

The past three months at the Mother Teresa Institute featured a variety of activities, including travel, upgrades to our capacity, and support to visiting researchers. October began with the Director, Fr. Brian, and the Research Fellow, Joe Evans, traveling to Marquette University in Wisconsin to present as part of a panel at the World Christianity Conference. We closed the quarter with a special Advent edition of the Reading Partnership Program with a parish that explored Fr. Joseph Langford, MC's *In the Shadow of Our Lady*. In between, we provided research assistance and resources to two scholars (Fr. Louis from the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, and Dn. Francis Vishal at St. Joseph's Regional Seminary in Uttarpradesh, India) as they completed projects related to Mother Teresa. In another promising development, the MTI worked over the past few months to edit and submit Fr. Langford's manuscript, *A Window on the Heart of God*, which has been accepted for publishing through CUA Press! As we move into 2026, we will continue with these efforts and participate in the Marian Forum at the University of Dayton in March and continue coordination for our Student Research Symposium, Annual Colloquium, and 20th Century Saints project.

Message from the Director

The Lenten season begins this year in mid-February, with Ash Wednesday falling on February 18th. In one of her early general letters ([3rd] February 1961, Mother Teresa's General Letters to her Sisters, pp. 13-14), Mother Teresa instructed her Sisters on how to make their Lenten sacrifices in their daily lives:

We all want to do something beautiful for God during Lent – because Jesus did so much during His Passion – We look round and try to imagine all kinds of sacrifices and mortifications, but for us – dear Sisters – we need not go round seeking – just take your rules and try to live them with greater love for Jesus and with Jesus – and you will have all the sacrifices your generous heart desires to offer to God.

This is wise advice for all of us, regardless of the vocation the Lord has placed us in. When we strive to live generously and lovingly, there will be ample opportunities to “offer up” something to the Lord.

In one of her last letters to her Coworkers (Lent, 1996), Mother Teresa offered a consoling message for Lent. There is no need to fear the suffering that inevitably comes to all our lives; on the contrary, seen with the eyes of faith, it is a gift from God:

We are now in the holy season of Lent. Lent is a time of preparation for Easter. But Easter comes only after the pain, suffering and death of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. That is exactly like our life. We look forward to rising with Jesus, but each one of us must go through pain, sorrow, suffering, sickness and death. Because of the promise of the Resurrection, we do not have to be afraid. We can accept all suffering as a gift of God. We may shed a few tears, but inside we will be at peace, and have a deep sense of joy.

This is how Mother Teresa herself lived. Suffering IS suffering – “we may have to shed a few tears” – yet with faith and a “greater love,” it becomes a steppingstone to our growth in holiness.

Perhaps Mother Teresa's greatest suffering was what she called “the darkness.” To learn about the interior suffering she endured throughout her life as a Missionary of Charity, you may read the book *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light* (2007). There, you can read how she practiced what she taught. Over those many years, as she wrote above, she herself was at peace and radiated a joy that belied the suffering within. Hers was a faith and love truly heroic.

Through her words and example, Mother Teresa teaches us the role and benefit of suffering lived with faith and love in view of the Resurrection.

~ Fr. Brian Kolodiejchuk, MC

Upcoming 2025-2026 Events Schedule

FEB-MAR 2026	Lenten Reading Partnership Program
MAR 24-25, 2026	Intl. Marian Research Institute Marian Forum (Dayton, OH)
APR 3, 2026	Submissions Due for Student Research Symposium
APR 24, 2026	Student Research Symposium (MTI)
JUN-AUG 2026	Summer Reading Partnership Program
SEP 4-5, 2026	Annual Colloquium & Keynote Lecture / Mother Teresa's Feast Day
Spring 2027	20 th Century Saints Conference (Washington, DC)

Publication Review

Evans, Joseph. "Interreligious Peacebuilding in South Asia: Mother Teresa as a Model of Remaining Faithful While Crossing Boundaries." *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*. Vol. 48, No. 1 (Fall 2024): 102-118.

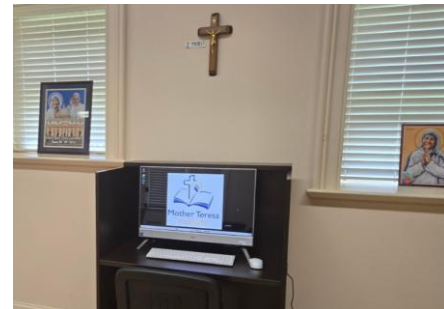
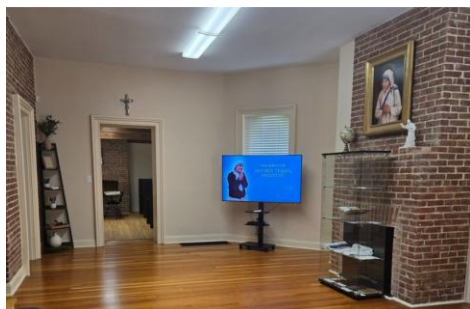
Drawing on Mother Teresa's lived example of the Gospel and based on a foundation of Catholic peacebuilding literature and practice, this article illustrates how Mother Teresa serves as a model for interreligious peacebuilding while remaining committed to her Catholic faith. Evans describes how Mother Teresa's service to the poor resonated across religious boundaries amid the religious plurality and political violence of post-partition India. This article offers insight into the practical application of Catholic peacebuilding and interreligious bridgebuilding through the life and work of Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

Please forward information for published articles or materials to mti@mtinstitute.org.

Words from Mother Teresa

At the foot of the Cross, Our Lady saw only pain and suffering – and when they closed the tomb, she could not even see the Body of Jesus. But it was then that Our Lady's faith, her Loving Trust and Total Surrender were greatest. We know that before, in Nazareth, Jesus could not work any miracles because they had no faith. Now, to work His greatest miracle – the Resurrection – He asks the greatest faith from His own Mother. And because she belonged completely to God in Loving Trust and Total Surrender, He could bring to us the joy of the Resurrection, and Mary would be the Cause of our Joy.

~ Mother Teresa to the MC Sisters, March 14, 1997



Panel Presentation at the World Christianity Conference (Marquette University)

The MTI Director, Fr. Brian, MC, and the MTI Research Fellow, Joe Evans, joined Sr. Ngoc Nguyen, LHC, in a panel presentation at the World Christianity Conference at Marquette University from October 2-4. Their panel explored the influence of indigenous spiritualities on Catholic religious sisters in Asia. The conference was attended by approximately 40 scholars from the U.S. and around the world. Fr. Brian's paper, "Could Indigenous Indian Spiritualities Have Helped Mother Teresa's Spiritual Darkness?" addressed questions about her spirituality in an Indian context. The revelation of Mother Teresa's spiritual darkness was shocking to some, perplexing to others, but an integral part of who she was as a living Catholic saint. This profound aspect of her relationship with God illustrated her deep faith. Nevertheless, a predilection for the avoidance of suffering has caused some to suggest that Mother Teresa should have found a way out of this darkness. For instance, one Hindu scholar lamented that Teresa of Calcutta could have avoided the suffering associated with her spiritual darkness had she been aware of and embraced Hindu spiritual practices of meditation. Fr. Brian argued that Mother Teresa, given her close relationships with Hindus in India, was probably aware of these practices but that the spiritual darkness was beneficial for her efforts to adhere to Jesus's call and respond to his thirst. Dr. Evans' paper, "The Impact of Marian Spirituality on the Implementation of Catholic Social Teaching for Religious Sisters in South Asia," was not focused specifically on the Missionaries of Charity but included aspects of their experience in his analysis. Within the religious plurality of South Asia, the Church has deliberately sought to adapt how its teachings, practices, and rituals are presented to non-Christian cultures and, in turn, accept the influence of those cultures on the evolutions of its teachings through a process of inculturation. Amid this context, congregations of women religious rigorously seek to implement Catholic social teaching. These religious sisters often draw from an inculturated Marian devotion. Evans argued that the uniquely interreligious nature of Marian devotion in South Asia is important to how Catholic religious sisters promote and preserve human dignity with solidarity, love, and pursuit of the common good.



Reading Partnership with Holy Spirit Parish (PA) for *In the Shadow of Our Lady*

The Mother Teresa Institute (MTI) continued the "Reading Partnership" program during Advent to encourage groups with their spiritual development and find inspiration from the life, work, and writings of Saint Teresa of Calcutta. The participants selected *In the Shadow of Our Lady* by Fr. Joseph Langford, MC, as the text to explore. Five parishioners from the parish met weekly throughout December to discuss their responses, lessons, and inspiration from the book. Participants were struck by Mother Teresa's devotion to the Rosary, recognizing the simplicity and profound spirituality in how she would "hold our Lady's hand" in everything she said and did. This imagery evoked feelings of comfort and security, prompting the realization that a devotion to Our Lady through prayer can be the connection that leads one closer to Jesus and to peace and healing.

Anyone with interest or questions about joining the reading partnership should contact the MTI Research Fellow, Joe Evans at joseph@mtinstitute.org.

Essay Contribution

**“I Thirst!” – Spiritual Famine in our Modern World
Cabrini Pak, Ph.D. (Catholic University of America)**

“There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man’s table. Dogs even used to come and lick his sores.” Lk 16:19-21

Many have preached on this parable, often taken with a literal interpretation of material wealth and poverty, with the usual admonition to be mindful of those “less fortunate” than we are. However, there is more than material wealth and poverty to be mindful of in the Christian life. In 1975, Time Magazine quoted Mother Teresa of Calcutta’s signature perspective on poverty: “Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty.”¹ This poverty transcends the material - it is a poverty of the soul, spiritual in nature.

In our 21st century landscape, we are in the midst of the greatest spiritual famine of the modern world. According to the World Health Organization, more than 720,000 people die by suicide annually. It is the third leading cause of death among 15-29 year olds, and for every suicide, there are many more people who attempt suicide.² What an epidemic of hopelessness. Such famine cannot be alleviated by humans alone. It requires Divine gifts of spiritual richness or wealth.

What, then, would spiritual richness or wealth look like? I imagine the height of spiritual wealth is being able to consume, *in toto*, one’s own Creator, to experience the miracle of such an intimate communion, one that fills us with faith, hope, love, and joy. A Catholic daily communicant like Mother Teresa could do this, every day, until the day she died. Catholic Mass is the source and summit of our spiritual life, and holy communion is our climax. Mass has time-space qualities that transcend the limits of our own existence. *Anamnesis* brings forward the moments of Jesus’ sacrifice to the present day, bringing into our presence His very body, blood, soul, and divinity. In that same Mass we can consume Him, take Him into ourselves, and dwell with Him in the most intimate way possible in this life. *Prolepsis* anticipates a heavenly future - *eschaton*, when Jesus will return and his Kingdom will reign for all eternity. The effects of each Mass echo into eternity. When we emerge from such a feast, we have the opportunity to bring that richness to the world, sharing the immeasurable spiritual wealth gifted to us by the Father in the Son, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Mother Teresa was able to share a superabundance of spiritual riches because she received it daily from Jesus himself.

Mother Teresa recognized Lazarus figures in the lonely, the forgotten, the neglected, and the unwanted. They needed most to be reminded that they are loved, called by name, and deeply desired by the Lord to come and join Him in His eternal home. She emerged daily from the Eucharistic feast of Mass and went out beyond her door to encounter and tend to them, giving generously and embracing them wherever she found them, tending to them as she would tend to Jesus in his thirst on the cross. She answered his cry, “I thirst!” with promptness, simplicity, and love, through daily encounters outside her doorstep.

¹ “Saints Among Us: The Work of Mother Teresa.” *Time Magazine*, Dec. 29, 1975, accessed 12/12/2025, <https://time.com/archive/6878542/saints-among-us-the-work-of-mother-teresa/>

² “Suicide,” World Health Organization website, accessed 12/10/2025, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/suicide#:~:text=Key%20facts,requires%20a%20public%20health%20response.>

In 1994, at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC, Mother Teresa illustrated the stark contrast between material richness and spiritual impoverishment:³

"I can never forget the experience I had in visiting a home where they kept all these old parents of sons and daughters who had just put them into an institution and forgotten them — maybe. I saw that in that home these old people had everything — good food, comfortable place, television, everything, but everyone was looking toward the door. And I did not see a single one with a smile on the face. I turned to Sister and I asked: "Why do these people who have every comfort here, why are they all looking toward the door? Why are they not smiling?"

I am so used to seeing the smiles on our people, even the dying ones smile. And Sister said: "This is the way it is nearly everyday. They are expecting, they are hoping that a son or daughter will come to visit them. They are hurt because they are forgotten." And see, this neglect to love brings spiritual poverty."

If we dine sumptuously on the Lord our God every day, every week, even once a month, we are immeasurably rich, possessing the infinite goodness of our God within us. This is greater than all the material riches in the world and has the potency to eradicate the spiritual famine in our time. How are we being called to share our spiritual riches with the Lazarus figures in our midst? The first step is to fully participate in the sacrifice of the Mass, paying close attention to the Lord's words in both the Liturgy of the Word and the Eucharistic Prayer. Those words will echo into our hearts with a call to meet Him in the Lazarus figures we encounter along the way.

The next step is to discover, encounter, and accompany the Lazarus figures in our lives, but it requires an open and vigilant heart. We need to change little habits to make room for such encounters. For example, rather than doomscrolling with our mobile devices on the train and in the social commons, we can put them away and look at those around us. The eyes are windows into the soul - we can see so much there: grief, oppression, anxiety, sickness, and loneliness. It only takes a moment to glimpse such pain and ask, "How are you? How can I pray for you today?" We can also pause in our hallways to say hello to our neighbors with a smile, offering them a safe space to rest, even if for five minutes. If you see someone struggling with groceries, offer to help instead of walking by. Sometimes they're struggling with more than just the groceries. Many thirst for the healing accompaniment of God's heart - one that notices the person, listens, and responds with love and compassion. The more we take in Jesus with open hearts, the more we can magnify Him in our own souls and bring Him to the spiritually famished, to heal, fill and satiate their thirst.

"Not all of us can do great things, but we can do small things with great love." – Mother Teresa⁴



³ Mother Teresa, "Mother Teresa at the National Prayer Breakfast," Feb. 3, 1994, Address at the National Prayer Breakfast (sponsored by the US Senate and House of Representatives), accessed 12/12/2025, <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/mother-teresa-at-the-national-prayer-breakfast-2714>

⁴ Taucedá, M. "Doing Small Things with Great Love." Missionaries of the Poor website, accessed 12/12/2025, <https://missionariesofthepoor.org/doing-small-things-with-great-love2/>



Mother Teresa Institute

2026 Student Research Symposium

Call for Papers

Date: Friday, April 24, 2026

Location: Mother Teresa Institute, Washington, DC

Deadline for Paper Submissions: Thursday, April 3, 2026

Event Description

The Mother Teresa Institute announces the first annual student symposium. Saint Teresa of Calcutta was an Albanian nun, originally a Sister of Loretto, who – after receiving a call from Jesus to serve the poorest of the poor – then founded the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India, where she served the poor and marginalized for almost fifty years. The symposium aims to feature research from both undergraduate and graduate students related to the life, work, and writing of Mother Teresa. We encourage proposals from any discipline, department, and institution and welcome participation from students to this no-cost* symposium. The event will include a mentored pre-symposium workshop to facilitate interconnected panel discussions and presentation techniques. Students may utilize any writing (to include original research, course papers, journal articles, dissertation chapters, etc.) as the basis for their proposals.

This one-day hybrid (zoom and in-person) event is an opportunity for students at colleges and universities from around the world to present and showcase their research related to the life, work, and impact of St. Teresa of Calcutta. The symposium will consist of a plenary session followed by panel presentations from the selected students. In each panel session, students will provide a fifteen-minute presentation on their respective research project. The symposium will conclude with a keynote presentation from the director of the Mother Teresa Institute.

Suggested Topic Areas (only suggestions, not exhaustive):

- Mother Teresa's Love of Jesus
- Mother Teresa's Spirituality
- Mother Teresa and Promoting Peace
- Missionaries of Charity Work with the Poor
- Mother Teresa's Marian Devotion
- Quenching Jesus's Thirst
- Suffering and Spiritual Darkness
- Understanding Mt. 25:40 "You Did it to Me"

Papers intended for consideration in this symposium should be 2000-8000 words. Selected students will be allocated 15 minutes for presenting their research as part of a panel with other student presenters.

** There is no registration fee for this symposium; however, attendees are responsible for their own transportation and lodging.*

Submission Information

Papers should be 2000-8000 words on a topic that is focused on or related to St. Teresa of Calcutta. All references should be cited using Chicago or APA style. No bibliography is required. Students name and institution must appear on the first page, above the title of the paper.

For questions, contact MTI@mtinstitute.org. Please submit your proposal by April 3, 2026

*** Link for submission can also be found at motherteresainstitute.org ***



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