

# Beatification of Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger

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November 17, 1985, marked the culmination of six decades of searching, evaluating, and intense work when Pope John Paul II declared Mary Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger blessed. Reminiscent of Mother Theresa's pattern of life, the cause for her beatification moved slowly, with difficulties and disappointments. However, this proclamation assured the faithful that her life of heroic virtue was deeply rooted in God and the flowering of the congregation she founded continued to be animated by her spirit.

Shortly after her death on May 9, 1879, people began seeking her intercession. By 1920, the Catholic Women's Organization in Amberg expressed that Mother Theresa ought to be beatified. When they went on the Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome in 1925, they submitted their request for beatification to Pope Pius XII. The year before, the congregation had petitioned Cardinal Michael Faulhaber of Munich to begin the process. Permission was granted and the work began in 1925.

From 1925 to 1929, all letters, notes, etc. of Mother Theresa were gathered, literally copied and certified; the 42 volumes, weighing 130 pounds were presented to the Congregation of Rites. Out of 272 living witnesses, 98 were selected to appear before an ecclesiastical tribunal from 1929 to 1932. Six thousand pages of minutes in German and Italian were notarized, sealed and sent to the Congregation of Rites. Further investigation was necessary to ensure that no public veneration had been given to Mother Theresa. By 1933, all the necessary documents were in place and her writings declared theologically and morally satisfactory.

The death of the postulator and the emergence of World War II delayed any further progress. On July 11, 1952, Pope Pius XII signed the decree permitting the beginning of the procedure to show that Mother Theresa practiced heroic virtue. The 30-year probing of virtues concluded with the decree of January 13, 1983, declaring that Mother Theresa practiced the virtues of faith, hope, charity, prudence, justice, fortitude, and moderation in a heroic manner.

The last phase involved the investigation of the miraculous cure of Sister Tecla Medeiros, SSND, of Brazil who was dying from cancer. On May 9, 1985, Pope John Paul II signed the decree, which declared her healing miraculous. Six months later, Mother Theresa was declared *Blessed* in the beatification liturgy at St. Peter's Basilica.

The Beatification Planning Committee consisted of Sisters Helena Arns, Porto Alegre; Erharda Bauer, Bavaria; and Henriette Hoene, St. Louis. They coordinated the five-day celebration in Rome involving nearly 900 SSNDs, students, lay and clerical friends. Throughout the world, SSNDs celebrated this special day with family and friends.

Twenty years later, Blessed Theresa continues to inspire her daughters to strive for unity of our congregation and to express our concern for women and the poor. We cherish Blessed Theresa's zeal for the transformation of the world, her devotion to Eucharist and her dedication to Mary.

[Source: S. Barbara Brumleve and S. Marjorie Myers, SSND, The Cause of Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger: A Resource Book, Resource Publication No. 6, 1984; S. Marie Michelle Walsh, Beatification booklet, 1985.]