

The Servants of God, Henry and Inez Casolani

Their Path to Holiness in Marriage

Stephanie Quintano

Henry and Inez Casolani lived for each other from the moment they pronounced their matrimonial vows. Together they progressed in holiness, even to an exemplary degree, by keeping the commandments, by doing good deeds and by the practice of all virtues. Through the Sacrament of Matrimony they consecrated themselves to God and sustained each other in spiritual growth. When Henry and Inez Casolani experienced joy they recalled God's grace. Similarly when they faced challenges Henry and Inez sought ways to be less anxious about matters and therefore they experienced God's grace as their help and comfort. They were determined to allow their love for God and for one another to increase apace.

Their marriage was built on trust, spirituality, kindness, charity and forgiveness. They complemented and supported each other at all times. Henry and Inez were always available for one other. *"They are no longer two but one"* (Mt.19:6). Henry and Inez Casolani treasured their matrimonial vows as well as their unity with one another. They loved and respected each other 'till death do us part'. Henry and Inez admired each other's gifts and talents. Their unity was a cradle of love where abilities developed and matured. Their level of surrender and generosity went beyond that which is habitual and normal. Their pure and enthusiastic love was maintained even through the trials of time.

Henry and Inez Casolani's married life was a school of sanctity. Christ was heard in their talking! Christ was seen in their living! Their life was a steady walk toward their goal. They were interiorly detached from every evil but within them there was a strong adherence to righteousness and holiness. Henry and Inez Casolani present a model of life based on the values of love, justice, hope, humility and peace. By the reception of the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving, by the witness of a holy life, by self denial and charity Henry and Inez were the first heralds of the faith to their daughter. They guarded their daughter's religious vocation with special care.

- **They were pro-life parents.** They saw life as a gift from God. The upbringing of their daughter was gentle and joyous, yet cautious and solid. Inez used to tell her daughter:

*"God has only lent you to us. I want to give you back to Him as He gave you to us."*¹

¹ Archivium Casolani [A.C.] , 9.3

Inez used to pray several times a day for so many abortions to be avoided. From a tender age their daughter was taught and encouraged to say the daily morning prayer, and her last 'Goodnight' was always to be addressed to Jesus. There is no need to say that, apart from the daily Eucharist, the daily Family Rosary held an important place in their timetable. Henry and Inez carefully trained their daughter in the spiritual life. Inez prepared her daughter so well for her First Holy Communion that inadvertently in school she was examined with a group of first communicants, and to the greatest joy of Inez, actually received her First Holy Communion at the tender age of five. One of the prayers that Henry wrote for young Cecilia for that occasion and which she carried in her tiny little white bag as she went up for her First Holy Communion was:

*"Oh Jesus, I promise my Holy Communions worthily in reparation for those who are unwilling to be friends with you."*²

- **They were grateful parents.** They thanked the Lord for calling their daughter to the consecrated life.

"We are happy, thank God! HE has chosen our beloved daughter to be HIS loving bride! I am sure we are not worthy of her!" (Inez Casolani)³

- **They were holy parents.** Henry and Inez were the first catechists of their daughter. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that *"the home is the first school of the Christian life."*⁴ As parents, Henry and Inez Casolani gave witness to the goodness of God through their loyalty, their deep affection for one another and their spiritual outlook even in the smallest details of their daily life. Their daughter summed it all up when she wrote:

"As I reflect on the type of life my parents lived, the discreet scent of tiny flowers of Sanctity keeps me most alert in understanding that the presence of God was always in their midst." (Sr. Cecilia Mary Casolani SJA)⁵

This couple's intense love for God and each other had bonded them in a pursuit of heaven that flowed out even to their daughter. Praying together was a way of life. They consecrated their family to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Sacred Heart of Mary. They were one heart and one soul in faith. The family of Henry and Inez was a Church in miniature. Henry and Inez trained their daughter to detest sin, to help and to do good to others. Henry's advice to his daughter was:

*"All I can say is to take care of yourself and try to help others."*⁶

Inez's advice was: *"Whatever you do, do it with love and for love of Him."*⁷

² *ibid*, 32.44

³ A.C. Travelling Diary, 4th September 1965, 17.7

⁴ CCC: 1657

⁵ A.C. Flowers of Sanctity, 2.23

⁶ A.C. Letter to Sr. Cecilia M., 15th August 1985, 15.66

⁷ A.C. Letter to Sr. Cecilia M., 15th August 1985, 15.66

Inez's letters to her daughter were filled with descriptions of warmth at home and visits to relatives. Inez was always very inventive in cooking, knitting, writing articles, giving recipes and seeing to her family's needs. Inez creating a relaxed and happy atmosphere at home.

"They impressed me immediately with their kindness, as well as with their religiosity and the Christian values that underlined all their speech and behaviour." (Prof. Fr. Maurice Eminyán SJ)⁸

Although she was a fully qualified teacher, Inez resigned from her teaching career as soon as she got married and dedicated herself totally to her family. Henry was a diligent Civil Servant; he worked at the Public Works Department and was renowned for being a most conscientious man. Henry and Inez lived a very full life and participated actively in the ecclesial life of the Parish yet their thoughts were constantly oriented towards Heaven. In the conflicts of everyday life they spontaneously turned towards the Divine help. They accepted contradictions patiently. Under the direction of her spiritual director, Fr. Joseph Mifsud Bonnici, Inez used to organize the nocturnal adoration of the Eucharist. She often stayed up till late at night in order to pray. She said the Divine Praises several times a day. Henry and Inez blessed without reserve their daughter's call to a consecrated life to God; they accompanied her spiritually in her mission and prayed incessantly for her. In one of her letters to her daughter when she was in India, Inez wrote the following:

*"Although so far away from each other, be certain that we follow you spiritually every single minute both during the day and at night."*⁹

Henry and Inez Casolani surrendered themselves to long and often painful illnesses. Among other things, Inez suffered from shingles in the head, arthritis and heart-trouble. From the age of thirty-eight Henry was diagnosed with diabetes which later led to serious health conditions. Henry injected himself with insulin whenever necessary! He also suffered from heart failure. Amongst other ailments he suffered from Dupuytren¹⁰ which he never ever mentioned to doctors. Yet, Henry and Inez Casolani bore their illnesses with Christian fortitude. They accepted their ailments in silence and without complaints¹¹ and they offered their suffering in atonement for the world's spiritual sickness.¹² After being diagnosed with diabetes, Inez wrote:

*"I thank God for this new bouquet. These are the marvels of life. I am in His Hands, and I accept all He sends me joyfully."*¹³

Henry had a remarkable sense of humour. Inez was full of joy. Wherever they were Henry and Inez generated a sense of peace and serenity. When, like in every marriage, difference of opinions occurred, Henry and Inez overcame their problems themselves through dialogue; besides one was always ready to give in to the other.

⁸ Prof. Fr. Maurice Eminyán, foreword to 'Henry and Inez Casolani - A Couple Moulded in Christ' (author: Anton Quintano)

⁹ A.C. Letter to Sr. Cecilia, 23rd August 1985, 15.74

¹⁰ A.C. Addenda to Flowers of Sanctity, 9 (b) - Dupuytren is a very rare ailment.

¹¹ A.C. 36C.3; 36C.4; 36C.15; 36C.18

¹² A.C. 36C.19

¹³ A.C. Inez Casolani, diary annotation, 27th April 1990, 25.27

They persevered through every difficulty. Their unity was perfected through openness, understanding, patience, reconciliation and a great spirit of sacrifice. In this way, the love between them deepened throughout the years they were bound together in married love and this was a source of intimate joy for them.

Henry and Inez Casolani were members of the Third Order of St. Augustine. Inez was an Auxiliary Member of the Legion of Mary and also an Ambassador of Mary. Henry Casolani was an outstanding devotee of the Venerable, now Blessed Maria Adeodata Pisani. Inez loved and spread devotion towards St. Joseph. Henry and Inez lovingly and faithfully observed the precepts and counsels of the Church: fasting, abstinence, daily Mass and frequent confession. Their daughter recalls the following:

*“Right to the very end of her life my mother was in full control of all her senses and did not hesitate to mortify them whenever she felt she had to do so, and this even in the most simple and pleasant matters. For example, she would refrain from smelling a rose to give it totally to Jesus or Mary. She would eagerly buy the first fruits of the season for us, yet she would not taste them herself so as to offer the sacrifice for the souls in purgatory.”*¹⁴

Henry and Inez Casolani were an example of piety to all who knew them. Inez passed away on the 13th July 1992. For Henry it was a devastating and deep wound indeed that would only be closed in the next world. Yet Henry accepted his beloved wife’s loss with an exemplary spirit of faith and with the conviction that his ‘saintly wife’¹⁵ was in Heaven.

Trust: *“Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”* (Eph. 5:21) Henry and Inez mutually submitted themselves to each other. Henry was an exemplary husband and was faithful to his role within the family. He provided protection and provision for the home. He was the head of the family just as Christ is the Head of the Church but he was also ‘a servant model’¹⁶ admirably forgetting himself to seek the interests and needs of his family. St. Paul commends:

“Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ is the head of the Church.” (1 Cor.7:3)

Inez honored and affirmed her husband’s role. By exercising her gifts, Inez helped and inspired Henry in his undertakings. She performed her duties within the family with zeal and dedication and was faithful towards her husband. From a tender age she stood out for her love of prayer, diligence, and obedience and also for her sensitivity to the needs of the family and the less fortunate. Inez was recollected and at the same time very human, serene and full of kindness and disinterested love for others. Inez never thought of herself – she was only concerned with the needs of her family and neighbour. She delighted in an extraordinary, so to say,

¹⁴ A.C. ‘My Mother’ – Addenda to Flowers of Sanctity.

¹⁵ A.C. 36D.48

¹⁶ Refer Matthew 20:27

continual union with God. Henry used to address Inez as *'My inseparable wife'*.¹⁷ He trusted her totally and always followed her advice. Henry never failed to give his wife and daughter priority in his thoughts! His family was the world to him. This loving relationship was intensified through the presence of Jesus in whom Henry and Inez trusted totally. For Father's Day, just some three weeks before her passing away Inez wrote the following words to Henry on his feast day:

*'All my love for you always. God bless you for ever and ever.'*¹⁸

When a choir sings together and everyone uses the same note, it is called unison. But when different members sing soprano, alto, tenor and bass, it is called harmony. Henry and Inez Casolani had different characters. In spite of this fact their marriage was most harmonious and they made a fine pair. Their marriage was founded on mutual understanding. As one examines the married life of Henry and Inez Casolani, one notices that because of their mutual and abiding trust:

- they agreed about priorities in their marriage.
- the couple did not permit tiny disagreements to escalate from an ant hill to a mountain.
- they did not allow the use of harsh words to mar their relationships with one other.
- they instilled in their daughter a sense of security. They both helped her to grow in spirituality and in discipline, yet they *'cushioned'*¹⁹ her within their parental love.
- the family income was always used responsibly and conscientiously.

This great trust between Henry and Inez Casolani was based on the sense of oneness as well as on the doctrine of Christ and the Church regarding matrimony. Henry and Inez's respective souls were joined and knit together in total trust in Our Lord in whom they had recourse in all the trials they faced. Henry and Inez accepted the Word of God and put it into practice. They glorified Our Lord through their deeds. Henry and Inez Casolani enjoyed a fruitful love within their marriage and this was *'an image of the absolute and unfailing love with which God loves man.'*²⁰

Charity: Henry and Inez Casolani's life provides a beautiful opportunity to reflect on the simple yet important ways that a Christian family ought to follow in order to be a school of faith, holiness and charity. While being dedicated to their roles as spouses and parents, they were the generous individuals that relatives, neighbours and companions in the workplace too always turned to whenever in need. Devoted as they were to each other and to their daughter, Henry and Inez could still reach out lovingly to support their extended families. The couple was very close to Henry's only sister, Juliet, and to Inez's sister Marie. They strove to help others even at a personal sacrifice.

¹⁷ A.C. 11th October 1982, 13.2

¹⁸ A.C. 21st June 1992, 13.12

¹⁹ A.C. Flowers of Sanctity, 3.27

²⁰ Catechism of the Catholic Church, CCC: 1604

When a relative was sick with a terminal illness, Henry and Inez spontaneously took a four year old child home, treating him as their very own, seeing to his schooling and education and all that this entailed; this they did with so much love never expecting or ever receiving anything in return.

To the measure they could afford, Henry and Inez Casolani generously gave donations to the less fortunate and to religious institutions. When he went out, Henry always carried money specifically to donate to those who collected for charity. Inez took good care of her maid both in health and in spiritual concern. Anyone who set foot inside the home of Henry and Inez was sure to find comfort and help. Inez used to buy and prepare a special nourishing drink for a religious who used to pass regularly in front of their home on her way for her hospital check-up.

One of their neighbours became a widow at a young age and had many children. Inez willingly offered her services and taught and helped these children to prepare themselves for examinations – out of love and charity. Henry and Inez Casolani were not martyrs; they simply spent their life doing good to others.

When later in life Henry and Inez Casolani retired at St. Joseph's Home at Rabat, an elderly lady who lived in the same home needed daily massage in the back. No one was sensitive towards the necessity of this person, but Inez was! Although Inez was already suffering from heart trouble, she daily went to massage her back.

Mgr. Nikol G. Cauchi, Emeritus Bishop of Gozo wrote: *“Henry and Inez were fervent Christians endowed with the best religious sentiments. They were kind-hearted and were always ready to help their neighbour at every opportunity.”*²¹

Henry and Inez Casolani never held a grudge against anyone even if at times certain people made them suffer. Inez was badly treated by a person. This same person was taken ill suffering from terminal disease. In spite of suffering from severe heart trouble, Inez went to visit this person in hospital and was deeply concerned and upset about this person's poor health. A close acquaintance of Inez declared the following:

“I admired Inez very much, especially when she kept silent at unkind words that were not called for. I admired her for this mostly. She would carry on with another person even if Inez knew that the latter might be holding a grudge against her.” (Ivy Warrington)²²

At his work place Henry created an atmosphere filled with the spirit of the Gospel. Gossip, trivial conversations and passing judgment on others were not possible to take place in his presence. Henry was always disposed to help others. Henry's colleagues trusted him and referred to him in their need.

²¹ A.C. 36B.44

²² A.C. 37.23

A colleague exclaimed *‘Henry was generous to a fault, and wore his heart on his sleeve. He never refused a request from anybody.’*²³

As for Inez, she gave spiritual direction not only to her daughter but also to all those who confided in her. In their daily domestic life, Henry and Inez practiced the virtue of charity:

• **in self-giving:** *“I give him my heart and all I possess.”* (Inez Casolani)²⁴

Henry and Inez mutually gave themselves to each other. Before Henry went to work his breakfast was always ready and Inez sat with him. When he returned home lunch was always ready and Inez welcomed him home with a ready smile. Even when coming out of the operating theatre after a major operation, when told that Henry was beside her, she gave him a most beautiful smile which, though without words, expressed the sincere love of a lifetime. Henry and Inez spoke of each other with an enthusiastic love. Henry’s words witness to a love that remained forever young:

*‘Best greetings to a marvellous mother and wife. Who else could it be? Inez! There may be an equal, but not better! Though for me there is no equal; she is unique. Harry.’*²⁵

• **in unconditional and selfless love:** Prompt forgiveness enhanced serenity in misunderstandings.

• **in loving and mutual obedience:** As early as their courtship, in their letters one can feel a deep sense of passionate love along with a deep religious commitment and when they were united in the Sacrament of Matrimony they committed themselves wholeheartedly to their sacred vocation. In spite of difference of character their love for each other was ever genuine, human and pure. Mgr Lawrence Gatt commented:

*‘Such a couple impress us. I was impressed by Henry, a man of a certain age and experience, who never faltered in his loyalty to his faith, to his wife and daughter, and to that which he lived for and which he would never abandon.’*²⁶

• **in mutually seeking each other’s interest first:** Inez always taught her daughter to respect and love her father. Sr. Cecilia recalls the following:

*“When I used to be about to take the largest fruit: ‘No,’ Mam used to say, ‘the best one is for Daddy!’”*²⁷

• **in sincere and humble consultation of the other's desires even in slightest details:** Henry and Inez Casolani’s thoughts were transparent towards each other. Henry always took Inez’s advice. Although Henry left

²³ A.C. 36A.4

²⁴ A.C. Little Flowers of Sanctity, 2.4

²⁵ A.C. 13.10

²⁶ A.C. 36B.9

²⁷ A.C. Little Flowers of Sanctity, 2.13

the management of their finances to Inez, Inez always involved Henry in every personal and family decisions – and always abided faithfully and totally by his advice.

In a family where father and mother displayed such affection for one another and where God was the center of the home, it is obvious that this was the ideal situation for the spiritual, emotional and educational nurturing of the offspring. So, for Henry and Inez, it was their daughter who benefited greatly by this home environment.

Spirituality: “*Be you, therefore, perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.*” (Mt.5:48)

The vocation of every Christian is to live a holy life in the ordinary circumstances of every day situations. Henry and Inez Casolani’s spirituality is very simple: it was centered on the Eucharist, on the greatness and goodness of God and in allowing the Holy Spirit to pervade every moment of their life.

Henry and Inez Casolani’s devotion to the Mass, to the sacraments and to various forms of prayer ensured that everything they experienced in their life was guided by the Holy Spirit. Having their thoughts focused on eternal realities Henry and Inez gave priorities in their life to God, to love for Our Lady, to the imitation of Saints, to living out of the Gospel in all the details of life, to mutual devotion and fidelity and to tremendous love towards their one and only daughter with whom God blessed their sacramental union. Through the virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude which they lived out to an exemplary degree, their life was imbued with Christ. They always accepted the mysterious Will of God as ‘*a bouquet*’²⁸ and abandoned their joys, hopes and decisions in the ‘*Capable Hands of God*’.²⁹ Inez nourished her spirituality by constantly engaging in prayer. Both during the day and night Inez was in conversation with God. As for Henry, he accomplished all his aspirations in the light of faith. Henry Casolani was endowed with a child-like trust in God and he radiated his strong faith to all his colleagues at his work place.

Henry and Inez Casolani’s way of life does not present anything out of the ordinary.

‘*The originality of their virtue lies in the manner they harmoniously fused faith and daily events*’. (Prof. Fr. Maurice Emyan SJ)³⁰

Henry and Inez Casolani’s path to holiness is accessible to all modern-day couples. May we not just admire Henry and Inez’s life and remain passive devotees, but like them, let us really try hard to sanctify ourselves in the midst of the ordinary situations of our work, family and social relationships, for the greater glory of God. Amen.

²⁸ A.C. Inez Casolani, Diary Annotation, 27th April 1990, 25.27

²⁹ A.C. Inez Casolani, Travelling Diary, 12th September 1966, 18.11

³⁰ Prof. Fr. Maurice Emyan SJ, ‘Qalb in-Nies’ – a religious television programme, June 2004