been attributed to the new film stock being marketed by Kodak.

Teresa discovered the power of mass media; she travelled the world and received numerous awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize.

### **No accountability**

Today, around the world Teresa's charities have attained untouchable status, which helps them fend off any attempts by the authorities to stop their morbid experiments on sick and poor people.

There is also the question of the missing millions. Millions of dollars were transferred to the charity's many bank accounts, but most of the accounts are secret, says Larivee. *"Given the parsimonious management of (Teresa's) works, one may ask where the millions of dollars for the poorest of the poor have gone?"* he asks.

According to the researchers, Teresa raised almost \$100 million before 1980. A good chunk was used for building houses for the missionaries. Just five percent went to the cause. Let's hear that again – just five percent of that went to the poor.

### **The legacy**

In India where Teresa did her *'charity'* work for more than half a century, the former government flagged off a train named Mother Express to commemorate her birth centenary in 2010.

Perhaps it's just a coincidence that the party, and therefore, the country, was headed by the Italian Catholic Sonia Maino, a.k.a. Sonia Gandhi. Christian NGOs and church groups had a free run during her 10 year proxy rule.

Teresa has been known to be stingy even during national emergencies. During numerous floods in India she offered numerous prayers and medallions of the Virgin Mary but no direct or monetary aid, the Canadian researchers say.

It's noteworthy that all the abandoned children who are taken in Teresa's missions are brought up as Christians. These children were never offered a choice in the matter of religion.

Teresa was (and her mission continues to be) actively engaged in proselytising work, which will negatively impact India's complex society. In effect, by allowing the likes of Teresa to operate in India, the government is giving the green light for the long-term balkanisation of the country.