

Blessed Teresa of Kolkata was a woman who truly felt wed to Jesus, and the freedom she experienced in loving him led her to radical poverty, a courageous outreach and an immense love for the poor, said the superior general of the order Mother Teresa founded.

“She was very happy to be a woman and to be a mother to so many souls,” Missionaries of Charity Sister Mary Prema Pierick told Catholic News Service.

“Her freedom of loving opened the doors of hearts and avenues of service, which maybe were not so common, especially in sharing the radical poverty of the poor,” said the blue-eyed, German-born sister, who was elected superior general in 2009....

...Mother Teresa is “an icon of mercy,” she said. “Even people who would have no faith would see the compassion and the mercy which Mother spread around her. She would not leave a suffering person without giving attention to them. On the contrary, she would go out to search for them and try to bring them to the realization that they are loved and they are appreciated.”

Speaking in the sisters’ garden, with blue-trimmed white saris drying on a clothes line, Sister Prema said Mother Teresa’s persistence in prayer and works of mercy, even when she felt God was far from her, is a lesson for all believers.

“Prayer is something we want to be faithful to rather than to be successful at,” she said.

And while the phrase “corporal and spiritual works of mercy” may sound old-fashioned to some people, Mother Teresa demonstrated the enduring power of those expressions of love, Sister Prema said. “However you phrase it, it is always modern because you are imitating Jesus and his compassion.”

The vast majority of people Mother Teresa tended to, caressed and accompanied were not Christian, Sister Prema said, but for her, they were Christ in disguise.

Called, like all Christians to spread the Gospel, Mother Teresa “helped people to find Jesus in their own hearts and experience that love that God has for them just by the experience of her motherly attention and intense interest in their personal lives.”

“She had a great desire that all souls would get to know and love Jesus,” Sister Prema said. But at the same time, “she knew that conversion is the work of God. The acts of charity and mercy, which she performed, came because of love for Jesus and for others.”

“God has to do the work of conversion,” she said. “It’s not a human work to convince a person to believe what I believe. It’s a grace which a soul receives and for which we can pray.”

‘Icon of mercy’: Missionaries superior describes Blessed Teresa

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When a poor person dies of hunger, it has not happened because God did not take care of him or her. It has happened because neither you nor I wanted to give that person what he or she needed.

You and I, we are the Church, no? We have to share with our people. Suffering today is because people are hoarding, not giving, not sharing.

Jesus made it very clear. Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do it to me. Give a glass of water, you give it to me. Receive a little child, you receive me.

Mother Theresa