

**The Desire For God
On The Occasion of
December 5, 2013
The Birthday of Fr. Jean-Baptiste Rauzan,
Founder of the Fathers of Mercy
By: Fr. Andy Cravalho, C.P.M.**



+ J.M.J. +

“In a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, faith takes the form of a relationship with him and in remembrance of him, especially in the Eucharist and the Word of God, and creates in us the mind of Christ, through the Spirit, a mentality which makes us recognize our brothers and sisters, gathered by the Spirit in his Church, and, in turn, see ourselves as witnesses and heralds of this Gospel. This encounter equips us to do new things and witness to the transformation of our lives in the works of conversion as announced by the prophets (cf. Jer 3:6 ff; Ez 36:24-36).”

(Instrumentum Laboris, 19)

The day of September 5th marks the day of death of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, as well as that of the Fathers of Mercy founder, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Rauzan. Though separated by 150 years, both found their strength from the fire of Divine Love through which the Holy Spirit moved them toward the goal of union with God and zeal for the salvation of souls. Fr. Jean-Baptiste and Bl. Teresa of Calcutta harnessed this desire for God and understood the longing of the souls around them for God’s infinite love. Their personal encounter with the true God touched them deeply and made them His heralds of the Gospel.

Fr. Rauzan desired to proclaim the love and mercy of God by re-evangelizing France after the devastation of the French Revolution. Due to the extensive propaganda and the various persecutions, the fervor and zeal for the Gospel had been lost in the people of France. They cried out, in the wake of the French Revolution, for the knowledge of salvation that comes from Jesus. Their thirst was real and their spiritual poverty was glaring. They wanted to see, feel, experience Jesus.

Fr. Rauzan recognized the cry of the Mystical Body of Christ and felt the call of the Holy Spirit for a remedy. “Viewing the evils against Religion and the extreme shortage of priests in France during the first days of the Restoration, the pious faithful ardently requested from the Divine Mercy help of extraordinary salvation. We saw in the missions one of the works from which we gathered great advantage...We dedicated ourselves to this type of ministry.” (*Handwritten Manuscripts on the Constitutions, Quinn translation, p.36*) And elsewhere he exhorts the members of the Missionaries of France [now the Fathers of Mercy],

“We should share – deeply – [the Church’s] joys, and her sorrows, her tribulations and her triumphs. Nothing should cost us when it comes to serving her: deprivations, age, fatigue, trips – performing all this work with a thirst for the salvation of souls.” (*Handwritten Manuscripts on the Constitutions, Quinn translation*, p. 8)

Similarly, as some may already know, Bl. Teresa of Calcutta also felt the yearning of the poorest of the poor, and dreamed of satiating their thirst for Him; to be Love, to be Mercy to them. Those in Calcutta cried out for the joy and hope that made them live life to the fullest, despite the hardships they endured. Mother Teresa said regarding the foundation of the Missionaries of Charity,

“What is the reason for our existence? We are here to satiate the thirst of Jesus, to proclaim the love of Christ – the thirst of Jesus – for souls by the holiness of our lives...We are here to satiate the thirst of Jesus... that is why we must be holy. – Mother Teresa’s Instructions to the M.C. Sisters (January 1980).” (*Mother Teresa’s Secret Fire*, p. 79)

The words of Jesus (“I Thirst”) from the Cross would become more than a “motto,” but become a way of life for the Missionaries of Charity. Bl. Teresa of Calcutta would instruct the Sisters and Brothers to transform their lives into a communion of love. The words, “I Thirst” would need to penetrate the heart of any Missionary of Charity, in order that the whole Community would understand God’s deep love for each of them, and in turn take that love to every encounter in the streets of Calcutta.

“‘I Thirst’ is something much deeper than just Jesus saying ‘I love you.’ Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you – you can’t begin to know who He wants to be for you. Or who He wants you to be for Him.” (*Come Be My Light*, p. 42)

In the handwritten Constitutions that Bl. Teresa sent for approval, she enumerated the ends for which the Missionaries of Charity were founded, along with the need for holiness among the members of the Order.

“1. *The End*

The General End of the Missionaries of Charity is to satiate the thirst of Jesus Christ on the Cross for love and souls by the Sisters, [through] absolute poverty, angelic chastity, cheerful obedience.

The Particular End is to carry Christ into the homes and streets of the slums, [among] the sick, dying, the beggars and the little street children. The sick will be nursed as far as possible in their poor homes. The little children will have a school in the slums. The beggars will be sought and visited in their holes outside the town or on the streets.

2. To be able to do all these – the Sisters must learn first to live real interior lives of close union with God – and seek and see Him in all they do for the poor.” (*Come Be My Light*, p. 341; Appendix A)

The Sisters sacrificed themselves for the sake of the poorest of the poor. Blessed Teresa continually exhorted them about the beautiful vocation of being “carriers of Christ’s love in the slums.”

“Your life of sacrifice is the chalice or rather our vows are the chalice & your suffering & our work are the wine – the spotless host. We stand together holding the same chalice & so with the adoring Angels satiate His burning Thirst for souls.

My very dear children – let us love Jesus with our whole heart & soul. Let us bring Him many souls – Keep smiling. Smile at Jesus in your suffering – for to be a real M.C. you must be a cheerful victim.” (*Come Be My Light*, p. 159)

This, too, was an emphasis of Fr. Rauzan to the Missionaries of France. As missionary priests, they would need to be a Eucharistic offering for the flock.

“We are continually handling that of which there is nothing more sacred, nothing more holy; our actions have infinite consequences; we must be models for the flock. God cannot bear lukewarmness in the priest.” (*The Life of the Very Reverend Father Jean Baptiste Rauzan*, by Father A. De La Porte, SPM; Branigan translation, Book V, p. 12)

Again, he stressed the need to affix our eyes constantly on the Divine Savior, for this is what made the lives of the saints so exemplary; their “ardent love for Jesus.”

“That which gave the Saints so much courage – made them so patient in the midst of tribulations – was, without a doubt, the ardent love they had for Jesus Christ; a love which set them on fire, consumed them without relaxation; it was the ever more vehement desire to please Him in all things, everywhere and unceasingly. They meditated on it during the day, they meditated on it during the night; all their endeavor was to trace out, in themselves, a vivid picture of this Divine Model. Nevertheless, one can state that they did not arrive at this high point of perfection – where suffering became their delight – until after many battles, and many victories, and, perhaps, after many falls.” (*The Life of the Very Reverend Father Jean Baptiste Rauzan*, by Father A. De La Porte, SPM; Branigan translation, Book V, p. 14)

The Gospel message transformed the lives of Fr. Rauzan and Bl. Teresa of Calcutta. They proclaimed the message of Jesus to all corners by caring for those who didn’t care; giving hope to the hopeless; strength to the weak; knowledge to those who had lost it; love to those who clamored for it. Mother Teresa once said, “I long for God. I long to love Him with every drop of life in me. (*Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*, p. 203)” (*Secret Fire*, p. 79). This is the message of the Gospel and the zeal for souls that must exude from each of our lives. And Father Rauzan reminded his priests,

“To study unceasingly this Divine Model [of Jesus Christ], to relate to Him all our thoughts, our desires, our plans, our undertakings – all the faculties of our being; to give to Him the greatest possible glory; in a word, to live in Him and for Him – that is our principal end.” (*The Life of the Very Reverend Father Jean Baptiste Rauzan*, by Father A. De La Porte, SPM; Branigan translation, Book IV, p. 19)

Pope Benedict XVI emphasized this desire and confidence in Christ when he gave an address in Vatican City: “While conscious of the challenges you face, I encourage you to follow faithfully in the footsteps of your founders, and to stir into flame the charisms and apostolic zeal which you have inherited from them, confident that Christ will continue to work with you and to confirm your preaching with signs of his presence and power.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Vatican City, November 16, 2007)

Continuing in the legacy of these two founders, in their footsteps, the members of their Communities walk and carry that message of Hope, Love, and Mercy to new generations. Fr. Rauzan exhorted his priests, “Preach with courage my dear child, with all patience and doctrine.” (*The Life of the Very Reverend Father Jean Baptiste Rauzan*, by Father A. De La Porte, SPM; Quinn translation, Book I, p. 34)

In the New Evangelization, all of us are God's chosen instruments to carry the Gospel by our words and example. The need and desire for God is again prevalent here in America and all over the world. Jesus' thirst for souls, to love them and be loved by souls continues. We can feel it; it's almost palpable. The heart of America, and the world, clamors for Jesus. The world is longing for each one of us, His ministers and instruments, to fulfill the words of Bl. Teresa of Calcutta to "carry on our body and soul the love of an infinite, thirsty God." (*Secret Fire*, p. 277; cf. *Come Be My Light*, p. 155)

Jesus reminds us always, "It is not you who have chosen Me, but I who have chosen you." (Jn. 15:16) Each one of us has been entrusted with the Good News of salvation, the same Gospel which Father Rauzan and Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta carried in their hearts. They were so in love with Jesus and manifested this love in every encounter and to their respective Communities. They had a tremendous zeal for souls and models for each of us to say with St. Paul, "For if I preach the gospel...woe unto me if I do not preach it." (cf. 1 Cor. 9:16)

