

The Feminine Spirituality of Joseph Allamano.

Feminine spirituality is far much different from the feminist spirituality. Feminine spirituality refers to the face of the divine spirituality that relates to the body, with the nature and with the cycles of creation. The concept of feminine spirituality is not about gender, but rather about the creative and life-giving spiritual energy that gives form to that which we care about and put our energy into. However, the concept of life-giving does not imply motherhood, or the biological concept of fertility or reproduction. On the other hand, feminist spirituality holds that women's neglected experience and ideas need to be brought to the centre not only of women's religious lives but also to their personal social lives. In the writing of Father Allamano, we do not find any traces of Feminist spirituality.

The feminine spirituality of Joseph Allamano grew in him as he also grew in it. Meaning that it was a spirituality of a lived experience beginning from his childhood. Talking about feminine spirituality of Allamano, two major figures come into view: His Mother Marianna Cafasso and his teacher Benedetta Savio. In the biography of Allamano, Domenico Agasso points out that, Allamano's father died when he was still under three. Marianna therefore found herself a widow, with five young children. Marianna confronted this situation with the terse resoluteness characteristic of the times and distinct, and took charge of the work, as Allamano latter recounted: *'on our modest patrimony, she managed to send three of us to school, and still she increased our possessions by some 12,00 lire. She also had eyes on the needs of the others, poor people of the place who were otherwise overlooked, and she intervened with prompt efficiency'*.

Her niece Pia Clotilde latter said about her: *' As she worked hard, so she made others work hard, and had enough stuff to dress a ball; when some poor woman had a family, she prepared a large part of the layette for her, similarly for the poor and the sick, whom she helped in their many needs'*. (To have enough stuff to dress a ball is a piedmontese expression indicating wealth (and not only in cloth) for a household). On the other hand, Benedetta divided her time between the infants at the nursery School, her invalid family, and a life of piety. Testimonies of her joyful fervour in prayer, even in advanced years and in illness, have much in common with those describing more famous examples of holiness.

The centrality of these two great figures in the life of Allamano influenced him, their tenderness, their generosity, their hard work and holiness. This then marks the onset of Allamano's feminine spirituality in which Allamano appreciates the *'woman-figure'* not only in his life, but in the life of the Church and the entire society. The spirit of hard work, generosity, and exactness, which he learned from his mother, were latter to be seen in practical sense in his life. In fact, Joseph Allamano, it may be stressed, displayed an identical *'exactness'* throughout his life.

In his spiritual writing, Allamano desires all these virtues for his missionaries and among them include: generosity, hard work, spirit of prayer, and charity towards God and neighbour: *' our Lord wants generosity'*; *a true missionary has to double his efforts;* *' missionaries must work, even manual work'*; *' you should not be afraid to dirty your hands'*; *' we should be happy to die in the field of our work'*. Allamano

indeed personified these virtues learned from the two female figures. As we read from his biography that in his mother's style, he sent frequent relief to the poor.

In his spiritual writings, Allamano frequently uses feminine terminologies. For example, when writings to the seminarians he says "*consequently, love this house as a true mother. She has received you in her arms, and she nourishes and prepares you for the apostolate*". The frequent use of the term "*mother house*" also showcases this aspect of feminine spirituality of Allamano. Allamano compares our religious family to a loving and tender mother, whose focus and attention is directed towards her children: "*this house is your Jerusalem*"; "*this house was built for your formation*"; "*in this house, God provides many graces just for you, for your sanctification, graces that He doesn't give to others outside this house*".

The apex of Allamano's feminine spirituality is seen in three major aspects: the naming of the Institute after Our Lady Consolata, involving women in his missionary work of evangelization and the founding of Consolata missionary sisters. Like Many other founders, and regarding the charism of the Institute, Allamano would have chosen a different title. However, naming the institute after our Lady Consolata, is tied to his appreciation of her role as a Woman figure in the history of the church and of the salvation of humanity. Allamano believed that our lady is indeed a mother to us, and we are dear sons to her. On the other hand, at the incredibly early stages Allamano involved female missionaries in his mission. This is seen in the second expedition (1902) in which there was unexpected novelty: *along with the six missionaries were to go eight sisters too: the first women called to the work of Consolata Missions*. This was then followed later by the foundation Consolata missionary sisters, whom Allamano frequently referred to as "*Papal*", and who Pope Francis called the "*female branch of the Institute*" during the Thirteenth General Chapter.

Why the feminine spirituality of Allamano? The feminine spirituality of Allamano brings together the two branches of the Institute, *IMC*, and *MC* as one family, dedicated to the service of the church and the whole human race with the burning flame of charity towards God and neighbour. In addition, this spirituality recognises the role of women in the mission evangelization of the Church and their roles in the society and in the families. Besides, this spirituality strengthens our commitment to promoting the dignity and the roles of women in the society, remembering the address of Pope Francis during the Thirteenth General Chapter, "*special attention is given to the commitment to promoting the dignity of women and the values of the family.....*". This spirituality enables us to appreciate the presence and the active role of the consecrated women who in following the example of the Mother of Jesus Christ, open themselves with obedience and fidelity to the gift of God's Love.

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