



**Monastery of Sacred Heart - April 5 2003
Centenary of the birth
of the Servant of God Sister M. Consolata Betrone**

**FROM THE HOMILY OF HIS EMINENCE CARD. SEVERINO POLETTO
ARCHBISHOP OF TURIN**

TO LOVE GOD IN OUR LIFE

My dears, this evening we find ourselves in the Convent of our Clare Capuchin Sisters to remember one hundred years from the birth of the Servant of God Consolata Betrone, born in Saluzzo in 1903 and died at 43 years old in 1946: therefore, one hundred years ago.

We are here to remember her, because in her brief life - 43 years are not very many! - she really knew how to orient herself towards the Lord Jesus as we ourselves are invited to do during this celebration. We have listened to three readings (*Jer 31,31-34; Heb 5,7-9; Jn 12,20-33*). In the first, the prophet Jeremiah says "*The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah*" (*Jer 31,31*). Which is the new alliance that God has established with the people of Israel? In times of the prophet the alliance was a profound and spiritual sign that God wanted to put in the conscience, in the heart of every single member of the people of Israel; not anymore a law written on stone or a pact tied to extraordinary external events, but the Lord says "*I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts*" (*Jer 31,33*), in your conscience, because you understand that this bond of love is a spiritual bond, but real, between me and you, for each one of you, if you will be attentive and reflective, you will notice my presence, my love, my nearness, and you will have no need to teach each other, because everyone will have the experience of God in their life.



The Lord says that this alliance is the fruit of a gift of his Spirit immersed in us. And we know that this new alliance is announced by Jeremiah, but that in reality is fulfilled with the coming of Christ on earth. We are getting under way towards Easter, we are already at the fifth Sunday of Lent and, therefore, we are drawing towards the goal: next Sunday will already be Palm Sunday and then the Holy Week will follow. We will prepare for Easter, and we'll do it listening to the Word of God, converting, renewing and cleansing ourselves from our sins and waiting for the Easter gifts of a new life that the Lord offers us every year. He is a Lord to contemplate nevertheless, risen, alive, and present in this Eucharist: every Eucharist renders present for us that fact, the event that occurred two thousand years ago on the Calvary of Christ when he sacrificed himself on the Cross for us and then rose again, he gives himself to us and he gives us his Spirit and the promise of a saintly life through the forgiveness of sins and the new life.

The Evangelical text recalls us to this central attention on the person of Jesus. These Greeks that desire to see the Lord and meet with him, we know who they are; they had turned to the apostles that were close to the Lord and when Jesus heard that there were some people that wanted to meet him, he presented himself with the image of the grain of wheat. They want to know him, but it's not enough that they see his face, it's not enough that they hear his voice: they will really know who He is if they understand, and therefore we also will really know Jesus if we are able to understand that Jesus came to die, to consume himself like the grain of wheat that fell to the ground; because if the grain of wheat that falls to the ground does not rot, does not die, does not become an 'ear of corn', does not produce fruit, remains alone. And so, Jesus says all that to indicate which will be the moment that he will manifest himself, that is, when he will be glorified by the Father.

"Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your Son" (Jn 17,1), he had prayed in the supper-room. It's the hour of his Passion and Death: in that

moment you will understand who he is. He had said it and in the Gospel of John there's this expression: "*When you lift up - from the ground - the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM*" (Jn 8,28). Here he uses the Name of God (=I AM) to affirm that: "*I am the Son of God*". He's the same Jesus that we heard say, at the end of today's Evangelical passage: "*When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself*" (Jn 12,32), that means: Crucified, I will draw everyone to myself.

My dears, we are celebrating the Eucharist to live this spiritual experience and to feel ourselves drawn by the Lord Jesus crucified and risen. He's a Jesus that became man, that entered into our human reality, in to our history; he's a Jesus that came on this earth to take upon himself all of our realities: he did not sin, because he is the Son of God, but he took upon himself our sins and he wanted to experience all the difficult situations that the creatures experience, including the situations of suffering, of passion, of death, of illness. He subjected himself to everything that is human reality, except sin: I believe that the Lord also subjected himself to the consequences of the war that is taking place in Iraq or the wars that are going on in other parts of the world. This is not because men justify with their reasoning the oppression and violence towards others, but because men see in the face of their brothers the face of Christ and above all respect life itself, together with all the persons human rights.

Therefore, Jesus subjected himself to everything, even death, and "*with loud cries and tears*" (Heb 5,7) he prayed to the Father to be delivered from death. You see even Jesus like us had lived the fear of death and, as the text says, "*and he was heard because of his reverence*" (*ditto*), that is, for his confidence and for his complete abandonment of himself to the Father: but was heard in the sense that he was delivered from death. But when I ask children these things, they say: Jesus is dead, he wasn't delivered from death! Yes, but he's Risen: that's the deliverance! The Resurrection was not a deliverance in the sense that Jesus was not to go through with death, rather in the sense that he is Risen. So this gesture of his passing from death to life and, therefore, his victory over death, shows that death is the last enemy that had to be conquered and so our enemies don't exist anymore, because the Lord has freed us from every form of enemy.

You see, the Eucharistic celebration this evening must bring us to concentrate our attention on the Lord Jesus and if we came here in this Convent, it's also to meet the Lord, reflecting ourselves in the testimony of this nun, Consolata Betrone. Her brief life, let's us understand how important it is to live for Jesus: *JESUS, MARY I LOVE YOU, SAVE SOULS!*

Therefore, her life had been an act of love to the Lord. With commitment, effort and hard work she arrived at saying, per example: in one month I was distracted four or five times in prayer. In a month! Or: five times I had useless thoughts. Not nasty, useless: in a month! For us instead it's very different: from the beginning of the Mass until now, how many times have we been distracted? And a month has not passed by, we have been here for only half an hour!

Here's a woman that had made of her life a continual desire to search for the Lord: also the tormented choice of the Congregation was a total abandonment of herself in the Lord, a need to do penance, of purification for herself and for all of humanity, a great redress. I think that she had learned well the little way of the spiritual childhood of 'Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus', who died a few years before her birth; Sister M. Consolata had in fact read, at the time of her adolescence, the book "Story of a soul" with the spiritual events of the great Saint, now Doctor of the Church and, who had learned to seize the Lord in the simple things and love him intensely.

There are still nuns in this Convent, that lived with Sister M. Consolata. I asked them which things do they remember the most with joy and consolation about this Sister. They gave me examples that are very normal, nobody told me that they saw in her unusual behavior. Here, the saints are people with their feet on the ground, far away from the sensational things; they know well that you are sanctified by carrying out one's duty. For example, like Sister M. Consolata that cooked and first thought of her sisters and then herself. If there was any left, in those terrible years of the war. This giving to the others of hers, this orient herself towards her neighbor, a nun who had worked in the kitchen with her told me, that sometimes she became a little impulsive, direct, but she always knew to kneel down and ask forgiveness. She knew to turn her life in whatever circumstance to the Lord Jesus and to talk with her, always brought you to Jesus.

So, my dear brothers and sisters and dear brethren priests that are here to celebrate with me the Holy Mass, why are we here? Because the Lord Jesus concerns us, because we believe that he is the Son of God, the Savior; because we are convinced that he is to love with all our heart, with all our soul, with all of our strength in a way to then be able to love our neighbor as ourselves. Because we are convinced that our life, as the life of the world, will get better in proportion to our growth in the love of God.

Sister M. Consolata doesn't have many teachings to give us, if not that which is fundamental: love God in our life and abandon ourselves to him with confidence feeling like children in his hands. Sister M. Consolata

relates in the Dairy, that one day she was sitting watching a brood of baby chicks and at a certain point taking one in her hand, she could feel it's little heart beating fast out of fear; caressing it a little at a time, slowly it returned calm: straight away she made a comparison between this little chick and herself that, abandoning herself in God's hands she felt even more secure and calm. You see, this sanctity is simple, Sister M. Consolata didn't do anything extraordinary. The Pope has canonized many saints and the Blessed, because he has a particular idea of sanctity, that he explained to me when he came to Asti and I had the pleasure of receiving him for the beatification of Monsignor Giuseppe Marengo. He said that it was his duty to do the ostentation, in the sense of exhibiting before the world the sanctity of the Church. The proclamation of the Blessed and the Saints is in fact a look at the history of the Church which is a history of sanctity: the fundamental characteristics not of everyone, but of many saints and blessed, are just those of people that have lived every day ordinary lives in an extraordinary way. What has Jesus himself done that was extraordinary? Of course, in the public life he worked miracles and the people said that they had never seen anything simile, but in the thirty years at Nazareth, he lived an ordinary life. His people were those that had trouble believing that he could be the Messiah, the cause of this ordinary life. Where is therefore the extraordinary in the life of Jesus? Here: in doing the will of the Father; only in this way Jesus saved the world. From Sister M. Consolata Betrone we will therefore look to extract this lesson. We celebrate a Mass of thanks for the one hundred years from her birth and we ask the Lord the gift of her beatification, if he wants to give us this grace. But we will learn from the sanctity of Sister M. Consolata that, to become saints keeping the Lord in our hearts and doing his will day by day, according to our specific vocation.

This memory of Sister M. Consolata remains, while we ensure the nuns our gratitude for their presence in this Convent and in this town that has a good three Convents of an enclosed order, like I said before to the Councilor that represents the Mayor of Moncalieri. This presence is a particular blessing; the nuns live secluded, but like antennas pointed towards the sky, imploring graces for us and for the world, today in a particular way, in which we also remember the theme of peace.