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Christocentrism in Mother Cándida

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To remember 150 years of life is to place oneself in an attitude of gratitude to God who chose and called Cándida María de Jesús, that woman who knew how to give life to “God wills it”.

With grateful hope I have reflected on this trait of M. Candida. Christocentrism is the core of her spirituality because Jesus is the center of her experience, to such an extent that it led her to give identity to her evangelical project with the name of Daughters of Jesus.

M. Cándida unites filiation and Christocentrism in a single experience. Being a daughter goes with belonging "to Jesus". Already in Rosarillo, Juana Josefa has the inspiration that she will later express in the Formula with respect to the Congregation: "I wish that it be called the Daughters of Jesus". In her epistolary career she will transmit to the sisters the need for them to be "true Daughters of Jesus". Jesus in is? Our identity.

But who is Jesus to M. Candida?

In her spiritual experience, M. Candida refers indistinctly to the Trinitarian God and to Jesus-God. This difference is experiential. For her, Jesus is first of all God, "a God who for love of us became man". "Jesus is our God nailed to the cross". He is also the Absolute in whom "we have everything", he is "hope" and "love", he is the person who deserves everything because he is "our everything" (1).

And in a special way Jesus is a father who loves us, holds us by the hand, blesses us, never abandons his daughters. From her experience of familiarity with God, she considers Jesus Father and Spouse, Savior, Lord who has our life at his disposal, who calls and chooses. To love Jesus very much and very truly, and the reason is that he is our Father (2).

She has felt very strongly within her the "With me" that Ignatius presents in the temporal King and she has not been deaf to his call (3). Being with Jesus and being sent form one unity, that “with me” that gives strength to the mission. "In Jesus we have everything and without Him everything we have is lost." Could she be more radical in her confidence and in her response? She also understands that for Jesus the mission is a constant relationship with the Father because he is sent for others. To resemble Him

will lead her to identification because the God who is near becomes imitable in Jesus, “following in his footsteps to the cross”, till the end of love.

M. Cándida understands her belonging to Jesus to the point of "being held as fools... because of their desire to resemble and imitate in some manner our Creator and Lord Jesus Christ, by putting on His clothing, since it was for our spiritual profit that He clothed Himself as He did.” [from CFI 137]. Rooted in the third way of being humble [Ganss SpEx] (4). Much patience in suffering, offering everything for love of Jesus, facing difficulties with courage (5). She lives a process that moves from knowledge to love and from love to total identification through the following of Jesus. "Those who desire to show greater devotion" (6) – [from SE 97, Ganss]. The inner strength that sustains her in suffering is love and her desire to resemble Jesus. She is convinced that following God's will leads her to identification with his Son (7).

And that passion for Jesus makes her available. Father Arrupe said: "Without an identification with Jesus in our personal and apostolic life we would be incapable of the availability that the Society demands of us" (8). It is the experience of feeling as an instrument in the hands of God, knowing that one is more united to its owner the more it is available to him. Experience of true consolation.

M. Candida has the ability to penetrate into the deepest reality of Jesus that she needs to discern in order to live humanly in her world, to grasp the things of God, what pleases him. She needs to grasp the human from Jesus, to grasp the greatest needs in order to give an evangelical response. Recently Pope Francis told us, the Hijas de Jesus: "Do not be afraid, get involved in all areas, in areas that are shouting the need for a proclamation of the gospel...". This woman, intuitive and sensitive, seeks that everything be a place of encounter with God, with everything that she lives, does and thinks. With the joy of someone who trusts in Jesus because she has everything in Him. "The less we had, the happier we were", they tell us about the early days. A poverty with a total reference to Jesus, as expressed by the 18th GC: “Mother Candida has taught us with her life that the ultimate reason for the choice of poverty and the poor is rooted in Jesus Christ. True evangelical poverty is made possible when we put our hope only in Jesus and we assume his way of life”(9).

Mother Candida configured with Jesus who "carries him in her heart because she had hers placed in Him" (10) She has placed Christ at the center of her life to see and feel him close by, without insurmountable distance. Her passion for Him is so great that her preference for everything else becomes indifferent. Jesus at the center of her affections, her ideas, her illusions, her dreams and desires, Jesus encompassing everything.

Without this passionate love for Jesus, the life of Mother Candida, her service to the Lord in the Church, cannot be understood (11). Fidelity is a demand of love, it is a way of expressing gratitude - "Let us be grateful by being faithful to Jesus". A manifestation

of that love is the desire to be united with Him through communion by means of the Eucharist, which has an irreplaceable power for her (12).

From there takes off her apostolic work, the need to make known and love a Christ who is part of her existence.

In relation to Jesus the role of Mary as Mediatrix appears clear. She obtains graces for us from her Son. Mary lives the mystery of the cross, united to the suffering Christ of our redemption. She is also a model to follow for considering the mysteries in all their depth: Christmas, waiting, pain in passion, resurrection, joy, and prayer at Pentecost (13).

How to live it today according to the context and vocation to which we have been called?

For M. Candida, life is not expressed by theological formulations but by experiences. What she gives us with the name of Jesus is an authentic experience, a spiritual experience that is at the same time mission (14). We could ask ourselves, Who is Jesus to me? If transmitting Jesus is mission, how can I live it in the concrete today, in the places where we work, in our community realities? With others? From where do we value the dignity of people?

Her contemplation of Jesus does not remain as a memory of something that happened, but Jesus continues to live and fulfill his mysteries in us: “he is born in our hearts”, he calls us to “suffer with him” and “accompany him in his Passion” and his love inflames us by “being resurrected in our hearts”. And with him we will be happy forever in heaven (15). How do we contemplate Jesus from our life taking into account the evangelical itinerary? Am I affected by Jesus?

Jesus occupies a central place, polarizes her entire existence. He is the point of reference in her daily life, with simplicity and naturalness, but concretized in service and dedication to others. How can I experience Jesus by placing him at the center of my existence? What things prevent me?

The desire always goes beyond what has been achieved. We Hijas de Jesus, the M. Candida family, many people who try and want to live from this spirituality, also have a call to place Jesus at the center of our lives to make us come out of personal confines so that we too may see “the world as too small for our desires”.

NOTAS

1) “Iluminación sobre Cristocentrismo y Filiación en nuestra vocación de Hijas de Jesús”, Inés Laso y Mª del Pilar Linde – Roma 1983 (Cf. pág. 42, 43)
2) Ibid. (Cf. pág. 44)

3) Cf. EE 91
4) Cf. CFI 137, EE 167
5) Ibíd (Cf. pág. 23)
6) Cf. EE 97
7) Ibíd (Cf. pág. 18)
8) Carta sobre la disponibilidad. P. Arrupe-Noviembre 1978
9) Cf. CG XVIII, 10
10) Apuntes Espirituales de la M. Cándida
11) "Un camino entre dos fechas", Jesús Montero S.I. (Cf. pág. 168)
12) "Espiritualidad de la M. Fundadora" 1969 (Cf. pág. 103)
13) "Espiritualidad de la M Fundadora" 1969 (Cf. pág. 107)
14) Ibíd (Cf. pág. 50)
15) Ibíd (Cf. pág. 44)