

For Brasilia 2012

**Intervention by Fr Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.
Postulator for Fr Caffarel's Case**

Father Henri Caffarel, man of the encounter

Allow the postulator for Father Caffarel's case to remind you that everything started here in Brazil. It will be my way, as well as that of the co-postulator, Marie-Christine Genillon, of showing our gratitude towards the Team members of this country. In 2004, the International Responsible Couple of Teams, Gerard and Marie-Christine de Roberty and the International Spiritual Counsellor, Mgr François Fleischmann visit the Team members in Brazil. They notice that not only is there a bond between them and Father Caffarel who came to visit them three times, but that there is a real "presence" of the Teams' founder. A saint is first and foremost, somebody who is "alive" and upon whom everyone calls today, to live and go through life's hardships. That is why the Teams asked the Archbishop of Paris, Archbishop André Vingt-Trois, to open the case for their founder. Father Caffarel is alive for us. He has to become alive for all. Team members are not allowed to keep him for themselves: Father Caffarel has to shine in the Church and beyond...

What is the goal being pursued? The good of the couples and of those who want to pray. The aim is to show that marriage is Good News for those who love each other and that prayer is a source of life and love. Fr Caffarel's life and personality, his teachings passed on through his books, the organizations he founded, are of such wealth, that all this has to be shared with everyone.

Father Caffarel is a man of encounter. Let us make it clear that he was never the one who went looking for those encounters which shaped his life; they were imposed upon him.

God came first. You know the story that summarizes his whole life. "At age twenty, in just an instant, Jesus Christ became someone for me. Oh, nothing spectacular. On that far-off day of March 1923, I realised that I was loved and that I loved and that from now on between Him and me, it would be for life. It was all over." (Jean Allemant, Henri Caffarel, a man seized by God, END edition, p.14). The Lord imposed himself upon him. It was his joy, his life. That is the first encounter. All is centred on the love God reveals to him: he is loved by God, he loves God, all is settled. "It was all over," as he says himself. All his life will be built on that reciprocal love between God and him.

Father Caffarel's other two determining encounters are similar, they are always God's work: the encounter in 1939, with the couples asking him to lead them on the road to holiness, to whom he replies: "Let's go search together"; and the encounter in 1943 with the widows asking him to lead them on this new path, to whom he also replies: "Let's go search together". When the Lord appears to someone, it is to entrust them with a mission: do good for others. Father Caffarel would like us to experience the love of God. Essential mission!

Father Caffarel has had “come and follow me” written on his tomb. And it was that way. The Lord led His servant’s life so that he was at the disposal of that love revealed to him at the time of his vocation in 1923: love in marriage, love stronger than death in widowhood. In a broader sense, the Lord placed in Father Caffarel’s heart a huge desire, which I quote: “I have only one wish: for myself, to get further inside that intimacy with Christ, and that other desire to bring others to it, because it has been essential in my life. It has given me the joy for living, the grace for living, the momentum for living. So much so, that I cannot not wish upon others that encounter with the living Christ, this discovery that God is love.” (Jean Allemand, Henri Caffarel, a man seized by God, END edition, p.15). God is at the centre of everything. When Father Caffarel opened the international House of Prayer in Troussures, he had the same goal. “We must tell everyone how much they are all loved by God.” At Troussures, there was a prayer that everyone could use, which was placed on a number of tables: it might not be Father Caffarel’s, but it depicts the love of God that he wanted everyone to know. I will read you a few lines; it is God talking to those who come with their burdens and their hopes: “I know your wretchedness, your soul’s struggles and trials; your body’s weakness and disabilities; I know your cowardice, your sins, your failures; I still say to you: ‘Give me your heart, love me as you are.’” The postulator remembers those who had met Father Caffarel and had found in him a witness of God’s broad and deep mercy. His writings still touch us: Father Caffarel talks to us.

God is at the root of Father Caffarel’s life. He concentrates on Him, he organises everything around the encounter with his Lord. He might have seemed demanding... (he loved to say: “be demanding, you will never disappoint”); sometimes, he seemed too serious (except with the Brazilians, as he could not resist their good mood!); he ate little (which is unthinkable for the French!)... Our founder is not, therefore, a perfect mummy. But he always was a man of encounter. What inflames him is to try to detect God’s mark in the heart of those who come to see him, so that they too can receive the light of this priest who has encountered the Lord. His eyes suggest that: eyes that give a piercing look, eyes that do not pry but that seem to humbly and respectfully invite the other to talk about the heart of the matter, about God.

Father Caffarel loved the Church passionately. He was a priest of the Diocese of Paris. The archbishops of Paris have always understood and supported his work. It is the previous archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, who gave him the title of “prophet of our times”. In that way, he showed the potential of Father Caffarel’s ideas which had put forward marriage as “a way to holiness”. Father Caffarel was in profound harmony with Pope Paul VI. When in 1970, Father Caffarel came to Rome with more than three thousand couples, the Pope gave a long talk on marriage, which elated the priest and the team members, as they found in it the beautiful conjugal spirituality by which the team members lived. On that day, the Pope presented Father Caffarel with a chalice, which his nephew, Father Voisin, has lent us for the gathering: it is a small part of Father Caffarel which will visit Brazil once again.

We need to say more about Father Caffarel. But he is very discreet about himself, about his family. A trait of his disposition? Maybe. Above all, for him to be a priest is to stay in the background and allow God to be the only one to be encountered. To lead the others to God is the main thing for him. However, he is fully present in his sermons, his writings. Therefore I would like to give you Father Caffarel’s impressions upon his arrival in Brazil. One can say that the following lines, which I will read for you, can be applied to many other instances. Read here however, this letter on prayer, written to a friend, becomes a

confidence: “We are gripped by a feeling of distress, when, arriving in a strange town (at the pier, the train station, the airport), there is no one to meet us. On the other hand, if a smiling face greets us, if we are welcomed with open arms, we are straight away marvellously comforted and rid of that awful feeling of being lost. Therefore, the customs, the language, that disconcerting big town, none of them matter: we can easily put up with the fact that we are strangers to all, as long as we are a friend for someone. (...)” Straight away, Father Caffarel moves on to a deeper confidence for him, one that is more vital for us. He writes to his friend: “What I would like, my dear friend, is that when you go to pray, you have the strong feeling that you are expected: expected by the Father, by the Son and by the Holy Spirit, expected by the Trinitarian Family. Your place is always ready: remember, in fact, what Christ has said: ‘I will prepare a place for you’.” (Henri Caffarel, In the Presence of God, One Hundred Letters on Prayer, Parole et Silence, Paris, 2000, p. 9) So many people have described Father Caffarel before the Blessed Sacrament, sitting on his little prayer bench. Everything is still: he remains within God.

This letter I have just read for you is “pure Caffarel”! Talking about a piece of writing or a homily, he loved to say: an idea, a picture, a feeling. The idea is clear: God is always waiting for us. Before we decide to go towards Him, He is waiting for us. A picture: the warm welcome of friends and he must have been remembering his arrival in Brazil. A feeling: that of love, that love we all want to receive and to give! At every moment Father Caffarel brings us back to God. At the same time he joins us there. We are touched and filled with wonder by God!

Here is another picture. Father Caffarel writes: “When God introduces to us, the one he wants to make the father of all the saints - Abraham, he shows him the stars in heaven, saying to him: ‘these are your descendants’.” And Father Caffarel translates that for us by saying: “Your holiness will be your fertility.” We are Father Caffarel’s “fertility”. We ask the Church to recognise his holiness. We have found a source of life in the grace the Lord granted our founder. It is up to us to become holy through the grace of marriage or the grace of holy orders! The fruits will be the proof of the tree’s holiness.

Let me now give you some specific news on the progress of the investigation into the cause for Father Caffarel. It was opened on 25 April 2006 by the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, at the request of the Teams Movement who, for this purpose, formed the “Association of Friends of Father Caffarel” and it is the International Leading Team (ERI) that is responsible, particularly Maria Carla and Carlo Volpini.

Since the opening, the Episcopal delegate appointed for this investigation, Mgr. Maurice Fréchal, former Archbishop of Pau, has received numerous testimonies most of which were presented by myself, postulator, and by the vice-postulator, Marie-Christine Genillon. He also received the report from the theologian censors who examined the correctness of Father Caffarel’s faith. He finally received the report from the historical commission that examined the accuracy of information relating to the life of Father Caffarel.

The vice-postulator has classified all the records relating to the cause. Mgr François Fleischmann, former international Spiritual Counselor, has scanned nearly three thousand

pages, editorials in journals and various texts and, as chancellor for the diocese of Paris, has authenticated a considerable number of documents...

We believe that this diocesan inquiry will be completed by the end of this year 2012. The body of work will be sent to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. This will launch the second part of the path under the responsibility of a new postulator, Father Angelo Paleri, Conventual Franciscan, postulator general of his Order and team member of Equipes Notre-Dame. Myself, I will have to write the “positio”, that is to say, the synthesis of the inquiry that demonstrates the holiness of Father Caffarel. The official appointments will be given in 2013.

You do not have to memorize what I have just told you...Just understand that an inquiry for a cause requires time and work and is performed according to strict rules. But if I tell you all this is for the following purpose:

Father Caffarel will be beatified, God willing...But also if you want it! If you ask the Lord! The Church will then recognise this fact. For this, there are three steps required:

- First read and meditate on the writings of Father Caffarel about marriage and prayer. To know him is to love him and is to put oneself in his school.
- Then, live the beauty of your marriage, helped in particular by the Charter: marriage is a path to holiness. The holiness of your life will also demonstrate the holiness of Father Caffarel who has led you. The priests, inseparable from team members, are also witnesses to what Father Caffarel was and is for everyone.
- Finally, frequently say the prayer that asks for the canonisation of Father Caffarel. Ask, ask the Lord for graces and a miracle, a sign of the presence and intercession of Father Caffarel for us. Therefore I ask you, urgently, to convey to us any account of grace that you have received through the intercession of Father Caffarel, grace for your moral life, spiritual grace or, of course, grace for your physical life. You know that a miracle is a physical healing, instantaneous, permanent and inexplicable through science. A miracle always flourishes among a people who request all the graces.

In conclusion. A canonisation, the first stage of which is beatification, is for the good of the Christian people and of human society. We believe that Father Caffarel’s message of love and prayer should be known by everyone. Father Caffarel was given to us by God, we must make him known to couples and anyone seeking the Lord. We cannot keep such a treasure for ourselves. Talking about Father Henri Caffarel is to evangelise men and women in search of happiness.