

**HOLINESS IS THE MOST
ATTRACTIVE FACE OF THE
CHURCH:
CONCEPCION CABRERA:
A LIFE LIVED TO ITS
FULLEST**



With this worksheet we'd like to share with you the life of Concepcion Cabrera, a Mexican woman soon to be beatified on May 4, 2019. This is the last of four 4 worksheets we have prepared. In this worksheet we want to get to know Concha as a model of holiness.

Let us begin from our own experience

We have probably come into contact with many people throughout our life. Some of them we may admire, others not so much. Some surprise us for their creativity, their strength or their joy, for living lives that we can call “desirable”. For even when they are still working things out, or facing many problems, they inspire us to live day to day with passion, motivate us with their example and encourage us to be better. Therefore, we invite you to stop and reflect:

- Who has inspired you to be the best you can?
- Are there people who had been an example of life for you? In what way do they do it?
- Identify 3 to 5 people like this and list the traits you admire in them.

Once you have identified those people you admire and who have motivated you, take a moment to reflect:

- How do those lives speak to me about God?
- How did they become the way they are?
- What was the path they had to travel?

Share this reflection with someone in your family or community and hear what they have to say.

Concepcion Cabrera: a life lived to the fullest

Now we invite you to see Conchita’s life, beginning with her response to the universal call to holiness. The Second Vatican Council says: “Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect.” (LG 11) Most recently Pope Francis has also reminded us about this in his Apostolic Exhortation “Gaudete et exsultate” (Rejoice and be glad). From the very beginning he tells us that God “wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence” (n.1). And He “has chosen each one of us to be holy and blameless before him in love” (n. 2). This is why we proposed to you at the beginning to bring to mind people with “desirable” lives, and we believe Concepcion Cabrera’s life is one of them.

Witnesses of God’s Love

Pope Francis reminds us that perhaps the lives of the saints were not always perfect, that they had their difficulties, and in the midst of their imperfections and failures they continued on and were pleasing to the Lord. This happened in Conchita’s life as well, as she tells us herself, at first, she was hesitant to accept God’s love, but in the end, she let herself be



conquered by Him:

As soon as I approached the tabernacle Jesus would talk to me and I'd leave. He pursued me the way a boyfriend would. He would not allow me to pray, or read, and He would say to me: "I want you to be mine, will you allow it?" And I'd resist His advances, until one day His love won me over.

He showed me my name in his chest with golden letters, and then, the rock that was my heart broke open and I told Him: "Yes, my Jesus, whatever You want, I give myself, I surrender, do unto me as you please".

The important thing is that each one of us, both individually and as a community, may recognize the path the Lord has planned for us, and that we bring into the light the best of ourselves, the gifts God has given us. It is about being witnesses of God's love, understanding that there are many ways to bear witness. Can you identify the ways in which you have witnessed God's love for others? What are some of the barriers you put up to prevent God's love from working in you?

The feminine face of holiness

Within these varied ways of living a life of holiness, Pope Francis stresses that "the 'genius of woman' is seen in feminine styles of holiness, which are an

essential means of reflecting God's holiness in this world" (n. 12). These words are of special importance because we are preparing ourselves to celebrate the Beatification of the first Mexican lay woman, a person who lived to the fullest her role of woman, wife and mother. Her last spiritual Director, Archbishop Luis Maria Martinez, reminds her of the following:

You have received from God the gift of holy fecundity in wonderful abundance; your mission, in all its fullness, can be expressed with this word: mother. This word represents your intimate and holy relationship with Jesus, and your sweet and fruitful relationship with souls. For you, consummation in the union is the consummation in that holy maternity.

Being holy means living love

We may ask ourselves, what does it mean to be holy? How can we accomplish that? Pope Francis reminds us that every moment of our lives can be an expression of self-sacrificing love under the loving gaze of the Lord. That being holy means living our lives with love and bearing witness in our daily occupations, wherever we find ourselves. This is how Concha lived her life, that is what her writings and her works portray, like these words she wrote on December 8, 1912:

I give you my life Jesus, Jesus, through the hands of the Immaculate Conception, to whom I dedicate in a special way from this moment forward all the minutes of my existence!

I give you my past, with all my sins, my imperfections and miseries, so that you may forgive me... My present so that You may sanctify all the seconds and instants... My future, Lord, that You may fill it with flowers or thorns, with thrones or crosses, with consolations or desolations, whatever is Your Will, and only Your will, which I will always, always! embrace full of gratitude.

It can be said then, that holiness is not in the greatness or the smallness of what we do, but in how we do it. Conchita's example, and that of many other people, speaks of the love lived in ordinary daily activities. In that same way your life, lived day by day, can speak of that self-sacrificing and generous love. What would you ask the Holy Spirit so He may lead you in every moment of your life? How can you allow God to fulfill His work in you?

Fully Human

Living this way does not make us less human, nor does

it take away our freedom, on the contrary. It is about letting our fragility and weakness encounter the strength of God's grace. And from this encounter something beautiful emerges, as Pope Francis says: "holiness is the most beautiful face of the Church" (n. 9). This was also the experience of Concepcion Cabrera, who never lost sight of the poverty of her soul, but understood that above all what matters most is God's action in our lives. These words, that Jesus told her, manifest this very clearly:

As the sun rises beautifying everything and giving it life, in the same way I have been warming and beautifying your soul with my treasures from the moment you were born... this sun will enter into your spirit to the fullness of noon, and it will not abandon you at the sunset of your life, rather it will cover you up with eternal splendors...!

Words from God to the World

Our mission on earth is to respond to God's call, to walk in holiness allowing the Holy Spirit to shape our life to be like Christ's, and to work for the Kingdom of God.

I am writing my life, and I do not know what I feel when remembering the innumerable and unmeasurable gifts and graces I received from the Lord. I do not lose God's presence, and so many memories have been refreshed in my soul that I am deeply humbled and almost crushed under the weight of so innumerable graces.

I clearly see God's plan for me, how He has been molding me since I was a child. I can see Him bringing His plans to fruition with admirable sweetness. I can see God's will for my soul take shape, appearing as a sunrise and finding its fullness at noon, making His wishes clear and accomplishing His plans.

Each life is a word, a message God wants to tell the world, hopefully we can recognize it and profess it loudly. In her spiritual legacy Conchita shares the message God has given us through her:

I will die: I will suffer no more...

My strength will fail me, I will not be able to prostrate myself in front of the tabernacle...

My heart will stop beating...

But, what comfort it will be for me to know that there will be on earth lips who will continue to praise God in my name...

Hearts, who will continue beating out of love for Jesus in my name...

Living hosts, who will continue elevating to heaven the divine

perfume of blood in my name...

They are my blood! and through them I will continue suffering, as I will continue to love...

I will not die at all, my children, I will live on in you!

God's immortality, that is, the perfect transformation into Him, the consummation in the Unity, this is ineffable, about that...we will speak in heaven.

Amen.

From all we've read so far, and acknowledging that we are called to live a plentiful life living our vocation to holiness, can you identify what it is that God has to tell your family, your community, the world, through your life? We must realize that our lives can also be "desirable" for others, in as much as we seek to respond to God's call.

What does Concha tell you today?

We have travelled together this journey to come closer to Concepcion Cabrera. We have also been able to have a better understanding of the importance of her upcoming Beatification: the Church's official recognition of a person who lived her vocation to holiness fully. That is why we invite you to reflect on the movements that have taken place in your mind and heart:

- What feature of Conchita's life speaks the most about God to me?
- How can I personally apply what I've learned about Conchita?
- What is the path that God invites me to walk?
- Can I have Conchita become my friend and companion on this road to holiness? How?

Praying with Concha

As our encounter comes to an end, we present some phrases from Conchita's writings that speak of her love for God. We invite you to read them, or go back to some of her other texts presented in these worksheets and build your dialogue with God:

- *You are, Jesus, the love of my life... You, my happiness and tenderness... You are more than enough for my soul, and having your love, I lack nothing... (April 21, 1894)*
- *It is my dream, my hope, to be able to offer the Lord a pure heart where He can rest... (January 27, 1900)*



- *Oh! Crucified Lord, my Model, my Way, my Truth, my Cross and my Life! You, and you alone, are the love of my life, the magnet of my love, my life's only aspiration!... You fill the immense bosom of my soul... It is You who, in the silence of the night, receives my tears and counts the beats of my heart so much in love... (May 29, 1901)*
- *O Jesus, Jesus of my soul, blessed are You! That which You want, I want. Help me, for I can do nothing without You. O love, love, only love of my existence, my great Love, my good Jesus, have mercy on me! (November 12, 1905)*
- *O Jesus, Jesus my whole life! Mold me, today, I beg You, please, out of love, like you want me to be, like you need me in order to fulfill your designs in this world. (November 5, 1935)*

Books for further reading:

*"Una mujer de nuestro tiempo: Concepción Cabrera de Armida" by A.A.V.V.
Eco de mis amores. Selección de textos de Concepción Cabrera de Armida" by A.A.V.V.
"Flor de México. El itinerario espiritual de Concepción Cabrera de Armida" by Carlos Francisco Vera
"Concepción Cabrera de Armida" (3 volumes) by Jesús María Padilla*

Available videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g10d_Pco27Q
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7h0bppU4Mgl>
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbT1R7x_EmU&t=44s

Beatification of Concepción Cabrera:

Saturday May 4, 2019 at 12pm EST - Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Mexico City)
Website: concepcioncabrera.mx