



**Monastery of Sacred Heart - July 18 2011
65th anniversary of birth to Heaven
of the Servant of God Sister M. Consolata Betrone**

**FROM THE HOMILY OF HIS EXCELLENCY MGR. CESARE NOSIGLIA
ARCHBISHOP OF TURIN**

**PRAYER IS LOVE
LOVE IS HOPE**

"Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the Lord will win for you today" (Ex 14,13): Moses addressed the Israelites like this when, out of Egypt, they found themselves in front of a tragic situation of having on one side the sea and on the other the Egyptian chariots that wanted to reach them and then to kill them all.

The bad at times always seems stronger than the good in the lives of people and in the world and we know that all this, also becomes a source of discouragement, because it seems that the negative things prevail over the positive aspects of life. Also in yesterday's Gospel (Mt 13,24-43), Sunday, Jesus spoke to us about the grain and the weeds saying that the good and the bad flourish together in the heart of man and, therefore, in the heart of history. But God is merciful: he doesn't pull up the weeds, but he wins them over with the force of good: evil is not the last word. And so, in this passage of Exodus, we see that the Lord intervenes and says: *"Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to go forward"*. *"Fear not...the Lord himself will fight for you and you will be calm"* (Ex 14,14.15).

So we need to have faith, have a profound faith that permits us to face the situations, even the most difficult and complex ones of life and that allows us to not leave ourselves suffocated by the problems that at times can seem irreversible, by the bad that seems to prevail, not only in us, but around us in the history of man. But God acts, God does wonderful things: in the Gospel of this Mass Jesus also invites us to be capable of grasping the sign that he gives, in fact the Pharisee' say: *"Master, we wish to see a sign from you"* (Mt 12,38). And Jesus answers referring to his death: *"A wicked and adulterous generation pretend a sign! But no sign will be given to them, if not the sign of Jonah the prophet. In fact as Jonah remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three night, so the Son of Man will stay in the heart of the ground for three days and three nights"* (Mt 12,39-40).

Jesus is dead, he was killed, the good has been defeated: as so appeared the cross of the Lord; but, from that seed thrown in the heart of the ground, life is born, from death gushed forth the salvation for all men. Jesus is risen from death to help us understand and give us the strength as believers to always win the evil with good, because even the smallest seed of good that we throw into the heart of the world, in our life and in the lives of our neighbours, brings forth fruit in the most marvellous way and much more than what we can imagine. This is the faith that is love, love of God and our neighbours. Who possesses the love of God in himself has a limpid expression, simple, positive: who knows how to see the wonderful signs that God does even today in this world, in the history of man, in the history of the Church, in our personal life and doesn't ever lose heart or get discouraged: but knows how to fight and knows how to continue with strength, with their testimony of every day, the mystery of the kingdom of God.

Yesterday, in the Gospel, Jesus reminded us that the kingdom of Heaven is similar to a little seed, a mustard seed, the smallest, but once sown, becomes a great tree that produces wonderful fruits.

The 'little way' of which Sister M. Consolata fell in love is the spirituality and the sanctity of Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus and, in the end, the way of evangelical simplicity, of Saint Francis and of Saint Clare, the way of humility, the way to make yourselves little as Jesus said: *"I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt 18,3). It's the way that knows how to always value the situations of life with the heart and the glance of God, that doesn't allow us to fear because it asks us to abandon ourselves as does a child in the arms of his father and his mother.

Here, to remember that this evening in the live memory of Sister M. Consolata, which must push us to go along the road of this evangelic smallness loaded with love that she indicates: Love with the capital letter

'L', is at the centre of the experience of this nun. Love is to identify oneself with the very Heart of Jesus that loved everyone and everything, that didn't have an attitude of rejection towards anyone, but saw something good in everybody with which to make a reference to revive them to a new life. Nothing can resist the love of God; and human love, if it is not covered with the love of God, at times can become a difficult way, tiring and at times even impossible.

Human love is a strong sentiment that recalls us to the love of God in as much as we are created by his love and therefore human love can also be beautiful, sincere, valid and positive. But human love is prone to many situations of separation, of temptation, of selfishness, of becoming closed in oneself, only if one is welcomed and inserted into the love of God, we become invincible, we become a force of transformation for our own life, for the world, for history, the most complex and difficult realities also change: always win the bad, but it has to be covered with the love of God.

The primacy of God in the life of Sister M. Consolata is evident in the simplicity of her relationship with Jesus and with Mary, as in her life of love that is measured in the prayer of contemplation, the welcome of the providence and of the will of God and again in the prayer that she had loaded upon herself, that of the salvation of sinners. Let's remember the beautiful invocation that she continually repeated: *Jesus, Mary I love you, save souls*: here's, the salvation of the souls, of the others, through a total donation of herself in the love of Jesus and Mary his Mother because it is through the way of love that one becomes able to really love the whole world. So this lets us understand the importance of a life also of sacrifice, of renouncement, of commitment because to love means also to work hard, to overcome our defects and our sins: which means to open ourselves up to live in the dimensions of gratitude, of generosity, of forgiveness, and of reconciliation.

The way of love is not easy, the 'little and littlest way' of the Gospel: it's, in the end, the way of the cross to which the Lord always calls us. The cross means for us to assume until the end with responsibility the task of putting God at first place in our life, always welcoming his will even when it seems not to correspond with our thoughts and our ideas. We should never doubt God that is our Father, of God that is the Son, and in Jesus he gives us the salvation and takes care of us in his mercy and in his love. We should never doubt the force of the Holy Spirit that was given to us, and therefore welcome until the end that which God likes means to pray listening that pushes us to ask: *Lord, what do you want me to do?*

He wants to speak to us more than we want to speak to him. At times we think that to pray means for us to say something, to have an attitude of availability to be able to speak with God, and so we do and say our prayers that nevertheless are important, we should learn them, we need

to repeat them, but to pray doesn't mean to just recite the prayers; to pray means first of all to make ourselves inwardly available to listen to what God wants to give each one of us because he is the first to want to love us and to speak with us. It is asked of us to give an answer and a space in our life for this dimension of Love so great that it seems almost not to be able to do without us.

It's paradoxical, but in the profound experience of little Saint Teresa, of Sister M. Consolata and of many of our cloistered sisters, the most profound experience is this: realizing that at a certain point it is no longer us that search for God, but it is God that searches for us, it is God that desires us, it is the Lord that seems to have more of a need for us than us for him. This is the greatest paradox, but speaks of a love that gives to the extreme of itself.

This is our God, that of which our sisters and our witnesses of the said love, like Sister M. Consolata, indicate to us, and let us understand. It is not easy, because generally we are used to having a very different experience of love: receiving it humanly it gives us joy, but at the same time we work hard to give it back and so it seems almost that we have to make the first move. Therefore, also towards God, the love and the prayer become almost an obligation and we live them as a duty: it's true, they are also a duty, but they are first of all a pleasure. Love is first of all a pleasure and such as the prayer should be for the Christian: to really find joy, serenity and to deeply desire to place oneself in a relationship with God or, better still, to welcome God that wants to start a relationship with us.

Saint Agustin, the great Bishop of Hippo, asked himself how Jesus invites us to always pray without ever getting tired, with a very strong expression of the Gospel: *"Always pray, without becoming weary"* (Lk 18,1).

Jesus himself had a life full of occupations and everybody sought after him, but he found time, even snatching it away from his sleep and other moments of the day, to place himself in an intimate relationship with the Father in deserted places.

Saint Agustin, that for his commitments as Bishop had to work, study, relate to people and even go and find the poor, said that it is not always possible to pray. But reflecting about himself he understood that when two people love each other, they always carry each other in their hearts, because they desire each other: this means to always pray.

Love is desire and if we really do desire the beloved person, we will always carry them with us, even if they are not physically near us. Desire and you will love, maintain the longing for God in your heart and you will always pray, because this longing for God will open you up to welcome his presence, you will feel it, you will enjoy it. The sweetness of God will make you capable of having a profound experience of him, even if in that

moment you are not in Church and you are not praying like you think. This is the real sense of the contemplative prayer, a profound prayer of which recalls us to the life of Sister M. Consolata and of which recalls us, I would say, to the life of our cloistral sisters.

The society accustoms us to doing and if we don't, if we don't produce, we are made to feel useless, dead, finished like when, at a certain age we retire. In a world like this it seems that the prayer is a luxury for whoever has time, for whoever in some way has the possibility. It makes you think: "I that have a family, a job, and many things to do, how can I pray? Where can I find the time with my family and in my personal life?". Like this you lose the major part of the most beautiful and most powerful experience that we could have towards God and that would permit us to live more serenely and with hope in facing the trials and the hard work of life.

Our sisters recall to us this primacy of God because they are like the heart of the Church and of humanity, the heart that pulsates the love: it's the love that makes you live, it's the love that gives you serenity and meaning to life and to everything that we do. If there is no heart, every part of the body stops functioning, if the heart stops everything stops. It's like this if the prayer stops in the life of each one of us, everything stops: we can conquer the world, accumulate a lot of money, have various activities to do, but in the end we find ourselves empty, emptied, lifeless and without the ability to live the fullness of the human and spiritual life.

So we will ask Sister M. Consolata to give us a little of this desire to love: I won't say all of it because she really is a model that could seem unattainable, even if the way that she indicates is a possible way for all of us in our different environments of life. Let's ask her to intercede with this love for us to Christ, to God, to the Holy Mary, with facts, and not just words: in fact it's easy to say: *Jesus, Mary I love you, save souls*, the beautiful ejaculatory prayer that Sister M. Consolata said in such a strong way, tied so to her experience, that it was certainly received by God in totality.

At times we say these invocations repeating a little something that we had learned. Let's ask to pray to her, if we recite, with serenity and with faith, because, like Jesus said, if you have faith as small as a little mustard seed you can say to this mountain: Move! And this mountain will move. Sister M. Consolata had made of her life a testimonial of this profound love for God that then became a profound love for sinners, for the last, for the poor, for all those who could have drawn strength from it, vigour, hope. Up to today very many have benefitted. We poor in the end, of good because often poor of God, of his presence in our life, we are the first to have need of his example, of his light.

The intercession of Sister M. Consolata makes us go along this *littlest* way in a way that our life as Bishop, priest, deacon, religious, pious,

family, assumes a different dimension. Maybe a lot of preoccupations, a lot of worries, many fears from our heart would disappear and we could find a serenity and an inner strength capable of fighting against every adversity. And so we would not be afraid anymore of the bad, whatever bad it may be, because the good would become for us the way of hope. Oh, so we wouldn't ever sin against hope. It's easy to sin against hope when we don't realize the good that God has sown in and around us, when we don't have a simple heart and we don't know how to see the signs of His presence.

Sister M. Consolata give us a little of your heart so simple, poor, humble, little, but for this great, great in love. We can also obtain it following her example and her testimony: this is the prayer that we want to address to her because she, close to God, sees our needs, and the needs of her Sisters.

Sister M. Consolata stay close to them and make it that they are always here for you at Moncalieri a point of reference like they have always been in all these years: already for 65 years the presence of Sister M. Consolata is alive in the midst of them and she certainly is in the midst of us. For this together we will thank the Lord.

