

Spirituality of Mother Teresa Casini

Mother Teresa Casini's spirituality follows the main lines of that "re-launching" of priestly sanctity, especially that of Diocesan priesthood, which has had a profound effect on the progress of the Church between the two Vatican Councils.

The names of two women stand out in this movement: Margaret Luise Claret de la Touche and our own Teresa Casini.

The association is not a chance one. The two women did not know each other during their lifetime, but their thought and work are so complementary that they immediately appear as two aspects of an individual vocation.

Mother de la Touche had the work of revealing to Priests the deepest reason for their call to sanctity, and that is the infinite love given them by the Heart of Jesus.

Mother Casini had the task of revealing the mystery of that Heart's infinite anguish in the presence of the priest's sin and mediocrity. Mother Casini's spirituality is entirely dominated by the idea of this divine anguish. Here is how she exhorts her daughters: "The thought and the desire of consoling the pierced Heart of Jesus should always be alive in the Oblate...love and sorrow drove Jesus to make His voice heard in the depths of our heart, and this love and sorrow cause Him to desire and to want holiness in the priests dear to Him. He wants the Oblate to sacrifice herself, to pray, to supplicate, to work and grow weary for the sanctification of these dear people...He loves these souls with an immense love...His Heart seeks out people who will pray, suffer and make reparation for them."



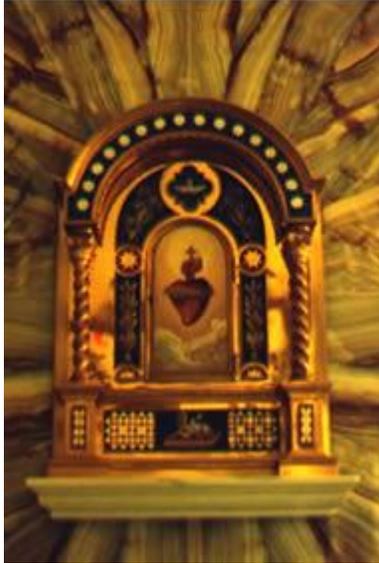
Mother Casini understood her vocation as an Oblate in the maximum sense of the word. One may be offered in a variety of degrees ranging from the general situation of fundamental fidelity to one's state of grace, to the point of being totally and always at the disposition of divine justice so as to cooperate with the accomplishing of divine mercy. This latter state is the victimal oblation, the one Jesus Christ chose for Himself.

This sort of oblation, if we take it seriously, is not an action. It is a state. It is not totally expressed by a formula, it is not consummated in a moment of heroism and it is not accomplished once and for all. It is a state of committing one's life, and it is accomplished at every moment with that perennial new beginning which is proper to every spiritual step forward.

Mother Casini described the wearying and exalting journey of her own going up to Mount

Calvary, not so much in the usual form of a spiritual diary or perhaps in a summary of her own interior experiences, but rather in the objective and practical form of the journey she outlined for those whom God called to follow her on the difficult path of her own way.

This journey has two stages. The first one goes from one's vocation to the victimal state, to the preparation of the victim for the offering. The second goes from the offering to its consummation.



The parallel between the Host on the altar and the little host in the convent is often written about by Mother Casini. But this is not a simple teaching tool; it is one of the keys to her spirituality. If a victim is truly such, she knows this and wants to live in a continual act of sacrifice and immolation. But, Mother adds with some slight and understandable doubt, seeing her wide experience of souls and what happens to them, "...not just the ideal of sacrifice but an effective and practical one. The Oblate must be able to understand and suffer Christ's suffering with the full and absolute will to please God in all her daily actions, in her perfect observance of the rule, and especially in her ready and total abandon in God and to all His dispositions. This is the foundation of her donation to the Lord.

Mother Teresa discovered the treasure of Jesus' Eucharistic Virtues, and in them she finds the divine model for what must be the sacrificial virtues of a true Oblate. She writes: "The life Jesus leads in the Sacrament of His love, and which the Oblate must imitate and make her own is this; a life of generous and limitless sacrifice... a life of incessant prayer ...a life of obedience... a life of poverty...". We are at the heart of Mother Casini's spirituality.

Mother understood reparation as a form of that overflowing love which Jesus cherishes for His Priests and, through them, for souls. She considers herself as always sharing intimately in this love and such a sharing in a woman's heart has to assume the form of maternal oblation.

The activity which she recommends to her daughters must not, however, be contrasted with their reparative oblation, which remains the essence of their vocation, but must be itself the occasion and the substance of their perennial sacrifice as Oblates.

So, we are not talking about oblation and activity, but of oblation only, confirmed in the interior offering of one's life at every instant, committed to observance of the Rule and to the work of priestly service, spiritual service most of all. Oblates by their special vocation must pray a great deal for priests to obtain from God their fidelity to grace and to the holiness proper to the priestly state. But not spiritual service alone. And here we are talking about Mother Casini's works.

Although the Institute had been born with clear cut characteristics, it had not yet said exactly



what the works were which it would do. After some experiments the Little Friends of Jesus came and became the official work. But, side by side with it, another one was being done without defined programs or structures. Mother Teresa's great charity toward priests had led her to sense that one of the causes of a falling-off in the priestly spirit could sometimes be found in their isolation, and sometimes in their abandoned state in which they, the great forgotten ones, are compelled to live. And so she began to make the first timid attempts by preparing meals for them in the Institute itself, choosing the best she had available.

Every day she sent the Sisters to bring meals she had prepared with her own hands to some sick priests and she helped the needy ones with alms which often represented all she herself possessed; and she would have done more, but "... we must await the hour of God."

WE HAVE BEEN GIVING SOME BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES, GUIDELINES FOR A HISTORY OF THE INSTITUTE BUT ALSO EXTREMELY INTERESTING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE SPIRITUALITY THEY REVEAL! NOT AN ENTIRELY CONTEMPLATIVE LIFESTYLE, NOT REALLY AN ACTIVE ONE. AND SO WE CALL IT "OBLATIVE" AND HAVE SAID EVERYTHING.

Without doubt it is an austere spirituality, a robust spirituality, but for this very reason a spirituality shot through with serenity and peace, with smiling and relaxed happiness, because "... where one loves, one does not feel the work".

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