

Homily celebrates 50th anniversary of Teams of Our Lady in the US

By Fr. Edwin Dill, S.T.

Book of Exodus 22:20-26; Gospel according to St. Matthew 22:34-40

Potomac, MD - 26 October 2008 It is providential that our readings for this Sunday, as we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Teams of Our Lady in the United States, are about love, because that's what Teams are all about. From the Book of Exodus to the Gospel according to Matthew, from Moses to Jesus, sacred scripture takes us from the compassion of God to our love for God and neighbor, from the love that is the source of our faith to the love that lies at the core of our Faith.

In Exodus, the Ten Commandments had already been given, but God continues his instructions to Moses. He reminded them that he delivered the Jewish people from slavery and fed them in the desert – water from the rock and manna from heaven. Now God elaborates on the conduct he expects from them, how they are to treat his chosen poor, how they are to treat one another, “for,” he says, “I am compassionate.” And compassion is simply God’s way of loving.

In the gospel, Jesus answers in a straight-forward manner a question that was meant to entrap him. He takes his hearers back to the roots of their faith. He quotes that passage from the Book of Deuteronomy, the famous “Shema Israel – Hear, O Israel....You shall love the Lord, your God, with all

your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the passage that God instructed his people to “drill into their children, to speak at home and abroad, whether busy or at rest, to bind at their wrists as a sign, to be a pendant on their foreheads, to be written on the doorposts of their houses and their gates.” And then Jesus, quoting from the Book of Leviticus, added – and gave equal importance to – “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

A celebration such as ours today is more than marking of a significant number of years. It is, first of all, a ritual of thanksgiving for the people who had the courage to live out their inspiration and to translate over space and time the charism that was born seventy years ago in France and came to the United States twenty years later. We honor the four young couples who in 1938 approached Father Henri Caffarel to guide their search for a deeper spirituality of marriage. And we honor the couples and chaplains through whose influence the movement took root in so many different countries and cultures. Today we pay special homage to the French couple that brought their Teams experience to the United States and to those first few men and women who here caught the spark and fanned it

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into fire that glows in so many marriages today in our country.

We celebrate the difference that Teams has made and continues to make in so many lives, usually in quite, unnoticed ways. We often lament the low profile that Teams of Our Lady has in the public forum, often overlooked by Church officials looking to bolster married life and family values. We look wistfully at other movements that for whatever reason have caught the public fancy and spread far and rapidly. But today, especially today, let us concentrate on the wonder of the graces we have. Count not just your own blessings, but try to tally the blessings that have been given to literally thousands of couples over the past fifty years because of Teams of Our Lady in this country.

Those blessings have come in the love and understanding couples have received from other couples in support of their marriage, in the spiritual discipline from the endeavors that has strengthened their commitment, in the prayer they have offered and shared, in the Word of God they have pondered together, in the enlightenment from the readings and discussions at each meeting. And then think of that singular grace of a changed attitude toward marriage itself. How many individuals and couples have come through Teams of Our Lady to realize for the first time that marriage, in its spirituality and physicality, has come “out of the shadow of Christian experience into a full sacramental Divine light?”

Do you want Teams better known? Then celebrate over and over again the blessings of the past fifty years – and especially yours since you have become a member of Teams of Our Lady – because it is only to the extent that we treasure what God has already given that we receive the grace to

share it effectively with others.

But we are more than individuals, more than couples, more even than a Team. Each Team, as a little church, is a part of a movement which provides roots and continuity with everything that is Christian. As people of the Church, members of the Body of Christ, we trace our true origins to the resurrection of Jesus and we draw our power for good from the Spirit of God dwelling in the Christian community. As Teams of Our Lady gather individually around family tables or by the thousands at places of worldwide pilgrimage, they celebrate their Catholicism and their catholicity, their universality – universal not because they are everywhere across the globe but because their appeal and their mission touches the common ground of all committed couples who seek to look beyond themselves for the spiritual meaning of their life together.

As far back as 1970, two thousand couples from twenty-three countries gathered in Rome, and heard Pope Paul VI confirm the fundamental intuition of the first Teams: namely that human love is a path to holiness, that a married couple is the privileged image of its Creator, that bound together by the sacrament of marriage they have a unique vocation and are a specific witness to the world. In 2003, Pope John Paul II, addressing Teams’ leadership gathered in Rome, thanked God “for the fruitfulness of (Teams) throughout the world” and encouraged its members “to witness untiringly and explicitly to the beauty of human love, marriage and the family.”

Nothing of worth starts out to be a

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Magnificat

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Seeing things through other's eyes

By Ted & Eileen Kosnik, Super Regional Couple

“What shall I compare the kingdom of God with? It is like a yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.” (Luke 13:20-21)

We have had the opportunity to attend several 50th Anniversary parties for TOOL in 2008. What a wonderful spirit of love and friendship was felt at each!

We missed a celebration in Massachusetts because it was the weekend that Ike visited northeast Texas, but we understand that it was great! **Joe and Amelia Almedia** did the honors installing the new Regional Couple, **Inez and Jose Varao**, in our absence. A special thank you to Joe and Amelia for exceptional service to the Movement. They served first on the Super Regional Team with Tygielskis as Portuguese language liaison couple, and then continued to serve, when asked, as the New England Regional Couple.

In October we attended the Sector Day in Tampa, FL in the most beautiful setting that we have ever seen, a retreat facility on the shore of the bay. There were outdoor meditation places, and a porch with rockers where many ate a box lunch. The day began

with an adoration hour and then broke into workshop sessions. Please read about it, and see pictures in this issue. Many people worked very hard to make this day a success! Hats off to **Ed and Susan Klein** and their many workers.

In early November we traveled to Detroit, MI to attend another Sector Day and install a new Midwest Regional Couple, **Beverly and Frank Lentine**. The Sector Day was well attended and a huge success based on the comments that we overheard. The day began with installations and ended with Mass celebrated with the parish. In between there were talks on TOOL topics and mini-team discussions. Many new friendships were formed, and old ones renewed. Couples traveled hundreds of miles from Ohio and Northern Michigan to attend.

Anne and Ed Franco are retiring from the position of Midwest Regional Couple but will continue to serve the Movement until 2012 as USA representatives on a Satellite Team working on the development of materials for the

International Movement. They bring to this position their skills in French and Spanish.

Ed and Anne Franco have piloted a Spanish team in Detroit and are ready to go with another. **Millie and Jorge Cruz** are traveling to Miami, FL to



pilot a Spanish team! We see these teams as a great source of growth and future strength.

Former Coastal Regional Couple, **Ruth and Jim Wagner**, are continuing to serve the Movement with their translation skills. It is through their efforts that TOOL materials are translated into Spanish for our ever-growing number of Spanish teams.

Many thanks to all of the TOOL couples who work to spread the joy that TOOL has brought to their lives. **Linda and Paul**

Puffenberger are traveling from their home in southern Ohio to pilot a team in northern Kentucky. **Wendy and Rob James** have worked very hard to establish the first team in Canton, TX, and **Nancy and Ron Railsback** are hard at work in Amarillo, TX piloting in new areas.

Let us resolve that as we end our 50th birthday year we will multiply teams in all areas, starting in our own parishes. Let's work to help couples strengthen their sacramental love! ■

Changing of the Guard In Midwest Region

By Ed & Anne Franco, Midwest Regional Couple

As our term as Midwest Regional Couple draws to a close, we have prepared Bev and Frank Lentine to take over responsibility for the Region. They are longtime members of Detroit 04, and have been active in the Detroit Sector, including as Sector Couple. A dynamic duo, they are sure to win the hearts of all the teams they encounter in the next few years.

As we recognize the international anniversary of TOOL (60 years) and now the national anniversary (50 years) of Teams in the United States, we have had the opportunity to travel to visit the Midwest sectors and train and install new Sector Couples.

Being Sector Couple is a wonderful opportunity to connect closely to the teams in your area, to share your enthusiasm, your understanding, as well as to encourage and help teams to live the Teams way of life. Never be afraid to accept the invitation whenever you are asked to serve. The Holy Spirit and Our Blessed Mother are always present to guide you.

In Granville, Ohio we were welcomed to our newest sector. Barb and Bob Doran have been serving as the Sector Couple and we were able to install them in the presence of their teams and Teams families. It was wonderful to see so many children and teens present for the celebration that followed.

The next day we traveled to Toledo, to meet with Roz and John Needham, who were installed that evening as North-



Barb and Bob Doran, first Sector Couple for Granville, OH (left) join Anne and Ed Franco and Fr. William Dettling, spiritual advisor for Granville OH 01.

ern Ohio Sector's second Sector Couple. This sector has grown incredibly under the leadership of its first Sector Couple, Marcella and Richard Sevigny. From two teams in the Cleveland area and one in Toledo, they now number ten, all addi-

tions in the Toledo area! Marcella and Richard have moved back to Canada. We are deeply grateful for their leadership and all they accomplished in their area. The Movement is alive and well in northern Ohio!

On Saturday, November 8th we had a Sector Day which culminated in a Birthday Celebration for the fifty years of TOOL in the USA! We invited TOOL couples from the many pre-sector teams in our region

to attend; we wanted them to experience the camaraderie and excitement for Teams that always results from Teams gatherings.

Bev and Frank Lentine were installed as new the Midwest Regional Couple.

Karen and Mike Allison were installed as new Sector Couple for

Detroit, replacing Cindy and Walt Romano. We are most grateful to the Romanos for their leadership and dedication to the Detroit teams during the past three years. We are delighted that Eileen and Ted Kosnik were able to join us

for the weekend. All regional Sector Couples were invited to stay over for a Regional Service Team meeting to be held on November 9th.

We want to report on the Detroit sectors which are also experiencing growth. In the last year we piloted our first Spanish-speaking team – five couples transplanted from various parts of Mexico to Detroit. Detroit 14 is now in piloting, as are an English-speaking and a Spanish-speaking team in London, Ontario.

Our time as Midwest Regional Couple has truly enriched our lives.

Aside from the contact we have had with teams throughout our area, we were privileged to serve on the Super Regional team, to assist in training for Sector Couples at national gatherings in Turlock, CA in 2005 and Chaska, MN in 2007. We participated in the international gathering in Lourdes in 2006. Everywhere we met the same enthusiasm for the Teams Movement, interest in better meeting the challenges of Teams, appreciation for stronger, more faith-filled marriages

that gradually evolve as we try to live our Teams life as envisioned by Father Caffarel and those early couples so many years ago.

As we reflect on these past four years we are truly grateful to Our Lord for his love and blessings, the guidance of the Holy Spirit as



Pictured with Midwest Regional Couple, Ed and Anne Franco (right) are retiring Sector Couple Mick and Barb Stoddard (left) and new Sector Couple Kathy and Norm Bennett.

we tried to keep in touch with the teams in our region, as we encouraged them to be strong and faithful to the Movement, as well as to encourage the formation of new teams. We realize more fully the incredible gift of being part of Teams of Our Lady and wish we could

package it and distribute it to every couple trying to build a better marriage and relationship with God.

Thank you for the blessings and the friendship that you have brought to our lives. ■



Teams of Our Lady

Equipas de Nossa Senhora • Equipos de Nuestra Señora

TOOL window clings (3" x 5") are available for \$1 each + postage from the TOOL office. They are miniature versions of the banner with Teams of Our Lady in English, Portuguese and Spanish under the multicolored logo that cling to the inside of your car window. For more information, or to order, e-mail info@teamsfourlady.org.

Southeastern Regional Day of Enrichment

By Melissa and Paul Kruschwitz,
North Pinellas Sector Couple

Sixty teams couples from Jacksonville, Fort Meyers, and the Tampa Bay area came together on October 11th for a day of reflection and enrichment. The day was held at the stunningly beautiful Our Lady of Divine Providence House of Prayer in Clearwater, FL located on the banks of Old Tampa Bay.

The Marian Servants of Divine Providence, a Private Association of Christian Faithful, who facilitate the ministry efforts at the House Prayer, have this to say in their mission statement: "Our mission is to bring Catholic Christians to a deeper understanding of their vocation and mission in Christ, in the Church, and in the world." How well this mirrors the charisms of Teams of Our Lady. For we are communities of couples united by the sacrament of marriage who meet in the name of Christ to help each other live our lives more fully according to the Gospel. We seek to build up the Church by promoting married love and married spirituality as a gift of God to the Church and to the world. (Taken from the "Guide of the Teams of Our Lady").

As one of the co-coordinators of this day, I feel I must thank

the countless many of you from other TOOL regions around the country. It was out of sharing that took place at a recent Super Regional gathering that our Regional Couple, Ed and Susan Klein, came home with the idea to offer something like this for our local TOOL couples.

We learned about trusting God and counting on the gifts of the Holy Spirit as we planned this event. It clearly was a Holy Spirit moment when, during planning, I chimed in and said "Oh, Paul and I could do a talk on prayer." What had I gotten us into?

I'll tell you what: the best conjugal prayer we have had together in our married lives came as a result of preparing for this talk. We prayed diligently together; asking that the Lord give us the words that would be His words; that we would touch people in our own unique ways; and that He would give us peace in the process. And God delivered. Thank You, good and gracious God.

I believe that sometimes God is calling us to step outside of our comfort zones and reach a little further to spread His love. If you would like information about our day; we would be happy to share. But here's my advice; seek a day away with your spouse; get some other TOOL couples together and toss around some ideas; pray about it; plan to the best of your abilities; and let God do the rest of the work. ■

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

It is with great honor we extend our devotion to our Holy Family JESUS, MARY, & JOSEPH. They are the ICON of the Teams of Our Lady. As God called us to serve him, we ask all of you for your support and prayers. It is in uniting as couples that we can serve not only God but each other.

May the Holy Family Bless us all.

Your Brother & Sister in Christ,

Jose & Maria Cabral

Southeast New England Portuguese Sector Couple

Eu gostaria de começar pela Liturgia da Palavra

O rancor e a ira são coisas detestáveis e o pecador é mestre nelas. Sir 27,33-28,9

Assim começava por dizer que a dias fui a aproximado por uma pessoa que me dizia eu tenho uma coisa para te dizer. Mas não quero que me respondas agora. O meu desejo e que tu deias algum tempo ao Espírito Santo afim de que seja ele a dizer sim ou não. Mas depois de eu te dizer vais ter que falar com a tua esposa afim de voses se porem de mutuo acordo. Bom eu continuei calado afim de saber o que era que essa pessoa queria. E por surpresa minha era para esta missao. Nos estava-mos a 2 dias de partir para umas curtas ferias de 4 dias ate ao estado de Pensilvânia afim de ir visitar o nosso filho mais novo que se encontra a estajiar lá.

Assim fizer-mos e sinceramento irmaos em Cristo foi uma surpresa para nos os dois. Sentirmos o desejo de servir o Senhor, com a proteção de Maria Santissima porque este moviment em boa hora foi baptizado com o nome de E.N.S.

Irmaos em Cristo,

Jose & Maria Cabral

Casal do Sector Responsavel da Lingua Portuguesa,

Diocese Fall River, MA

Mid Atlantic Region Celebrates 50th Anniversary of Teams Of Our Lady in the U.S.

By John and Carolyn Lyman,
Mid-Atlantic Regional Couple

Team members from Maryland, Delaware, Virginia and Washington, DC gathered together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Teams in the United States of America on Sunday, October 26th at Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Potomac, MD. The celebration began with mass concelebrated by five Teams chaplains, Rev. Edwin Dill, ST, Mid Atlantic Regional Chaplain, Rev. Joaquin Bazan, Rev. Jean Prosper Yaga, Rev. John Ferrelly, OSB and Rev. Nicholas Yambu, OFM CAP. Fr. Edwin spoke very eloquently during his homily, tying together the themes of love, thanksgiving, celebration, blessings and gratitude as they pertained to the Sunday readings and the Teams movement. It was especially moving to hear again how the struggles

of those young French couples, with the support, direction and encouragement of Father Henri Caffarel, has blossomed into this worldwide movement in support of married spirituality.

At the conclusion of the liturgy, Bob and Mary Christensen were installed as the new Sector Couple for the Maryland South Sector. We are truly blessed by those who offer their time and talent in nourishing the Teams movement.

Following mass, everyone was invited into the adjacent Kennedy Room for a delicious catered meal. During desert we were blessed to have Andy and Loretta Favret, Bob and Marie Wallace and Harry and Josie Gieske, early Regional and Super Regional Couples, give a reprise of the talks that they gave at the National Conference at Chaska, MN in July, 2007. Hearing of

the challenges of communicating primarily by "snail mail" in growing and nurturing Teams in its infancy here in the United States should inspire us all to match those early efforts and continue the growth and nurturing of Teams today.



John and Carolyn Lyman, Mid-Atlantic Regional Couple (left) with Mary and Bob Christensen, new Sector Couple for the Maryland South Sector.

TOOL COUPLES MAKE CAMINO PILGRIMAGE

Tom and I along with JoAnn and Chuck, both TOOL couples, spent the month of May making a 500-mile walking pilgrimage across Spain on the very ancient pilgrimage route, the Camino de Compestello. I still can't believe that we accomplished this and that we survived unscarred and still friends.

It all began when Tom watched a show on EWTN that highlighted the Camino de Compestello. The priest who had made the Camino told of his adventures and the spiritual opportunity it offered. But along with the spiritual benefits he talked of his feet aching the entire time, sleeping in bunk beds with 100 other people in the room, not knowing if there would be a bed for you at night, etc. When Tom asked me to watch a repeat of the show I had to ask if this was suppose to be convincing me to make the trek. If so, it was not a very good sales pitch. Tom, however, was intrigued and fascinated by it.

Realizing that we were not getting any younger, about a year later we decided, with two other couples to make the pilgrimage. Tom and I both wanted to make it a prayerful experience. A pilgrimage, not a vacation, and our friends, faith-filled Catholics, joined us in this goal. My other reason for accompanying Tom on the Camino was to give him the Camino as a gift. In our 35+ years of marriage Tom has always been so accommodating to my desires and ideas. The pilgrimage turned out to be a true blessing for both of us. And yes, the discomforts and blessing that the original video expressed all turned out to be true. *~Ruth Becker*



From left to right: Colleen & Bill Pasnik, JoAnn & Chuck Olson (Dubuque Iowa pre-sector Team 06) and Ruth & Tom Becker (Team 03).

Chuck and I were invited to walk the 500 mile Camino de Compestello in Spain by our friends Tom and Ruth Becker (TOOL couple). We decided to join them on the pilgrimage after much thought about being gone one month from our elderly parents. After finding the proper hiking shoes and gear, Tom led our training program for six months

before we left for Spain. We thought we were well prepared. However, the Camino proved to be a physical and mental challenge, with blisters, sore legs, etc., but as the days went by we got stronger. The walk led us closer to Christ and to each other. We began each day with prayer, then stopped for mid-morning coffee and group prayer. As we walked we prayed the mysteries of the rosary, we sang and had a lot of time for reflection and private prayer. We found we needed each other in our physical and spiritual welfare each day. The varied terrains with many days of rain also challenged us. When one of us got down, the others lifted us back up – isn't that what God desires for us

all? We three couples were together day and night for 29 days and kept our focus on Jesus. When we arrived in Santiago, we were not exhausted but refreshed and very excited to have completed our journey together. The pilgrimage made us realize just how much our daily life is a journey – a pilgrimage to our heavenly home when we die. Through the good and difficult trials of daily life, with the help of our faith, family and friends, we hope that we will complete our life pilgrimage well and that our reward will be waiting for us in heaven.

You can view pictures of our adventure, read our blog entries and fine more information by visiting: <http://www.elcamino.nor-sketch.com>. *~JoAnn Olson*

Rosary Sunday at the Martyr's Shrine

By Tanzél Picard

On Sunday September 21st our TOOL group from Durham, Ontario set-out and spent a lovely day with our children and some extended family at the 24th Annual Rosary Sunday held at the Martyr's Shrine in Midland, Ontario.

It was an exciting day, to be sure, with 14 kids in tow all under



the age of six! We began our day with Mass at our local parishes and then we met at the Martyr's Shrine for worship and celebra-

tion. A lovely procession of the Blessed Sacrament lead by various Knights of Columbus began the Living Rosary. We all took part alongside about a 1000 others in the Living Rosary, Liturgy of the Word, Homily and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; all in the beautiful outdoors at the Papal Altar. The living rosary was said in a multitude of languages – as individuals from various groups recited the prayers in their native tongues. The readings, homily and hymns were said and sung in our two national languages, English and French.

After the concluding hymn, our group enjoyed a sunny picnic near the outdoor Italian altar. Our picnic even consisted of a mini birthday celebration for Ethan, the oldest child in our group, who turned six! We all enjoyed lively conversation and a sneak preview of an upcoming Polish concert. Our children's laughter rang through the field as they chased bubbles and collected enough acorns to put any squirrel to shame.

Our day ended at dusk with the Magnificat and a group photo. Then we all piled very tired children into our cars for the journey home as we discussed our excitement about our upcoming Team meeting at the Sullivan's family home! ■

TOOL Finances – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly!

TOOL runs a very tight financial ship: the monies that are received in a calendar year become the budget for the following year. The leadership works together to make sure that we live within that budget!

The same principles apply to a special event, such as a National Conference or a Sector Day. They are designed to be self-supporting. There are times, when regardless of educated planning and projections, we do not meet our budget. We try to cover the cost by reducing spending in another area and it is only as a last resort we use reserve funds. Those funds are set aside to allow the Movement to continue should we experience a very low contribution year due to a national financial downturn. The reserve funds are for true emergencies.

We will experience a very tight budget in 2009, as our contributions are more than \$24,000 behind where they were last year. We need to cover basic expenses for printing, postage, piloting mileage, training expenses, storage unit rental, etc.

The annual budget covers the cost of printing material for piloting, TOOL study material, fliers and the *Magnificat*. It also covers the travel of the Regional Couples for semi-annual Super Regional meetings, and of the Super Regional Couple to meet with the International College once a year. In 2009 we have already altered our meeting schedule to include only one Super Regional meeting.

Volunteers do all of the work of TOOL, from RCs up to Super Regional Couple. Pam Sieracki's layout and editing of this newsletter is also donated labor. Our "office" is the home computer and phone of the Super Regional Couple, and a climate controlled 4x8 storage unit where the materials are kept on shelves. We have little room to cut out fat!

In January of 2009 we had to tell the International Movement that we would not be able to pay our full tithe. Our tithe is based on the gross national product of the country, the number of couples in the Movement and other objective criteria. Our tithe was assessed at 24,949 euros. We will pay 14,308 euros and told the ERI that we will be unable to cover our obligation. We understand that the country's woes have affected our collections, and ask that everyone pray for the work of the Movement, and better financial times worldwide. ■

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movement, and I am reasonably certain that Fr. Caffarel and the pioneer Team did not have that in mind. Nor were they eager to take on new obligations or go to more meetings. Their simple objective was to discern God’s will in their lives together as couples. Through prayer and reflection on their own Christian experience, they received the graced insight that the rootedness of Christian marriage, the sacrament, was deeper and richer than they imagined and they looked to understand – and live – that mystery.

The special insight they had, I believe, the one that distinguished them from earlier, mostly monastic, spiritualities, was that they entered into the sacrament not by removing themselves from the human realities of marriage but by immersing themselves more thoroughly and deeply into that God-given humanness. Sacrament, after all, is very much a physical thing. Words, gestures, materials, touch – these are all part of every Sacrament; in our Catholic economy of salvation, these are the ways that God comes to us. Historically – and unfortunately – we have tended strip away the material, even the human, in our search for contact and life with a God who seems so out of reach.

Teams of Our Lady, prayerfully reflecting on the lived experience of women and men who were married, helped renew the Churches understanding that marriage, perhaps more than any other sacrament, is a reflection of the Incarnation of God, the love of God, in the person of Jesus. And we – married and celibate alike – are grateful for this because it makes present to us all, the Church and the world, the presence of Jesus in the real stuff that life is made of.

Understanding God is so beyond us, but God gave Jesus to show us definitively what God is like. Loving God – the immaterial and mysterious and transcendent – is virtually impossible, but we have been given human love, especially as expressed in the committed and sacramentalized union between a man and woman, to help us understand and express it.

As we ponder God’s grace and give thanks for the Teams of Our Lady in the United States, we can hardly overlook Mary, our patroness. In the patriarchy that so afflicts our religious heritage, she shows that the wisdom of woman, wife, and mother, is truly the light of God shining through darkness. Besides her role in the central mystery of our redemption, she holds a special place of honor wherever there is commitment to family.

We take all our reasons for gratitude today and we wrap them in our celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, because this is the supreme act of thanksgiving for us and the whole Christian community. We consciously place ourselves within the mystery of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection and are nourished by Word and Sacrament to live that mystery in the everydayness of living, especially in marriage, and to hope for its fulfillment in the next dimension of our lives.

As we continue with our celebration today we can do no better than to pray for each other and for every member of Teams of Our Lady – past and present – with the words from the Letter to the Ephesians: “May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may love be the root and foundation of your life. Thus you will be able to grasp fully, with all the holy ones, the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ’s love, and experience this love which surpasses all knowledge, so that you may attain to the fullness of God himself.” ■

Rest In Peace

Robert Burns
Franklin OH 01

Frank Schaller
Uniondale NY 01

Bill Standley
Gresham OR 02

James Westbrook
Detroit MI 01

Robert Verhelle
Petosky MI 01

Hyatt Nolan
Fairfax Va 05

Nancy Burghardt
Warwick NY 09

*Please pray
for the
deceased
members
of Teams*

Mary and the Word of God

By Edward Sri

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As the world's bishops prepare for October's synod in Rome on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church," there is much we can learn from Mary, the mother of Jesus, about this topic. Let us consider four aspects of Our Lady's life that serve as a model for approaching God's word in a life-transforming way.

Attentive Hearts

"Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

Many of us seek God so that he may fulfill our dreams and plans. In contrast, Mary and the saints were the kind of people who, instead of always telling God what to do, listened attentively to God's word, affectionately wanting to know his heart so they could devote their lives to fulfilling his desires.

We see this loving response, for instance, in Mary's words at the Annunciation. After hearing from the Archangel Gabriel that God wanted her to become the mother of the Messiah, Mary did not react in a lukewarm manner. She responded

joyfully, longing to do whatever her beloved desired of her: "I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38).

Pope John Paul II and others have pointed out how in the original Greek of the New Testament, Mary's words, "Let it be to me," indicate not a passive acceptance of God's word, but an active, loving embrace of it. Mary does not simply submit to God's plan; she longs to fulfill it, "making it her own," explained John Paul II during a general audience in 1996. She inspires us to approach God's word with attentive love, seeking to know God's will in order to satisfy his desires.

Interiorize God's Word

"Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19).

Simply knowing God's word is not enough. Even if a Christian memorizes the Scriptures and understands every doctrine in the Catechism, he will not necessarily be close to God. Certainly, we must understand

God's word intellectually, but we must also allow it to penetrate our hearts and shape our lives.

Mary is a model for making God's word our own. When Mary witnessed the amazing events surrounding the birth of her son, the Scriptures tell us that she "kept all these things, pondering them in her heart" (Lk 2:19, cf. 2:51). On a basic level, the notion of keeping and pondering in the heart indicates that Mary sought to understand the meaning of the mysterious events at the dawn of the new covenant (see Gn 37:11, Dn 4:28).

Still, the phrase tells us something more. In the Psalms and wisdom literature of the Bible, to keep and ponder in the heart implies not just a correct interpretation of God's words and deeds, but a faithful living out of God's revelation. For example, Psalm 119:11 says, "I have laid up thy word in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (emphasis added). Here, the psalmist ponders God's word in his heart so that he may live according to that word.

Therefore, we learn from Mary that it is not enough to know God's word intellectually. We must interiorize God's word and allow it to shape our lives. We need to take his word to prayer, meditate on it and apply it to the situations we face each day. Like Mary, we should keep the word of God and ponder it in our hearts, so that we may walk in his ways.

Thanksgiving

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior" (Lk 1:46-47).

At Mass, we respond to the readings from Scripture by saying, "Thanks be to God." But how many of us truly express heartfelt gratitude for God's word during the liturgy?

When we come to understand something in the Bible or in our Catholic faith, we may get excited. Perhaps we gain a deeper appreciation for a certain Catholic practice or we hear a homily that sheds some light on our own lives or we come to understand a passage in Scripture that previously eluded us. In these moments of insight, do we take time to

thank God for his word enlightening our lives?

Mary was someone who took time to do just that. Even though she was a very busy woman — helping her cousin Elizabeth get ready for a baby and preparing for her own

Simply knowing God's word is not enough....We must allow it to penetrate our hearts and shape our lives.

child, who was no less than the Son of God himself — Mary still paused to praise and thank God for all that he was doing in her life and for the people of Israel. When visiting Elizabeth, Mary expresses her gratitude in a passage known as the Magnificat. She says, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior...for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name" (Lk 1:46-47, 49). Let us, like Mary, take time to thank the Lord for the ways in

which his word guides us and blesses our lives.

Sharing The Word With Others

"Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

Finally, our encounter with the word of God is not meant to be a private affair. It is meant to radiate outward and touch the lives of those around us. Mary was not afraid to invite others to hear the word of God and give their full obedience to it as she did herself. We see this at the wedding feast of Cana.

Consider how Mary's command, "Do whatever he tells you," has a profound effect on the servants at the feast, inspiring them to trust Jesus in a radical way (Jn 2:5). Just put yourself in the servants' shoes. The wine has run out at the wedding feast, and Jesus tells them to take the six stone jars for the Jewish rites of purification, fill them up with water and draw some out to present to the steward of the feast. These stone jars would have been used for ritual washings of hands (and possibly feet). Astonishingly, Jesus tells the servants to fill up these very jars with water and present the contents to the steward to serve as drink for the guests.

This would demand a lot of faith from the servants. Imag-

ine what they are thinking: "Fill up these jars? With water? And serve it to the guests? How is this going to solve the problem?" From a human perspective, Jesus' plan does not make any sense. Yet, Mary tells the servants to place their total trust in Jesus even if they do not understand his plan.

Similarly, we too may not always grasp Jesus' work in our lives. We may not see clearly where the Lord is leading us. Yet, as John Paul II reminded us, Mary's command, "Do whatever he tells you," challenges us to trust him without hesitation. We must do so not only when it makes sense to us, but "especially when one does not understand the meaning or benefit of what Christ asks," John Paul II said in 1997.

We can now see how Mary's words inspire the servants to tremendous faith. John's Gospel, in fact, highlights how the servants respond as faithful disciples. Jesus gives two orders to the servants. First he tells them, "Fill the jars with water," and the Gospel immediately points out that the servants not only obeyed Christ's command, but did so perfectly: "And they filled them to the brim" (Jn 2:7, emphasis added). Then Jesus tells them, "Now draw some out and take it to the steward of the feast," and the Gospel adds, "So they took it" (Jn 2:8). Notice how John the Evangelist

goes out of his way to tell us that the servants did exactly as they were told?

Clearly, these servants followed Mary's exhortation, "Do whatever he tells you." As such, they are portrayed as faithful disciples, obedient to Christ's words, and they become witnesses to Christ's glory and the first of his miracles (Jn 2:11).

Like Mary, let us bring God's word to those around us, inviting them to "Do whatever he tells you." Let us do so confidently that they too will encounter Christ's love and his supernatural work in their lives if they respond to his word with trust and faithfulness like the servants at Cana.

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Teams of Our Lady

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To Meet or Not Meet – Resolved!

By Eileen & Ted Kosnik

In the last issue we posed the question to meet or not to meet... Thank you to all who replied and expressed excitement about the conference. The realities of the country's finances as well those of TOOL have caused us to make the decision NOT to meet until at least 2010. The Conference will be the New England area. We are grateful to Amelia and Joe Ameida and Inez and Jose Varao for suggesting their region, and look forward to a New England location! (Please see the article on TOOL finances for further information).