

Former club dancer becomes a nun, teaching others to dance for God



Former club dancer becomes a nun, teaching others to dance for God

Sister Anna Nobili, a former club dancer, has been running the "Holy Dance" school for human and spiritual training for three years now

Up until a few years ago she worked as a club dancer at the most “in” venues in Milan; now she is a nun and dances “in praise of God.” She also teaches dancing in order to “bring people closer to Him.” This is no film plot; it is the real story of 42 year-old Sister Anna Nobili of the Congregation Of Working Sisters Of The Holy House Of Nazareth. After working as a dancer in clubs and on a number of television programmes, she took her vows in 2008 after living in a convent for four years. The turning point came when she was 22, as she stood in front of the Basilica of Saint Clare in Assisi, Italy. She had been “catapulted into a career in dancing” but Sister Anna no longer wants to talk about her past: “Too much has already been written about me: what matters now is not who and what I was, but what we are doing now with dance.”

And here is what she is doing: For about three years, Sister Anna has been teaching modern dance at the “Holy Dance” school, located inside the monastery of the Carmelitan Fathers in Palestrina near Rome. “The reason we named the school “Holy Dance” is because dance is holy, because God is Holy!” she explained. “And we want to put the Father of our dance in first place. God dances and enters history and our history dancing. Our Lord is the Lord of joy and life.” Sister Nobili does not make distinctions between dance types: “It does not matter which type of dancing you prefer, whether modern or hip-hop; and age does not matter either; one can feel part of a Church that dances to the rhythm of faith, without getting hot and flustered even and particularly when today’s choreography becomes tough, opaque and heavy-going.”

Dance is therefore considered not as an exhibition of one's body or as a way of stimulating the senses, but as a channel for communicating one's emotions, for praising God; at the same time it is an attractive and useful art for the human and spiritual training of new generations and not only: "Those who dance have a better chance of learning to love – the sister went on to say – by following Jesus' footsteps. Jesus turned his footsteps into a dance of Love and never gave up when faced with the challenge of difficult choreographies to save us. We tried to stop Jesus' footsteps by nailing his body to a cross, but his dance carried on. When he gave his last living breath, his Spirit did not stop twirling and spinning from his body into our bodies. We are that Church which became the body of Christ so that we could learn His dance too."

Whoever thinks that the "Holy Dance" school only teaches one type of dance can think again: Sister Anna teaches the modern spirit dance, hip hop, break inside, classical dancing and sweet dance, as well as the liturgical dance and prayer using gestures, of course. All these are ways of "never stopping praising God! He loves you exactly as you are in your dance."

And this is not all. The "Holy Dance" school, which in the space of three years has gone from having 3 to 90 pupils, also offers a number of evangelisation activities: dance lessons linked to the Word of God, spiritual retreats, dance internships, prayer and "catechetical" meetings, trips and all sorts of other opportunities for participation "linked simply by the joy of being together and sharing what each other is."

"Holy Dance" also performs shows and musicals on tour. "These are non-profit events that aim to raise money for solidarity initiatives" and are through up and organised by the School itself. This evening and next Monday evening, for example, the school will be putting on a dance show entitled "Ruth, a friend from abroad" at the Teatro Principe in Palestrina (at 20:30). The show is inspired by the biblical figure in the Book of Ruth.

"Holy Dance" – Sister Nobili concluded – represents the Church which is not afraid to live and is able to turn mourning into dancing (from Psalm 30:29)."

Domenico Agasso Jr - L'Stampa