

To meet or not to meet? That is the question.

By Ted & Eileen Kosnik, Super Regional Couple

When the Super Regional Team met in January of this year it was decided that we would have a National Conference in mid July 2009 in the northeast area of the country. The location was based on the desire to move the conference around the country to maximize the number of TOOL couples and families who could attend. We met in Long Island, New York at Post College in the summer of 1999; 2003 in San Antonio, Texas; 2005 in Turlock, California; and 2007 in Chaska, Minnesota.

For those of you who have not yet experienced a National Conference, let us explain what happens! We responded to the requests of our spiritual counselors to hold the conferences during the week, so that they could attend. We responded to the evaluations of the 1999 Conference and moved lodging to a motel rather than a college dormitory. We usually meet from Tuesday evening through Friday noon. Registration is affordable for families and we budget tightly to keep costs low (San Antonio maximum registration for a family was \$125 which includes the programs, and in 2007 it was \$100).

When the couples arrive at registration they are given name tags that assign them to a "conference team." Great care is given to the assign-

ment of couples so that friendships are formed with people from all over the country! Many attendees find this the best part of the conference because you have the opportunity to meet with your team for discussion following each session. The sharing opens new windows of thought as geography, age, and experiences often color the viewpoint of the participants. Mass for couples and families officially opens the conference on Tuesday night and we celebrate the liturgy everyday.

On Wednesday a keynote speaker presents two sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. While the parents are attending sessions the children, toddlers to teens, are divided by age group and have age-appropriate activities. The youngest usually follow a bible school type format, and the older kids have a combination of activities that includes fun, service and theology. Sometimes they join the adults for talks and sometimes they have their own speakers. Babies under a year stay with their parents. All meals are eaten with adults and children together.

Thursday uses the same format as Wednesday with two more talks. The evenings are full of good time activities that can be enjoyed by couples and families *Continued on page 2*

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with children In San Antonio we had a talent show and a wedding reception – complete with a Mariachi band. In Turlock we had entertainment including Portuguese dancing, singing and other musical fun. We also had a candlelight procession with the rosary recited alternately in Spanish, Portuguese and English. In Chaska we had a sing-a-long, ice cream socials and fireworks on July 4th.

Friday morning talks are about TOOL in the USA, and last year we started our 50th anniversary celebration early, and laughed our way through sharing by the early TOOL leadership couples. We end the conference with Mass and farewells.

As you can see from the descriptions, the format changes with the committees who develop the program.

Now the question... Will there be enough couples and families who will come, in spite of gas prices in 2009? Are couples willing to spend part of their vacation time and dollars at the National Conference? Will the economy affect attendance? If we throw a party, will anyone come?

These questions are impossible to know without YOUR INPUT! Last year we had very carefully examined the budget and projected attendance based on the experiences of the San Antonio and Turlock Conferences. We were blown out of the water financially because although we had a good national attendance, very few local couples attended. We had good attendance from Texas and California, but little interest from Minnesota. We do not want this to happen again.

So the key question is: would you attend a National Conference in July 2009 if it were held in the northeast part of the

country (maybe Buffalo/Niagara, NY)? Please e-mail your comments to: info@teamsfourlady.org by August 1. Your e-mails will help us to answer the question: To meet or not to meet? ■

Magnificat

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Seeing things through other's eyes

By Ted & Eileen Kosnik, Super Regional Couple

“Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance, but as obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the model of the Holy One...” (1 Peter 1:13-14)

Our Memorial Day weekend was spent in Charleston, South Carolina with TOOL friends and provides the inspiration for this sharing on friendship and perspective.

There is a group of TOOL friends that met while serving on the Super Regional team many years ago, and since we are dispersed all over the country, we make a point of gathering about once a year. We refer to ourselves as the Reunion Team.

One of our activities this weekend was to visit Fort Sumter, the site of the first shots fired during the Civil War. During his introductory remarks, our guide commented that depending on your perspective, the Civil War was known as the war of northern aggression, the war for states rights, or the war to end slavery. We personally experience this diversity of opinion when our children discuss the topic, so it was not news to us! Caroline graduated from high school in Michigan (war to end slavery), Benjamin graduated in Virginia (war

of northern aggression), and Matthew graduated from high school while we lived in Texas (war for states rights).

When we celebrated Mass at the beautiful downtown church we saw the same core of our religious faith, expressed with a local flavor, but unchanging. It provided a contrast on spiritual and political levels.

This brings to mind the diversity of opinion that makes our TOOL discussions so rich.

We each have experienced life from a different angle: some are parts of large families with lots of siblings, others only children; some members are cradle Catholics, some converts, some bring the perspective of another religious faith. Some couples have never moved far from their roots, others have moved all over the world. Some read theology for pleasure, others read only when preparing for our monthly meetings. The richness of our discussion at our meetings reflect all these differences as well as similarities.

In the last couple of months we have visited teams in Des

Moines, IA, Fayetteville, AR, Dallas, TX and Nacogdoches, TX. They all have the same meeting format, but each has a different point of view reflected in their discussion. What is similar is that the richness of the discussion is influenced by



the length of time they have been together, and the preparation that has been made by each couple in the team prior to the meeting. Within minutes it is obvious to us whether the couples have read the material and answered the questions thoughtfully, or read it in the car on the way to the meeting.

We suggest while doing your annual evaluation to carefully look at how you prepare your questions for the meeting. We cannot urge you enough to write your answers down and exchange them with your

spouse prior to sending them to the discussion leader. We each can learn so much from the other's point of view. You bring to the meeting a unique gift to your spouse and your team. You bring your life. Be generous and read your material in advance so that you can meditate on it and fully reflect on it. Then write your answers and enjoy the richness of discovering a new aspect of your spouse. Never take for granted what they think, because it is evolving each day.

We have been given a great gift in our teammates. They enrich our lives with their love and perspective. Please take the time to prepare your comments so that they are well thought out and can be expressed. We learn from each other!

On a different note, we want to keep you up to date on the search for the new Super Regional Couple. We will be in leadership until a new couple is found who says “YES!” Please join us in prayer that the Holy Spirit works in the heart and mind of the right couple! ■

Southeast Region continues to grow

By Ed & Susan Klein, Southeast Regional Couple

The Southeast Region is growing! There is one new team in Hillsborough County and two new Teams in St. Petersburg at St. June's Cathedral Parish. These teams were recruited mainly by Sister Phyllis Shaughnessy. These are the result of recruiting by both teams couples and teams chaplains and also by inviting the couples to a teams event. Congratulations to all those who worked so hard to make this happen.

The first Southeast Regional meeting for Sector Couples was held April 1 with representatives from all but two of the Region's Sectors. It was a good day of exchanging information and brainstorming about future events.

The Birmingham Sector had a Sector Service Meeting on April 26. Later that day, the Kleins presented a workshop on Couple Prayer that was very well received by Teams and non-Teams couples. Gabe and Sandra Restrepo, who are finishing their term as Sector Couple, hosted the Kleins. The Kleins enjoyed the visit and especially the time with the Restrepos' four active and adorable children, Alejandra, Isabella, Sophia and Gabriel. ■



After the Couple Prayer Workshop (L-R) Laney & Gary Gagnon, Birmingham 11; Ed & Susan Klein, Southeast Regional Couple, Sandra Restrepo, Birmingham 14, retiring Sector couple.

Central Region Installs Hendricksons as new Des Moines Sector Couple

Barbara and Gordon Hendrickson were installed as the new Des Moines Sector Couple during the Central Region's April 19, 2008 celebration of Teams of our Lady's 50th anniversary in the United States. Barbara and Gordon are members of Des Moines Sector's Team 5 and have been active TOOL members for 15 years. They met while in graduate school at the University of Wyoming and were married in The Bronx, New York, in 1974. They lived and worked in Cheyenne, Wyoming; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Kansas City, Missouri, before moving to Des Moines in 1988.



Gordon and Barbara Hendrickson, new Sector Couple of Des Moines, renew their marriage vows at the Des Moines Sector Day Of Reflection. Retired Bishop Joseph Charron celebrated Mass.

Gordon is an administrator and State Archivist with the State Historical Society of Iowa and Barbara is a program planner with the State of Iowa Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. They have three adult children: a son Anders and his wife Marie and daughter Maria, who are moving to Morehead, Minnesota, this summer, where he will join the faculty of Concordia College; a daughter Rosina who is Director of Faith Formation at St. Columba Parish in Dothan, Alabama; and a son Karl who is discerning a vocation with the Brotherhood of Hope in Boston, Massachusetts. ■

Noticias De Los Equipos En Español En Carolina Del Sur

por Florentino y Beatriz Rodríguez

En la última edición del *Magnificat* nos enteramos que fue aprobada la idea que cada Equipo ore de aquí hasta el 8 de diciembre 50 horas por los 50 años de los Equipos de Nuestra

Señora en los Estados Unidos. Esta propuesta nos parece que tiene un gran significado porque además de elevar nuestro espíritu hacia Dios, en acción de gracias por darnos este instrumento de su amor, de acercarnos más a María y a Jesús, nos da la oportunidad de unirnos en mente y oración con todas las demás parejas de los Equipos de los Estados Unidos.



Sentimos una gran alegría el saber que salió de nuestra "Coastal Region" la propuesta, y que nuestra "Coastal Region" ha hecho una contribución importante en la unión espiritual de las Equipos en USA. En la primera oportunidad les comunicamos el plan "50 por 50" a las parejas de los Equipos en español de Carolina del Sur, y fue acogido con mucho entusiasmo.

En consecuencia, para participar en la celebración de los 50 años, cada pareja aceptó la propuesta de orar de aquí al 8 de diciembre, diez Rosarios, visitar el Santísimo cinco veces y atender a cinco Misas adicionales, todo por las intenciones de las parejas de los Equipos, por sus dirigentes y por el Movimiento en general.

Gracias por brindarnos este motivo de alegría y de unión y por colocar la "Coastal Region" en el mapa de los Equipos. ■

Lake Erie Region's Buffalo Sectors Celebrate Holiness Through Endeavors

By Joe & Diane Manuel, Lake Erie Regional Couple

The theme for the Teams of Our Lady Sector Evening on April 26, 2008 was "Finding God in Our Busy Lives... Holiness through the Endeavors." Mike and Vida Frysz, Sector Couple of Buffalo North were organizers a wonderful Sector Event which involved both the North and South Sectors of the Buffalo area.

The evening began with Mass at Our Lady of Pompeii Church in Lancaster, NY. The parish graciously welcomed us in the parish hall. A Wine and Cheese Social preceded a delicious buffet dinner. Couples mingled and enjoyed meeting new couples and reconnecting with old friends.

Father Leon Biernat, a Teams Chaplain, gave an inspiring talk both at Mass and as the main speaker after dinner. Couples were then divided into mini-teams.

Also invited to the event were twelve couples who expressed interest in Teams. These couples were divided into two information meetings given by the Fryszes and Regional Couple, Joe and Diane Manuel.

As with everything Teams, we ended with the praying of the Magnificat and receiving a blessing from the priests who attended. ■

Rest In Peace

Suzanne Redmond
Washington DC 04

Jose Sousa
Turlock CA 01

Please pray for the deceased members of Teams

They Answered the Call

New Coastal Regional Couple: Doug and Maryellen Bashioum

Doug and Maryellen Bashioum have been married 48 years. They have five children, 14 grandchildren, and one great grandchild. Four of their children live in Virginia and one lives near Atlanta. They are members of St. John Neumann parish in Reston.

In the early 1980s, the Bashioums joined the Christian Family Movement and their core group of six couples stayed together for about 18 years. That group became a Teams group in 2003 and Ralph and Jackie Tygielski were their piloting couple. The original group has changed, but Doug and Maryellen continue as

members of a Teams group because of the spiritual benefits and challenges it affords their marriage and the close fellowship of their group. They also had the wonderful opportunity of being a Piloting Couple with the first team in Raleigh, North Carolina. That has been a special blessing for them.

Sometime in the early summer, Doug and Maryellen will be leaving Northern Virginia to live in Cary, North Carolina, where they plan to continue in Teams and pilot new teams. They are involved in Catholic Engage Encounter (CEE) as senior couple presenters; they intend to remain involved in CEE in Charlotte/Raleigh area. ■



Doug and Maryellen Bashioum, in Teams since 2003, are the new Coastal Regional Couple.

Dear friends of the Super Region of United States,

With great joy we share with you the experience of our Annual retreat that took place April 26-27, 2008 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. We were very fortunate to have the participation of 20 couples and one priest during the retreat.

The theme for the retreat was the "The Five Love Languages." Even though we might have one or two different languages, we realize that we all have the need to speak of all the languages. So, after each language we as couples had the opportunity to



have a prayerful moment and a time to share as a couple how important or not each language is to build a better relationship. We really felt the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

Saturday morning we dedicated a moment to Our Lady. We walked from the seminar room to a statue of Our Lady that is situated in one of the gardens of the retreat center. We had seven stations to read and reflect on the Magnificat meditation calendar published in the *Magnificat* newsletter (vol. 26, Spring 2007). When all couples had arrived, we gathered around the statue of Our Lady and sang the Magnificat.

We are really grateful that Father Augusto Garcia dedicated all weekend to our retreat. We ended our retreat on Sunday afternoon with Eucharist celebration and a short sharing of our experience during the weekend.

Even though it was very intense, and a weekend with lots of work, the interest and hard work of the couples was very noticeable. Overall the opportunity to build community and express the fraternal LOVE to each other, that at the end is the language of all Christians and team members.

After a long journey and dialogue, the couples went back to their homes with their batteries charged to last another year.

Thanks for your generosity, support and prayers.

Juan & Ivonne Serrano, Pre-Sector couple in Western Canada

DEVELOPING MATERIALS For Teams Of Our Lady

By Eileen and Ted Kosnik

If you are feeling creative, or theological, and wish to submit material to the TOOL office, we would be delighted to see it! However, during the last several months a few well meaning people have written material that bears the Web site and e-mail address of Teams of Our Lady, but has never been seen or approved by the Super Regional Team. We are delighted that there is an interest in the Movement and its materials, but we would like to outline the procedure to use if you would like to write for the Movement.

When we assumed the responsibility of Super Regional Responsible Couple in late 2003 we began a system that encouraged collegiality and meets ERI desires regarding control of materials. There is a procedure that is followed for material approved. You may submit the material to the TOOL office, or any of the Regional Couples can bring material to the Super Regional Team (the ten Regional Couples, the Secretariat Couple and the Super Regional Couple) during our January or July meeting for review. If it is determined that Teams wants to publish the material the group discusses whether it will be printed as presented, or with changes.

For example, at the January meeting Ed and Susan Klein presented a tri-fold idea for recruiting chaplains. It was discussed at the meeting, changes were made and a proof was sent to the Regional Couples for comment (via e-mail) prior to printing. Further changes were made and approved by all before printing. The layout was sent to a professional, Pam Sieracki, who volunteers her time, and she laid it out. We printed 1,000 chaplain-recruiting tri-folds, and distributed them to the Regional Couples for use in their regions.

The ERI made the decision in Rome, 2003, that TOOL needed an international corporate image, much like Marriage Encounter or a Knights of Columbus. To that purpose guidelines were laid out and local material has been eliminated. Your recruiting or study material cannot use TOOL identification or be distributed for a Teams purpose without review.

We hope that this helps creative minds with new ideas! ■



God said: "Christian couple, you are my pride and my hope.

When I created the heaven and the earth and the great lights in the sky,
I saw traces of my perfection in the beings I created,
and I found that it was good.

When I covered the earth with a great mantel of fields and forests,
I saw that it was good.

When I created innumerable animals in their own species,
I saw in these living and abundant creatures,
a reflection of my overflowing life,
and I found that it was good.

Then, from all my creation,
there arose a great and jubilant hymn,
celebrating my glory and my perfections.

And yet, nowhere did I see
the image of what is my most secret, my most fervent life.

Then awoke in me the need to reveal the best in me:
And it was my most beautiful invention.

So it was that I created you, human couple,
"in my image and likeness",
and I saw that it was very good.

In the midst of this universe,
in which every creature spells out my glory,
celebrates my perfection,
love, at last, had appeared,
to reveal my Love.

Human couple, my beloved creature,
my privileged witness,
do you understand why you are dearest to me
among all my creatures?
Do you understand the immense hope I place in you?

You are bearers of my reputation, of my glory.
You are the universe's great reason for hope...
Because you are love.

*Poem written by Father Caffarel
in the style of Charles Péguy*

To Live Out Our Membership of Teams As “Service of Couples to Couples”

By Father Angelo Epis, Spiritual Counsellor of the International Leading Team

I am often called upon by team members, or even by teams, to take sides on would-be heresies that appear in our documents. It is unquestionably one of the duties of a Spiritual Counsellor. Nevertheless, I often have the impression that I find myself faced on the one hand with the difficulty of relating the time involved in research, faithfulness and confrontation with the world and on the other hand with the teaching of salvation. It is almost preferable to take refuge in the certainties of the truth that we take to be irrefutable. Obedience to the Church and to the Magisterium does not exempt us from the duty of studying people’s search for truth today.

We read in the Letter from Lourdes that “the orientation to be a couple in the church and in the world today, given at St. James of Compostela, invites us to take part in the Church’s work of evangelization through its movements, its parishes, its dioceses, etc... We must look together for new methods for teams and team members to become more active within the Church.”

We live in times of profound changes. Our faith, together with how we feel as Christians, affects us deeply. Our ways of acting and thinking within our parish communities have

We move from sociological study topics to spiritual study topics, often of bad quality, without a true discernment of team members’ faith journey.

changed a lot. In spite of this, we do not seem to have understood where we are heading for, where this historical evolution that is always unexpected and surprising is leading us, where the witness we must give to today’s humanity invites us to go. We must keep

telling ourselves again and again, untiringly, what we seem to perceive and what we seem to have to choose.

We are coming out of a religious period in which Christianity had a central role. As Christians in this emancipated and secularized society, we are obliged to come out of our religious “castle” and to follow the roads of human beings, to listen to their requests and to discover in them the ways of the Gospel. This change of outlook forces us to express the whole Christian message in a new way. Father Caffarel felt this change coming and stressed how necessary it was to understand the situation of teams in which there were Christians of different levels of faith.

This awkward situation appears, for example, in the choice of study topics. We move from sociological study topics to spiritual study topics, often of bad quality, without a true discernment of team members’ faith journey. We forget that the objective is not to be a team but to become saints. Rather than choose a formative way, we often follow the

tide that takes us to the beach or to the middle of the sea. It is true that it is not possible to think of study topics that can be studied in the same way in all countries. But it is also true that we cannot think in terms of simplistic solutions that do not give a taste for the Gospel, for research or for the good of people. It is not sufficient to do a study topic simply to fulfil an ‘endeavor.’ We must choose study topics that introduce us to the ways of the world of today. The Lourdes letter does not only urge us to do something, but to “participate in the work of evangelization as part of our commitment to the Church... Together, we must look for new ways for teams and team members to be more active in the Church.”

We must set out on a “mission,” that is to say leave our meetings and go out to take the Good News that is given to us to our brothers and sisters in our towns. We cannot keep the Gospel locked up within our walls but we must start thinking and be concerned about what is going on outside where people are less and less interested

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in our message. The Gospel asks us to meet people and more specifically people in our society. We have a treasure – Good News for humanity – but we have difficulty trying to make it known to our friends. Our treasure is wrapped up in

Is it possible to rethink and re-express the Christian faith in such a way that it becomes understandable to the people of our time?

complicated ideas and cumbersome institutions that hold it imprisoned. Many of our friends find the Christian message incomprehensible. Obviously, what they understand is not what we meant to say. Our Christian words seem so different from people's daily language, from their ways of thinking and from their daily preoccupations. It is as though we were speaking in a foreign language. The Christian mes-

sage concerning truth and behavior is even more unacceptable. It seems like a pre-packed message that claims to impose anachronistic truths and rules of behavior. The words we use must be related to the human condition. Is it possible to rethink and re-express the Christian faith in such a way that it becomes understandable to the people of our time?

It is possible to do so if we learn from Jesus of Nazareth, from the way he acted as a man. How does Jesus speak to us about God? – through his humanity. The temptation is well expressed by the serpent in Genesis 3:5: "you will be like gods." To try to identify oneself with God is the devil's way to tempt men to build humanity. This temptation is the corollary of a false concept of God that is at the root of our wrong way of building humanity. The man from Nazareth behaved in a diametrically different way: he made the opposite choice to that made by Adam. It is clearly described in the Letter to the Philippians: "He did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. And for this, God raised him high... so that every tongue

should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord" (Ph 2: 6-10). He made Him a way and a guide for all men, his brothers.

How are we to live out our commitment in the Church, how must we witness to God? The Church is made up, in the first place, of the baptized who journey through history. It is this People, spread throughout the world and forming communities who follow the way of Jesus Christ and who, living among other human beings, adopt the way of life of Jesus. This "way" sets Christians at the heart of history and in the common effort to save humanity. It is a dramatic choice: to fight against evil and sin and against the perverse message that speaks of power and domination and to listen to the "wise" Word that offers to give us life and to put us at the service of our brothers and sisters, even to washing their feet.

Christians are the guardians and witnesses of this new, reconstituted and redeemed life: the guardian who recognizes the presence of God wherever human beings love and help each other, the witness who, by the way he is, is a humble sign that the way of life is in humble service.

The first duty of the Church and of Christians is to recog-

nise and bear witness to God's action in humanity. Christians are not the keepers of the way of salvation, which is the love of neighbor, but the servants of salvation. Before claiming to proclaim the good news, they must receive this good news where it is to be found, where it manifests itself in human history: that is to say, where it witnesses to the love of God. Meditating on the Word and Gospel that Jesus has entrusted to us makes it possible for us to discern the action of God in the daily life of human beings. Above all, Christians must not feel that they are bearers of a preset meaning of life, but discoverers and servants of a new meaning that arises – like the Kingdom of God – where we least expect it. The Church gives thanks for this: the worship it celebrates is a thanksgiving for the work of God accomplished in the world and a well from which springs the humanizing of humanity. Such is the true "glory of God"

The second duty of the Church is to bring together in one union the dispersed children of God. The Church is the sign or sacrament of the coming together of all humanity in God. Each person in this gathering – and therefore especially the weak and deprived – are valued because of their dignity and of their unique-

ness thanks to their link to and relationship with others. Christians are people of peace, concord, dialogue, solidarity and charity.

The third duty that we can point out is for our communities to become ever more laboratories of humanity: places where one tries to become human beings of a particular kind, transforming the humanity of our society by the light of the Gospel. In our secularized society, we are preoccupied with maintaining our identity, our distinctiveness. It is not by presenting ourselves as a people apart in our very own world, as an institution with its own objectives and values, that Christians

- will bear witness to the Gospel; but by living in the world in full solidarity with the human activity of every individual,
- and will be identified if their behavior, inspired by the message they bear, show signs of “a little bit more humanity.”

“It is by your love for one another that everyone will recognize you as my disciple” (Jn 13: 35). This secret is to be found in married love. ■

The Team, A Community Of The Church Open To The World

By Jan and Peter Ralton, ERI

At the conclusion of the Gathering in Lourdes in 2006, all Teams couples were invited to become messengers of the Movement “...to the four corners of the world.” The general orientation outlined for the following years and given to us at that time was “Teams, communities of couples, reflecting the love of Christ.” As we progress along the pathway to which this orientation leads us, it is appropriate to review our role as a team community and our preparedness, both as couples and as a team, to be truly open to the world.

That the team is a community is, by definition, obvious. That the Teams are a community of the Church is also well documented including both the Charter of the Teams in 1947 and the Decree of Recognition from the Pontifical Council for the Laity in 2002. That the team is open to the world might, we suggest, be the subject of greater scrutiny.

In his June 1948 editorial,

Fr. Caffarel challenged the Teams with the question “Are Teams cosy sitting rooms?” Sixty years later we may well ask this question again. While many teams members today are actively involved in a variety of fields within both Church and society, just as they were in 1948, the challenge posed by Fr. Caffarel was “... may couples in each team ask themselves whether it is possible to go further still in commitments and giving of self.”

We are all fortunate that through our team involvement we have a greater awareness of the concept of “spirituality of the couple” and are not limited solely to individual spiritual growth, even though this is an important aspect for our personal and couple growth. The “couple” is formed of two distinct personalities, each capable of self expression but when coming together as “couple” they are capable of much greater wisdom. Within the team, each couple brings their own individual and shared experience.

By sharing these experiences with the other members of the team they create within the group a deeper understanding and acceptance and so build the dynamic of their team.

This is the charism of Teams that we need to demonstrate to the world. We are not a secret society, or as Fr. Caffarel reflected “cozy sitting rooms”, we are in effect the basis of Christian society, of family and of the Church. For this reason we should be prepared to reach out in witness and in service with a spirit of mission to other couples. We should be mindful of the words of Pope John Paul II who, when addressing the topic of missionary spirituality in his 1990 encyclical “Redemptoris missio”, observed that “The universal call to holiness is closely linked to the universal call to mission. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission” (Chapter VIII, 90).

The Guide to the Teams when referring to “mission” states:

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“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,
- 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).

One of the important endeavours for our life in Teams is the “Rule of Life.” This calls us to pursue a way of life that brings us closer to God and is in effect a pathway to holiness. Can it also include a call to go out from our comfort zone? When was the last time that you spoke to other couples outside the Teams Movement and were witness to the existence of the movement and the benefits of life in Teams? When did you last invite other couples to share with you the journey of Teams? We should never find ourselves in the situation of a couple that we once heard about who, when the topic of Teams was mentioned, sighed and replied: “Yes we would have liked to have joined

Teams but were never invited.”

“The contemporary society has a particular need of the witness of couples who persevere in their marriage, as an eloquent Sign of our human condition and of God’s constant love (even if it is sometimes a dif-

We need to challenge ourselves to be “missionaries” for Teams to other couples and within society.

ficult sign to display)” (Pope John Paul II, Agenda for the Third Millennium).

Therefore the call for us is to bear witness that marriage is a source of love, happiness and holiness as well as of human fulfilment. We need to challenge ourselves to be “missionaries” for Teams to other couples and within society. What we have received through our teams involvement is a gift that

should be shared not hoarded and kept to ourselves. In particular it is a gift that we need to share with younger couples as they embark on their married life together. It is a gift that not only allows couples to grow together in spirituality and mutual support but importantly enables them to live fully their sacramental marriage. We should also seek to develop the skills we have learnt in promoting the joy of marriage to society in general.

In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI addressing a group of young people who had been taking part in a “Youth Mission” to Rome organized by the Archdiocese of Madrid said: “Do not cease to cultivate your own personal encounter with Christ, to keep him ever at the center of your heart, since in this way your life will be converted into a mission; you will let Christ who lives in you shine forth.” Perhaps we, as team members, could take these thoughts to heart both individually and as a couple as we reach out to others.

For us to be truly open to the world as witnesses of Teams we must each be prepared to take responsibility. It is not enough to say “that is for others to do.” We should take responsibility, with our fellow members and within the Church, to be witnesses to the power of the couple as the basis of family.

“The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Lk 10:2).

In conclusion, as we contemplate how each of us, as individuals and couples, can go out into the world to effectively share the charism of Teams, let us reflect on the words of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, one of the patron saints of the missions: “We do not know what the future holds - but we know who holds it.” ■

Love is not always “Charity”

Henri Caffarel, March 1966

Note: This editorial was written in the wake of the 1965 Teams pilgrimage to Lourdes at which the ‘orientation’ for the subsequent year was “Love one another” (Jn 15: 12). The word ‘charity’ in this editorial is in its Biblical sense of ‘the highest form of love’ (see Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical “Deus Caritas Est”).

Since our pilgrimage to Lourdes, in all countries where Teams are established, team members have had in mind the Lord’s commandment: “Love one another” (Jn 15:12).

In my contacts with you, I learn with joy that, within your team, within your marriage, you strive for a greater love. Sometimes, however, I have a niggling feeling: is it in fact towards a greater charity and not just towards ordinary human love that your efforts are directed?

But you might say: ‘is not all love charity as long as it is genuine?’ Certainly not! I would refer you to your own experience: is it not true that your married love is often prompted by self-love rather than love of your spouse; and that, even when charity (love of the other) is no doubt present and

dominant, it is not always however the first motive?

A human love, a very beautiful human love that is pure, disinterested, self-giving, is not, for all that, charity. Charity is of ‘another order.’ According to Pascal, charity is divine: it is a spark of God burning in the heart of a human being.

Saint Paul is categorical: “I will put before you the best way of all. If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have charity, I am no more than a gong booming or a cymbal clanging. And if I have prophetic powers to penetrate all mysteries and all knowledge and have the faith necessary to move mountains, but do not have charity, I am nothing. If give all my possessions to the poor and if I hand over my body to be burned, but do not have charity, I gain nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Therefore, according to Saint Paul, to love to the point of sacrificing all one’s possessions and – even more – to sacrificing one’s life and to love to the point of being burnt alive for one’s neighbor is not always

loving with a love of charity.

Well now, our orientation for the year calls on all team members to grow in charity because such is the Lord’s spiritual legacy, because “this way”, this perfection, this life “is the best way of all.” It is to convert all their love into charity: married love, love between parents and children, love between team members... and this is no small undertaking!

No doubt it is a case of loving more, of loving better, but it is in reality a case of loving differently. Left to our own resources, we cannot. In this as in all spiritual matters, we must remember the words of the Lord: “without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).

The love of charity is the work of the Holy Spirit in us (see Rom 5:5). We draw it from the sacraments, from prayer. It is nourished by the Word of God who demands that we practice it or we diminish. It is, first of all, directed to God and then to our neighbor who is a child of God called to be holy as his heavenly Father is holy.

In other words, the person

whose love is charity is one who, in the manner of Saint Paul, can say: “It is no longer I who loves, but it is Christ who loves in me.” Let us not forget, however, that before Saint Paul said: “It is no longer I who

Sacrificing one’s life and to love to the point of being burnt alive for one’s neighbor is not always loving with a love of charity.

live, but it is Christ who lives in me”, he had first declared: “I have been crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:19-20). ■



Quiet Prayer

By Harry & Clotilde Meigh

It was in the conference he gave to the Teams' pilgrimage to Rome in 1970, entitled "In the Face of Atheism", that Father Caffarel introduced the 'endeavor' of daily quiet prayer in these words: "Henceforth, every member of the movement will be asked to consecrate every day a modest minimum of ten minutes to quiet prayer, from the time of commitment."

It was in the same conference that he introduced the regular reading and reflecting on the 'Word of God.' Seven years earlier, in the March 1963 editorial, he deplored the fact that so few team members included

these two practices in their spiritual rule of life.

Back in February 1949, he wrote: "What, to me, seems to be lacking in the Christian community and its members is vitality: they are no longer filled with fire and passion. For my part, I believe that the reason for this worrying anaemia lies in the disinclination of today's Christians to pray and, more particularly, to the form of prayer, the intimate encounter with God, that is called quiet or contemplative prayer. Without it, the Word of God, the sacraments are, in a way, obstructed sources of unutilized energies."

What does quiet prayer consist in?

Quiet prayer consists in responding to the Lord's invitation: "Be still and know that

I am God" (Psalm 46: 10). It is only in stillness and silence that we can 'know' God, that we can have 'the intimate encounter with God' that Father Caffarel mentions above. We need to quieten our over-active minds and become aware of God's presence within us... easier said than done!

To succeed, we need all the practical help we can find:

- a) We need to find a suitable time in the day when we are not likely to be distracted;
- b) We need a quiet place.
- c) A crucifix, an icon or some such object of devotion can help us focus our attention on God. Alternatively, some people may prefer to close their eyes and picture some scene in the Gospel.
- d) We need to enlist the cooperation of our body: That is to say, we must adopt a comfortable posture so as not to be

distracted by physical discomfort. Yoga and other oriental practices have much to teach us in the art of quietening our body for prayer, e.g., becoming aware of our breathing, repeating some 'mantra' or short prayer, such as the 'Jesus Prayer', much favored by the Orthodox: "Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me." Father Caffarel advocated that we should not hesitate to use such practical helps.

...and then what?

When a man and woman are deeply in love, they are happy to sit silently together, holding hands, simply enjoying each other's company. It is an attitude of love. Father Caffarel saw quiet prayer also as an attitude of love but with the difference that, whereas human love is prompted by feelings, our love of God is prompted by faith.

If a distraction comes our way – as it surely will – as soon as we become aware of it, we let it slip out of our mind and return to our awareness of God’s presence – this too is an act of love.

Before and after.

Father Caffarel suggested that, before we begin our ten minutes of quiet prayer, we may find it helpful to say a short set prayer, such as the Our Father or the sign of the cross done slowly, so as to consciously become aware of the presence of God. Some find it helpful to begin by meditating on the Word of God thereby entering into the presence of God through his Word.

He also said that, time permitting, some people have found it beneficial, after their time of quiet prayer, to spend a few moments thinking of the day ahead whilst still under the

influence of their time of intimacy with God.

What some great saints have said about quiet prayer:

A very good illustration of quiet prayer is given by the story of the peasant in the village of Ars in southeast France. When asked by his parish priest, the saintly Curé of Ars, what he was doing as he sat in church gazing at the tabernacle, he replied: “I look at him and he looks at me” (see Catechism of the Catholic Church 2715).

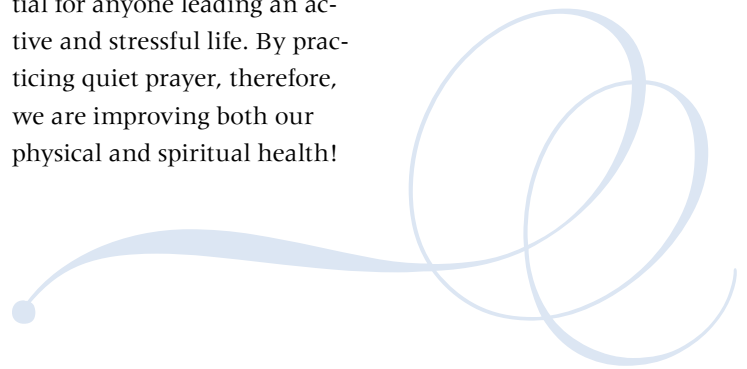
St. Augustine said of quiet prayer: “Enter into yourself, leave behind all noise and confusion. God speaks to us in the great silence of the heart. Hear the word in quietness that you may understand it. Let Christ speak to you interiorly.”

In her “Very Simple Way,” Mother Teresa tells us: “I always begin my prayer with a time of silence: it is in the

silence of the heart that God speaks. God is the friend of silence and we must listen to Him, because it is not our words that matter, but what He says to us and what He says through us.”

A bonus!

There is a ‘bonus’ to practicing quiet prayer: it is good for our physical health. It is a well-known fact that spending some time every day relaxing our body and quietening our mind is good for all of us and essential for anyone leading an active and stressful life. By practicing quiet prayer, therefore, we are improving both our physical and spiritual health!



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