

6-19-95

Mrs. Clinton met privately with Mother Teresa inside the home, a two-story Tudor, for about a half hour before they came out to the front hall for a blessing led by Washington Cardinal James Hickey, and took a brief tour of the building.

The inside of the house is neat, clean and simple, with hardwood floors and walls generally painted white or covered with light wallpaper and decorated with paintings of either religious figures or outdoor scenes. It has two nursery rooms upstairs that can accommodate five infants, and two other rooms for three mothers and their children. The basement has been converted into a convent to house four nuns. The cribs are inscribed on their headboards with "Angel of God Watch Over Me."

The cardinal led the blessing with Mrs. Clinton and Mother Teresa gathered next to him in the front entranceway of the home. Several nuns gathered in the adjacent room, and other nuns on the upper floor chanted the lyrics to the song, "On This House," which could be heard as a soft background tune throughout the blessing.

The blessing included prayers of thanks and a sprinkling of holy water. The nuns, like Mother Teresa, were dressed in white robes with blue trim.

They were joined on the tour of the house by D.C. Mayor Marion Barry and Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton. In one room on the second floor, Mrs. Clinton told Barry, "Thank you for all your help, mayor." He responded, "The D.C. government should work this way all the time."

In another room on the same floor, Mrs. Clinton and Mother Teresa had a brief exchange with the pool, with Mother Teresa warmly holding the first lady's arm throughout.

Flotus: "We all worked very hard with the neighbors so they would feel that they are a part of this."

Mother Teresa, asked if she were bringing peace to the house, said: "Mother Teresa doesn't give peace to anybody - She makes everybody work."

Flotus said she brought a donation from a lutheran minister who along with his wife visited mother teresa's home in calcutta. the minister's wife later died, and he offered the donation in memory of her. flotus declined to identify him. (as mentioned during the subsequent open press remarks outside, the donor who bought the house is also anonymous).

Mother Teresa said she was "very happy" in the house and said the babies would begin arriving "as soon as possible." "Now that Mrs. Clinton has opened the house, they'll pour in."

Flotus: "I have been in many, many places in our country and around the world where children are cared for, and sometimes I am disappointed that I don't feel the sense of love and personal connection with the children that every child needs, and when you do see it, it is a marvelous gift that you know will make a difference in the lives of the children, and I think the more we can do, all of us, to provide places of peace and joy and love for our children anywhere in the world, we ought to do that."

Mother Teresa added immediately afterwards: "Lots of love and peace." She then said: "It was wonderful that Mrs. Clinton went to India, and what she saw there - It is beautiful that we can together do the same thing here."

Flotus: "Any of our facilities for children in our country, and particularly now here in the District, are going to need a lot of help and support and I'm grateful for the mayor and what his staff did to bring this about. But I think a lot of us, every one of us, are going to have to pay more attention to our children and how they're being cared for."

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"No, we make amends during that talk I gave."

Asked where they had common ground in their beliefs, referring to abortion, they said in quick succession:

Flotus: "Well, in children, and doing everything we can..."

Mother Teresa: "Giving tender love and care..."

Flotus: "That's right, for every child."

Mother Teresa grasped the first lady repeatedly throughout the tour and during their comments. The first lady also presented Mother Teresa with a framed picture of Mrs. Clinton and Chelsea holding children during their visit to her mission in New Delhi.

--paul basken, upi