

## Brisbane Albanians including honorary consul say Mother Teresa deserved sainthood

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Precious gift: Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge with Missionaries of Charity Sisters, Sr Antonella, Sr Milada holding the relic of St Teresa of Kolkata and Sr Maria Domini at the celebration of the canonisation of Mother Teresa of Kolkata at Marsden in Brisbane archdiocese last Sunday. Photo: Alan Edgecomb

AUSTRALIA'S honorary consul for Albania has whole-heartedly described Mother Teresa as his own mother, a mother for Albanian and for all people, following her canonisation last Sunday. Dr Resmi Kamberaj was among hundreds of Catholics, including members of the Brisbane Albanian community and three of the Missionaries of Charity Sisters living in Brisbane, at a Mass for St Teresa of Kolkata at St Maximilian Kolbe Church, Marsden.

The church was packed for the first Mass in the Brisbane archdiocese to honour the Albanian-born nun who served the poor in India for 50 years, just hours before her canonisation in Rome.

Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge concelebrated the Mass with Kingston Marsden priests Fr Sunil Paul Nagothu and Fr Bang Van Nguyen.

The Mass also coincided with the Confirmation of four young women in the parish.

While he never had a chance to meet Mother Teresa, Dr Kamberaj said he could feel her spirit in her followers, the Missionaries of Charity Sisters who attended the Mass in Marsden.

"If you see her missionaries are here, you straight away feel they are part of her," the honorary consul said.

"I went to meet (one of the sisters) feeling like I was meeting Mother Teresa."

Mother Teresa was born in 1910 in Macedonia to Albanian parents and at 18 left for Ireland to join the Loreto Sisters.

She was sent to India for her novitiate and remained there until making her final professions and eventually teaching as a Loreto Sister.

In 1946, she heard Christ calling her to be with the poor and abandoned, and within 18 months left the convent to a new mission that became a new order, the Missionaries of Charity.

While she spent the rest of her life in India, Albanians around the world, and most recently in Brisbane, have told the world to never forget Mother Teresa was firstly an Albanian.

During the Mass in Marsden, Albanian-born mother Veronica Ndoci watched as her son processed into the church carrying two precious treasures in her life, the Albanian flag and her granddaughter, decked from head to toe in traditional costume.

Mrs Ndoci said the entire Albanian Catholic community was "proud and very happy" to call one of their own blood a saint.

“We were so happy because we thought that she does deserve it,” she said.

“If one person deserves it, she does.”

Mrs Ndoci said there were hundreds of statues scattered throughout Albania honouring St Teresa of Kolkata as an “endless appreciation” for her work in the Church.



Family event: Agron and Anabella, of the Brisbane Albanian community at the celebration of the canonisation of Mother Teresa at the St Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Parish, Marsden. Photo: Alan Edgecomb

The Brisbane Albanian community has prepared to welcome the news of Mother Teresa’s sainthood since her death in 1997.

Brisbane Catholic Tom Kalaja, who was born in Albania, said the entire Albanian community had called Mother Teresa “a living saint”.

With the canonisation officially calling Mother Teresa to the rank of sainthood, Mr Kalaja said all of Albania was proud.

“It’s great to see someone that was a great champion for the poor that is being recognised today,” he said.

As treasurer for the Albanian program on radio station 4EB, Mr Kalaja has always told the show’s listeners that the canonisation was a momentous occasion for all Albanian Catholics.

“I’ve said to them that it’s a moment we probably won’t have in our lifetimes, maybe forever,” he said.

“I don’t even know who the last Albanian saint was, for example.

“But this is something that a lot of people are going to talk about, and a lot of generations are going to remember it and talk about it.”

In his homily, Archbishop Coleridge said the Book of Wisdom called all Catholics to be wise, a quality Mother Teresa clearly demonstrated in her lifetime.

“So what does it mean to be wise?” he asked.

“The answer comes to us from Jesus this morning when he says none of you can be my disciples, unless you give up all your possessions.

“Jesus isn’t saying sell your house, or the shirt on your back, or the beautiful dress you’re wearing or the food you eat, Jesus is saying free yourself from everything that possesses you, that holds you back, holds you down, makes you dumb, and deaf and blind.

“And I say she’s wise, this woman whom we now call saint, precisely because she was free; she was free of all that might have possessed her.

“She gave up all that possessed her in order that Christ himself could possess her.”  
Archbishop Coleridge said St Teresa of Kolkata witnessed to the truth that “the only slavery that sets you free is the slavery of Christ”.

“And Mother Teresa, whatever else about her, she was a slave to Christ and that’s why she became a servant of the poor,” he said.

“And because she was a slave of Christ, and servant of the poor, Mother Teresa we say today belongs to everyone everywhere.”

*By Emilie Ng*



Celebration day: Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge with the Albanian Community at the celebration of the Canonisation of Mother Teresa of Calcutta at the St Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Parish, Marsden. Photos: Alan Edgecomb