



UN CARISMA VIVO, UN CAMINO COMPARTIDO

150 años de las Hijas de Jesús

Joy In The Life of St. Candida

“Rejoice in the Lord Always, again I say Rejoice.” Phil. 4 :4

“I pray that the Lord may increase in you holy peace and Joy¹ .” This was Mo. Candida’s expressed desire for her friend Fr. Joaquin Perez Pando, O.P. and most probably to all of us her children, members of the family of St. Candida.

In this time of the pandemic, we know that many people are depressed and suffering due to isolation, financial difficulties, sickness and even sorrow over the death of a loved one. Aside from the pandemic, some of us might also be affected by calamities and other difficult situations in life. During this 150th anniversary of our founding, it seems so timely for us to go back and learn from our dear St. Candida, who went through lots of sufferings and problems but lived her life to the full with much joy and enthusiasm in the service of God and our brothers and sisters.

Despite the countless tribulations in her life, joy and gratitude filled her soul. For St. Candida, joy comes from her deep union with God in the person of Jesus. She expressed her deep trust and confidence in Jesus with these words “In Jesus we have everything, and without Him everything we have is lost.”² Mo. Candida’s joy is an indication of her personal experience of the unconditional love of a God who is Father, revealed to her in Jesus Christ.³

Indeed, Pope Francis’s words finds its reflection in the life of St. Candida, “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.”⁴ Mo. Candida truly found her pearl of great price. As she said, “Love Jesus very sincerely because He is our father, our spouse and our all; because he deserves all our love and all our being. He gives us everything and we must return to him everything.”⁵

Since the fount of her joy was the person of Jesus, no amount of problems, tribulations and struggles could take away her inner peace, and so, she found so many reasons to bless and

¹ MF letter #208

² MF letter # 13

³ EG # 7

⁴ EG #1

⁵ MF letter #282

praise the Lord. From her letter to Dona Hermitas during a very difficult time, Mo. Candida shared “I am here, dear mother, in this school of Tolosa for quite a long time working on so many problems for which I seem not to find a solution and suffering for so many things. But I am happy and resigned because my beloved Jesus makes me the gift of so many trials. Pray that I may always be patient and I may respond to so many favors the Lord bestows on me continually.”⁶ And when children began to fill her schools, who can forget this saying? “It is my joy to see that many girls come to our school, so that they will receive Christian Education by this means, we may lead many souls to God.”⁷

Seeing the sisters fervent in spirit, deepening in their religious and spiritual life and growing in apostolic zeal were also sources of joy to her. “I am happy to know that there is great union, peace and charity in the community; hence, I can say that God reigns among you.”⁸

And who can doubt her joy during the definitive approval of the Congregation? “I was so touched (when I received the decree) that I could not even talk; tears filled my eyes and joy flooded my soul. Then I manage to kneel down with the help of my daughters and I lifted up my hands to heaven giving endless thanks to God..”⁹

And certainly, joy and gratitude filled the heart of St. Candida when she received the news of the arrival of the sisters in Brazil. “Imagine what a great joy it is to know that my beloved daughters arrived safely!We are deeply touched by the joy of knowing that they were already at their house in that far land. We are opening the first house in that remote region precisely on the very day of our 40th foundation anniversary.”¹⁰

Everyone is searching for lasting joy and happiness. Some connote happiness with riches, power, fame or accumulation of things, ideas, persons, achievements and titles. Others experience joy when they find meaning in their lives and in what they do. Still, many find joy in giving selfless service and love to others especially to those in need. As Pope Francis said: “Sometimes we look for joy where it is not to be found: in illusions that vanish, in dreams of glory, in the apparent security of material possessions, in the cult of our image, and in so many other things. But life teaches us that true joy comes from realizing that we are loved gratuitously, knowing that we are not alone, having someone who shares our dreams and who, when we experience shipwreck, is there to help us and lead us to a safe harbor.”¹¹

And in the same homily he said, “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son” (Jn 3:16). This is the heart of the Gospel; this is the source of our joy... The source of our joy is

⁶ MF letter # 89

⁷ MF letter # 324

⁸ MF letter #447

⁹ MF letter # 216

¹⁰ MF letter # 436

¹¹ Pope Francis’ homily on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Christianity in the Philippines, March 15, 2021

not some lovely theory about how to find happiness, but the actual experience of being accompanied and loved throughout the journey of life.”

It would be good to enter into our hearts to seek and hopefully find the meaning of real joy for each one of us, to enter into our personal experiences and ask ourselves: When was the last time I experienced deep joy and consolation? What were the reasons for it? Do I find joy and consolation in my life now? What are the sources of the “joys “of my life? Do I still feel peace and inner joy when I am facing difficulties and conflicts in my life? How do I manage and help myself, when I feel down and sad? How do I help others find joy in their lives in this time of great difficulty?

From his homily “Filled with Joy” Pope Francis quoted a text from the book of Nehemiah “Be calm, do not weep anymore, preserve this joy because the joy in the Lord is your strength” (Ne 8:1-12). He reminded us Christians that “The great strength that we have to transform, to preach the Gospel, to go forward as witnesses of life is the joy of the Lord which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit.”¹²

He also affirmed in his meditation on the theme “with Joy and Hope”¹³ - that the Christian attitude must be “joy and hope together. Joy makes hope strong and hope flourishes in joy. These two Christian virtues indicate an exit from ourselves: the joyful does not close in on itself; hope takes you there. We can therefore “go out of ourselves with joy and hope”

Let us then ask our risen Lord, as we encounter him in our prayers and daily experiences, to grant us this gift of the Holy Spirit and to fill us with deep joy and hope. When we receive the grace of encountering our source of joy and consolation, may we become agents of the same to our depressed and downtrodden brethren by becoming balm, warmth presence to our broken world. We ask St. Candida to share her joy and to pray for us.

Sr. Ma. Leoly M. Quitaro, F.I.
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¹² HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS “To be filled with joy” 16 April 2020

¹³ Morning Meditation In The Chapel Of The Domus Sanctae Marthae , May 6, 2016