

MOTHER TERESA

On meeting a future saint

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sionally asking for help, he said.

"The nuncio and I kept saying, 'Go slowly. You are building for the future, build solidly,'" the cardinal said.

Cardinal Cassidy returned to Calcutta, India, in 1975 to celebrate Mass with Mother Teresa and her sisters to mark the 25th anniversary of the Missionaries of Charity.

"She said, 'Remember when you used to tell me to go slowly? I always went away thinking, 'You'd think the representative of the Holy Father and his secretary would have more faith.' That was her little dig at us,'" the cardinal said.

The congregation at the beatification Mass included official delegations from the Orthodox Church of Albania, Albania's Sunni and Bektasian Muslim communities, and from 26 governments, including the United States, the Canadian province of Quebec, India, Albania and Macedonia.

Aferdita Berisha, 35, a Muslim from Kosovo, said: "All the good things Mother Teresa did cannot be divided according to faith. She helped everyone who needed help, regardless of religion."

In his homily, Pope John Paul wrote that Mother Teresa's life was "a radical living and a bold proclamation of the Gospel."

Mother Teresa was born to Albanian parents in 1910 in what is now Macedonia; in 1946, she experienced a call to found the Missionaries of Charity and live among the poorest of the poor in Calcutta.

Mother Teresa — always smiling — rapidly expanded the order and opened hospices, clinics and shelters around the world, but her letters to her spiritual directors express a feeling that God had abandoned her.

"Mother Teresa shared the passion of the Crucified One, particularly during her long years of 'interior darkness,'" the pope wrote. "In the darkest hours, she clung with even greater tenacity to prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

"This harsh spiritual struggle allowed her to identify even more with those she served every day, experiencing the pain and even rejection they felt," he wrote.

The people participating in the processions, readings and dances at the Mass included active and contemplative nuns, contemplative brothers and priests belonging to the various branches of the Missionaries of Charity, as well as lay co-workers and children adopted from the Missionaries' orphanages.

After the Mass, the 2,000 poor who were special guests at the Mass were offered a luncheon in the Vatican's audience hall.

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Father Anthony Mugavero became a part of history because someone was late picking him up.

Father Mugavero, pastor of Rochester's St. Bridget's Parish, was living and working with the Missionaries of Charity's brothers in Calcutta, India, while on sabbatical in 1990. One day in September, he was waiting for a ride to a leprosarium when the Missionaries of Charity's sisters called: They needed a priest to come to their headquarters to celebrate a Mass for Mother Teresa, who had been re-elected as the order's superior. Father Mugavero changed his plans and became the sole celebrant of the Mass.

"They had sisters literally from all over the world," Father Mugavero recalled of worshippers at the Mass, as he displayed pictures showing hundreds of nuns garbed in the Missionaries of Charity's famed blue-and-white saris. Even though Father Mugavero had to improvise a homily on the spot, he said he has nothing but fond memories of the Mass, particularly of the sisters singing the Gloria.

"For whatever reason, it was as if the Gloria was being sung in heaven and transported to the earth," he said.

Mother Teresa was a little late arriving at Mass and apologized to Father Mugavero.

"She talked to me as if I was a long-lost friend," Father Mugavero said, recalling her saying: "I'm so sorry I wasn't here. I'm sorry."

Father Mugavero, however, was anything but sorry to meet her, noting she had given him two Miraculous Medals when he met her in New York City two years earlier. On both occasions, the priest was struck by how personable she was despite her enormous fame.

"When you meet her, you just sort of sense she is focused totally on you," Father Mugavero said. "Whoever's in front of her gets her total attention."

A happy twist of fate also marked the meeting between Mother Teresa and Father Alexander Bradshaw, pastor of Our Mother of Sorrows Parish in Greece, who was a deacon-seminarian in Rome in 1984. During the Youth Jubilee in Rome that year, Father Bradshaw said he handled some of the scheduling for English-speaking participants, and had arranged to have Mother Teresa speak at a church. However, five days before the event, he found out that the church's prior had forgotten



Photo courtesy of Father Anthony Mugavero

Father Anthony Mugavero, pastor of St. Bridget's Parish in Rochester, met Mother Teresa in both New York City and Calcutta, India, where he celebrated a 1990 Mass marking her re-election as superior of her order.

to tell him a wedding had been scheduled at the same time Mother Teresa was slated to speak.

"So, in my predicament I called Mother Teresa over the telephone to discuss with her how this awkward situation should be handled," Father Bradshaw said. "She had just arrived in Rome from India. 'Come and have afternoon tea with me and we will find a solution!' she said. 'I plan to speak on the subject of love,' she said, 'what better context for such a talk than a wedding. See if you can persuade the young couple to agree to their wedding being celebrated in the midst of a gathering of 3,000 young people, and I will incorporate their wedding into my talk.'"

Fortunately, the couple agreed, Father Bradshaw said, and the wedding proceeded with an enthusiastic congregation of attentive young people from around the world. "Everyone present, except for those who knew, were convinced that this had all been planned from the outset," he added.

Laura Carmona worked with the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta for 40 days in 1984. While in India, Carmona, a registered nurse who attends St. Mark's Church in Greece, took care of babies and young people with developmental disabilities, as well as the dying. She also worked with Mother Teresa's order in New York City and Washington, D.C., during the mid-1980s, volunteering in homes for the dying and for people with AIDS. She also worked in soup kitchens and shelters.

Carmona, along with her son and two other relatives, left for Rome Oct. 15 to attend Vatican ceremonies celebrating Pope John Paul II's 25th

anniversary and Mother Teresa's Oct. 19 beatification. She said she had planned to go to Rome with her husband, Alvaro, but he passed away suddenly April 30. He is with her in spirit, she said, adding that he, too, met Mother Teresa on a number of occasions, and was inspired by her example to work with the sick. Over the years the couple volunteered at homes for the dying throughout Rochester, she said, noting that she currently volunteers at the ecumenical Sunset Home for the dying.

Carmona said she was struck by Mother Teresa's humility and common-sense approach to ministry.

"She taught me ... to do small things with great love," Carmona said, citing standing patiently in line at a store or smiling while passing dishes of food at a supper as examples. "All of these things are little, tiny things, but in total, they could bring about world peace if everybody did them," she said.

Father Kevin E. McKenna, pastor of St. Cecilia's Parish in Irondequoit, met Mother Teresa while doing graduate studies in Rome in the early 1980s. The priest noted he regularly celebrated Mass at a Missionaries of Charity convent near the Coliseum.

After a Mass celebrating the profession of vows by several members of her order, Mother Teresa met Father McKenna and thanked him for concelebrating the liturgy with other priests.

"Although small in stature, she had a tremendously wide smile," he said. "As I shook her hand, I could only reflect on how much service those hands had given — how many lepers she had touched, how many people dying she had comforted."