

**Homily – Memorial of Our Lady of Vailankanni,
Mass with Indian Catholic Community – September 7, 2024**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ; today, as we gather to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Vailankanni, we also carry in our hearts the memory of Saint Mother Teresa of Calcutta, whose memorial we celebrated just a few days ago. Both Our Lady of Vailankanni and Mother Teresa are powerful witnesses to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and His boundless love for humanity. They are gifts from God to India, to the Church, and to the world, guiding us closer to the heart of Jesus. Our Lady of Vailankanni reveals an identity to the Indian people, as healers, people of peace. And even as Mother Teresa was not born in India, I dare saying that she became as Indian as anyone else, and a model for what it means to be Indian.

The readings today draw us into the mystery of God’s plan, a plan that is always unfolding in our lives and in the world. In the first reading, from Revelation, we encounter the image of a woman clothed with the sun, a powerful symbol of Mary, the Mother of God, and of the Church. This woman’s victory over the dragon represents the triumph of good over evil, a victory made possible by the Lordship of Jesus. Similarly, in the life of Mother Teresa, we see the Lordship of Jesus shining brightly. She devoted herself entirely to the poorest of the poor, embodying Christ’s love and mercy in the most tangible way.

Pope Francis reminds us that Mother Teresa’s “mission to the urban and existential peripheries remains for us today an eloquent witness to God’s closeness to the poorest of the poor.”

Her life challenges us to reflect on what shines through us. What is our motivation deep down? Are we driven by the love of Christ, as Mother Teresa was, or are our hearts consumed by lesser pursuits?

The Gospel today recounts Mary's visit to Elizabeth, where her Magnificat echoes through the ages: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Mary's humility and joy in serving God remind us of our call to be vessels of God's grace. Our Lady of Vailankanni, often called the "Lourdes of the East," also embodies this spirit of service and intercession. She is a mother who understands our struggles and brings them to her Son, Jesus, who is our Good Shepherd, as today's Psalm beautifully expresses.

As we honor Our Lady of Vailankanni today, let us be inspired by her example and the example of Mother Teresa. May we allow the Lordship of Jesus to shine through our lives, bringing His light to all we encounter, especially the least among us. In doing so, we fulfill our own unique calling, trusting that "all things work for good for those who love God" as St. Paul reminds us in the second reading.

May Our Lady of Vailankanni and Saint Mother Teresa intercede for us, guiding us on the path of love, humility, and service.