

Eucharist

Salvation of souls



Thematic meditations

For Guardian Angel pilgrims

41st Pilgrimage of Notre-Dame de Chrétienté - 27th, 28th y 29th May 2023

Monday 29th May – Pentecost Monday

Monday: The Eucharist, from communion to mission
with Blessed Conchita Cabrera de Armida

Blessed Conchita Cabrera de Armida

MEDITATION 7

As a hook

"I want you to sanctify yourself by imitating me, and by fixing your thoughts and your heart on the Cross and the Eucharist." These words of Jesus to Conchita Cabrera de Armida reveal to us the secret of the holiness of this wife and mother of a family.

Eucharistic devotion is not a "side" of Conchita's life, it is the very center of it. Her whole soul, her whole life was Eucharistic. For it was the whole daily life of this lay Mexican that was enlightened and inhabited by her love of Jesus in the Host.



Major Ideas

- Conchita, daughter of Mexico, asks for special graces for her greatly afflicted country
- Conchita's heart is a Tabernacle
- Being a wife and a mother was never an obstacle for her spiritual life
- Conchita allows herself to be loved and transformed by Jesus
- One day Jesus said to Conchita: "You have become my Host"
- Conchita has a eucharistic soul, that is to say a soul of action, of grace, and sacrifice.

Conchita, daughter of Mexico

Concepción Cabrera de Armida, colloquially called Conchita, was born on December 8, 1862 in San Luis Potosi, a city located in a province in northern Mexico. She was the seventh of twelve children. Her mother transmitted her love of the Eucharist and of the Blessed Virgin to her. Every evening, the family recited the rosary with the workers and peasants of the area.

She received her love of the poor and the sick, from her parents. It was also with her parents that she learned the meaning of work by participating in field work and domestic chores. She was not to experience material poverty but as an adult, at the risk of shocking those close to her, she chose to live in poverty in imitation of Jesus and out of friendship for all the poor people around her whom she wished to attract to Christ.

Conchita was Mexican. From her childhood until her death, especially between 1911 and 1937, the Mexican Catholic Church was afflicted by severe persecution.

In 1914, a social revolution took on an anti-religious accent and caused this daughter of the Church to suffer deeply: expulsion of religious, blasphemies, shootings... Monsignor Ibarra charged her with writing a prayer for the rulers. Jesus explained to him that this persecution against the Church was to bring about an increase in fervour. In 1918, Conchita wrote: "I ask for special graces for my country which is so afflicted and in which so many sins are committed against the Church and its pastors."

In 1926-1927 the same theme appeared in Conchita's Diary. In fact, in 1926 the Calles Law was published, which defined any religious practice as an offence. The persecution was coming to a head. Conchita had great devotion to the patron saint of Mexico and placed all her trust in her: "Virgin of Guadalupe, Mother filled with love and tenderness, obtain forgiveness for us," she wrote. Conchita united herself internally with the sufferings of the Church and of the Mexican people. It was from this perspective that she offered herself as a victim for priests. She bravely hid bishops, priests and nuns in her house.

"My Heart is a Tabernacle"

On November 8, 1884 at the age of 22, Conchita married Francisco Armida Garcia de Monterrey, whom she had met at a ball. On their wedding day, she asked her husband that she be able to receive communion every day. Nine children were born from their union. Conchita seized every opportunity to please her husband and make him happy: "I surrounded him with a multitude of attentions," she wrote in her autobiography.

While being deeply attached to her husband and her children, Conchita let herself be loved and transformed by Jesus. She was driven towards the heights of contemplation and knowledge of God: "Being a wife and a mother has never been an obstacle for my spiritual life," she said. It was in marriage and then widowhood that the Lord called her to the highest holiness. Jesus made clear to her his express will: not to enter the convent even once she was a widow. She was a true mystic while being a secular mother in the Republic of Mexico. With a keen awareness of her unworthiness, Conchita received several extraordinary graces from God: revelations from our Lord, mystical engagements... but Conchita's holiness is not to be sought here, it is found in her union with the will of God through everyday life: "Such is the effect of the sanctification wrought by the Eucharist: to have only one will with the Father."

She fully lived her vocation as a wife and mother of a family, knowing that human love could never quench the infinite thirst of her soul: "Instinctively my heart drew closer and closer to God. The interior emptiness of my soul had grown despite all the happiness of the earth." Conchita liked to pray before the tabernacle for a long time. She experienced a period of tension between, on the one hand, her thirst for contemplation and, on the other hand, her duty to her state of life which she was keen to accomplish. It was in the Eucharist and the contemplation of the Trinity that she found the remedy to unify her life: "I am going to speak to you about the Eucharist which is a mystery of unity," Jesus told her.

Theatres, balls, circuses, social gatherings... she went everywhere, with a smile on her lips out of love for her husband - and that not without suffering, she who would so much prefer to stay close to the tabernacle. In the midst of daily tasks Conchita took refuge at the request of Christ in the "interior cloister" of her heart, a heart which she perceived as the tabernacle of the Heart of Jesus. This recollection, this interior life did not cut her off from the world but allowed her to live each of her activities in the presence of God: sewing work, outings, watching over a sick child, washing her granddaughter... There was nothing extraordinary in the way Conchita lived her daily life as a mother, grandmother and mother-in-law. But her daily life was transfigured by faith, by the unfathomable love of Christ received and then shared: "In the evening at nightfall I went to the church of Saint John of God and there, very close to the tabernacle, I emptied my heart, close to

Jesus. I offered him my children, my husband, the people of the house, asking him for light and prudence to accomplish my duties," she wrote in her autobiography.

The soul as Host

Her children describe their mother as "always happy, very happy, she laughed, told jokes, chatted, played the piano, sang." And yet like all mothers, Conchita's life was strewn with joys and sorrows. It united them to the sacrifice of thanksgiving of Jesus to His Father, a sacrifice actualised on the altar. One day Jesus said to Conchita: "You have become my Host". Her maternal heart would forever be bruised by the death of her son Carlos at the age of 6 in 1887 from typhoid fever. Her husband died on September 17, 1901 after 17 years of marriage. A few days later she wrote in her diary: "I feel the horrible weight of pain that grips me [...] Blessed be the Lord for everything."

Conchita had a Eucharistic soul, that is to say a soul of thanksgiving and sacrifice: "Men have a debt towards the Eucharist, that of gratitude [...] It is a debt of delicacy, of shared love [...] but love is only paid for by love and not just any love, but sacrificial love," Jesus taught her.

By centering her life on the Cross and the Eucharist, Conchita shared Christ's ardent desire to save souls: "Oh! Jesus, I must go and give You to others and pour into other hearts the torrents of graces You have poured into mine," she noted. A lively apostolic flame inhabited her, first of all for her children: "The concern for raising my children occupies the greater part of my life. I carry them in my heart, and more their soul than their body," she wrote to her spiritual father. But this zeal for souls was to extend far beyond the family setting, to the dimensions of the whole Church. In 1889 she heard these words "Your mission will be to save souls".

In 1913, Conchita made a great pilgrimage to Lourdes, Rome and the Holy Land. In Rome she obtained the approval of the foundation of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit by the Congregation of Religious and Pope Saint Pius X. She was the inspiration of four other religious families: the Apostolate of the Cross, the Religious of the Cross, the Alliance of Love and the Apostolic League. Conchita wrote numerous works intended for the piety of all the faithful in which she communicated her own experience of the Eucharistic mystery.

Conchita died on March 3, 1937 in Mexico City. She was declared venerable by Saint John Paul II in December 1999.

To conclude, let's take another 3 tips from Conchita

1. "I prepare to receive the Eucharist as soon as I wake up, I approach God with all my soul."

A few kilometers separate us from our arrival at Notre-Dame de Chartres and our communion at Mass there. Following the example of Conchita, let us prepare now to receive the Eucharistic Jesus; and live in thanksgiving for this, and offer sacrifices for the salvation of souls.

2. "Mary attends all Masses in a special way."

We who walk towards the great cathedral of Chartres, dedicated (like all French cathedrals) to Our Lady, let us not forget to live our Mass with Mary, in Mary.

3. "When you receive Communion, it is the Holy Spirit that you receive with the other two persons of the Trinity."

On this Monday of Pentecost, let us wish to receive the Holy Spirit during our communion. Let us ask Him to make our soul a Tabernacle of the Lord, a Host for Jesus and for the world.

The Eucharist, Communion with God and Communion with the Church

MEDITATION 8

As a hook

Dear Chartres pilgrims,
Your pilgrimage is coming to an end. Chartres Cathedral is in sight, its spires call to you, outstretched towards the sky. The white Host is the reward for your effort: "To him who overcomes, saith the Lord, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat." Bravo, dear pilgrim, you have walked well, you have conquered your laziness, the suffering of your feet, your resistance to grace. Or rather, you let yourself be conquered by grace. Bravo! The host that the priest will soon place on your tongue will be your reward, it will also be the bread for your journey – this is the meaning of the word *viaticum* – because your journey is not over. Your pilgrimage has also been a pilgrimage of intelligence. You have meditated over three days on different aspects of the Holy Mass. Today, let's talk about the rite of communion.



Major Ideas

- Learn to live the rite of communion, from the *Pater*
- Commune with God and with the Church
- Bow down before the Lamb of God and implore His mercy
- Enter into the peace of God through good fellowship
- Offer thanksgiving after Communion: thanking God

"The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of the Lord? For, although many, we are but one bread and one body, all of us who partake of the same bread."

1st rite: the *Pater*

The Communion rite begins when you hear the priest sing the *Pater Noster*. Then, all of us, we will rise, because the sacrifice of the Cross has just been renewed, in a non-bloody but very real way, on the altar, the grace of resurrection – the word "to resurrect" in fact, etymologically, means "get up, get up". Think about it when you get up. It will be like at the end of time, when the voice of Christ will bring you out of the tomb: "Lazarus, come out!" Yes, when you stand up at Mass, you signify your future resurrection; or better, you anticipate it, because you have already been resurrected, in your soul since baptism, and each communion makes you enter a little more into this mystery of the resurrection. Eucharistic contact with the Most Holy Body of the Risen Christ gradually makes your body capable of resuscitating itself.

Communion with God and with the Church

Communion makes you a participant, in solidarity, a beneficiary of the sacrifice of Christ at the altar, according to the teaching of Saint Paul: "Consider Israel according to the flesh. Are not those who eat the victims in communion with the altar?" *Victim* is precisely the meaning of the word *host*. By receiving the consecrated host, you enter into communion with the altar, you enter into communion with Jesus crucified and risen, you enter into communion with all those who communicate: *Pater noster*... Father: you become more of a son of the Eternal Father. **Our** Father: you are not a son alone, you become, in Him and through Him, more and more a brother to other Christians. Communion is therefore twofold: it unites you with God, it unites you with the Church.

2nd rite: peace

Shortly after the chanting of the *Pater*, you will hear the priest sing: "*Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum!*" which means, "May the peace of the Lord be always with you." Communion introduces us to this peace. But what peace? Will you be delivered from the troubles of daily life? Will peace be signed between Russia and Ukraine? Will it be liturgical peace? Maybe not yet...but Christ gives us a much more essential and deeper peace: "I give you **my** peace; I do not give it to you as the world gives it." Treaties bring a certain peace between nations, but this peace is precarious. "Peace is the tranquillity of order," said Saint Augustine. God alone can restore order in its depths. Communion makes us partakers of this peace. Each Communion heals me a little more profoundly, restores more profoundly the order in me: "Lord God served first!"

Fellowship with the Church

Each communion also deepens the peace of the Church, its unity. After having chanted "*Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum,*" the priest lets a piece of consecrated host fall into the chalice. It is the rite of commingling, which manifests the unity of the body and blood in the risen Jesus, but also our communion with the Church of Rome. It is a trace of the ancient rite of the fermentum: in Rome, in fact, the pope sent a fragment of a host, consecrated during his Mass, to the neighbouring bishops and to the priests of the city, as a sign of fraternal charity around the successor of Peter, thereby demonstrating that there was only one sacrifice beyond the multitude of Masses. The surprising role of the sub-deacon, standing before the altar bearing a paten in a veil, perhaps finds its origin and its meaning there: the paten is in fact used to carry the holy host, and this is why it is garnished with gold.

3rd Rite: *Agnus Dei*

Then, dear pilgrim, you will hear the *Agnus Dei* sung, "Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us". These are the words by which Saint John the Baptist designated Jesus. So think of the Baptist when you sing. With him, implore mercy, at every *miserere*, beat your chest, not mechanically, but like the Jews who returned after the death of Jesus: "The crowds who had gathered for this spectacle, seeing what had happened, went back beating their chests." Beat yourself on the breast so that you don't have to do it, too late, with the nations at the end of time: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then all the races of the earth will beat their breasts." No! strike your chest like the publican of the Gospel: "The publican, standing at a distance, did not even dare to raise his eyes to heaven, but he beat his chest, saying: My God, have pity on the sinner that I am!" and then, like that publican, you will go home justified.

4th rite: the Kiss of Peace

At the third *Agnus Dei*, one asks for Peace, this peace of which we spoke earlier. Take a good look at the priest, he bends down and kisses the altar, which is Christ, to receive peace from it. Getting up, he transmits this peace to the deacon by an embrace; this peace which is not of men but of God.

The deacon in turn transmits it to the clergy and servers. Formerly, and still in some places, this kiss from the altar was transmitted with dignity to the faithful through a silver tray decorated with a Lamb whose name it bore. During the chanting of the *Agnus Dei* and the rite of the kiss of peace, the priest, bowing deeply with folded hands on the altar, prepares for Communion with three magnificent prayers which you are encouraged to recite to prepare your own Communion.

5th rite: The Communion of the Priest

Then, in profound silence, the priest takes the communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, as the apostles did at the First Supper: "Take and eat all of you [...] take and drink of all of you." Some faithful regret not being able to commune with the Precious Blood, receiving only the Body of Christ. As for you, dear pilgrim, have no regrets. Besides the fact that distributed under both species, communion this afternoon would last for hours, know that you lose nothing! You indeed receive the Body **and** the Blood of Our Lord. In fact, when you receive the Holy Host shortly, it is the Body of Jesus risen that you will receive. Now, Christ is risen and dies no more, Saint Paul reminds us. His Body is henceforth and forever inseparable from his Blood. When you receive the Body of Christ you receive the whole Christ, His Body, His Blood, His Soul and His Divinity.

6th rite: The *Confiteor*

While the priest receives the Precious Blood, the deacon sings in the name of all and therefore in your name, the *Confiteor*, "I confess to God...". The melody is beautiful, the content even more so. We recognise our faults before God, the Virgin Mary, the Angels, the saints and the Christians present. We do not condemn each other – "let him who has never sinned cast the first stone" – but we pray for each other. Therefore, those who have not been baptized or those who have lost baptismal grace through mortal sin, that is to say a serious fault, committed with full knowledge of the facts and in full freedom, do not approach for communion. But those who have only venial sins on their conscience can receive communion and are even strongly encouraged to do so: "Lord, it's not that I deserve it, it's that I need it!" said the holy Curé d'Ars. Venial sin, which is a lack of charity, calls for contact with Jesus in the Host, who is the source of charity. As for those who cannot or do not want to take communion, for whatever reason, do not hesitate to approach the priest to ask him for a blessing, arms crossed over your heart.

7th rite: *Ecce Agnus Dei*

Now the priest raises the host above the ciborium facing the faithful while repeating the words of the Baptist. Then remember the Apocalypse: "I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four Living Ones, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb was standing, as if slaughtered (immolated), [...] the four Living Ones and the 24 Elders prostrated themselves before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense which are the prayers of the saints; they were singing a new song. "You too, prostrate yourself before the host, before the Lamb slain and yet alive, before the dead and risen Christ. And raise your prayer to the Lamb, the prayer of a saint, since baptism has sanctified you. Raise your prayer so that the angels present it to God like perfume in a golden cup. Where can I find a prayer sufficiently beautiful? It is the centurion of the Gospel who whispers it to you: "*Domine non sum dignus...*" Lord, I am not worthy that you come under my roof, but just say the word and my soul will be healed. How humble is this prayer!

8th rite: Communion Itself

And now, dear pilgrim, the time has come for you to approach the priest to receive your Lord from his hand. Already, he is approaching under a yellow and white umbrella, preceded by a server carrying a golden tray. This umbrella is not just a landmark. When you see it, think of the cloud over the temple of Solomon, think of the cloud over Tabor, think of the cloud covering Mary

with its shadow. Yes, it covers with its shadow at the same time as it reveals the presence of the Almighty who humbly wants to make His home in us. So, like the apostles in the presence of Jesus at Tabor, prostrate yourself, kneel down, have a holy fear of God. And then the priest will place the host on your lips. Yes, with his consecrated hands, and directly on your lips. Because the Church is a mother, so she feeds her children. You are therefore going to receive, on your knees, the most holy Body of Christ. Yes, Jesus will touch you with his sacrament, as he touched his prostrate apostles on Mount Tabor: "Get up, do not be afraid."

9th rite: Thanksgiving

Come back to your place, and then remain on your knees. It is a posture of adoration. The sitting position is a posture of digestion! Heaven is within you! Say, then, with the angel of Fatima: "My God, I believe, I adore, I hope and I love you." Thank Him. Enjoy His presence. Ask Him what you want. Enlarge your heart, enlarge your prayer, pray for the Church, pray for France (and England), pray for poor sinners: "My God, I ask your forgiveness for those who do not believe, who do not adore, who do not hope, and who do not love you." Let your thanksgiving be first in the silence of your heart – the long duration of the distribution of communion will give you time – then let it be liturgical, through the final hymns, and let it blossom, on leaving Mass in joyful and concrete charity (helping others find their backpacks...), because by uniting you to God, communion has united you to the whole Church. May she finally shine forth! But let's leave that for the next and final meditation, on mission: *Ite missa est!*

The Eucharist at the heart of the mission

MEDITATION 9

As a hook

How do we talk about the Eucharist in a simple understandable way, and with the objective of transmitting Christ? Christ Himself scared away Jews who listened to Him when He explained that He is the bread of life, that He will remain among us until the end of time, that He will take the form of bread and wine and that in addition, we can eat Him!

It must be recognized that this has plenty to trouble many people.



Let us end our pilgrimage with this great mystery in our hearts: to be missionaries of the Eucharist in our daily life.

Major Ideas

- How can the Eucharist, so complex and so hard to understand, be at the heart of our mission?
- Jesus Christ is there, present on earth, near my home, in the tabernacle
- The Eucharist is at the heart of our mission, it is the effective sign of the Presence and Power of God
- Those who truly live by Faith diligently attend the Eucharist
- Jesus Christ wanted to link the sacred rite of the Eucharist to remembrance of the death that saves us
- To adore this host, to consume it with fervour amounts to letting oneself be shaped by divine Love.

At the heart of our mission - really?

If we talk about our Faith to friends who do not share it, we want to make it accessible, we want to show that it is neither complicated nor far-fetched. That's why we avoid words that smack of jargon, that's why we circumvent the difficulties that come up against common sense. And here is the Eucharist! A four-syllable Greek word! A word used to describe the result of "Transubstantiation" - four Ts in five syllables: the mystery by which the bread and wine become the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, that is, the body and the blood of God... Legitimately, then, we may think twice before speaking about it, especially if our catechism needs dusting off. Moreover, when Our Lord himself wanted to announce this mystery, "my flesh is really food and my blood is really drink", He saw a good number of His first faithful abandon Him immediately: "This word is hard, who can listen to it?" So if the Eucharist is so complex and so hard to hear, how can it be at the heart of our mission?

Jesus Christ is the one who remains

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday today and forever. He is the one who does not change, who does not corrupt Himself, God: the one who remains. Thus, He wanted that after His ascension into Heaven we keep a manifestation of His presence among us. He changed the world by His

preaching associated with contact with His divine flesh; it was therefore necessary, for His Gospel to spread, that His incarnation, His concrete presence, still support in a certain way the word of the Apostles. This is why He is there: present on earth and near my home, in the tabernacle. He lives in the Church, which He mysteriously enlivens, and His Church celebrates Mass every day to call forth His power over the world.

This reminds us that our mission is not a process on a human scale. Our human resources are too blunted to succeed in converting a single unbeliever to our religion. The Church could not have survived the fierce persecutions of the first centuries if it had not had a dynamism which is from Heaven. The bad popes and the bad bishops of past centuries would have already ruined her if the vigilance of God and of the saints did not rest lovingly on her.

If therefore the Eucharist is at the heart of our mission, it is because it is the effective sign of the Presence, of the Power of God, at work in the Church and through the Church. This is where the power from above comes from that opens hearts when the Christian speaks. This is why when Jesus commands His disciples to baptise and teach all nations, He promises them at the same time: "And behold, I am with you always until the end of time." The Eucharist therefore reminds us that we need grace, it reminds us that our action must be accomplished according to the Spirit of God and that without Him we would only be vulgar peddlers of rags.

Worship in Spirit and in Truth

"Eucharist" simply means "to give thanks", "to be grateful": to be grateful to God for His goodness to us. Jesus Christ wanted to institute sacraments, visible signs of the presence and action of God on earth. And among these sacraments, the most important and the most frequented is the Eucharist: the Blessed Sacrament, the Sacrament of Mass and Adoration, the bread of the angels, the bread of the journey of the faithful. For us Catholics, it is the main source of our life according to grace, it is our best resource in spiritual combat. It is the foundation stone of our missionary attitude. For those who truly live by the Faith attend the Eucharist assiduously: through Mass, through adoration, through spiritual communions. This contact with the presence of God gives them a general attitude of prayer and gratitude and it is this attitude, engraved in the soul, which gives them the strength to speak of God, and which gives credibility to what is said.

We can only give what we have. A lukewarm Christian, far from the sacraments, how can he shine? A worshiper in spirit and in truth, on the contrary, how can he not speak and testify? If therefore the Eucharist is at the heart of our mission, it is because it is the ardent brazier from which the heat is communicated step by step: from the divinity under the veil of the host to the soul of the Christian, from the soul of the Christian to his daily life and from his daily encounters to other souls.

The sign of self-sacrifice

Jesus Christ, before undergoing His passion and accomplishing His great mission of salvation, wanted to institute the sacrament of the Eucharist. He wanted to link this sacred rite to the memory of the death which saves us. This is manifested by the gesture of the fraction of the host, during the Mass, of which we can hear the crack when close enough to the altar. Christ delivered His flesh to the executioners to overcome sin and death, He wanted to die for the salvation of men and He wanted the Eucharist to be the sign of this sacrifice right up to our own time. The round, white host therefore reminds us of that delicate heart, opened with a spear, from which love flows abundantly. To adore this host, to consume it with fervour amounts to letting oneself be moulded by this type of love and invites us to give ourselves also, with this same divine generosity.

This is how we can understand why Saint Charles de Foucauld was so attached to his very long, daily, and solitary adorations. It is true that he converted almost no one during his lifetime: barely

the two slaves that he had ransomed. But he was burning with the desire to spread the true Faith widely over Algeria and Morocco and for that, he wanted to erect his monstrance in the middle of the desert, as a living sign that Jesus had also died for the Arabs, the Berbers and the Tuareg. He wanted the generosity of Christ to begin by being communicated in this way, as the principle of an accomplished missionary action. The spiritual path of Charles de Foucauld was in fact to be a Eucharistic hermit: offered out of love, even to the giving of his blood, to unbelieving peoples: without any emotional reward, without comfort of any kind, but in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

It is therefore up to us, faithful pilgrims, to find in the Eucharist the active power of God, it is up to us to be adorers in spirit and truth, to assimilate and transmit this power of grace; it is up to us to be generous, as best we can, and where we are, just as Christ was for us in his passion. We may not necessarily speak of "Transubstantiation" every time we testify of God, but it is because we taste this substantial nourishment that we will have the strength to do so.