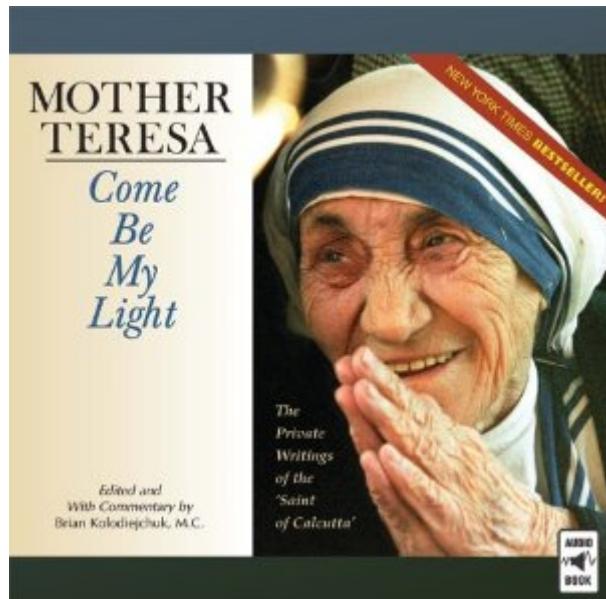


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Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light: The Private Writings Of The 'Saint Of Calcutta'



Synopsis

This book includes correspondence (and context for understanding it) from Mother Teresa's early years in religious life and throughout her years as founder of a new religious community. This correspondence reveals Mother Teresa's struggles, doubts, and her sense of abandonment by God. These revelations can encourage and strengthen us as she reveals her abiding faith despite darkness and trials. Missionary of Charity Father Brian Kolodiejchuk met Mother Teresa in 1977 and joined the Missionaries of Charity Fathers at the time of their foundation in 1984. He is postulator of the Cause of Beatification and Canonization of Mother Teresa of Calcutta and director of the Mother Teresa Center.

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Customer Reviews

I am an Evangelical pastor of nearly 25 years. Nobdoy has spoken of the spiritual dryness that we SO reluctantly admit to, as Mother Theresa. No wonder she wanted her letters burned, we may still not be ready for the reality of Christ. She approaches only the Apostle Paul in doing so. She teaches that if we aproach the benefits of following our risen saviour only in terms of self-gratification, we miss the whole point. Our Lord will withhold it, to test and clarify our desire to follow him for no other reason than to gain Him. I do not claim to have grasped the things she testifies to, only to see at a distance that she is correct and the things she suffered were not punishment for sin, but the course of growth in Christ which, as Augustine pointed out, is only achieved for it's own sake, with no regard to present benefit. She moved forward, without regard to personal gain, because she grasped the overwheleming reality of Christ our Saviour. Buy the book

when you are ready to be drawn into Christ centered spiritual maturity that no seminary, Sunday School, nor Sunday preaching could have prepared you for.

"I am told God loves me--and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul." I wrote this quotation on the white board at the beginning of a recent Sunday School lesson on the Israelites' wilderness wanderings and asked the kids who they thought had written it. Their guesses ranged from Kurt Cobain to Alanis Morissette to Sylvia Plath...people we associate with acute depression or drugs or angry rejections of the world. No one supposed the meek, humble, seemingly always-at-peace saint, Mother Teresa of Calcutta. This response from my junior and senior highs mirrored the response of Christians all over the world when these private letters and journals of Mother Teresa were made public for the first time a couple months ago. For those who have not yet seen the book, it offers a remarkably candid and penetrating insight into the depth of Mother Teresa's spiritual life, revealing a surprising and tragic absence of any sense of God's presence or comfort with her for most of the final 50 years of her life. I have found myself reading her letters and diary entries with a mix of voyeuristic curiosity, heartwrenching concern, and a desire to glean wisdom from this luminary of Christian history. Many times Mother Teresa begged that these papers be destroyed, and I can't blame her for desiring that; I would be mortified if my deepest thoughts and feelings--intended for myself, for God, or for my closest confidants--were made public. And there would be an added sense of betrayal, as opposed to, say, posting something on a myspace page that eventually made its way to unintended eyes. Ultimately, the Catholic Church decided that Teresa's own spiritual experience belonged not to herself, but to the Church. And, in spite of feeling like part of the betrayal when I immerse myself in her descriptions of the depths of her soul, I do have to agree that the potential benefits of Mother Teresa's personal writings for the spiritual development of every Christian outweigh other concerns. Some of the valuable lessons from Mother Teresa's words: A Deeper Understanding of Spiritual Darkness "There is no God in me--when the pain of longing is so great--I just long & long for God--and then it is that I feel--He does not want me--He is not there..." Although the darkness and sense of abandonment that Mother Teresa suffered was, it seems, more profound than that which most of us are likely to experience (corresponding to her unusually high calling), her words will connect powerfully with anyone who has gone through a period of doubt, darkness, or depression, as well as enlightening everyone's understanding of the complexities of such a spiritual state. Too frequently those in the Church rush to interpret spiritual dryness as a sign of spiritual failure or unfaithfulness; indeed, Mother Teresa initially regarded her own feelings of being abandoned by

God as resulting from her own sinfulness. But there is not always such a simple, formulaic explanation for these "dark nights of the soul"--would it not seem rather naïve and foolish to conclude from Mother Teresa's spiritual condition that she was not praying enough, or that she wasn't being faithful enough to God's call? As surprising as the revelation of Mother Teresa's spiritual darkness may seem to us, it is consistent with the Apostle Paul's understanding of the Christian's sharing in Christ's sufferings. But rarely do we accept this suffering as the call of a modern-day Christian--and never do we expect this suffering to include Christ's anguished cry from the cross: "My God--why have you forsaken me?!" This is not to imply that those in spiritual anguish--Mother Teresa included--are free of sin, but that there is not a set correlation between our faithfulness and the happiness--or even the joy--that we experience. And yet these feelings of spiritual darkness are often compounded exponentially by feelings of guilt and failure..."I'm not a good enough Christian," "I'm not faithful enough," "It's all my fault that I can't seem to experience the joy of Christ right now." Mother Teresa reminds us that there is an element of mystery to suffering in this age, that its causes cannot be identified the way we diagnose the roots of lower back pain or of a toothache.

An Extraordinary Model of Faithfulness

"I know there have been things which could have been better, but in all sincerity I have tried to refuse nothing to God to answer His every call."

So often we want to know what God desires of us--so long as that calling does not interfere with the plans we have already made for our life, or draw us into a place where we would feel uncomfortable, or where we would have to give up things or freedoms we are unwilling to surrender. Even things as simple as rearranging our schedules, repairing a relationship, or making small sacrifices in our standard of living we tend to reject as too difficult--as if God were asking us to go evangelize a colony of single-celled organisms on Mars. Mother Teresa voluntarily spent decades of her life in utter poverty, without even the comfort of God's presence with her--and she did not leave her mission field to seek the limited pleasures and comforts the world could offer, all because she knew that she was doing what Christ (or "the Absent One," as she came to call Him) had called her to do.

Her faithfulness--with so few spiritual comforts and supports--is both humbling and inspiring.

A Powerful Witness to Hope

"The joy of loving Jesus comes from the joy of sharing in His sufferings...In all of our lives, as in the life of Jesus, the Resurrection has to come, the joy of Easter has to dawn." It seems particularly cruel that Mother Teresa's darkness did not ultimately lift before she died in 1997. Even the most famous of the spiritually desiccated, St. John of the Cross, suffered in his similar condition for a mere 40-some years before finally experiencing God's presence again in his final years. How could Mother Teresa love so deeply while feeling so abandoned? How could she keep going for half a century? How could she experience any joy at all? Mother Teresa lived

her life in a condition of pure faith and hope, trusting that God's reality was greater than her sensation of His absence, that the hope of resurrection was a concrete certainty, that "the Absent One" would indeed return, as He had promised in the scriptures. Her life defines "hope"...a life built on Christ's promises, and not on her own experiences. Her witness can be heard as a word of hope to all who suffer, have suffered, or will suffer from the agony of Christ's absence--there is a greater reality than what we can perceive, there are mysteries that we cannot comprehend, and there is a hope that transcends our understanding.

Mother Theresa began her missionary work in the late 40s and has become one of the most beloved figures of the twentieth century. Her compassion for the poor and her devotion to the cause has brought her great admiration from believers and non-believers alike. For the first time we are able to get a glimpse of the inner workings of her brain and heart. "I am told God lives in me -- and yet the reality of darkness and coldness and emptiness is so great that nothing touches my soul," she writes in one of her letters that help shed light into her plight to feel the presence of God. Mother Theresa suffered for her faith. "There is nothing but emptiness and darkness," she declared. They say suffering is needed for Sainthood. She definitely passed that test. Some may find it disappointing that a person as holy as Mother Theresa struggled with her faith. I personally found it rather consoling. It helps me relate during those moments of doubt and questioning. She might have questioned her faith; she might have felt the emptiness of God's presence, from time to time, but she never questioned her mission to serve and to do God's will. These types of dichotomies abound the entire book. Here is a perfect example: "But when I was eighteen, I decided to leave my home and become a nun, and since then, this forty years, I've never doubted even for a second that I've done the right thing; it was the will of God. It was his Choice." Although Mother Theresa had asked that these letters, that spanned decades, be destroyed upon her death, they have been published in this book that will inspire millions to live her example of faith; to live her example of sacrifice and to get closer to God. She didn't want her writings to divert attention from Jesus, that's why she wanted them destroyed. The result, however, is quite the opposite. Many people have made the struggle of her faith the cornerstone of this book. I feel, however, that they have missed so much of the inspiration; the beautiful writing; her poems; her dedication and her beautiful heart. As an aside note, I really enjoyed the way Mother Theresa ended her letters. Here is one, addressed to Father Michael, which spoke on her desire to be an instrument of Jesus: "I pray for you that you let Jesus use you without consulting you. Do the same for me." This is a very inspirational book that I will read again, for sure. Enjoy!

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