



Sunday 22nd February 2026

Matthew 5:42 (ESV) Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

My name is Carolyn Senik, I have been attending church at St Carthage for the past 12 years.

My Story

I was born in Calcutta, India in the 1960s, I was raised by my father who was a sole parent to me. He was a Locomotive engineer and drove the trains, to many other towns and cities, sometimes I would accompany my father on these journeys to Darjeeling, Rajasthan and North India. Great bonding times for us, as my father loved to keep me close to him as much as he could.

Our home was almost a small palace, we lived in a British colony associated with the British Barracks, and our home was full of extended family, which helped in taking care of me. This being due to my grandfather being posted to India in the 1950s from the UK

My father was a devout catholic and held strong Christian values, he hated seeing the beggars and the poor on the streets especially the children starving and naked, he did all he could in his position to get people into shelters with care and food. I remember my grandmother complaining that he was giving all his salary and family items to the poor and the needy, but my father did this every day. in need of help.

Sundays and mid-week were the usual church days, where we would see beggars lining up to beg for food, Dad saw an opportunity to get the local baker to bake milk bread to feed the people noting the milk nourishment would be good for their health and energy.

I noticed he spoke with a lovely nun many times and soon realised it was Mother Theresa herself; my dad would help her in the orphanage and the house. He would cook clean, donate, pick up the children to take to the homes and quite often he would even help the rickshaw man to pull the cart full of children. To me this seemed the normal thing to do, you help others and feed them I thought.... Dad did much in the leper colonies, frowned upon by society and even our own family who could not understand why he would take me with him, but during these time he left me with the nuns to play with the other children and to hear stories about Jesus which I absolutely adored to hear .

Sadly, when I was about 5 years old, my world came crashing down by the sudden death of my father. By now I was alone and scared and wondering where or who would want me? for by now most of the family had returned to the UK, Canada and some to Australia. I felt so much like the Beggar now, begging Jesus to help me and give me a mum and dad. My father's family here in Australia organised for me to be taken care of in the British boarding school. Mother Theresa would come herself or get the nuns to come visit me and take me to them especially around the holiday period. She made sure I had what I needed and I remember the books she would give me at Christmas.

One day she told me I was to be adopted by my father's brother in Australia and that I would have a family and a nice life, never stop praying and thanking Jesus, she would always tell me. I was lucky to have her love, care and the hugs with the kisses on my forehead and her blessings for me, I would feel safe, warm and so wanted in her presence.

Soon the day came for me to come to Australia I was almost 7 now, they organised a little bag of my belongings and told me about the ladies on the flight will take great care of me and deliver me to my new family. I will never forget the hugs I received, tears flowing, and my heart racing excited to go on a big plane but scared...she held my hand its ok it will be ok and always say your prayers and one day help others too.

We stayed in touch, I wrote to her and would receive responses, cards and little notes. When my son was born early, don't worry she said David will be ok, I and the nuns are praying for little David and you.

I was also lucky to see her a few times when she did visit here in Australia, and she made it point to see me and to give me those big hug and kisses... how lucky was I to have those moments with her.

In 2019 I decided to return to India to visit Mother's Tomb and the orphanage. Sadly, not much did change there is still so much suffering, people dying on the streets and beggars everywhere. I retraced my steps, and saw the little bakery is still there, the bread is still baked and people either buy it to give to the poor or it is donated to feed the less fortunate, what a proud moment to remember this started with my father's kindness.

During my time at Mother's house at the tomb I looked at the stairs leading to a room I remember this room I thought, I know it I used to go in that room and talk to Mother...A nun saw this and asked me why I kept looking at the stairs during rosary, when I told her my story, she invited me to walk up the stairs, there was a new gate and closed to public. This is her room she said, yes, I said I used to go there and listen to her stories, she allowed me in..... I stood still it was a flood of emotion, a small bed on a tin base, a small desk, tin chair and tin utensils, on the wall a photo of our Lord Jesus with the crown of thorns on his head. This was the first vision she saw in the morning and the last at night. I remember her and honour her, and I did shed my tears of missing her.

Today the legacy of her kindness and that of my father stays with me, and I can never not help especially to those who beg and those on the streets, no matter where, which country I cannot go past those who beg, even for a chat, how are you or how can I help.

Recently in Moonee ponds a man was sitting at a café, he asked me for money for food, he looked ok, so I kept walking. I stopped as I was confused at my reaction, I noticed another man stopped and then they walked into the café together, I followed and saw the man buy the man a meal, my heart racing I went over apologised and asked to pay, its ok said the man donating the cost for the meal, but he needs about 20 until his pay day, has fallen on hard times !! of course I said, hurried to the bank and got the money for him. Looking into his eyes of hope and gratitude he was no different to the beggars I witnessed through my early life.

This time of Lent, give to all who beg from you.