

FEATURE

Mother Teresa's life told with passion and fervor

Mother Teresa: A Complete Authorized Biography, by Katherine Spink. Harper-San Francisco (San Francisco, 1997). 306 pp., \$23.00.

Reviewed by Brian T. Olszewski
Catholic News Service

If there is a pyramid display of Mother Teresa books at your bookstore, Kathryn Spink's *Mother Teresa: A Complete Authorized Biography* deserves to be near the top.

Like other important figures in Catholicism — e.g., Thomas Merton — one might wonder if we need another book about Mother Teresa. But like the Gospel, Mother Teresa's words are worth reading and re-reading, and her life story is one with which we should be familiar.

The chronological approach aids the reader in seeing the roots of Mother Teresa's work and how her faith was strengthened during each stage and each transition in her life.

Much of this material may overlap what was reported at the time of her death, or what has appeared in other books about her life. But Spink takes this abundance of information about a complex woman who led a simple life and compiles it into a book that is certain to

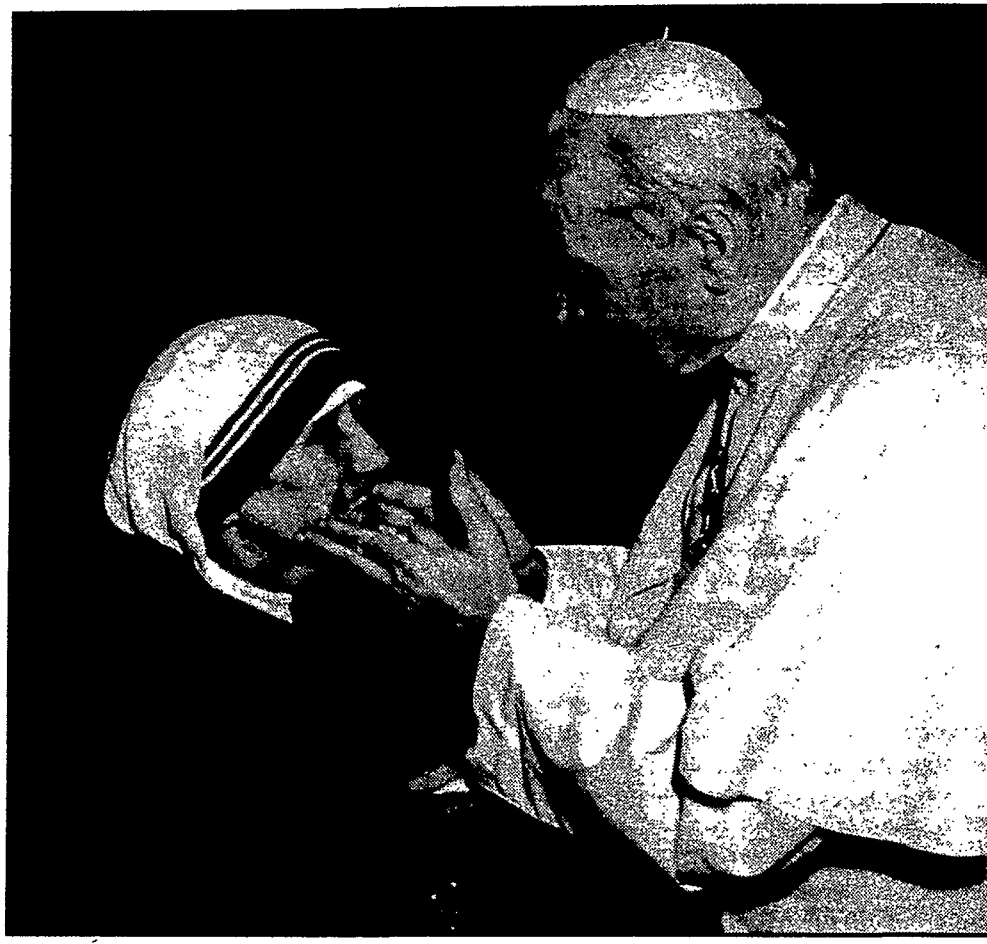
inform and inspire.

What this volume does is show that Mother Teresa, while loved and admired by many, including Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, also had her detractors. There were those who thought she did not use her position to advocate other agendas — e.g., nuclear disarmament and ordination of women. Others questioned her methods of treating the "poorest of the poor."

The poorest of the poor — they are the crux of this book; they are the reason she cooperated in its writing. Throughout the world, her Missionaries of Charity have gone into places no one would go, touching people no one would touch. No matter how honored or praised she was, Mother Teresa always saw that celebrity in the context of serving the poor.

That's what Spink does best. She does not ignore the celebrity of her subject, but she always links that celebrity with the mission. In practice, the former was never allowed to supersede the latter. So it is in this book.

Just as Mother Teresa answered a call to serve the poor and to lead others to do the same, so, too, does it appear that Spink had a calling to write this book. It took several attempts to get Mother Teresa's OK, but once she did, Spink



CNS

Pope John Paul II greets Mother Teresa at the Vatican. She died Sept. 5, 1997.

wrote with the fervor of one who couldn't wait to tell the world this story.

It is difficult to call a volume "definitive." Certainly more books will be written about Mother Teresa, but for now, one is hard-pressed to find one that con-

tains this amount of information written with passion and honesty.

Olszewski is editor of the Northwest Indiana Catholic, newspaper of the Diocese of Gary, Ind.

'Wasted' makes vivid case for bettering child welfare

Wasted: The Plight of America's Unwanted Children, by Patrick T. Murphy. Ivan R. Dee (Chicago, 1997). 191 pp., \$22.50.

Reviewed by Carole Norris Greene
Catholic News Service

If you are the kind of person who becomes angry and upset when you hear of injustices, collect yourself first before reading Patrick Murphy's *Wasted: The Plight of America's Unwanted Children*. Long after I read it, I could not put the stories out of my mind.

Murphy is the public guardian of Cook County, Ill. For almost 30 years he has represented abused and neglected children in cases that went as high as the Supreme Court.

In *Wasted*, he levels some very chilling accusations against the child welfare system: In an attempt to help preserve families, it is too often placing children in danger as it lavishes public resources on abusive parents who can't and won't change their behavior.

As a result, many of these unwanted children suffer continued abuse, degra-



dation, neglect, injury, even death.

The alarming statistics don't stop there, according to Murphy:

- Struggling poor parents are ignored by the government while abusers benefit from the confidentiality that protects state agencies'

mistakes.

- Resistance to transracial placement and adoption prevents many African-American children from ever finding a permanent home.

Says Murphy: "The child welfare system has failed children because it refuses to distinguish between parents who are ill-equipped to raise their children adequately without help, and parents who are too immature or thuggish to raise children even with help.

"To the system, all parents are victims, irrespective of their crimes or potential

for reform. And the parent, not the child, is the client."

Among the cases Murphy cites is that of 2½-year-old Sionia, whom the Department of Children and Family Services admitted died from abuse over a three-year period.

When an aunt first reported the abuse, an agency was assigned to "work on preserving the family." A caseworker visited the home regularly, the mother attended parenting classes for her six children, 8 months to 4 years old, while her "paramour" baby-sat them.

The mother likewise was accompanied by a caseworker on outings for food and clothing purchases, and entertainment, and a homemaker was assigned to the home for several hours a week.

Three months later the social worker recommended that the case be closed since the "mother has complied with the Family Preservation Program ..., the family has become stabilized ..., (and the) mother will continue to utilize community services for emergency (sic) food, milk and clothing."

But later the same month, Sionia was dead. "The skin in and around the girl's vagina and anus had been completely scalded off," writes Murphy. "For good measure, her head was bashed in."

The final autopsy, he says, chronicled more than 40 separate bruises and burns on her body, most incurred while the social worker and homemaker were visiting their "client."

Murphy explains in detail why he feels the following remedies are needed:

- The social work and child welfare systems should be given more responsibilities.
- Classifications of abuse and neglect should be replaced by three clearly defined categories of abuse.
- Child welfare bureaucracies should be broken into two separate agencies.
- The juvenile court should be replaced by a "parens patriae" (the kindly parent) court.

Greene is an associate editor for special projects at CNS.

Looking for
Quality Printing?

Call
Catalogs & Snapshots

Through a special arrangement between Wayuga Press and the Catholic Courier Graphic's Department, you can now get quality, affordable typesetting and printing.

.....
Give us a call for your next job!

COURIER GRAPHICS • 716-328-4340
WAYUGA PRESS • 315-754-6229

Women Needed for Hormone Therapy Research

As they search for the combinations of hormone replacement therapy that are both safe and effective, the Reproductive Endocrinology Unit and Menopause Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center seek women to participate in a study.

Volunteers must be healthy, post-menopausal women between the ages of 40 and 65. After a physical examination, women will be randomized to one of 8 treatment groups and receive various combinations of an FDA-approved estrogen and/or progestin, or placebo.

During this one-year study, volunteers are seen every three months. Benefits to volunteers include free Pap smears and lab tests, free mammogram, and possible relief of menopausal symptoms based on the medication(s) they receive. Compensation of \$450 is available. Women who have had a hysterectomy are not eligible.

Women interested in participating can call Kathy DeRider at 275-4149.

Sherwood Deutsch
and the staff of
CENTURY DISCOUNT LIQUOR

wishes you
and your family
a very
Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year!

CATH
C
By M
Staff
RO
Mari
the M
to ru
"W
saw p
cred
ple v
(Chr
fusio
as M
Bloo
"F
the c
adde
Su
Most
pasto
"O
visito
is ven
the e
ing a
who
"Vi
Preci
Grea
as a
west
"T
loved
said J
cious
much
Ar
Caro
the c
amon
were
Ov
the p
holdi
chick
partic
"Ye
67, w
ever
For
was s
Preci
in-law
daine
Fat
Chu
219
Roc
716,
Pari
Past
F
Prie
Fa
Dea
Jo
Past
Si
Secr
M
Mus
M
Pari
B