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Apostolic Trip of Pope Francis to Bulgaria and North Macedonia (5 to 7 May 2019) – Visit to the Mother Teresa Memorial in the presence of religious leaders, and meeting with the poor

At 10.05 this morning, the Holy Father Francis paid a visit to the Mother Teresa Memorial. Upon arrival he was received by the Mother Superior and the Sisters of Mother Teresa, and by a child who presented a floral tribute, which the Pope then placed beneath the statue of Saint Teresa of Calcutta. He then proceeded to the indoor chapel where he was awaited by the leaders of the religious communities present in the country and two relatives of Mother Teresa.

The reliquary of the Saint was placed on the altar, along with some personal objects and five candles representing the religious confessions.

After a moment of silent prayer in front of the relic of the Saint, the Pope recited a prayer in honour of Mother Teresa.

At the end, the Holy Father greeted the religious leaders and relatives of Mother Teresa, and proceeded to the courtyard where there were around 100 poor people assisted by the Missionary Sisters of Charity.

After a brief greeting from the Superior of the Community, a testimony from one of the people assisted and the performance of a hymn, the Pope blessed the first stone of the Shrine of Mother Teresa.

After the final blessing, Pope Francis transferred by car to Macedonia Square.

The following is the text of the prayer of the Holy Father in honour of Mother Teresa:

Prayer of the Holy Father

God, Father of mercy and all goodness,

we thank you for giving us the life

and the charism of Saint Mother Teresa.

In your boundless providence, you called her

to bear witness to your love

among the poorest of the poor in India and throughout the world.

She was able to do much good to those in greatest need,

for she saw in every man and woman

the face of your Son.

Docile to your Spirit,

she became the prayerful cry of the poor

and of all those

who hunger and thirst for justice.

Taking up the words uttered by Jesus on the cross:

“I thirst” (*Jn* 19:28),

Mother Teresa sated

the thirst of the crucified Lord

by accomplishing works of merciful love.

Saint Mother Teresa,

mother of the poor,

we ask for your special intercession and help,

here in this city where you were born,

where you had your home.

Here you received the gift of rebirth

in the sacraments of Christian initiation.

Here you heard the first words of faith

in your family and in the community of the faithful.

Here you began to see

and meet people in need,

the poor and the helpless.

Here you learned from your parents to love

those in greatest need and to help them.

Here, in the silence of the church,

you heard the call of Jesus to follow him

as a religious in the missions.

Here in this place,

we ask you to intercede with Jesus,

that we too may obtain the grace

to be watchful and attentive to the cry of the poor,

those deprived of their rights,

the sick, the outcast and the least of our brothers and sisters.

May he grant us the grace to see him

in the eyes of all who look

to us in their need.

May he grant us a heart capable of loving God

present in every man and woman,

a heart capable of recognizing him in those

who experience suffering and injustice.

May he grant us the grace

to become signs of love and hope in our own day,

when so many are poor, abandoned,

marginalized and migrants.

May he grant that our love not only be on our lips,

but that it be effective and genuine,

so that we may bear

credible witness to the Church

whose duty it is to proclaim the Good News to the poor,

freedom to prisoners, joy to the afflicted

and the grace of salvation to all.

Saint Mother Teresa, pray for this city,

for this people, for its Church

and for all those who wish to follow Christ,

the Good Shepherd, as his disciples,

by carrying out works of justice, love,

mercy, peace and service.

To follow him, who came not to be served but to serve,

and to give his life for many:

Christ our Lord.

Amen.

[Blessing of the First Stone]
