

Mother Teresa's birth anniversary celebrated

Mother Teresa's birth anniversary celebrated Nuns say the Missionaries of Charity congregation continues to grow Mother Teresa's birth anniversary celebrated



The Missionaries of Charity congregation that St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta founded continues to grow even in difficult areas, says its present superior as they celebrated the 107th birth anniversary of the saint, the first such celebration after her canonization.

The congregation opened three more houses in May, said Sister Mary Prema, the second successor of Mother Teresa and its superior general.

The nuns opened a house in Khandamal, in eastern Indian Odisha state, where nine years ago Christians witnessed a fierce attack from Hindu extremists. Christian leaders say their people were scattered since the attack and those in the region continue to live in fear.

The Missionaries of Charity also started a house in Motijhil, in the eastern Indian city of Kolkata, where Mother Teresa first began to serve the "poorest of the poor." The congregation has its headquarters in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta) and is where the nun died in 1997.

Sister Prema told ucanews.com that the third house was opened on May 13 at the request of Pope Francis in Bajo Flores, the south zone of the Flores neighborhood of Buenos Aires. "There was need for the sisters in an area of drug abuse and unemployment," she said.

The 63-year-old German-born nun was elected initially in 2009 for a period of six years to succeed Sister Nirmala Joshi, who took over from Mother Teresa in 1997.

The growth of the Missionaries of Charity shows that the congregation has been growing even after the death of Mother Teresa. At the time of her death the congregation had less than 4,000 nuns in 520 convents in some 100 countries.

Now it has 5,174 nuns in 758 houses spread across 139 countries, some of them in poverty-stricken and conflict-ridden areas.

Sister Prema spoke with ucanews.com as her congregation celebrated Aug. 26 the 107th anniversary of Mother Teresa with prayers and flowers at her tomb within their headquarters in Kolkata.

Sister Prema said the congregation celebrated Mother Teresa's birthday when she was alive and continues the tradition because "we feel her presence among us," she said.

Mother Teresa was born in 1910 in Skopje, now the capital of Macedonia. She came to India in 1929 as a novice with the Loreto nuns. She left the congregation in the late 1940s and started the Missionaries of Charity in 1950.

Pope Francis declared Mother Teresa a saint Sept. 4, 2016 at the Vatican.

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