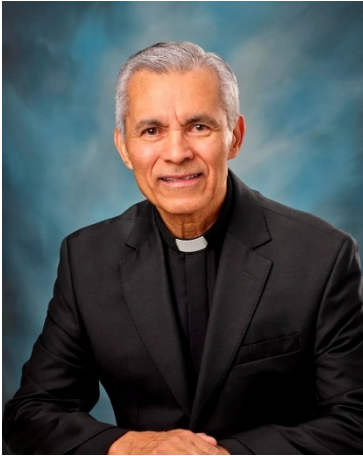


THE SPIRITUAL COUNSELLORS AND ADVISORS OF TEAMS IN THE TEACHINGS OF THE POPES



In this new edition of the ERI Letter, I would like to continue the reflection begun in the September 2025 letter on the presence, role, and importance of the Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors in the life of the teams. This semester, I have attended several training sessions for Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors in the Francophone Super Region of Africa and the Canada Region. In these sessions, it has been common and even reasonable to hear questions such as: What is my role in the team meeting? When should I intervene and how should I do so? These questions and many others reveal the deep desire of Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors to offer the best of themselves and to do so in meaningful ways. To help us in this mission with the Teams, I would like to briefly reference some words addressed by Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis to the Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors in

their messages to the Teams of Our Lady. Reading these speeches in their entirety would be a great opportunity for formation not only for the Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors but for all the team members.

Pope Paul VI

In his message on May 4, 1970, to more than two thousand couples gathered in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the Pope addressed the Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors personally with these words:

“Dear sons, chaplains of the Equipes Notre Dame, by a long and rich experience you know that your consecrated celibacy renders you particularly available to be, on behalf of families in their advance towards holiness, the active witnesses of the Lord's love in the Church. Day after day, you help them to “walk in the light” (Cf. 1 Jn 1:7) to think correctly, that is, to appreciate their conduct in truth; to wish what is right, that is, to direct their will towards the good as responsible men; to act justly, that is, to gradually harmonize their life, through the uncertainties of existence, with the ideal of Christian marriage which they generously pursue.

It is only little by little that the human being is able to order and integrate his multiple tendencies, to the point of arranging them harmoniously in that virtue of conjugal chastity, wherein the couple finds its full human and Christian development. This work of liberation, for that is what it is, is the fruit of the true liberty of the children of God. Their conscience demands to be respected, educated and formed in an atmosphere of confidence and not of anguish. The moral laws, far from being inhumanly cold in an abstract objectivity, are there to guide the spouses in their progress. When the spouses truly strive to live the profound demands of a holy love, patiently and humbly, without becoming discouraged by failures, then the moral laws, present there as a reminder, are no longer rejected as a hindrance, but recognized as a powerful help (no. 14).”

These words of Pope Paul VI contain very precise guidelines that orient the priestly mission of the Counsellor in the Teams of Our Lady.

The Holy Father defines the task of chaplains in two words. The first: “witness.” The Pope says: “Your consecrated celibacy makes you particularly available to be, alongside families on their journey toward holiness, **active witnesses of the Lord's love in the Church.**” In other words, alongside couples, the Counsellor lives and bears witness in a very particular way to his spousal relationship with the Church in the image of Christ, the spouse of the Church. The second word is “help.” The Pope confirms to

Counsellors that “Throughout the days, you help...” couples. What a wonderful affirmation of the Counsellor's service. But immediately we may ask ourselves, how can I help them on a daily basis? Pope Paul VI does not leave it to our imagination what this help consists of, but defines it by pointing to fundamental dimensions of personal and couple Christian life. I note that he presents this help with four verbs: *walking, thinking, loving, and acting justly*. In this way, he indicates that Counsellors should help stimulate all the spiritual faculties of the human person, such as their intelligence, will, and freedom to decide to change and grow in holiness, happiness, and in the search for God's will, which is the biblical meaning of the “*righteously*” that accompanies each verb. Thus, according to Pope Paul VI, the Counsellors should help couples to:

1. to “walk in the light” (Cf. 1 Jn 1:7)
2. to think correctly, that is, to appreciate their conduct in truth;
3. to wish what is right, that is, to direct their will towards the good as responsible men;
4. to act justly, that is, to gradually harmonize their life, through the uncertainties of existence, with the ideal of Christian marriage which they generously pursue.

Let us continue reading, because Pope Paul VI is not content with defining the counselor's help to couples, but with the heart of a Shepherd he also indicates the evangelical pedagogy to be followed, which requires great care for the anthropological conditions and Christian spiritual growth of each person and each couple. Let us identify each point of this pedagogy that, as counselors and spiritual advisors, we must remember every day in our personal relationship with couples and in our meetings with teams. Using the pedagogy of the TOOL, I summarize each point of the Pope's teaching with the words in italics above each paragraph:

Gradualism:

1. **“It is only little by little that the human being is able to order and integrate** his multiple tendencies, to the point of arranging them harmoniously in that virtue of conjugal chastity, wherein the couple finds its full human and Christian development.”

Respect and responsibility toward each person:

2. “This work of liberation, for that is what it is, is the fruit of the true liberty of the children of God. **Their conscience demands to be respected, educated and formed in an atmosphere of confidence and not of anguish.** The moral laws, far from being inhumanly cold in an abstract objectivity, are there to guide the spouses in their progress.”

The effort:

3. **“When the spouses truly strive to live the profound demands of a holy love, patiently and humbly,** without becoming discouraged by failures, then the moral laws, present there as a reminder, are no longer rejected as a hindrance, but recognized as a powerful help.”

In a way, what the Holy Father says helps us to remember the pedagogy of the TOOL in the document “*The Second Wind*,” which proposes three guidelines or principles to be put into practice in the Endeavors:

1. **Gradualism:** this gradual progress made by each spouse and the couple is the daily experience of every team member who, recognizing their present situation, wants to progress in their conjugal spirituality.
2. **Personalization:** it is necessary to pay attention and care to the pace established by each couple and each spouse in order to encourage them personally and as a couple to move forward on their journey.

3. **Effort:** recognizing and encouraging the efforts of each spouse and couple who seek to translate the Endeavors into concrete actions that gradually change the couple's life and build up their spiritual life.

In the next ERI letter, we will continue reading the Popes' messages to Teams, focusing on their guidance specifically directed towards the Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors of the Teams.

To all Spiritual Counsellors and Advisors, we extend our deepest gratitude this Christmas. May the Child of Bethlehem bring you peace and joy. And in this New Year 2026, may God bless you abundantly in your ministry in the Church, particularly in the Teams of Our Lady.

Edmonton, December 2025
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