



**Monastery of Sacred Heart - July 18 2004
58th anniversary of birth to Heaven
of the Servant of God Sister M. Consolata Betrone**

**FROM THE HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY MGR. PIER GIORGIO DEBERNARDI
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DON'T PASS BY IN MY LIFE, LORD, WITHOUT STOPPING!

Martha and Mary are two women that express the two complementary directions of the Christian life: the contemplation and service, that is the two sides of love. The two flames that originate from one fire: love.

In the life of the disciple of Jesus, it's not possible to distinguish these two dimensions. Like in Jesus, contemplation and action must be closely united in a way that fits. To separate one from the other would mean to make less authentic one or the other and in each one of us there has to be the soul of Martha that knows how to accommodate and serve and the soul of Mary that knows how to listen to the word of the Lord.

The verbs that feature the behaviour of these two women are exquisitely evangelical, or rather, if we want, summarize the whole Gospel: welcome, serve, and listen. Martha welcomes into her house and serves, Mary, at the feet of the Master, listens. If you thinks about it it's the behavior of Jesus himself, the behavior of the life of Jesus, the Master. Jesus listened to the word of the Father, it's the beloved Son: "My food is to do the will of the Father" (ref. *Jn* 4,34).

The do presumes the listening and the welcoming. The whole life of Jesus was a welcoming, also to who betrayed him. Like, the life of Jesus was all duty, up to the giving of his life: "I didn't come to be served, but to serve and give my life for the brothers" (ref. *Mt* 20,28). That which Jesus reprimands in Martha is not the welcome and the service, but the

worry and the agitation. Let's reflect on the conclusion of the discourse on the mountain, when Jesus says: "Do not worry yourselves, do not become frantic, do not become agitated". This is what Jesus reprimands Martha for, when that is, we find in chapter six of the Gospel according to Matthew with this teaching: "For this I say to you, for your lives do not become frantic about what you will eat, or drink, neither for your bodies, of what you will wear. Is life perhaps not worth more than food and the body more than the clothes? Look at the birds in the sky, they do not sow, they do not harvest nor do they collect and yet your heavenly Father nourishes them. And are you not worth more than them?" (ref. *Mt 6,25-34*).

Jesus reprimands Martha for becoming frantic and agitated. Well then, is the behaviour of these two women in us? Mary knows how to enrapture herself at the words of Jesus; sometimes Mary had listened to Jesus speak and Jesus had a familiarity in the house of Martha and Mary. How many times had Mary heard Jesus speak, therefore, but she never got used to his word. She always remained stupefied, and amazed, as if it was the first time. The Pope, recently, above all in preparation for the Year of the Eucharist, speaks about the astonishment before the Eucharist.

Mary remains astonished before the word of Jesus, as if for the first time. And this should be our attitude: every time that we listen to the word of the Lord, we should feel in us astonishment and wonder, as if for the first time, because God, the Lord, is Life, is the bridegroom and for this he asks closeness, time and for us to listen.

Martha knows how to welcome and serve, and Jesus says to her: don't become frantic. But Martha, in front of us, is the image of the one who welcomes and serves. Only he who loves knows also, how to live with heroism these two verbs: welcomes and serves. I think of that mystical soul of the Blessed Sister Teresa of Calcutta. In her welcoming and serving are expressions and give visibility to the invisible love of God, to sit oneself next to the Master and listen to his word and then to pass to welcoming and service.

Martha and Mary don't oppose one another, their behaviour is complementary. Martha is not able to do without Mary and Mary is not able to do without Martha, because each other, their behaviours, derive from the same source. Martha and Mary are two ways to love, two expressions, two flames that come from a single fire: divine love; two aspects of a single beatitude. Blessed are those who hear the word, blessed are those who put it in to practice, Jesus teaches (ref. *Lc 11,28*).

We couldn't have a more beautiful page in the Holy Scriptures, of the Gospel, for us to remember the birth in heaven of the Servant of God Sister Mary Consolata; we couldn't encounter a more beautiful page this Sunday that helps us illuminate her works, her life and her behaviour before God. In her everything began with an act of love.

I quote from her Dairy: *"One day for the errands that I had to do I found myself in a lonely street of Airasca, gathered within myself I pronounced with all my heart: "My God, I love you". And straight away I felt a great and intimate joy, as are all of the joys that come from the Lord. That was my first act of love".* And then this ejaculatory prayer: *"My God, I love you",* elongates to: *"Jesus I love you, increase my love for You".* To love Jesus to the folly: are expressions that we found in her letters to her spiritual director, and folly wants folly. It's the littlest way of love, that's source is in God and develops into love for thy neighbour. The desire to love becomes so great, that Sister Mary Consolata doesn't want to lose an act of love, an act of charity, of virtue from one holy communion to another. Everything in her life has to be an act of love. Really, beginning with the holy Communion, beginning with the holy Eucharist in her the liturgy becomes spring and source, summit of her whole life of love: the littlest way of love.

Again two pages that help us understand how this unique love, the love of God, that moulded the personality of Sister Mary Consolata making her grow up to the stature of Christ. In the first, there are some expressions drafted from a letter of her spiritual Father dated 14th July 1939. Her spiritual Father wrote her: *"Yes, for you, to carry on to the end your mission of victim «unum est necessarium» (only one thing is necessary): the incessant act of virginal love. Don't get lost in other ways, don't waste your strength looking for other means, don't draw light, joy and strength from other sources. Only and always, in all the conditions of the spirit, through all the battles, in all the anguish of the heart and spirit: the incessant act of virginal love. This cross, according to the same divine promises, will help you bear all the others. - And then he adds - The hour is approaching in which his dream that he had one night will have come true. Alone, poor little girl, the waves of a sea storm, in the frightening darkness...but with the eyes fixed on the sky, on a single thread of light: the incessant act of love. Yes, dearest daughter, hold on tight to this. Save it, the incessant act of love, in the middle of the storm of ugly images that the devil is preparing for you, and that Jesus will allow; and also when it will seem that everything is lost, the fidelity to the incessant act of love, brought to the highest point of heroism, will guide you safely to a successful conclusion...then the «don't lose an act of charity» from one holy Communion to the next. Oh, this yes that will really cost you, will require heroism!".* The life of Mary was carried out in Sister Mary Consolata with the love of God lived in the littlest way of love which leads us to God, passing through the love of thy neighbour.

The second, is a letter of Sister Mary Consolata to her spiritual Father dated 2nd august 1939: *"The act of love, my only everything and the give myself to everyone mould my life (in this expression we have Mary and Martha). I don't know if I am the cook temporarily or permanently. Also*

here the field of sacrifice and charity is without limits. At the bottom of my heart, there is an infinite desire for solitude, and in the hours that are free I looked for a small corner of the house, to do my work as shoemaker. But an infirm little sister discovered me, and she comes to spend a few hours with me, stealing from me in this way my only happiness. Change place? I would need to resort to the cellars, and I don't think it is suitable. To see Jesus in everyone! And also tolerate even that useless chatter that to me is so very boring...But an act of charity exceeds everything. To be, and to make myself the servant of everyone. At times the nature seems to rise up, and it seems to spoil the sisters, when adjusting the sandals to the smallest details, while they could quite easily do it themselves. Well it seems to me, and I hold to this, that for me it's better to accumulate as much as I can, treasures of merit. The others will adjust themselves. It's worth my while to do my own interests well. Therefore always «Yes» without caring about what anyone thinks".

Always «yes», in the certainty that everything that one does, one does for the love of Jesus: here is the synthesis of Martha and Mary, of these two flames that intertwine, but proceed from a single fire, the fire of the love of God.

And I would like to make a referral also to the first reading, to the words of Abraham before the Lord that appeared in these three characters, the three angels that knock at his tent: **"Don't pass by, Lord, without stopping!"** (ref. Gn 18,3).

In the life of Sister Mary Consolata the Lord passed and he stopped and in her accomplished wonders. We have to also say this, they are the words of Abraham, they are the words of the souls full of God: *"Don't pass by in my life, Lord, without stopping!"*.

Sometimes it seems that we don't have time, sometimes we are also caught up in lots of interests, and yet, in the middle of our preoccupations, we should repeat this prayer of Abrahams, the prayer of the saints, the prayer of Sister Mary Consolata: Lord don't pass by my house without stopping. And so, only if we love we will recognise the visit of God; only if we love we will know to open the door to him as soon as he arrives and knocks, we will know to open the door to our heart, we will know to open our heart to love thy neighbour. This is the grace that, through the intercession of Sister Mary Consolata, we want to ask this evening: that also in us the flame of the love of God and the flame of the love of our neighbour intertwine, that the flame of the love of God shines through an even stronger love, even more generous towards our neighbour. Then we will really be disciples of the Lord, because in us there will be the spirit of Mary and Martha.