

Resonant Spirits
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In a world of causality, there are no coincidences — even though life sometimes plays itself out in ways so bizarre they're hard to fathom. Such was the week of Aug. 31, when Diana, princess of Wales, died in a Paris car crash.

In the middle of the clamor that followed, Mother Teresa, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, rose from her sickbed to pray for the princess. Then on Sept. 5, Mother Teresa also died. Both women were praised and loved — across boundaries of class, race and religion — for their hearts. Both were also criticized and ridiculed by cynics and people of power who saw them as naive or simple-minded females in a complex world.

Mother Teresa, the youngest daughter of an Albanian builder, was 18 when she committed herself to a religious life, working as a missionary in India. Around the same age, Lady Diana Spencer, the youngest daughter of an old British family, was working as a nanny and kindergarten teacher when she was discovered by the royal family.

Both reached a major turning point at 36. Mother Teresa received what she referred to as an order: to leave the convent and live among the poorest of the poor. Diana gave up her husband and her legal connection to the British Crown, then set about fashioning her own title as “the queen of hearts.” After Diana died, Mother Teresa praised the princess “for helping me help the poor. That’s why she came close to me.”

Mother Teresa’s words reflect her deep spiritual resonance with Diana, who was so different by all outward appearances.

An estimated 2.5 billion people worldwide watched Princess Diana’s funeral. Mourners sent an estimated \$50 million in flowers. And now the memorial fund in her name is bringing \$250,000 a day, for a total of \$260 million as of Sept. 11. That doesn’t include the money that will come from sales of music by Elton John and others dedicated to her memory. Much of the outpouring of money came in small amounts from individuals — and even from children with pocket change.

But as Diana and Mother Teresa knew all too well, all the money in the world won’t necessarily solve the problems — problems that both actually drew personal strength from by confronting face to face.

“It is not how much we do, but how much love we put in the doing,” Mother Teresa once said. “It is not how much we give, but how much love we put in the giving.” And again: “There is a terrible hunger for love. We all experience that in our lives — the pain, the loneliness. We must have courage to recognize it. The poor you may have right in your own family. Find them. Love them. Put your love for them in living action.”

In the final analysis, both were women of faith who were concerned about happiness for themselves and others.

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