



**Monastery of Sacred Heart - July 18 2014
68th anniversary of birth to Heaven
of the Servant of God Sister M. Consolata Betrone**

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**A CONTINUAL ACT OF LOVE:
THE HEROISM OF THE “LITTEST WAY OF LOVE”**

The episode of the Gospel just heard (Mt 12,1-8) is part of the polemic that the Pharisee' stirred up against Jesus with this further demand to attack him. And Jesus, a great Master, uses the occasion to clarify his teaching: not to abolish the law, but to perfection it. This is because the law is an instrument to fulfil the real divine precept that is, that of the love towards God and our neighbour. And it's exactly this love at the centre of the life and spirituality of Sister M. Consolata and will be the reason for being of the merciful manifestation of the "littlest way", the real program of the spiritual life of the "littlest souls". Hers really is a love story that takes obvious form when, one Sunday, during Catechism, the Curator of the Parrish delivered to Pierina Betrone the card of acceptance into the Convent of the Clare Capuchins at Borgo Po in Turin. The fixed date for her entrance was the 17th April 1929. She arrived with Franca that had accompanied her by car, she rang the bell and they opened for her the cloistered door where she would spend the rest of her life. She confessed: "*Nothing draws me to the Capuchins, the renouncement is complete!*". It seems paradoxical, but in reality it's her walk of sanctity that opens up for her: sanctity that is intended as "the art of taking off", of removing, of detachment, of the continual renouncement, reiterate, donation for love. She began to understand something a few days later,

Wednesday the 8th May 1929 when she had a particular illuminating experience in which Jesus had her renew the offer of victim of love and takes possession of her heart. Enraptured she thought to find the following morning, in the Holy Communion, the sweetness already tasted, instead nothing else and she underlines: "...if before, the virtue was attractive, now on the contrary it costs me. **EVERYTHING WAS TO REDO IN MY SOUL!**". The day of my 'taking the veil' amongst the Capuchins, a divine suggestion clearly indicated to her which road to take: "*The only thing I ask is this: a continual act of love*".

It is not easy to find in the Christian hagiography a soul that feels called at the first onset to a declaration of love so intense, incessant, virginal like in the case of Sister Mary Consolata that she heard (the Lord) say: "*Consolata, we have to no longer only think and avoid defects, but our effort must tend towards loving Jesus to the folly. I want to be loved by you to the folly*". It seems a hazard for a soul to arrive at such a goal, but when it's Jesus that promises all the graces necessary, the perspective changes. Let's hear him repeat it also to us, this evening: "Love me to the folly!".

It can be affirmed from the attentive and in depth study of documented and testimonial material that composes the inquiry *Super vita et virtutibus* of Sister Mary Consolata, that from that day (it was in 1930) and for the sixteen years of cloistered life, her whole life had been concentrated on this foundation of the continual act of love. Or rather it is exactly this characteristic that unifies her journey and exactly on this foundation that corroborates her aspiration to "sanctity". Of course, it needs to be said: the protagonist is not herself, but the Spouse from which she is assured: "*Since I am the Sanctity it is my thirst to communicate it to the souls...You just love...you are too little to climb up the summit...I will carry you in My arms*". "You just love!".

There's a point of capital importance in this story when, almost by chance, at 21 years old Pierina read the "*Story of a soul*" by little Saint Theresa, that the same Sister M. Consolata remembers clearly: "*I remember that Sunday evening, sitting by the window of the mezzanine, with the light that came in abundantly from the street-lamp of Via S. Massimo, absorbed in that reading. And with the unravelling of the pages, the divine Light radiates even more brightly in my soul...and then, the hour of grace, the divine Calling...That evening I felt that I could make mine the way of love of little Saint Theresa; I could have imitated this Saint. That which moved me the most, that made me burst out crying, was the phrase: **I would like to love him (Jesus) so much, love him like he has never been loved!** And the cry of love of the saint found an echo in my heart!*".

There was then a long itinerary of at least 20 years that brought Sister M. Consolata Betrone to reach the fullness of her vocation and to understand with determination that, like she wrote herself: "*In the womb of the Holy Mother Church I have to be the confidence*" explaining even better on what that would mean and counting solely on the Divine Omnipotence: "I will love Jesus and Our Lady like no one has ever loved them or will ever love them, and I will save souls like no one has ever saved them or will ever save them. From that moment on I don't want to ever let doubt enter on this subject, but just believe, firmly believe, to reach everything with the confidence that rests on my miserable nothingness and on the divine Omnipotence" (1^o Friday, August 1943).

The echo of the grace of illumination that Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus had on her mission is obvious: "*In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love*". Whilst she, Sister M. Consolata, understands that in the womb of the Holy Church she has to be, the confidence, to save souls like no one has saved them or will ever save them. Rightly, a qualified studious professor of spirituality (professor Luciana Mirri of which we have to thank for her profound studies on Sister M. Consolata), brought to notice the link that cannot be disregarded between the Carmelite of Lisieux and the Capuchin of Turin, noting that the heart and the womb are of the same mother: the Church, and adding that love and confidence "arrange themselves in a logical succession of growth", because the confidence is "the perfection and truth entirely of the first", that is of love. Maybe daring, but the conclusion of Mirri is logical: "not two, but only one history of sanctity seems to want to transmit and be rendered vital for the present times...".

As father Sales notes in a beautiful paragraph on the call of heroism, for Sister M. Consolata it was about a formal call to heroism, with a program well defined: that of the "littlest way of love". During the Spiritual Retreat of 1936, after a lecture she felt that Jesus repeated to her the big call : "Now from you I want the HEROIC endeavour for you to be faithful to that which I ask of you. I want you HEROIC, Consolata, and I want to be able to show you such, one day to the world". It will be at the end of that retreat that she heard Jesus say: "I will leave you with the holy Gospel from this morning: «Don't think that I have come to bring peace; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword» (Mt 10,34). War on every side: in you and around you; war in the heart and in the spirit. But don't fear, remain calm and you will win with the act of love. I will win in you". Sent to Moriondo to climb Calvary – father Sales wrote – Jesus had fixed for her a unique program: *heroism* and he had promised to put her in a condition to live heroically. That which came true and Sister M. Consolata wrote it from the beginning of her life at Moriondo: "I noted that, here at Moriondo, the Lord sends along my path occasions of continual acts, that to my extreme weakness require a real heroism. It's

true that I am free to choose, but the peace I find is only in the total acceptance, even if the nature shrieks". (Letter to Spiritual father, 8th august 1939). Heroism that reaches a single peak – it wouldn't be good for all the souls – with the silence with which she lived her suffering whether physical or spiritual, after she had heard Jesus, inwardly: "*Suffer and say nothing, hide and smile*. And he explained to her: *When your heart will be oppressed from the anguish and your soul is immersed in sadness, if you win yourself over and smile, remember that it pleases me*". It was by then her way of loving Jesus as she already certified in one of her writings: "*A heavy veil hides me from the eyes of everyone. And underneath this veil of silence and smiles, you can also hide from the expert eyes of the Mother superior coming into contact with her and the Sisters, whole days of indescribable oppressing anguish*".

Effectively it was like that, entirely a holy spiritual war, continuous, how much struggle and above all with what style: with the smile, without making it noticeable...if this is not heroism!?

Sister M. Consolata dwelt in the love for the Lord and for the souls that she wished were saved, by thousands, and she risked her whole life for this. "You just love", Jesus had told her and she did just that: she just loved! Let us learn from our Servant of God to make it that the heroic becomes normal and the normal becomes heroic. "*Jesus, Mary I love you, save souls!*".