

Forthcoming lectures on Mother Teresa in Singapore, Chennai and New Delhi

Gëzim Alpion (PhD)

Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Birmingham, UK

Singapore:

National University of Singapore

Topic *Mother Teresa and Multidisciplinarity: A Geopolitical Approach to a Complex Personality*
Date Monday, 29 April 2024
Time 4.00 – 5.30pm
Venue AS8, Level 4, Seminar Room 04-04, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119260
Website <https://ari.nus.edu.sg/events/20240429-mother-teresa/>
Abstract Since the publication of Mother Teresa's personal writings in the 2000s, an increasing number of scholars affiliated with various academic disciplines are engaged in 'unpacking' her complex personality to better understand her religious role and international aura. Notwithstanding the tensions between disciplinary 'purists' and 'trespassers', the growing Mother Teresa scholarships is testimony to the benefits of employing a multidisciplinary approach. Having acknowledged the welcome contribution of recent studies in areas like theology, philosophy, psychiatry, psychology, media studies and celebrity studies, Alpion focuses on the contribution that Sociology, especially Sociology of Religion, can render in throwing light on aspects of Teresa's life and spirituality that, to this day, are mostly perceived as a 'monopoly' of theology. Focusing on Teresa's interrelated ministry and spiritual darkness, he explores their causality by employing both 'sociological imagination' and a biographical approach in the context of an array of interrelated personal, familial and ethno-spiritual milieus. Reassessing her impact on world Catholicism and global geopolitics, Alpion argues that Teresa's formative years determined her choice of vocation and every decision thereafter, including the current features of the religious order she generated, the Missionaries of Charity.

Chennai:

Indian Institute of Technology Madras

Lecture *Mother Teresa and the Question of Values in Social Sciences*
Date Wednesday, 1 May 2024
Topic *Mother Teresa and the Question of Values in Social Sciences*
Abstract Gëzim Alpion has been conducting research into the interrelationship between 'authorship' and 'spirituality' since the early 1990s. Drawing mainly on his work on Mother Teresa, at the start of the talk at IIT Madras, Alpion identifies some of the challenges and benefits of being a multi/interdisciplinary author intimating that searching for Truth remains a demanding endeavour. He then acknowledges the influence of some medieval and modern thinkers on his work – Aquinas, Ibn Khaldun, Weber, Said, Bauman – before highlighting the need to engage anew

with the debate about 'values', claiming that Humanities and Social Sciences have never been, can never be, completely 'value natural/free' He concludes that, like sociologists, scholars affiliated with other academic disciplines too would benefit from more 'imagination' to bring about what C. Wright Mills calls the 'intersection of biography and history'. Being central to his research on Teresa, this interaction, Alpion claims, has been helpful in his ongoing efforts as an author to be a committed, and yet detached, go-between. This role is accomplished better, he believes, if one is prepared to take Tagore's challenge to serve the country while reserving worship for Right.

New Delhi:

Jesus and Mary Colle, Delhi University

Date: 3 May 2024

Topic: *Mother Teresa: Saint of India and Saint for the World*

Abstract: Gëzim Alpion has been conducting research on Mother Teresa's life, work and spirituality from a sociological perspective for over two decades. In his invited talk at Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University, Alpion will initially share with faculty and students some of his published findings before focusing on his work in progress. Alpion contends that Teresa's ethno-spiritual-familial milieu constitutes the foundation of her lifelong devotion to the poor. In his view, Albanian-born Gonxhe Agnes Bojaxhiu, known to the world in her lifetime as a Living Saint and since her canonisation in 2016 as St Teresa of Calcutta, is a perfect example of how an international personality of her calibre benefits from and enriches the traditions she comes from. Mother Teresa epitomises the best of two ancient nations – her native Albania and adopted India – when it comes to spirituality and compassion. Alpion highlights the need for more research on Mother Teresa's life and work from academics affiliated with various academic disciplines to explore and implement better her 'love in action' philosophy. This, he concludes, will ensure that the world acts more effectively to protect human dignity which Mother Teresa held sacred.

Biography:

Gëzim Alpion has a BA from Cairo University and a PhD from Durham University, UK. He is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (SFHEA) and a Fellow of the Academy of Sciences of Albania. Currently an Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Birmingham, UK, Alpion's main publications include: *Vouchers: A Tragedy* (2001), *Foreigner Complex: Articles and Short Stories about Egypt* (2002), *Mother Teresa: Saint or Celebrity?* (Routledge 2007), *Madre Teresa: Santa o Celebrità?* (Salerno Editrice 2008), *If Only The Dead Could Listen* (Globic Press 2008, 2024), *Encounters with Civilizations: From Alexander the Great to Mother Teresa* (Routledge 2017), and *Mother Teresa: The Saint and Her Nation* (Bloomsbury Academic 2020), winner of the Association of Catholic Publishers (ACP) Excellence in Publishing Award 2023 for biographies. Alpion is considered 'the most authoritative English-language author' on St Teresa of Calcutta and 'the founder of Mother Teresa Studies'.