



## A living Charism, a shared Path 150 years of the Daughters of Jesus

### GRATITUDE, A CONSTANT ATTITUDE IN MOTHER CANDIDA

As pilgrims we continue to contemplate Cándida María de Jesús in this special month, in which we celebrate a new anniversary of her passing into eternity, "happy homeland"<sup>1</sup>, which she so longed for. We will do so by reflecting on the trait of gratitude. Pope Francis has told us: "Gratitude ... is also a characteristic of a Christian. It is a simple but genuine sign of the Kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of gratuitous and grateful love."<sup>2</sup>

According to the RAE [Real Academia Española], gratitude is a feeling that obliges a person to esteem the benefit or favor that another has done him and to reciprocate in some way. The first thing is to **esteem, know or re-know [recognize] the benefits received**, to be aware of the favor that someone has done for us. For this, it is necessary **to stop, remember, look, pay attention, contemplate** the benefit. "This knowledge or re-knowledge [recognition] mobilizes a positive emotion of gratitude and a chain of possible behaviors"<sup>3</sup> resulting from it. Thus, gratitude is a concrete response, which is expressed in praise, thanksgiving, a gesture of love, of service, of adoration.

In the experience of the Spiritual Exercises, gratitude "is a basic condition to be among those most disposed to receive grace and gifts from the divine and supreme goodness"<sup>4</sup> and runs through the entire process. "When our condition as a creature is assumed, when the limitation and contingency that constitutes us as human beings is accepted, and when, in a parallel way, it is recognized that life has been given to us, then gratitude can arise for all that, without merit, we are and we receive."<sup>5</sup> From it, the retreatant will make a journey of constant gratitude and welcome to God the creator who forgives him, calls him, and sends him to collaborate with Him in building a world more of brothers, in the way of Jesus. At the end of the SE, in the "Contemplation to attain love", everything has to do with gratitude (...) *Interior knowledge of the good received is asked for, so that by fully recognizing it, one can love and serve in everything* (SE 233) (...) This interior knowledge that is requested is *grace* and as we progress in the exercise we discover *how all goods and gifts descend from above SE237*<sup>6</sup> Summarizing the core of the lived experience, daily life is assumed as a grateful response to purely gratuitous Love, who is God "manifested in Christ."<sup>7</sup>

#### **How did Mother Candida live this trait?**

<sup>1</sup> Letter n°22 to Fr. Joaquín Pérez Pando

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis: Ángelus June 28, 2020 (Zenit)

<sup>3</sup> Ignacio BonéPina -Psicología y Espiritualidad Ignaciana: Nuevas aportaciones (Revista de Espiritualidad Ignaciana Octubre- Diciembre 2016)

<sup>4</sup> Iván Restrepo SJ Artículo sobre Disposición para comenzar los E.E

<sup>5</sup> Carlos Domínguez Morano SJ Principio y Fundamento Aspectos Psicológicos (Apuntes Ignacianos Enero -abril 2005)

<sup>6</sup> Ignacio Boné Pina Psicología y Espiritualidad Ignaciana: Nuevas aportaciones (Revista de Espiritualidad Ignaciana Octubre- Diciembre 2016) Pág. 388

<sup>7</sup> 1 John 4,9 (Biblia Latinoamericana)

Cándida María de Jesús experiences herself as a creature, graced, blessed, dear to, loved and called by God, amid her limitations. From her evangelical poverty, she opens herself to God's gift, as she is invited to reciprocate with love and gratitude. Gratitude was one of the human strengths she lived as a virtue, it is a lifestyle that speaks to us of her holiness. I share some experiences expressed in her letters.

### **Gratitude for long-awaited desires and filial experience:**

**-In the Approval of the Institute:** it was given on August 25, 1901 and throughout that year she asks the sisters to give thanks: "let us be grateful to the Lord"<sup>8</sup>, she also shares her happiness with other people. To Father Joaquín Pérez Pando she says: "*in my heart a joy impossible to explain. Blessed be God, who loves us so much (...) Truly it has been a great grace that we have been approved in times as calamitous as we are going through... and definitely... How good is God and how much he loves us!*"<sup>9</sup> To Dña. Hermitas Becerra: "... I was so excited (...), I knelt down, raised my hands to heaven, giving infinite thanks to God, pronouncing the words of Saint Simeon (...) I asked them to bring me down to the chapel... and with everyone I sang the Te Deum in thanksgiving (...) I don't know how to thank God for so many special favors, seeing the hand of God very visibly in everything"<sup>10</sup>.

**-In the Approval of the Constitutions.** The following year, she wrote to Sr. Joaquina González: "You cannot imagine with how much joy in my heart I write these letters to tell you that the Constitutions and Rules have already been approved (...) we have the desired Decree. How much God loves us! (...) His daughters, we say with all our hearts that we want to be very faithful and observant of the Holy Constitutions and Rules"<sup>11</sup>

The recognition of her wishes fulfilled leads her to experience the great love of God, to give thanks and to respond in fidelity. Let us learn from our Mother to relate dreams fulfilled in our life. Let us become aware of how much the Lord loves us. Let us pay attention to our ability to give thanks, to praise, to adore.

### **Gratitude in the face of Divine Providence:**

**-Preparing the papers for the approval of the Institute:** she writes to Sister Josefa González "... the agent from Rome came, to whom we were going to send everything for the approval". She experiences with astonishment divine Providence in the intercession of the Virgin and The Sacred Heart. She continues by saying "he sent us this very person who had to receive it in Rome so **that he himself would receive everything in his own hands and in our house**. Let's thank God and let's be very good"<sup>12</sup>

**-Seeking the expansion of the Congregation:** after speaking with the Bishop of Vitoria about the concretion of the foundation in Brazil, she writes to Sister Igarategui saying: "Let us thank God for favoring us so much, and let us be very grateful. You can now read this letter to the community so that we can all praise Divine Providence".

Gratitude in this simple woman, beloved daughter, is intimately linked to her trust in Providence. How good it is to become aware of Divine Providence in our lives.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter n°221 To Sr. Josefa González 1 November 1901

<sup>9</sup> Letter 219 To Fray Joaquín Pérez Pando Salamanca 24 October 1891

<sup>10</sup> Letter 216 To D. Hermitas Becerra 7 September 1901

<sup>11</sup> Letter 248 To Sr. Joaquina González Roma 29 October 1902

<sup>12</sup> Letter 212 To Sr. Josefa González

### **Gratitude for help in unexpected circumstances:**

"I want you to help me to thank God for so many benefits that we receive every day and for having brought us out of this horrible storm that seemed like the end of the world."<sup>13</sup> Write twice to Sister Antonia Robles about the same event, insisting that they all give thanks. In September 1911 there was a similar situation, and she told Sister Águeda Rey: "There was a horrible storm... well, whoever sees all this and knows what happened, cannot help but confess that this was a set of miracles that, very evident and visible, we have seen and felt. So let us be grateful to him and give him thanks ... "<sup>14</sup>

In these situations that occurred at different times, we see Cándida María de Jesús who does not remain in evils experienced; complaint is far from her. Her focus is on the positive: the benefit received from the Lord, his help in the midst of the storm, his mercy, the goodness of God. This experience reminds me of what Brother David Steindl-Rast says: "To live gratefully is to be aware that we are standing on sacred ground, always, in contact with the Mystery." Can we discover God's favor in the midst of these difficult situations that are we living in this time of pandemic? Let's do the exercise of connecting with the mystery and let us tell each other about the favors received in these circumstances that we have to live and let us encourage one another to thank God for all this.

### **Gratitude in communications from loved ones:**

I received your much awaited letter with such a consolation of my soul! (...) I went to the chapel right away to give thanks to Jesus"<sup>15</sup> This is how she expresses her gratitude to Father Herranz and in the same way we can perceive her gratitude in the letter to Father Fray Joaquín Pérez Pando: "I received your letters, I thank you (...) I cannot help but be very thankful; rest assured that I do not forget you, Fr. Joaquin, in my prayers"<sup>16</sup>

Our foundress was a woman with strong ties, both inside and outside the Congregation. May she help us to grow in this dimension, valuing all the good that comes to us through each person with whom we interact daily. May gratitude make us more brothers and sisters.

### **How can we live it today, according to the world context in which we live and the vocation to which we have been called?**

In this time of uncertainty due to the pandemic and so many other evils that we live as humanity, it seems providential to me to reflect on this issue. It is a "window"<sup>17</sup> that helps us face daily difficulties and opens us to the call that God makes to all, to be happy. "Gratitude is the key to happiness"<sup>18</sup> Saint Paul reminds us that the will of God in Christ is to give him thanks: "In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus"<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Letter 75 to Sister Antonia Robles

<sup>14</sup> Letter 428 to Sr. Águeda Rey García

<sup>15</sup> Letter n°3 to Fr. San José Herranz

<sup>16</sup> Letter n° 22 to Fray Joaquín Pérez Pando

<sup>17</sup> José Antonio García SJ: Ventanas que dan a Dios. Experiencia humana y ejercicio espiritual, Sal Terrae, Santander 2011

<sup>18</sup> Hno David Steindl-Rast

<sup>19</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5,18

For me, Gratitude is a window to the "charismatic healing" that we Daughters of Jesus are seeking. Being grateful takes us out of ourselves, exercises us in "interior itinerancy"<sup>20</sup> and sets our gaze on God alone, our Father, giver of all good, making us freer to "follow Jesus Christ who chose poverty for himself". Contemplating our Foundress makes me aware that the response that most pleases the Lord in this jubilee year is to live in an attitude of continuous gratitude, from the trait of poverty that identifies us. His Word confirms me that this is the way: "Whoever offers me his gratitude honors me"<sup>21</sup>

Being grateful brings many benefits, harmony, health, joy, fraternal bonds, peace. "The world needs hope and, with gratitude, we transmit hope because if we are bearers of gratitude, the world also becomes better". Thus, Pope Francis encouraged us in his last general audience in 2020, in the same way our Mother General Graciela Francovig, in her message of December 8, inaugurating the Jubilee year, invited us to walk with this attitude.

We need to develop this virtue and for this it is good to carry out repeated practices of knowing and valuing the good, the gifts, the benefits; this transforms our way of looking at reality and disposes us to find meaning also in difficult or adverse situations, such as those that we are going through now.

The Ignatian Examen can be a help because the first point of that exercise is "*to give thanks to our Lord for the benefits received*".<sup>22</sup> Saint Ignatius of Loyola recognizes gratitude as an important and constant task on the believer's path. Another way can be simply: record positive experiences lived during the day, with oneself, with others, with God, with nature.

Recognizing these benefits as M. Candida did, we will begin to perceive how much the Lord loves us, in how many thousand ways He has made himself present in our lives, with his providence, his goodness, his mercy. We will be making gratitude a lifestyle. And it will spring up in us at all times: Praised be my Lord! Saint Ignatius's response: "To love and to serve in all things" or as M. Cándida used to say. Blessed be God who loves us so much!

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<sup>20</sup> Determination, General Congregation XVIII N°13

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 50,23

<sup>22</sup> S.E 43