

Theology on Tap about Blessed Conchita September 26, 2019

On December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, in 1862, a woman was born in San Luis Potosí, México. Her name was María Concepción Cabrera, but eventually she would be known simply as Conchita. Conchita was born during a conflict between France and México and lived during the Mexican Revolution and severe persecutions of the Church and faith. She knew conflict and pain. She knew the suffering that God's people endure. But through all of this she cultivated her love of God and his Church. She found love and married Francisco Armida in 1884. They would go on to have nine children. Amid so much suffering, Conchita stayed close to Christ and found life and joy. This would become the enduring message she has left for the Church.

She is an example of marriage and family well lived. Her family did not hinder her love for God but brought her closer to him. She wrote of her husband, Pancho: "Never did my love for him, so full of tenderness, hinder me from loving God. I loved him with a great simplicity, as wholly enveloped in my love for Jesus. I did not see there was any other pathway for me to come to God." She loved her husband and children with all her heart but found that she drew closer and closer to the Lord though her love of family. Still, Conchita desired more. Her burning love of God brought her deeper and deeper into mystical experiences – visions and experiences in her soul. When she was 27 years old, Conchita heard for the first of many times, the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord had chosen her to hear his voice and to share with the Church the message of the love and power of the Cross. At this time persecution of the Church, Conchita was chosen to show how persecution, pain, and suffering cannot stop the love of the Lord, cannot destroy true life. On the contrary, we come to true life through the Cross. The mission laid before her was not a small one. The Lord commanded her, saying: “Your mission will be to save souls, especially the souls of priests.” She was called to sanctify the world and to share the good news of the Cross. She was also called to live the mystery of the Cross deeply in her life. She began intense penitential and ascetical practices. She also began to write down the words the Lord shared with her and her own works related to the mission he had given her. By her life’s end, Conchita had written over 60,000 pages! As her mission continued, this truly remarkable disciple came to understand that she was to build a greater work. Toward the end of the 19th Century, Conchita began founding the many members of the Family of the Cross. These different apostolates have been sent into the Church and the world to share the good news of the Cross and the mercy of God.

In her life, Conchita became foundress to five communities. Firstly, in 1895, she founded a community of laity called the Apostolate of the Cross, the Apostolado now extends throughout the world carrying out the great work of deepening the spirituality of its members and sharing the Spirituality of the Cross with the Church. In 1897, she founded the Congregation of Sisters of the Cross of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, then the Alliance of Love with the Heart of Jesus in 1909, the Apostolic League in 1912, and in 1914 she

founded a community you might have heard of before - the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit! The Family of the Cross would continue to grow to over a dozen communities after Conchita died. We have here with us in the Archdiocese the Apostolado de la Cruz, the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit, and the Daughters of the Holy Spirit. Conchita's work continues to give life to the Church in these communities, and we give thanks to God for her tireless efforts and her spirit. However, my friends, I would like to leave you today with a deeper appreciation for the Spirituality of the Cross.

“The Spirituality of the Cross contemplates, lives and transmits Christ in His aspect of Priest and Victim and is expressed in the following formula: By divine will we have been called to participate through Baptism in the common priesthood of the faithful, following Christ, Priest and Victim, in His sacrifice for love, emphasizing His fidelity to the Father and His salvific solidarity with his brothers and sisters. With Mary we offer Him and we offer ourselves with Him to the Father, above all in the Eucharist, to extend the Reign of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of mankind, the sanctification of the Church, especially of priests. In this way, the Heart of Christ may receive consolation for the glory of God the Father” (Apostolado de la Cruz website). In short, the Spirituality focuses on our baptismal union with Christ the High Priest. His sacrifice is unlike all priests before him. Jesus offered *himself* for the salvation of the world. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are joined to that sacrifice by our baptism, and so offer ourselves – taking up our Cross and following the Lord. Any suffering, any slight, any pain, any struggle, any challenge is an opportunity to exercise our baptismal priesthood and

offer up our own selves for the salvation of souls. We do this through Mary, who is our best example of following the Lord. We do it with the Church, and for the good of the Church. Conchita had a special mission to care for the ordained priests of the Church, and the Family of the Cross continues this tradition, making offerings for the priests and religious of the Church. It is a spirituality that calls us back to the meaning of our baptism. We become one in Christ, yes, but we also take on his mission of the salvation of souls. It remains his mission – he is the savior – but we are his coworkers in his priesthood, and we walk the road of the Cross together with the joy of new life.

So, I call you my sisters and brothers and sisters to hear the words that Jesus spoke to this remarkable woman, disciple, wife, mother, mystic, and blessed example of Christian love. Jesus told Conchita: “The world is buried in sensuality, no longer is sacrifice loved and no longer is its sweetness known. I wish the Cross to reign, today it is presented to the world with My Heart, so that it may bring souls to make sacrifices. No true love is without sacrifice. It is only in My crucified Heart that the ineffable sweetness of My Heart can be tasted. Seen from the outside, the Cross is bitter and harsh, but as soon as tasted, penetrating and savoring it, there is no greater pleasure. Therein is the repose of the souls, the soul inebriated by love, therein its delight, its life.”

In what ways can you turn back to the Cross today? We, in our own ways, know suffering, pain, rejection, alienation, and isolation. We know the Cross when it comes to us. Listen to the Lord, heed the wisdom of Blessed Conchita. Embrace those crosses. This is not

some twisted love of pain. Christians are not crazies or weaklings like the world thinks. It is the truest strength to trust the Lord and take on our crosses as priestly sacrifices for the salvation of souls. We always stand against injustice in the lives of our brothers and sisters, but in our own lives, we bear these wounds with faith in the one priesthood of the Lord who saves us. We cry out with the family of the Cross: “Jesus, savior of the people, save them.”

My friends, I hope you take some time and learn more about the life of Blessed Conchita Cabrera de Armida. She is a master of listening to the Lord and heeding his will. In her life, she experienced married and family and was present to priesthood and religious life in a special way. She is a friend in discernment of your vocation. She is friend in suffering and doubt. She is a saint with a message for our current age. May the Spirituality of the Cross also bless you and renew you. I urge you to bless the Church in your own baptismal share in the priesthood of Jesus. Do not deprive souls of the sacrifices that only you can offer for their good.

Jesus is calling you as he called Conchita. In your own place, and in your own circumstances, Jesus calls to you, saying: “Give Me souls who love Me in suffering, who find their joy on the Cross. My Heart thirsts for such a love, an unselfish love, an expiatory, crucified love ... it is the only true love, the love which saves, purifies, and the love I require through My commandments.”

“Jesus, savior of the people, save them!”

Blessed Conchita, pray for us.