



# GUIDE

to the Teams Of Our Lady



2018 Edition

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Christian couples, united by the Sacrament of Marriage, are called to follow Christ along the path of love, happiness, and holiness. Teams of Our Lady, a gift of the Holy Spirit, is offered to couples throughout the world to help them develop and live out their married spirituality.

“The Guide to Teams of Our Lady” published by the ERI (International Leading Team) in 2001 with the approval of the International College is based on previously published official documents, namely: “The Charter” (Appendix 1), “What is a Team of Our Lady” (Appendix 2) and “The Second Wind” (Appendix 3).

Since then the Movement has greatly increased and made important changes in its organization and structure; changes needed for the proper functioning of the base teams and for the support of all Team members.

The final approval of the Teams Canonical Statutes in July 2002, by Decree of the Pontifical Council for the Laity (Appendix 8), was also a very important step in the Movement’s life.

Similarly, the promulgation of the new document “Team’s Vocation and Mission at the Beginning of the Third Millennium” (Appendix 4), which emphasizes the mission of couples and the Movement as an integral part of the New Evangelization, necessitated an update to the Teams Guide.

This second edition of the Teams Guide (2018) updates and supplements the guide published in 2001 and thus allow Teams to go forward with confidence and boldness in fidelity to the founding charism.



“The Guide to Teams of Our Lady,” second edition, after a short introduction, has the following structure:

- Chapters 1 and 2 take us back to the beginning of Teams: Father Caffarel, the Charter, and other fundamental documents.
- Chapter 3 shows us why Teams exist and what its proposals are.
- Chapters 4 to 9 present the four fundamental pillars of the Movement: the Spirit of the Movement, its Pedagogy, the life of Teams of Our Lady as a Movement, and finally its Mission.
- Chapter 10 deals with the Intercessors.
- Chapter 11 lists the key documents available to all Team members and Teams organizations.
- Finally, in the appendices are the texts of documents, including the decrees of recognition for Teams of Our Lady by the Pontifical Council on the Laity and the Canonical Statutes.

## **1.1 THE BEGINNINGS**

The Movement of Teams of Our Lady was born in a very uncomplicated way: In 1938, four young committed Christian couples wanted to live their love in the light of faith. They spoke with a young priest in Paris, Father Henri Caffarel, to guide them in their search. He answered them: *“Let’s seek together.”*

It was on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1939 that these four couples met with Father Caffarel and thus the Movement’s first team was born.

During the Second World War (1939-45) many teams were formed, and there was further and deeper reflection. The Magazine “L’Anneau d’Or”<sup>1</sup> was born and the experiences gained on this path of spirituality were transmitted to other couples.

In 1947 the war was over and these couple groups had become popular and multiplied. Father Caffarel feared that *“couples might be tempted to slacken in the euphoria of the new-found peace and that the groups become merely a place for comfortable old friendships... There was a crisis... What should be done in order that the crisis facing our groups would move them forward rather than overtake them? I sought an explanation of how holiness had never ceased to flourish and re-flourish in religious orders over the years in spite of external and internal crises, and I realized that one of the essential factors of their strength and vitality was their rule. Why, I asked myself, should we not propose a rule to married Christians who wished to progress spiritually? Not a rule for monks, but a rule for married lay people.”*

(“Vocation and Itinerary of Teams,” Henri Caffarel, Rome 1959)

Arising from the inspiration and reflection of Father Caffarel with the first members of the “Caffarel Groups,” a common method for couples wanting to live their love more deeply rooted in Christ was gradually developed.

The number of Groups increased and an organization was gradually put in place. Father Caffarel and the leaders of the Movement then prayerfully drew up a founding document called the “Charter of the Teams of Our Lady.” It contained the essential elements of the “Rule” of

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<sup>1</sup> In English, “The Golden Ring,” a periodic magazine of family spirituality, founded by Father Caffarel in 1945 (edition “Feu Nouveau”) published until Nov/Dec 1967 with 138 issues in total.

the Movement and was promulgated on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1947 in the church of Saint Augustine in Paris.

Thanks to the Charter, Teams of Our Lady quickly developed in France, Belgium, and Switzerland and crossed the barriers of language and oceans, reaching Brazil in 1950. The expansion of Teams outside France necessitated a choice between two options: to become a federation of national movements or a single International Movement. After deep reflection, the second option was chosen, and Teams of Our Lady became an International Movement.

## **1.2 FATHER CAFFAREL**

Official recognition by the Church was in some way an affirmation of the considerable work of Father Caffarel and the couples with whom he journeyed. He died on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1996 at Troussures in France at the age of 93.

The Teams of Our Lady movement is indebted to Father Caffarel for giving couples depth of meaning to their sacrament of marriage, for making it possible for them to discover the warmth and inspiration of small Christian communities, and for showing them the way of contemplation in their busy lives.

*“One of the great figures given by God to his Church in the course of this century.”*

(Cardinal Lustiger, 27<sup>th</sup> September 1996)

The opening of the cause for the canonization of Father Caffarel was officially announced at the 10<sup>th</sup> International Gathering at Lourdes, on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2006. The Decree of Canonical Investigation announced by the Archbishop of Paris was published on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

This long procedure has several steps that need to be followed exactly. To this end, the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel (AAPC) was created with the purpose of promoting the Cause for the Canonization of the founder of our Movement.

The Association of The Teams of Our Lady is the sole founding member of the AAPC and is a member of the Board of Directors with decision-making powers.

The closing ceremony of the Diocesan Inquiry for the Canonization of Father Caffarel took place in the Church of St. Augustine, in Paris, on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2014, in the presence of many Teams members coming from various countries with several friends and family of Father Caffarel.

In November 2014, all the documentation of the Diocesan Inquiry on Father Caffarel was deposited at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. After auditing the documentation and testimonies, the Congregation signed the Decree of Validity of the Inquiry on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

The Decree of Validity opens a second step in the canonization process; the drafting of the Cause, the "Positio," which shows the virtues of Father Caffarel and the holiness of his life based on the Paris Inquiry. At the same time, an analysis of the testimonies is made with the purpose of considering at least one of them as a miracle.

In September 2015, at the audience that he gave to Teams of Our Lady, the Holy Father Pope Francis renewed his assurance and strongly encouraged Teams by saying that from the moment the Beatification Cause came to Rome, *"I have prayed that the Holy Spirit may illuminate the Church in the judgment that she will have to pronounce in due time in this regard."*

## 2. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS OF THE MOVEMENT

### 2.1 THE CHARTER

The founding principles of the Charter were drawn up to preserve faithfulness to the original inspiration of the Movement and to offer teams some firm proposals. Today we are able to see the effects of creating the charter and to appreciate how essential it was for the Movement's growth and development.

With the publication of the Charter the Movement acquired its permanent name, and the existing "Groups" were invited to accept the Charter and join Teams of Our Lady.

The Charter, written in 1947 in the language of its time, remains the vital reference document and the cornerstone of the Movement. Several modifications were made to the original document over the years and the final version was published in May 1972 (Appendix 1). This date marked the end of the period when Father Caffarel was active in the Movement.

The Charter has become our common heritage. Today, inspired by the same ideals for Christian marriage, and using the same methods to accomplish it, thousands of couples throughout the world speaking different languages and coming from different cultures—discover through their marriage the richness of a deeper love of God.

It was only a few years after the writing of the Charter that Father Caffarel, a prudent man, said: "I must acknowledge that, in the creation of Teams, there was something more than my own inspiration and that of the first couples; there was the inspiration of the Spirit."

## 2.2 COMPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

Other complementary documents followed:

***“What Is a Team of Our Lady?”*** (1977) complements the Charter and redefines the ideal and methods of the Movement in an up-to-date presentation. It develops the concept of the team as a community (Appendix 2).

***“The Founding Charism of Teams of Our Lady”*** (1987) represents a discourse from Fr. Caffarel during the Meeting of Regional Responsible Couples of Europe in Chantilly and should be considered a reference for the Movement. It begins by pointing out what is the founding charism and synthesizes key events for Teams (Appendix 5).

***“The Second Wind”*** (1988) aims to help teams discover new means of encouragement and how to live out the aspirations of Teams of Our Lady with the hope and vitality of a second wind (Appendix 3). This document also seeks to deepen some aspects of the charism of Teams of Our Lady that, until the document was written, had not been properly clarified, such as self-denial inspired by love, the human and Christian meaning of sexuality, and the mission of Teams of Our Lady in the Church and in the world as a couples movement.

By the grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Movement’s renewal carries on. Through prayer and reflection, the members of the International Leading Team and the Super-Regional Couples (Ch. 6.3.4) decided to produce a complete Guide to the Movement based on the richness of previous documents.

In his Apostolic Letter *“Tertio Millennio Adveniente,”* Pope John Paul II recalls that *“in the history of the Church, the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ are always closely interwoven. The ‘new’ grows out of the ‘old,’ and the ‘old’ finds a fuller expression in the new”* (Chapter 18).

It was following these words of the Pope that the first edition of this document, "The Guide to the Teams of Our Lady," was conceived and produced.

The document "Team's Vocation and Mission at the Beginning of the Third Millennium" (2018) is the result of the dynamism generated in Teams after the Synod (Appendix 4). It seeks to respond to the exhortation made by Pope Francis to the Universal Church for "a new evangelizing chapter" (c.f.: "Evangelii Gaudium I") and invites us to be available for commission by the Lord: "Here I am Lord, send me" (Is 6:8).

The Movement has felt the need to reflect on this topic and has prepared a document (Appendix 4) that helps couples to maintain their fidelity to the sacrament of marriage and the charism of Teams of Our Lady, while also answering the challenges of today's world.

The Movement's development over recent years necessitated putting new structures in place and needed to answer the new pastoral challenges made in Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortations "Evangelii Gaudium" and "Amoris Laetitia." These exhortations required the updating of "The Guide to Teams of Our Lady."

The current edition of the Guide defines, by way of intrinsic principles, the precepts of the Movement to its members. It continues to be a reference for the functioning of the Movement and cannot be altered, except by the International Leading Team (ERI), after consultation with the International College.

## **2.3 RECOGNITION OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY**

In 1960, the Teams of Our Lady Movement received the first official recognition by the Church via a letter from Cardinal Feltrin, Archbishop of Paris (Appendix 6).

In 1975, the Pontifical Council for the Laity granted the Decree of Recognition of Teams of Our Lady as an International Catholic Association. Then in 1992, the Pontifical Council for the Laity granted a Decree of Recognition (Appendix 7) as a “Private Association of the Faithful.”

On 26<sup>th</sup> July 2002, the Pontifical Council decreed (Appendix 8):

- Confirmation of the Decree of Recognition of the Movement of Teams of Our Lady as a private International Association of the Faithful, endowed with legal status;
- The final approval of the Teams of Our Lady Canonical Statutes.

On 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014, the Pontifical Council for the Laity approved the modifications proposed by the ERI in Articles 1, 4, 6, 7, and 8, which were included in the new version of the Statutes (Appendix 9).



### **3. THE OBJECTIVES AND PROPOSALS OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY**

#### **3.1 THE AIM OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY**

The Teams of Our Lady exist to help couples discover the riches of the sacrament of marriage and to live out a married spirituality. Through their example, these couples seek to be witnesses of Christian marriage in the Church and in the world.

“The Teams of Our Lady have as their essential aim to help couples to strive after holiness - no more, no less” (Father Henri Caffarel).

Teams of Our Lady, as a movement of married spirituality in the Catholic Church, is composed of Christian couples united by the sacrament of marriage, who seek to practice the objectives and methods of the Movement.

The couples of teams want to:

- remain faithful to their baptismal promises,
- place Christ at the heart of their life,
- base their married and family life on the Gospel,
- bring the message of Christ to the world,
- bear witness to Christian values in their social and professional life,
- carry out their activities in collaboration with God and in service to others,
- promote marriage and family life in society, and
- walk side by side with the Church and support it actively.

Because they know the difficulties of living as Christians and are aware of their weakness and the inadequacy of their efforts, these couples rely on the support of those who share their ideal and commit themselves to form a “team.”

Through their example, Teams couples want to be a testimony to Christian marriage within the Church and in the world.

### **3.1.1 WHY “TEAM”?**

- Because the word “team” clearly expresses the spirit and unity necessary for the pursuit of a common goal.
- Because the couples of Teams strive together and help each other, being concerned for other members and their spiritual and human progress.

### **3.1.2 WHY TEAMS OF “OUR LADY”?**

The Movement is placed under the patronage of Our Lady because it is Mary who leads us to her Son: to Christ who is the centre of the spiritual life of Teams members. Through her submission to the will of God, Mary is a perfect example to couples of availability and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

## **3.2 THE PROPOSALS OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY**

Teams of Our Lady wish to help married couples live their lives more fully according to the Gospel, with the mutual support of the members of a team and the strength of the International Movement as a whole.

### **3.2.1 A Community of Christian couples**

Teams of Our Lady offer to each couple:

- A way of living as married Christian couples in today’s world, following the teachings of Christ.

- Guidelines to help them to progress in the love of God and of others.
- Ways of development that lead to a deepening of faith and a better life for the couple.
- A life with a team; a community of Christian couples united by the sacrament of matrimony assisted by a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor.
- Mutual aid that is spiritual, human, and material.
- The opportunity to study and reflect together, which leads Teams members to form their conscience personally and as a couple.
- An organization to promote animation, liaison, and formation to achieve unity in the international dimensions of the Movement.

A team of Our Lady is therefore a community of couples united by the sacrament of marriage. It meets “in the name of Christ” and wants to help its members to respond better to Christ’s call.

The presence of a priest in the life of the team is not only that of a spiritual advisor. He accomplishes his function of priest. He makes Christ present as head of the mystical body; a sign and reminder of the closeness of God who is interested in our life.

*“In the light of the Second Vatican Council, the long journey made by Teams all over the world made it possible to understand that priests and lay people can help each other to grow in the knowledge of the mystery of Christ. On the one hand, priests accompany couples in the discernment that the latter are called to make on a daily basis and, on the other hand, the presence of couples who pray and love each other helps priests exercise their ministry with dynamism and depth”*

(“The Priest-Spiritual Counsellor and the Spiritual Advisor in Teams of Our Lady,” March 2017).

For this reason, in Teams we talk of the complementarity of the two sacraments: Marriage and Holy Orders.

In September 2015, during an audience with the Responsible Couples of Teams of Our Lady, Pope Francis said:

*"I thank you, dear couples of Teams of Our Lady, for being a support and encouragement to the ministry of priests who always find a priestly joy, a fraternal presence, emotional balance, and spiritual paternity through contact with your teams and families."*

### **3.2.2 In communion with the Catholic Church**

Teams of Our Lady encourages its members, as a team, to deepen their love for the Church and to help each other to become active members of the People of God.

Pope John Paul II gave priority to ecumenism during his pontificate through the publication of his encyclical letter "Ut Unum Sint," which contains concrete measures to restore unity and communion between Christians. According to the Pope himself, it is necessary to create a path of purification in the historical memory of centuries of confrontations, divisions, and even great schisms.

Teams of Our Lady, walking alongside the Church, cannot remain indifferent to this call of the Holy Father or to his challenges. Thus, the Movement is open to welcome in its teams couples where the sacrament of marriage is mixed. If one of the spouses is Catholic, the other may profess another denomination. This happens mainly in countries where Catholicism is not predominant.

On numerous occasions, Teams members have been encouraged by the leaders of the Church to uphold the ideal of Christian marriage.

*“Thank you for not leaving us alone to proclaim the beauty of love and the greatness of a united and fruitful couple. To all of you, thank you on behalf of all the pastors of the Church. Your task is important since you are, to a great extent, the credibility of the Church.”*

(Cardinal Danneels, “40th Anniversary of the Belgium Charter”)

### **3.2.3 Teams of Our Lady in the world**

*“Love is patient, love is kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful and conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence...”*

(1 Cor 13: 4-5).

Such is the love that we try to live out thanks to the methods of Teams of Our Lady.

Because of changes that have taken place in society, marriage is going through major upheavals. The number of marriages that fail are numerous and cause irreparable damage to the spouses and their children.

Couples of Teams of Our Lady try to bear witness that marriage is a source of love, happiness, and holiness as well as of human fulfilment. Living in the world in accordance with the values of the Gospel, they aim to be the yeast in the dough and be present in all activities of society.

Couples today need the witness of other married couples, whose love is lasting, to be assured of a reasonably predictable future. Such is the characteristic of Christian marriage since the time of Jesus. The couples of Teams of Our Lady want to be the witnesses of this love and of Christian marriage, in order to be a sign of hope for their brothers and sisters.

### 3.2.4 The signs of the times

Members of Teams of Our Lady live in today's world. They are fully part of it and want to be the "yeast in the dough." This is why they must constantly discern the signs of the times to discover the new realities and needs of couples today. They must also look for signs of hope in a world that seems increasingly hostile to the Christian faith and where the fundamental values of marriage and family are threatened.

Within our Movement, sometimes it is hard to arrive at a consensus as to what are the signs of the times in a multi-ethnic world. This prompts us to seek a change in paradigm for evangelization.

*"The well-being of the individual person and of human and Christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that society produced by marriage and family. Hence Christians and all men who hold this community in high esteem sincerely rejoice in the various ways by which men today find help in fostering this community of love."*

("Gaudium Et Spes," 47)

In September 2015, in his speech to Teams of Our Lady, Pope Francis said:

"The New Evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized ("Evangelii Gaudium," 120). Christian couples and families are often the best placed to proclaim Jesus Christ to other families—to support, fortify, and encourage them. What you live as couples and as families—accompanied by the charism of your Movement—the profound and irreplaceable joy that the Lord enables you to feel in domestic intimacy, in joy and sorrow, in the happiness of your spouse's presence, in the growth of your children, in the human and spiritual fruitfulness that He grants you, all this is to be witnessed to, proclaimed, and communicated outside so that others may set out on this path."

To discern the signs of the times means to give witness to the beauty of human love according to the designs of God. This is indeed our vital task that leads us to meet Christ.

We believe that Teams of Our Lady will gush "rivers of living water" in their response, by cooperating with Him in this unique way that inspires and stirs us, but above all, guides and accompanies us.

The Teams of Our Lady bring this sign of hope to couples in the Church and in the world.

## **4. THE ESSENCE OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY**

### **4.1 “COME, FOLLOW ME”**

Christ addresses this call to all baptized Christians, inviting them to be always open to His love and to bear witness to it. Christ also addresses this call to the Christian couple, who are called to find God at the heart of their married love. And so human love becomes an image of divine love.

### **4.2 THE CHARISM OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY<sup>2</sup>**

A charism is a specific gift of God to be used for the common good. This free gift is special and is part of the personality of the one who owns it.

Teams of Our Lady was an inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to the Church as a determined service at a specific moment in its history. It is only in this way that we can understand Teams’ vast expansion in so many countries on all five continents and being such a decisive influence in the lives of couples, in the pastoral care of the Church, and in the life of society.

The Movement of Teams of Our Lady is a charism for the Church, insofar as it is an extremely important gift for rediscovering the value of the sacrament of marriage as a path of love, faithfulness, and holiness.

In addition, Teams’ unique charism of conjugal spirituality provides strong guidance that leads the couple to live their daily lives according to the will of God and in accordance with the values of the Gospel.

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<sup>2</sup> The word “charism” comes from the Greek “charisma,” which means “free gift,” and has the same root as the word “charis,” “grace.” Grace is a gift of the Spirit. There are also exceptional graces called charisms that are gifts to be used for the common good.



Teams of Our Lady, a movement of conjugal spirituality, is considered a gift of God for all couples who live out its ideals.

### **4.3 THE SPIRITUALITY OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY**

According to Father Caffarel: *"conjugal spirituality is the art of living the ideal evangelical marriage that Christ offers to all His disciples."*

The life of the couple, through their Christian marriage, is marked as a sacrament because of their deep commitment to one another and is thus a sign of God's grace. Married love finds its source in God's love. It is at the heart of this relationship that married spirituality is born.

*"At the origin of conjugal spirituality, there is a call from Christ. Our vocation as a couple is to progress together towards Christ, one with the other, one through the other."*

(Father Caffarel)

Divine love finds its expression in human love when the daily life of the couple is filled with care and concern for each other, with support and absolute faithfulness, with understanding and mutual respect, and in harmony of heart and mind. When even the simplest tasks are carried out with love, the Lord is present at the heart of the couple and their spirituality is a lived reality.

The married couple wants to live this spirituality in the course of each day. Sometimes it is a struggle to relate lovingly to each other. Mistakes are made and people are hurt but they constantly turn towards each other and in those moments they encounter Christ.

*"There is a married spirituality that gives direction to the life of the couple. Teams of Our Lady gives you the means to acquire it."*

(Father Manuel Iceta, "Towards a Family Spirituality")

The conjugal spirituality proposed by the Movement is to know and carry out the will of God for the couple and embody it in everyday life, taking its strength from the grace of the sacrament of marriage.

The action of the Holy Spirit is a mystique that leads us to act according to God's will, the intuition that "opens" what is obscure to the human mind, and the direction that transforms life into a continual search for communion with God.

The mystique of Teams is the spirit that gives meaning to concrete ways of life, based on Christian values essential to life as a couple, as a team, and in the Church. It involves three aspects:

- Gathered in the name of Christ
- Mutual Aid
- Testimony

#### **4.3.1 Meeting in the name of Christ**

*"Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of them."*

(Mt 18: 20)

A team, composed of couples and a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor, is more than a human community; it meets in Christ's name and in this way the Spirit is communicated to all team members.

When Christ appeared to His disciples after the resurrection, His words allowed them to understand the Scriptures and to know His message. Similarly, Christ is present during our meetings. Gathered in His name, His Spirit nourishes our faith and makes it grow.

### 4.3.2 Mutual aid

Mutual aid is one of the fundamental pillars of the Teams mystique. According to Father Caffarel, mutual support represents a new commandment of Christ. It is the practical way to implement this command.

Teams members try to satisfy the four demands of fraternal love: **to give, to receive** and—what is more difficult—**to ask** and **to know how to refuse**.

Mutual aid involves different aspects: aid in marriage, aid on the path to holiness, aid in prayer, aid in deepening Faith, and aid in the various stages of married life.

Teams couples practice extensive aid in both material and spiritual terms, thus following St. Paul's direction: *"Bear one another's burdens"* (Gal 6: 2).

#### **Mutual Aid in Marriage**

Marriage is a union that is constantly evolving; from the first moment that couples say "I do" until the moment of return to the Father. If mutual support is part of their daily lives, the love of the couple will continue to deepen. In this way, each of them will grow within the marriage, bringing to their relationship the best of their differences and complementary qualities.

#### **Mutual Aid on the Path to Holiness**

Couples that join Teams of Our Lady wish to:

- achieve a deeper sense of union with God and
- seek holiness in and through their married and family life.

In order to live in greater harmony with God and to know His will, married couples need to adjust their lives to the Gospel.

Because they search together as a team for a better understanding of the Word of God and to practice it in their life, members of Teams of Our Lady support one another on the way to the kingdom announced by Christ.

### **Mutual Aid in Prayer**

*“I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven”*

(Mt 18:19).

Comforted by this promise of the presence of Christ in their midst, members of Teams of Our Lady pray together, with one another, and for one another, with joy and confidence.

Teams of Our Lady chose the *Magnificat* as the common prayer, to be said daily in union with all the members of the Movement, and as a prayer of intercession for all the couples of the world.

### **Mutual Aid in Deepening Their Faith**

Just as there can be no Christian life without a living faith, there can be no living and growing faith without study or meditation. In practice, many Christian couples give up all efforts at study and meditation, either because they fail to realize their importance, or because they lack time, guidance, and training. As a result, their faith remains immature and weak and their knowledge of the will of God and of the teachings of the Church remain superficial and incomplete.

Teams couples therefore try to deepen their religious knowledge and pursue this goal with the help of a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor.

### **Mutual Aid in the Various Stages of Married Life**

The needs and aspirations of couples differ depending on their age and how long they have been married. What Teams of Our Lady provides must take this into account.

In the first years of marriage, a young couple searches to discover the implications of their recent exchange of vows. These young marriages need to be “born” into a supportive community. Teams of Our Lady can contribute the warmth, support, and help of an extended family.

Later in life, the ideal of married love is put to the test. Faced with the demands of family, working life, job insecurity, and the tensions of an increasingly materialistic society, couples need a place where they can share and take a fresh look at the events that affect them. The understanding and experience of the team permits the couple to share, openly and in confidence, their worries and discoveries.

Then comes the “autumn of life,” a time which is lasting much longer than before, when couples return to the one-to-one relationship. This time together can be one of renewal and personal growth. It can also be a time of difficulties and major new phases in life: retirement, illness, and death of the other. It is the deepening of the Christian life of the couple in a team that will enrich the last years they spend together.

#### **4.3.3 Testimony**

The pagans were surprised with the early Christians, who were thus described in the Acts of the Apostles (4:32) *“the company of those who believed were of one heart and one soul.”* And the pagans said when seeing them: *“See how they love one other.”*

The Teams of Our Lady are convinced, now as previously, that other couples will feel drawn to Christ and to the sacrament of marriage if they see Christian couples truly loving one another and helping one another in the search for God.

It is in this spirit that couples who seek authentic meaning in their married life will find an important source of support and encouragement in the fraternity and mutual help of Teams.

*As Father Caffarel said in 1950: "A comprehensive Christian life does not consist only of adoration, praise, asceticism, or efforts at building an interior life. It is also serving God in the place where we live: family, job, parents, etc. In the same way, couples following Christ try to learn to serve God in the world."*

## 5. TEAMS' PEDAGOGY

Pedagogy is the method used within Teams of Our Lady; the tool that helps transmit fundamental concepts of the Movement. It leads couples to discover the riches of the sacrament of marriage and invites them to live a conjugal spirituality.

There exists a close link between the Teams pedagogy and the couples' spirituality. In fact, the entire pedagogy aims to help couples build their life project in spirituality and conjugality, giving a privileged place to prayer, couple dialog, and mutual aid to the couple and the team.

First, it is necessary to emphasize that the introduction to pedagogy made in piloting must be done in an enjoyable way, with tenderness and understanding. Second, it is done through mutual love, through discoveries and life experiences, and not by blind obedience or simply by following the requirements. Also, it doesn't mean meeting requirements based on rigid principles.

To do this, it is important to consider that the pedagogy of the Movement must focus on three aspects: gradual growth, personal growth, and action on the part of the couple.

- **Gradual growth:** the Lord takes us as He finds us; it is for each individual to want to progress, little by little, along a path of spiritual growth.
- **Personal growth:** progress is individual and appropriate to each couple: each will have their own pace and their own way of putting the propositions of the Movement into practice.
- **Action:** there can be no conversion within a person or within a couple unless they translate their desire for progress into precise and well-defined actions.

The method of Teams of Our Lady relies on three fundamental pillars that are really means of spiritual perfection:

- Guidelines for Life
- Endeavours
- Team Life

The profound reason why these means are offered, the essence that gives them meaning, lies in the purpose of awakening and developing among couples a way of living based on three permanent attitudes:

- The diligent search for the will of God.
- The search for the truth about ourselves.
- The experience of meeting together and of communion.

These three attitudes have an inner coherence and form an indivisible whole that loses all meaning if they are considered separately.

## **5.1 GUIDELINES FOR LIFE**

The guidelines for life are an important pillar. They speak to us of the reasons to be part of Teams and to answer the call of the Lord who invites us to “open ourselves more and more to His love so that we may be witnesses of this same love.”

The main guideline is the love that Christ came to bring to us.

The permanent guidelines proposed by the Movement are a reflection of the Movement’s identity, as for example, are the attitude of listening and praying, the practice of mutual aid, welcoming and hospitality, a willingness for formation and for service.



To grow in the love of God is a lifelong undertaking. In order to help their members, Teams of Our Lady offers the following guidelines for life:

### **5.1.1 To help each other progress in love of God:**

- by making a special place for prayer in their life,
- by reading the Word of God regularly and always trying to live by it,
- by constantly deepening knowledge of their faith,
- by frequenting the sacraments, especially the Eucharist,
- by endeavouring to progress in the knowledge and practice of Christian asceticism.<sup>3</sup>

### **5.1.2 To help each other progress in love of neighbour:**

- by the couple truly helping each other—through listening, talking, sharing—in all areas of their life, especially in spiritual matters,
- by being always concerned with the human and Christian upbringing of their children,
- by practicing generous hospitality as a couple, and
- by witnessing to the love of Christ in practical ways, especially by one or more involvements in the Church and in society.

## **Orientations of the Movement Suggested at International Gatherings**

At the time of the International Gatherings, the Movement proposes guidelines that are its priorities for the subsequent years. These “orientations”, which are defined from the observation of the realities

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<sup>3</sup> Asceticism comes from a Greek word that means “to exercise”—a word evocative of the exercise one takes to keep in good health. Similarly, Christian couples in their married and family life have opportunities to practice asceticism, that is to say: “to exercise selfless love.” The specific points of endeavor are the instruments proposed by Teams of Our Lady to encourage and nourish this exercise of selfless love.

and needs of couples, provide a common shared direction for all members.

## **5.2 THE ENDEAVORS**

To pursue a direction of spiritual and human growth involves making a logical plan and giving oneself the means to follow it faithfully.

*“Experience shows that, without precise points of application, guidelines are liable to remain a dead letter”*

(“What Is a Team of Our Lady?”).

The Teams of Our Lady call these “precise points of application” endeavours.

The endeavours are an essential characteristic of the Movement. They are not tasks to be accomplished, but inner attitudes that have to be awakened and absorbed in order to lead to a new way of life. They are a discipline that helps Teams couples apply the Gospel in their daily life.

Being committed to these six endeavours will change the couple little by little, developing a married spirituality that will draw them closer to God, to their spouse, and to others.

The endeavours are not obligations that have to be followed in a blind way, but ways to develop attitudes we must assimilate and that, over time, lead us to a more Christian way of life.

The endeavours demand of each spouse and also of the couple a commitment to discernment, creativity, and perseverance that involves our whole being. It is never an imposed effort but is a voluntary commitment.

A real encounter with the Lord is the starting point of any conversion. The endeavours exist so that we can live this encounter. They should not be considered a mandatory routine.

Members freely make it an “obligation” on themselves to strive to practice the six endeavours:

- listen regularly to the **“Word of God,”**
- turn to God daily in silent prayer: **“personal prayer,”**
- pray together daily as a couple: **“conjugal prayer,”** and if possible with the children: **“family prayer,”**
- make time each month for true dialog together, under the eyes of God: the **“sit-down,”**
- choose some specific points of personal effort: the **“rule of life,”**
- each year, make time to place yourself before the Lord, as a couple if possible, so you can reflect and organize your life in His presence: **“retreat.”**

### 5.2.1 Listening to the Word of God

*“For the Word of God is living and active”* (Heb 4: 12).

God speaks to us because He loves us. He wants to establish a relationship of love with all of us, a personal relationship with each of us individually. He speaks to make Himself known to us, to reveal to us His great project of love; to communicate to us His thoughts, His will for us, and to offer us His Covenant.

God speaks through Scripture, through creation, through His interventions in human history, through His prophets, and especially through His Son, Jesus.

In his letters on prayer, Father Caffarel is insistent on listening to the word of God. He tells us, for example: *“Yes, God speaks. What we need to know is how to listen...God speaks to men in different ways”*

(“New Letters on Prayer”).

For this specific endeavour, two expressions are used: Listening and the Word. We listen to God speaking to us to save us, to give us His life in abundance. His words should not only be read—we should welcome Him into our lives.

Let us therefore set aside the necessary time, on a daily basis, to create silence with the purpose of listening to what the Lord wants to tell each one of us. This relationship we have with the Lord is the pillar of our spiritual life. The word of God is not a monologue. God expects us to answer Him with love, thus putting His Word into practice.

Father Caffarel explained Listening as follows:

*“Listening involves not only our intelligence but our whole being, body and soul, intelligence and heart, imagination, memory, and will. Our whole being must be attentive to the word of Christ; open up to it, give it place, let it enter, invade, cling, and wholeheartedly adhere.”*

(“Cahiers sur l’Oraison,” December 1966)

The creative Word of God remains an indispensable source of motivation and energy for our spiritual growth, personally and as a couple, and for the building of a better world.

This is why Teams of Our Lady invites each member to read the Word of God daily, making time to read a passage of the Bible—especially the Gospels—and meditate on it in silence in order to understand better what God is saying to us through the Scriptures.

Listening to the Word of God is one of the best ways to advance on the path to holiness to which we are all called.

### **5.2.2 Personal Prayer**

*“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving”*  
(Col 4: 2).

We are called to make time for the Lord, for an intimate moment with Him, and to live in His presence.

Daily prayer develops in us the ability to listen to and dialog with God. It means making time to be alone with God who loves us. It is a time of silent "heart to heart" listening to God, a time of discovery and of welcoming God's plan for us.

To pray is to freely give our time to God. It is a personal and essential act of love and the best way to enter into communion with Him. Prayer is a dialog with God where we listen more than we speak.

There are no rigid rules for praying: each person decides what is appropriate in terms of when, where, and how. Perseverance and regularity seem most important to developing this deep union with God.

We must ask God for the grace of prayer with perseverance and humility. Humility is the basis of personal prayer. God is the main mover. Personal prayer is a work of God requiring our cooperation and not the reverse. It is also a journey and a permanent act of faith. It is a fundamental endeavour.

*"In silent prayer one finds the secret of a happy, fruitful, and full life. We must feed ourselves on God through prayer before starting our apostolic mission."*

(Henri Caffarel, "Cahiers sur l'Oraison")

### **5.2.3 Conjugal Prayer**

*"I in them and thou in Me, that they may become perfectly one"*

(Jn 17: 23).

Christ is present in a very special way when a couple prays together. Not only do they renew their "I do" to God, but they also achieve a depth of oneness that comes only from the union of hearts and spirit in the sacrament of marriage.

Conjugal prayer becomes the common expression of two individual prayers and should come naturally from a life shared together. If the husband and wife each have their own style of prayer, then it is important that they try to develop a common way of praying in order to discover and experience a new dimension to their married life. Their prayer together will be easier, more authentic, and deeper when they listen to the word of God and each spouse practices silent prayer.

Conjugal prayer can be varied according to the creativity of the couple. The key is to pray together, husband and wife, every day regardless of the style of prayer.

Father Caffarel said: "*at the time of conjugal prayer, arguments should cease and peace should be restored. Thus husband and wife renew their faith in the covenant which Christ sealed with them*" ("L'Anneau d'Or," 98).

The Magnificat, the common prayer of Teams of Our Lady, may be part of this daily prayer, in union with all the couples of the Movement.

When there are children, it is important to set aside a special time for family prayer. The home is the first place of learning for children. It is for the parents to pass on the faith to them and to make the home a place where they feel at ease with prayer. Older children may wish for a more personal time with God. Nevertheless, some remain open to sharing a time of prayer as a family, such as before meals.

When we pray together, we form a prayerful community. There is no better basis for our marriage and our family.

Father Caffarel wrote: *"Conjugal prayer is a factor of spiritual unity between the spouses."* It is a great encouragement for married and family life. It is a source of fruitfulness for the couple that radiates to others. It is the key to the treasure of the sacrament of marriage.

#### **5.2.4 The Sit-Down**

*"For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?"*

(Luke 14:28).

*"The Sit-Down is intended to help the couple 'find,' on a monthly basis, the time for a real conjugal dialog under the eyes of the Lord"*

(Father Caffarel).

The sit-down enables a face-to-face encounter to suggest, to ask questions, to observe, and to listen to each other.

It is a time for the husband and wife to speak together calmly and truthfully in the presence of the Lord. This time to express their feelings and thoughts results in better knowledge of each other and in mutual help. It is an opportunity to review the past, to analyse married and family life, to make plans for the future, and to speak of the ideal that they have for their life.

The sit-down prevents routine setting into married life and keeps their love and their marriage young and alive.

It is best to begin the sit-down with a time of prayer or silence in order to become aware of the presence of God. The silence deepens the thoughts that each one has of the other. It brings them closer to God and creates a suitable atmosphere for sharing.

The sit-down, considered one of the great insights of Father Caffarel, is the most specific proposal of the Movement of Teams of Our Lady. It is a very important instrument because it enriches the husband and wife's spirituality, helping them to live mutual forgiveness better, to grow in love of each other, of God, and of others on the path of holiness.

### **5.2.5 The Rule of Life**

*“Do not model yourself on the world around you but be transformed by the renewal of your mind. This is how to discern the will of God and know what is good, what pleases God, and what is perfect” (Rom. 12:2).*

The rule of life consists of one or more points on which each spouse personally and with full freedom decides to concentrate their efforts so they can follow their chosen path of growth and respond with joy to God's call to love.

The rule of life helps the spouses adhere more personally and more concretely to God's plan for the person and for the couple. It consists of one or more practical steps that one takes in order to progress along the path of spiritual and human growth.

As we reflect on the various aspects of our personal, married, and family life as Christians, we seek the truth about ourselves so as to recognize what acts as a barrier to God's will. The rule of life leads us to discover ourselves and our vocation.

The rule of life is a personal choice that leads us to search for the will of God for ourselves<sup>[LR1]</sup>. It should be short, precise, and practical. It must build up gradually and follow the principle of "small steps." It must have realistic goals and be demanding but also flexible.



The progress of our spiritual life is not along a continuous path: we must constantly start again. That is why it is necessary to review our rule of life regularly to evaluate our progress.

### **5.2.6 The Annual Retreat**

*“Come away to a deserted place and rest a while”* (Mk 6: 31).

Team members are encouraged to make sufficient time each year for a retreat, as couples if possible, so they can reflect on life in the presence of the Lord.

Father Caffarel said: *“From time to time, our faith becomes weak, yet through God’s Word it re-awakens, strengthens, and acquires life again. In retreat it becomes possible to open ourselves to the breath of the Word of God”* (“Monthly Letter of the END,” February 1960).

The retreat is a special time to stop, listen, and pray. It is an opportunity to recharge spiritually. It is also a special time to look into oneself and conduct a general examination of one’s life—particularly the direction of one’s spiritual growth.

Participating in a retreat is important for everyone, but especially for couples, so they can withdraw towards God who invites them to listen to the Holy Spirit and focus on the essentials without being side-lined by details

Team’s couples are encouraged to take advantage of the retreat’s special atmosphere to renew themselves. They are invited to leave their home and place of work, to detach from their daily obligations, so they can listen to God and discern His plan for them as a couple.

The retreat allows couples to revitalize their lives individually and as a couple by placing God first in their lives. It enriches their sacrament of marriage and enables them to go back to the source of their love.

The retreat is a response of faith in God who invites them to encounter Christ and to open themselves to his Spirit on their path to holiness.

### **5.3 TEAM LIFE**

The team is not an end in itself; it is at the service of its members. It allows them:

- To experience special times together of prayer and sharing.
- To effectively help each other journey to the Lord and bear witness to Him.

In the life of every Christian community one can distinguish three phases:

- With Christ, the community turns to the Father to welcome His love;
- In Christ, the community shares this love: “The whole group of believers were of one heart and one soul”;
- Moved by the Spirit of Christ, the community sends its members to reveal this love to the World.

Team life is thus developed at monthly meetings, other social gatherings, in couples’ contacts with each other outside of meetings, when meeting with the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor, etc. The aim is to strengthen the bond of friendship that allows them to understand and be attentive to each other. These friendships provide mutual support, which strengthens the bonds of the community.

Hospitality, attendance, punctuality, and faithfulness to the methods and organization of the Movement are the elements of the discipline that must be freely accepted with loyalty and honesty by all members of Teams.

The team must be available to build the Kingdom of God together. Without this, the team becomes an island closed in on itself instead of being leaven which makes the dough rise.

The mystique of Team life is the presence and the driving force of Christ in the community, the couples' mutual support, and their testimony.

### **5.3.1 The Monthly Meeting**

The team meeting is the high point of the life of this little community. The presence of the risen Christ is there—alive, attentive to all, and loving each team member as he/she is.

The meeting is a special time that allows team members to deepen their Christian life through prayer, general sharing, and sharing on the endeavours in an atmosphere of charity and fraternal love. True mutual love is demanding and cannot result from a passive attitude. Sharing requires a climate of mutual trust and discretion from each member of the team.

*In the monthly letter of Teams of Our Lady (March/April 1973), Father Caffarel explains the Christian meaning of the Team meeting: "The monthly meeting of a team should not be defined only by its structure, by its spirit, by the friendship among its members, or by the desire of progressing in the search for God. In truth, above all, its supernatural substance and its mystery must be recognized. In fact, it is, or should be, a very different reality from that of a simple social meeting."*

*What I have just said doesn't always happen, but it is what should happen. A team where the main effort is not above all to find Jesus Christ is something very different from a Teams of Our Lady team meeting."*

The monthly meeting must be lived as a very important moment in the life of a team, so a preparatory meeting should precede it where the responsible couple, the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor, and the animating couple are present.

The team meets once a month at the home of one of the couples, at least ten times per year.

It is very important for all the members of the team to be present in order to promote harmony and to preserve team unity.

There are five parts to the meeting and sufficient time must be allotted to each:

- the meal, shared in a couple's home,
- general sharing,
- communal prayer,
- sharing on the endeavours, and
- exchange of views on the study topic.

This sequence may change according to the needs of the team.

## **The Meal**

*"They met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously"*

(Acts 2: 46).

The meeting begins on arrival with the practice of hospitality on the part of the hosts. Naturally, each member of the team must strive to welcome the others by helping to create from the very start an atmosphere of openness and friendship, with simplicity and joy.

The meeting normally begins with a meal, an essential time of intimacy to strengthen the ties of friendship. It is important that it should be simple. Each couple may bring a plate of food so that everyone takes part and those who may have little time or modest means may feel at ease.

The meal should be a moment of grace where the team enjoys being reunited, celebrating, and praying.

### **General Sharing**

*“Above all, have unfailing love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins.”*

(1 Pet 4:8)

At monthly meetings, a time must be dedicated for each person to share family, professional, civil, and ecclesial concerns, to include failures, discoveries, sorrows, and joys.

The monthly meeting is a special time of mutual help, during which couples discuss important events that happened since the last meeting. It is important that a Christian spirit predominate during the discussion on events, while confronting the reality of life in light of the Gospel.

They share the concerns of their daily life, with a willingness to be open to others, to give and to receive, to speak and to listen, to offer and to ask. The joys, pains, difficulties, and hesitations are entrusted to the team—sometimes asking for advice or assistance in any aspect of life. Getting to know each person deepens and fortifies friendship. In fact, we can only love someone we know.

General sharing presupposes mutual confidence and absolute discretion. What is revealed in the team must be considered an absolute secret and should not be talked of elsewhere.

It is by attentively listening to every person that a genuine and fraternal friendship can grow between members of the team. This general sharing reflects the current state of life of the team members gathered together in the name of Christ.

### **Communal Prayer**

*“Jesus told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart.”*

(Lk 18:1)

*“Prayer is the personal dialog with God of the individual and of the community.”*

(John Paul II, “Agenda for the Third Millennium”)

Prayer is an essential element of the life of every team. It is the centre and summit of the meeting. It allows everyone to personally respond to the word of God, based on one’s life experience, by requesting intentions, praising Him, or thanking Him.

Communal prayer during the team meeting opens our hearts and predisposes us for welcoming the action of grace. That is why it must be done at the beginning of the meeting so that communion in a genuine spiritual climate is immediately established.

The time of prayer begins by slowly reading aloud a text from Scripture followed by a time of silence to welcome interiorly the Word of the Lord and meditate on it. Each member then expresses his or her thoughts on the text in the form of a shared prayer. It is God who speaks to us through the voice of our brothers and sisters. The silence after each

moment of meditation is itself a prayer. In this way, we listen to the Word within and through the small “church” which the team forms.

Then the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor, after participating in the personal prayer and the intentions, summarizes the prayers and intentions of the couples (final prayer) and presents them to God.

The meeting usually ends with the Magnificat, in communion with the members of Teams throughout the world.

Sharing on the Endeavours

*“Let your love for each other be real and from the heart” (1 Pet 1:22).*

Sharing is key in the joint effort of providing spiritual help and forms a path to community conversion. Sharing takes place in a climate of prayer and fraternal listening, full of charity, and includes mutual needs, motivation, and mutual aid. A good time for sharing is after the communal prayer, in a manner that continues and extends the climate of prayer.

Each team member is invited to share his or her experience of the endeavours during the past month.

Sharing on the endeavours is not an examination of conscience, nor a statement of successes and failures, but a review of the efforts necessary to advance in the spiritual life.

Each member of a team is at a different stage of their spiritual life, which evolves at its own pace. It is essential to accept this diversity so that everyone is free to share openly and in confidence. Each member’s experience, progress, or difficulties can help others to follow their own faith journey.

We need to share to create and build community. The community doesn't exist simply because a group of people get together. The community is created when we share our lives, when we seek together, when we help each other, when we share the gift of God that we have received.

Sharing is the place and time where each team member connects with the other in the fullest and deepest sense.

In conclusion, sharing has two important functions:

- In community, the team accompanies, reviews, and motivates others in the practice of the endeavours.
- In community, the team greatly deepens the experience of the three Attitudes of Life:
  - a persevering search for the will of God,
  - a search for truth about oneself, and
  - the experience of sharing and of communion.

Discussion on the Study Topic

The apostles said to the Lord, *“Increase our faith!”* And the Lord said, *“If you had faith as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you”* (Luke 17:5-6).

The study topic is a way for us to further deepen our faith.

Whatever the study topic, it should lead us, directly or indirectly, as a couple and as a team, to encounter the Word of God. It is the



convergence of the Word with the study topic that radiates in our daily lives, in the place we give to God in our lives, and on the different tasks we perform.

The study topic requires prior preparation, first individually and then as a couple. Each spouse should read it after the previous team meeting. Spouses should note their thoughts and then talk about them as a couple and consider them in light of their married life.

The reflections of each couple (short texts and not long essays) should be sent to the Responsible Couple to be worked on with the host couple and the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor during the preparatory meeting prior to the monthly meeting.

At the team meeting, the study topic discussion is led by the animating couple (probably the host couple) who provide a short introduction based on the notes they receive from the other couples. They should help ensure that all have the opportunity to participate in the discussion, ensure that there is no interruption or parallel conversations, and that the conversation doesn't drift away from the topic.

The Priest-Spiritual Counsellor, for his part, will need to answer questions on doctrine and will guide the couples on practical issues of their everyday life. He will finish by highlighting the less clear and most important points of doctrine.

The discussion of the topic should not be reduced to an exchange of ideas or experiences, but should above all be a moment of transformation in the lives of each couple and the team itself.

### **5.3.2 The Annual Review**

The last meeting of the team year is a review meeting. It gives the team the opportunity to reflect and review its life openly and in a Christian

spirit. It looks back on its progress during the past year and prepares for the following year.

Therefore, the review meeting is a time of sharing and mutual aid that the team must live in a climate of prayer, truth, and communion.

One cannot forget that the essential thing is to seek the will of God for the couple and for the team and to respond to His call to live out more authentically the agape-love that is the soul of every Christian community.

It is important that all team members evaluate their progress and establish goals to improve their spiritual life individually and as a couple. Similarly, couples should consider their experience of the different parts of the team meeting during the year. Based on those experiences, the team should then identify improvements for the following year.

The review meeting is always a big celebration (if possible, with a Eucharistic celebration) where all team members make a joint effort to encounter Jesus Christ. Thus, it will be not only a time to speak about the wonders that the Lord has done, but also a time to consider the journey of the couple and the team and their integration into the Movement with great enthusiasm and hope.

### **5.3.3 Team Life outside of the Monthly Meeting**

Team life is not confined to the monthly meeting. It is essential for couples to maintain contact with each other and the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor by phone or in person. The couples should get to know each other well and create links of friendship. As a matter of fact, it is this gradual friendship that will enable one of the elements of the Teams mystique: mutual aid.

Prayer in union with other members of the team and for their intentions, along with dialog, sharing, and mutual help (spiritual and material) continues throughout the month, according to each team's arrangements. It is the role of the Responsible Couple to ensure this continuation of team life.

It is important that team members benefit from the deep friendships that are characteristic of a Team of Our Lady and that outside of the monthly meeting they think of the team as one big family.

On occasion, the Responsible Couple may decide to organize a social gathering to enable friendships to grow further.

When a couple is absent from a meeting, the Responsible Couple will call them as soon as possible to discover the reason for their absence, to check if they need help, and to let them know what happened at the meeting.

It is important that, between meetings, couples feel the presence of the team and that links are established among team members.

#### **5.3.4 The Commitment**

Team members are invited from time to time to renew their commitment to loyally observe the spirit and methods of the Movement. This takes the form of a simple ceremony that can take place in the course of a team meeting or at a Sector or Regional event. The mystique of the commitment—its profound spiritual reason—is the mutual help and love that compels us to be compassionate to other couples.

It must be clear in the minds of the couples that the commitment adds nothing to the obligations that they already have, either as Christians or as team members.

The commitment is a liturgical celebration in a very special environment where love is transmitted to other members of the team and to the Movement in general. It is this love that will lead the team to accept what is fundamental in Teams of Our Lady's charism and pedagogy.

For a new team, the best moment to celebrate the commitment will be during the Gathering of New Teams, which coincides with the end of the piloting phase. It is a time for each of the couples and for the team to stop, reflect, and review what they have experienced. It is very important that all the couples and the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor are present during this ceremony.

### **5.3.5 The Annual Contribution**

*“They sold their goods and possessions and shared the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed”*

(Acts 2: 45).

To distribute, to give, to offer, to be selfless. All these words lead us to reflection when we think of material and spiritual mutual aid. The Word of God enlightens us so that we understand its true meaning and can therefore apply it in our lives.

The financial contribution is the material expression of the spirit of mutual help on which the formation and the very reason of a Team of our Lady are based. It comprehends the sense of sharing goods as was done in the earliest Christian communities. It contains, in essence, the spirit of truth and fraternal charity.

It is necessary to ensure the material health of a community to which we belong and from which we get so much. From the beginning, Teams of our Lady, which has no other source of income, has asked its

members for an annual financial contribution equivalent to one day of the couple's income.

The spirit of the contribution is well explained in the Charter, which establishes this as an obligation of each couple:

*“To give each year—by the manner of an annual contribution—the fruit of one day’s work, helps strengthen the material life and assure the growth of the group to which they partly owe their spiritual enrichment.”*

These contributions ensure the functioning of several levels of the Movement’s structure and allow for Teams’ spiritual animation and development (such as the revision documents and the holding of formation sessions, meetings, and gatherings). Contributions also help to transmit and to expand throughout the world the values that Teams are committed to promote.

The financial contribution should not be seen as a payment for services or a tax. It should be regarded as a mystique of sharing not only of spiritual gifts, but also of material goods.

*“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you”*

(Luke 6:38)

## 6. ORGANIZATION OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY

### 6.1 THE SPIRIT OF THE ORGANIZATION

The structure, organization, and methods of the Movement were created to help Teams members grow in conjugal love and the love of God.

The structure of the Movement developed as it expanded. Teams felt the need to be interconnected, thus creating a body, a community. The small communities of teams become richer by forming links that strengthen the larger community that forms the Movement.

To facilitate the organization of this great community of communities, Teams of Our Lady are structured in small groups (teams) where the human dimension makes it possible to know everyone and provide mutual help.

A team cannot live in isolation. Teams of Our Lady has put in place an organization to provide coordination, animation, and connection with other teams to support and serve them and to maintain unity.

A team operates first thanks to the commitment of its members and second because it is helped and nourished by the Movement with which it lives in communion.

Unity is formed and maintained by the desire to progress together in faithfulness to the spirit and methods of Teams of Our Lady.

The allegiance of members not only to the team but also to the Movement is expressed in the following ways:

- by praying the **Magnificat** daily in union with other members of Teams throughout the world,

- by reading the **Teams Newsletter** published at the various levels of the Movement,
- by taking part in events and celebrations organized in the Sector or at the Regional, Super-Regional, or International level,
- by welcoming and offering hospitality to other members of Teams of Our Lady when the opportunity presents itself,
- by accepting a responsibility or taking part in the organization and animation of the Movement, and
- by contributing to the material needs of the Movement.

## **6.2 THE TEAM**

The team, a true ecclesial community, is the basic cell of the Movement. It creates and animates these small communities of couples who seek to fully live a Christian life in their homes, their families, and their specific vocation within the Church.

The team is composed of five to seven couples assisted by a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor.

The members of Teams of Our Lady are Christians, united by their sacrament of marriage, and validly married in the eyes of the Church who:

- express their willingness to belong to the Movement.
- accept taking part in the communal life of the team and of the Movement.
- commit themselves to be faithful to the spirit of Teams of Our Lady and to practice its methods.
- respect the freedom of conscience of other team members and their human and social diversity.
- seek to live in faithfulness to the Pope and to follow the teachings of the Church.

Widows and widowers can remain in the team after the death of a spouse.

### **6.2.1 The Responsible Couple**

Each year, every team must elect a Responsible Couple. Their role is to encourage and affirm the team members' commitment to this small community so that mutual help is effective in it and each member feels accepted, acknowledged, and loved.

The Responsible Couple should try to ensure that couples prepare well and participate in the monthly team meeting and in social meetings in between. They keep in touch with the Sector and must keep their team members informed about the life of the Movement—encouraging them to take an active part in meetings at all levels of the organization.

To elect the new Responsible Couple, each team member should cast a vote in writing. The poll is entrusted to the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor who does not participate in the voting and will only announce who is the elected couple.

The choice should be made in the best possible atmosphere, remembering that the essential point is not the form but the spirit. Therefore it is important, on the one hand, to place this choice under the eyes of God (the perfect time could be during a Eucharistic celebration), and on the other hand, to make sure that the selected couple is at that moment the best prepared couple to help the team go forward.

It is very important that all couples undertake this responsibility because this service helps them grow as individuals and as a couple.

### **6.2.2 The Priest-Spiritual Counselor**

Each team must obtain the help of a priest. He is not only a Spiritual Counsellor to the team, but he also fulfils His priestly role in this Church community.



He *“makes Christ present as Head of the Body.”*

(1971 Synod of Bishops)

The presence of a priest in a team means that teams are enriched by the two sacraments of Marriage and Holy Orders.

It is very important that couples invite the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor to their home to establish a more intimate relationship in a family atmosphere, thus creating a space of attachment and bonding that the priest especially appreciates.

The increase in the number of teams and the decline in the number of priests make it more difficult, especially in some countries, to have a priest present in each team. We must seek and find answers to this difficulty. The shortage of priests should neither prevent the formation of new teams, nor hinder the ordered journey of those that already exist. On the other hand, this situation must be dealt with in order to preserve the unity and identity of the Movement.

In 1961, in Brazil, there were couples willing to form a new team without being able to do so due to the lack of a priest, and on this matter Father Caffarel stated categorically: *“The question is raised, it is impossible to avoid it: can the monthly meeting of a team go ahead without the presence of a priest? The Charter of 1947 did not foresee these situations, but don't get us wrong, this dilemma will arise more and more frequently: either there won't be more teams or there will be teams without the assistance of a priest at each meeting, and even, in some cases without ever having the presence of a priest. The option is clear and can be expressed this way: ‘Will this lack of priests slow down the expansion of the Movement? No, of course, not.’”*

If it is not possible for a team to obtain the help of a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor, it is the responsibility of the Sector Couple to ensure that

the team has a spiritual advisor, while always ensuring that the team has a link to a priest.

The spiritual advisor, who must be an individual person—never a couple—must have a solid theological formation and a certain pastoral experience: a seminarian with advanced training, a deacon, a monk or a nun, and, as a last option, a layperson of either sex.

For new teams in the piloting phase, it is particularly important to count on a priest as spiritual counsellor since couples must, from the start, understand and experience the charism and the mystique of the Movement. The Sector Responsible Couples should pay particular attention to this need.

The official document of the Movement "*The Priest-Spiritual Counsellor and the Spiritual Advisor in Teams of Our Lady*" (March 2017) explains in detail "*the art of spiritual guidance*" in Teams. Consequently, responsible structures of the Movement, as well as those who are responsible for formation, should examine and promote the guidelines contained in this document.

### **6.3 LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ANIMATION**

To facilitate compliance with the objectives of Teams of Our Lady, multiple levels of responsibility and animation were gradually created as necessary to enable teams to function better and also to ensure the unity of the Movement.

To have support in the exercise of their responsibility, Sector, Region, Province, and Super-Region Responsible Couples set up service teams consisting of a few couples and a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor to assist them in a climate of communion and trust.

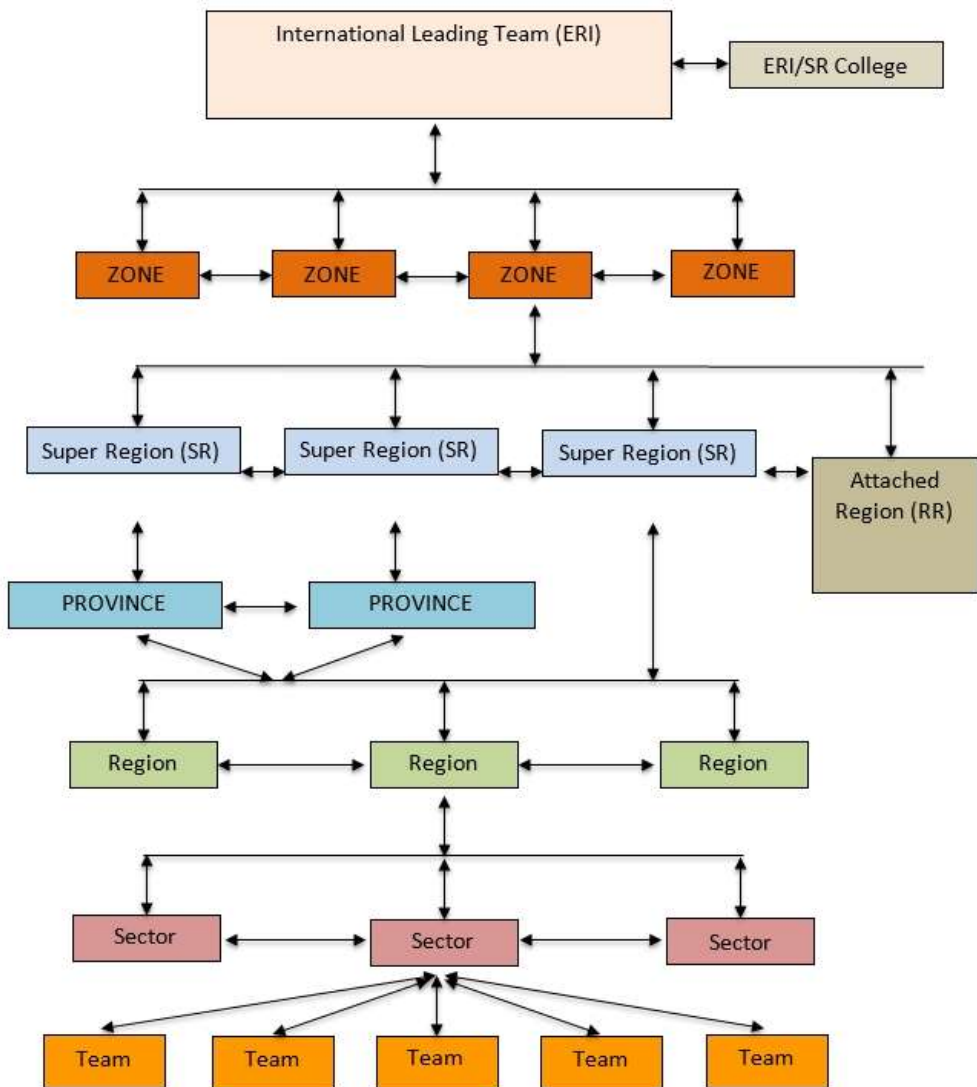
All these service teams should keep in mind the preservation of the Movement's unity, fidelity to its founding charism, its mystique, and its pedagogy in accordance with the guidelines of the International Responsible Team (ERI<sub>[LR2]</sub>).

At each level of responsibility, it is important to ensure a rotation system among members of the service team, while preserving a balance between new couples and those who have prior service, in order to avoid disputes and permit smooth team functioning.

Each couple is chosen and called by a higher level of the Movement to which they respond with their service.

It is important to introduce the general notion of a "College," or a place where a responsible team on one level can meet with responsible couples and spiritual counsellors of the level immediately below them.

The organizational chart below shows all of the structures of the Movement as well as the connections between them.



### 6.3.1 The Sector

The Sector is a community of teams that wish to journey together and help each other. It usually consists of five to twenty teams located within a reasonable distance of each other, small enough for communication to exist between them, but with sufficient teams to ensure good animation.

The Sector is the heart of organization and animation; that is why it is essential for the Movement. The main role of the Sector is to establish a horizontal and a vertical link: horizontally, between the teams that make up the sector and vertically, between these same teams and the whole Movement.

The responsibility of the Sector is entrusted to a couple nominated by the Movement as "Sector Couple." They care for the spirit and progress of the teams that make up the Sector as well as the spiritual growth of the couples entrusted to them.

The Sector Couple is called to serve by the Regional Couple for a period of three years, after discernment conducted by the Region between the responsible couples within the Sector.

Since the basic cell of the Movement is the team, the Sector Couple works with the support of a "Sector Team," consisting of a few couples (the liaison couples) who liaise with the base teams and a priest (the Sector's Spiritual Counsellor). Other couples may be added to the Sector Team for other functions, according to local needs.

The Sector Team forms a small community of couples who meet at least four times a year, and is strengthened by prayer, sharing, and mutual help. The number of couples that makes up the Sector Team depends on the number of teams they liaise with and their geographical

proximity, but none of the couples shall liaise with more than three base teams.

The functions of the Sector Team are spiritual animation, liaison, formation, the organization of events, and the expansion of the Movement.

### **6.3.2 The Region**

The Region is composed of several neighbouring Sectors and provides mutual help among them. It is the centre of communication and communion between Sector Couples, members of the Sector Teams, and other couples who provide services to the Movement.

The main role of the Region is to ensure a two-way link of communion and mutual help between the teams of their Sectors and with the whole Movement.

The Region is the level of responsibility at which people begin to feel and understand the importance of the Movement's internationality and its integration in the Church.

The Regional Couple is called to serve for four years by the Super Regional Couple or by the Province in consultation with the Sector Couples of that Region. Attentive to new necessities and open to the spirit of the Movement, the Regional Couple ensures a spirit of unity in the Region.

The Regional Couple serves several Sectors, welcoming a wide range of testimonies and experiences of Sector life. They play a pivotal role in listening to and communicating with the Sectors, along with establishing communication between the Sectors and the higher structures (Super Region or Province).

The Regional Team, which must meet four times a year, is composed of the Regional Couple, the Sector Couples, and a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor. Other couples can be included to perform any other duties according to regional needs<sup>[RL3]</sup>.

Together they are responsible for animation, liaison, formation, and expansion.

### **6.3.3 The Province**

The Province is a structure of coordination, animation, and liaison comprising several neighbouring Regions (between three and ten), with a large number of teams and/or with a very wide territory.

Each Province must define its geographical limit to enable the best proximity between the Province Couple and its Regions. It should allow for good horizontal liaison with the different areas of the Province as well as vertical liaison among the different Regions and the Super Region.

The creation of the Provinces proved to be necessary to facilitate the circulation of the Movement's lifeblood, due to the great expansion of Teams of Our Lady in some countries. The Province Couple, living within the same geographical area, has easier and better local knowledge to comprehend the realities of the local culture.

The Province Couple is obviously part of the Super Regional Team but they should not consider themselves solely as representatives of their Province. Without compromising their position as Province Couple, they should broaden their horizons in order to acquire a wider vision as members of the Super Regional Team.

The Province Couple is chosen from among the Regional Couples that comprise the Province and is called to service for five years by the Super Regional Couple.

The Province Couple should form a Province Team composed of the Regional Couples and a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor. Other couples may be called to be in charge of other functions according to local needs. This team should meet at least four times a year<sup>[RL4]</sup>.

The main functions of the Province Team are animation, training, liaison, and dissemination, while giving great importance to the expansion of the Movement in a sustainable way.

#### **6.3.4 The Super Region**

The Super Region consists of three to ten Regions (or Provinces if they exist) of a country, or of the Regions (Provinces) of neighbouring countries. Experience shows that at least 200 teams constitute a good base for the viability of a Super Region.

The responsibility for the Super Region is entrusted to a “Super Regional Couple.” They call on other couples and a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor to assist them in a service of reflection, discernment, and animation of the Regions (or Provinces) entrusted to them.

Together they constitute the “Super Regional Team” and they work in a spirit of collegiality, co-responsibility, and communion. The Super-Regional Couple is appointed for five years.

They fulfil their role in faithfulness to the founding charism, vocation, and mission of the Movement. They are responsible for transmitting to the teams the main guidelines of the Movement and they promote its formative ways and methods. They are responsible for unity,



communion, and the formation of leaders and team members in the Super-Region.

The Super Regional Couple is a member of the International College of the Movement. They are called to serve by the International Leading Team (ERI) in consultation with the Regional or Province Couples of that Super Region.

For certain Super Regions, with a large number of teams, it may be necessary to have an intermediate structure called a Province to gather Regions together. In that situation, a couple is chosen to be the Province Responsible Couple.

The Super Regional Team meets at least four times a year. If it is an extensive Super Region with Provinces, all Regional Couples must attend at least one of these meetings to ensure the cohesion and unity of the Super Region.

The main functions of the Super Region are animation, liaison, formation, and dissemination of the Movement within the Super Region as well as in areas where Teams do not yet exist.

### **6.3.5 The Liaison Zone**

The Zone is a means of coordination and liaison, formed by Super Regions and Regions or Sectors directly linked to the ERI, as well as by countries where Teams do not yet exist.

The concept of Liaison Zones was presented at the College of Houston (July 2001).

The goal of the Zones is to develop a closer connection and animation, with a sense of mission, unity, and solidarity beyond national borders.

The organization in Zones must favour the communication and connection of the Super Regions (SR) and Regions inside the same zone (RR), but also with the Super Regions and Regions connected to other Zones and with the ERI. Location and language are factors to be taken into account in the distribution of the SR/RRs into each Zone.

The Zones are structures of coordination and liaison, so they are not a level of responsibility. At this level the responsibility belongs to the ERI. Each Zone is coordinated by a couple in the ERI.

The Zone Couple is essentially a member of the ERI and participates in reflections, discussions, activities, and decisions of the ERI. They commit to total solidarity with the ERI. Their mission is as a part of the ERI.

The ERI is in contact with all the teams of the Movement thanks to the Zone Couples, since they are members of the ERI. Through personal contact within the countries or by the intermediary of electronic communication (such as telephone, internet, or e-mail) the Zone Liaison Couples and the Super-Region and Region Responsible Couples can understand the needs, objectives, projects, actions, successes, and difficulties of each Super Region, Region, or Sector.

The Zone Couples are accorded a certain autonomy in agreement with the ERI. This autonomy must be based on common objectives set by the ERI with the purpose of avoiding a situation where the Zones establish different objectives, values, requirements, or fundamental concepts that could affect the unity of the Movement. The Zone shall meet at least once a year, during and just after the International College.

### **6.3.6 The International Leading Team (ERI)**

The International Leading Team has overall responsibility for the Movement, exercised in close union with the Super Regional Couples. It works collegially and is composed of six to eight couples and a Priest-

Spiritual Counsellor for the Movement. The members of the International Leading Team are chosen after multiple consultations, especially with the Super Regions. The choice of members reflects the international character of the Movement. They commit themselves to act personally and not as representatives of their own country.

The International Leading Team chooses one of its couples to be the Leading Couple. The Leading Couple is in charge of animation and coordination within the International Leading Team and the International College. They assume the day-to-day management of the Movement and report regularly to the other members of the ERI on the exercise of their mission. They are the official representatives of the Movement.

Each couple on the International Leading Team serves a maximum of six years.

The ERI has an International Secretariat coordinated by a Secretary Couple. Together they are responsible for the administration and functioning of the ERI, thus being at the service of the Movement anywhere in the world.

The coordination of the Zones, including all the Super Regions, Regions, and Sectors directly attached to the ERI, is the responsibility of the members of the ERI.

The ERI may enlarge its work by service teams entitled "Satellite Teams." Having an international character, they study in depth any topics important for the Movement and prepare documentation that is reviewed and approved by the ERI. A member of the ERI coordinates these teams.

The ERI should meet three or four times a year.

The responsibilities and mission of the International Leading Team are as follows:

- To animate the whole Movement.
- To maintain the Movement and the connection with the universal Church.
- To ensure faithfulness to the founding inspirations of the Movement.
- To exercise long-term discernment.
- To ensure the unity and internationality of the Movement in line with the diversity of the existing cultures.
- To develop the Movement and particularly to establish it in countries where it is not yet present, such as in areas that are outside the expansion zones of the Super Regions.
- To prepare and update fundamental documents on the pedagogy, organization, and responsibilities of the Movement.
- To organize the International Gatherings every six years and present the Movement's course for the next six years.

### **6.3.7 The International College**



The International College is composed of members of the ERI and the Super Regional Couples. It meets for reflection and exchange in order to discharge collegial responsibility for the International Movement.

It meets once a year for a working session that lasts several days, to which the Priest-Spiritual Counsellors and the Responsible Couples for the Super Regions and Regions directly attached to the ERI are invited so they can participate in the College's reflection.

The International College is concerned with maintaining the unity and communion of its members while maintaining fidelity to the Movement's charism. The members of the College speak in general terms about the international financial management, the canonical statutes, and the principles for the functioning of the Movement.

### **6.3.8 Other particular cases (Sectors & Regions attached to the ERI)**

#### The Sector Directly Attached to the ERI (SETR)

This Sector is one that cannot be integrated nor participate in the life of a Region because of its geographical isolation. Responsibility is defined and exercised in the same way as a Sector within a Region.

Liaison with the Sector is provided by a member of a Super Regional Team or by the International Leading Team. The responsible couple is nominated by the ERI on the recommendation of the Zone Liaison Couple.

#### The Region Directly Attached to the ERI (RR)

This is the name for a region that is not integrated into a Super Region and has an insufficient number of teams to justify establishing a Super Region. The responsibility for an Attached Region (RR) is defined and exercised in the same way as a Region within a Super Region.

The regulation and tasks of an Attached Region differ from those of a Region on the following points:

- It is directly connected to a Zone Couple on the ERI.
- The Responsible Couple is chosen and appointed by the ERI, following a proposal made by the RR.
- Animation and formation activities are similar to those of a Super Region.
- It manages its own finances.

### **6.3.9 Temporary intermediate structures (Pre-Sectors & Pre-Regions)**

Where necessary and most often for geographical reasons (e.g., long distances), temporary intermediate structures may be set up to provide animation and expansion of the Movement.

Couples responsible for these intermediate levels have responsibilities and a length of service similar to those of Regional Couples and Sector Couples.

#### **The Pre-Sector**

This is the name given to a group of teams close enough to be able to develop a common animation but that:

- are either too few to form a Sector (less than five teams) or too far from the existing sectors to be integrated into one of them, or
- do not have sufficient formation.

#### **The Pre-Region**

This is the name given to a group of Sectors too low in number (less than three) to form a Region or too far from the nearest Region to be integrated into it. However, this group of Sectors requires an animation structure to facilitate communication with the level of responsibility to which it is attached.

## 7. LIFE OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY AS A MOVEMENT FUNCTIONS

The current structures of the Movement do not stem from an organization that was determined from the outset. Rather they arose to meet the needs of Teams' life such as animation, liaison, formation, and expansion. These are the functions that all levels of responsibility of the Movement must promote in accordance with the mission assigned to each level.

### 7.1 SPIRITUAL ANIMATION

To animate<sup>4</sup> means to give a soul, to initiate life, or as Father Caffarel said, "it is necessary to **teach how to live.**"

To animate is to look with love, to discover, confirm, and appeal to what's best in each person, in each couple, in each team, Sector, Region, Province, or Super Region.

Father Caffarel said that a Responsible Couple's function is to "inspire the soul," that is to bring continuously a freshness that awakens life, allowing people to grow and progress on their path, to glimpse new horizons, to discover the joy of life by being on this path.

Much more than projects, or the transmission of rules, orders, or concepts, the responsible couple must be able to transmit their enthusiasm, the joy of their own life, as an example to others. They reveal to each couple in their teams the possibility of experiencing a real encounter with our Lord Jesus.

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<sup>4</sup> Animate derives from the Latin word "anima" which means "soul."

When speaking of animation, what is desired is to reach the spiritual meaning of this word and to bring the wonderful mystery of love and strength of God into couples' lives. It is about leading teams to the understanding of Jesus' presence in their small community that meets in His name, to welcome the love of the Father and share it among all.

To animate is to promote and organize activities in order to create and maintain unity and to ensure cohesion within the structure they are responsible for, by getting to know their teams, and making them feel connected to the Movement.

Team members are invited to integrate themselves in the life of the Movement through voluntary and loyal collaboration. In addition to team meetings and working meetings at various levels, other more formal and official activities are organized such as detailed below.

### **7.1.1 Sector, Regional, Province, and Super Regional Meetings**

At least once a year, a meeting is organized in each Sector, Region, Province, or Super Region to bring together all couples, particularly those with responsibilities in the Movement. It is a time for praying together, for fostering unity and communion, for presenting new orientations, for formation, for meeting local leaders of the Movement, and for obtaining information on developments within the Sectors, Regions, Provinces, and Super Regions.

At the Sector level, Spiritual Animation is provided to all the teams following an annual program of activities adapted to the characteristics and necessities of the teams that make up the sectors.



### **7.1.2 International Gatherings**

The Movement organizes International Gatherings every six years. They are special times of prayer, exchange, and orientation for the Teams of Our Lady in a worldwide context.

The “orientations” for all team members are the priorities for the Movement for the following years. They are based on observations of the current situation and needs of couples.

Between International Gatherings, Regional Gatherings are held which the Responsible Couples of the Super Regions, Provinces, and Regions must attend.

An International Meeting is an important sign of the unity of spirit and internationality of the Movement, which binds together thousands of team members from around the world in an atmosphere of joy and praise to God.

### **7.2 LIAISON**

The necessity and importance of liaison with the wider Church goes back to the Christian communities of the early Church. St. Paul and his followers frequently visited the churches with the purpose of organizing them and ensuring their purity of heart and fidelity to the Faith.

Father Caffarel, realizing that alone he could not succeed in liaising with all the existing teams, introduced in 1947 the concept of Liaison Couples whose function was to establish good communication between the teams and leaders of the Movement.

In a Movement whose vocation is love, the priority is to find ways to keep this love alive.

A team does not journey by itself. Nobody remains isolated when love's life-giving force continually passes through communication, that is, through effective liaison.

Liaison, which should be carried out in a climate of prayer, love, and trust, is indispensable for building a spirit of community and unity, for giving a sense of membership to the Movement, and for encouraging faithfulness to the founding charism. It allows communication between the teams and the Movement.

In the Movement, it is the relationship between people that matters. Therefore, liaison must mean being of service, of helping in a constructive way. Thus unity and communion deepen through mutual aid, dialog, and sharing, as do Teams' animation and spiritual growth.

It is liaison that allows regular contact and interpersonal communication, which will enable mutual help and sharing to be easier and more efficient both in the vertical direction (teams to Movement) and in the horizontal direction (among teams).

Liaison is indispensable at every level of responsibility and is particularly important between the teams and the Sector. This liaison with the Sector is essential for the life of Teams.

Liaison Couples must be an integral part of the Sector team. They cannot be passive elements in a chain but active and interested couples through which the Holy Spirit's lifeblood works to build communion and spiritually animate action.

The Liaison Couple is sent by the Lord to be a Christian driving force; both discreet and attentive to the teams assigned to them. They establish personal contacts and meet the teams with the support of the responsible couples, participating in the monthly meetings of their teams. Thus they help the evangelization of couples who will also

become evangelizing agents in the various situations of family, social, and professional life.

There is ample evidence that the quality and dynamics of Teams of Our Lady are highly dependent on the way liaison is carried out. It must establish a lively and dynamic link that keeps couples together and engaged with the teams on the Sector, which is then linked to the Region, the Province, the Super Region, and the Movement in general.

Much more than an experience of communication, liaison is primarily a true proclamation of the Good News: it has an evangelizing dimension, essential to the construction of the community spirit of the Movement which, in turn, becomes a living “team of teams,” open to the Church and to the world.

### **7.3 FORMATION**

Formation in Teams of Our Lady follows the breath of the Holy Spirit and offers couples a pedagogy (or method) that will help them grow in their spiritual life and identify themselves with the image of Christ. Teams couples also have the responsibility of announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ to couples around the world, to help them on their path to holiness.

To perform this mission correctly, couples must be well prepared with a permanent and solid formation. Teams are well aware that they have received a special charism, that of journeying together as a couple towards holiness. They are committed to offer the riches of this gift to the couples who desire it.

Formation should trigger the process of transmission, mainly through testimonies on the Movement’s charism.

*“Teams is a school of formation for couples. It not only deepens knowledge on faith, but also cultivates human and Christian discernment using heart and mind to seek a closer connection between faith and life” (“The Second Wind,” 1988).*

Formation should be organized with a certain coherence and take into account continuity and progression in the life of the couples and the teams.

Formation in Teams is a “dynamic pivot” that links all types of formation. This connecting theme allows couples to deepen their conjugal spirituality in a coherent, permanent, and progressive way on the path of holiness.

Formation in Teams must be on-going, because it serves the couples in various stages of their lives.

### **7.3.1 Characteristics**

The characteristics of Formation are as follows:

- **A SPIRITUAL FORMATION** - All formation is primarily spiritual. Our journey in Teams is above all spiritual; that is, Christ-oriented. It is Christ who is the centre of our lives. He is our Guide, our Shepherd.
- **A FORMATION EMBODIED IN REAL LIFE** - Formation must respond by helping everyone discern the will of God for the couple and the family. It should not be limited to a simple transmission of contents, but show through testimony and teaching how the vocation to love is embodied in the reality of team members’ lives.
- **A FORMATION BASED ON EXPERIENCE** - This is formation based on "lived existence." It is based on the dynamics of the team meeting, during which participants share not only their

knowledge but also their experience. It is therefore a place to renew the spiritual life. The team goes through different stages of spiritual growth and appropriate assistance must be offered to them at each stage.

- **A FLEXIBLE AND GRADUAL FORMATION** - Formation should be gradual and patient. Without losing anything of its substance, it must respect the time required for every couple's journey. It must adapt to the different stages of the couple's and team's life in different cultures and to their various ways of expressing the faith.
- **AN INTERNATIONAL FORMATION** - Formation must have a perspective of communion and unity, based on the experience of the Movement's internationality. It should aim to help couples live Teams of Our Lady's charism and pedagogy in a dynamic, charitable, and faithful way.

The Formation Program involves three types of formation:

- **INITIAL FORMATION:** a phase of "introduction to the spiritual life of Teams."
- **PERMANENT FORMATION:** a phase of "*Life in Teams.*"
- **SPECIFIC FORMATION:** a phase for the couples to be "*Called to Service.*"

We must ensure continuity between Initial Formation and Permanent Formation because one naturally follows the other.

Specific Formation applies to a limited number of people, relevant to the service they offer.

Formation Sessions are an important time in the life of Teams. Their goal is to form teams and deepen their knowledge of the spirit and methods of the Movement. Thanks to this possibility of deepening the proposition of life in Teams, the team members become surer in their

commitment. They live the Movement more fully and at the same time fulfil their responsibilities.

Couples in Teams also accompany couples that are part of other communities whose objectives are community life and catechetical formation. This is something that is discussed at the end of the Formation chapter under the title "**Involvement in Activities outside of the Movement.**"

Very often couples that have participated in catechetical formation outside of Teams then decide to become team members when it finishes.

### **7.3.2 Initial Formation**

- Initial Formation is based on testimony. Its purpose is to transmit the Movement's charism and purpose, which with the team's help deepens the meaning of the sacrament of matrimony as a path of love, happiness, and holiness.
- Initial training must always include the main principles and objectives of the pedagogy of Teams that are essential to the Movement's life.
- The techniques, pedagogy, and documents employed should be adapted to the area, culture, and local historical dimensions that are continually changing.
- The integration of new teams into the Movement is also part of Initial Formation.

#### **TYPES OF FORMATION**

- PILOTING
- NEW TEAMS MEETINGS

## PILOTING

This Formation is fundamental and indispensable. It is the start of life in a team. It is intended, with the guidance of a pilot couple, to give couples and Priest-Spiritual Counsellors basic knowledge regarding life in Teams, including its pedagogy and organization, in accordance with the Charter. It is important that a study of the Charter be undertaken during Piloting.

- A couple called the “Pilot Couple” accompanies the new team during piloting. They pass on knowledge, spirit, and methods of the Movement in a gradual way, explaining its pedagogy a little at a time. The Pilot Couple uses specific literature for this formation and remains part of the team until piloting ends.
- 
- Piloting is accompanied by "piloting booklets" (between 10 and 18, depending on the SR/RR), which contain the orientations and contents to be studied each month. This Piloting phase should never last less than one year, but may continue for two years.

The pace and duration of piloting vary according to the level of knowledge and interest of the couples regarding the Movement's methods, as mentioned in the Charter.

Piloting is provided by the Sector. Each Region must be informed of the progress in the current piloting of teams. It is indeed a key stage for the future life of the teams and their integration into the Movement.

It is essential to pay considerable attention to the constitution of a new team. The base team is the smallest but the most crucial cell for the dynamism of the Movement.

## **NEW TEAMS MEETINGS**

These meetings are meant for teams at the end of piloting or for those who have recently completed it. During the weekend, couples have the opportunity to further deepen their knowledge of the Movement's pedagogy by meeting couples from other teams and celebrating their integration into the Movement. This helps new teams discover a more complete perception of the Movement.

These meetings, which mark the end of piloting, should be organized either by the Super Region, Province, or Region and involve the participation of several new teams (about 30 couples). They should be animated by a Formation Team chosen because of their attributes as qualified for this type of formation. Participation is considered essential. "After piloting, a formation session with other couples will help consolidate what has been learned and assimilated" ("The Second Wind," 1988).

### **7.3.3 Permanent Formation**

Permanent Formation accompanies teams on their way to holiness in the different stages of their lives.

This Formation is based on three fundamental axes:

- The couple's daily life as a path to holiness.
- Team life, with mutual help from other couples.
- Formation sessions.

In addition to these three basic elements for the formation of team members, several other means can facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences, such as the Teams newsletters, the website, study topics, the Movement's documents, and guidelines.

There is a Christian Formation digital platform, available to all Teams members, with workshops that address several important issues in catechetical formation.



The activities for each year proposed by the Super Regions, Provinces, Regions, or Sectors are very important. We should not abandon the paths that have proved effective in the past, but it is also very important that we pay attention to the "signs of the times" and modify programs if that is useful to couples.

It is not enough "to deepen the knowledge of our faith, but we have to cultivate human and Christian discernment, using our heart and mind, to seek a closer connection between faith and life" ("The Second Wind," 1988).

### **Stages of Formation**

Permanent Formation is different and addresses three stages that characterize a team's life after piloting:

- Stage "**Teams Beginning their Journey – Faith and Life.**" After piloting, the team begins its journey. It is a path marked by themes designed to bring the team closer together. It does not have to coincide necessarily with the annual study topics. Their reflection covers the main aspects of conjugal love, personal and couples' life of faith, and the pedagogy of Teams.
- Stage "**Teams on the Move – Vocation and Mission.**" Teams freely choose their study topics. Thanks to these study topics, general sharing, and sharing on the endeavours, couples continue the path of their vocation and mission.
- Stage "**Second Wind.**" After several years, the team may feel the need to revitalize its life or return to the source of its commitment by renewing itself to move forward.
- Stage "**Teams Deepening.**" After more than 20 years, the couples in the team are encouraged to continue to deepen their faith and to have better knowledge of the Movement.

### **Formation Sessions**

For each of these stages, the SR/RR will identify formation tools adapted to the path ahead. Permanent Formation Meetings will be led by teams

of trainers/animators, coordinated by the Super Region, Province, or Region depending on the needs and local circumstances.

In addition, it is expected that the Responsible Couples will organize a Gathering at the end of each stage. This is an invitation to the entire team to stop, reflect, and examine how far they have come, exchange experiences with other teams, make proposals for changes, and commit to continue their progress. Whenever possible, it is important that these Sessions adopt the structure of a team meeting with time for communal prayer, listening, testimony, and communication. There will also be time for couples to exchange their points of view in light of their experience. In this way, couples from different teams will become acquainted, and ideas and experiences will be exchanged, which is very rewarding for all.

#### **7.3.4 Specific Formation**

The goal of Specific Formation is to prepare couples who are called to serve the Movement, either as Responsible Couples or as Trainers. This formation is required for couples that are going to assume a mission or responsibility. Each Specific Formation is intended to accompany and support the couples called to serve the Movement.

The main objectives of this formation are to:

- enlighten couples on the spirit of service and responsibility.
- develop the apostolic and evangelizing mission of a couple in Teams.
- transmit the specific knowledge necessary to accomplish their tasks and present the means of preserving the spirit and unity of the Movement.

As much as possible, formation should be offered when starting service. Any participation in a service team (Sector, Region, Province, or Super Region) should be an opportunity for formation. These teams shouldn't be limited to exchanging information or organizing activities.

When organizing Formation Sessions/Meetings, it is desirable to call to service as many team members as possible so that they become aware that service is necessary, normal, and rewarding.

Formation Sessions

Sessions are normally residential and last at least a weekend. These days spent immersed in the atmosphere of Teams, with couples from different teams, is a strong time of prayer, friendship, and sharing.

The International Travelling Formation Teams (taskforce) have been set up to introduce the different types of formation in the Formation Plan to the SR/RRs. They are service teams composed of multilingual couples appointed by the ERI to animate experimental sessions and prepare local trainers in the different kinds of formation. These couples travel to the SR/RR/SECR whenever they are requested.

### Types of Formation

The following list refers to the different kinds of Formation. Each Super Region, Province, or Region will develop those that seem best suited to their specific situation.

#### Couples Formation – Initiation and Liaison

- Formation Sessions for Information Couples
- Formation Sessions/Gatherings for Pilot Couples
- Formation Sessions for Liaison Couples

#### Responsible Couples Formation

- Formation Sessions for Team Responsible Couples
- Formation Sessions for Sector Responsible Couples
- Formation Sessions for Region Responsible Couples

Information/Formation for Priest-Spiritual Counsellors and Spiritual Advisors.

#### Gatherings for Formation Couples

- Sessions to prepare Formation and Animating Couples for:
  - New Teams Gatherings
  - Permanent Formation Gatherings
  - “Teams Beginning Their Journey - Faith and Life”
  - “Teams on the Move - Vocation and Mission”

- “Second Wind - A New Enthusiasm for Teams”
- “Teams Deepening”
- Sessions to prepare the International Travelling Formation Teams

### **7.3.5 Involvement in activities outside the Movement**

Team members who have been enriched by the Movement should participate in apostolic activities outside of the Movement. In this way, the gifts they have received are turned into action. Conjugal love has a fruitfulness that leads couples to be open to others.

*“Today, it is necessary to be aware of a different reality: the lack of basic Christian formation requires a catechesis of initiation in the conjugal and community field in addition to religious formation”*

(“The Second Wind,” 1988).

Team members who have been enriched and sustained by the life of the Movement are encouraged to get involved in meeting the needs of their local parish community as a service to the Church.

It is very important that team members are available and well prepared with appropriate and permanent formation. This preparation allows them to help other movements and pastoral activities and thus actively contribute to increasing the Kingdom of God.

## **7.4 DIFFUSION**

The Teams of Our Lady Movement—a gift from the Holy Spirit to the Church—is entrusted to the care of its members. They should feel a sense of responsibility for its development and act to allow other couples to experience this gift of God. Christian marriage is a path of love, happiness, and holiness.

This responsibility, which should be felt by all teams couples, has three aspects:

- **Diffusion:** Encouraging other couples to discover how to deepen their conjugal spirituality and to appreciate the value of Christian marriage.
- **Information:** This is the next step following diffusion. It means giving simple witness to what the Movement is to couples who are eager to know about it.
- **Expansion:** This is the prime point of diffusion. It is the "final product" that promotes and renews the Movement through the creation of new teams.

#### **7.4.1 The Purpose of Diffusion**

Spreading the Movement makes it known to others, reveals it, and informs others of its existence and shows how it helps us in our journey as a couple towards Christ.

Through diffusion, not only is the Teams Movement presented to couples, but it is also important to present it to the various levels of the Church—including the parish and diocese—as well as to organizations that work with couples and the family. These contacts must be established for effective working together.

In this way, all couples, and each one in particular, should be aware of the importance of their role in spreading the Movement: diffusion is the work of everyone.

### **7.4.2 Information**

The provision of information aims to provide clear and objective information about the Movement, including its riches and its demands.

It is a matter of informing couples who want to know about the Movement what Teams has to offer: its objectives, means, and methods, based on the documentation of the Movement. It is equally important to demonstrate the importance of Teams for couples and families and its place in the Church.

It makes known the small community that is the team, which meets in the name of the Lord, and forms a community where each practices mutual aid, gives of themselves, and welcomes sharing that enriches and encourages others.

Information should be organized at the Sector level by Information Couples who need to receive adequate formation. The procedure may vary from one Sector to another, depending on the local context and charism of the couples in charge of this task.

### **7.4.3 Expansion**

Expanding the Movement allows other couples to learn how to live the sacrament of marriage through mutual help in a team. It offers them the possibility of having the experience of living in community and feeling how good it is to help and be helped, to encourage and be encouraged.

Expansion leads to the creation of new teams, which requires the Movement to be prepared to welcome them and provide the necessary means for their initiation, formation, and growth.

All levels of responsibility of the Movement must be attentive to the need for expansion. However, the Sector's role is crucial. Each Sector

Team should establish plans for the dissemination and expansion of the Movement in their area.

In metropolitan areas, in places with a high concentration of sectors, or in areas where there are no teams yet, this responsibility can be undertaken at the Regional or even the Province or Super-Regional level.

Responsibility for diffusion and expansion in places where there are no Sectors belongs to the respective Region or Province. The Super Region, in coordination with the ERI, has the responsibility for diffusion and expansion of the Movement in countries where there are no teams.

A Movement that doesn't renew itself lives turned in on itself, stagnates, and dies.

## 8. LIFE OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY AS A MOVEMENT SERVICE

Team members are invited to join and collaborate in the life of the Movement and its structures, providing willing and loyal cooperation. In addition to team meetings and meetings at various levels, team members with responsibility are called to serve other more formal or official activities.

*"Whoever renders service...renders it by the strength which God supplies"*

(1 Pet. 4: 11).

### 8.1 THE CALL TO SERVICE

All Responsibilities in Teams of Our Lady are a Service

*"Spiritual responsibility must purely be considered as received from the Lord and cannot be supplanted. That is to say, we have to remain united to the One who entrusted it to us"*

(Father Roger Tandonnet)

God calls us not because of our merits, but because He looked at us and called us by our name, personally and as a couple.

*"Jesus looked at him and loved him....Come, follow me"*

(Mark 10:21).

The call of the Lord is, above all, on His own initiative, not ours. We respond to His loving gaze on us as a couple, totally relying on Him.

As soon as we take notice of His call, we listen to the Lord, as Samuel did *"Here I am, for you called me."*



In the world today, “responsibility” is often synonymous with strength and power. But when Christ washed the feet of His disciples, He showed us another way to exercise responsibility: in the Teams of Our Lady we place ourselves at the service of our brothers and sisters. Responsibility in Teams is an invitation to a greater love, and all responsibilities are a call to serve. This is the spirit of Teams of Our Lady.

## **8.2 STAGES IN THE CALL**

- Rotating the Responsible Couples is a source of grace for Teams, but procedures and criteria benefitting the unity of the Movement must be respected.
- When replacing Responsible Couples, it is necessary to exercise good discernment, careful choice, proper celebration, and excellent transition of service.
- The stages for replacing the Responsible Couple are indicated below. They should be followed closely.
- It is advisable to start appealing to the replacement Responsible Couple a year before the end of the service of the couple that will be replaced.

### **1<sup>st</sup> stage – Discernment and Selection Procedure**

It is the Lord who calls. Only faithful and assiduous prayer will place us in the condition of total trust in His action.

- In choosing a couple for service, the appropriate responsible team must collect as many couples’ names as possible. It is essential that this research be done in a collegial way within that team. The results

of this research should be shared at a meeting of those team members.

- The discernment and choice of the Responsible Couple in question is then made by the service team. The couples who form it should propose a certain number of couples suitable to be chosen, indicating an order of priority.
- The end of this first stage arrives with the elaboration of a smaller list of the three most preferred couples, in order of priority, after scrutiny by the Responsible Couple and the Priest-Spiritual Counsellor.
- The Responsible Couple then sends to the Responsible Couple at the next higher level a proposal with the three preferred names, in order of priority, including the profile of each couple (such as ages, professions, years of marriage, number and age of children, languages spoken, years in Teams, services performed in Teams, various observations that may inform the next level, etc.)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> stage – Decision and Invitation

The choice and formal invitation are always made by the Responsible Couple at the next level of responsibility. In the case of the SR/RR, the ERI makes the choice and invites the chosen couple.

- The couple responsible for the next level of responsibility presents the three proposed names in order of priority at their service team meeting and they choose the future Responsible Couple collegially.
- The invitation to become the future Responsible Couple is made by the Responsible Couple at the next level of responsibility, after consultation with the role that will be replaced.

- In the case of Responsible Couples for an SR/RR, the ERI makes the choice and invites the chosen couple.

The whole process of discernment and appeal should be accomplished in secret and with discretion, during and after the final choice.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> stage – Transferring Service

The former Responsible Couple transfers responsibility to the new Responsible Couple. This includes transmitting information and guidelines based on the experience and knowledge of the former Responsible Couple. The transfer should be a truly collegial exercise, well prepared and well executed.

- The official replacement of the Responsible Couple of an SR is held in the International College. However, service can be transferred in the couples' own SR at the beginning of the year's activities.
- The official replacement of Responsible Couples for Provinces, Regions, and Sectors should take place in a celebration of service transfer in their respective areas at the beginning of the year's activities.

## **8.3 RESPONSIBILITY AND COLLEGIALITY**

The exercise of responsibility is based on a sense of service. Its model is Jesus who washed the feet of His disciples.

Responsibility and collegiality were two gifts offered to the Movement from the very beginning. This is why they must be exercised as a means of service and to express the reality of couples and teams. This way of living responsibility implies the recognition and service of each other, mutual respect, trust, openness, and mutual liaison.

Teams of Our Lady has certain foundational principles of responsibility:

- Responsibility is above all spiritual, that is, received from the Lord.
- **Responsibility is assumed as a couple:** Teams members are called to service as a couple. They aim to use all their qualifications to be faithful to the mission received, while undertaking it with rigor and creativity.
- **Practice of collegiality:** in all responsible positions, analysing topics, discerning, and making decisions are not entrusted to a leader couple but must be shared in collegiality. This assures service is not exercised as power but instead favours communion, co-responsibility, and unity with other team members.
- **Rotations:** A couple that completes a service role should be aware that another couple after them will take the same role. The rotation of responsibilities (every three to six years) guarantees a broader vision and allows the Teams community to become enriched by each couple's gifts.

Taking on a service role requires solid knowledge of the work's objective and of the Movement. All responsibility exercised within the Movement has a limited duration which varies according to the responsibility (**Sector: 3 years; Region: 4 years; Province and Super Region: 5 years; ERI: 6 years**).

The Responsible Couple develops the practice of communion, collegiality, and shared co-responsibility in their service team.

Collegiality is the sharing of the diverse and complementary “gifts” that the Spirit has given to each, so that together we seek the truth and a deeper unity among all.

Collegiality should involve:

- a common search for truth,
- a search for communion and consensus,
- the establishment of trust,
- a process of co-responsibility and decision making,
- full acceptance of communal decisions, and
- evaluation.

Collegiality must play a prophetic role by paying attention to the signs of the times and being at the service of evangelization. Collegiality is based on the following principles:

- **Equality:** which assures that everybody has the same rights and responsibilities.
- **Transparency:** which stimulates freedom of expression so people can speak freely and confidently.
- **Discussion or debate:** which promotes collegial reflection and discernment instead of a simple debate of opinions and ideas.
- **A Balance between collegiality and responsibility:** which is a good indicator ensuring that a sense of service, openness, and

responsibility has been maintained during discussions and decision-making.

- **A chain of collegiality:** which is expressed at all levels of responsibility and at the service of the Movement.

To assure collegiality is practiced within a service team, the Responsible Couple must keep in mind a few necessary operational rules:

- To work as a team, promoting trust and friendship.
- To highlight the abilities of each member so they can use them for common service.
- To animate the team, stimulating reflection, discernment, study, and debate.
- To participate actively in Teams' objectives in a climate of fraternity, sharing, and joy.
- To act in a charitable way to ensure that everyone's ideas are taken into consideration and to reach consensus in decision-making.
- When consensus cannot be reached and the final decision is made by the Responsible Couple, they must do it with love and conscience, supported by prayer in a true spirit of service.
- Once the Responsible Couple makes a decision, they should exercise their responsibility by conducting a periodic evaluation to ensure that the decision was valid and in the spirit of the Movement.

Collegiality is important to Teams, because it is more than an operational method. It is a state of mind. It allows true discernment concerning the work undertaken together to discover the will of God. It also reveals a sense of service that takes into account the reality of the couples' lives.

The various responsibilities are explained in detail in the booklet "Responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady."

## **8.4 INTERNATIONALITY**

With the publication of the Charter in 1947, Teams of Our Lady spread little by little in France's neighbouring countries. But after 1950, they crossed the ocean and arrived in Brazil and other countries on the American continent, thus becoming a truly International Movement.

The Canonical Statutes, in Article 1, confirm the Movement's International character, which is always developing.

The Teams Movement is present today in more than 90 countries on 5 continents, but internationality is not simply that.

The true meaning of internationality is to understand the following elements:

- Teams is a gift of the Holy Spirit for the needs of couples around the world.
- The differences of languages, cultures, races, and realities are an additional wealth that must be disseminated to the wider Teams community.

- Agreeing to share the essentials means accepting the challenges of understanding and respecting each identity, in order to make the Movement stronger through everyone's gifts.
- Practicing fraternal help is a demanding invitation to Christian solidarity. It will grow through knowledge of other countries and establishing relationships between people, realities, and cultures.
- Being open to other movements to help formation within the Church.

At the 2001 Houston (USA) College, the ERI created four large Liaison Zones that bring together teams from around the world. This was to affirm and develop this sense of internationality, which is a great richness for the Movement.

When creating these Zones, the ERI ensured that the two fundamental ideas of liaison and internationality were present, with all their features, riches, difficulties, and challenges.

In each Zone, we can find great social, cultural, and linguistic differences that should be seen as additional gifts for the good of the whole Movement.

During the same College (Houston), Satellite Teams were also created. They are service teams directly attached to the ERI. They have an international character because they are formed by couples from different countries and with different languages; their work promotes collegiality.

Collegiality and internationality are intended to discover together the will of God for the Movement by strengthening unity and fidelity to the spirit and charism of Teams of Our Lady.



Promoting and developing the Movement's internationality, in its diversity and difference, while maintaining its unity, is a great challenge for Teams.

## 9. MISSION

Teams of Our Lady is a Movement that helps its member couples to be active in the Church and in the world.

The Movement as such, at the request of the Church, assists in the Church's pastoral ministry — especially in the sphere of marriage and family.

### 9.1 VOCATION AND MISSION

Love is the great testimony that Teams must give! Conjugal spirituality proposed by the Movement is to know the Will of God for the couple and to apply it in real life. This spirituality draws its strength from the Grace of the Sacrament of Marriage.

*“The path of holiness that the couple chooses to take on the day of their marriage will continue all their lives. It is a long pilgrimage that must each day distance them from sin and lead them to God. For by the sacrament of marriage, the anointing of the Holy Spirit fills our beings and accompanies us. Like Fr. Louis de Raynal says in his book *The Good News of Marriage*, ‘we can speak of marriage as a permanent sacrament.’ The vocation of the couple and the family is to live their Christian life in communion with God and accompanied by the love of Christ who unites, restores, and slowly perfects marriage—the masterpiece of God—as affirmed by our founder. To lead each couple, united by the sacrament of marriage to transform their conjugal and family life in Christ, is clearly the fundamental intuition of our Movement. Spirituality and action enrich each other.”*

(“Team’s Vocation and Mission at the Dawn of the Third Millennium,”  
2018)

What matters is not the importance of what we do, but above all else the need that we have to be united with Him, in total abandonment to the Lord, in an unconditional love regardless of the phase of life in which we find ourselves.

The mission of each one of us is the circumstances of our own existence. As a result, vocation is not something extra; it is an integral part of our identity.

When Father Caffarel challenges us in a very clear way concerning Teams couples' mission, he wants us to make fruitful the gifts that we were offered freely, through the sacrament of marriage. Vocation and Mission are always linked.

The speech of Pope Francis to Teams on September 10, 2015 is also a rich underpinning, not only because the Pope insisted on the couples' missionary role, but especially because he emphasized our obligation to give witness to what we have already received from Teams. Testimony is more persuasive when others see us happy and joyous.

## **9.2 TEAM MEMBERS' MISSION**

*“The first aspect of the apostolic mission is to know God, to proclaim His love. In effect, following the expression of St. Paul, love compels us to announce to others the Good News and to share the spiritual riches of life with God.*

*“The second aspect of this apostolic mission is the awareness of the responsible paternity of the couple, as mentioned by Pope John XXIII. Father Caffarel emphasized that God has entrusted to us the task of being together with our children, witnesses and prophets of His love. The family is the best nourishment for the faith. It is there that children have the first contact with the faith.*

*The third aspect of this mission is for the spouses to ask themselves what they can do for those waiting for the Good News of marriage.”*

*(“Team's Vocation and Mission at the Dawn of the Third Millennium,”  
2018)*

- Mission includes a transformative and liberating message that begins initially in the couple's hearts, leading them to restore their spiritual health as advocated by the Pope.
- Mission is sending out in a more unique sense; it transforms those who are sent, allowing them to be continually transformed.
- Those who are on mission are not sedentary. Nothing is ever completely successful, and there is always something still to be done. To be missionary is to be a nomad, a traveler, and a mover, not only in the direction sought, but also in an inward direction.
- Mission transforms and inspires us to go further, it enables us to mature, obliges us to make progress; it also stimulates each one of us. It doesn't allow us to be content just with what we have achieved but enables us to feel that there are hurts and signs of fragility in the other. These weaknesses and hurts are in the end our own when we travel the path of others!

May the joy of the Good News that we have had the opportunity to know and proclaim make us share in the hope and certainty of salvation, making us living witnesses to what we proclaim: *"Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers; it is because they are witnesses"* ("Evangelii Nuntiandi," 41).

- Mission is an action focused on the Good News. It is an effective action that leads others to transformation through the testimony we give them when serving in a free and humble way. It's an action with no other interest than happiness and quality of life of the other. Thus in giving our testimony, the other is led to a new life of joy and hope.

- In September 2015 in Rome, Pope Francis gave a beautiful speech to Teams in which he invited us to go on mission, because we are strengthened by the grace of belonging to Teams. He urged us to be close to families suffering because of absence of work, problems with children, domestic violence, or the tragedy of divorce. He asked us to be instruments of Christ's mercy with a better understanding of the suffering to which so many people are exposed.

*“If the Teams of Our Lady are not a training ground of men and women who are ready to assume courageously all their responsibilities in the Church and in society, they lose the very reason for their existence”*

(Father Henri Caffarel).

To fulfil our mission, Teams of Our Lady must always support action with prayer:

*“Isn't prayer the force that takes us out of ourselves and propels us to the service of others? It is through prayer that human means acquire their full efficacy, and it is prayer that continues to achieve when these means no longer can”*

(Father Henri Caffarel).

### **9.2.1 Mission in the Movement**

Teams couples put the gifts they have received from God at the service of their own team, of their Sector, and of their Region:

- by taking part in the common effort to fully live community life and to broaden mutual help,
- by giving support to those who respond to the call to serve in a position of responsibility, and

- by taking part in new initiatives that are launched in response to the growing aspirations of couples.

*“No one is allowed to remain inactive”*

(John Paul II, “Christis Fidelis Laici”).

### **9.2.2 Mission in the Church**

The Teams movement does not get involved as such in particular collective activities. It is for each couple to discover the call to which the Lord wants them to respond. But this fruitful freedom of individual commitments must not lead us to forget that the Movement has its own particular charism.

It is also important that teams should:

- be open to new social backgrounds and be concerned about the needs of their country, preferably those highlighted by local Churches.

(“The Second Wind,” 1988)

- respond to the call of the Church for a new evangelization based on human love and family life.

(“Team’s Vocation and Mission at the Dawn of the Third Millennium,” 2018)

- Today the Church has great need of a married laity, enriched by a formation where faith and life nourish each other. Christian couples also have a missionary duty to other couples and a duty to help them. They legitimately desire to pass on to them their experience and show them that Christ is the source of all married life.

(John Paul II, “50th Anniversary of the Charter”)

- The Church recognizes that Christian couples, by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, are the principal agents of family

pastoral care. This is not to expound theories or to impose doctrines, but to show from experience the attractions of conjugal and family love, which responds to the deepest expectations of the human being.

(“Team’s Vocation and Mission at the Dawn of the Third Millennium” – 2018)

The idea that Pope Francis promoted of a “Church reaching out” links an attitude of action to the practice of welcoming. In his discourse to Teams of Our Lady (Rome 2015), Pope Francis urges us first of all to practise and live conjugal spirituality deeply with constancy and perseverance. But it also reminds us that this spirituality, if not missionary, remains middle of the road. We receive in abundance from Christ and from the Church by our participation in Teams and, for this reason, the Movement feels irresistibly sent out to witness and transmit what it has received. As wished by Father Caffarel, Teams must be the “free body” of a Church that goes out of its own comfort zone to meet the most fragile.

It is a communitarian and a personal call: the New Evangelization implies a new engagement for each team. Being aware of our limits will stimulate us not to remain in mediocrity but to continue towards holiness: the mission opens a path of formation and maturation.

### **9.2.3 Mission in the World**

Today, internationality, cultural diversity, socioeconomic differences, and communities linked to other Catholic rites are on our doorstep or perhaps further away in a nearby neighbourhood. It is time to remove the numerous barriers to expanding the Movement and in spreading the Good News that accompanies it.

Couples are called to be the leaven of renewal, not only in the Church but also in the world, and to show by their witness that:

- marriage is at the service of love,
- marriage is at the service of happiness, and
- marriage is at the service of holiness.

*“Innumerable couples will be grateful to you for the help that you bring to them; in fact, most couples today are in need of help.”*

(“Pope Paul VI to the Teams of Our Lady,” 1976)

### **9.3 THE MOVEMENT’S MISSION**

*“Teams of Our Lady have a specific and direct mission: to help couples to fully live their sacrament of marriage. They have, at the same time, a missionary objective: to proclaim to the world, by word and by the witness of their life, the values of Christian marriage.”*

(“The Second Wind,” 1988)

Teams of Our Lady must respond to the call of the Church from what they are. Living our mission from our charism involves realizing it as a couple, sharing it as a team, and relying on the impetus and protection of the Movement.

*“In this new stage, the Movement assumes with a clear conscience the real sense of its mission in the Church and in the world. In this way, it reaffirms that its charism is not only to cultivate conjugal spirituality, but also to promote a missionary spirit in each member, in each team. Without diminishing the personal liberty and initiative of team members, the Movement will enable and encourage, with its organization and animation, concrete programs to support couples in the new situations encountered in contemporary society. This constitutes the concrete contribution we are able to offer the Church and the world today: it is our strength. How do we make even more concrete this spirit and this new missionary dynamic? Let us be inspired by the key*



*words that Pope Francis uses to urges us to discern, to welcome, to accompany.”*

*(“Team’s Vocation and Mission at the Dawn of the Third Millennium,”  
2018)*

*“Pope Francis insists on the need to practice ‘the art of accompaniment’ on the way of progression. ‘We, Teams of Our Lady, are already initiated in this art which implies discernment, reception, listening, compassion, care, patience, reciprocity...we are called by the Church to accompany especially in moments of great fragility: the path to firm and lasting commitment, the first years of a couple’s life; the stages of crisis and difficulties; the complex situations resulting from breakdowns, abandonments, and misunderstandings.”*

*(“Team’s Vocation and Mission at the Dawn of the Third Millennium,”  
2018)*

The Mission of the Movement is to form, mentor, and motivate couples to be agents of the Good News in the world in which we live, to announce the values of God within the couple and the family. Couples are like pillars supporting the bridge we have to cross and that requires a commitment based on the constancy of love.

It is necessary to start by recreating and adapting the means of formation, while ensuring the fidelity to our charism, to respond to the real challenges of our time and particularly to everything related to marriage and the family.

The expansion of the Movement, especially in countries where there are no teams, is an important step we must take.

Faced with the urgency of the task of evangelization, Teams of Our Lady became aware of the need to allow couples to discover Christian faith or re-start a journey in the Church. This concern had given birth to several initiatives that help couples who are not part of Teams to have

an opportunity to meet in groups to help one another in the search for a life based on spiritual commitment. The specific objective of these community experiences is to promote a foundational catechesis and to give couples the opportunity to journey in faith through small communities.

Teams has an evangelizing action of an incalculable dimension in the expansion of the Church. They cannot, therefore, be limited to an individualistic spirituality but must participate in a pastoral project that is essential to the transformation of the world.

## **10. THE INTERCESSORS**

The Intercessors form a family that gathers around the vocation of voluntary intercession, team members or not, in a mission of prayer, fasting, or offerings. Interceding is a matter of the heart, because true intercession has strength insofar as the one who prays feels compassion for the one being prayed for. The Church has always encouraged its members to practice prayers of intercession since we are affected by the sufferings experienced by others.

### **10.1 WHY WERE THE INTERCESSORS CREATED?**

It is in this spirit that in 1960 Father Caffarel called for volunteers to get involved in intercession, because he worried about the increasingly large difficulties faced today by Christian marriages. Thus a movement of “vigil” within Teams of Our Lady was born.

The Intercessors invite each of us to participate in this action of the Church by praying for Christian marriage, the priesthood, families, and couples from around the world.

As Pope Paul VI said: *“Countless couples will be grateful for the help you bring them.”*

### **10.2 INTERCESSION – WHAT IS IT?**

Intercession is a fixed encounter at a set time every month with the Lord: *“So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?”* (Mt 26:40).

It is an exchange effected in love between God and humanity.

Each of us is affected by the misfortunes of others: depression, suffering, separation, unemployment, etc. With a sense of helplessness, we wonder what we can do. We have within our reach the best support to our brothers in adversity: the prayer of intercession.

*“To intercede is to let God accomplish in us, with us, His plan to save all humanity. Concern for the salvation of others is one of the gravest responsibilities that he has ever given to us”*

(Father Henri Caffarel).

Christians should come before God to intercede for others with a repentant, broken, and selfless heart, recognizing their unworthiness.

### **10.3 THE PRACTICE OF INTERCESSION**

Intercession is a commitment. How should we live this commitment? The three options proposed to the intercessor are prayer, fasting, and daily offering of one’s life:

- Commitment to a monthly prayer time, on a fixed date, and, if possible, at night.
- Commitment to a day of fasting, also every month and on a fixed date.
- A daily offering of misfortunes, sufferings, and joys, and praying for those who cannot ensure a regular commitment.

With the objective of developing the Intercessors’ world family, and to facilitate the dissemination of the intercessory spirit in all SR/RRs, the Intercessors animating team:

- Proposes prayer intentions.
- Writes a quarterly letter and the Intercessors’ Newsletter.

- Prepares the publication of documents on intercession in five languages.
- Animates and follows the Intercessors' expansion work all over the world.

## **10.4 THE INTERNATIONAL INTERCESSORS ANIMATING TEAM**

The Intercessors Animating Team is composed of three to five couples assisted by a Priest-Spiritual Counsellor. The duration of their service is six years (renewable).

The Responsible Couple for the team participates in Teams Regional and International Gatherings to speak directly to the participants and interact with them. A Liaison Couple, a member of the ERI, is the link between the ERI and the Intercessors Animating Team.

The correspondent couples in each SR/RR are directly linked to the Intercessors Animating Team. Their role is the following:

- To develop the spirit of intercession in their countries and find new intercessors.
- To collect prayer intentions and circulate them among the intercessors.
- To create a record of intercessors in each country in order to develop an international list of intercessors.
- To consider communication between intercessors and their SR/RR by distributing the quarterly letter in that country and by being familiar with the pages dedicated to the Intercessors on [www.equipes-notre-dame.com](http://www.equipes-notre-dame.com) that contain all the guidance, information, and documentation on the Intercessors in five languages.
- To organize an annual spiritual retreat for Intercessors to meet and support one another in their commitment.
- To organize other specific activities in each country.

The evolution of intercession, the growth in the number of intercessors, and the effective organization of their activities are a support to the Movement of Teams of Our Lady. Intercessors allow Teams to respond more generously to its mission within the Church and in the world.

The Intercessors family has spread worldwide. Today there are 4,000 intercessors present in more than 30 countries. Liaison is effected by correspondent couples and by the quarterly letter translated into five languages. They are also united in daily prayer.

God calls all Christians to be intercessors, to pray for one another in the communion of the Saints.

# 11. DOCUMENTS

*For additional information:*

## 11.1 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- Appendix 1 - The Charter of the Teams of Our Lady - 1947
- Appendix 2 - What Is a Team of Our Lady? - 1977
- Appendix 3 - Discourse by Father Caffarel at Chantilly - 1987
- Appendix 4 - The Second Wind - 1988
- Appendix 5 - Vocation and Mission at the Dawn of the Third Millennium - 2018
- Appendix 6 - First Recognition of Teams by the Church (Letter of Cardinal Feltin) - 1960
- Appendix 7 - Decree of Recognition as an Association of the Faithful - 1992
- Appendix 8 - Confirmation of the Decree of Recognition and Approval of the Canonical Statutes - 2002
- Appendix 9 - Confirmation of the Modifications to the Teams Canonical Statutes following Approval by the Pontifical Council for the Laity - 2014

## 11.2 DOCUMENTS ON PEDAGOGY

- Sharing on the Endeavours 2001
- The Team Meeting 2009
- Conjugal Spirituality 2011
- The Endeavours
  - The Sit Down 2015
  - Individual Prayer 2016

- Couple and Family Prayer 2016
- Listening to the Word of God 2017
- The Rule of Life 2017
- The Retreat 2017
- Formation
  - Formation in Teams of Our Lady, a Path 2011
  - Formation Plan:
    - Initial Formation Sheets 2011
    - Permanent Formation Sheets 2011
    - Specific Formation Sheets 2011

### **11.3 DOCUMENTS ON THE LIFE OF THE MOVEMENT**

- Responsible Couple Guide 2015
- Information Couple Guide 2016
- Liaison Couple Guide 2017
- Pilot Couple Guide 2018
- Sector Couple Guide 2005
- Regional Couple Guide 2005
- The Priest-Spiritual Counsellor and the Spiritual Advisor in Teams of Our Lady 2017
- Young Couples in Teams Today. What is the Reality? 2011
- Teams and Their Older Members 2010
- Longstanding Teams 2017
- Responsibility in Teams of Our Lady 1993
- Collegiality in Teams of Our Lady 2003
- The Call to Service in Teams of Our Lady 2004
- The Principle Events in the History of Teams 2018



## 11.4 DOCUMENTS BY FATHER CAFFAREL

- The Teams of Our Lady (Father Caffarel) 1988
- Henri Caffarel – "Un Homme Saisi par Dieu"  
("A Man Seized by God") 1997
- Conferences and Editorials in Letters of Teams of Our Lady
- Teams of Our Lady at the Service of the New Commandment
- Teams of Our Lady Faces Atheism
- Gathered in the Name of Christ

# APPENDICES

## ANNEXE 1

### The Charter of the Teams of Our Lady

1947...1977

#### WHY THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY?

We live in an age of contrasts. On the one hand, divorces, adultery, free love and 'neo-malthusianism'<sup>5</sup> are widespread; on the other hand, a growing number of couples aspire to a thoroughly Christian life. Some of these have founded the Teams of Our Lady.

They aspire to carry out fully their baptismal commitments,  
They want to live for Christ, with Christ, through Christ,  
They give themselves to him unreservedly,  
They intend to serve him unquestioningly,  
They acknowledge him as leader and Lord of their home,  
They make his Gospel the charter of their family,  
They want their love, sanctified by the sacrament of marriage, to be

- a praise to God,
- a witness to people clearly proving that Christ has saved love
- and a reparation for the many sins committed against marriage,

They intend to be missionaries of Christ everywhere,  
Devoted to the Church, they want to be always ready to respond to the calls of their bishop and of their priests,

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834), an English economist, advocated population control.

They want to be competent in their work,  
They want to turn all their activities into a collaboration in the work of God and a service to humanity.

- Aware of their weakness and of the limits to their strength, if not of their good intentions,
- because they experience daily how difficult it is to live as Christians in a pagan world,
- and because they have unshakeable faith in the power of fraternal mutual help,
- they have decided to form a team.”

Teams are not nursery schools for respectable adults but ‘commando squads’, made up of volunteers.

No one is forced to join, nor to remain in it, but whoever belongs to it must play the game honestly.

## **MEANING OF THE WORD ‘TEAM’**

The word ‘team’ preferred to any other, implies the idea of a precise objective, pursued actively and in common.

The Teams place themselves under the patronage of Our Lady. In so doing, they emphasise their will to serve her and affirm that there is no better guide to God than the Mother of God.

## **SPIRIT OF THE TEAMS**

### **Mutual help.**

1 - There can be no Christian life without a living faith. There can be no living and growing faith without study. In practice, most married Christians give up all efforts at study and meditation, for want of knowing their importance, for want also of time, guidance and training.

As a result, their faith remains weak and vulnerable; their knowledge of God's ways and of the Church's teaching superficial and fragmentary. They have little knowledge of the ways to union with God. They have but little notion of the realities of family life: marriage, love, fatherhood, the upbringing of children, etc. As a result, they have little religious vitality and a very limited range of influence.

The couples of the Teams want to react against this. And so, they endeavour to deepen their religious knowledge and to discover the demands of Christ, in order to conform their life to them.

It is together, as a team, that they pursue this effort.

2 - It is not enough to know God and his teaching, there must be personal encounter with him. To study, one must add prayer. Just as we help one another to study in the Teams of Our Lady, so we help one another to pray. We pray with one another; we pray for one another.

"Again, I say to you, that if two of you consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Mt. 18: 19-20).

Strengthened by the Lord's promise, the couples of the Teams strive to remember the presence of Christ among them and pray together joyfully and confidently.

3 - Is it not unrealistic to claim to help one's friends to lead a spiritual life, if one does not first help them to overcome their worries and difficulties? This is why the couples of the Teams of Our Lady practice mutual help generously, as much materially as spiritually, obeying Saint Paul's great precept: "*Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfil the law of Christ*" (Gal 6: 2).

They try to satisfy the four demands of brotherly love: *to give, to receive* (more difficult than giving), *to ask* (even more difficult) *and to know how to refuse* (there can be no asking with simplicity, where there is not the simplicity to refuse a service requested, if it cannot be rendered without too much difficulty).

Mutual help should provide the legitimate security that so many others expect from money.

### **Witness.**

The Acts of the Apostles (4: 32) tell us that the early Christians “*were of one heart and one soul*”. Seeing them, the pagans were surprised: “*See, how they love one another!*” and admiration often led to conversion. Has brotherly love, in this twentieth century, lost the power of influence and attraction that it had in the early days of the Church?. The Teams of Our Lady think that, today as then, non-believers will be won over to Christ if they see Christian couples truly loving one another and helping one another in seeking God and in serving their brothers and sisters. And so brotherly love, going beyond mutual help, becomes a witness.

## **DISCIPLINE OF THE TEAMS.**

For the spirit of Teams to be alive and lasting, there has to be a rule. Spirit and rule, like body and soul, cannot be separated: the spirit must be the soul of the rule; the rule must support and protect the spirit.

The rule must be sufficiently light not to inhibit the personality and mission of each couple, but strong enough to protect against slackness.

## **The team.**

A team is composed of four to seven couples. One of these couples is its leader. It is important not to exceed this number, beyond which an intimate atmosphere is difficult to achieve and loses in quality”.

## **The monthly meeting.**

Friendship suffers from prolonged separation; it needs regular meetings. This is why the team meets at least once a month. Attendance at the monthly meeting is obligatory<sup>6</sup>. The plan of the meeting is as follows:

### **A MEAL TOGETHER**

It is very desirable to begin the monthly meeting with a meal together at the home of one or other of the couples in turn (as far as possible, of course). Man has not yet invented anything better than a meal to bring people together and create bonds of friendship. Is it not at mealtime that the family comes together? Is it not the Eucharistic meal that gathers together the children of God? The Acts of the Apostles tell us that the early Christians *“broke bread from house to house and took their meal with gladness and simplicity of heart”* (Ac 2: 46).

### **PRAYING TOGETHER**

Praying together is the outstanding way of meeting others in depth, of acquiring a common spirit and of growing aware of the presence of Christ among his own. But it only achieves this, if it is sufficiently prolonged to help people to put aside their worries and create silence. At least a quarter of an hour is devoted to praying together before the Exchange of Views.

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<sup>6</sup> It goes without saying that, in case of serious difficulties, one can be excused from this obligation as of others.

Immediately before the prayer, the couples share their intentions. If they are to be truly adopted by all, they must be presented with sufficient details and must be seen to be close to the heart of those who express them.

Then the current intentions of the great Catholic family are evoked so that they can also be prayed for (for example: persecuted Christians, a mission in difficulty, a particular apostolic venture, recruitment to the priesthood, etc.).

For this prayer together to swell the hearts and make them beat to the rhythm of the Church, it will include psalms, collects and hymns from the breviary and from the missal. These are given in the *Letter of the Teams of Our Lady*.

Another part of the prayer consists in each member expressing aloud their thoughts and feelings inspired by the passage from Scripture given in the Letter. A time of silence must also be allowed so that each member may have a more intimate and personal contact with God.

#### GENERAL SHARING<sup>7</sup> AND SHARING ON THE OBLIGATIONS.

A time must be set aside at monthly meetings (it can be during the meal) for a general sharing on matters of interest and concern affecting the family, a member's job, civic or Church involvements, successes or failures, discoveries, joys and sorrows.

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<sup>7</sup> This 'General Sharing' is wider than the sharing of news. It is called 'Mise en commun' in the French text of the Charter and is a reference to Acts 4: 32: "*They had everything in common*"

After the prayer, a time is reserved to the 'sharing' on the obligations of the Charter. Each couple says quite frankly whether they have kept, during the preceding month, the obligations laid down in the Charter.

It goes without saying that there is an intimate and personal domain which it would be wrong to reveal under pretext of friendship. Members of Teams react against the unashamed openness - all too widespread today - of couples who do not hesitate to reveal to everybody the problems of their married life. Barring this one reservation, how truly in keeping with Evangelical charity it is to share in this way and to call, in all simplicity, on brotherly mutual help. How many couples are saved from mediocrity, or even from failure, the day they no longer have to struggle alone.

### **EXCHANGE OF VIEWS<sup>8</sup>.**

Conversations not carried out in the presence of God are liable to be superficial. Ideas are bandied about and hearts refuse to be open to truths that call for transformation. Team members endeavour to be absolutely loyal: every truth that is better grasped must become part of one's life.

Exchanges of views are fruitful only if they are prepared. The spouses must reflect together on the study topic and send, a few days before the meeting, their comments in writing to the couple chosen to lead the next exchange of views. This obligation of a time of reflection together each month has proved very fruitful to them.

Mutual help in study demands that the exchange of views be prepared by all. Preparation in this case is even more necessary than for material

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<sup>8</sup> This 'Exchange of views' is not a discussion or debate but a sharing of thoughts on the study topic.



mutual help in which people would have qualms about receiving without giving to others.

The topics for study are not left to the free choice of teams. They are provided by the Leading Team - not out of arbitrary authoritarianism - but in order to help couples to acquire as complete a concept of Christian thinking as possible, and to initiate them to an authentic married and family spirituality.

The first three years are devoted to fundamental topics: love, marriage, married spirituality.

After these three years, teams can choose from several series of subjects for which study outlines, questionnaires and references are provided<sup>9</sup>.

It goes without saying that teams can organise extra meetings, either for additional exchanges of views or, quite simply, to deepen friendship.

### **The obligations of each couple.**

Couples, as we have seen, come to Teams seeking help. This does not absolve them from making some efforts. It is to give direction and support to their efforts that the Teams ask their members to observe the following obligations.

- a) *To set themselves a rule of life* (the great diversity of couples does not allow the same rule to be proposed to all). Without a rule of life, the religious life of the spouses may easily be governed by the whim of the moment and become chaotic. This rule of life (it goes without

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<sup>9</sup> Following Father Caffarel's conference "The Teams of Our Lady in the face of atheism", given during the 1970 Rome Gathering, study topics have been "based on the Word of God, the basis of all spiritual life".

saying, that each spouse has his/her own rule), consists in nothing else than determining the efforts that one intends to impose on oneself in order to respond better to the will of God.

It is not a question of multiplying one's obligations but to define them in order to strengthen the will and avoid drifting. Advice and guidance of a priest are desirable in order to guard against doing too much or too little. There is no obligation to reveal to one's team the rule adopted nor the manner it is observed. It must be noted, however, that some have benefited from extending mutual help thus far.

*to pray together and with their children once a day*, as far as possible, because the family, as such, owes worship to God and prayer together has great power,

- b) to say the prayer of the Teams of Our Lady daily, in union with all the couples of the Movement.
- c) *to practice once a month the 'duty of sitting-down'*. It is the occasion for each couple to review their life.
- d) *to study together as a couple the topic for study* and send in their comments in writing before the meeting - and to attend the meeting.
- e) to read the editorial of the Letter of the Teams
- f) *to make every year a residential retreat* of at least 48 hours, husband and wife together as far as possible. Only one retreat is obligatory prior to the team's commitment.
- g) *to give each year - by way of contribution - the fruits of one of their working days*, in order to provide for the material needs and

expansion of the movement to which they owe in part their spiritual enrichment.

- h) to contact and welcome, with a fraternal heart, couples from other teams, when the occasion arises

## **STRUCTURE OF THE TEAMS**

### **The Responsible Couple<sup>10</sup>.**

A short formula defines the role of the Responsible Couple and underlines its fundamental importance: 'they are responsible for brotherly love'. It is their responsibility to see that the team succeeds in evangelical charity and that each couple find in it the help they need.

They are strongly advised to prepare the monthly meeting with the team chaplain.

It is the Responsible Couple who provide the liaison with the leaders of the Movement and, through them, with all the Teams of Our Lady.

They send each month a report on the activities of their team to their 'Liaison Couple'. These reports make it possible for the Letter of the Teams to make every team benefit from the experience of other teams. It brings to light - should it occur - the slackness of a team. The Leading Team can then deal with it. Any team that does not want to play the game loyally, or cannot do so, is asked to leave the Movement. This is a necessary discipline: how many movements collapse, slowly smothered under the weight of inert members who have not been asked in time to leave.

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<sup>10</sup> The expression 'Responsible Couple' has been retained in this translation because it has long been accepted 'Teams Jargon', although it is a mistranslation of the French expression 'Foyer Responsable' which means 'Couple in Charge'.

When the Responsible Couple are forced to ask a couple who do not observe the commitments of the Teams to leave, they must make them understand that, although the general interest requires their departure, the affection the team has for them is in no way changed. They will ensure that contacts and bonds of friendship with them remain close.

The Responsible Couple is chosen by the members of the team at its foundation and subsequently at the end of the team year<sup>11</sup>. The couple who were Responsible Couple for the previous year can be chosen again. The Leading Team retain the right of veto on their appointment.

The Responsible Couple will only fulfil their role well if they have recourse to prayer. This is why both spouses commit themselves to attend mass on one weekday (barring serious obstacles) and to practice ten minutes of contemplative prayer each day.

### **The role of the priest in the team.**

Each team must secure the help of a priest. No programme of work can, in truth, replace the doctrinal and spiritual contribution of a priest. He not only outlines principles, but also helps couples to seek to translate them into their life. This is a fruitful collaboration. Priest and couples learn to understand, to value and to support one another: the couples adopt the great apostolic intentions of the priest and the priest remembers at mass these couples whose efforts, struggles and desires he knows so well.

### **Launching of a new team.**

Launching a new team is a delicate matter. Too hasty a start, without the objectives and methods having been clearly stated, ends almost

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<sup>11</sup> The team year ends with the summer holidays (vacations).

necessarily in failure. Careful preparation is necessary and a minimum of three meetings must be devoted to reading and explaining the Charter, under the guidance of the 'Pilot Couple'.

After approximately a year, the couples of the new team are invited to commit themselves. They will then, in the presence of a representative of the Leading Team, commit themselves to observe loyally the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady, both in the spirit and letter.

### **Admitting a new couple to a team.**

The new couple must acquaint themselves with the Charter. They will study the Charter with the help of the Responsible Couple or of another couple in the team. They will then progressively endeavour to practice the obligations. After a loyal trial of approximately a year, they will commit themselves with the team when the other couples renew their commitment.

How is one to give the new couple the formation acquired by the couples of the team through the study of the basic study topics? It is for the Responsible Couple to help them to study these basic subjects, even if it means excusing them from answering the questionnaires in the topic being currently studied by the team.

### **The Letter of the Teams.**

Close contact is necessary between the Leading Team and teams generally - however distant these might be. Brotherly links between the teams themselves, based on mutual acquaintance, mutual help and prayer is no less important.

The *Letter of the Teams*, sent to each couple, establishes and maintains a double link: vertical and horizontal. In it are to be found news of teams,

reports on the most interesting experiences, the editorial (mentioned above), the texts of prayers for the monthly meeting, information, etc.

### **Liaison Couples, Sectors, Regions.**

Although very useful, the Letter of the Teams, on its own, is not sufficient to ensure that the ties between the Leading Team and teams generally are as close and fruitful as desirable. It is for the various levels of leadership in the Movement to make them so.

Each team is entrusted to a Liaison Couple (each Liaison Couple looks after three to five teams). Furthermore, teams are grouped in “Sectors” and the Sectors in “Regions”. Sector Couples and Regional Couples are responsible for the smooth running of the teams entrusted to them.

Through frequent mutual contacts, leaders at various levels pass on the motivation they receive from the Leading Team and keep the latter informed of the desires and needs of teams. Thanks to them, the relationship between teams and the Leading Team have a note of brotherly cordiality instead of being purely administrative.

### **The Leading Team.**

The Leading Team is composed of priests and couples. It is not simply an administrative organ, but the motive force of the whole widespread body of teams. Its mission is to keep the spirit of Teams alive and its discipline strong. Its members must live close to God in prayer and close to teams through attentive friendship.

For their part, members of Teams must give it support by their prayers and help it by their comments and suggestions.

Couples do not look upon their entry into the Teams of Our Lady and their acceptance of the Charter as an end, but as a starting point. The law of the Christian home is love, and love has no limits - it knows no rest.

***Promulgated on the feast of the Immaculate Conception  
8 December 1947***

## **ANNEXE 2**

### **WHAT IS A TEAM OF OUR LADY?**

**(1977)**

#### **1. A Proposal**

“Come, follow Me!” Christ is calling each of us and each married couple. He invites us constantly to broaden His love so that witness may be given to that love wherever it may be.

There are couples who wish to answer that call. Although well aware of their weaknesses, these married couples have confidence in the sacramental grace given them by marriage and believe in the efficacy of fraternal mutual help and Christ’s promise - “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Some of these couples decide to form a Team and ask the Movement to help them. This is the basic proposal underlying the Teams of Our Lady.

#### **2. An Image**

A Team of Our Lady is a married couple’s Christian community.

##### **2.1 A Community**

A “Team” consists of 5 to 7 couples, assisted by a priest, who freely decide to join together. No one is forced to come, or forced to stay. They continue as active members because of fidelity to the Spirit.

In order to attain the common end they seek, each of the participants agrees to “play the game” faithfully, in accordance with the rules of their community.



Such a community has its rules and needs which find expression in the choice of a certain number of common goals and the concrete means necessary to achieve those goals (see third part). As long as a couple participates in the life of the community, they accept as their own the decisions made by that community.

Each “Team” forms part of a larger community, the international Movement of the Teams of Our Lady, and agrees to share fully in its life.

## **2.2 A Christian Community**

A “Team” is not simply a human community. It comes together “in Christ’s name” and attempts to help its members to make progress in the love of God and in the love of one’s neighbour in order to answer fully the invitation of Christ.

It was Christ’s wish that a visible community be the meeting place where the love He brought us could find expression and actuality. He, Himself, assembled such a community promising it His presence and granting it His Spirit. He entrusted it with His Gospel of Good News which was to be announced to the world. The community is the Church, the “Body of Christ”, which is at the service of the community of mankind.

The Church herself is made up of small communities, each distinct in appearance. The structure of these communities may be very different from that of the Church but the same life is present in each, just as each part of the human body shares the life of the whole body. The principle of life of the Church is Christ’s own love for His Father and for all mankind.

A Team of Our Lady is one of these small communities. As such, it links up with the Father (by its close communion with the Church) and yet remains in full contact with the world.

Its life is organised accordingly. The priest who “ensures that Christ be present as Head of the community” (Bishops Synod, 1971), helps the community by being a constant reminder of its true goal.

### **2.3 A Community of Married Couples**

In a distinctive way, a Christian home is already a Christian community.

On the one hand, such a community is found on a human reality, that is, the free, complete, definitive and fruitful gift of one’s self through love. This is what a man and woman undertake in marriage. On the other hand, through Christ, this human reality becomes a sacrament, that is, a sign that displayed God’s love for mankind and Christ’s love for His Church and allows husband and wife to share in those two loves.

Christ’s presence in a conjugal community is very special. His love for God and for men transforms human love from within. Consequently, human love lived in a Christian fashion is already, of itself, a witness to God. From the fullness of conjugal love flows the apostolic action of a Christian home.

The mutual aid that develops within a Team has a distinctive character. Each couple will help others to grow in Christ (married couples are constantly “under construction”) and through their love, collaborate in the promotion of God’s kingdom.

A Team of Our Lady asks for the special protection of our Blessed Mother. In this way, the members of Teams underline their conviction that there is no better guide on the path to God than “she who held the first place among the humble and poor of the Lord, those who confidently await and attain His salvation” (Lumen Gentium, 55).

### **3. A Way**

Only one “way” exists for all Christians: namely, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. “Happy are they who hear the word of God and keep it” (Luke 11:28).

The Teams of Our Lady do not impose a particular type of spirituality on their members. They simply want to help them advance, as a couple, along the path signposted by Christ. For this reason, stress is placed on three points:

- a direction to life
- concrete suggestions for particular practices (Endeavours)
- Team spirit

#### **3.1 A Direction to Life**

This is based on the love that Christ came to bring us: “Love the Lord, Your God, with your whole heart, your whole soul, and with all your mind and strength. Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12: 30- 31).

To grow in such love is a lifetime’s work. The Teams of Our Lady want to help their members in this effort and thus require the following points of collaboration:

- For mutual aid toward their growth in God’s love, couples should:
  - carve an important place in their lives for prayer,
  - become familiar with God’s Word, and make a consistent effort to live it more fully,
  - frequent the sacraments regularly, especially the Holy Eucharist,
  - energetically strive to grow in knowledge and the practice of Christian asceticism.

- For mutual aid towards growth in love of others, couples should:

- put into practice true mutual help as a married couple - listen, speak and share in all matters, but especially with regard to spiritual matters,
- preoccupy themselves to the full human and Christian education of their children,
- open their homes in a spirit of friendship and hospitality,
- bear effective witness of Christ's love, especially by acceptance of ecclesiastical and civic duties.

### **3.2 Concrete Suggestions for Particular Practices (Endeavours)**

Experience shows that unless one undertakes a certain number of specific practices, general directives for one's life will remain unattainable. The Teams of Our Lady propose the following to their members:

- to undertake a number of "obligatory" practices (these are six in number, and constitute what are called "the obligations")
- to request an accounting and assistance of the Team with regard to these practices (the so-called "sharing on obligations" at the monthly meetings).

The six obligations are the following:

1. A regular reading (or hearing) of the Word of God.
2. A daily period set aside for true "conversation with the Lord" (prayer).
3. A daily time between husband and wife for conjugal and if possible, family prayer
4. A monthly in-depth talk between husband and wife in the Lord's presence (the duty of sitting-down).
5. A drawing up (and monthly revision) of one's rules of life.
6. A yearly retreat (at least two days) made together as husband and wife, if possible, in order to withdraw into

the presence of the Lord and effect a spiritual accounting of the past year.

### **3.3 Team Spirit**

The Team is not an end in itself, but a means for the benefit of its members. It allows them:

- to live together key moments of common prayer and mutual sharing
- to help each other truly progress in the Lord and bear witness to Him.

There are generally three aspects, or turning points, in the life of a Team, just as there are in the life of any Christian community:

- with Christ, the Team turns toward the Father and welcomes His love;
- in Christ, the Team shares that love - “they are united in heart and soul” (Acts 4:32);
- urged by the Spirit, the Team sends its members into the world to reveal that love.

Primarily, there are three aspects to be found in the course of the monthly meetings.

These normally include:

- a meal, which is more especially an occasion for fostering a spirit of friendship;
- a communal prayer, which is the center and summit of the meeting and which, sometimes, can take the form of an Eucharistic celebration;
- a “sharing” (on endeavours) and a “pooling”, where mutual aid is at its strongest, especially with regard to spiritual and apostolic help for one another:

- a discussion on the theme under consideration for the month, wherein the members especially deepen their grasp of the Faith.

However, the life of the Team is not limited to the monthly meeting. In accordance with the initiative of each group, prayer (in the company of other members and for their intentions), and mutual sharing and assistance prolong the groups' activities during the month.

There is one couple "in charge" elected each year by the members of the Team who undertakes to ensure that all participate effectively in the life of the community so that mutual help will be really efficacious and each member will feel truly recognised, loved, and accepted by the group.

The couple in charge has the duty of inviting each member to participate actively in the Teams of Our Lady;

at the individual Team level:

- by attending the monthly meeting,
- by preparing for that meeting through prayer and reflection and particularly by writing out one's considerations of the monthly theme;

at the Movement level:

- by keeping informed about the life of the Movement, especially by reading the Newsletter of the Teams and, more particularly, the Editorial,
- by making an effort to live according to the directives common to the Movement and to promote the Movements interests,
- by attending the meetings organised at different level of the Movement

- by a willingness to share in the Movements life and apostolic mission,
- by accepting service responsibilities
- by paying the annual dues (based on a fair appraisal of one day's earnings),
- by including in one's prayers the intentions of each and every member of the Movement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Teams of Our Lady is a Movement of spirituality for married people. It offers its members a team life and some concrete means to help them progress as a couple in God's love and the love of their neighbour. Teams of Our Lady thus prepares couples to become witnesses in a manner freely chosen by each couple. In this way, Teams of Our Lady, even though they are not a movement for action, are nevertheless, a Movement of active people.

**September 1976**

## ANNEXE 3

### DISCOURSE BY FATHER CAFFAREL AT THE MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL RESPONSIBLE COUPLES



*Chantilly, Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1987.*



Could we begin with a brief recollection, for it is something that is **very** important? It is a question of trying to enter more deeply into the mind of the Lord before we start, so let us spend a few seconds in prayer.

Here is my subject: What is the founding charism of the Teams of Our Lady?

So that you may understand me better, let me begin with a story: I was in Rome, twenty years ago, I was at the Commission of the religious, the body which supervises, controls and guides the congregations and religious orders throughout the whole Church. I was speaking with an ecclesiastic from this Commission and he said to me: "Every year we have some 700, 800 or 1,000 applications for the approval of the foundation of new orders." I was surprised at these figures, and this cleric, being somewhat misogynous no doubt, said to me: "To tell you the truth, most of these applications come from women: they are not particularly keen on being novices in a long-established order, so they found a new order in order to be straight away "Mother Superior", and he told me "the applications fall into three categories:

- Those which advance reasons and ideas which are wholly unacceptable, we eliminate them.
- Those which have good ideas, ideas which are very edifying, for the foundation of a new order, so we subject these applications to further study and we will probably grant them.
- And a third category, that as regards which we have the feeling that probably there is a founding charism at the start but, to tell the truth, there never is one at the start, it is the future that decides.

What is meant by "founding charism."? Well, something totally different from just a good idea, rather an inspiration of the Holy Spirit which will be like a dynamic force which will guide the institution

throughout the whole of its development and will allow it fulfil its mission. There are groups which have at the start a founding charism but it can happen that, over the years, there is a falling away: and the history of the Church gives many examples of this because their successors were not sufficiently welded to the founding charism by thought and prayer, and all of a sudden, decline sets in. This man from the Commission for the religious continues to address me: "This is clearly why, he says, the Council was very insistent in asking the Congregations, and the religious orders, to bring about an *aggiornamento*. That is to say, to envisage a renewal, a renaissance, starting with reflecting on, and enquiring into the needs of their members and with a view to responding to the demands of the times and having regard to the future.

So, there are three elements when one is envisaging an *aggiornamento*, as you are doing now, after 40 years. To return to the source, because sometimes the spring has become clogged with sand, the spring which I call the founding charism. There are religious orders which, in the course of time, take a wrong turn. I am thinking of such a one I know very well. It is an order of women. At the outset it was founded to educate poor children and it finished up having only boarding schools for the daughters of a social elite: girls from this background produce more vocations than poor children: there you have an example of infidelity to the founding charism. So, **return to the source.**

Secondly, keep in mind the needs and values of the period in which one is living. Each period brings new values to the Church and to society, some positive and some negative; there is no doubt that we must keep in mind the values which are positive and the needs of individuals. One has to verify to what extent these values, which one is envisaging adopting, are consistent with the founding charism. Some years ago it happened that certain Trappists asked permission of their superior to become worker-priests. He consulted with other superiors

and then told them that it was not within the order's founding charism, which did not mean that he looked down on worker-priests but simply that the Trappists had a different vocation.

Return to the source, take on board the current needs and values to the extent that they can be assimilated and then consider the road ahead. What is the direction in which the Movement must be invited to go forward, but always linked to the founding charism? This notion of fidelity to the founding charism is vital, but one must not confuse being faithful with being set in one's ways. I dare to believe to-day, after 40 years, that at the origin of the Teams of Our Lady there was a founding charism. But mind you, I do not take myself for someone inspired, a prophet or a saint.

At the start we had no inkling of what the future might be; we did not say: "the Holy Spirit prompted me to do such and such." It is to-day, after 40 years, looking at the development of the Teams, that these are my thoughts: in 1939, with the first four couples, there was something other than just a good idea, there was something other than just enthusiasm, that this coming together was not just by chance, that Providence and the Holy Spirit had a part to play in it, and now I give thanks to the Lord, but at the same time I put a question to myself. And it is of this I want to speak to you.

What is it of the founding charism that has really been understood over the years? What has been imperfectly understood? And what is it we could not understand but which we understand better at the present time?

When one envisages an *aggiornamento*, as you are doing, there is a major law which must be respected, and not only at these decisive moments but throughout the whole of the process. First of all, those in control, and that is your position, must be in close contact with those at the base. This is why, when a religious order carries out an

aggiornamento, all the members of the order are consulted: be in close contact with those at the base, it is often there that the founding charism is preserved in its purest form.

The second law: it is also necessary to be in contact with those at the base in order to pass on what has been understood, what those at the top understand; it is always a very serious matter when there is a gap between the top and the members. It is a very difficult problem, and I became aware that it existed in the Teams of Our Lady. There was a time when I was in contact with all the responsible couples every two weeks or every month, it was obviously a very direct contact; then, little by little, a whole hierarchy was put in place, and to establish contact became much more difficult. But, no matter what the price, there must be the will to establish it. But first of all, the first point which I mentioned above.

What is it of the founding charism that appears to have been well perceived, well understood, and well assimilated?

I am unable to put into words the first steps. It was the sowing of a seed in which there was all the dynamism which powered the take-off of the Movement. One day, in March 1939, a young married woman came to see me to ask me if I would help her to progress in her spiritual life. Naturally, I agreed. Two weeks later, she asked me if I would see her husband; I agreed. And a month later, both of them asked me if I would agree to have a meeting with three other couples, friends of theirs, who were concerned with how to make progress in living as Christians. They were four young couples under thirty years of age. I hesitated because I had had a cruel experience. In an abbey, I was with a group of adolescent scouts; there had been a discussion, and they had put the following question to me: "Father, could you speak to us of love? So, trusting in my knowledge of Scholastic psychology, I said to them: "To love, is to wish somebody well." They burst out laughing: "To wish somebody well! But, you know nothing about it." And I beat a hasty

retreat saying: "Well, my answer needs to be qualified somewhat." But it did not stop my being mortified by this little experience. So, when I found myself faced with this proposal from the couples, I was lacking in confidence, all the same, I went to the meeting. The couples were very characteristic of young couples of that era: they had effected a twofold reconciliation. Firstly, a reconciliation between love and marriage: a well-known saying was often heard at that time and in the preceding years: "Love is one thing, marriage is another." I think it was either Maurois or Mauriac who was the author of it. Well, for these young couples, almost all of them having been scouts, this reconciliation had been effected: love and marriage, both were one and the same thing. They had had no love affairs beforehand, their first love was their spouse. And their marriage was a love full of joy. They had effected a second reconciliation: Religion and the love of Christ are one and the same thing. I do not know if you can recall what the thinking was in regard to this at that time, and for many years before, when I was in College; no one spoke of God's love; in France we were still very influenced by Jansenism and a priest who spoke of God's love was an oddity. I had the good fortune to meet a spiritual director who actually spoke to me of Christ's love. But, it was truly a reconciliation that had to be effected by Catholics, and these four couples had succeeded in doing it.

The result was that I had before me couples in whom dwelt two loves: love of their spouse and love of Christ. At first sight, one might think that conjugal love and the love of Christ are each all consuming and intransigent, but they had the curious experience of discovering that these two loves, which are absolute, fitted perfectly together in their spiritual life without their really being able to understand the uniting of the love of spouse and the love of Christ; this is why they were eager to discover how to progress towards holiness with those two loves in their heart. The first meeting, very joyful, full of optimism, flowing from the great joy, which was theirs, of loving each other and loving Christ. They put thirty six questions to me and suddenly my

apprehensions disappeared, I was even surprised to feel so much at ease, and then I understood why I was so much at ease; for the previous 10 or 15 years I had had a relationship of love with Christ, and in the company of these couples, who spoke to me of their love, I discovered that in the life of the couple were to be found the laws which I had discovered in my relationship with Christ; the laws of love are the same everywhere. And this is what immediately won me over and made me enthusiastic, we were going to be able to help each other, they would bring to me the concrete life which they were leading, and I would bring to them such notions as I had about spirituality. How many times have I said to myself that I would by no means have developed in the way I did if, instead of meeting these four couples, I had at the commencement of my ministry discovered marriage in the confessional; I would have got to know the moral difficulties and the psychological difficulties, I would have formed a much more sombre idea of the union of man and woman; fortunately it was with these four couples that I became interested in marriage.

The other idea was, from the very beginning, to discover God's thinking on the couple, and on everything concerning the couple. And I think there we hit on one of the fundamental elements of the founding charism, so much so that we made a list of all the elements which go to make up the life of the couple and the life of the family and we said that we would seek to discover God's will on each of these elements in turn. We had no idea that four months later war would be declared, the four couples would be dispersed and I myself would go off to the army.

The second orientation: all of them, without exception, had no difficulty with the thought that their vocation was – holiness: holiness seemed to them to be the flowering of love, the completion of their conjugal love and of their love of Christ. And then, this thought immediately led them to discover in a wholly new way the sacrament of marriage, not just a formality but a source of prodigious grace, Christ

coming to save love, ailing since original sin, and bringing to it much needed help and huge graces.

Something else became apparent to us, very important, it had its origin at a meeting when we were praying, for at each of the meetings we prayed, spontaneously, it was a need, above all a need to praise God for what these couples were living and for what they were discovering about God's thinking. They were full of wonder to discover that God had such a marvellous idea about human love. And then, one day, during the prayer, one of the women addressed God in these terms: "Lord, we thank you for the marriage of our two sacraments: the priesthood and marriage." I think this insight was very far-seeing, and I think it is part of the dynamism of the start-up, the alliance of the priesthood, which represents the Church, and the thinking of the Church, and the couples who bring their richness, their needs, their questions and the necessity of a dialogue so that the teaching of the Church should not be disconnected from the concrete realities of their life, but rather that it should try to respond not only to the needs of the couples but also to their aspirations. And throughout the whole life of the Teams we have held firmly to this notion of the marriage of the two sacraments. We had four meetings – that was all, but it was sufficient, I can say, to decide for me what was my vocation. Thanks to these meetings I developed tremendous enthusiasm and then, in July 1940, I came back after three times escaping from the Germans, I was appointed curate to a parish, and straight away I met other couples and spoke to them about the experience we had had. And they asked me to let them have this same experience of meetings of couples.

It was in a completely different climate, there was the war, there were restrictions, there was suffering, there were threats, sometimes there was a visit of the Gestapo to the home of one or other of the couples, taking one of the husbands off to a camp to be deported. We kept the pre-war enthusiasm because God's thinking on marriage was the foundation of this enthusiasm, but at the same time we had become

conscious that human life is not an easy road. So, with much good will and tenacity we set out to explore together the doctrine of the sacrament of marriage. The thinking of the Church on all the aspects of marriage; we asked ourselves how we should live in a Christian way the realities of conjugal and family life. And then we widened our question: how to fulfil in the married state all the demands of the Christian life? I think that is more precise. And in particular it appeared to us to be necessary to tease out the spirituality of a married Christian for, it was clear, the teaching of the Church, of priests, at that time to men and women wishing to sanctify themselves, was a spirituality developed by monks or other religious. So there was a discovery to be made, otherwise we were bound to remain in a cul-de-sac, the couples would never get very far on the road to holiness if they were tied to the spirituality of a monk. So, the first deepening, during the years of the occupation: a doctrinal deepening, with the feeling that we would never finish getting to the bottom of God's thinking on marriage.

Second deepening: the deepening of friendship, in those circumstances, so difficult, sometimes dramatic, as I referred to earlier, we began to understand that these meetings of couples did not simply have as their aim the deepening of a doctrine but had also the aim of enabling friendships to be formed, and suddenly these groups of couples understood that one aspect of their vocation was mutual help. Mutual help and prayer. The first time that one of these husbands was taken away by the Gestapo, I remember that, the same afternoon, we immediately telephoned to all the other couples, and we decided to go to the home of that couple to spend the night in prayer. The women had divans and beds, and we, the men, were in the sitting-room, lying under blankets, and we prayed in turn all night in the home of that couple and, by the way, the husband did return ultimately. But we felt this need for prayer extremely strongly, and since then I could not conceive of any meeting of couples taking place without prayer being part of it. That then was from 1940 to 1945. The prisoners, the deportees, returned, some did not return, alas! The groups multiplied, it became a fashion,



some came out of a concern to deepen their knowledge of God, and some in order to find human friendship and perhaps also out of snobbery.

I had a strong feeling that there was a threat hanging over these groups, a threat of weakening. Instead of having a high ideal, being content to take the easy way. It was a critical turning point. It was then that I was driven to reflect, to put this question to myself: how is it that members of religious orders journey towards sanctity throughout their whole life without falling away, without becoming discouraged, without abandoning? It is because they have a rule. And this idea came into my mind; it stuck there and I spoke to others about it: "If we wish to avoid a collapse, or at least choosing the easy way, do we not need to have a rule?" And it is in 1945, 1946 and 1947 that we thought about the Charter, but we were straight away conscious of the fact that if we envisaged taking this course we ran the risk of losing a great many couples, which is what happened. On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1947, in the crypt of the Church of St. Augustine in Paris, all the couples had been invited to attend; a rumour had gone round that something more demanding was going to be proposed and, as anticipated, a third of the couples left, they did not accept a rule that was demanding. We felt very badly about this, we asked ourselves if we had been too ambitious, but finally, in the years that followed, we discovered that the groups of couples who stayed were in fact those who accepted what made demands on them.

And then there was an explosion, an unexpected expansion to the four corners of the globe. And then there were our great Gatherings, particularly in Lourdes and Rome. And I remember that in 1959 the following question arose for consideration. "The Teams of Our Lady, are they a movement of initiation to the spirituality of the couple and the family? But, if a movement of initiation, one leaves it when one has been initiated, a child does not spend the rest of its life in the nursery." And, in effect, we were conscious of the danger of the Teams of Our Lady

being a crèche for adults. Or, on the other hand, our movement, is it a movement seeking perfection, and the response which came out of the Gathering in Rome was that the Teams should be both a movement of initiation and a movement seeking perfection. It is simpler; a movement of initiation, and a movement seeking perfection, this means finding rules which permit the members to advance along the road. That's how it is. So let us make a resume of the elements of the founding charism as they emerged in the course of these years. To my mind there are seven:

- Firstly, marriage is a work of God, and it is God's masterpiece.
- Secondly, marriage has a soul and it is love, and to neglect love is to condemn marriage,
- Thirdly, men and women cannot be faithful to love without help from Christ, this is why he invented the sacrament of marriage; we must delve deeply into it.
- Fourthly, married Christians, like other people, like monks, are called to be holy, which was quite an original idea. The Vatican Council had not yet taken place, and it was at the Council that great insistence was put on the vocation to holiness of the laity.
- Fifthly, conjugal life has very great riches but can also be very demanding.
- Sixthly, it is necessary, in fact indispensable, to develop a spirituality of the couple, which cannot be the spirituality of a celibate or of a monk.
- Seventhly, this spirituality can only be lived with the help of a movement to give direction to the couples' thinking and a framework for their lives.

This is what has been fully perceived regarding the founding charism; I will tell you now what has been less well perceived:

- Firstly, having been made very enthusiastic by these young couples so filled with love, I thought love would be the great factor in their achieving perfection, and that I should say to them "Be faithful to love." I forgot that Christ proposes two means to

those who wish to seek perfection: love and self-sacrifice. God wishes the Christian to be perfect, the couple to be perfect, he wishes every human being to become perfect, they will only become so by being faithful to love and self-sacrifice, that is to say, by giving themselves and forgetting themselves. Love and self-sacrifice are the two sides of the coin, no love without self-sacrifice, and a self-sacrifice which is not a self-sacrifice made out of love is a self-sacrifice which is impossible in practice. And in reflecting on this I understood that the Lord had invented marriage as the great means of developing love and as the great means of making self-sacrifice possible. And I understood that self-sacrifice cannot be merely a side line, that true self-sacrifice takes over, it never ceases to love, to love permanently with the attitude "for you" and never with the attitude "for me". To walk on the roads of the earth, the Lord gave us two legs, to walk on the roads to holiness, the Lord gave us two means, love and self-sacrifice. For I realised that I had invited couples to hop on one foot to reach their destination, and one does not get very far along the road hopping on one foot, one must advance on two feet, putting one foot after the other. And I am not so sure that this penetrated fully into the consciousness of the Teams of Our Lady. Marriage, a great means of love, and a great means of self-sacrifice precisely in order to make it possible for there to be love.

One of my souvenirs: after a conference on conjugal spirituality, a woman came to see me, a woman who must have been about 60, she said to me: "Father, how I want to thank you, but to think we did not know all that, my husband and I, at the time of our marriage." I stop to listen. "I am going to tell you something." I expect her to confide something to me, I let her talk. ""Ah, I can tell you everything. Well, the colonel (when she spoke of her husband, it was always the colonel, as if there was only one colonel in the world) the colonel, when I married him, was already very advanced in the spiritual life. Ah, I can tell you the

rest, he was a member of the Franciscan third order (she had difficulty in getting out her story) he wore a hair-shirt, but I have to add that it was me that it scratched." I felt like saying to her: "But, (I withheld the malicious remark) he ought to have understood that it was enough to have a wife, there was no need to have a hair-shirt as well."

The moral of the story: the true way of dying to oneself, for there is forever this old egotism at work in us, the true way is to love, and to love from morning to night, and never to let oneself revert back to the "for me" mentality but always to remain with the attitude of the one who is poor. The Lord invented marriage as the best way of making progress in love and self-sacrifice. Members of religious orders have something else, married couples have this.

The second point which has not been seen in a way that is sufficiently clear. Sexuality in marriage: it was not something unknown, and these young couples were even quite ready to talk about it very freely. None the less, we have not gone deeply into the question, we have not delved into the meaning of sexuality from the human point of view and the Christian point of view, we have not sufficiently helped team members to achieve human perfection in sexuality or Christian perfection. I felt this so strongly that when we were thinking of the pilgrimage to Rome in 1970, and the Pope asked us on what topic we would like him to speak to us, I proposed that he give us a conference on the human and Christian meaning of sexuality, and we prepared a memorandum of 30 pages on the subject. This was submitted to Paul V1 who had this response sent to me: "It is not ripe for treatment, I cannot accede to your request." And in one way we were not sorry; he in fact delivered the admirable address with which you are all familiar. But in order to make it easier for Paul V1, we had launched a far-reaching inquiry, containing between one hundred and one hundred and fifty questions, on the sexual life of each of the team members: I gave an absolute commitment that the anonymity of the replies would be fully respected and asked them to reply with complete frankness. We

received more than a thousand replies to the inquiry. But since the Pope had not taken up the topic, the inquiry remained dormant for years and it was only last year that I said to myself: "It is out of the question to leave it in oblivion," and I began to go through the replies. I have now read something like 800 replies, some of them running to between 20 – 50 pages. It was no light work but for me it has been truly an eye-opener. I am far from being an altar boy, I had received confidences from lots of couples, but I had had only a very general view of the sexual life of this category of team couples. It taught me a great deal. I am still very affected by it, and I hope I will be able to set out my conclusions in a book, if God gives me the time.

Firstly, what affected me very strongly was the silence of parents on this topic, a negligence displayed by 95%. You will say to me, those who replied, this was in 1969, it was not the couples of 1987, I am not sure that there has been any great progress in this domain. So, the silence of parents, what this means: a difficulty for most children, boys and girls, which means difficulties of which they don't dare to speak, which means culpabilisation, and often neurotic culpabilisation. I am affected by these troubles of childhood, these consciences troubled for years, which means: engaged couples having difficulties because the parents say nothing and the priests don't say much more. Very often, for very many, the period of engagement is difficult, the fiancés not knowing exactly, as they say: "what is permitted, and what is forbidden." The commencement of the marriage, catastrophic, I did not believe that it could be so to such an extent. No one talks about it, needless to say. Sexual harmony rarely achieved at the start, often it takes two or three years, sometimes ten or fifteen, and in many couples it is never achieved, and that inquiry helped me to appreciate to what degree it is of capital importance.

This inquiry revealed at the same time that, amongst the couples, the Christian meaning of sexuality is almost completely unknown. Not even as many as 2% gave a genuinely worth-while reply

to the following question: What is the Christian meaning of sexuality? How do you live your sexuality in a Christian way? Another thing which came out of all this, something which has now greatly changed, most of the couples who replied had a special concern in regard to respecting what they called the law of the Church. They achieved this with difficulty, often with a great deal of impatience and perhaps wishing to rebel, but they did not concern themselves with the human quality of intercourse, and I came to understand through reading, studying and meditating on these replies, that there cannot be a genuine moral law of sexuality if there has not been any concern with the quality of sexuality. And it is there that I recognised that the people of the Church, from this point of view, have not been faithful to their mission. They preach the morality of marriage, they say what is permitted and what is prohibited, but not a single book on this topic is offered to married Christians; such does not exist, or tell me if you are aware of one.

Please excuse the expression, formerly I used to hate it, it is rather common, but I think it is important, as regards the manner of making love well, of having good sexual relations. Well, Christian couples, like the rest, have the sexuality of barbarians; I have not the time to tell you now how my thinking has evolved thanks to the confidences I have received and the research I have done personally and with certain couples. So, I speak of this as something which has not been done, and something which must be done, it is absolutely essential to guide couples towards a human and Christian perfection of sexual relations. Also, I had probably minimised the importance of the teaching of the Church on original sin.

The third aspect of the founding charism which it seems to me, has not been sufficiently understood, but to tell the truth, it is only over the course of the years that it could be understood: the mission of the Teams of Our Lady. For the Teams of Our Lady have a vocation, to help couples to become holy. The Teams of Our Lady have a mission in the Church, we must continually bear in mind these two aspects, vocation

and mission. So, after 40 years, we understand it better, I venture to say something to you which may appear to you to be an invitation to be proud, but it is not. The founding and the development of the Teams of Our Lady in the Church is a great Church event. Before 1939 there was not in the Church any group of couples; there were innumerable groups of individuals, but of groups of couples, there were none. It was something altogether unusual, there could not have been any such groups precisely because couples had not had the experiences of which we have been speaking. An example: in the first group I was with, we decided to make a retreat, and I went to ring at the door of a Jesuit retreat house: "Could we have a retreat in your house?" But, of course, (then he checked) but are there women?" "But yes, retro satanas!" They had never accepted women in their Jesuit retreat house. I go to the Sisters of the Cenacle: "But, are there men? Impossible!" This little anecdote displays the novelty of a movement of couples. It is there we discover an aspect of the founding charism which I had failed badly to understand.

Finally, in the Church, one only saw the individual, one reacted as if the whole point of creation, of God's great enterprise in creating the universe, the point, the supreme point, the perfection of God's work, was the individual: one forgot completely these lines in Genesis "God created man in his image, in the image of God He created him, man and woman He created them, and they shall be one flesh." The summit of the pyramid, it is not the individual, it is the couple. This is something very new, and the Movement should oblige the Church to revise somewhat its anthropology and its conception of things. St. John Chrysostom, one of the Fathers of the Church, though not a spiritual counsellor in the Teams of Our Lady, wrote this, this very strong statement: He who is not married, is not a unit, he is only half a unit." But this goes very far. Men and women possess the same human nature, so they are equal. They possess the same human nature but according to different modalities. So they complement each other when they unite, they form the entity which is the couple. The couple, it is the work

of God. I had this intuition with those first four couples, but I had not analysed the issue, I was insisting rather on love, on marriage, but I think that in the Church we must not be contented with speaking only of marriage and love, we must speak of the couple and it is all the more necessary to-day, rather than formerly, since we have arrived at the point where the difference of the sexes is being denied. That Madame Badinter, the wife of the Minister for Justice, should have written a book entitled: "One is the Other." IS, that is to say, man and woman are interchangeable, is one of the great catastrophes of our world of the expiring 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, since sexuality has been trivialised, then the complementarity of the sexes is unknown and one reaches this collapse of society: in 15 years the number of marriages in France has gone from 450,000 to 225,000 or something like that. Let us be careful then of the way we speak about the Teams of Our Lady; formerly we spoke of a movement of "ménages": oh, la, la! The word "*Ménage*," I can no longer stand it, we spoke of a movement of "foyers", that's a bit vague, it is a movement of couples. And that is the great affirmation that we must bring to the Church. I have not the time to tell you of the play by Giraudoux entitled "Sodom and Gomorrah."

Second aspect of the Teams of Our Lady: Before the arrival of the Teams of Our Lady, before this event which I have told you was revolutionary, the teaching was that "if you want to be perfect, give up thoughts of marriage and choose the religious life." That was what a priest said to me when I made my retreat at the end of my last year in College, and I replied to him, I was very naïve: "But really, if we were to listen to you, the end result would be that humanity would no longer exist, everyone would choose the religious life or to be a priest." Being a naïve 15 year old I thought that everybody wanted to be perfect. And the Teams of Our Lady, what do they say? That it is possible to become holy in and through the state of marriage. I am not going to stress it. You are all very familiar with the concept. But it is a new concept which is not a current concept in the Church.



Third “revolution”, if I may call it such: before the Teams of Our Lady – and it is still like this in the Church – we were somewhat Manichean, matter and the flesh, it was what we had to free ourselves from as much as possible, we were not far from thinking like Plato: “the body is the tomb of the soul.” Well, with the Teams of Our Lady, it is now affirmed in the Church that sexuality is a factor of sanctification, provided it is grasped and evangelised, that pleasure is a reality which is holy in God’s order of things, and should not be suspect as it is in those doleful types of spirituality which we often came across. And this goes much further, in the whole life of the world the natural values are not to be looked down on; we must adopt them, and sexuality is one type of these values. It is so important currently to understand all this in order to save sexuality from being treated as unimportant, for currently sexuality is at risk of this, and to save sexuality from eroticism.

Fourth “revolution”: When I was a child we used to sing: “I have only one soul which I must save.” And holiness, it was an individual matter, I did not sanctify myself for you. It is you who will save yourself. And the Teams of Our Lady, in the Church, say: but mutual help is something willed by God as a path to holiness, you do not save yourself on your own. Mutual help within the couple and the mutual help between couples, this is something new.

Fifth “revolution”. Bear in mind that I am giving the word “revolution” a broad meaning, I am not claiming that nothing of all this had been perceived before, but it is at the same time very characteristic of the Movement. Formerly, holiness was conceived as being “Cultivate your spiritual beauty.” But when one speaks of the holiness of people who are married, one recalls this saying of Christ’s: “The tree will be judged by its fruit,” not by its beauty but by its fruit. When God presents to us Abraham whom he wishes to make the father of all the saints, he points out to him the stars in the sky saying: “This is your posterity.” “Your holiness, it shall be your fruitfulness.” This is rather new in the Church, it is not about cultivating one’s beauty but

about participating in creation which is directed towards an end. It is an idea which is very much part of contemporary thinking, this idea of the evolution of the world and the necessity of contributing to that evolution. But marriage makes us understand this very well, it is about transmitting life, it is not simply about putting a shine on your personal perfection.

I regret one thing, this is just between us, I am not blaming anyone, by no means, I regret that the Teams of Our Lady, seen from the perspective of their mission, did not continue the centres of preparation for marriage. They were created by the Teams of Our Lady but very soon they lost their Christian ethos. I do not think that the Teams of Our Lady should have taken on the management of the preparation for marriage but I think that the Teams of Our Lady should have centres for the preparation of marriage to which the other centres could have referred to profit from the spirituality which they had discovered. And I regret, my second regret, that the marriage counsellors, many of whom are members of the Teams, have not been formed and supported by the Teams: as a result they rely more on the psychology of Freud than on the spirituality of marriage and the family.

And there too my wish would be that the Teams of Our Lady should have marriage counsellors and not maintain they have a monopoly but act in such a way that there should be references to them on the lines of the founding charism.

What could not have been seen, I have told you what had been very well seen, what had been less well seen, and what could not have been seen and could only be seen in the current circumstances. Firstly, today we must start at the bottom; there are quantities of couples who have never been properly taught the Catechism and who have little knowledge of the Christian life and who fulfil very badly the demands of that life. At the present time, I know teams in which it requires an effort to get the couples to go to Mass on Sunday. The question would not have arisen forty years ago, it is a fact, a matter of the practice of one's

religion, but it is above all a question of religious formation. The lack of knowledge of the catechism explains how there are couples with a very inadequate Christian formation who wish, none the less, to join the Teams of Our Lady. This reminds me of what I came across in Brazil some time ago. They had inaugurated in Brazil years of study, of preparation for joining the Teams of Our Lady. There is something that needs to be done, we have no right to let down couples who are far removed in their thinking or in their practice but who, none the less, wish to join the Teams of Our Lady.

Secondly, what could not have been seen previously but which is better understood now: there are couples who have been 10, 20 or 30 years in the Teams of Our Lady and are feeling the need to go further. I know these teams, I know these couples, some have come to me for confession for more than 40 years, and it is wonderful to see how they are evolving, and just as we may have to start at a lower level, perhaps we should be giving more help to those who wish to go further. It is not an easy question, it is the problem that a teacher has, should the focus be on the average pupils in the class or are the best going to be pushed none the less with a view to helping them progress towards becoming more advanced. I do not know what is to be done; I am not putting forward any answer, but it makes me sad to see these couples who, after a certain number of years, are disappointed by their teams. It is true that in the same team there are some who have not made any progress, and others who have progressed and who have major spiritual needs, what can be done? What is the answer? I don't know, but we cannot let down those who wish to go further. I raise the question, I have no fixed idea about it. At the present time, certain of these couples, who are aspiring to a holier life, are tempted by communities where they will be with celibates, nuns and priests. It is fifty years since I saw couples tempted to found communities of couples, but none of those which I knew over those fifty years has lasted. I asked myself why, if there was not something there which had some significance; even still, at the present day, certain people are putting this question to

themselves. I have no definite answer, but one thing I note, it is that the couple has this very solid, very coherent reality of which I spoke a short while ago. And that a community of couples is more or less at risk of merging somewhat into a wider community, particularly if it is demanding, and particularly in a community where the members lead a common life. It is an experience I have had. In a certain way the couple has too much support, but to tell the truth, they have not in fact much support: the husband and the wife are somewhat relieved of responsibility. I ask myself if we are not here in touch with an important law; the couple is a society, a community which above all must be protected, which is autonomous; whereas as regards movements of couples, provided they are really true to their vocation, with the couples living fully in the world, open to every wind, the couples find in the Movement something which strengthens them. In the Teams of Our Lady the couples do not disintegrate, they do not cease to be responsible. So, what is to be done, what answer can be given to those who put this question? This brings me back to what I was saying a short while ago, perhaps what it means is what can be done for those who have more demanding spiritual concerns, so that they may be helped in the Teams of Our Lady and not have to look for another way.

The fourth thing that could not have been foreseen 50 years ago: the huge multiplication of the methods and means of contraception. It has resulted in a fearful change in the Teams of Our Lady, for if, formerly, most of the couples took very great care to respect God's law, at the present time innumerable couples in the Teams of Our Lady use contraception, and I am very preoccupied by this. I am not going to develop the question, it would take too long. They use contraception because, as I said a short time ago, the couples have not been taught to comprehend the quality of sexual intercourse and so its morality is unacceptable to them. When an individual offends against the law of God, it is said that he loses the state of grace. When in a movement there is a big proportion of the members, I have no idea what the proportion is, is it 20%, 40%, 70%, I just don't know; where in a

movement there is a serious proportion of the members which ignores, which does not want to hear about God's law, that movement is at risk of losing its state of grace, and it risks sliding into decadence and becoming perverted.

Fifth and final point: what was not sufficiently appreciated at the start, which could not have been, and which now is. For goodness sake, help the couples of the Teams to grow old very well, to have a good death, to live their widowhood very well. I know many of the friends of the early years and who are still in the Teams, we should be very concerned about helping these elderly people to progress in holiness. Old age is a big trump card for making progress in God's love. I have not sufficiently followed your publications. Help the couples of the Teams to have a good death, and help your founder to have a good death! But before old age and death there is retirement. I ask myself if, in the Teams of Our Lady, enough is being done to make people discover the Christian meaning of retirement, of this time of life which is very important. I bring this to your notice without spending time on it.

And then there is the drama of unemployment: in the Teams of Our Lady do we enable people to discover the Christian way of being unemployed? This is something which could not be seen 40 years ago, something with which people are confronted now. To finish, I would like to read to you , I am running late, but it will not take long, a lovely passage which alludes to what I have just been saying to you: I published it in "L'Anneau d'Or" at some time in the past. An old man decided to write the story of his marriage for the numerous members of his family: before finishing the first chapter, which was devoted to the period of his engagement, he wrote the following post-script to the chapter: "I should finish this chapter here, but I want to add another few pages, they would be superfluous if I was assured of being able to finish the story of my life, but without displaying extreme rashness how could I count on being left sufficient time to get to the end of the task I have undertaken? I am 77 years old. Since I am still capable of doing it, and to-morrow perhaps

I will no longer be able to, I want in the last pages of this first chapter to render to my beloved Suzanne the tribute that I owe her. Younger than I by eight years, she will survive me. May she feel some sweetness in reading here, when I will no longer be alive, what my thoughts of her are now in the presence of death. She created the happiness of my life; after 45 years together I love her more than I loved her when for the first time she opened her arms to me; my tender feelings have become less burning and more deep, we still have not said everything to each other: calm kisses, gentle embraces, reawaken distant springtimes, but above all our souls are bonded together in the same faith, the same hope. When the year brings around again the 6<sup>th</sup> July it is as pleasing for me to say again the fateful “Yes” from the bottom of my heart as it is for a member of a religious order, who is happy in his vocation, to renew his vows. It would not have been like this if my Suzanne had not, with a courage which at times amounted to heroism, fulfilled all her duties as wife and mother.

My intellectual tastes, my inability to make money, my contempt for worldliness, my passion for books, and no doubt, without knowing it, other aspects of my character, were made to irritate her and to hurt her. Because it is one of my principles to speak only the absolute truth, I do not want to say that she never suffered from this, that she never complained to me about it, that my consciousness of the sorrow I caused her in spite of myself, never caused me any pain. But she maintained for me, like the blue sky above the clouds, an unchanging determination to make my life pleasant and to make me feel sensitive to the tenderness of her heart. She gave me six children. Whenever we were separated, she wrote to me everyday. In spite of all the attacks on me from outside and my personal failings, she at all times gave me her comforting esteem, she always had a smile in reserve for me, and she did all this in a life in which the days of sickness, physical exhaustion, mourning and mental suffering were almost as numerous as those of good health and unruffled calm. I shall leave this world certain that for as long as she shall survive me she shall never cease praying that heaven

may strengthen my soul. May God bless her and reward her and may her descendants venerate her memory.”

Impossible not to wish that this may be true for all and in particular for all those couples that we help. I am not going to reach any conclusion; to reach conclusions is your business, not mine. My role was simply to set out the facts and to invite you to be faithful to the founding charism, and to invite you to be creative within that faithfulness. But I would like to point out, before I finish, a coincidence: it happens that you are celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter in the year that the Pope has decreed should be a Marian year. You know that the Marian year begins at Pentecost and will end at the Feast of the Assumption in 1988. Well, I see there a providential sign, for our faith in Mary, in her love, in her intercession, was there from the beginning of the Teams of Our Lady, and that is why, precisely, the Teams of Our Lady, have Our Lady in their title. It is not by chance, and so I invite you, more than ever, to renew that confidence in the Virgin Mary who will preside over the destiny of the Teams.

## **ANNEXE 4**

### **THE SECOND WIND...**

**(1988)**

#### **A Look Towards The Future**

##### **1. THE CHARISM OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY TODAY**

When the Charter of Teams of Our Lady was promulgated forty years ago, no one could foresee the changes which would occur in the Movement, the Church and the world. History may change, but the charism of Teams, the original spiritual gift, is still working through the signs of the times to inspire couples in the service of love.

As you read these pages, we hope you will find new reasons to feel encouraged about the future of Teams, and that these and the suggestions for living out your aspirations within and for the Movement will fill you with the hope and vitality of a Second Wind.

##### **1.1. The Movement Today**

The will of God for Teams at a given moment in history only reveals itself little by little. It can be grasped in the light of the events we experience, as well as through the convergence of ideas between the International Leading Team (ERI) and the Super-Regional Couples as they pursue a common reflection. It can also be perceived in the needs expressed by responsible couples at all levels and by the "grass-roots" Teams.

Father Caffarel, in a number of his writings, calls for an effort to be faithful as well as creative, in a quest for ongoing renewal. His desire is that Teams truly be a "leaven of renewal," and not merely a conservative movement upholding the faith within the Church.

Teams aspire to be that leaven of renewal in the Church, but today they face a different set of circumstances, which were analysed by Father



Caffarel at his 1987 meeting with the regional responsible couples of Europe. Certain aspects of the founding charism that were not clearly grasped at the beginning are just now being clarified and integrated into the spirituality of Teams.

For example, it has become apparent that:

- The first matter in need of better explanation in the teaching of the Movement is the fact that a harmonious marriage cannot be built on love alone: **self-sacrifice** is equally important. In fact, the two are inseparable. Without self-sacrifice, there can be no love; without love, self-sacrifice is meaningless.
- The second matter to which the Movement must give more thought is the human and Christian significance of sexuality. Teams have not given couples enough help understanding and living the true dimension of their sexual relationship. Consequently, some find the Church's moral teaching unacceptable and readily find excuses for ignoring it. This is an urgent matter, especially for a movement devoted to the spirituality of marriage.
- The third aspect to attend to is the importance of the Teams' mission in the Church as a movement of couples: in the beginning, the very idea of such a movement was a quiet revolution, and in some places it is still a novelty today. Teams must help the Church deepen her vision, theology, and mystique of the couple as the summit of creation: *man and woman He created them.*

There are other needs that could not be foreseen in the beginning but that the passing years have revealed: such as, the need to give some young couples who join Teams a basic education in our Christian faith; to accompany couples who feel a need to go farther than their Team; to help couples adapt when both husband and wife work outside the home; to help jobless couples through their ordeal; and to help couples prepare for ageing, death, and widowhood.

Finally, as Teams become increasingly international, we should welcome the enrichment of our diversity while at the same time protecting the unity of the Movement.

## **1.2. The Church Today**

The Church also stands at a decisive moment in history. Ever since the Council (1964), the Church, the People of God, has chosen to make a more positive commitment to and in the world. Nothing that is human can be foreign to a Church whose vocation is to be the seed of the Kingdom of God, in the tangible realities of men's and women's lives.

The Church has expressed her will to opt in preference for the poor and youth, to question a materialistic society nonetheless in search of a certain mysticism, to accept the tensions and difficulties of a dynamic plurality, and to seek the means of a new evangelisation touching every aspect of the human condition.

At each period in history, the Spirit of God calls forth specific gifts, or charisms, which give rise to religious orders and movements in answer to the needs of new generations. Today, it is not unreasonable to think that the credibility of the Christian faith rests mainly on concrete examples of love with a great power to shine and bear witness: the love of couples, of families, and of small Christian communities. The mission to which the Church is urgently calling Teams is one of bearing witness through love. Without the love of married lay people, without families who have learned to share, without faith communities of couples, like Teams, it will be difficult for the Church to convince our world that the Gospel is a call to love and that this love is truly possible.

## **1.3. The World Today**

One look at the spiritual situation of today's world reveals an abundance of failures, wounds, and sins. However, despite all these negative signs, we know that the Spirit of God is at work and that the Lord is with us until the end of time. This compels us to look also for signs of hope and grace.

Many factors deeply affect today's couples: individualism is rampant; sexuality is debased; violence is tearing apart the great human family and is present in every relationship. People seem incapable of sustaining a long-term effort; they free themselves effortlessly of all objective moral standards; they are afraid to commit themselves to lasting

fidelity. These are troubling tendencies, but alongside them, growing ever stronger, there exist encouraging tendencies: a search for new values of authenticity and coherence, a desire for peace within and without, a greater wealth of interpersonal relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children, and a return to nature preserved from human intervention.

This world has great God-given potential; however, we only perceive that potential mingled with the presence of sin. That is precisely why we feel so strongly that there is need for a new reconciliation in each historical situation.

## **2. THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT MARRIAGE**

Today's Christian couples must have the possibility of hearing the Good News about the controversial and fragile reality of marriage.

The Good News teaches us that the sacrament of matrimony is at the service of love, happiness and sanctity. Only in sacramental marriage can a man and woman fulfil their deepest aspirations to love and happiness and answer the call to sanctity written deep in their hearts but often left unheeded. Teams want to be a path leading them to discover the richness of the sacrament of matrimony and of the profound communion between husband and wife. We believe that this affirmation is exactly what today's world needs to hear. The Lord is waiting for us to proclaim it in our words and our actions.

### **2.1. Marriage at the Service of Love**

*God created man in His image;  
in the divine image He created him;  
male and female He created them. (Gen. 1,27)*

Man and woman, while of the same nature, are different yet complementary. Thus, in uniting as a couple, they form one being. The conviction that we are one being inspires us to continually praise God, who created human love. It calls us to remain humble, knowing we need

each other in order to feel our oneness. It strengthens us in faithfulness, so that we may be one flesh.

This image of the couple reveals the richness of sexuality as it was willed and created by God. How important it is, then, that Christian couples be concerned about the human and Christian quality of their sexual relations. Christian spirituality is an incarnated spirituality. The specific nature of the spirituality of marriage derives from the sexuality (in the sense of sexual character) inherent in the sacrament of matrimony.

## **2.2. Marriage at the Service of Happiness**

The sacrament of matrimony helps us live through times of crisis and doubt. Crises are necessary if we are to grow in love. They compel us to surpass ourselves; they test our creativity and lead to new behaviours. They can have a positive influence if we, as a couple, are able to discern God's will for us at that moment in our lives.

If we have our spouse's good at heart, we will want him or her to find personal fulfilment, be it psychologically, professionally, or as a mother or father. To care about our spouse's happiness, even in his or her sexual life; to discover that reconciliation does not mean resignation but rather a chance for renewal; to live in order to give; to decide to stay in love with each other... Far from limiting us or bringing us down, these attitudes open us up to each other, and to others. They open the door to happiness.

## **2.3. Marriage at the Service of Sanctity**

Married Christians are called to sanctity. They do not answer this call as individuals - although each retains his or her individuality but rather they walk the road to sanctity as a couple. The great revelation of the spirituality of marriage is this: conjugal love and love of God are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they go hand in hand. Husband and wife can follow in the demanding footsteps of Christ, as a couple.

True wisdom in marriage consists in the desire to live "for you" and not "for me." Communion flows from the reciprocal current of giving and receiving. This is the highest form of unity within a couple, because it

flows from their oneness in Jesus. Communion is not only the culmination of conjugal love, it is also the greatest gift a couple can give others. Parenthood, hospitality and friendship, work and commitments are all manifestations of the irresistible tendency of communion to transform itself into giving.

The Christian couple who live in this conjugal state of grace, who are nourished by the Word of God and the Bread of Life, are truly living a eucharistic life. Their whole life is a holy sacrifice. Husband and wife are signs -"sacraments"- of God's love for each other and together for their children and for the world.

### **3. A MOVEMENT OF SPIRITUALITY AND FELLOWSHIP FOR MARRIED COUPLES**

Teams of Our Lady offer married couples a chance to discover the Lord's presence in their marriage and a chance to live in Christian fellowship with other couples, as a way of giving thanks to God and bearing witness to Him in the world. This way of looking at and living conjugal life may not necessarily be entirely new. However, it can help couples live their life with more strength, light, and hope. A Team is formed of couples who are aware of their own weaknesses and difficulties and who decide to form a faith community in order to walk a road of conversion together.

Through deepening friendship, through pooling their joys and sorrows, through sharing on the endeavours, Team members support and encourage each other as they seek to know God's will and to learn the truth about themselves. Team life is a life of encounter and communion. The goal of a Team is not for each couple to attain a predetermined degree of perfection, but for each couple, in union with the others, to become part of a living and dynamic process tending to reconcile that which is divided, bring closer that which is distant, strengthen that which is weak, build up that which is incomplete: in short, to carry out a common task in the brotherly love which unites us to Christ.

The spirituality of marriage is centred around the couple, of course, but it also takes family life into account. Children are called to life through

their parents' love, and family life is seen as a community in which all participate.

The experience of Team life builds our capacity for dialogue, mutual respect and openness, which in turn shapes our attitudes towards parenting. We want to bring up our children in a way that leaves them "free to be" and stimulates them to reach full maturity. We want to experience with them a faith that is a personal encounter with Christ.

It is our hope that our children will truly be able to "be themselves," that they will enter into relationships freely and with a sense of solidarity, and that they will be able to fulfil their commitment to society. Above all, we hope that they will carry on the values of Christian marriage thanks to our witness in word and deed.

Finally, Teams are a lay movement, for couples united in the sacrament of matrimony. The life of the Movement depends on the willingness of its members to accept leadership responsibilities in a spirit of service. Those who accept responsibility do so in close collaboration and communion with the priests who accompany Teams as spiritual counsellors. The union of these two sacraments makes each one appear in the eyes of the world as a specific expression of God's love.

### **3.1. Education**

Teams are like a spiritual school for couples. We come to Teams not only to deepen our knowledge of our faith, but also to learn to exercise human and Christian discernment, using our hearts as well as our minds, in our search for a greater coherence between our faith and our life.

Our discernment can be nourished in several ways: by reading and discussing the study topic as a couple and as a Team; by reading Teams' publications; by attending sessions and retreats; and by keeping abreast of the orientations the Movement periodically proposes. Our search as individuals, as a couple, and as a Team is rooted in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), in a deepening prayer life, in hearing the Word of God, and in a correct interpretation of the signs of the times.

To train and educate us, Teams question us, help us understand God's plan for us as a couple, and call us to adapt our conjugal, family and

professional life to fit Gospel values. Two goals remain to be pursued by the Movement: to afford a better insight into the Christian significance of man's and woman's work as it relates to God's plan, and to shed light on the relationship between private and public ethics.

### **3.2. Teams Endeavours**

Love is a choice that husband and wife make anew each day. It requires not only the heart's consent but also an effort of will to carry out this decision. Teams offer simple, practical means to help couples nurture their love, reaffirm their decision and pursue their road of conversion. These means are not things to do, but attitudes to awaken within us and to assimilate. Being accountable for our attitudes is not a matter of bookkeeping, but a matter of orienting our lives gradually in a chosen direction: that of God's will.

The endeavours should be seen as a means of spiritualising and unifying our lives and of achieving union with God. In this, Mary is the best guide, and that is why Teams bear her name. By her attitude of humility and receptivity, nourished by the Word and the Life of Christ, she shows us the way to union with God.

The manner in which the endeavours are expressed, as objectives rather than commands, reflects the spirit in which they were presented:

- A regular reading (or hearing) of the Word of God.
- A daily period set aside for a true "conversation with the Lord" (personal prayer).
- A daily meeting of husband and wife for conjugal and, if possible, family prayer.
- A monthly in-depth talk between husband and wife in the Lord's presence (the sit-down).
- *A drawing up of one's rule of life*, which is an encouragement to work at unifying our personality and to find out who we really are.
- *A yearly retreat made together as husband and wife, if possible*, in order to reflect on and organise our life in the Lord's presence.

There are three important ideas to keep in mind while making use of these spiritual means.

- **Gradual:** The Lord takes hold of us wherever we are. We do not need to rush ahead or try to "skip a grade." All we need is a sincere desire to progress from our present situation.
- **Personal:** Each person, as well as each couple, moves forward at a particular pace. The endeavours should not serve to discourage us but, on the contrary, they should inspire and assist us our whole life long.
- **Determined:** Any long-term effort, be it marriage or personal prayer life, requires determination. We cannot experience an ongoing conversion unless we are determined to take our wishful thinking about progress and express it in tangible ways that will change our lives and shape us little by little.

### **3.3 Stages in the life of a Team**

Teams of Our Lady call couples along a road that leads to a true encounter with the Lord and to a commitment to follow Him. The methods of Teams provide couples with a means of pursuing these goals at each stage of their lives.

A Team is a Christian community comprised of 5-7 couples and a priest, all moving forward along the same road. The priest is truly a member of the Team but in a different way; through him, Christ is present as the head of the community. Teams are enriched by the encounter of two sacraments: Holy Orders and Matrimony. Where a lack of priests makes it difficult to form new Teams, the Movement could train couples to accompany those Teams.

Any community dedicated to a life-long walk together will experience difficulties as it passes through various stages of growth. Teams are no exception to this, but they aim to face these challenges joyfully, with courage and realism.

The principal stages in the life of a Team are:

#### **Initiation**

Today, many couples lack a basic education in the Christian faith; they need initial instruction in marriage and community life, as well as, in



religion. Such instruction could be provided within the framework of "uncommitted Teams." At the end of this initiation phase, couples may choose the path that suits them best: either Teams, or another couples' movement, or a different means of spiritual growth.

### **Piloting**

Specific training in the spirituality of marriage and the fundamental methods of Teams takes place under the guidance of a Pilot Couple. Piloting must follow the same plan throughout the Movement if Teams are to develop on the same basis world-wide.

At the close of the piloting period, an inter-Team training session would help new members consolidate their knowledge and understanding of Teams' goals and methods.

### **Team life**

- a. After piloting, the Team needs to gain a deeper understanding of the spirituality of marriage through study topics concerning conjugal love, Christ and the Church.
- b. From then on, each Team may choose the study topics which suit it best, from among those published by the Movement or other topics in keeping with the specific nature of Teams.
- b. Couples need to participate in training sessions organised by the Movement if they are to better comprehend the universal dimension of Teams, in the image of the Church, as well as the importance of their mission in the world.
- c. With age and experience, certain couples may wish to follow a more demanding path. More than the study of a new topic, this might mean a method of progressively changing their life, or a new deepening of their prayer life, or a more demanding commitment. The Movement should help them find or follow paths that complement those of their Team.

These stages are but a few of those that couples may experience in their spiritual walk together. They represent the starting point of a growth process that, just like charity, knows no bounds.

## **4. A LIFE OF COMMUNION TO ANSWER A CALLING AND FULFILL A MISSION**

No matter what the spiritual development of each couple, all try their best to live a life of communion with the little faith community of the Team. It takes patience, openness and humility; there can be no holding back. The Team should not be seen as an end in itself, for communion cannot be contained. It will inevitably overflow the boundaries of the Team, as it nourishes the generosity of the members. Teams are a movement of spirituality, and a true spirituality implies that those who have freely received, freely give.

The Movement's gift to the Church and the world is this: we must work for the coming of the Kingdom of God by founding our lives on a new image of the couple.

*They have no wine*, said Mary at the wedding at Cana; with profound intuition, she foresaw Christ's saving act. Today the Earth is still in need of many kinds of "wine."

We in Teams must be sensitised to those needs and wants, whether spoken or unspoken, physical or spiritual. Only then will we be open to the great questions of our time, attentive to the causes of suffering in marriage and family life, and ready to collaborate with other movements in this area.

Teams of Our Lady have one specific, direct objective: to help couples fully live their sacrament of matrimony. At the same time, Teams have a missionary objective: to bear witness by their lives and words to the values of Christian marriage. On which tasks should we concentrate our efforts for the next few years?

### **4.1 In the Movement**

Stimulated by the Second Wind, we should all strive together to strengthen the feeling of community and improve mutual help in our Teams. We must continue to remind ourselves that the endeavours are attitudes to assimilate, and that they are only means to an end. For each individual and for each couple, to live as a Christian is a daily struggle.

That is why Teams offer choices that encourage spiritual growth, but they abide by only one law: the Spirit of love.

Creativity helps to combat the subtle menace of a routine that can eventually lead members to abandon the endeavours. The longer a Team is together, the greater the danger that the meetings will become social events. The couples will excuse themselves and each other for not having followed a road they no longer freely accept, and they will neglect their personal and collective responsibility for their Christian commitments.

Two other stages of Team life pose problems that still await a creative solution. First, the training of "uncommitted-Teams:" it seems best that each country develop its own structure based on the needs and characteristics of its young couples, as long as there is an international exchange of experience in this respect. Second, a way must be found to offer mature couples a "more demanding commitment"

Let's be inventive and contribute as best we can to these initiatives that indicate a desire to forge ahead. The Movement will thus be able to respond to real aspirations, and couples will not feel the need to look elsewhere.

Our Movement has always been concerned with educating its members and has always given reference points and criteria for discernment. While couples remain responsible and free, they still need support in their search to understand the Word of God in relation to the signs of the times. This calls for ongoing training and for a day-by-day search to enable them to express the realities of faith in modern terms.

Each of us should be aware that couples who accept a responsibility within the Movement in a spirit of leadership and service have an important mission to fulfil. They need and deserve our support.

## **4.2 In the Church**

While Teams are not a movement of action, Teams members are definitely people of action, in the sense that they benefit from the ample spiritual nourishment of Teams and then freely determine what the Lord has called them to do. In the same way, each member is a missionary,

wherever he or she is, according to each one's personal choices. It is true, again, that Teams as a movement do not commit themselves to collective endeavours, because couples in Teams must hear and answer the Lord's call for themselves. However, this fruitful freedom to choose our commitments must not obscure for us the fact that the Movement has its own charism and that we cannot turn a deaf ear to our fellow men and women, especially to the call of our bishops in the area of pastoral efforts concerning the family. It is also important for Teams to be open to all without distinction as to class or race, and to pay more attention to their country's needs, preferably as they are called to do so by the local Church.

Here, to name but a few, are some of the urgent areas of diocesan action relating to family life:

- to accompany youth groups;
- to prepare engaged couples for Christian marriage;
- to support young married couples;
- to help couples in difficulty and divorced remarried couples;
- to have concern for young couples who are living together outside marriage.

While it would be a grave mistake to bring these latter couples into Teams, we can envision parallel structures for them in which Teams couples could serve effectively.

### **4.3 In the World**

To answer both our calling and the expectations of today's world, we must practise and proclaim three things:

a. Marriage is at the *service of love*. If there is a marriage crisis today, it is mainly because people no longer really believe there is a link between love and marriage. We in Teams do, however, and that is why we have decided to love each *other* as long as we live.

b. Marriage is at the *service of happiness*. In this sad and anguished world, the very word "happiness" has an unfamiliar ring. Let us live our conjugal life as a road to happiness and make it apparent to others by

our attitudes and by testifying to the methods that help us achieve this happiness.

c. Marriage is at the *service of sanctity*. This is without doubt the most specific vocation of Teams: not only to call lay people, married lay people, to holiness, but to affirm that human sexuality can be a path to holiness. This is still a new path in the Church, and as far as the world is concerned, it is practically revolutionary. The Second Wind is an invitation to apply the Gospel message to human sexuality, that is, to learn to see it through God's eyes and to live it according to His plan so that it may serve the coming of His Kingdom. Dear friends, the seed we are planting in Lourdes, at Mary's feet, must sprout, grow, blossom and bear fruit, just as the Child she carried in her womb became a Man, the Man of salvation. To bring that little seed to fruition, we will need time and caring, hope and patience; we will also need to keep our hearts open to the Spirit and to God's unexpected ways.

We entrust the Second Wind to Mary, knowing that she will lead Teams wherever the Lord wants them to build up His Kingdom.

### **The International Leading Team of Teams of Our Lady**

## Epilogue

Exhortation by Father Olivier

Magnificat! With the Virgin Mary we sing to the Lord our joy and our gratitude.

With her we live the great hope of the people of God.

With her we welcome the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham, the Messiah made flesh in her womb.

Although the Messiah has come, all is not over. Not yet! The Messiah brought us Good News which we must implement. Therein lies the new hope of the People of God.

The Teams of Our Lady have the vocation and mission to live and announce an important aspect of this Good News: the Good News for couples, for Christian couples called to build up the Kingdom of God.

We firmly believe that the creation of the Teams of Our Lady forty years ago was a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. And during the past forty years the Movement has spread to the whole world. It has remained faithful to its founding charism. In keeping with this faithfulness, the Movement today wishes to accentuate in a new way certain aspects of the life of the Teams, in order to answer the urgent needs of today's couples.

There is a "marriage crisis" in many countries. The divorce rate continues to climb. The number of young people who live together yet have no desire to marry is enormous. That is why the aim of the Teams of Our Lady is more than ever up-to-date: to help Christian couples to fully live their sacrament of matrimony. And more than ever the mission of the Teams in today's world is up-to-date: to bear witness to the values of Christian marriage.

To be able today to respond to our vocation and mission, we need a "second wind," or second breath. We must ask it of the Holy Spirit, the Breath (the Wind) of God, Breath of life, creating and sanctifying Breath. Under His inspiration we are proposing a special, three-fold objective for the coming years: LOVE, HAPPINESS, HOLINESS.

## 1. LOVE

Go and proclaim, and show by your lives, that marriage is at the service of love.

LOVE has always been the great dream of men and women, of the young in particular. In our world, people still believe in love, but not in the link between love and marriage. Notably, for many young people love cannot be commanded, it is essentially free. It must be freed of all constraints, such as, a commitment, an institution, a sacrament... Yet we in Teams know that marriage is the natural place, the favourable and privileged atmosphere in which true love can develop.

LOVE, which is a great flame, a fire, needs to be fed, nourished, sustained, or it will become, as all fires that die out, a simple pile of ashes. Marriage is the will, the decision, to build this love every day, even on the days when "we don't feel like it."

LOVE, to be true, needs time. To grow stronger, it needs to face difficult moments; it needs time to allow the progressive discovery of the other; it needs to be tested in patience, which is the contrary of "I want everything now, and on a silver platter." Marriage ensures that love will have enough time; marriage upholds the progress of mutual self-knowledge, and invites us to have patience for the long walk together until the end.

LOVE needs fidelity: you do not throw your heart to the wind, but you give it to someone, forever! Fidelity is precisely the first demand of marriage.

LOVE in marriage tenderly prepares the nest which will welcome the fruit: the child in whom the man and the woman find themselves reflected, at once themselves and someone else...

Marriage, far from being an obstacle to love, is still the best "invention" for protecting love and making it grow indefinitely.

I often think of my grandfather. My grandparents got on very well together and, in the family, they were called "the lovers." My grandmother died a few months before the celebration of their golden wedding anniversary. My grandfather wished to watch over her for three nights, all alone. On the day of the funeral, during the family meal,

he who was normally a silent man looked at the young couples around the table and said: "You young people think you know what love is. You don't know anything about it. You have to live together for fifty years to know!" Marriage is the best servant of love.

## **2. HAPPINESS**

Go and proclaim, and show by your lives, that marriage is a path to happiness.

We live in a world that is often morose and joyless. And there are certainly good reasons to be anxious: the unending wars, violence that attacks the innocent, sickness, lack of work, poverty, and often... for the young, dim prospects for the future.

All this is true. But each of us, nonetheless, bears in his heart the desire for happiness. Who will tell us where to find it? Absolute happiness is God alone. But on earth we can have a "taste of happiness".

- A man and a woman who love each other, who choose to unite their lives and their destinies, who walk together, hand in hand, with the grace of God on them and in them: these two people are strengthened to face life, and there is something between them which must be happiness.

- A man and a woman who know that they are united by God also know very well that their days will not always be rosy and that even their love may go through troubled times. But they know that the strength of God in them will enable them to understand, forgive, and be reconciled. In those moments of deep communion, there is something like happiness.

- And there is also the union of the flesh which, if it is both an expression and a means of love, brings true moments of happiness. Because "sexual love is not merely a remedy for concupiscence, it is the 'spiritual communion in the flesh' of two people who love each other." Happiness must also be built up: it does not just happen. It is built up by sharing all that one has and all that one is. It is built up by giving oneself to the other. And marriage is nothing other than the decision and the permanence of this gift from one to the other: the gift of bodies seeking



physical harmony, the gift of hearts and spirits in privileged friendship.

The greatest joys in marriage are:

- to make your spouse happy;
- then, to create a nest of happiness for your children;
- and finally, and not so easily, to create a happiness that rubs off on all those with whom you come in contact.

Never forget: happiness is contagious!

### 3. HOLINESS

Go and proclaim, and show by your lives, that marriage is a path to holiness. We know that God alone is holy. And we can never bless and proclaim His holiness enough, as Mary does in the Magnificat.

But we also know-and we have been repeating it for forty years in the Teams of Our Lady-that all Christians are called to holiness and that, for spouses, this means that they are called to sanctify themselves through their conjugal life.

This means that a life of prayer and contemplation is wide open to them, and that they need to approach the sacraments fervently and frequently. And this means, in particular, that the sexual life, which for some was a taboo and suspect subject for so long, must be considered:

- not only as a natural thing, willed by God: "Man and woman He created them;"
- not only as a good thing which has nothing shameful about it: "He saw that all this was good..."
- but as a means of sanctification.

Certainly, we know that a **powerful** force is at work here, which, if not mastered, can be an obstacle to prayer, to union with God, and to the spiritual life. Therefore, it is important to control this force, to dominate it, to tame it, and to put it to good use in seeking the Kingdom of God.

This is what I like to call "applying the Gospel message to human sexuality." We must learn to humanise sexuality, so that it becomes a true factor of human growth. We must learn to harmonise it, so that it serves the blossoming of the couple. We must learn to care for it, which forty years ago would have been an unbelievable thing to say. Because

here we have substantial matter for the life of the couple: sexuality must not be sacrificed; on the contrary, it must be made to blossom. However, this cannot be done without real self-sacrifice, and it is here, I think, that spouses must seek the best application of the penance necessary in all Christian lives.

Without doubt, the most specific message of the Teams of Our Lady lies in the statement that marriage is a path of holiness. This is why, in the perspective of a Second Wind, one of our major objectives must be to work together in applying the Gospel message to human sexuality.

There is work to be done!

## ANNEXE 5

### VOCATION AND MISSION *at the dawn of the third millennium*

(2018)

#### 1. Introduction

The changes that are taking place in our world today reinforce the urgency of discerning and facing the signs of the times with hope and boldness. The Teams of Our Lady throughout the whole world and gathered together on the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> International Gathering at Fatima does not turn away from this challenge.

In 1988, on the occasion of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Gathering in Lourdes, the International Responsible Team (ERI) had already wanted, in a document entitled “The Second Wind”, to analyse “the urgent needs” of the couples at that time and, as a response, to suggest some ways of encouraging the creativity of team members and avoid the Movement running out of steam.

After thirty years, it is evident that the reality of married and family life had not stopped evolving and that the environment in which couples live today no longer has a lot in common with that of 1947, the date of the proclamation of the Charter, or those of “The Second Wind” of 1988, even if the fundamental question asked by Father Caffarel in 1939 remains: “How to love as Christ loves?”

In a materialistic world, marked by atheism, it seems that Christian couples, who experience the richness of marriage through their ecclesial and sacramental life, can no longer be satisfied to be witnesses to the value of this conjugal model. In a society which no longer accepts a system of pre-established truths, it is essential, if we do not wish to fail our apostolic mission as baptised people united in the sacrament of marriage, to demonstrate and justify by our actions how the

characteristics of Christian marriage are understandable, commendable and beneficial with regard to human reason, even when this is not enlightened by faith.

Our experience of the Christian faith makes us privileged witnesses, not to impose our morals on society, but to reveal the characteristics of the success of human love on a society that disregards these morals. The challenge today is to find new ways to demonstrate, especially to young people, that the couple and the family are not a source of restriction but, on the contrary, a source of inner freedom and openness, a path to happiness and a way to God.

Throughout his whole life, Father Caffarel never stopped repeating that for a movement to survive it had to evolve. For him, a living movement is a movement that reinvents itself daily, thanks to the action of each of its members. It is why, at the dawn of the third millennium, that the ERI wants to express its thoughts on the future of the Movement.

Study of the Chantilly talk, given by Father Caffarel on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1987 on the occasion of a meeting of European regional couples, and which has since been a reference within Teams of Our Lady, has guided us in the creation of this document. Father Caffarel, with his prophetic mind, had already foreseen the new situations that were to arise at Movement level, considering the great transformations that were taking place in the world and the Church. He announced three principles to observe when facing change with regards to the question *“What mission does the sacrament of marriage bestow on the couple?”*; these principles are as follows:

1. « To go back to the source because, sometimes, the source can become blocked, the source which I will call the founding charism »
2. « To take into account the needs and values of the times in which we live »
3. « To consider a future.....the direction in which it is necessary to encourage the Movement to take....always in line with the founding charism ». He stated that the notion of remaining true to

the founding charism of the Movement is paramount, but one must not confuse « being faithful with being rigid »

Firstly, we will go back therefore to the source, as Father Caffarel requested, to pick out those unchanging elements of vocation and the mission related to the founding charism, to meet with some flexibility, the challenges of our time.

The second section of this document will endeavour to emphasise the essential traits of the “*changing times*” in which we live in, both negative and positive.

In the third section, various ways forward will be suggested; they will be able to be tried out on the ground with the help and support of the Movement, which wishes to be a motivator of both suggestions and actions, within the Church, regarding spiritual conjugality, the nucleus of its founding charism.

This document “Vocation and Mission at the dawn of the third millennium” is the work of the communal energy established in the Teams of Our Lady to respond to the exhortation of Pope Francis addressed to the universal Church “*for a new chapter of evangelisation*”. (*Evangelii Gaudium* 1).

## **2. « Return to the Source » Vocation and Mission**

### **1-1 Vocation**

The word vocation has as its origin the Latin verb “*vocare*” which means “to call”. Father Caffarel in his magazine L'Anneau d'Or No. 111-112, entitled “Marriage, the great sacrament”, makes explicit the call aimed at couples united by the sacrament of marriage. The Christian couple, he says, is “*elected*”, “*called*” by God. And just as baptism consecrates the individual, so the sacrament of marriage is the sign that God consecrates the call of the Christian couple. The sacrament of marriage

is a symbol of the relationship between God and the Church, the relationship between God and the world. God is the source of love. It is God who pours his love into the human love of the couple, so that they can show the world that God loves and that is why he sent His Son into the world. This transforms married love, provided that the Christian couple, thus invited into the Kingdom of God, agree to become a cell of the Church. This transformation takes place gradually throughout the life of the couple because *“following God”* is demanding.

The path to holiness, which the couple chooses to follow on the day of their marriage, continues all their life. It is a long pilgrimage that every day takes us further away from sin and nearer to God.

Through the sacrament of marriage, the grace of the Holy Spirit fills our beings and remains with us. As Father Louis de Raynal says in his book *“The Good News of Marriage”*: *“one can speak of marriage as a permanent sacrament.”* The vocation of the couple and the family to make of their Christian life a life in communion with God is accompanied by Christ's love which unites, restores and slowly perfects the marriage, *“God's masterpiece”*, as our founder affirms. To encourage every couple, united by the sacrament of marriage, to live their conjugal and family life in Christ is clearly the sentiment at the basis of our Movement. Spirituality and action mutually enrich each other.

Two Christians who choose to unite themselves in the sacrament of marriage engage not only in a relationship with each other, but also with the Church. Pius XII in *“Mystici Corporis”* declared: *Christ has provided in a specific way for the fundamental needs of the Church by the institution of two sacraments: marriage and holy orders”*, two complimentary sacraments *“directed towards the salvation of others”* (Catechism of the Catholic Church – 1534).

## **1-2 Mission**

As with every vocation, the call of God to the Christian couple goes hand in hand with the duty to live for the service of God. Already, every Christian, by the fact of their baptism and by their confirmation, should

contribute to the growth of the Church. But the Christian couple should devote themselves to it in a specific, unique way.

The first aspect of this apostolic mission is to make God known, to proclaim His love. According to the words of St. Paul, love, in fact, urges us to announce the Good News to others and to share the spiritual riches of a life with God. Father Caffarel already saw in this mission a challenge to Christians to combat the atheism that is taking over our world.

The second aspect of this apostolic mission is the awareness of the parental responsibility of the couple, which Pope John XXIII evoked. Father Caffarel emphasised that God had entrusted us with the task of being close to our children, and being witnesses and prophets of His love. The family is the nourishing background to our faith. It is there where the children have their first contact with faith. In "Marriage, this great sacrament" Father Caffarel declares: *"Listen to what Christ says to you: "Parents, it is with you and by you, that I want to increase and form new children of our Heavenly Father."* It is here that *"the new man who will change the world"* will be educated and grow. (Cardinal Pironio).

But Father Caffarel does not limit the apostolic mission of the couple to children; the third aspect must lead the married couple to ask themselves what they are to do, with regards to all those in the world, waiting for the Good News of marriage.

For Father Caffarel, the Christian couple and the family must practice an apostolic mission of welcome and hospitality and mediate between the world and the Church. They must be intermediaries on the path of the Church for people or couples who are fragile, isolated, discouraged, traumatised, and for newcomers.....He described the Christian home as "an extremely effective instrument of apostolic mission". Suggesting that indissoluble marriage as a way of life should not mean that we lose the capacity to accompany all those who are thirsting for love. The Teams of Our Lady invite team couples to live a path to holiness, with Jesus as their companion on the journey, allowing the graces of marriage, based on permanence and faithfulness, to flourish. Father

Henri Caffarel thought that non-believers should be able to get to know the Church by visiting the homes of Christians.

Father Caffarel clearly states that this mission of the Christian couple should not restrict itself to the family or just a few friends. To him, this charity, which is breathed into us by Christ, must radiate widely all around us and be a sign of unity for the world. It goes much further than the simple context of testimony and influence. His aims are unambiguous: "This apostolic mission is not just a witnessing and an influencing, it is also an endeavour". For him, there is a close interdependence between conjugal love and apostolic mission. Just as Saint Paul called the couple Aquila and Priscilla "my assistant disciples", it is necessary that Christ can say the same to every Christian couple. Being truly part of the Mystical Body, the couple cannot content themselves with just receiving; they must be active members. Our founder has always castigated the Teams of Our Lady so that they do not stay centred in on themselves, enjoying the comfort of being with like-minded people and not confronting what is happening in the outside world. Hence the lyrical exhortation that Father Caffarel places in the words of God, and states during his speech in Rome in 1970: *"Faced with atheism": "Couples...do you understand the great hope I place in you? You are the bearers of My reputation, of My glory, you are the great reason for hope for the universe..., because you are love."*

Contrary to what one might hear at times, these warnings reiterated by Father Caffarel demonstrate, how mission plays an essential role in his eyes because there can be no vocation without mission. In his Chantilly speech he reminds us of Christ's words: *"The tree will be judged by its fruit"* and he insists by adding *"not by its beauty, but by its fruits...it is not about cultivating its beauty but about participating in this evolution of creation which strives towards an end."* For him, our area of mission is more specifically that of marriage. It is why, in a world where Christian marriage and the family only represent a path of happiness and holiness for the minority, it is time to ask ourselves about the credibility of the message of the Teams of Our Lady outside of the Movement itself and to reflect on how to produce new and adapted responses if we do not



wish to alienate ourselves from our fellow human beings and at the same time cease to be apostles.

### **1-3 Action**

What Father Caffarel refutes is not action in itself but an action that is not connected to its divine source. It is this irreplaceable role of the basic team that helps us to retain our strength. In fact, God, who is the origin of all love, attributes different forms of discipleship to the couple. It is from this love that the grace, given to the Christian couple, ensues and which strengthens them. So that this source does not run dry, so that our apostolic resources remain fruitful, Father Caffarel invites us to *“take a stand with Christ”*. It is by a living faith, nourished by the Word, by prayer and by reflection that the couple permit themselves, more and more each day, to be open to a new view of the world and of events. It is in this way that the transformation of our couples will take place and help them to better discern and act according to Christ's perspective. Through the words of Christ in the Gospels the couple becomes a community of love. It is from this that the missionary strength of the couple pours forth. Father Caffarel expressed it very well, when he said: *“Shared prayer and shared mission are like the front and back of the same coin in the community of love in the home....as with Christianity, the family weakens when it does not continually draw on the Gospel. And for the home, as for the Church, it is always by returning to the Gospel that a renewal takes place. Because it is Jesus Christ who speaks in the Gospel. And the words of Jesus Christ are the spirit and are life.”* (Anneau d'Or No. 117-118: “Marriage, the route to God”). God calls us to live this great love; we cannot keep silent about the way we live and it is our duty to bring others into this love.

### **3. “Taking into account the needs and values of our times” A changing world challenges the Teams of Our Lady**

We are not just in a time of change but also in a change of the times. We are witnessing the arrival of a new cultural system that, although often based on our own Christian values, seems to distance itself from them, distort them and question their very structure.

Today's society does not seem able to adapt to preconceived truths and customs. On the contrary, in the world today it is the reality in which we live which challenges the norms, which seeks justification and coherent answers.

Our world is still far from the Christian ideal of integral human development and respect for creation that extends to all the peoples of the world. Global economic and technological progress of recent decades has been accompanied by aberrations and imbalances that have ultimately affected families in both the developed and the poorest countries.

And so we live in a world of contradictions and lack of continuity, in which the future is not clear to see. It is exactly for this reason that we need to act because we can change things.

It seems very important, therefore, that the exhortations of the Church confront, with hope, audacity and joy, the challenges of this changing world, which is full of hurt and frustration but equally one of opportunity and possibility. The Teams of Our Lady accepts enthusiastically the ever-renewing call to evangelise by the power of the Holy Spirit and in their turn to become evangelisers. But if we want to be intelligible apostles, we must understand with spiritual wisdom, that is to say from a cultural and Christian perspective, where we are coming from.

**From an economic point of view**, we are immersed in the culture of globalisation of production, consumer habits and information. The opportunities to create work and wealth anywhere on the planet are accompanied by competitiveness between states and often by a

decrease in social safeguards, by an unlimited exploitation of the world's resources and questionable practices as well as corruption. As a consequence of this, there is a state of permanent tension for a great part of humanity and a huge increase in migration, whether by choice or necessity. All these facts are what give rise to the difficulties of developing stability in marriage and the family, even if they are sources of richness, of opportunities for hospitality and chance to approach those on the fringes of our society.

Economic globalisation is associated with global urbanisation. The concentration of population in major towns and the general spreading of urban culture is the other side of the abandonment of rural areas and traditional values. Towns are privileged places for the new evangelisation but it requires great imagination to create attractive and meaningful opportunities for its inhabitants to meet and interact.

The current world development is likewise associated with technological progress in the fields of nature, life and communication. These are doubtlessly advances that can improve people's well-being, their living conditions and their freedom. However, they also lead to exaggerated feelings of self-reliance and self-satisfaction which cause people to be more preoccupied with the "how" of their decisions rather than the "why". It is the culture of efficiency and usefulness: something only having value if it is useful; there are no ethical limitations in the manipulation of nature as long as it satisfies the desires of the individual.

**From the social point of view,** when competitiveness and consumerism hide a diminishing of ethics, and equally of God, we are entering into a *culture of rejection and lack of protection*. The human being is reduced to his capacity to produce and to consume. Those who do not contribute are not even at the bottom of society or on its periphery, they are outside of it. This style of life that excludes numerous people has developed a worldwide indifference: without being aware of it we have become anesthetised, we have lost our ability to see and help those on the periphery. This lack of help also affects old people, whose number is constantly growing, and they run the risk of being considered a

burden. Their dependence is sometimes even exploited economically. For a number of them loneliness becomes unbearable, even though many of them have the love and support of their family as well as the spiritual fellowship of the Church and its movements.

The *culture of rejection* is also a *culture of waste*, of the “useable and disposable”, which harms nature and the quality of life. *God speaks to man through His visible creation*, and through what we can hear; the cries of the abandoned, the cries of our sister Earth, mistreated as never before, calling out for a change of direction. God has put His Creation into the hands of the couple and we are therefore heirs to, and responsible for how we respond as a community to, this beauty and fullness of which He dreamed. Surely man is the high point of creation, but if the Earth goes to waste and if the quality of life of our descendants continues to deteriorate, our message of love and marriage will fall on deaf ears; people will have different priorities.

**From the point of view of emotional, married and family relationships,** we see lots of positive changes but also great contradictions, as well as threats. General indifference generates a lack of interest in the married couple and the family. Social structures support the emotional and family life of people less than before. The paradoxes are numerous. On one hand, many young people suffer from lack of opportunities for housing and coping with everyday needs; precarious working conditions make it difficult to set up a home and a comfortable life. A family and a home are two things that go hand in hand, and yet one of these is often missing. On the other hand, this very culture of competitiveness and consumerism offers young people such opportunities that they show no interest in engaging in the formation of a family.

The old ways of the family characterised by authoritarianism and too much patriarchy have disappeared to reveal the true “soul” of marriage: Love. However current society seems to give little value to the monogamous union between a man and a woman based on permanence and openness to life. Let us add that the word “family” today includes a variety of realities.

In other respects the recognition of equality between a man and a woman has progressed decisively, even though violence and unacceptable practices still persist and new forms of exploitation of the female body come to light. The feminist fight, even though it is legitimate, sometimes leads to extreme, irrational and disturbing theories based on the disregard of the difference of the sexes or how they can complement each other and in the wish to impose in an authoritative manner what is called “gender theory”, according to which human sexual identity would depend on the choice of the individual.

The exalting of this “me” is equally a sign of the times. We can find in it positive values in the desire to encourage the best in everyone and in exercising the freedom to make the most of one's own life. However, the absence of personal discipline and of moral focus can lead to the inability to give generously of oneself. In this way, the *culture of individualism* intrudes bit by bit, and to its detriment, into the family circle. If the “me” and not the “we” becomes the master, then the marriage and the family are at the service of the individual and not the other way around. Marriage and family grow together and change according to the sensitivity and desires of each person; with this in mind it is not difficult to justify the lack of commitment and breakdowns in marriage.

The culture of individualism mentioned above does not encourage true love based on faithfulness; it has as a consequence the speed with which people dispose of emotional relationships and move easily from one to another. Crises in the couple relationship are dealt with in a superficial, impatient and egotistical way. Breakdowns result in new relationships and new unions, each time generating situations that are more difficult to comprehend and experience, especially for children, and situations, which are problematic on a Christian level.

The paradox is, that in this context, the desire for a union and a stable family remains strongly at the heart of each person; it is this that is to motivate the Church.

**From the point of view of religion** this individualistic culture leads to a moral relativity and the relegation of God into one's private sphere. This impoverishes public life and society, which is then deprived of objective values for the benefit of all, and neglects to support and clearly guide people facing the big questions which they are presented with, especially in terms of ethics. The Church today needs to fill this gap. The weakening of faith and the practise of religion also leaves families more needy when faced with difficulties. Many people suffer the horror of loneliness, caused by the fragility of relationships and the absence of God in their lives. They can find themselves attracted to new religious “offers”, some tending towards fundamentalism and others proposing a spirituality without God. These false propositions often find a favourable response on the fringes of society and in the poorest areas where people suffer the greatest deprivation and live in hardship. Moreover, it is necessary to recognise along with Pope Francis that, if some of our baptised people do not participate in the activities of the Church, it is due to the existence of certain structures and an unwelcoming climate in some of our parishes and communities.

#### **4. “Envisaging the future...the direction in which we require the Movement to progress...”**

#### **What real challenges can the Movement respond to and how?**

There is a substantial challenge and basic objective for our mission: to help to discover and to live the true nature of human love which current culture tends to distort. Chapter 4 of the Apostolic Exhortation “Amoris Laetitia” shows the splendour of true love: a crafted work that is realised in the highs and lows of everyday life, a place to love from morning till night, accepting and overcoming each others imperfections; a reality which changes during one’s life but without losing its very essence; a definitive and lasting commitment that demands and generates a union

with God. Ultimately our mission is to show the path to happiness and holiness.

The Teams of Our Lady knows that the Lord will not cease to give it the strength and the means necessary to confidently make progress with this task. As Pope Francis said in 2015 in his speech to the leaders of the Movement, we have something that we need to share. It was a call to put the teachings of Teams at the service of their mission: these are our strength and what we are able to share.

Of course Teams must answer the call of the Church starting from what they are. To live mission, based on our charism, involves realising it as a couple, sharing it as a team and relying on the impetus and encouragement of the Movement.

In this new chapter the Movement can take on its mission to the world with a clear conscience and a real awareness. In doing this, it reasserts that its founding charism is not only to cultivate conjugal spirituality but also to promote a missionary spirit in each member of each team. In this way, and without taking away the freedom or the initiative of the team members, the Movement will support and encourage, with its organisation and animation, practical programmes to support couples in the new situations they encounter in contemporary society. This is the real contribution we can make to the Church and the world today: it is our strength.

How can we enhance this new spirit and new dynamic mission? Let us be inspired by the key words with which Pope Francis is constantly urging us: *to discern, to welcome and to accompany.*

### **3-1 Discernment and Welcome**

*Welcome:* This word is part of the identity of the Movement expressed in the founding Charter. Father Caffarel in “Marriage, the great sacrament” spoke of the ministry of Christian hospitality; a very important function that contributes to the life and growth of the Church. The couple or the small community that gathers in privacy, whether briefly or for a longer period, offers not only its human warmth but also

its radiating love and the real presence of Christ. In this way, “ *the non-believer or the part believer, the unhappy, the abandoned, the sinner will come face to face with the bigger Church, will become familiar with it and turn to the sacraments and the liturgy.*” From the perspective of the new evangelisation, it is vital to maintain this spirit of welcome at the heart of the Teams of Our Lady and to practise it without forgetting that *the Lord receives into His house and not into that of his neighbour.*

The International College meeting in Florianopolis in 2017 wanted to welcome with empathy and in a practical manner, according to the founding charism of Teams, the words that Pope Francis expressed in *Amoris Laetitia*. In this way not only the world, but also the Church concerns the Teams of Our Lady, because our charism is at its service.

The idea that an “outward-looking Church” which Pope Francis promotes, combines a sense of action with the practice of hospitality which was already acknowledged by Father Caffarel: “*whoever regards himself as a host does not wait for someone to come knocking at his door, he will have already invited that person in. This is the first manifestation of hospitality. Loving intuition makes it easy to know who is in need of this invitation.*” (Marriage, the great sacrament) In his address to the Teams of Our Lady (Rome 2015) Pope Francis urges us, most of all and with constancy and perseverance, to practise and to live fully conjugal spirituality. But he reminds us that this spirituality, if it is not missionary, remains ineffectual. In Teams we receive a great deal from Christ and the Church and because of that the Movement feels *irresistibly sent out to testify and pass on what they have received.* As Father Caffarel desired, Teams have to be the “shock troops” of a Church that is leaving its comfort zone to face whatever is necessary.

It is both a call to the community and to the individual. The New Evangelisation implies a new commitment of each and every team member, and not just from qualified professionals. The awareness of our limitations will be a constant motivation not to remain mediocre but to continue to pursue holiness. Mission opens up a path of formation and maturity.



All this implies a **new impetus and a new spirit in the expansion of the Movement**. It is important therefore, in the context of the New Evangelisation, to make known the riches of Christian marriage in as many countries as possible. We know very well how the pedagogy of Teams of Our Lady is so important in developing, in a positive way, the relationship between a man and a woman.

Today internationality, cultural diversity, socio-economic differences, communities linked with other catholic rites are on our doorstep or further away from our own surroundings. It is time to take down the numerous barriers in the expansion of the Movement and in the spreading of the Good News that accompanies it. When we look for a new couple to join our team or when we plan a Teams of Our Lady expansion or information event in our sector, do we go out and only look for those who are like us or do we consider the option of welcoming the stranger. All too often we are fishermen in waters that are familiar to us and we are afraid of fishing in waters we do not know well.

**How can we increase our capacity to welcome** while respecting the charism of the Movement and the Canonical Statutes with which it has been endowed? There is no easy answer but we know, through science that a healthy cell needs a strong nucleus with a porous membrane which allows exchange in certain situations. The call of the Church no longer makes it possible for Teams of Our Lady to live locked away in the shadows.

The Canonical Statutes of the Teams of Our Lady include rules to be respected for the welcome of new members. These rules determine a precise format for the notion of full membership to the Movement. At the same time the Movement acts with the spirit of discernment, of forgiveness, of prudence and of charity when faced with certain situations. It attempts to analyse with love each situation, case by case, never losing sight of its founding charism. In line with Chapter 8 of *Amoris Laetitia*, this kind of welcome suggests a fellowship that could eventually lead to some participation in the dynamics of the Movement, without actually belonging to it. From the perspective of the Vocation

and Mission of Teams, this response is compatible with our Charism of conjugal spirituality, if we acknowledge that there is some spiritual conjugality within each couple, man and woman, who commit to a real love and a true quest for God.

Discernment in the ability to welcome others evokes the mystery of our eternal and infinite God, who humbles Himself to reach out to us in mercy.

### **3-2 To Discern and to Accompany**

Above all Pope Francis points out the great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge to be met by practising a complete conversion to a fully Christian life and by adopting a different lifestyle. The family is the privileged place in which to achieve this conversion. It is the place where life is welcomed and protected; the place where we cultivate our first experiences of love, of sharing and of respect for all; the place where hospitality is practised.... On this basis the Church stresses the need to strengthen the education of children and to overcome obstacles so as to pass on faith within the family.

The family is the ideal place for dialogue and exchanges between generations. Young people have a new sensitivity and a generous spirit, a lot of them fight admirably for a more just and more open world. They can help us to get back again on the right path to conversion and mission that the Church is showing us:

- To develop an ecological conscience which leads to a simpler, more humble and more interdependent way of life.
- To overcome a lack of confidence, defensive attitudes and be open to going out to meet others beyond the boundaries of diversity because the Holy Spirit is also at work there.
- To promote the respect and dignity of the individual and to exercise freedom in an ethical and responsible manner, particularly regarding emotional and sexual relationships.

The Church recognises that *Christian couples, by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, are the main agents of pastoral care within the family*. It is not a matter of expounding theories or doctrines but by demonstrating, through experience, the attraction of conjugal and family love, which meets the deepest expectations of the human being and which is the antidote to the egoism that overruns the world today. We married Christians have the experience that love is stronger than all the agonies a couple can go through, as long as they remain united with Christ. We know very well that the couple is a work in progress that grows gradually thanks to the gifts bestowed on us by God. It is this joy and hope that we are able to pass on.

The key word is *“to accompany”*. Pope Francis insists on the need to practise *“the art of accompaniment”* on the path of progress. We, the Teams, are already initiated in this art that implies discernment, welcome, listening, compassion, care, patience, mutual understanding.... We are called by the Church to accompany, especially in moments of great fragility: the path to a firm and lasting commitment; the first years of the life of the couple: moments of crisis and difficulties: the complex situations resulting from breakdowns, abandonment and lack of understanding.

### **3-3 Practicing “the art of accompaniment”**

**In the sphere of education and transmission of faith** one of the basic challenges facing families is definitely that of education, which has become more demanding and complex because of the current cultural situation and the major influence of the media. The transmission of faith that once seemed self-evident is more problematic today. In a materialistic world, where nothing is sacred and everything is put into question, the Teams of Our Lady need to take hold of this issue and help Teams parents with the education of their children. They are called to collaborate, through adequate pastoral action, so that the parents themselves can fulfil their educational mission.

As is already done in some places, it would be useful if responsible couples tried, during sector days or other events, such as 8<sup>th</sup> December, to provide some religious-based activities for children. During retreats, for example, why not invite the children to follow a School of Prayer. The educational experience can be made easier by using ever more sophisticated technology and entertainment. Children need symbols, gestures and stories. Teenagers get into conflict regarding authority and rules. It is necessary, therefore, to encourage their own experiences of faith and to offer them shining testimonies, which are imprinted through their attractiveness alone. The revitalisation of Teams of Our Lady for the Young would be a logical consequence of this attention paid to the younger ones.

Father Caffarel extolled the virtue of example. For him, missionary families give rise not only to missionary children but would be the origin of numerous vocations. Today, when the transmission of faith is more difficult for families, it is the concern of the Teams of Our Lady, as of all communities of the Church, to help parents. The fellowship that unites demands this of us.

**In the sphere of preparation of marriage and its accompaniment** The first mission of the Teams of Our Lady is, of course, to radiate the good news of marriage. For a long time now, a number of team members have worked in Marriage Preparation but the regret expressed by Father Caffarel, during his conference in Chantilly in 1987, should be a real cause for thought. He said: *“ I do not think that the Teams of Our Lady should lead marriage preparation, but I do think that Teams of Our Lady should have advice centres for marriage preparation which would be references for other centres, leading on precisely from the spirituality they have discovered.”*

A reflection is also needed to think up and create modules or courses, inspired by our Movement, which could be offered to young couples, who have just got married, and who would like to benefit from something to help them through the first years of marriage without actually belonging to the Movement. Pope Francis has expressed this

need today in “Amoris Laetitia”: *“Both short-term and long-term marriage preparation should ensure that the couple do not view the wedding ceremony as the end of the road, but instead embark upon marriage as a life-long calling based on a firm and realistic decision to face all trials and difficult moments together. The pastoral care of engaged and married couples should be centred on the marriage bond, assisting couples not only to deepen their love but also to overcome problems and difficulties. This involves not only helping them to accept the Church's teaching and to have recourse to her valuable resources, but also offering practical programmes, sound advice, proven strategies and psychological guidance. All this calls for a pedagogy of love, attuned to the feelings and needs of young people and capable of helping them to grow interiorly”.* (Amoris Laetitia 211)

The Teams of Our Lady in the world today should not ignore all those young people who do not choose the commitment of marriage and prefer to live in what might be called an “irregular” situation. Their reasons are many. It is our responsibility, without judgement or trying to convert, to approach them to explain why, contrary to what is advocated today, Christian marriage is the path to happiness. Thanks to the pedagogy used in Teams, it is possible to guide them not only to marriage but also to encourage in them a desire to progress further on the path of faith. Several experiments, such as “Tandem Teams” or “Mas Pareja” or “Community Experiences” already exist in different countries. It is enough to adapt them and enrich them according to the situation and culture in each country.

The involvement of the Movement’s responsible couples at the diocesan pastoral level needs to be influential. It is a challenge that we are faced with if we want our Movement to flourish in the “outside” world and bear fruit.

**In the sphere of couples in crisis** We also know that today no country is spared from what is called “the crisis of the couple” which often occurs in the first few years of life together.... Is there nothing that can be done

about this crisis? If the Teams think so, then they must do something about it.

As “couple experts” do they not have a role to play in a society that currently offers the couple nothing but separation or divorce? To achieve this goal, the implementation of long-term pastoral care seems more necessary than ever, beyond the already existing suggestions that should be encouraged and developed wherever possible. Could they not suggest helping the couple alongside the professionals, before the crisis becomes irreparable? Isn't it possible to bear witness to the grandeur of the couple, to its riches, its beauty and its durability in spite of the storms that naturally trouble it?

Over time, Teams of Our Lady have created proposals that respond to the various circumstances in a couple's life. In all cases the Teams of Our Lady have sought to ensure that, throughout inevitable crises, the union of the couple remains solid, lasting and lived in the Faith.

Learning to anticipate the crisis before it becomes irreparable is surely a good basis for discernment. The Teams of Our Lady have the expertise to be inventive and creative in this area. Certain countries have very interesting initiatives that are worth knowing about so that they can extend into as many different countries as possible. Team members, therefore, could be invited to take a marriage counsellor's course in order to be more effective in helping couples in crisis, whose separation in many cases could be avoided. Father Caffarel had already come up with this idea in his talk in Chantilly: *“I would like the Teams of Our Lady to have marriage counsellors, not to have a monopoly but to ensure that they act in line with the founding charism.”*

In certain countries responsible couples regularly organise conferences throughout the year, which, whenever it is possible, are open to everyone on topics related to the couple and the family. This has two advantages: The Teams of Our Lady is addressing itself to those outside of teams and can therefore help to find answers to questions raised by society (on education, ethics, sexuality, the anthropology of love and of the couple....)

This support could likewise be relayed to more remote or underprivileged areas thanks to the various means of communication available to us today.

In the same way, the Movement could, on a different level, create teams capable of intervening on a variety of subjects.

**In the sphere of couples who have formed a new relationship** Likewise, one cannot ignore the question of separated or divorced couples, who have formed a new relationship and who wish to have a lasting and living faith. For many years, Popes and Bishops have asked us to come to terms with this reality. The address of Pope Francis to the Teams of Our Lady in 2015 is very clear with regards to this. *“Therefore, it is necessary that you be able to bring your testimony and your experience to help Christian communities to discern the concrete situations of these persons, and to receive them with their wounds, and help them to walk in faith and in truth, under the gaze of Christ the Good Shepherd.”* Reliance teams are one suggestion but we must move forward if we want as many people as possible to experience the mercy of God.

It is clear that if all these suggestions are to be effective they cannot survive on their own or be developed without the support of Spiritual Counsellors. The task of helping someone to renew their faith is the task of the counsellors *“It is impossible to dissociate the priest's mission from the mission of Christ; it prolongs and perpetuates it throughout the centuries.”*(Father Henri Caffarel). It is necessary that the Movement at sector and at regional levels, depending on the circumstances, launches reflexion groups, starts to experiment and stays in a close relationship with the diocese, which we regard as the most significant level allowing a good dissemination.

**In the sphere of the elderly** Our Movement has to adapt to the modern world without leaving aside our old people. We must take into consideration the loneliness they suffer. Initiatives will require imagination and be active on the ground according to the expectations expressed. It is a challenge for us all.

Marie d'Amonville, widow of Louis, both old colleagues of Father Caffarel, suggested, wherever possible, creating a new Movement linked to the Teams of Our Lady, *"The life ahead of us"* so as to live in preparation for the "great passage" as a time of grace.

The birth of this new movement is proof that the founding charism is always fertile and at work. It is also necessary to take time and make space for reflection and discernment if we really want to find answers to the challenges of our world.

**In the sphere of spiritual reflection and its dissemination** During the Colloquium on the thinking of Father Caffarel that took place at the College of the Bernardins in Paris in December 2017, Sister Fernanda Barbiero explained in her lecture, *"The Anneau d'Or"*, the essential role that this publication had played in the spiritual world of its time. The speaker concluded by stating that *"Anneau d'Or opened paths that are still to be explored today."* Therefore, this periodical, as well as acting as a link between the team members, opened up perspectives which could be expanded on and updated today.

Is it not necessary, in this period of profound change, to open space for reflection and creation, capable of arousing interest and conviction among our contemporaries, around this basic subject of conjugal spirituality at the dawn of the third millennium?

Of course, the means used would not have much in common with those of *"Anneau d'Or"*; it would try to use all modern means of communication allowing team members to be reached in a very direct and personal way, as well as perhaps reaching larger audiences.

This issue could be part of the reflective and creative thinking of the leaders of the Movement and, more widely, of all team members who would find in it an essential part of their missionary vocation.



## Conclusion

The future of the Teams of Our Lady will always be based on greater communion with others. It will only be by following the necessity and gift of love that we can attain this communion in the different areas of our life, at the heart of the Movement and the Church. Members of Teams of Our Lady participate in their own way to the prophetic, priestly, true role of Christ in the Church and in the world.

Evangelisation is not an optional invitation but a constant duty. *“Evangelisation is to acknowledge one’s position in the missionary Church.”* It is to recognise the call of God.

The time has come when the Teams of Our Lady feel able to accept and respond to the great concerns of the world giving meaning to their existence, thanks to their identity and to their specific mission that leads every couple to engage fully in this Mission.

The Mission of the Movement is to shape, train and motivate couples to be messengers of the Good News in the world in which we live, so as to proclaim the values of the Gospel at the heart of the couple and the family, the pillars of support for the bridge we have to cross, and that more and more impresses on us a commitment based on the stability of love.

The first step to take is to recreate and adapt methods of formation while remaining true to our charism, so as to provide answers to the real challenges of our time.

Teams of Our Lady can take the lead in this *“Outward going Church, according to the expression of Pope Francis, an evangelizing action of unimaginable proportions.* For this reason, the Teams of Our Lady cannot limit themselves to an individualistic spirituality but have to realise a pastoral perspective that is essential for the transformation of the world.

If, throughout the world we light up marriage and the family with the true light of the Gospel, a new path will open which will be a reason for hope and joy for all. Our Movement should not be restricted to the strict observation of the endeavours without taking the trouble to look

around and to see *“what to do next”*. Some people in fact, even though they respect the endeavours, sometimes lose sight of the true demands of Christian life (Faith and Works). Father Caffarel never separated our vocation from our mission; he said it was necessary to constantly take both aspects into account. Let us make the words pronounced at the end of each mass our own: *“Go and serve the Lord”*.

In conclusion with Father Caffarel: *“More love in the home, more charity in the teams and more energy in our mission....”*

**Given to the Teams of Our Lady  
by the International Responsible Team  
Fatima, 20th July 2018**

## ANNEXE 6

### First Recognition of Teams by the Church (Letter of Cardinal Felтин)

(1960)

#### CARDINAL FELTIN WRITES TO US:

In the Church, as in civil society, every association is led one day to express its nature, its objectives and its methods in the form of Statutes. There is advantage in not doing it too soon so as not to be confined to too narrow a mould that would hinder a necessary evolution and adaptations. But one must, however, give oneself as soon as possible a framework that will guarantee that development takes place along the right lines and which will eliminate any hesitation and discussion on the distinctive character of the grouping. In the Church, new institutions are first approved by the local bishop, and thereafter by the Holy See, if the latter deems it appropriate.

As you learned from the last Monthly Letter, the Statutes of the Teams of Our Lady have just been submitted to Rome where they are being studied. They had previously been approved by His Eminence Cardinal Felтин, by a letter of great importance which you will find below. This document of capital importance defines with vigour and clarity the characteristics of our Movement. It deserves to be read and meditated upon by each one of you and studied at your team meeting. Our place in Christianity could not have been more clearly defined.

*The line of conduct is very clear, it is up to each one of us to be faithful to it.*

Henri Caffarel

Having witnessed the development of the TEAMS OF OUR LADY in France and in the world, and being aware of the spiritual growth of its member couples, I welcome this opportunity of expressing my thoughts to the leadership of the Movement.

As bishop of the place where it was founded, and after having studied the statutes that were submitted to me, I have pleasure in informing the Leadership of the Movement that I approve them. They are the fruit of a long experience that has shown how much an administrative framework, that is both firm and flexible, can favour the growth of charity and the radiating influence of couples.

May all members remain faithful to the original inspiration and to the characteristics of the Movement: spirituality, supra-nationality and lay leadership.

1- The Teams of Our Lady are and must remain a movement of spiritual formation.

The reason for their existence is to help their members to discover the demands and the greatness of their vocation as baptised Christians and to help them, by the statutes and structure of the Movement, to “strive towards the perfection of the Christian life in the context of their married and family life”, according to the words used by Pope John XXIII last May in his address to the thousand pilgrim-couples of the Movement.

Being a ‘school of perfection’, the Teams of Our Lady are not to be classified among movements of Catholic Action, nor among family movements. They must rightly have the ambition of being a breeding ground of militants who, in accordance with the individual vocation of each member, will take part in large numbers in the life of Catholic Action and in the good works approved by the hierarchy. They will

involve themselves in their worldly occupations anxious to be Christian witnesses and to establish a social order that is in conformity with the teaching of the Church.

2 – Their objective of spiritual formation justifies the ideal of supra-nationality of the Teams of Our Lady. There are no frontiers to the spiritual life and this great spiritual and supra-national fraternity of couples in a unique movement, established in more than twenty countries, is a valuable witness within Christianity as well as a great hope.

If this supra-nationality is not to be an illusion and is to remain at the level of the charity of Christ, there is need of both strong leadership and of a loyal spirit of discipline from leaders and members of the Teams, otherwise the movement would be weak in the face of the temptation that threatens all spiritual groups, to turn to active involvements. To yield to this temptation would be, for the Teams of Our Lady, a denial of the reason for their existence.

3 – It is fortunate that leadership at all levels is provided by lay people.

This is truly in keeping with the promotion of the laity, so strongly favoured by the Holy See for the past thirty years. The priest who, according to the statutes, helps the Sector Couple, has the mission both to give spiritual animation and counsel to the couples and to provide a link with the bishop of the diocese.

In view of the doctrinal and spiritual responsibility implied in its role, the International Leading Team has, as its leader, a priest appointed by the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. This role has up to now been exercised by Father Caffarel, founder of the Teams of Our Lady. The approval that We grant to the Statutes provides Us with the opportunity to confirm Father

Caffarel in his role and to confirm Our total approval of the spiritual and doctrinal contribution that he makes to the Teams of Our Lady, as well as for the wisdom with which he and his collaborators lead them in a spirit of absolute submission and faithfulness to the Bishops and to the Holy See which has never failed.

*Approval given in Paris, on the 25th of March 1960*

**Signed : Maurice Cardinal FELTIN  
Archbishop of Paris**

## **ANNEXE 7**

### **DECREE OF RECOGNITION AS AN ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL**

**(1992)**

The Teams of Our Lady were created in Paris in 1938 by a number of couples who, under the guidance of Father Henri Caffarel, wished to live to the full, in marriage, their vocation as baptised Christians.

However, it was the adoption of the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady on the 8th December 1947 which constituted the true foundation of the Movement.

In the Charter, the couples then leading the Movement, under the guidance of Father Caffarel, affirmed their commitment.

- to fulfil "their baptismal vows",
  - to give themselves to Christ "unconditionally",
  - to "serve him without hesitation",
  - to base their "family life on His Gospel",
  - to see their love, sanctified by the sacrament of marriage, give "glory to God, bear witness to others that Christ has redeemed love, and atone for the sins against the marriage bond".
- 
- "They aim to be missionaries of Christ at all times and in all places.
  - They wish to express their devotion to the Church by being always ready to respond to the requests of their clergy and bishops.
  - They strive to be competent in their callings and in their daily work.
  - They desire to turn all their activities into a collaboration with God in his work and in the service of others.

- Because they are aware of their weakness and their limitations, notwithstanding their goodwill,
- because they experience daily how difficult it is to live up to the Christian ideal in our godless world,
- and because they have unflinching faith in the power of fellowship and mutual help,
- they have decided to form themselves into "teams".

The Teams of Our Lady have placed themselves under the patronage of Our Lady, because there is no better guide to God than the Mother of God. They wish to be a movement of spirituality grouping couples who desire to progress towards holiness in and through their marriage by incorporating, in the life of the couple, a married spirituality with the help of a team.

Over the last few years the urgent need for a renewal of family life and Christian marriage has not ceased to grow a need, prophetically perceived by Father Caffarel and the couples who founded the Movement, and which was strongly endorsed by the second Vatican Council. Hence the support of a Team, the encouragement received from couples sharing the same ideals, and the constant spiritual nourishment derived from the Movement, become more and more indispensable.

Throughout its history the Teams of Our Lady, as a result of having spread to numerous countries and every continent, and thanks to the seeds of holiness maturing in the lives of its couples, has sought to respond to this need. The spiritual quality and apostolic strength of the Movement have already made an important contribution, likely to be developed still further in the future, to the renewal of marriage throughout the world.

Considering the Teams of Our Lady as a gift from God to the Church and to the world, numerous bishops have given their support to the



Movement's request, submitted to the Pontifical Council for the Laity on the 19th September, 1990, to be recognised as an Association of the Faithful under private law.

Having carefully studied the draft statutes submitted for approval and received the agreement of His Holiness John Paul II during an audience given to His Eminence Cardinal Eduardo Pironio on the 26th March 1992, the Pontifical Council for the Laity recognises the Teams of Our Lady as an Association of the Faithful under private law in accordance with the provisions of canons 298-311 and 321-329, and approves its statutes *ad experimentum* for a period of five years.

May this official recognition make even stronger the bond of fidelity to the Church and to its magisterium which has been an outstanding characteristic of the Movement from the beginning. May Mary, Mother of God and Mother of every Christian couple, continue to guide the Teams of Our Lady on the path to holiness which only Christ can give. With her, let us give thanks to God:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord  
and my spirit exults  
in God my saviour ;  
because he has looked upon  
his lowly handmaid".

*Given at the Vatican, this 19th day of April 1992 on the feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul J. Cordes  
*Vice-President*

Eduardo F. Cardinal Pironio  
*President*

## ANNEXE 8

### Confirmation of the Decree of Recognition and Approval of the Canonical Statutes

(2002)

#### DECREE

The *Teams of Our Lady* were started in France during 1938, on the initiative of some couples who, accompanied by a priest, Father Henri Caffarel, used to meet every month to rediscover together the meaning of marriage and the riches of this sacrament. The first team meeting took place in Paris on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 1939. Soon these couples found in it so much benefit for their married life that they attracted several others to share their experience. Thus it was that on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1947, the Charter of the *Teams of Our Lady* - which is considered the founding document of the Movement - was finalised.

The *Teams of Our Lady* are a movement of married spirituality established to meet the needs of Christian couples who wish to live their married life to the full on the basis of their sacrament of marriage. According to their Statutes, the *Teams of Our Lady*, being a “movement of spiritual formation and renewal”, help their members to progress in the love of God and in the love of their neighbour. They look to fraternal mutual help as a way to help their members to live out, individually and as a couple, the concrete conditions of their married, family, working and social life in accordance with the will of God. They encourage them to become aware of their evangelising mission in the Church and in the world and to carry it out by the witness of their married love and by other forms of actions of their choice” (*Statutes*, art. 3).

During the Jubilee of the year 2000, Pope John Paul II, stressing the meaning and value of married communion, said that, “in the sacrament of marriage, the spouses endeavour to express to one another the indissoluble love with which Christ loves the Church and to bear witness to it in the world. This is a ‘great mystery’, as the apostle Paul calls it (Ef 5: 32) (John Paul II, *Homily of the Jubilee of Families*, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2000, 4).

The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, as well as the post-councilar Magisterium, paid very particular attention to associative forms of participation in the life of the Church, by expressing its deepest esteem and consideration of these forms of participation (see the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 18, 19, 21; John Paul II, Post-Synod Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*, 29).

In a similar vein, Pope John Paul II wrote, at the beginning of the third millennium, that ‘the duty to promote various types of associations is of great importance for communion, whether they be in traditional forms or in the form of more recent Church movements. They continue to give vitality to the Church which is a gift from God and which is a true “spring-time of the Spirit” (Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio ineunte*, 46).

Therefore:

- Bearing in mind that the Pontifical Council for the Laity has, by a decree dated 19<sup>th</sup> April 1992, recognised the *Teams of Our Lady* as an international private association of the faithful, with juridical status in pontifical law, and that it approved these Statutes *ad experimentum*;
- responding to the request presented to us on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2002 by Gérard and Marie Christine de Roberty, Leading Couple of the International Leading Team of the *Teams of Our Lady*, who requested a definitive approval of the Statutes;

- accepting, at the same time, the modifications made to the text of the Statutes;
- taking into consideration the apostolic influence of the Movement and the in-depth formation of the members of the *Teams of Our Lady* - an association that has served the family and society for all these years by helping couples to live out their married life in a Christian way and to discover God's plan for them in their daily life;
- and in view of articles 131-134 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* on the Roman Curia, as well as canon 312, §1, 1<sup>o</sup> of the Code of Canon Law,

the Pontifical Council for the Laity, by this decree,

1. confirms the recognition of the Movement of the *Teams of Our Lady* as an international private association of the faithful, with juridical status, in conformity with canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canon Law,
2. and approves definitively the Statutes of the *Teams of Our Lady*, the original of which are deposited in the archives of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

*Given at the Vatican on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 2002, on the liturgical Memoria of Saint Joakim and Saint Anne, parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

**Stanislaw Rylko**  
*Secretary*

**James Francis Cardinal Stafford**  
*President*

## ANNEXE 9

# CONFIRMATION OF THE MODIFICATIONS TO THE TEAMS CANONICAL STATUTES FOLLOWING APPROVAL BY THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY (2014)

### CANONICAL STATUTES OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY

#### FOREWORD

The Teams of Our Lady (Equipes Notre-Dame, END) originated with a group of four couples, who wished to respond fully to the demands of their baptism in and through their married life, and with a priest, Father Henri Caffarel, who foresaw the spiritual richness of the sacrament of marriage.

The first Team meeting was held in Paris on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1939. The Team's Charter was drawn up on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1947, at the instigation of Father Henri Caffarel and of those responsible at the time. It constitutes the true founding act of the Movement, which placed itself under the patronage of the Mother of God.

The primary aim of this foreword is to place these statutes within the context of the original intuition of the Movement's foundation and to thus allow the Teams to move forward with daring and confidence, faithful to the founding charisms.

As is clearly stated in the Team's Charter, note n°1 and as Father Caffarel reminded all at Easter 1988 in an anthology of founding texts for the Teams, the Teams of Our Lady, from the start, wished to be a

“Movement for married spirituality and not simply a friendly group of Christian couples who wanted to escape isolation, nor a family Movement, nor Catholic action Movement.” Similarly from the beginning, it brought together not individuals, but couples who want to progress towards holiness in and through marriage.

The central intuition of the first meetings, which would give rise to what would be called ‘married spirituality,’ is indeed therefore that couples united by the sacrament of marriage are called to holiness not despite their marriage, but in and through it. We find it difficult today to understand the novelty such a notion exemplified fifty years ago. Today still, it is a field to be tilled.

By being with young couples, Father Caffarel discovered the meaning of this ‘great mystery’ that St Paul spoke of (Ep 5, 32). The only way for couples united through the sacrament of marriage to seek an alternative route to holiness is through their love, seized and transfigured by divine love. As Father Caffarel loved to repeat, *“Marriage means giving yourself to each other to give yourselves together.”*

Another intuition grew out of these first Teams: the parallel between two relationships of love: that of the human person with Christ and that of the couple. Both have a similar evolution: after the joy of the first meeting comes one day the trial of the dark night and of apparent absence. Then it is necessary to hold on in faith and fidelity.

In 1945, an editorial that had a great impact appeared in the *Golden Ring*, a magazine for married and family spirituality set up by Father Caffarel - ‘A Little Known Duty’. In this editorial, Father Caffarel inspired by a passage in St. Luke from which he derived the principle: “a house will end up falling down if you do not keep an eye on the roof,” launched the duty of the ‘sit-down’. In couples who do

not stop to think, get caught up in the routine their marriage will crack and fissure.

But because they are aware of their weaknesses and limitations, because they realise everyday how narrow the door is and how the long term is difficult, ever more couples decide to join a team within a structured Movement that is flexible and rigorous.

Inspired by experience that goes back over fifty years, the Teams are convinced that the Movement responds more than ever to the needs of couples and the Church. This Movement, currently located in about sixty countries, wishes to be the bearer of a Christian testimonial in the world.

In conformity with Canon 299, paragraph 3 of the Canonical Code, promulgated on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1983, the International Leading Team of the Teams of Our Lady Movement, along with the Super-Regional and numerous Regional Couples, unanimously decided to adopt the following statutes.

These statutes were approved '*ad experimentum*' for 5 years by his Eminence Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity during an audience with His Holiness John Paul II on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 1992. The Decree of Recognition of the Teams of Our Lady as a private association of the faithful, according to the norms of canons 298-311 and 321-329 was promulgated on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1992, on the Feast of the Resurrection.

These statutes were definitively approved on July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2002, date of the feast of St Joachim and St Anne, the Blessed Virgin's parents, in a decree from the Pontifical Council for the Laity under the presidency of Cardinal James Francis Stafford.

Their aim is

- To provide for the coherence and growth the Movement in line with and faithful to the original intuitions, while allowing for the necessary adjustments, according to the new needs that could occur in relation to the various contexts of time and place;
- To ensure the anchoring of the original intuition of the Teams of Our Lady Movement in the Church and to therefore obtain confirmation of the recognition of its special features;
- To serve as a reference point for the Movement's members and those in responsibility and as a guarantee for the Church authorities;
- To define the institutional expression of the attachment of the Teams of Our Lady to the Holy See.

### **Article 1 – Denomination and Qualification**

The official name of the Movement is “Equipes Notre-Dame” shortened to END. This denomination is common to the whole of the Movement, without prejudice to the use of official translations. Where necessary, the subtitle, “Movement for Married Spirituality” is added.

The name Equipes Notre-Dame may be translated in the languages of the countries in which it is established with the agreement of the International Leading Team (ERI).

The END, as a lay movement, is an international private association of the faithful, presided over and governed by its members. It has a legal personality, according to canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canonical Law, promulgated January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1983 and in compliance with the present statutes. This Movement forms a spiritual community of universal character within the Church.



## **Article 2 – Headquarters**

The Movement's headquarters are situated in Paris, 49, rue de la Glacière, 75013 Paris, France. It could be moved to another location if the International Leading Team (ERI) so decided.

## **Article 3 – Aims and Essential Characteristics**

The aim of the END is to help Christian couples discover and experience all dimensions of the sacrament of marriage, by remaining faithful to the teachings of the Church.

A movement of spiritual training and resourcing, the END help their members progress in their love of God and their love of their neighbour; they appeal to mutual help so that their members can accept personally and as a couple the concrete conditions of their married, family, professional, and social life according to God's will; they encourage them to become aware of their evangelic mission within the Church and the world through the testimonial of their married love and through any other means of action they decide upon.

## **Article 4 – Members**

Members are defined as those Christian couples, united by the sacrament of marriage, who support, with a view to putting them in to practice, the aims and methods of the Movement, as were defined in the latest edition of the Charter (May 1972), in the fundamental documents that brought it up to date and by the present statutes.

'The Guide to the Teams of Our Lady,' published in May 2001 by the ERI after the International College's approval, is based on all the aforementioned documents it contains, together with the present statutes. It lays out the rules and regulations governing the conditions for the life of the Movement and of its members. It is the reference document, detailing how the Movement works and can only be modified by the ERI after consultation with the International College.

Any couple, who fulfils the conditions of the first paragraph of the present Article 4, may join the Teams. After an introductory period of at least a year, spent with a Team and accompanied by a Pilot Couple, who explains the various aspects of life with the Teams, each couple commits to the Movement or decides to leave it.

Every member may leave whenever they choose.

The SR/RR may decide upon the exclusion of one or more members in their region for reasons of non-compatibility or serious difficulty in relation to the association's commitments. This decision is based on the evidence of the local Responsible Couple, but those excluded are entitled to the right to defend themselves and even to appeal, if necessary, to the ERI.

### **Article 5 – Team Life and Mutual Help between Members**

The Team is a true ecclesial community and constitutes the Movement's basic cell. The specific vocation of the Teams of Our Lady, as a Church Movement, is to encourage and facilitate small communities of couples, who seek to fully live a Christian life in their home and their family.

After a Piloting and introductory period, the Team as such commits to the Movement, which accepts the Team, or it decides to leave the Movement.

Made up of five to seven couples, the Team chooses a 'Responsible Couple' every year. This couple is helped by a priest 'Spiritual Counsellor'/chaplain, who renders the link between the priesthood and the Church visible.

The monthly meeting is the highpoint in the life of the Team. Everyone prepares for this meeting, which comprises a simple meal, a time for

prayer, a time for sharing or pooling of each members' experiences and preoccupations, an exchange on the subject topic, which is linked to the aims and essential characteristics of the Movement, as well as a time of sharing on the Endeavours, explained below.

The Teams of Our Lady members commit in fact to making an effort personally and as a couple to accomplish the Endeavours: a personal Rule of Life, a time of true married dialogue every month in order to seek out together the will of the Lord (the Sit-Down), listening to the Word of God, daily personal prayer, family and couple prayer and an annual retreat. In order to succeed in these Endeavours, they also commit to helping each other mutually as a Team and to participating in the activities and life of the Movement.

## **Article 6 — Responsible and Organisational Bodies**

1) Various bodies of responsibility and organisation are at the service of the fraternal communion with a view to accomplishing the Movement's goals:

- The Liaison Couple is in charge of ensuring the liaison between various teams;
- The Sector Couple is in charge of running a group of 5-20 Teams with the help of a Team, called a Sector Team, comprising a few couples and a priest, Spiritual Counsellor/chaplain to the Sector;
- The Regional Couple in charge of running various sectors
- The Provincial Couple in charge of liaising with various Regions, when the Super Region is too large a territory;
- The Super-Regional Couple in charge of running various provinces or regions.

Responsible Couples to the Sectors, Regions, Provinces, Super-Regions will make sure to constitute a service team to help them exercise their responsibility. This service team is made up of a few couples and a priest Spiritual Counsellor/chaplain, who help them collegially in a spirit of

communion and trust. Each of these responsible couples must answer to the Movement's hierarchy.

All these responsibilities together with the services rendered by Teams' couples for administrative duties, translation etc. are done on a volunteer basis, without payment.

**2) The International Leading Team (ERI)** collegially assumes the general responsibility of the Movement. It exercises this role in close collaboration with the Super-Regional couples.

The ERI comprises six to eight couples, who are assisted by a priest Spiritual Counsellor/chaplain. These couples are chosen by the ERI itself, once it has consulted at large and notably with the Super-Regions. The choice of ERI members should be inspired, inasmuch as is possible, by the international character of the Movement.

ERI members serve for a maximum of six years.

The ERI chooses a Responsible Couple from amongst its members or from amongst couples who belonged to the preceding ERI. Only in exceptional circumstances may the ERI Responsible Couple be chosen from the members of the College. If this is the case, the chosen couple must participate in ERI meetings for at least a year before beginning to exercise their responsibility.

The ERI Responsible Couple is in charge of running and coordinating the ERI. This couple takes on the everyday running of the Movement and regularly gives feedback on its mission to the other ERI members. The mandate is for a maximum of six years and they are the official representatives of the movement.

Before beginning the nomination procedure for the Responsible Couple, the ERI makes sure that the Pontifical Council for the Laity has no major objections to their choice.

The ERI has access to an International Administrative office, run by the General Secretary Couple of the ERI, who look after the administrative aspects and functioning of the ERI.

The Liaison Zones are made up of Super-Regions, Regions or Sectors, which are directly attached to the ERI, as well as countries, which do not yet have a Team at this level. The ERI is responsible for them.

Specialised service teams called 'Satellite Teams' may also be called upon by the ERI to help it fulfil its mission. The ERI will make sure that the international character of these teams, whose members serve for a limited time defined by the ERI, is preserved. A member of the ERI is responsible for them.

The ERI may call upon experts, priest or laity, to help them in their reflection.

If the post of ERI Responsible Couple falls vacant, the corresponding mission will be exercised, after election to the ERI, for a provisory period and for a maximum period of one year, by the member couple who had obtained the majority vote, until such a time as another couple is called upon to take on the succession definitively, according to the rules of the present Statutes.

3) All responsibility exercised by each level is given to couples, who are Team members, for a limited time frame, usually 3-5 years. Couples mentioned in paragraph 1 of the present Article are chosen according the rules fixed by the Movement's official documents in a spirit of communion and service. The couple responsible for the general organisation that they belong to proceeds with their nomination, once

the outgoing responsible couple and all competent people have been consulted.

Concerning the nomination of SR and RR Responsible Couples, this is inevitably made in consultation with the ERI.

Administrative offices are created according to the needs of different countries, with the agreement of the ERI and are placed under local responsibility, in collaboration with the International Administrative office.

If the post of Responsible Couple falls vacant, the corresponding mission is assumed by the Responsible Couple of the level to which the post depends. Upon the advice of its team, Responsible Couple may ask a couple, who are members of their team, to fill the post.

Each Responsible Couple, from the Sector level up, represents the Movement in their geographic area. This representation only concerns the domains covered by Article 3. The Responsible Couple must report back regularly on its initiatives, decisions and governance.

All documents, created by any part of the Movement and concerning the Movement's pedagogy, its rules of governance or which are to be made available to couples for their study or distribution, must be sent to the ERI for approval.

Responsible Couples, who exercise at a level of responsibility in the Movement, may be relieved of their functions:

- In the case of exclusion from the Movement, according to Article 4 of these Statutes;
- In the case of systematic refusal to respect the obligations inherent in their responsibility;
- In the case of practices that are not in agreement with the Church;

- In the case of violation of these Statutes, which would call into question the unity and communion of the Teams of Our Lady.

The decision to replace someone must be taken by the SR/RR Responsible Couples in charge, while ensuring their right to a defence and with the possibility of appeal before the ERI.

### **Article 7 — Priests Spiritual Counsellors**

Priests bring the irreplaceable grace of their priesthood to the Teams. They are not in charge of governing, which is why they are called “Spiritual Counsellors.”

Team members choose the priest, **Spiritual Counsellor to the Team**, from amongst those priests, who legitimately exercise their priesthood and in conformity with Canon 324, paragraph 2.

The Responsible Couple of the Service Team and with the agreement of their hierarchical Responsible Couple chooses the priest, **Spiritual Counsellor to the Sector or other service Team**. It beholds the priest to talk to and get the agreement of his spiritual hierarchy before accepting the responsibility. The usual length of the commitment is three to five years.

The Responsible Couple, who is about to assume the service within the ERI, puts forward the priest’s name who is to be **Spiritual Counsellor to the ERI** and the Holy See confirms his nomination. The length of his mandate is six years maximum and should finish at the same time as the Responsible Couple’s.

Other priests may be associated with the reflection and spiritual animation of the Movement, at different levels of responsibility, depending on the circumstances and needs. They are chosen by the

level who needs them and in agreement with the Movement's hierarchy.

### **Article 8 — Administration of Property**

The Movement's resources comprise the annual subscriptions paid by members, together with gifts, subsidies and eventual bequests. These resources cover the running costs as well as those involved in activity and expansion of the Movement.

The Movement may acquire property, through purchase, donation or bequest, but will retain ownership only with a strict view to the fulfilment of its aims.

Whoever is involved in the finances of the Movement must account for the sums received and spent.

Every year, the ERI fixes the Movement's financial policy, in particular the international Super Regions' and Regions' contribution, and they ensure that it is adhered to.

Civil, national or regional associations, of a juridical nature, may be established in the countries where the END are located. The decision to create them and their statutes are to be submitted for the ERI's approval beforehand. These associations can possess and run property belonging to the END and will report back annually to the Movement's local heads.

With a view to transparency and confidence, accounting documents of civil associations, set up by the regions or Super Regions, or to which they belong, are annually forwarded to the relevant instance. Similarly, the ERI hands over to the College all documents relevant to the various associations of which it is a member.



If one of these associations is liquidated, the goods and property are devolved according to the rules of each country. The international association will however make sure that the goods/property are used for the good of all of the Movement's members or of institutions that are related to couples and marriage of the countries administered by the aforementioned associations.

If the International Association of the END is liquidated, the ERI will devolve the goods and property to associations that pursue the same goals in conformity with Canon 326.

### **Article 9 – Revision of the Statutes**

Any proposal to revise the present statutes is to be made either by the International Leading Team (ERI), or at the request of the Super-Region Responsible Couples with a majority of two thirds.

The modifications are fixed by the ERI after consulting the Super Regions according to the same procedure as that which was followed for the elaboration of the present statutes and submitted for approval to the Holy See.

### **Article 10 – Final Measures**

The ERI and Super Regional couples ensure the compliance of the internal regulations and official Movement documents with the present statutes.

Paris, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014



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