



GANZA / ANA

Peel Biography

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Mother Teresa and St. Martin Secondary School teacher Ana Ganza worked together for five weeks last summer in Calcutta. Ganza, armed with photos and memories, will now write a book about her experiences.

## Visit with Mother Teresa turns teacher to author

By ANGELA BLACKBURN  
Staff

Most people simply admire Mother Teresa's good deeds, but St. Martin Secondary School teacher Ana Ganza knows of them first-hand.

The Erin Mills resident spent five weeks of her summer working alongside Mother Teresa and her missionary sisters in centres Mother Teresa has established in Calcutta, for the destitute and dying, homeless children, premature babies, even lepers.

"She's a saint on earth," said Ganza, 49, herself well-recognized in Mississauga for her charitable work, especially in teaching her heritage Croatian language.

Ganza and Mother Teresa, in fact, spoke in Croatian, since the nun, an Albanian native, is fluent.

"I'm grateful to the Lord," said Ganza, telling how she came to spend time in Mother Teresa's Calcutta home, working "with the poorest of the poor."

As a young adult, Ganza fled her homeland to Italy when her husband was jailed for his political beliefs.

In her mid 20s, Ganza settled in Hamilton and came to Mississauga 11 years ago when she landed her job at St. Martin's.

During the recent war in her native land, Ganza, a business and computers teacher, wrote about her sadness. It culminated in two published books, with proceeds going to charity, including Croatia's homeless children.

Ganza had also penned a poem about Mother Teresa, and encouraged by her

school chaplain, forwarded it to Calcutta.

It drew an invitation from Mother Teresa to visit her Calcutta home.

That was over a year ago and when Ganza's school term ended, she left for India.

Ganza remembers arriving at Mother Teresa's home to find the nun coming off her balcony to greet her.

Ganza watched as a man, who had come to be blessed, fell to the ground to kiss Mother Teresa's feet. She pulled him up and blessed him, assuring him that he needn't do that.

"At that point, I was on my knees," said Ganza.

Mother Teresa presented Ganza with a Virgin Mary pendant.

According to Ganza, the spunky 86-year-old nun is quick to point out that if there were no Mary, there would be no Jesus.

After rising at 4:30 a.m. daily to participate in prayers and mass until 8 a.m., it was a breakfast of tea, bread and two petite bananas before Ganza, alongside Mother Teresa and her workers, trekked to various centres to work in the intense heat. On days off, she ventured to different centres, including one for lepers that's run by missionary brothers.

Overcome by emotion after her visit there, Ganza boldly asked Mother Teresa if she could write a book about the work. She watched as Mother Teresa, without uttering a word, gave her written permission.

Ganza said the book should be ready for publication by the spring.