

Message from Father Pergjini:

September 5, 2021

As I think of the anniversaries of Mother Teresa on earth and the other one, more importantly, in Heaven, I thought to share with you my personal memories with her. It was a blustery cold winter's day in New York in January of 1992. The day promised to be both unique and remarkable, one that I will never forget. It was the day I was scheduled to encounter the future Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta. Many times I heard of her so often that I persistently dreamed of this dear woman, and I truly believed that I would meet with her and speak to her one day. It was early in the morning that I had to leave the seminary and drive to the house, in the Bronx, the residence of the sisters of Mother Teresa who live taking care of a shelter for men. Mother Teresa's busy schedule brought her to the Bronx for a few days and she was presently attending Mass at that convent.

As I headed toward the Bronx many thoughts danced through my mind about this fine woman. As a teenager, I became aware of the fact that both her mother and sister lived ten minutes walking distance from our home, but I never had the chance to visit them. They and my own family were persecuted by the communists, so fear made those demands of visits impossible. I later learned that the mother and sister of Mother Teresa had passed away. It is very sad to know that the leaders of the Communist government never allowed Mother Teresa to come and visit them or offer them the opportunity to leave Albania and go visit her in India or anywhere else for that matter.

Things changed in Albania, as throughout the world, and Mother Teresa visited Albania for the first time since her departure from her homeland, in 1988. Unfortunately, both her mother and her sister had entered eternal rest long before this visit. With her amazing Christian spirit of both holiness and forgiveness she went to pray at the tomb of the dictator, Enver Hoxha who had persecuted and killed the Catholic clergy and religious and declared Albania the first atheistic country in the world and he also made it impossible for Mother Teresa to visit her dear mother and sister. With her visit to the grave of the dictator she angered many Catholics when they witnessed her on the news on television, kneeling before that infamous gravesite. My dear parents and I watched Mother Teresa kneeling wrapped in deep prayer as we sat silently in our own pain under that terrible regime. From the recesses of my own pain, I pondered on just what had Mother Teresa prayed and had she prayed for her family to remind Enver Hoxha for what he had done? Now, after many years, I quietly imagine those divine moments of forgiveness and love, longing for the same capacity for both.

Holding the reflection of those sad times of the past, I arrived at the convent of the sisters of Mother Teresa. I entered the convent enveloped in peace and tranquility while going into that small and warm chapel. My memories of the past became pleasant and consoling when I gazed upon Mother Teresa with her sisters and a few other people in that cozy chapel. What a joy to be present in so fine a place as this lovely chapel! The atmosphere was pregnant with an absolute silence. At the corner of that simple and prayerful chapel the Holy nun was kneeling in prayer. I gazed upon her with love and admiration; she seemed to represent the suffering and pain of millions of people whom both she and her community served. What a powerful beauty to bring that loving service into the power of the Divine in the context of the Mass! The Mass was short, but as always, a deep divine experience to rejoice. After Mass and meditation, the sisters left the Chapel in profound silence. One by one the people moved in the direction of the corner in which Mother Teresa was seated. Each in turn greeted the dear nun. As it so happened, I was the last in the small gathering to move into her presence. I knelt before her and introduced myself. We spoke in Albanian, and she smiled a radiantly and beautiful smile as I asked her to pray for me and give me her blessing. She placed her tiny and tired hands on my head. In those unforgettable and memorable moments, I thought of those holy hands that had fed and served thousands of poor people, her hands that faithfully prayed the rosary, the hands that carried those small medals that she humbly kissed and gave to millions of people she met. What a joy for me to experience those unique moments of my Life! Mother Teresa of Calcutta pray for us! Amen!

