



**Monastery of Sacred Heart - July 18 2003
57th anniversary of birth to Heaven
of the Servant of God Sister M. Consolata Betrone**

**FROM THE HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY MGR. GIUSEPPE GUERRINI
BISHOP OF SALUZZO**

MERCY AND CONFIDENCE, THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

"If you had understood the significance of: *'Mercy I want and not sacrifice'*, you wouldn't have condemned people without fault". The citation of the prophet Hosea (6,6) puts before us a word that summarizes the attitude towards God: *Mercy*. Or rather, more radically summarizes the same attitude of God, we could say *the nature of God*. Mercy is the heart, the maternal heart, the maternal love full of compassion, of tenderness. Here, is the deepest feeling, private, that ties two people in a blood bond or for a bond of the heart by choice. Mercy is goodness, attention, kindness, understanding, forgiveness.

In the passage that we heard (*Mt 12,1-8*), and in the quotation of the prophet Hosea, *Mercy* is opposing to *sacrifice*, that is to the offering of something except ourselves or that which belongs to us, but to which we renounce. In antiquity in general it was about animals, but also other products of the earth, for example the early produce, the first fruits from the field or the vegetable garden. "*Mercy I want, not sacrifice*", as if to say: I'm not interested in anything except you, I'm interested in your heart, I'm interested in your profound attitude, that which is who you really are. The sense of this page of the Gospel is a reproach to formalism, to superficiality, as in many other pages of the Gospel. So it

becomes an invitation to go deeper with attitudes, deeper in that which the Bible calls *the heart of man*.

And the whole life of a Christian is this inner walk, that is from the outside towards the inner most part; a walk of deepening our faith, that is, from the surface towards the profound nucleus of the life of things; a walk of truth from that which appears to that which actually is. In this inner walk, of making our faith deeper, and of seeking the truth we are helped, we said before, by the exegesis, that is by the explanation of the word of God that comes to us through men and women that before us have endeavored to live in a radical way their bond with God. *The exegesis, the explanation, the most effective presentation of the word of God are the saints*. So we'll allow ourselves to be guided a little by Sister M. Consolata to understand better this reality of the Mercy of God.

Maybe she would have used the word *confidence*, but the substance is the same: the full adherence, total, and absolute to love with all of your heart, with all of your strength, and with your whole self. "*My God, I love you*": this phrase that a thirteen years old rose up from her heart while she was on the way to do some errands in Airasca, this phrase "*My God, I love you*", sums up her whole life, all of her spirituality. But I would like to underline plainly, the simplicity and maybe also the ingenuousness of who has just approached from a distance the figure of Sister M. Consolata Betrone.

Here, it seems to me is a love that knows how to put together the vertical and the horizontal dimensions: the paying attention to God with her whole self, until annihilation; but also paying attention to the others, first of all to the Sisters of her community and then, to the brothers and sisters. Before some Sisters that had known her told me, how she had to gather her strength to control her own temper, her own impulsive personality and always ask forgiveness kneeling down before the Sister that she had wronged or with which she had been a little impetuous. Here the importance of putting together this vertical dimension, which is contemplation, which prayer, which is union with God, with this attention towards the others.

The favorite invocation of Sister M. Consolata: *Jesus, Mary I love you, save souls*, seems to me to say well this twofold love. Of course, it's love for Jesus and Mary, but straight away it then becomes love for the others. I said before that for her sisters she always had an attitude of availability, and of duty. How many responsibilities she had, very practical, very humble: cook, caretaker, cobbler, nurse, secretary, always with intensity of commitment to sometimes even impulsive, impetuous, but always with a glance on the whole world, on the souls, at the school of Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus that had influenced her and her spirituality so much.

That of Sister M. Consolata is an itinerary of love open to everyone because it's also possible for everyone, with a predilection for the littlest ones that for adolescent Sister M. Consolata, busy in the Parish, was really the little children, in particular the *littlest ones*, the "favorites" of the Catholic Action. But this adjective, *littlest*, is referred to the attitude of the heart: in short the capacity to always say "yes" to everything, seeing Jesus in everyone, living every moment of life with a grateful heart, trying, between two ways to behave, to always choose the most perfect as judgment for the walk of faith and of sanctity.

Therefore the *littlest way* is a walk of faith in which everyone can enter, provided that they have this availability deep down, the availability to always say "yes", daily. And again it's an itinerary of love that becomes a usual dialogue, profound and intimate conversation with the Lord. We use the word *contemplation*, that is where at a certain moment the words are no longer necessary and only love counts, only this heart that gives counts and in the middle of the daily events, in the middle of the daily occupations, very practical occupations. Sister M. Consolata managed to live in this attitude of total availability, of dialogue, of conversation beyond the words, where of course there are words, but they are always inadequate instruments, insufficient the heart would say, to say love, to say totally, that's the radicalism of this love.

Once again a suggestion that comes from the narration of Easter that we have listened to in the book of Exodus (11,10-12,14), in the first reading: that blood of the lamb put on the jamb and on the architrave of the door. Well, every morning Sister M. Consolata brought all the brothers and sisters who are far from God and immersed them in the Blood of Christ, this blood that saves, that frees, that redeems or of this Lamb of God that takes upon himself the sins of the world. It's the Easter of the Lord, for us Christians it's the Easter that we experienced in the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And so, exactly, Sister M. Consolata closes in the tabernacle in contact with Christ, Lamb of God, her brothers and sisters far from God, convinced that only the love of God can save, can convert hearts, can overturn the world.

Whilst we give thanks to God for the gift that he offers us through these examples of Christian life, practical and at the same time sublime, we ask to know how to share this great and strong experience of the love of God. It doesn't make sense to fix our stare on Sister M. Consolata, as on every other Christian example or on every other saint, if not in how much it must then be a reflection on our life, a real reflection in the concreteness that says: so it's possible, so this love of God's lived concretely, with effort, with falls and with continual resumptions, is possible.

This confidence in God is possible to maintain also during the events of the everyday. Of course the context of life in these 57 years - today precisely we remember this anniversary of the death of Sister M. Consolata - it has been radically modified, but the compassion of God remains eternal. And so today it's our turn to live in the spirit of donation and contemplation; it's our turn, everybody according to their own vocation, to put together this contemplative glance, in-love with God, and this glance of attention towards our brothers. *Jesus, Mary I love you, save souls.*