

# BULLETIN



## OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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ASSOCIATION DES AMIS DU PÈRE CAFFAREL  
49 RUE DE LA GLACIÈRE  
F-75013 PARIS  
[www.henri-caffarel.org](http://www.henri-caffarel.org)

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L'Association des Amis du père Caffarel

• 49, rue de la Glacière F-75013 PARIS

• [www.henri-caffarel.org](http://www.henri-caffarel.org)

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## EDITORIAL

**Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer & Alberto Pérez**  
*(Responsible Couple of the International  
Leading Team of the Teams of Our  
Lady movement)*



Dear Family of the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel,

This year, as we work on the study theme "Love is much more than Love," that enables us to read, reflect on, and savour Father Henri Caffarel's profound texts on love, we would like to draw your attention to the text that opens Chapter 4, "**The Vocation of Love.**" This text also resonated with us on the first day of the International College retreat that we attended in Lyon, last July, the day when we meditated on the theme of searching within our lives.

*The source of Christian love is not in the human heart. It is in God. To spouses who want to love, who want to learn to love more and more, there is only one good piece of advice: seek God, love God, be united to God, give Him all the space. The more they open themselves to the God of love, the richer the exchange of love between them. Before them lie infinite possibilities: their love will never cease to grow, since they can open themselves ever more fully to God's gift. If they want their love to be a bright, ever-burning flame, let them love God more each day. The decline of so many loves is explained by forgetting this fundamental principle: that to turn away from God and sin against Him is to sin against love by cutting oneself off from the source of love. To refuse God is to refuse one's spouse their daily bread: love. The person who claims to value love while despising Love is lying.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Henri Caffarel, « The Vocation of Love », *L'Anneau d'Or* n° 2-3-4, July 1945.

When we read a text of such depth and realise it was written in 1945, we truly recognise the prophetic nature of Father Henri Caffarel's words about Christian marriage. This reflection sheds immense light on our understanding and helps us recognise how wrong we are to try to build everything, including our marriage, solely on our own strength. We struggle to accept that God supports us and that together we must find the path to draw closer to Him. And yet, we benefit from exceptional guidance that we sometimes fail to use or even misuse. The Endeavours present a challenge for many of us, and this can lead us to minimise their importance in our commitment. We dislike the word "effort" that underpins the Endeavours, we dislike feeling obligated, we dislike acknowledging our difficulties, and we find it particularly hard to share what these Endeavours have meant to us over the past month during the Team meeting. It is not our intention now to revisit the Endeavours' entire dynamic, but we propose to analyse Father Henri Caffarel's text to help us in exploring them. If we remember that these elements of the Teams' pedagogy help us seek God's will in our lives, to live and experience it in truth as well as in our encounters with others and communion with others, we will be better able to understand his entire proposition.

In this paragraph, Father Caffarel helps us to reposition ourselves in our relationship with God. It will be difficult for us to recognise His will, the truth, and the communion of our encounter with Him if we focus solely on our inner selves. Recognising how God has loved us, giving us His most precious gift, His Son—something we just experienced at Christmas—can help us reflect: How do we experience the gift of our most precious gifts? Are we generous? Do we hold anything back? How do we help our spouse draw closer to God? How do we, individually and as a couple, put this commitment to God into practice? Do we tend to make each other feel guilty, or do we respect each other's pace and encourage one another when we falter? Our love for our husband or wife should lead us to mutually enrich our spiritual lives. But it is true that the daily grind of life—children, work, responsibilities, difficulties, problems, or even joys—often makes us forget the spiritual dimension of our lives. If we enter into the spiritual dynamic of communion with the Love that nourishes us, we can experience reconciliation and unification with the God, who dwells within us and we can rediscover this dynamic of the image of the Trinity as a communion of love.

It is only through the generosity of our shared gifts, through our complete offering to one another and to others, that we can truly receive God's gift. Our marriage will become life for others, because it will be animated by God Himself, who does not leave us alone. As we have read, "*if want (our) love to be a bright, ever-burning flame,*" let us not separate ourselves from the source of Love. Let us ask our spouse to help us return to Love, with a capital L, when we are discouraged and forget to rely on God, when we falter in the face of difficulties and drift away from God, or when our strength fails us and we need them, the person we have chosen to share our life with, by our side, reminding us that God awaits us.

Thank you to Teams of Our Lady for helping us have these points of support that draw us back to Love when we stray from Him. Thank you Mary, our mother, who helps us on this path.

In communion with all of you,

Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer & Alberto Pérez  
International Responsible Couple of the Teams of Our Lady movement  
Valencia, December 20, 2025

## Au Service

*News from the Friends of Father Caffarel  
The Cause for Canonisation of Father  
Henri Caffarel*

**Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.**  
*Roman Vice-Postulator*



### Miracles and Grace

God is the sole master of His gifts. Yet, He loves it when we ask Him for what we need in all kinds of different areas. Like a happy father, He loves to see His children turn to Him. We constantly recite the "*Our Father*," the prayer his Son taught us. Therefore, without hesitation, without fear of disturbing the one who ceaselessly gives us life, both physical and spiritual, let us ask for what we want, let us ask "*without being shy*," as Father Caffarel used to say.

Let us pray for ourselves. Let us pray for others. This is the law of charity. In heaven, Father Caffarel, in the light of God, never ceases to intercede for us. Thus, charity flows between heaven and earth, and we enter into the communion of saints.

The Church asks God to perform a miracle in response to Father Caffarel's intercession, so that he may be beatified. A "*miracle*" is defined as a physical healing that is immediate, definitive, and inexplicable by science.

What about today? We regularly receive accounts that we would spontaneously call "*miracles*," so beautiful are these accounts, so deeply do they touch our faith, and so closely are they linked to a request for Father Caffarel's intercession. But Rome's criteria are demanding: nothing must be open to question. These accounts that we have received cannot be considered "*miracles*" in the strict sense of the Church.

What should we to understand by this? The sick person has indeed been cured: is this a cure simply explainable by science? Where is God's role and the intercession of Father Caffarel? We will certainly rejoice at the former patient's good health and give thanks to God. But is it that Father Caffarel did

nothing? It is often the case in heaven that God, and his servants around him, act discreetly. They become accomplices in nature's work.

Yet, the accounts of the event seemed to us filled with the God's presence through the intercession of Father Caffarel. Let us get it right: the witnesses who prayed so fervently for a healing were right, and they cannot be disappointed. There is no "*miracle*," but there is indeed a "*grace*" bestowed by God through the intercession of Father Caffarel. The sick person and their family were heard by God and his servant. The healing becomes not only a deliverance from illness, but also a spiritual gift—which is what *grace* is—to enlighten the formerly ill person and their loved ones: God is with them, and so is his servant, Father Caffarel. They receive a particular strength to bear witness to God's love.

God grants us, simply, discreetly, but magnificently, so many graces! How many families have invoked Father Caffarel for the birth of a child, for the healing of a friend after a serious accident, for the reconciliation of a couple... If it is not a miracle in the strict sense, it is a grace that can be attributed to the intercession of Father Caffarel, whom they have so often called upon in prayer. Even more so, how many graces have we received in our lives, making Father Caffarel a companion on the journey to God, an ally in our life with others.

These non-miraculous graces of healing will remain etched in our memories. They are also important for the future of Father Caffarel's cause, for these graces are the fertile ground in which "*a miracle*" will germinate. To put it another way: God, who is love and loves to be called upon, seeing these numerous requests and these graces already granted, will perform a miracle through the intercession of Father Caffarel. The Gospel puts it well, like the widow, we must "*keep bothering*" God. (Luke 18:1-8) We must do so: firstly for the healing of a loved one, but also so that our intercessor with them, Father Caffarel, becomes increasingly known, as does his message: the spirituality of marriage and widowhood, his teaching on prayer; all of this contains riches for living with God and others.

We await a miracle, for the good of all our fellow human beings. God is the sole master of his gifts. He always responds at the best time for us, and we trust Him. God loves us... Father Caffarel never ceases to teach us this.

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.  
Roman Vice-Postulator



## In Service

### *Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel A Testimonial of Graces received*

*With this testimonial sent to us by our friends, Paul and Monique, from the United States, we continue this new section of the newsletter. Please feel free to send us your testimonials of graces received through the intercession of Father Caffarel.*

Over the last 2 years, our lives have changed, as Monique & I, at the ages of 76 and 78 years and being free from the burdens and stress of managing our careers, gave up our retired lifestyle with hopes of going on long vacations and trips, and made a total sacrifice for the caring of our grand-daughter. We took her into our home to tend to her medical issues and health, ensure she attended and did well in school, and provided her with a home of love, security, and personal safety. As Jesus did for us, we made a total sacrifice of our personal desires for the good of our grand-daughter.

We became aware in June of 2023 that our grand-daughter suffered an unknown illness for several months and that she was attended by her private doctor without success. While she was with us, we took her to 2 different children's hospitals, during which she had many specialized tests, saw an infectious disease specialist, a rheumatologist, had genetic and bone marrow testing, to no avail. After 9 months of praying for a miracle, (grandparents, Teams of Our Lady couples, and others) from the intercession of Father Caffarel, her symptoms disappeared in mid-March 2024 and have not reappeared.

Here are more details of that miracle involving our grand-daughter, Brianna M. Harris. In June 2023, Brianna began to suffer from chills. According to Brianna, she would sit outside in the sun during the heat of the day in the middle of summer just trying to get warm and to stop her body from having cold - like shivers. In August 2023, we took Brianna on a short trip and saw Brianna shivering outdoors on a warm day in the sun. During the night she woke up shaking so violently, that first thing in the morning, we took her directly to emergency room. Randall Children's Hospital gave her IVs, pain medicine and ran several blood tests. Without finding a cause for her chills and fever, the hospital discharged her.

We took Brianna back to her home. Several days later, [...] we picked up Brianna and took her back to Randall Children's Hospital, where they admitted her and scheduled more tests. [...] No definitive diagnosis was found and Brianna was discharged. Several days later, we took Brianna back to our home on the

recommendation of the hospital counselor and we persuaded her parents to let Brianna stay with us to attend school near our home. [...]

Finally, in January of 2024, results from bone marrow testing indicated Brianna has a genetic marker for severe autoimmune disorder, but she still continued to suffer from periodic chills and high temperatures. We continued to keep Brianna in our home to give her a safe and loving home as best we could [...]. Then in March 2024, having prayed consistently to Father Caffarel for her healing, her chills and fevers disappeared.

As Teams of Our Lady Liaison Couples for Father Caffarel, Monique and I prayed daily that Father Caffarel intercede for Brianna and our family. Our team couples continued to pray as well. On every Friday, for over 2 years and continuing to this day, we joined other 4 other Team couples via Zoom video to pray for Brianna and another Team member who was undergoing treatment for cancer.

The graces received are not be easily explained. First Brianna's medical issues appear to have been cured and not reappeared. The situation brought Brianna into our home where we find ourselves as "New parents". Brianna has done extremely well in school getting high grades and has found many good friends. In the past 2 years, Monique and I have seen a total transformation in Brianna's attitude. Previously she exhibited rebellious and angry behavior towards adults. We are blessed to see Brianna grow into a wonderful person as she brings new life and fresh and youthful love into our home, as we comfort her, she comforts us. We also go to church together and Brianna is often the one who chooses the church; she is certainly family to us.

Our lives are forever changed. We sacrifice all for the will of God and the good of another over our selves. Brianna needs a safe, loving home which we believe she was denied for the most part of her life. We are committed to being her refuge and supporting her growth for the next several years. What we are doing for Brianna is more important and gives us more in return than anything in the world could do. Without Brianna, I fear our life would be a void and dull existence. With her, we have challenges and joys one could never imagine. We call the joys receive each day our "Angel Droppings".

Thank you Jesus.

*News from the Friends of Father  
Caffarel*

*Excerpt from the Association's  
Treasurer's Report – for the Year 2024*

***Treasurer's Report – Year 2024***

**General Situation**

The year 2024 was marked by reduced activity regarding the cause for the canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel, as the procedure is now in the hands of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints at the Vatican. Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits and Marie-Christine Genillon nevertheless continued their studies and work, albeit on a smaller scale, and did not travel to Rome in 2024. Several documents were purchased for inclusion in the library at our headquarters on Rue de la Glacière in Paris.

The decrease in membership fees compared to previous years can be explained by an exceptional increase in membership fees in the two preceding years (2023 and 2022): indeed, some membership fees could not be paid on time in 2019 and 2020, due in particular to the health situation.

Specific expenses were incurred in connection with the International Gathering of Teams of Our Lady in Turin in July 2024, in agreement with the Association's board.

**Key Event of the Fiscal Year**

The Association's President and Treasurer were re-elected on July 21, 2024, following a change in the leadership team of the International Teams of Our Lady movement.

According to the former Treasurer, €5,389 in cash belonging to the Association was misused by International Teams of Our Lady movement, which led to the recording of an increased income of the same amount as an asset on the Association's balance sheet as of December 31, 2024. This amount was settled in June 2025.

## Table of Activities

The main expenses were for printing bulletins and bookmarks, all of which were distributed at the Turin gathering, as well as for the cost of making kakemonos.

### Activities

Revenue	2023	2024 budget	2024 actual
Membership Fees	23 218,00	15 000,00	17 263,00
Book sales			120,00
Financial Products			96,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>23 218,00</b>	<b>15 000,00</b>	<b>17 479,00</b>
Expenses	2023	2024 budget	2024 actual
Trips & Testimonials		1 500,00	532,00
Postulation	6 220,00	6 500,00	0,00
Direct Costs linked to the Cause	8 000,00	4 000,00	400,00
Office and Documentation Costs	755,00	600,00	8 436,00
IT and Web Costs	527,00	600,00	383,00
Bank Fees	237,00	300,00	217,00
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 739,00</b>	<b>13 500,00</b>	<b>9 968,00</b>
<b>Result</b>	<b>7 479,00 €</b>	<b>1 500,00 €</b>	<b>7 511,00 €</b>

## Projected Budget for 2025

1. The amount of membership fees was prudently estimated as lower than the amount received in 2024
2. The budget does not include book sales, which are unpredictable
3. The new Treasurer has invested the amounts exceeding the Association's savings account limit to generate income without increasing our risk
4. Travel expenses mainly relate to travel within Paris
5. Concerning the Postulation, the 2024 expenses level is maintained

6. Office and documentation costs return to 2023 levels
7. IT costs are reduced to a minimum. A specific budget is allocated for updating and improving the website, which has not undergone any technological development for many years

### **2025 Budget 2025 as compared with 2024**

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>2024 budget</b>	<b>2024 actual</b>	<b>2025 budget</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Memberships Fees	15 000,00	17 263,00	15 000,00	
Sales		120,00		
Financial Products		96,00	200,00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 000,00</b>	<b>17 479,00</b>	<b>15 200,00</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>	<b>2024 budget</b>	<b>2024 actual</b>	<b>2025 budget</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Trips & Testimonials	1 500,00	532,00	1 500,00	
Postulation	6 500,00			
Direct Costs linked to the Cause	4 000,00	400,00	4 000,00	In case of a miracle
Office and Documentation Costs	600,00	8 436,00	600,00	In 2024 printing and posters
IT and Web Costs	600,00	383,00	6 600,00	
Bank Fees	300,00	217,00	300,00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 500,00</b>	<b>9 968,00</b>	<b>13 000,00</b>	
<b>Result</b>	<b>1 500,00</b>	<b>7 511,00</b>	<b>2 200,00</b>	

*Christophe BERNARD*  
*Treasurer*  
*Association of The Friends of Father Caffarel*



## FATHER CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

*Teams of Our Lady Letter, Supplement to n° 40 – 2nd trimester 1981*

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE SOUL OF THE COUPLE**

*In front of two thousand Responsible Couples, Jean Allemand interviewed Father Henri Caffarel on the Holy Spirit's role in a couple's life. Here is this interview based on the notes taken by a listener in the audience.*

*Father, don't you feel it's a luxury to talk about marital spirituality in a world that questions marriage itself?*

A luxury? Perhaps if one seeks in marital spirituality an additional comfort for couples, who are already privileged. But if one considers the Synod's perspective, it appears as collaborating in a work of the Church.

Following the bishops' interventions at the Synod, it seems to me that the Church's thinking is moving in four directions. I am simplifying and outlining hereafter.

1° It is essential to distinguish between the essence of marriage, its intangible core, and the Christian family. The latter is not made up of a single type. We must accept that it takes on diverse forms depending on the continent, social class, and circumstances. Nevertheless, there remains a common and unbreakable core that must be defined.

2° The Synod has a pastoral focus. Every Christian couple, and all the more so the more privileged, must nurture warm affection for all the unloved, for so many unhappy couples. Not to reject them, but to ask ourselves, along with the whole Church, the question, "*How can we help them walk towards the holiness to which they are called?*"

3° The Synod Fathers raised a variety of problems specific to different regions of the world. In particular, they emphasised the difficulties faced by many families due to poverty. An Indian bishop stated, "*Millions of families are living in a state of sub-humanity.*" And Cardinal Zoungana added, "*The World Bank is imposing*

*contraceptive methods on us as a condition for granting loans for our investments."* The issue of marriage thus takes on a different dimension. It is crucial that public opinion as a whole mobilises to provide assistance to this suffering humanity.

4° We now come to the spirituality of marriage, which is of great personal importance to us. Christian marriage will flourish to the extent that it is not reduced to being a mere institution, but whereby couples live out and experience its profound meaning as presented by the Church, following Christ. Marital spirituality must be realistic. *"It must be presented not in a legalistic, romantic, or utopian way, but realistically,"* says the Brazilian Cardinal.

It must also be mystical, *"We focus too much on morality and lack mysticism,"* declares Archbishop Danneels of Brussels. I would add that it must be accompanied by asceticism. I read this in the writings of another bishop, Bishop Bernardin of Cincinnati. After highlighting the need for a spirituality of marital intimacy, he adds, *"Spouses need a specific form of asceticism."* A Brazilian bishop, for his part, says, *"Christian families set an example of a simpler and more austere life for the sake of a more fraternal global society."*

Let us therefore have no qualms: marital spirituality is not a luxury, but an absolutely fundamental pursuit for the Church.

*Father, you told me you hesitated to entitle this presentation, "The Holy Spirit, the Soul of the Couple." Why?*

I was afraid of giving in to a tendency. Yesterday, while listening to the testimonials, I thought to myself, *"If those speaking had lived between 1900 and 1930, they wouldn't have spoken of the Holy Spirit, but of God. If they had lived between 1930 and 1960, they would have spoken of Christ. And since 1960, we've been talking about the Holy Spirit."* Is this simply a figure of speech? Sometimes I fear so, and that's why I hesitated to give it this title. But ultimately, I settled on it to highlight an essential aspect of marital spirituality.

*You previously published an issue of L'Anneau d'Or entitled "Christ within the Couple." Today you speak to us of the Holy Spirit within the couple. So, Christ or the Holy Spirit?*

The Holy Spirit is not an ambassador abroad, cut off from those who send him off. The Holy Spirit's action must never be isolated from Christ's action or the Father's action. The early Church Fathers of the East often spoke in this way: the Father is the sun, Christ is the ray, the Holy Spirit is the light and the warmth that illuminates and warms those who receive him. One cannot separate the light from the ray, nor the ray from the sun. This comparison seems apt to me. It is a

downward movement: everything begins with the Father, passes through Christ, and is accomplished through the Spirit. But then everything begins with the Holy Spirit, who joined humanity, ascends through the Son, and ends in the Father. We are constantly caught up in this movement, in this trajectory of the Father's descent through the Son into the Spirit and of the Son's ascent in the Spirit back to the Father.

At the beginning of Eucharistic Prayer No. 3, we have this very explicit text: *"You are indeed Holy, O Lord, and all you have created rightly gives you praise, for through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, by the power and working of the Holy Spirit, you give life to all things and make them holy, and you never cease to gather a people to yourself, so that from the rising of the sun to its setting a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name."*

This is indeed the twofold movement of descent and ascent. Therefore, let us never isolate the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son. This is what I readily call the spirituality of the mirror. The mirror receives the light and reflects it back to the light source. This is true in the Church; it is true in our couples; it is true in each of our lives. This is how I understand the role of the Holy Spirit.



*The Disciples of Emmaus  
(Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris)*

*If the Holy Spirit's mission extends that of Christ, shouldn't we first discuss the latter's mission in order to properly understand marital spirituality?*

For years, I struggled to better understand the sacrament of marriage. I have said, and I repeat more than ever: it is the covenant between Christ and the couple. And to clarify this word "covenant," which risks being vague, I would add, Christ is present in the couple. As a living presence. Dare to believe in each of your couples that Christ's promise is fulfilled, *"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among you."* And if Christ is present, He prays, He adores his Father, He intercedes for humanity. That is the first aspect. We must add, however, that



although present in the couple, He never ceases to build up and develop the couple. Through His word. Through His sacraments. Through the teachings of His Church.

Through His word. I like to quote this testimonial from a Teams household, *"What we have gained most from the Gospel is a scale of values more in line with Christ's thoughts. Little by little, since our marriage, we have eliminated a certain part that seems less and less important to us: the pursuit of success, reputation, luxury, to make greater room for what seems essential to us: prayer, apostolate, self-giving. A choice is constantly required between materialism and spiritual values."*

Through His sacraments. Through the Eucharist, which is still greatly honoured by Christians today. But also through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, which, it seems to me, holds such a significant place in the couple's life. But that is another topic I don't have time to address.

Through the teachings of His Church. He entrusted the Church with the task of interpreting His teachings. By listening to the Church, believe and feel that Christ, who is present in your couple, continues to build up and develop your marriage.

Finally, the third aspect: present in the couple, Christ animates it through the gift of the Holy Spirit. To animate is to give a soul. Since coming on earth, Jesus Christ has connected Himself to, and united with, people individually. Like branches to the vine so that they may live from the vine's sap. Like the graft of a wild olive tree, *"You, a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree."* (Romans 11:17) Like members of the body. Thus, Christ connects individuals to Himself to give them life. But, through the sacrament of marriage, He also connects the couple as such. The couple is a cell, an organ of the Body of Christ: this idea was echoed by John XXIII and Paul VI. And just as my soul animates my body, each of its organs, each of its cells, so too the Holy Spirit animates the Body of Christ and each of its cells, and therefore that cell which is the Christian couple, the Christian family. The Holy Spirit, soul of the Body of Christ, soul of the Church, is also the soul of the couple.

### *How does the Holy Spirit act in the couple ?*

The Holy Spirit acts in two ways. One is more outward and more striking. This was true for Saint Paul on the road to Damascus, and for Pascal during his dark night of the soul. Sometimes it is even spectacular. The Bible tells us that one day the Spirit seized the prophet Ezekiel by the hair and carried him to the Temple in Jerusalem.

This first way is exceptional. Normally, the Holy Spirit reaches us at the very root of our abilities, in the deepest recesses of our being. And this goes unnoticed. I'll share a personal secret with you. In the fifty years I've been a priest, I've never

said, "*The Holy Spirit told me*," or "*The Holy Spirit prompted me to do it*." I prefer to commit the sin of vanity by saying, "*Perhaps I had a good idea*," rather than risk delusion. When I founded the Teams of Our Lady movement, I believed I had a sound idea; I sought advice, I didn't think, "*It's the Holy Spirit who is prompting me*." Today, I'm inclined to think that He had something to do with it.

I fear two errors which, at a push, could become heresies. On the one hand, the error of quietism, and on the other, the error of illuminism. In the first, I wait for the Holy Spirit to inspire me. You may be waiting a long time. It may happen. It's not proven. The Holy Spirit is not the accomplice of the lazy. Saint Paul, it's true, had his Damascus Road experience, but we discover that he toiled and worked long and hard to gradually develop his great synthesis. The same for Saint Thomas Aquinas and for so many theologians: they were occasionally illuminated by a light that flooded them. But most of the time they prayed at length at the foot of their crucifix. They worked, they searched, and then they produced their writings.

I am even more wary of illuminism. People think, "*The Holy Spirit is suggesting this idea to me*." This is the root of all fanaticism. When one is certain of being inspired by God, one listens to nothing and rushes headlong into things. Let's think more precisely, if I am in the right frame of mind, the Holy Spirit will ensure that I think rightly and act decisively. This is more modest and more in line with the truth of Scripture.

*Does it not seem that the action of the Holy Spirit is no longer obvious in Christian couples as it was in the early Church?*

When speaking of the Holy Spirit, the soul of the couple, we must be modest. In many couples, it is not dazzling. There are two reasons for this. The first is that the action of the Holy Spirit is secret: we cannot judge it. The second is that, in order to act, the Holy Spirit expects certain dispositions from us. After fifty years of priestly life and thousands of confessions, I am struck by the fact that people evolve in two opposing directions: in some, the Spirit spiritualises the flesh; in others, the flesh "*carnalises*" the spirit. This is a great spiritual law. We must therefore work on the spiritualisation of the flesh: this is the asceticism spoken of in the Teams of Our Lady movement.

And we, people of the twentieth century, know that to receive a broadcast, you need a receiver suited to the transmitter: a television set for a television broadcast, a radio set for a radio broadcast; and you have to tune the device. Within us, what is the receiver for the Holy Spirit's action? The entire Bible gives us the answer: the heart. Not superficial emotions, but a very deep and intimate reality. It is the heart that receives the Spirit's messages. We must admit that most of our contemporaries live at the peripheral level of their personality. They are caught up

in action. They live through their senses; in their more or less disturbed emotions; at the level of the imagination or the mind. They do not live at the deep level of the heart, which Scripture speaks of: therefore, they cannot receive the Holy Spirit's messages.

In the prophet Isaiah, we read this exhortation, *"Return to your heart."* That is why one day I dared, at the risk of incurring the wrath of Teams members, to invite them to dedicate at least ten minutes each day to contemplative prayer. What is contemplative prayer? It is this return to the heart, this moment when the receiver tries to attune itself to the sender. For many, it is the only moment of the day when they live at the level of the heart. Whereas a true Christian should live there all day long. Bernanos said, *"It's curious how my ideas change when I pray for them."* That is to say, when they emanate from my heart. We could add, *"It's curious how my loves change when I pray for them... It's curious how my activities change when I pray for them..."* Everything should originate from this centre within us, which is the heart. In fact, we live in the peripheral areas of our being and we ignore our heart. Since the Holy Spirit doesn't find this receptive organ—I was about to say this electronic brain—within us, it cannot act, except in exceptional cases where it intervenes abruptly to break down our resistance. John Paul II told young people in Paris, *"You are worth what your heart is worth."* This was taken up as a superficial remark: you are worth what your kindness is worth. But not at all, he was speaking of the heart in the biblical sense we have just discussed.

*Contemplative Prayer is for individuals. What advice do you have for couples?*

In Christian couples, the Holy Spirit first works in each person, to make them—this is his *"job"*—into the image of the Son of God. (cf. Rom 8:29) But while He wants to make each spouse an image of Christ, the Holy Spirit also works to make the couple an image of the union of Christ and the Church. The couple is a small church; Christ is present there, and the Holy Spirit tries to bring about this union of Christ and the Church, a union that He works for at the level of humanity. He will only be a worker of unity and communion if He finds generous cooperation within the couple. Here, we should address the immense problem: how to establish a profound communion between a man and a woman, on all levels, from the flesh to the spirit? And to talk about the *"Sit-Down."* But I lack time to do so.

I would simply like to draw your attention to something that is closer to my heart than ever: marital prayer. And in doing so, I will answer the question that has just been asked of me.

Marital prayer is one of those special moments when the couple opens itself up to the action of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, we must not imagine the couple as two halves of a sphere which, by drawing closer, form a closed whole, but rather as the

two halves of a cup which unite to offer themselves to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In my archives, I found testimonials from couples in the Teams movement that I want to share with you. *“When we prayed together, our two souls no longer seemed impenetrable to one another.”* And here, from a Belgian couple, *“We praised God together, and God gave us a magnificent gift: by expressing our intimate prayers aloud, we communicated to each other the very depths of our souls and the most secret impulse of our inner lives.”* The full value of this discovery becomes clear when we acknowledge that a profound understanding of another person is the primary condition for esteem and true love. Listen to this as well, *“It is marital prayer that has forged our shared soul.”*

But be careful, we can be mistaken, and one couple learned this the hard way. *“At first, I was disappointed by our prayer together. I expected more intimacy with my husband. I saw it as a way to make myself known, to reveal my inner life to him. I had a false idea of what prayer should be. The disappointment came from the fact that our prayer was ‘for us’ and not ‘for God.’”* Well said!

Here is a particularly moving testimony. *“We were going to be separated for several weeks, and shortly before the departure, we argued. The atmosphere was heavy; we felt that this hour would inevitably be ruined by the pride that prevented us from making the first move. One of us, however, suggested that we kneel. Then, before God, well, we just had to shed our vanity and stop trying to be the strongest. In His presence, we asked each other for forgiveness, and, each praying aloud individually, that evening, we exchanged with a truth and intensity we had never before imagined.”*



The Wedding at Cana  
(Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris)

It is important to go even further and emphasise the link between the couple's prayer and the sacrament of marriage. Marital prayer is the high point of the sacrament of marriage. Listen to these four statements from four different couples. *"During marital prayer, it's as if we are being married again." "It is an extension of our sacrament of marriage." "One of its reasons for being is that it sustains the grace of marriage within us." And finally, "It's as if, every evening, we are saying the sacramental 'yes' anew."*

I used to insist strongly that marital prayer be very spontaneous. But this spontaneity is difficult in many couples, judging by the admission of many husbands. *"While I don't hesitate to pray aloud in front of everyone, including my wife (husband), at Team meetings I just can't manage it at home."* So today I say to you: Well then! When this spontaneity, however desirable, is impossible for you, at least recite a few prayers aloud together, with great sincerity of heart, but for nothing in the world should you miss this "sacramental encounter" that is Christian marital prayer: God is waiting for you there.

*Are you not afraid, Father, that the couple will become withdrawn?*

No, because the Holy Spirit simultaneously makes the couple co-workers with God. With God the Creator and God the Redeemer. I have always found much light in the following formula (it helped me understand something of the mystery of the Holy Trinity) applied to a couple's life: to love one another is to give oneself to the other in order to give oneself together. If one focuses solely on giving oneself to the other, the two streams form a pond. In a pond, the water quickly becomes stagnant. If, in addition, one gives oneself together, then it becomes a flowing river. I believe, today more than ever, that the Christian couple, in the Church and in society, has an extremely important role to play.

In the couple, the action of the Holy Spirit corresponds to what I call the dynamic structure of the couple, which I define with these three expressions (this seems to me to be like the fundamental law of the couple): personal life, sharing, and common work. What I have just presented to you is precisely the action of the Holy Spirit, giving rise to the personal, human, and spiritual life of the spouses; uniting man and woman: sharing; and fostering the couple's common work. When you question the place of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the couple, look to the Church. Since the couple is an image of the Church and reflects the union of Christ and the Church, look to the Church, and especially to the very early Church. This will give you enormous confidence. Consider these simple people—fishermen on the lake to whom Christ often said, *"You of little faith"*—and who, after Pentecost, with extraordinary boldness, affirmed their faith, the work of the Holy Spirit. See

these people, lacking great courage—who fled from Christ at the hour of the Passion and barricaded themselves in their homes—stirring forth across the whole world with the power of the Spirit. See these very simple people—who quarrelled over matters of precedence—now united in heart and soul. There were certainly disputes, even between Saint Peter and Saint Paul: let us not have an idyllic view of these beginnings. But profoundly, the Holy Spirit was working toward their unity. These men and women loved Christ before Pentecost, but with a meagre, weak love—and the Holy Spirit made them martyrs. You can, you must, expect this of the Holy Spirit in your couples. But nurture within yourselves that heart which is the organ through which the Holy Spirit acts.

I would like to speak of a pain that plagues many couples. When they married, their dearest desire was to pass on to their children the love of God that dwelt within them. Today, these children are grown and have not lived up to their expectations. What meaning can we give to this ordeal? First, to understand that faith is not passed down like an inheritance, like a piece of furniture. Above all, to understand that spouses must strive for a twofold fruitfulness, both physical and spiritual. Thinking of these grieving couples, and of younger families who are preoccupied with the spiritual future of their children, I turned once more to Saint Paul. He wrote to the Corinthians, whom he had introduced to the life of God, *“For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”* (1 Corinthians 4:15) Husband and wife, your primary mission is to bring forth your children in Christ, to practice this spiritual fruitfulness. It will come about that your children will be like little “Galatians.” Listen to what Paul writes to the Galatians, *“Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? (It's not always easy to say the truth!) My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you. I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for, I am perplexed about you.”* (Galatians 4:16, 19-20) How striking this exclamation is for spouses facing the difficulties I have just described!

*Scripture says that the Holy Spirit “renews the face of the earth.” This action of the Holy Spirit in the couple that you just mentioned, could you not place it within the context of the whole of His work?*

I have quoted Saint Paul too often not to want to offer you a grand cosmic vision, in the manner of Saint Paul. The small universe of the couple is a reflection of the vast universe. And the river of divine action, which flows from the Father through the Son and in the Spirit, is, so to speak, *“filialising”* humanity and the entire cosmos, drawing them back to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. This

is what is happening continually in the universe. This great river of life, which flows down from the Father of lights and returns to its source in a movement of thanksgiving, is what we celebrate in the Eucharist.

*Father Caffarel, what's your last word?*

I will finish up by leaving you with an image. Picture a young mother bathing and dressing her little child. When they are clean and well-dressed, she lifts them into her arms and draws them close to kiss them. Saint Irenaeus tells us that the Son and the Holy Spirit are the two hands of God. So, dare to imagine that each of your couples, through the two hands of God, is being worked upon and purified, and that the Father, through the Son and the Spirit, draws your couple to Himself to embrace it. May this image fill you with joy, for our Father is both the God of immense majesty and the Father of infinite tenderness!

Henri Caffarel



The Presentation of Jesus at the Temple,  
Jesus and the Doctors of the Law.  
(Notre-Dame Cathedral, Paris)



## **Prayer for the Canonisation of the Servant of God, Henri Caffarel**

God, our Father,  
You planted deep in the heart of your servant, Henri Caffarel,  
A fountain of love, which bound him totally to your Son  
And inspired him with a wonderful capacity to speak of Him.

A prophet for our time,  
He revealed the dignity and beauty of the vocation of every person  
In the words Jesus addresses to each of us: "Come follow me."

He made couples enthusiastic about the greatness of the sacrament of marriage,  
The sign of Christ's fruitful love for the Church and of His union with her.  
He showed that priests and couples  
Are called to live a vocation of love.  
He was a guide to widows: love is stronger than death.  
Prompted by the Holy Spirit,  
He accompanied many Christians on the path of prayer.  
Seized by a devouring fire, he was a dwelling place for you, Lord.

God, our Father,  
Through the intercession of Our Lady,  
We ask you to hasten the day  
When the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life,  
So that people everywhere will discover the joy of following your Son  
In accordance with their particular vocations in the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we invoke the intercession of Father Caffarel for.....  
(Indicate the particular favour being sought)

**Prayer approved by Monsignor Andre Vingt-Trois – Archbishop of Paris.**

**"Nihil obstat": 4th January 2006 – "Imprimatur": 5th January 2006.**

*In the case of a particular favour obtained through the intercession of Father*

*Caffarel, Contact: The Postulator,  
Association "Les Amis du Père Caffarel"  
49 rue de la Glacière – F 75013 PARIS*



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**Postulator to the Cause (Rome):**

Father Zdzislaw Kijas, o.f.m. conv

**Editor of the Cause of the Canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel:**

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p

**Director of publication:**

Alberto Pérez

**Editorial Team:**

Loïc & Armelle Toussaint de Quièvre-court

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THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

Law 1901 Association for the promotion of the  
Cause of the canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel  
49, rue de la Glacière - (7<sup>th</sup>Floor) - F 75013 PARIS  
Tel: + 33 1 43 31 96 21 - Fax: + 33 1 45 35 47 12

Email: [association-amis@henri-caffarel.org](mailto:association-amis@henri-caffarel.org)

Web Site: [www.henri-caffarel.org](http://www.henri-caffarel.org)

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