

## 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

I had a private conversation with Mother Teresa of Calcutta in a secluded garden in Rome early one sunny morning in 1985. I was completing my studies at the time. As a break from classroom and dorm life, I volunteered at a soup kitchen run by some nuns from Mother Teresa's community. The sisters were grateful that I came once a week to help feed the hungry, but they convinced me that the twenty sisters needed a priest for Mass more than they needed one in the kitchen. I celebrated mass for the sisters about once a week for a couple of months. One day, the sister sacristan told me, "We think Mother may be here next week." I shrugged it off. I had started down this path wanting to meet the poor, not plotting to chat with the saintly Mother Teresa. So I didn't give it much thought. The following week I showed up for Mass, and the sacristan was beaming. "Mother is here." I peered into the chapel, and it was as if the sea had parted. The sisters, who usually sat in rows directly on the floor, had created a center aisle. Mother Teresa of Calcutta sat on the floor there. Well, I did what I came to do. We celebrated the Eucharist together. Mother Teresa took a leadership role. For example, she started the memorial acclamation, and all the other sisters joined in after the first words. I gave all of them communion.

After Mass, I hung up the vestments and started out the door. The sacristan stopped me. "Don't you want to meet Mother?" Well, I guess so. I hadn't really thought about it. The sister said, "She will come out to see you after she finishes her prayers." Mother stayed in the chapel several more minutes, and I waited patiently in the garden just inside the convent gate. Then Mother Teresa came out the chapel door, into the garden, and walked up to me. We exchanged greetings in Christ. She said many things but repeated one point several times: "You must always do the will of God, Father. You must always do the will of God."

I will always remember the peace and tranquility of that chapel before mass, and the time Mother Teresa took to finish her private prayers after mass. Noise, activity, and stress fill our lives. Families fight and argue, employees shout at one another, students insult their friends. To walk into a room of people quietly at prayer is like entering another world. The First Letter to Timothy says one of the goals of Christians is to "lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity." We accomplish that through prayer, and not just any prayer, St. Paul says today, but specifically in prayers "for kings and for all in authority." If our political leaders are saved and come to the truth, then all believers may live in peace.

People today rarely pray for those in public office. We complain about them, we insult them, we uncover their past sins, and we hold them up to intense scrutiny. St. Paul says if you want to lead a quiet and tranquil life, don't degrade your politicians. Pray for them. If they become good leaders, then all of us may live in freedom and peace. He writes, "It is my wish, then, that in every place [you] should pray, lifting up holy hands, without anger or argument."

Two weeks ago Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa as Saint Teresa of Kolkata. She left us an example of doing the will of God in service to the poor and in prayer for others. If we imitate her, "we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity."