

*The Spirituality of the Servants of God,
Henry and Inez Casolani*

Henry and Inez Casolani stood out for their love for the Eucharist – a love which they always had from their youth and which remained with them till their very end.

Their life history was no doubt the work of God. It was a way of trust and absolute surrender to God's intimate presence. It was marked by a deep union with the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was the first tabernacle of Jesus and His Mother, Whom they both cherished dearly, and St. Joseph - not to mention other saints. Saints were their friends.

Everything in their life, including their physical ailments, which were plenty, became a context for relationship with God. However, what stood out forcefully in them was their burning love for the Blessed Sacrament in front of Whom they spent long moments in adoration. Their whole life, which was an example of great charity, ardent hope and total faith, as well as of deep humility, had its culmination in the Eucharist. The Eucharistic Christ was the centre of their spiritual life and it is from Him they received the grace and courage necessary to lead a life of love – a love which was extended to all those who came in contact with them. This could be clearly felt in their ordinary and unpretentious daily living. There were no half ways. They had one vision – God – and their abandonment to Him was total.

Henry and Inez Casolani treasured their marriage vows and nourished a sense of sacrifice which was a most important value in their family life. They were the ideal parents. Their home was an ideal domestic Church where their beloved daughter was brought up with a great love and reverence for God, especially for the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. One of the greatest joys that Inez, as a young mother, experienced and which remained with her all her life was when their daughter, Cecilia, was inadvertently sent with other girls to be examined and, since she knew all answers, was accepted for her First Holy Communion when she was only five years old! Inez could just see in this a special gift from Jesus – a grace she shared with Henry, which she treasured dearly, and which she made sure her daughter would never forget!

Both Henry and Inez were ever so grateful. Because of their closeness to God their heart was full of love; they were happy with very little. Even the slightest compliment or just a little smile would fill them with gratitude and joy. They were always content and at peace. Somehow they were in link with the beyond. That is why they could kneel in profound adoration and thanksgiving before this God who created the universe, the same God Who gave us the gift of His only Son.

Both Henry and Inez had great insight with regards to others. They loved and helped all regardless of their limitations. They were selfless. Henry not only gave of his own but was instrumental in collecting for the less fortunate especially for *Dar tal-Providenza*. Inez would give private lessons for free to anyone in need. Their thoughts were always for others never for themselves. They always respected authority - a fact that is proclaimed about Henry by his very own superiors. They worked hand in hand even with those of divergent opinions. Not only were they capable of overlooking the shortcomings of others but also had the art of highlighting the good they saw in them. The clarity of their faith, even in the midst of darkness, allowed them to view life through the eyes of God. This could be seen even in moments when they felt annoyed or misunderstood or, maybe, even hurt or disheartened. Their response was always one of love, understanding and even friendship!!

They were outstanding in their love of God and generous to a fault both with God and with others. It is the love for our God hidden in the Blessed Sacrament that motivated them to be at the service of others and to help friends, relatives, neighbours and the less fortunate, no matter who presented himself in front of them. They did all for the glory of God, but this could only be done because of their regular and intimate encounter with God. They never sought reward. God alone became their reward. This personal, loving and intimate relationship both Henry and Inez had with the Eucharistic Lord transpired through all their relationships and dealing with others. It seemed to be followed by a firm commitment from the part of both of them, together and separately, to extend His Eucharistic love not only within their family but to all those who came in contact with them.

Both Henry and Inez were ready to obey God's will no matter what it cost. In the midst of their trials it is in front of the Blessed Sacrament that they went and from Him they experienced the grace and peace of God which enabled them to transform their suffering into spiritual joy. In spite of all his ailments, Henry never complained but would only say: *'Imagine the suffering Christ went through!'* A careful reading of the diaries and the personal letters of Inez reveal the downpour of the emotional and physical sufferings she experienced. Yet throughout her life her clear goal shone through: a yearning to be united with her God and Creator for all eternity. Both Henry and Inez relied completely on His Providence and trusted Him with childlike confidence. In fact as soon as they realised His will for their daughter to become a religious, in spite of enormous and atrocious heartaches, as she was their only child, they fully supported her in her decision. Who but this Eucharistic God could give Inez the courage to declare so dynamically and without the slightest hesitation to this same only daughter she loved so dearly: *'You know how much I love you! Yet no one will ever take God's place in my life - not even you!'* Her spiritual testament says it all: *'I take record of God. In Thee I have had my earthly joy,'*

The Eucharist was the summit, the climax of their day, of their happenings, of their decisions, of their whole life. It was obvious to those who knew them that both Henry and Inez Casolani

had a deep, ardent desire to be united continually with this Eucharistic Christ. Even when Henry and Inez frequented each other before marriage one could feel that the Mass held an all-important place in their life. It is with the greatest respect and reverence that they received Jesus in Holy Communion, the most intimate communion they could ever have had with God on earth. This relationship was alive and continued throughout their day. Their greatest outing, no matter what weather, was always to go to Mass and Communion. Yet, even then, they would go to Church well ahead of Mass to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament! During the rest of the day Inez used to recite the Spiritual Communion so very, very often. Throughout his life, apart from Mass, Henry would never miss his daily evening visit to the Blessed Sacrament even in inclement weather and as both approached their last days these visits abounded.

Henry and Inez also delighted in the Gospel. Not only did they contemplate the mysteries of Christ during their daily Rosary but also grouped others to pray, Henry at his work place and Inez in their vicinity. They loved proclaiming the Word of God during Mass. They meditated on it daily. For them this Word was not static. It was fully alive and this reflected itself in their daily living. Both Henry and Inez lived the spirit of the Gospel without reservations. Was not this evangelization?

This love of Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament was so strong in Inez that she took it in hand to distribute books to parishioners to encourage them to do the Night Hour Adoration in their home and enlisted them accordingly with the permission of the Parish Priest. It is no doubt the long moments both Henry and Inez spent in adoration and contemplation of the Eucharist that gave them the power to live this life so authentically and so serenely in the midst of so many difficulties and setbacks. It is there that they found their solace and comfort.

Even though with severe heart trouble, Inez managed to go to Mass and Communion to the very last day of her life without any complaint – although that meant going up a hill, which because of her heart condition was a physical trauma. How often was Henry seen alone in front of the Blessed Sacrament! Even on his own deathbed, some three days before he passed away, Henry joyfully welcomed the priest who came to give him Holy Communion, and with eyes closed with weakness, managed to answer the priest completely. Not only, but actually thanked him and blessed the priest! No doubt it is the Eucharist that gave meaning to the essence of their being and thus gave them scope for existence.

Henry and Inez Casolani were ordinary people but with a great doze of unconditional love in their hearts. Whatever they did was done with love, thus they manifested Christ and radiated the love of God for all. It is clear that by witnessing to a life of such deep and close union with God and great love for others they lived a Eucharistic spirituality, thus becoming real

witnesses of the Eucharist. They actually *lived* the Eucharist. According to many people who knew them the Holy Eucharist was the centre of their life, their source, their joy and their ultimate goal. There is no trace of doubt - the secret of the life of Henry and Inez Casolani was Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

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