

Mother Teresa was born on August 26, 1910 into a Kosovar Albanian family in Skopje, Ottoman Empire (now the capital of North Macedonia). She was baptized in Skopje the day after her birth. She later considered August 27, the day she was baptized, her "true birthday". She was the youngest child of Nikollë and Dranfile Bojaxhiu. Her father, who was involved in Albanian-community politics in Ottoman Macedonia, died in 1919 when she was eight years old. According to a biography by Joan Graff Clucas, Anjezë (her given name at birth) was in her early years when she became fascinated by stories of the lives of missionaries and their service in Bengal; by age 12, she was convinced that she should commit herself to religious life. Her resolve strengthened on August 15, 1928 as she prayed at the shrine of the Black Madonna of Vitina-Letnice, where she often went on pilgrimages. Anjezë left home in 1928 at age 18 to join the Sisters of Loreto at Loreto Abbey in Rathfarnham, Ireland, to learn English with the intent of becoming a missionary; English was the language of instruction of the Sisters of Loreto in India. She saw neither her mother nor her sister again. She arrived in India in 1929 and began her novitiate in Darjeeling, in the lower Himalayas, where she learned Bengali and taught at St. Teresa's School near her convent. She took her first religious vows on May 24, 1931. She chose to be named after Thérèse de Lisieux, the patron saint of missionaries; because a nun in the convent had already chosen that name, she opted for its Spanish spelling of Teresa.

Teresa took her solemn vows on May 14, 1937 while she was a teacher at the Loreto convent school in Entally, eastern Calcutta, taking the style of 'Mother' as part of Loreto custom. She served there for nearly twenty years and was appointed its headmistress in 1944. Although Mother Teresa enjoyed teaching at the school, she was increasingly disturbed by the poverty surrounding her in Calcutta. The Bengal famine of 1943 brought misery and death to the city, and the August 1946 Direct Action Day began a period of Muslim-Hindu violence. In 1946, during a visit to Darjeeling by train, Mother Teresa felt that she heard the call of her inner conscience, to serve the poor of India for Jesus. She asked for and received permission to leave the school. In 1950, she founded the Missionaries of Charity, choosing a white sari with two blue borders as the order's habit. Mother Teresa received a number of honors, including the 1962 Ramon Magsaysay Peace Prize and the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. Mother Teresa had a heart attack in Rome in 1983 while she was visiting Pope John Paul II. Following a second attack in 1989, she received a pacemaker. In 1991, after a bout of pneumonia in Mexico, she had additional heart problems. Although Mother Teresa offered to resign as head of the Missionaries of Charity, in a secret ballot the sisters of the congregation voted for her to stay and she agreed to continue. In April 1996, Mother Teresa fell, breaking her collarbone, and four months later she had malaria and heart failure. Although she underwent heart surgery, her health was clearly declining. On March 13, 1997, Mother Teresa resigned as head of the Missionaries of Charity. She died on September 5th. At the time of her death, the Missionaries of Charity had over 4,000 sisters and an associated brotherhood of 300 members operating 610 missions in 123 countries. These included hospices and homes for people with HIV/AIDS, leprosy and tuberculosis, soup kitchens, children's and family counseling programs, orphanages and schools. The Missionaries of Charity were aided by co-workers numbering over one million by the 1990s.

Mother Teresa lay in repose in an open casket in St Thomas, Calcutta, for a week before her funeral. She received a state funeral from the Indian government in gratitude for her service to the poor of all religions in the country. Assisted by five priests, Cardinal Secretary of State Angelo Sodano, the Pope's representative, performed the last rites. Mother Teresa's death was mourned in the secular and religious communities. Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif called her "a rare and unique individual who lived long for higher purposes. Her life-long devotion to the care of the poor, the sick, and the disadvantaged was one of the highest examples of service to our humanity." According to former U.N. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, "She is the United Nations. She is peace in the world." She was canonized on September 4, 2016, and the anniversary of her death ( September 5 ) is her feast day. A controversial figure during her life and after her death, Mother Teresa was admired by many for her charitable work. Her authorized biography was written by Navin Chawla and published in 1992, and she has been the subject of films and other books. On September 6, 2017, Mother Teresa and St. Francis Xavier were named co-patrons of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Calcutta.



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