

Conjugal Spirituality and



The Commitments of Teams of Our Lady

September 2006
Updated March 2012

PREPARED FOR STUDY BY THE ERI
MODIFIED FOR USA

FIRST PRINTING IN THE UNITED STATES
SEPTEMBER 2006

MODIFIED AND REPRINTED
MARCH 2012

INTRODUCTION

“The Teams of Our Lady, a movement of married spirituality, is considered as a gift of God to the Church and to the world.” *Guide of the Teams of Our Lady.*

To further our journey together in our teams, as we attempt to understand more fully the charism of our Movement, the International Movement proposes this study topic:

“Conjugal Spirituality and the Commitments of Teams of Our Lady.”

The term ‘conjugal spirituality’ has been used from the very early times in our Movement, but do we fully understand the fullness of the term and its relevance in today’s world? To deepen our understanding, we have developed this topic to study the vocation of conjugal spirituality and the purpose of Teams of Our Lady. In studying the material worldwide we also build the spirit of community within the Movement and create an experience of unity.

Meetings Two and Three are devoted to the sacrament of marriage, exploring first the sacrament and then the experiencing of this sacrament in the real world.

The relevance of the methods of Teams of Our Lady are presented in Meetings Four and Five, while Meetings Six and Seven develop how we orient our lives in the love of God and progress in love for the future.

The final Meeting takes Jesus as our model and opens up some new thinking on our individual and couple path to holiness. While developing greater understanding of conjugal spirituality, the International Movement proposes this study to offer a guide to aid our Movement in becoming a reality in our lives.

BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY TOPIC

The purpose of the document is to provide a topic that will enable each member of Teams throughout the world to develop a greater understanding of what is meant by conjugal spirituality and how we live it. ‘Conjugal Spirituality’ was the term used by Father Caffarel and the early Team members in describing the purpose of our Movement. This term in those early years was new and it is only in very recent years that it has become normal terminology in the Church.

Because of the nature of this topic, it is important that we take time to reflect and discuss each chapter in a deep and intimate way. For this reason each chapter is short but open to deep dialogue with questions to support the subject matter. There are questions for the Team meeting, questions that could be used during our monthly sit-down and questions for the individual and the couple. Discussions around these will stimulate ideas for individual’s Rule of Life.

For couples or teams who wish to dig deeper in their learning journey, a wonderful book has been published to support this study topic and its focus. This book, when published, will be made know to you in the Magnificat newsletter. It contains papers presented at Colleges (meetings of the National Responsible Couples which take place annually) and other meetings of Teams between 2001 – 2003, many of which were written and presented by Team couples. All of these Conferences were written specifically for Teams of Our Lady and carry a wealth of experience and knowledge on couple spirituality.

Each meeting contains references to certain papers which we encourage those wishing to deepen their understanding of the subject matter of any particular chapter to study. The references can be found in the bibliography. Please continue the search!

Each meeting is structured in five parts.

- The first part is a presentation on the core content of that specific meeting. This is referenced to the publication of the Team conferences and to Church, scripture and spiritual writings.
- The second part is a recommended Scripture piece for reflection before and during the Team meeting.
- Part three contains the questions for the Team meeting.
- Parts four and five have recommended discussion points for our sit-down and for behavioural change which can lead us to a ‘Rule of Life’.

Let us always remember that a study topic is to guide deeper learning of any given topic. We encourage each of you to accept the challenges which may be presented and try to deepen your understanding as individual, as couple and as team with the love of the searchers, who described by Father Caffarel form a union: **“..... where intellect and heart are thirsting to know and to meet God.”**

Our Love and God Bless to all seekers.

International Leading Team (ERI)

TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction		i
Background to the Study Topic		ii
Table of Contents		iii
First Meeting	The Vocation of Conjugal Spirituality	1
	Questions	4
	Team Meeting Format	5
Second Meeting	Conjugal Spirituality and the Sacrament of Marriage	7
	Part One – The Sacrament	
	Questions	10
	Team Meeting Format	12
Third Meeting	Conjugal Spirituality and the Sacrament of Marriage	14.
	Part Two–A Value System, A Community, A Spiritual Journey	
	Questions	16
	Team Meeting Format	18
Fourth Meeting	Conjugal Spirituality and the Endeavors	20
	Questions	25
	Team Meeting Format	26
Fifth Meeting	Conjugal Spirituality and the Team Meeting	28
	Questions	31
	Team Meeting Format	32
Sixth Meeting	Conjugal Spirituality and the Orientations of Life	34.
	Part 1 - To progress in the love of God	
	Questions	38
	Team Meeting Format	39
Seventh Meeting	Conjugal Spirituality and Orientation of Life.	41
	Part 2 - To progress in love for the future.	
	Questions	45
	Team Meeting Format	46
Eighth Meeting	Conjugal Spirituality and Holiness	48
	Questions	52
	Team Meeting Format	53

Meeting 1

The Vocation of Conjugal Spirituality, the Purpose of Teams of Our Lady

Introduction

Teams of Our Lady was started by some couples who approached Father Caffarel over 70 years ago and asked him to assist them to develop their spiritual lives within their marriages. Today the purpose of the Teams Movement has not changed – it is to develop the spirituality of the couple.

This chapter will attempt to open up a fuller understanding of married spirituality. What does it mean? How aware are we of it within our marriage? How do the different expressions and practices of our individual spirituality enrich both spouses within the marriage?

Father Henri Caffarel in a talk to Responsible Couples of Teams of Our Lady in 1952, asserted that lay people must: “clearly define the means and methods that would constitute the spirituality of a married Christian.”

He defined Spirituality: “as a science that deals with Christian life and the ways that lead to its full blossoming” in a Letter to Teams in June 1950.

To study the subject, we need to ask ourselves some questions and then as a couple and as a team discuss these questions together. As individuals we give expression to our spirituality in different ways.

- ❖ Do we find the Word of God calling us to respond to Him with our different gifts?
- ❖ Can we discuss what deep within our hearts God is calling us to do?

It is important that as a couple we share on our individual spirituality and on our shared spirituality as couple. This will lead us as married persons to develop our vision for how we want to live out our lives together as couples, as family and as Domestic Church. This vision should contain a road map that we as couples can revisit from time to time and thereby execute our plan for this life and beyond.

Through sharing together we grow as Father Caffarel described speaking to Teams in Rome in 1970:

“Your home will bear witness to God in a still more explicit fashion if it is the ‘union of two searchers’ whose intellect and heart are thirsting to know and to meet God, to

become united with Him because they have understood that God is the Great Reality, and because God interests them more than anything else.”

In the reference document written for the International Leading Team (ERI) *The Second Wind: A Look Toward the Future* (2.3) we read:

“Married Christians are called to sanctity. They do not answer this call as individuals – although each retains his or her individuality – but rather they walk the road to sanctity as a couple. The great revelation of the spirituality of marriage is this: conjugal love and the love of God are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they go hand in hand. Husband and wife can follow in the demanding footsteps of Christ as a couple.”

An Understanding of Love

Responding to such demands, we must learn to suffer, to accept our weaknesses, to forgive each other and through our giving heal each other.

“When we love truly, we also suffer at times and this suffering makes us vulnerable and insecure. Each of us must certainly have experienced this in his/her life.... We learn to serve each other, to listen and to give, to understand shameful silences, to understand that the other can be saying ‘yes’ even when the words are saying ‘no’. We discover that, when the other was generously forgiving us, he/she was healing our wounds. Forgiving is not always easy, but always necessary because to forgive also implies accepting our imperfections. In the course of the years....we have patiently trained each other and found the one who loves best and most is the one who can teach us to forgive. Let us never forget that the Lord has entrusted us to each other and has given us an inexhaustible gift on our wedding day which is with us throughout our life.” To and Moura Soares - Dickenson College, July 2001.

Many of us, who have been married for some years will have had such experiences. Father Caffarel understood this when he said: for couples seeking to develop their spirituality, it was not a question of: **“running away from the world, but to learn, following Christ’s example, how to serve God in the whole of their life and in the thick of the world.”** He advises us of the importance of discovering that spirituality does not consist only of certain actions, such as praying or practicing ascetics, but entails the service of God where we live, in our family, at work, and in society.

A Practical Approach

“Both romantic love and committed love are important. It is vitally important that the couple reverences their humanity by being romantic, by saying ‘I love you’ in all sorts of ways – words, cuddles, kisses, hugs, special dinners, red roses etc. But it is more important that they recognize that their deliberate love is patient, kind, forgiving, not puffed up, ready to excuse, trusting and so forth, no matter how one feels, whether one is having a difficult day or a good day.

They must see themselves and the other as contributing partners to the marriage. Each of them gives and receives precious gifts. Each must see themselves and the other as God’s providential gift, someone to be honored and treasured. They must each recognize that

while they may not be able to change the other and must accept the other as he/she is, they can, out of love for the other, probably do a good deal to change themselves to be a better gift for the other.” Pat and Marguerita Goggins (Oceania), Talk at Dickenson College, July 2001.

Through all of this we must be aware of sin and of God’s forgiveness for the couple spirituality not to be ‘idealized’. At times of difficulty and incompatibility which cause us division, we must discover that we are sinners. Failures in love make us aware that love itself needs to be saved.

Father Caffarel speaking on the same subject:

“If admitting this painful discovery (of being sinners), their conjugal community at last becomes a penitent community within the larger penitent community of the Church, and have recourse to their Lord of whose presence and concern they may have doubt, then, opening themselves to forgiveness, they will find fresh hope.” Fr. Henri Caffarel, ‘Marriage this Great Sacrament,’ pages 332-333

What the Church Says Today

Father Fleischmann, Chaplain of the ERI, speaking about the Second Vatican Council at the College Meeting in Dickinson, TX in 2001 said:

“At the heart of the Council’s perspective are its very clear statements on the quality of human love consecrated by a special sacrament. It is an eminently human love that involves the good of the whole person and which manifests itself in a variety of ways according to cultures. This unfailing love guarantees the dignity of the physical and emotional expressions which are distinctive of married friendship. Going beyond the erotic inclinations, the feelings and the gestures of tenderness promote that mutual self-giving by which the spouses enrich each other with a joyful and thankful will.” Msgr. F. Fleischmann (ERI Spiritual Counsellor) - The Couple in the People of God - Talk at Dickenson College, July 2001

Jesus Present with Us

“For us as a couple, the teaching of the Church that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the Church and that his wife should respond in the way that the Church loves Christ, moves from a theory to a fact. It is an experience to be considered, mulled over and savored. The Endeavors have aided us in this understanding.” Peter and Jan Ralton (Oceania), ‘The Couple Contemplating the Incarnate Face of Christ,’ Melbourne, 2002.

Supporting Each Other on the Journey

“We need to help each other to be aware of the balance needed between the physical, the emotional, the social, the mental and the spiritual. It is in this balance that we grow as a person spiritually and together as a couple in conjugal spirituality. We realize that we must be pro-active people to live as Christians in today’s world. In helping each other to grow in spirituality, it is important to realize that to achieve any progress we must be guided by Jesus Himself, and His Holy Spirit.” Fr. M.P. Gallagher S.J. with John and Elaine Cogavin, ‘The Spirituality of the Couple,’ Rome, 2003.

Discussion Questions for the Team Meeting

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. How does our view of ‘deliberate love’ help us to change ourselves to be a better gift to the other?
2. What changes could we make in our relationship to bring our love for each other nearer to the love Christ has for His Church?
3. ”Spiritual growth takes time and is a gradual echoing of God’s love that requires time in reflection and silence, to listen to the Spirit guiding us.” How do we as a couple support each other to have time to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

The Sit-Down

Thoughts for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down.

Married spirituality must be based on individuals growing in their own spirituality, with their own unique methods, while journeying together as couple with Jesus on their conjugal path.

- ❖ How do we develop together such a vision for our married relationship?
- ❖ What are the first steps to take?

Behavioral Change

A practical approach to help bring about individual and couple attitudinal change.

If we agree with St. Paul that – ‘love is always patient and kind,’ how in the past have we experienced that patience and kindness has helped us to deepen our relationship?

After the Team Meeting reflect on this individually and then share as a couple so that you can practice these values with increased awareness.



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 13:4-13

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes. Love never comes to an end. But if there are prophecies, they will be done away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know only imperfectly, and we prophesy imperfectly; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will be done away with. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, and think like a child; but now that I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways. Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known. As it is, these remain: faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love.

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 1

Response: For the Lord watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked
and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread,
nor a seat in company with cynics,
but who delights in the law of the Lord and murmurs his law day and night.

Response: For the Lord watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

Such a one is like a tree planted near streams;
it bears fruit in season and its leaves never wither,
and every project succeeds.

Response: For the Lord watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

How different the wicked, how different!
Just like chaff blown around by the wind
the wicked will not stand firm at the Judgment
nor sinners in the gathering of the upright.

Response: For the Lord watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

Meeting 2

Conjugal Spirituality and the Sacrament of Marriage.

Part One – The Sacrament

Introduction

In May 2004, Pope John Paul II spoke to a group of American Bishops on the importance and the sacredness of marriage. He said:

“Family life is sanctified in the joining of man and woman in the sacramental institution of holy matrimony. Consequently, it is fundamental that Christian marriage be comprehended in the fullest sense and be presented both as a natural institution and a sacramental reality.” Pope John Paul II, Address to Bishops of San Antonio and Oklahoma City, May 2004

We have already had many studies on our sacrament of marriage and good guidance through the Canons of the Church (1055–1165) and the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1601-1666). However, to respond to this challenge of the Pope to comprehend the sacrament in a fuller way, we think it profitable to understand marriage as:

- ❖ A sacrament
- ❖ A value system
- ❖ A community
- ❖ A spiritual journey

The relationship of husband and wife in marriage is compared with the love Jesus has for His bride the Church. Jesus spent his time on earth teaching us and practicing the core values of human relationships. He put huge emphasis on building community and showed His closeness to the Father and the Spirit as ‘The Community of Love.’

”... when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord, but will say only what he has been told: and he will reveal to you the things to come .” John 16:13.

Jesus gave us the Eucharist to be always with us. By His Death, Resurrection and Ascension into Heaven, He created an environment for the Holy Spirit to be with us, to enable us to live out of His Spirit as Church, as His Body.

Using this model of Jesus, of Church, and of community we propose to study this important subject over two chapters and allow the depth of the subject be explored over two meetings or more by the Team members.

In this chapter we will explore together the Sacrament of Marriage, its nature, essence and fulfilment. In chapter 3 we will further develop the Sacrament as a value system, as a community and its spirituality.

Sacrament of Marriage

“But from the beginning of creation he made them male and female. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and two shall become one flesh. They are no longer two therefore, but one flesh. So then what God has united, human beings must not divide.”

Mark 10: 6-9

It is important for us as couples to experience our marriage as sacrament. On one level the sacramental marriage of Christians proclaims, lives and celebrates the intimate communion of life and love between man and woman. On a deeper level the communion of life and love between man and woman makes explicit and proclaims the intimate communion of life, love and grace between Christ and Christ’s people, the Church.

St. Paul constantly returns to the theme of marriage and the relationship of husband and wife as a covenant of love.

A History

From the earliest recorded times marriage was an established relationship and the family unit the basis for community and for society’s continuance and heritage. This is clear from Genesis right through the Old Testament and up to when Jesus performed His first miracle at the Wedding Feast at Cana.

In the 5th century, St. Augustine spelled out the detail and obligations which were later to become the basis for the sacrament. His three essential goods of marriage were – fidelity, offspring and Sacrament. In this context today the New Catechism reflects the three goods and requirements of conjugal love as:

- The unity and indissolubility of marriage.
- The fidelity of conjugal love.
- The openness to fertility. (Catechism 1644-1652).

Today, we talk of faithfulness, we talk of openness to each other; to the development of community; and we talk about the grace of the sacrament being ministered by the spouses to each other, as a loving relationship in the presence of the Holy Spirit. This reality puts more emphasis today on the importance of how we relate to each other, how we love each other as we live out our daily lives.

In the 1200’s the position expressed by the Irish Philosopher Duns Scotus – “that the man and the woman were themselves the ministers of the sacrament” – became widely accepted and continues today in Western Christianity.

St. Thomas Aquinas spoke in the 13th century of: “The form of marriage consists in an inseparable union of minds; a couple pledged to one another in faithful friendship.”

However, as long as the procreative purpose of marriage was seen as primary, there was not much emphasis on this personal relationship between husband and wife. Since 1939, Father Caffarel and the early Teams couples used the language of conjugal spirituality. It is only in the last fifty years that the relationship of the couple began to receive a general acceptance as a co-primary purpose of marriage in the Church.

“God is love, and those who live in love, live in God.”

Through every action of love, we make God’s presence more real. God forms an invisible partnership in bringing our marriage to the fullness of love.

Marriage as Community

The life of such a community of love is often spoken about as: “Building the little Church” or as ‘Domestic Church.’

Of the seven sacraments – Baptism, Confirmation, Penance and the Anointing of the Sick have ‘individual’ orientation. Eucharist has both ‘individual and community’ orientation, while Matrimony which preserves the human race and Holy Orders which perpetuates the Church, have clear public and community purpose.

Father Caffarel spoke of marriage:

“This sacrament has this characteristic that its subject is not the individual as in other sacraments, but the couple as couple. In effect, it establishes, it consecrates, it sanctifies this little society, unique in its kind, which a married man and woman form.” Fr. Henri Caffarel, Lettre Mensuelle, March 1962

In 1967 Karl Rahner described the marriage relationship:

“Because it is God’s love that sustains creation, gives humans life and love, and draws all to God through this love, the love between two people can lead them to reach each other at the deepest level of their being. The personal love which manifests itself in marriage is salvific through its source in the nearness in which God’s self is revealed – the innermost mystery and life of the human person.” Karl Rahner -‘Marriage as Sacrament’, essay, 1967.

In short Rahner is saying is: Where love is – there is God! This ministering by the spouses to each other is affirmed in the code of Canon Law:

“Through their consent a man and a woman through an irrevocable covenant, mutually give and accept each other in a partnership for the whole of life, a relationship designed both for the good of the spouses through their close special unity and for the procreation and education of offspring.” (Canon 1055 – 1057)

Mutual Promise and Self Giving

The sacrament then, is the mutual promise and the living out of that commitment for life. This means that the Lord becomes present through grace in a new and deeper way at the moment of the exchange of vows itself. But this also implies that Christ will continue to be present in a

unique way whenever husband and wife carry out their mutual promises – whenever they serve one another, make love, forgive each other or reach out to others around them.

In the words of Vatican II:

“Christ comes into the lives of married Christians through the sacrament of Matrimony. He abides with them thereafter so that, just as He loved the Church and handed Himself over on her behalf, the spouses may love each other with perpetual fidelity through mutual bestowal.” GS 48.

Spouses through their sexuality give life to each other and to the relationship. Understanding our sexuality in this way should fill us with gratitude to one another and to God for this wonderful, fulfilling, healing and reconciling experience. Very often today, sexuality is associated with oppression or as a commodity. When we deepen our quality of relationship and develop real intimacy, sexuality and the sexual act takes on the dimension that the Creator God designed it for – where the intimacy of relationship with the presence of the Holy Spirit reaches a climax of relationship with the giving and receiving, in total unity, which provides an environment of love, openness, of life-giving to each other and to the human race.

Monsignor Lafitte speaking to Teams couples in Rome 2003 said:

“The act of union between a man and a woman expresses the personal and mutual giving in marriage in which the whole person is exclusively involved. It is because marriage is a personal act of exclusive giving that it has no time limit. If the individual retained the possibility of deciding otherwise for the future, how could we speak of faithfulness? Humanly speaking, the commitment to faithfulness cannot set a time limit. It is a characteristic of the loving relationship that recognizes and honors the dignity of the person to whom one commits oneself.”

Discussion Questions for the Team Meeting.

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. How does the awareness of Christ truly present with us change our behavior?
2. Lifelong commitment is relevant and necessary to the sacredness of the sacrament of marriage. Discuss why this is important and what is your response as a couple?
3. How do you as an individual and as a couple minister the sacrament of marriage to each other and receive the grace of the sacrament in your daily routine.

The Sit-Down

For individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down

“Like each of the seven sacraments, so also marriage is a real symbol of the event of salvation, but in its own way. “The spouses participate in it as spouses, together, as a couple, so that the

first and immediate effect of marriage (res et sacramentum) is not supernatural grace itself, but the Christian conjugal bond, a typically Christian communion of two persons because it represents the mystery of Christ's incarnation and the mystery of His covenant. The content of participation in Christ's life is also specific: conjugal love involves a totality, in which all the elements of the person enter – appeal of the body and instinct, power of feeling and affectivity, aspiration of spirit and of will. It aims at a deeply personal unity, the unity that, beyond union in one flesh, leads to forming one heart and soul; demands indissolubility and faithfulness in definitive mutual giving; and it is open to fertility (cf Humanae Vitae, 9). In a word it is a question of the normal characteristics of all natural conjugal love, but with a new significance which not only purifies and strengthens them, but raises them to the extent of making them the expression of specifically Christian values.”

Pope John Paul II – Familiaris Consortio – 22nd November 1981 – n 13

Suggestions for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down.

1. ‘Where love is, there is God.’ In what circumstances have you experienced such intimate love when God is present with you as couple?
2. What are the values we need to develop as an individual and as a couple to support our commitment to faithfulness?

Behavioral Change

Consider the following:

St. Paul in writing to the Corinthians said: **“Love does not come to an end”**. What are the values we need to develop as individual and as couple to support our commitment to faithfulness?

After the Team Meeting reflect on this individually and then share as a couple so that you can practice these values with increased awareness.



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE **Ephesians 5:21-33**

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives should be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, since, as Christ is head of the Church and saves the whole body, so is a husband the head of his wife; and as the Church is subject to Christ, so should wives be to their husbands, in everything. Husbands should love their wives, just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her to make her holy by washing her in cleansing water with a form of words so that when he took the Church to himself she would be glorious, with no speck or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and faultless. In the same way, husbands must love their wives as they love their own bodies; for a man to love his wife is for him to love himself. A man never hates his own body, but he feeds it and looks after it; and that is the way Christ treats the Church, because we are parts of his Body. This is why a man leaves his father and mother and becomes attached to his wife, and the two become one flesh. This mystery has great significance, but I am applying it to Christ and the Church. To sum up: you also, each one of you, must love his wife as he loves himself; and let every wife respect her husband.

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 2

Response: How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

Why this uproar among the nations, this impotent muttering of the peoples?
Kings of the earth take up position, princes plot together against the Lord and his anointed,
'Now let us break their fetters! Now let us throw off their bonds!'

Response: How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

He who is enthroned in the heavens laughs, the Lord makes a mockery of them,
then in his anger rebukes them, in his rage he strikes them with terror.

Response: How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

'I myself have anointed my king on Zion my holy mountain.'

I will proclaim the decree of Yahweh: He said to me,
'You are my son, today have I fathered you.

Response: How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations as your birthright,
the whole wide world as your possession.
With an iron scepter you will break them,
shatter them like so many pots.'

Response: How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

So now, you kings, come to your senses, you earthly rulers, learn your lesson!
In fear be submissive to Yahweh;
with trembling kiss his feet, lest he be angry and your way come to nothing,
for his fury flares up in a moment. How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

Response: How blessed are all who take refuge in him!

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

Meeting 3
Conjugal Spirituality and the Sacrament of Marriage
Part Two – A Value System, A Community, A Spiritual Journey

Introduction

In our previous chapter, we studied the nature, the essence and the fulfillment of the Sacrament of Marriage. In this chapter we will look at the sacrament as a guide, a blessing and an experience leading us on a path to holiness (wholeness). Thus we propose to study marriage as Jesus taught us:

- ❖ As a value system, born out of a common shared vision
- ❖ As a community which grows out of a common purpose
- ❖ As a spiritual journey where the couple with the Holy Spirit fulfills their ‘joie de vivre’

Value System Born Out of a Common Vision

The values that Jesus taught us are basic human values such as: faithfulness, forgiveness, healing, nurturing, acceptance, commitment for life. *“I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”*

Jesus’ promise to *‘His bride the Church’* is our Christian model for marriage. It is not easy for us to live up to this model. However, if we develop together these same values, as we build our relationship together as couple, perhaps we will see more of how Jesus is journeying with us. Commitment for life, faithfulness, forgiveness, healing, nurturing, communication, friendship, common purpose, are but some of these core values. Understanding of these values is further developed by Ampara and Carlos Gomez-Senent, speaking to the International College in Melbourne and quoting Xavier Lacroix:

“Christian couples start together as soon as they receive the marriage sacrament, and follow up with their life by responding to God. Every marriage is a sacrament. We can even say that the couple enters little by little into the sacrament. Every act which is part of it is sacramental: meals taken together, sensual embracing, welcoming, education of children, mutual respect and even crisis and reconciliation. Sacrament’s place is not only at the church’s altar, but also in bed, through meals, at home.” Gomez-Senent, ‘The Couple Moves Towards Holiness,’ (Xavier Lacroix quotation from) Melbourne, 2002.

Community with Common Purpose

For us to grow as a community, we need to share our goals and the spirit that unites us. We recognise together that we are responsible for one another. We need to recognise that this bonding comes from God: it is a gift from God.

We may look at the relationship of the Trinity as community - the three Divine Persons with three totally different missions: the Creative Father, the Saviour Son and the Animating Spirit. This creates a model for us because of their common purpose to bring all mankind to participate in God's Kingdom.

The Church invites us as married couples, with the Holy Spirit, to be community and gives us this model for unity in paragraph 4 of *Lumen Gentium*. The same model of church and community in the image of the Trinity is put forward in St. John's Gospel: "*We are more than a man and a woman that love each other; through the sacrament of Matrimony God Himself is made present amongst us and our spouse participates in the Trinitarian mystery.*" Lila and Carlos Cobelas (Hispanic America), Bogotá, August 2004.

"Three essential elements of life in community are also part of life in a family: inter-personal relationship, a sense of belonging and an orientation of life to a common goal and common witness." Jean Vanier, 'Community and Growth.'

If community exists in this way, the orientation of the couple is to the common purpose of this community. The intimacy of the relationship brings about a love, a living and a learning together that grows to a new openness, an awareness and a spirit of hospitality. As the Spirit leads us and we desire this state, we must be aware that we are still human and subjects of our human frailty which draws against community.

This is developed very well by Joseph and Emanuela Lee, Super Regional Coupel for Italy:

"Despite our human weakness, we are invited to welcome the beauty of a face, even when it has changed. We are constantly called to look at the face of our spouse who entrusted his/her freedom to us. When we entrust our freedom, our face, our heart to this creature, he/she thus becomes a link between God and us.... But we will find it difficult to share this love fully with others if we do not learn to listen to the silent cry of our spouse, for it is this way that we are called to share our life." Joseph and Emanuela Lee (Italy), 'The Christian Couple Called to Live Out the Marriage Covenant,' Rome, 2003.

Spirituality

As we develop greater awareness of our sacrament, of each other, and of the values necessary to live our married life to the fullest, we start to develop an attitude of intimacy, of openness and of hospitality. This attitude, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, helps us behave in a new spirit, creating fulfillment of the two persons, making each other whole in body, mind, heart and soul, while making God real in our ordinary life.

Such behavior of person-giving, sustains and nurtures the other. As we journey together, we live out our physical thanksgiving to each other through a sexual intimacy that is both thrilling and fulfilling. Through this fulfillment we open to a spirit of hospitality, of creativity and of caring, producing new biological and spiritual life. Our unconditional love for each other makes God's Kingdom a reality on earth in a very human way. We become responsive to human change and growth while faithful to our shared vision. In this spirit the domestic church (ecclesiola) is lived out in our love for each other and the love Jesus has for His Church. We learn and grow in faith as an individual, as a couple and as a community.

“The Christian home is the place where the children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason it is rightly called ‘Domestic Church,’ a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity.” ‘Catechism of the Catholic Church,’ 1666.

Just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are relational and communitarian, we as a couple grow in awareness and in fulfillment of our sacrament of marriage. Our deepening married love makes us co-operators with God in the creation of life, of society and co-generators of a spiritual and human community.”

A greater understanding is developed by Fr. Fleischmann, International Chaplain of ERI, in his paper – ‘Father Henri Caffarel’s Legacy’:

”the totality of marriage in all its juridical, physical and spiritual reality ...to the point that the physical union of husband and wife is an integral part of the sacrament. The whole of married life is not only healed, elevated, sanctified, but is rendered sanctifying.”
...The sacrament of marriage – in which the active presence of Christ is so deeply involved – is an essential element of the building-up of the Church... By the sacrament of marriage, couples are made partakers in the building-up of the Body of Christ at the very heart of human society in which they are inserted... Where a Christian couple lives, there the Church already begins to live.” ‘Marriage, this Great Sacrament,’ page 315

Discussion Questions for the Team Meeting

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. Why are the human values expressed to us by Jesus important in living out our sacrament of marriage?
2. How as a couple have we benefited from such values?
3. In what way have you as couple experienced the building-up of the Body of Christ in your community? How do you contribute?

The Sit -Down

Suggestions for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down.

St. Paul to the Corinthians said: *“There are three things that last; faith, hope and love.”*... How in our marriage can we help each other:

- ❖ Grow our attitude of belief in God and our journey together to Him?
- ❖ Grow a positive attitude to life and a sense of hope in our development and our future?
- ❖ Grow in our relationship with each other and through such growth foster a spirit of hospitality?

Behavioral Change

For your consideration

If moved by Holy Spirit, we want to live our married life with this sense of community, what are the attitudes and behavior necessary to live this life to the full?

After the Team Meeting reflect on this individually and then share as a couple so that you can practice these values with increased awareness.



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE **John 17:22-23**

So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So he said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied: A voice of one that cries in the desert: Prepare a way for the Lord. Make his paths straight!'

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 3 [Psalm Of David When he was fleeing from his son Absalom]

Response: In the Lord is salvation, on your people, your blessing!

Lord, how countless are my enemies, how countless those who rise up against me, how countless those who say of me, 'No salvation for him from his God!'

Response: In the Lord is salvation, on your people, your blessing!

But you, Lord, the shield at my side, my glory, you hold my head high.
I cry out to the Lord; he answers from his holy mountain.

Response: In the Lord is salvation, on your people, your blessing!

As for me, if I lie down and sleep, I shall awake, for the Lord sustains me.
I have no fear of people in their thousands upon thousands,
who range themselves against me wherever I turn.

Response: In the Lord is salvation, on your people, your blessing!

Arise, Lord, rescue me, my God! You strike all my foes across the face,
you break the teeth of the wicked.

In the Lord is salvation, on your people, your blessing!

Response: In the Lord is salvation, on your people, your blessing!

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

Meeting 4

Conjugal Spirituality and the Endeavors

Introduction

The Teams Endeavors are essential characteristics of our Movement. They are concrete points of effort to use as stepping stones in our journey of faith. The endeavors are intended to create an openness to an encounter with the Lord. All through the Bible there are examples of conversion through encounter with the Lord – Mary Magdalene, Zaccheus and the Woman at the Well. The endeavors are a lifelong challenge that keep us moving forward. They are a constant help to awaken our inner attitudes and lead us to a new way of life. They require effort on our part and are quite demanding. The sharing on the endeavors helps us to be encouraged by the efforts of others. The practice of the Endeavors will help us to be more Christ like.

“Man alone of all the creatures of the earth can change his own pattern. Man alone is the architect of his destiny. The greatest discovery of our generation is that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.” William James, ‘The Principles of Psychology.’

A Practical Approach

The most basic habit of effective people is living proactively. To decide to take on the endeavors in our lives requires this behavior. Proactively means that we are responsible for our own lives; our behavior is a function of our decisions, NOT our conditions. We have the initiative and the responsibility to take on a new way of life or to alter our present way of living. The behavior of proactive people is a product of their own conscious choice that is based on their values. If we take time out to be in touch with and aware of our own value system, this will affect the quality of our attitudes and our attitudes determine how we behave in life.

The anthropologist Ashley Montagu said: *“the way I change my life is to act as if I am the person I want to be.”* To change ourselves in this way requires commitment. This commitment needs to be arrived at through self-awareness, independent will and imagination.

Through becoming aware of how we spend our waking hours, we can arrive at a new consciousness of the truth about ourselves. Our independence will give us the ability to make our own decisions, based on our own thoughts and feelings, free from people and things that would influence us. Our imagination will help us to imagine ourselves moved beyond our present reality.

In the Second Wind we are told: “The Lord takes hold of us wherever we are. We do not need to rush ahead or try to ‘skip a grade.’ All we need is a sincere desire to progress from our present situation.”

Taking on the endeavors daily with a sincere heart will truly transform our lives. With this in mind let us look at our endeavors:

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

Listening to the Word of God

God Speaks to us through Scripture

In our daily lives what place do we give to the Word of God? Does it really touch us and influence us? Do the passages of Scripture we visit strike us or challenge us? Can we pray as Samuel did? **“Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.”**

All of us make friends and relationships through speaking with one another and revealing more and more of ourselves to each other. God speaks to us because he wants to build a relationship with us and make himself known to us. Through listening to or meditating on the Word, we get to know more the person of Jesus. If we insert our own name while reading Scripture, it may help us hear the Word of God speaking more personally to us in this time and place. For example: “ John/Mary- Be not afraid. I am with you always...”

This may make it seem more real, that God is speaking directly to us just where we are. Through attentive listening to His Word with our hearts, we will find our lives directed in different ways to answer His call to live our lives to the full.

Cardinal Henry Newman used to pray: “God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another...”

The Word of God helps daily to motivate us personally and in our life as a couple.

Personal Prayer

“But when you want to pray, go to your private room, ...pray to your Father who is in that secret place.” Matthew 6:6

‘God tirelessly calls each person to this mysterious encounter with Himself. Prayer unfolds throughout the whole history of salvation as a reciprocal call between God and man.’ Catechism of the Catholic Church 2591

Do we ever realise the wonder of the friendship we can have with God? Have we ever thought what it means to be able to have present, and be able to speak with the God of the World? God has given us the right to enter His Presence whenever we wish. We can summon Him to our bedside, or to our workplace and He is there with us. We need to think of the mighty, tender, humble condescension of His friendship and to respond to Him.

According to Scripture it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain. The heart is the place where we live, it is the place of encounter. If we give ourselves time to respond to anyone's love, it is going to stir a deep feeling in us. Let us try to notice how we react when we listen to God revealing His love to us.

Father Caffarel advises us: "Become aware - I do not say of the presence of God, but of God present. He is alive, the Living God. He is there, He awaits you, sees you, loves you." Fr. Henri Caffarel, *Lettres sur la Prière*, September 1964.

In 1954 at the Pilgrimage of Teams in Lourdes, Father Caffarel called for personal prayer. "To be satisfied at being in a crowd around Christ without seeking to make personal contact with Him, would be showing a lot of indifference." (May 1954 Teams Letter)

He also said that: "... all we need to do is to be silent and attentive. It is not a matter of spiritual sensation, of interior experience, but of faith: that is to say, to believe in the Presence, to adore the living Trinity in silence, to adhere to and to enter in communion with its eternal activity."

Each of us must step out along this secret path, the only path that allows us to join Christ personally. "Nobody can lead you to this secret – and narrow – path. It is for each one of you to discover it. Be humble, docile, praying, persevering and you will find it – and you will meet Christ."

There are many forms of personal prayer; some of us may just be silent and rest in the presence of the Lord, others may practice *Lectio Divina*, others meditate on a phrase from scripture, or use a mantra. It is up to each of us to find the way or ways which help us to have a close encounter with God our Creator. Pray as we can - not as we think we should! St. Paul asks: "Do you not realize that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you?" 1 Cor. 3:16

After personal prayer, the couple may benefit from sharing on how God speaks to each one differently. This sharing will help enrich the relationship and help the couple deepen their commitment to personal prayer and to prayer as couple.

"Team life teaches us that the meaning of prayer is truly an act of surrender into the arms of the Father. We put our hopes in Him; we place our sufferings and worries in Him; we look to the future with Him." Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini (ERI Italy), 'The Couple in the Gospel,' Rome, 2003.

Conjugal Prayer

"Nothing builds closer ties than seeking God together." Father Caffarel.

When a couple pray together, they immerse themselves in the deepest sharing. Hearing each other praying, they make their souls transparent to one another, they share compassion for one another and share their experience of God. This prayer takes effort to put time aside and the effort of praying together.

Sometimes, one spouse may exercise the gift of prayer and pray on behalf of both. In times of difficulty, the prayer of the couple will bring the strength to sustain the marriage.

“To pray is to say: Lord, I am here, we are here, we seek You, we want You as a companion on our journey, and as a guide along the way, a brother and friend in sharing our daily life, a teacher in the face of confusion and our limited understanding.” Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini (ERI Italy), ‘The Couple in the Gospel,’ Rome, 2003

As couples in Teams, we will all have ways as husband and wife to pray together. However, new ways can always be experienced in order to keep our prayer fresh and alive. On occasions we may find ourselves on a mountaintop, beside a river, sitting under a starry sky at night or sitting in the kitchen as dawn breaks. The closeness of God to us as a couple at times like these may lead us to pray together in praise of God or in silence in the awareness of His presence with us.

“Oh, valleys and woods,
planted by the hand of the Beloved,
tell if He has passed by you!” St. John of the Cross.

While driving we may recite the rosary together, others may attend daily Mass together. Our morning and evening prayers are a daily opportunity to pray together as couple.

The Sit-Down

“*Leave the shore and set sail for the high seas.*” This was how Father Caffarel suggested we should approach the endeavor of the sit-down.

The philosopher Seneca would further advise: “*There is no favorable wind for him who does not know where he is going.*”

All of us from time to time get off course and the sit-down gives us the opportunity to revisit and dialogue together on the life we have charted out and to point our compass in the right direction again by the decisions we make at this time. We need to turn to one another, face to face and ask: “Where are we in our spiritual development?”

It is a time for us as couple to take time out together in the sure truth that God is with us. This may be helped through some gesture or symbol such as lighting a candle, starting with a prayer or just taking time in silence to acknowledge the Spirit present with us and within us.

It is a time to realize that we are totally in control of our lives and to reconsider the ideals with which we started out – to look at our relationship to God, to each other and to our family. We need to develop a capacity to listen and to understand the other through the eyes of the other. Listening has at its heart wanting to be in communion with the other, to welcome their sharing. To learn to dialogue is to learn to appreciate difference.

“Listening is at the heart of married life; it is pointless to speak of the married state if we do not learn to communicate genuinely in depth, in the sense of ‘being in union’.... We may imagine that we are relating in depth because we say a lot.... The sit-down brings us back to this depth of soul where only a dialogue based mainly on listening has a

place. ...The sit-down is making time to listen to our most intimate needs and to try to express the strength of a love that grows in spite of difficulties or of daily routine that tends sometimes to make everything more dull.” Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini (ERI Italy), ‘The Couple in the Gospel,’ Rome, 2003

This time together should give us the opportunity to approach any topics which concern us as couple or as family. It is a good practice to record what commitments come from our sit-downs so that we may remind ourselves from time to time of the outcome of our sharing.

It is good to plan a specific time for the sit-down like a date in our days of courtship. We should try to ensure that we have time and privacy to be completely open and honest with one another.

A Rule of Life

“A rule of life is of practical value because it helps one to keep life balanced, focused, oriented toward God.”
Brother Roger of Taize.

In order to identify a rule of life, we need to take time to ourselves, to honestly review how we are living our lives. All of us are aware of particular weaknesses in our lives which hinder our progress in living our lives fully in keeping with God’s will. We may also be aware of shortcomings in our day to day living which by altering our behavior or how we think, could help us or those around us. When we identify such a concern in our lives, our rule of life is the decision on a direction to address this matter. We need to plan how to apply this direction.

A climber who wants to reach the peak cannot afford to wander aimlessly over the mountain – he must be clear about the paths he intends to follow. This is the same with our spiritual journey. We need a clear sense of direction. We must detach ourselves from obstacles which weigh us down.

The progress of our spiritual life is not along a continuous path: we must constantly start again. This is why it is necessary to take on rules of life till they become habit, then take another and little by little we will remove from our lives the obstacles which hinder our progress. We should also add into our lives attitudes or habits which bring us closer to Christ-like living. Our rule of life should be short, specific and written down. It should be personal and a free choice to which one commits oneself.

Annual Retreat

“Come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while.” Mark 6:31

We live in a world of constant busyness and demands. In order to see the world in a more objective way, we need to remove ourselves from our day to day life from time to time. Our annual retreat gives us the opportunity to go away to a quiet place and to spend 2 or 3 days contemplating our spiritual lives. It is like an oasis in the desert where we can drink from the fresh waters of the Spirit. It is like a banquet of rich food on which we feed our soul. To make a retreat as couple is particularly valuable, as after returning home the experience can be revisited and memories shared. Our retreat together gives us an opportunity to become closer to God and

to each other in an uninterrupted atmosphere. Retreats can also help us to a fuller understanding of certain aspects of our faith or the art of relationship.

Discussion Questions for the Team Meeting

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. How do we feel the endeavor of personal prayer helps us most in our journey of life?
2. How do you establish a closer awareness of God in your prayer?
3. In what way does praying together as couple lead to a deeper relationship within our marriage?
4. How through listening to the Word of God have we been motivated to fulfil the mission for which we were created?

The Sit-Down

Suggestions for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down.

Recall a really in-depth sit-down that affected our life as couple. Can we share on how this came about and how we could bring this about more frequently?

Behavioral Change

For your consideration

‘Love does not take offence.’ How can we lovingly share with one another on our personal behaviour without giving or taking offence?



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE 1 Corinthians 3:11-16

For nobody can lay down any other foundation than the one which is there already, namely Jesus Christ. On this foundation, different people may build in gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay or straw but each person's handiwork will be shown for what it is. The Day which dawns in fire will make it clear and the fire itself will test the quality of each person's work. The one whose work stands up to it will be given his wages; the one whose work is burnt down will suffer the loss of it, though he himself will be saved; he will be saved as someone might expect to be saved from a fire. Do you not realize that you are a temple of God with the Spirit of God living in you?

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 27

Response: For Yahweh watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked
and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread,
nor a seat in company with cynics,
but who delights in the law of the Lord and murmurs his law day and night.

Response: For Yahweh watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

Such a one is like a tree planted near streams;
it bears fruit in season and its leaves never wither,
and every project succeeds.

Response: For Yahweh watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

How different the wicked, how different!
Just like chaff blown around by the wind
the wicked will not stand firm at the Judgment nor sinners in the gathering of the upright.

Response: For Yahweh watches over the path of the upright, but the path of the wicked is doomed.

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

Meeting 5

Conjugal Spirituality and the Team Meeting

Introduction

Have you ever thought of the value, the dynamic and the creative power of a Team Meeting? Native Americans, the New Zealand Maoris and many other indigenous groups used a team environment to deal with all community development and learning. They regularly got together and sat in a circle, each speaking in turn while everyone listened. The 'Ashram' in India used similar community relationship to achieve their common goal.

In very recent years large organizations have invested a lot of money trying to develop team based organizations to help communication, productivity and quality where the diversity and difference of the individuals can combine to achieve common purpose. This is often termed as a learning environment and has certain core elements:

- Key objectives
- A common purpose
- Understanding and awareness of the interdependence needed

As this group develops in a spirit of openness, of sharing, of support, of humility, in time what unfolds is: cohesiveness, confidence, trust, truthfulness, creativity and potency. Such an environment is also used where individual and community cohesion and outstanding performance is called for, such as in a concert orchestra or jazz ensemble or a rowing crew aspiring to an Olympic Gold.

When we look at our team meeting in a similar way, we can find a learning environment, not only at the time of the meeting itself, but as an environment which has each of us as individual and as couple preparing for our meeting, participating in the meeting and continuing our learning by practicing our learned skills during the month. Our common purpose is to grow our spirituality as couple. In this way we help each other grow in our path to holiness and contribute to making God's Kingdom come here on earth.

Monthly Meeting

Through our regular participation in our monthly meeting we have the opportunity to share together on this common purpose but also the opportunity to learn and practice the way that Jesus taught us. Through sharing our meal together, we participate in a social environment which is so much part of His life on earth as we read in Scripture:

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples." Matthew 26:26

“Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him.” Luke 24:30-31

At the sea of Tiberius Jesus said to them, *“Come and have breakfast”* As we share our meal, we are also able to share our lives and where we encounter Jesus in our day to day living, in our relationship as couple, in our families and in society.

By sharing on our Endeavors we help each other to understand the Endeavors and their importance in helping each of us to grow in holiness and wholeness as individual and as couple.

Our time in prayer helps us to share on Scripture and explore together the full meaning of God’s plan for salvation and how it is being lived out as we share and pray together and discover how we are so much part of this plan.

When we agree as a team on our study topic, we start a new journey together. Each of us takes to the meeting the learning and dialogue in which we have already partaken during the month. This study will help us grow in the specific topic which we are studying, whether that be on faith, relationships, solidarity etc.

Preparation

During the month as we prepare for our meeting, we are able as individual to study and reflect on all of these aspects and as couple to dialogue together in a spirit of intimacy, of openness and honesty which is nurtured through this environment created at the Team meeting.

We will practice and share on our endeavors, in this way, supporting each other to understand the stepping stones that these create for our path to holiness. We also learn a language of spirituality which will help us share more deeply and contribute more profoundly at our team meeting.

As we prepare our pooling, sharing, study topic and Scripture for our team meeting and while we prepare our part of the meal, we are fulfilling our most Christian dimension in preparing to share with the other Team members. *“The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common.” Acts 4:32*

Participation

As we participate at our Team meeting, we learn the great human values which Jesus taught us to share together with sensitivity as at Cana; to listen with empathy as at Lazarus’ house; to dialogue on the deepest reality; and to share our spiritual growth together.

The testimony that follows is from an extraordinary USA, couple Joe and Lois Johann. It describes their work as a couple in creating the ‘Friendship Ark’ as a home for their autistic son with the mutual aid of their team.

“As we look at our life, we realise something wonderful has and is happening. Movements in the Catholic Church, such as Bible Study, Christian Family Movement, Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, Retorno and Teams of Our Lady have constantly guided our Pilgrimage. We continually experience the Holy Spirit in our marriage and our separate

lives. All of Friendship Ark's early vision and its step into reality grew from our prayer, our sit-down, our rule of life, plus the support we have received from couples celebrating marriage. Team meetings on a regular basis are a major factor in keeping Joe from being a 24-hour veterinarian and in keeping Lois from her many individual ministries. It assisted us to move into one ministry – living marriage spirituality with each other.” Jackie and Ralph Tygielski (USA), ‘The Joy of the Resurrection’ Melbourne College, 2002.

Practice

During the month we take our nourishment from our meeting. Everyday through the team experience and practicing our endeavors, we grow more oriented to God; to the path which Jesus has shown us and we become more aware of the Spirit guiding us. We grow in awareness and practice of the values which this learning environment has brought to us. As we do our attitude changes and gradually we start to behave in a new way to ourselves, to our spouse, to our family, to our team, to Church and parish and to society.

Today we live in a world that is materialistic, that demands a quick-fix to all matters, fixes that may bring short-term gain but often results in long-term hurt, brokenness and isolation. To help alleviate this situation there is a great need for stability, for depth, for intimacy, and for hospitality. It is profitable that we reflect on the importance and huge contribution of this learning environment which our team gives us and how necessary it is in today's global society. While all of this is so justifiable in today's world, we must also remember that this was the framework used by the early Church.

“Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously; they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community....” Acts 2: 46-47.

Vatican II also talks of the ‘Domestic Church’. We can be so thankful to those early couples, Father Caffarel and the Holy Spirit for bringing our first team together and allowing this same model to flourish all over the world today. It is probably not surprising, but definitely worth reflecting on, what Father Caffarel spoke of as he stepped away as Spiritual Counsellor to the Movement in 1973. When asked for his opinion on what was the most important aspect of Team Life is:

“There is there, in the midst of these couples gathered together in a room in an apartment, the intense presence of the Risen Lord, alive, attentive to all, loving all of them, with their mixture of good and bad, and anxious to help them to become the kind of people they want to be. He is there, as on the evening of the Resurrection, in the upper room in Jerusalem, when He appeared suddenly to those other team members, the apostles. He breathed on them, saying: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ And they became new men. Jesus Christ, in the midst of couples, does not fail to impart His Spirit to them; and those who open themselves to His Spirit – this is something that people learn gradually – become people of the Spirit. And the whole meeting is animated by the Spirit. To these men and women who, in the evening, after a hard day, often arrive exhausted and weighed down with worries, this Spirit communicates Christ's twofold passion: His

impatience for the glory of His Father, and His burning and gentle pity for the crowds 'who are like sheep without a shepherd.'

What I have just described is not what it always is, but how it ought to be. For a meeting of a team which is not first and foremost a joint effort to meet Jesus is something completely different from a meeting of a Team of Our Lady." Lettre Mensuelle des Equipes Notre-Dame - March/April 1973.

Discussion Questions for Team Meeting

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. Do we put priority on preparing for our team meeting, knowing it will be an encounter with Jesus?
2. As we share our meal together, are we truly aware of Jesus present with us?
3. How do we understand our team environment as a place of learning?

The Sit-Down

Suggestions for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down.

As we grow in holiness through our practice of our Teams Endeavors, what practical steps can we take to live a truly Christian life more fully?

Behavioral Change

For your consideration

In order to prepare for our monthly meeting, try as a couple to have your sit-down soon after the meeting. This may help both to focus on the other endeavors. It may also assist in planning how to support each other in living out our ideals during the month.



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE Matthew 26:26-29

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had said the blessing he broke it and gave it to the disciples. 'Take it and eat,' he said, 'this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he handed it to them saying, 'Drink from this, all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. From now on, I tell you, I shall never again drink wine until the day I drink the new wine with you in the kingdom of my Father.'

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 27

Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom should I fear?
Yahweh is the fortress of my life, whom should I dread?
When the wicked advance against me to eat me up,
they, my opponents, my enemies, are the ones who stumble and fall.

Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

Though an army pitch camp against me, my heart will not fear,
though war break out against me, my trust will never be shaken.
One thing I ask of Yahweh, one thing I seek:
to dwell in Yahweh's house all the days of my life,
to enjoy the sweetness of Yahweh, to seek out his temple.

Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

For he hides me away under his roof on the day of evil,
he folds me in the recesses of his tent, sets me high on a rock.
Now my head is held high above the enemies who surround me;
in his tent I will offer sacrifices of acclaim. I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

Yahweh, hear my voice as I cry, pity me, answer me!
Of you my heart has said, 'Seek his face!'
Your face, Yahweh, I seek; do not turn away from me.
Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

Do not thrust aside your servant in anger, without you I am helpless.
Never leave me, never forsake me, God, my Savior.
Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will gather me up.
Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

Lord, teach me your way, lead me on the path of integrity because of my enemies;
do not abandon me to the will of my foes -- false witnesses have risen against me,
and are breathing out violence.
Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

This I believe: I shall see the goodness of Yahweh, in the land of the living.
Put your hope in Yahweh, be strong, let your heart be bold, put your hope in Yahweh.
Response: .I will sing, I will make music for the Lord.

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

Meeting 6

Conjugal Spirituality and the Orientations of Life

Part 1 - To Progress in the Love of God

Introduction

The word **orient** means ‘to turn ourselves in the direction’ or ‘to move towards.’ How do we orient our lives towards God? From where can we get the guidance for our direction? What can give it strength and determination to keep focused? Who are our role models?

The framework of TOOL with the combination of our base team, the team meeting and the endeavors should all have had a profound effect in orienting our lives towards holiness and towards God. If being in the Teams Movement helps our orientation towards God, what are we learning through this focus to deepen our faith? Is this helping each of us personally and as a couple to develop a more personal and intimate relationship with God? Is this more intimate relationship causing us to change our attitudes and our behaviour and does it affect the way we live?

Our focus should help us develop our relationship with God - to find God who is close, loving, evident in the beauty of creation all around us, evident in the new born baby, in every breath we take, evident in the nature of the cosmos and its vastness and all of the laws of nature that work so wonderfully, the God of eternity who will always be there.

The Example of Jesus

Jesus, the Son of God, came and took on human dimension to show us a way through the complexities of life. He came to show us the way home to the Father through teaching us how to live our lives. In his humanity he lived the first 30 years in a family environment. In that time he was learning to be a human person, learning and living the values which God the Father, through the Holy Spirit and Prophets, had been communicating through the ages. This same Jesus in his public ministry taught us how to live these values, so that each one of us would attain eternal life, while at the same time living life to the full. *“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.”* John 10:10

Jesus’ public life started with Him humbly wanting to be baptized by John the Baptist; by reluctantly, but in obedience to his mother, performing his first miracle at Cana in Galilee and progressing to his total giving on the Cross at Calvary. During his public life Jesus taught us how to live as human persons with the values and love that are necessary to live as communities of love, in a new spiritual and social reality, embracing all people through the love and mercy and justice of God, drawing them into one family.

He did this through his teaching, through his own lived example, his miracles and his ability to listen, to be aware and to heal his fellow human beings. As if this were not enough, after his crucifixion he was buried, rose from the dead and ascended to the Father who sent us the Holy Spirit. **“I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever.”** John 14:16

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is now with each of us. This is the Paraclete that Jesus asked the Father to send. This is the Holy Spirit who came upon Jesus as he was being baptized by John in the Jordan. This is the same Holy Spirit who descended on those gathered in the upper room with the Apostles, and who gave them the Spirit to go out to the whole world to live and teach, heal and develop community just as Jesus had shown them. This is the same Holy Spirit who comes to each one of us in Baptism and bestows on us the special gifts of the Spirit at our Confirmation. The sacraments, the gifts, and the promise of the Spirit are with us always, giving each of us the power to fulfill the mission of Jesus, to grow communities of love in our lifetime, to make God’s Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven.

When we take the time to be still, to be aware, this same Holy Spirit is patiently waiting to talk to us, to guide us and to support us in living our life to the full. Jesus promised us: “I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you.” (John 14:18) Our Trinitarian God has not only taught us the way but continues to do so, through the presence of the Holy Spirit, through the inspired work of Holy Scripture and through the tradition of our teaching Church.

The Sacraments

We are also especially guided and supported through the grace which we receive through the Sacraments which give us the grace and strength to carry out his work in the world. Baptism and Confirmation give us the grace and the gifts to be followers of Jesus.

The Sacrament of the Sick will prepare us to accept our weakness and our sufferings thanks to the support of Christ and to join in an eternal environment with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is always open to us. When we approach this sacrament we obtain pardon from the mercy of God for offences committed against him. We are given the grace of forgiveness, an opportunity to be listened to, to admit to our weakness, to be sorry. This in its very special way gives us inner peace that comes with forgiveness. Experiencing the forgiveness of God for our sins should help improve our capacity to forgive one another.

“Forgiveness means a decision resulting from reflection and dialogue. It does not occur spontaneously and takes some time. It means great efforts and a good dose of generosity, humility, courage, understanding and love.” Andres and Sylvia Merizalde (Hispano-America), ‘Called to Reconciliation.’

This gives the strength and the example to reach out to forgive others. In this way it gives us a basis to build communities of peace.

With our Sacrament of Matrimony – as mentioned in the second chapter of this material – Christ comes into the life of married Christians and abides with them forever.

“Through the Eucharist, Christ bursts into our life today. It is He who is, who was and who will be. What occurred as successive events – the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, Christ’s death on the Cross on Good Friday and his Resurrection on Easter Sunday – is made present in one moment, in a single act that sums up all that He is and has done out of love for us. To celebrate it, to commemorate it, is therefore to manifest to the world our faith in the presence of God, at the heart of our life.” Bernard and Elizabeth Gerard (France-Lux-Swiss), ‘The Couple Called to Eucharist.’

Pope John Paul II in his address to Teams in January 2003, closely linked the life and commitment of couples to participation in the Eucharist: *“The spouses’ mutual commitment – a mystery of covenant and of communion – invites them to draw strength from the Eucharist, ‘source of Christian marriage’ and model for their love,to dialogue and to have a communion of hearts.”* ‘Familiaris Consortio,’ No. 57.

Father Caffarel in 1963 spoke of Eucharist: *“As you know, the quality of union between two beings is the measure of what they share, hence you draw the very life of Church in Eucharist. It is the life of Christ that you must first of all share between you.”*

The daily or weekly reception of the Body and Blood of Christ given to us at the Last Supper, will certainly strengthen us in becoming more like Him and in living out His values and example.

Christian Asceticism

Through our learning environment in Teams:

- ❖ we can deepen our relationship with God the Father, with Jesus and the Holy Spirit,
- ❖ better understand the value of the sacraments and the grace they bring into our lives,
- ❖ through this awareness, practice participation in the sacraments
- ❖ through this participation receive the graces and blessings Jesus instituted in them.

With all of this available to us, surely then our challenge is to live more like Jesus instructed us and gave Himself as example.

Jesus said, *“If you wish to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”* Matthew 19:21

Jesus with no place to rest His head..... **“Remain in me, as I in you.”** John 15:4

“If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.” John 13:15

“I am the bread of life. but this is the bread which comes down from heaven, so that a person may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world.

Christian Role Models

There are many role models for us to follow, who went through enormous change to orient to a truly Christian life: St. Teresa of Avila, Mother Teresa, St. Vincent de Paul, Pope John Paul II, Ignatius of Loyola, St. Augustine, Cardinal Newman. There are also the 100’s and 1000’s of lay missionaries who have given up their home comforts and worldly belongings to give themselves to the poor, hungry and the marginalized, some in their own neighbourhood, some in other parts of the world. This to fulfill Jesus invitation: *“As long as you did it to one of these the least of my brothers, you did it to me...”*

How we relate to God is primarily how we relate to others and their needs.

Orientation to Jesus

As we orient ourselves towards Jesus, what does it mean to me/us today? When Jesus invites us to sell all we own..... When He tells us that what we do for another – we do for Him! When Jesus encourages us not to be afraid – to let go of worldly possessions. *“Sell your possessions and give alms, get yourselves treasure that will not fail you. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”* Luke 12:33

Today’s world is busy and material. We and many around us can be marginalized and excluded. Should we not follow Jesus’ words to us on the Mount, the Beatitudes? When we decide to follow Christ we need to be prepared for self-sacrifice. We need to stop looking for the easy options.

“It is not given to men and women to choose their crosses:
They are imposed on them,
as on Simon of Cyrene, who followed,
in spite of himself, but who later tasted the secret joy of following Him.”
Godfried Cardinal Danneels, (Belgium), ‘The Cross: Accursed Tree, Tree of Life, Tree in
Flower,’ verse 3.

Discussion Questions for the Team Meeting

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. What examples can we share of how we felt the power of the Spirit at work within us or set involving us?
2. How do the methods of our Movement help us in understanding, in a more intimate and personal way our journey of faith?
3. How can each of us in a practical and concrete way become more responsive to the needs of fellow human beings?

The Sit-Down

Suggestions for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down

1. How has the orientation of our lives as individual and as couple helped in forming our attitude to the marginalized and excluded?
2. What practical outreach steps could we take as couple in the future to respond to the “least of our brethren?”

Behavioral Change.

For your consideration

Which of the eight Beatitudes am I (are we) strongest in and which are the weakest? How can we help each other to improve?



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE **Matthew 5:1-10**

Seeing the crowds, he went onto the mountain. And when he was seated his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

How blessed are the poor in spirit: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance.

Blessed are those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for uprightness: they shall have their fill.

Blessed are the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: they shall be recognized as children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of uprightness: the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 18:20-31

Response: Lord, you yourself are my lamp

The Lord rewards me for my uprightness,
as my hands are pure, so he repays me,
since I have kept the ways of the Lord,
and not fallen away from my God.

Response: Lord, you yourself are my lamp

His judgments are all before me,
his statutes I have not put away from me.
I am blameless before him,
I keep myself clear of evil.

Response: Lord, you yourself are my lamp

So the Lord repaid me for acting uprightly
because he could see I was pure.

You are faithful to the faithful,
blameless with the blameless,
sincere to the sincere, but cunning to the crafty,
you save a people that is humble and humiliate those with haughty looks.

Response: Lord, you yourself are my lamp

Lord, you yourself are my lamp, my God lights up my darkness;
with you I storm the rampart,
with my God I can scale any wall.

Response: Lord, you yourself are my lamp

This God, his way is blameless; the word of the Lord is refined in the furnace,
for he alone is the shield of all who take refuge in him.
For who is God but the Lord, who is a rock but our God?

Response: Lord, you yourself are my lamp

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

Meeting 7
Conjugal Spirituality and Orientation of Life
Part 2 - To Progress in Love for the Future

Introduction

In chapter 6 we developed some thoughts on how as a couple we can orient our life to God. In this chapter we look at some of the areas where we can orient our life to progress in love, for the future of our children, our society and our Church.

Concern for the Human and Christian Education of our Children.

“The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates.” Pope Paul VI, ‘*Evangelii Nuntiandi*,’ 71.

“..... *God saw everything he had made, and indeed it was very good.*” Genesis 1:31

As a couple, God has made us co-creators with him of the future generation. He has entrusted our children to us – images of Himself – pure and undefiled – given to us to be loved and cared for and to be brought up in the values of Christian living. This responsibility needs to be attended to with love and attention. Our children are born free of attitudes, open to everyone, full of trust and unconditional love. They are delivered into an apathetic world of false values, individualism, selfishness and competitiveness, where money is a measure of all. As parents we need to show them another way, if they are to live life to the full.

The grace given to us at Baptism gives us the power to oppose this kind of world. “*In all truth I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born through water and the Spirit*” (John 3: 3-5). We thus become children of God: “*The Spirit will make you free.*” Msgr. F. Fleischmann, ‘Looking at the Church in Faith,’ Melbourne College, 2002.

God still left us free will. For us to live differently – in a Christ-like way – we not only need ‘to want to’ but we need ‘to be willing to’ change how we behave.

The world we live in today brings to our doorstep material demands, liberal thinking, social injustice and a lowering of moral standards both in public and private life. Youth challenges this imbalance in society and left without answers they will drift into an unconscious acceptance and responsiveness to these values.

Communicating a Different Way

How can we as parents communicate to our children the virtues which will make the world a better place for all? The young need to experience Christian values through interpersonal

relationships. They need to experience the habit of prayer to build faith and establish and maintain a relationship with God. We can help support this with through daily prayer in the family and discussions about matters of faith and justice.

We need to treat our children as people of infinite worth because of their dignity as sons and daughters of God. Christians are known by the love they have for each other. “*See how they love one another.*” This will invariably demand ‘laying down one’s life for the sake of the others.’ If our young people find themselves members of a genuine community, struggling together to find the will of God in their daily lives; a community that takes time in stillness and prayer away from the hustle and bustle of the world; a community that searches the Scriptures together for direction for life; a community that support one another in times of need; then they will find themselves members of a genuine Christian community.

Pope John Paul II writes: “If Christ is presented to the young people as He really is, they experience Him as an answer that is convincing and they can accept His message, even when it is demanding.” Pope John Paul II, ‘Novo Millenio Iueunte’ NM9.

If Eucharist is to be significant in their young lives, it needs to express the sense of community searching together to love and serve God. This needs to be lived out by loving and serving the needs of those who suffer most in our community. We need to understand, whenever we try to promote justice, peace, truth and love, we evoke resistance from others preserving their own interests. Jesus experienced this first hand. It led to his execution.

We as a community are the Body of Christ, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. We should be men and women who strive to relieve the suffering of mankind, who respond to the human needs in a human way, who speak out against injustice. In this way we carry on the mission of Christ. We need to accept that this involves carrying the cross.

This will make sense to our young who are generally highly idealistic and want to change the world. As families we need to support one another in living out these ideals. We need to start with small initiatives, close to home, which will succeed and make a difference. We need to work within our own area of influence, where it is possible for us to instigate change, not waste our energy on things outside our power. This will give ourselves and our children the courage to reach out with confidence and trust, with the Holy Spirit guiding us.

The Practice of Hospitality and Being a Welcoming Couple

All over the world TOOL couples feel completely comfortable meeting one another. For many of us this is one of the wonderful experiences of being in Teams. Is this really coming from the charisma of Teams or is it simply behaving in a truly Christian way? We need to create this openness to all whom we encounter. They then will experience the love of God through our love, acceptance and openness to them. The living, loving God is to be found in living, loving hearts. Jesus told us: “*I was a stranger and you welcomed me.*”

The stranger is the person who is different. When we decide to welcome the stranger, we open ourselves to discover a friend, we experience communion and God is present. Jean Vanier in his book *Community and Growth* says:

“Welcome is one of the signs that a community is alive. If a community closes its doors, that is a sign that hearts are closing too. Welcome is an attitude, it is the constant openness of the heart; it is saying to people every moment ‘come in,’ it is giving them space, it is listening attentively.”

“Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person’s side.” Revelation 3:20

Concrete Witness of our Love of Christ through Our Commitments in Society

In Matthew 5: 13-16 we are given our mission as ‘People of God’ is to be the ‘salt of the earth’ and the ‘light of the world.’

Only a very small number of us are visibly integrated through a total lifelong commitment in the Church of Christ, as priests and religious. By Church we mean the community of women and men who profess ‘Jesus Christ as Lord’ and actively commit themselves to His service. We are all responsible for bringing about the Kingdom of God. Vatican II opened for us the mission of the Church as both religious and temporal, both spiritual and social. Thus as ‘People of God’ we must recognize our mission broadly and commit some of our time to this mission.

Being members of Teams, praying together as couples, reading the Scripture, encourages us to question and search for the gifts God has bestowed on us to help in the building of the Kingdom. All of us have responsibility for some part of this building. *“By their very vocation, the Laity seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.”* ‘Decree of the Apostolate of the Laity’ 31.

“There are many gifts, but it is always the same Spirit.” 1 Cor. 12: 4

“the gifts that we have differ according to the grace that was given each of us” Romans 12: 6

Some of us may see ourselves as gifted in promoting the rights and dignity of the individual, others in social justice, others in support services for these efforts. Some may feel drawn to the poor, the unemployed: others to work in education to help alleviate abuses; others to help with couples in difficulty of divorce/separation, others with homelessness... We need to become aware of our attitudes, especially in dealing with situations where ‘one of the least’ of our society manifests needs.

“So very often, many outpourings of affection for God, of resting in His presence, of good feelings towards everyone and sentiments and prayers like these, although very good and very desirable, are nonetheless suspect if they do not express themselves in practical love which has real effects... Let us love God, let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brow.” St. Vincent de Paul Reflection.

Concrete Witness of our Love of Christ through Commitments in the Church.

“In the church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission.” Catechism of the Catholic Church 873. Our Church calling is a call to the apostolate. On all Christians rests the challenge to bring all people throughout the world to hear and share in the Divine message of salvation. How can we hope to fulfill this mission?

We all belong to parishes in our communities and we are challenged unite and share this mission. This collaboration needs to be seen not as sharing of power but as sharing the labor. Together we should question how we can fulfill this mission, while at the same time caring for God’s people. **“We need to move from ‘community for myself’ to ‘myself for the community.’”** Jean Vanier, ‘Community and Growth.’

In many countries the number of priests is decreasing, making the need for the laity to become involved and committed in their parishes essential to the life of the Church. St. Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians 4:7-11 affirms this spirit of collaboration at the heart of the building of the Christian community. He encourages them to maintain amongst themselves the unity of ‘the one Body’ of Christ. Writing again in Letter to the Romans 12:4-8, he speaks of ‘one Body.’ The theme of parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20) is that there is no place for idleness. It is not permissible for anyone to remain idle. We must become involved, some in small private ways, others in more public and visible ways.

“Among the fundamental duties of the Christian family, there is the ecclesial duty of putting oneself at the service of the building of the Kingdom by participating in the life and mission of the Church.” (Familiaris Consortio-49)

In days gone by being involved in Church ministry often meant Church maintenance or finance committees. Today what is needed is more people centered ministry.

We in TOOL have much to offer. Our experience as parents could help us assist in the preparation of children for the sacraments and in the organization of children’s liturgy. Many of us having reared children could offer much assistance in parenting courses. However, we must remember that our true area of expertise in Church today is in the development of married spirituality. If each Team in the world were to go out in their immediate community and develop one new team, introducing 5 to 7 new couples and a priest to the methods of TOOL, the result in spiritual growth for the individuals, couples, families, society and Church would be enormous.

There are many other ways to collaborate in the work of our parishes – in liturgy, visitation, music, ministering of Eucharist, Reading of the Word, the list is endless. What is important is to offer ourselves in service to our parish. It may be of help to point out our particular gifts, not in a boastful way, but in a humble and thankful way for that gift God has given. This may help groups to invite us to serve where our gift will be of value to the community. Whatever is asked of us, we should try to do to the best of our ability. Let us always remember that the Holy Spirit works through us. On earth we are the only eyes and ears, hands and feet that God has. Let us put them at His disposal, and offer ourselves for whatever is asked of us.

Discussion Questions for the Team Meeting

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. How do we communicate to children the virtues which will make the world a better place for all?
2. Discuss what ways we could open up new relationships with those who may be excluded, in work, in parish, in neighborhood, and thereby build a community where all feel they belong and are loved?
3. In what way do we, or could, we use the gifts we have been given to contribute in our parish, our movement or our community?

The Sit-Down

Suggestions for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down.

Try to share with each other the gifts we see in one another. In an honest sharing, discuss how each one is using these gifts to further the Kingdom of God on earth.

Behavioral Change

For your consideration

Try to plan one initiative in the family that will make a difference to another person or to our community. When this succeeds – discuss and try to take on another initiative. Try to develop in this way a project of outreach with our family.



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE **Romans 12:1-13**

From Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the service of the gospel that God promised long ago through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures. This is the gospel concerning his Son who, in terms of human nature was born a descendant of David and who, in terms of the Spirit and of holiness, was designated Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ, our Lord, through whom we have received grace and our apostolic mission of winning the obedience of faith among all the nations for the honor of his name. You are among these, and by his call you belong to Jesus Christ. To you all, God's beloved in Rome, called to be his holy people. Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because your faith is talked of all over the world. God, whom I serve with my spirit in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness that I continually mention you in my prayers, asking always that by some means I may at long last be enabled to visit you, if it is God's will. For I am longing to see you so that I can convey to you some spiritual gift that will be a lasting strength, or rather that we may be strengthened together through our mutual faith, yours and mine. I want you to be quite certain too, brothers, that I have often planned to visit you -- though up to the present I have always been prevented -- in the hope that I might work as fruitfully among you as I have among the gentiles elsewhere.

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 55 1-7; 16-19

Response: I put my trust in you.

God, hear my prayer, do not hide away from my plea,
give me a hearing, answer me, my troubles give me no peace.
I shudder at the enemy's shouts, at the outcry of the wicked;
they heap up charges against me, in their anger bring hostile accusations against me.

Response: I put my trust in you.

My heart writhes within me, the terrors of death come upon me,

fear and trembling overwhelm me, and shuddering grips me.
And I say, 'Who will give me wings like a dove, to fly away and find rest?'
How far I would escape, and make a nest in the desert!

Response: I put my trust in you.

For my part, I appeal to God, and Yahweh saves me; evening, morning, noon,
I complain and I groan.
He hears my cry, he ransoms me and gives me peace from the feud against me,
for they are taking me to law.

Response: I put my trust in you.

But God will listen and will humble them, he who has been enthroned from the beginning;
no change of heart for them, for they do not fear God.

Response: I put my trust in you.

Unload your burden onto Yahweh and he will sustain you;
never will he allow the upright to stumble.
You, God, will thrust them down to the abyss of destruction, men bloodthirsty and deceptive,
before half their days are spent. For my part, I put my trust in you.

Response: I put my trust in you.

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

Meeting 8

Conjugal Spirituality and Holiness

Introduction

Father Caffarel told us very clearly in *The Charter of Teams of Our Lady*: “The Teams of Our Lady have as their essential aim, to help couples to strive for holiness, no more, no less.” To complete our study topic, let us reflect on how the framework which we have in TOOL can be the framework which helps each of us individually and as couple to grow in holiness.

Holiness

First let us examine this word ‘holiness’. St. Paul exhorts us to holiness in his Letter to the Romans 12:1: “*Think of God’s mercy and worship Him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a Holy Sacrifice truly pleasing to God.*”

The Prophet Micah gives us guidance to holiness in the Old Testament:

“You have already been told what is right and what Yahweh wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love loyally and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6: 8

St. Thiery explained holiness as: “*When you watch Christ with the heart, beyond words, you become like Him almost without knowing it.*”

Pope John Paul II told us as we entered the new Millennium: “***This ideal of perfection must not be misunderstood as if it involved some kind of extraordinary existence, possible only for a few ‘uncommon heroes’ of holiness.***” (NMI)

Defining spirituality the question is asked: “Is it a way of living with the mind of Jesus, is it holiness, is it wholeness?” John and Elaine Cogavin (ERI Ireland), ‘The Spirituality of the Couple,’ Rome, 2003.

“Holiness for us means: to build ourselves and one another while we are beings of God” Gomez-Senent, ‘The Couple Moves Towards Holiness,’ Melbourne, 2002.

It is worth reading again the quotation from *The Second Wind: A Look Toward the Future* (2.3):

“Married Christians are called to sanctity. They do not answer this call as individuals – although each retains his or her individuality – but rather they walk the road to sanctity as couple. This great revelation of the spirituality of marriage is this: conjugal love and love of God are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they go hand in hand. Husband and wife can follow in the demanding footsteps of Christ, as couple.”

If then our conjugal spirituality is a path to holiness, a path to wholeness, a way of living with the mind of Christ – how do we capture and visualise this role model which Jesus presents for us as ‘the Way, the Truth and the Life’?

Practical Approach

Peter Van Breemen, in his book *As Bread that is Broken* tries to portray an image of this wholeness of Jesus as a model for each of us as individual or as couple to follow. He uses a Greek word that is non-translatable into any of our modern languages because of its fullness in describing the virtues of Jesus and the wholeness of His Human Person. This same wholeness is attainable by each of us with the grace of God for any who choose to follow Jesus. This untranslatable word which describes collectively the virtues and values of Jesus is ‘prautes’. Prautes reflect:

- ❖ the self portrait of Jesus in the eight Beatitudes. Matthew 5: 1-10. The Beatitudes reflect the mentality of Jesus, His lifestyle and that of anyone who believes in Him.
- ❖ the nine fruits of the Spirit: “... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Galatians 5:22.
- ❖ ‘with a still heart.’
- ❖ Jesus’ human wholeness, His humility when He rode down from the Mount of Olives on a donkey.
- ❖ “.....*learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*” Matthew 11:29.

If holiness is living with the mind and heart of Jesus, we must first listen to His Word; to be aware of the loving creation of the Father and be guided by the Holy Spirit. To achieve this in today’s busy world and to grow in holiness and to follow Jesus’ model, we too must ‘be still.’ We must be a person with a still heart. Such stillness of heart comes from silence. We experience God in silence. Jesus Himself constantly searched for a quiet place where he could be still. He renewed His strength by spending time in silence with the Father. We too must have our time in silence. “Grass grows green and lush in silence, trees grow to majesty in silence, the flower opens in silence.” Mary McAleese (President of Ireland), ‘Reconciled Being.’

Again we have Jesus in Nazareth, showing us the way, attending the synagogue on the Sabbath, as He usually did. There He reads what could be His mission statement from the words of Isaiah:

*“The spirit of the Lord is on me,
for he has anointed me
to bring the good news to the afflicted.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives,
sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord.”* Luke 4:18-19

Prautes

Prautes is more than a virtue. It is the summation of all the virtues of Christ. “*Love one another as I have loved you.*” It is difficult to define, yet it can be explained by our lives. We need to live our lives with absolute trust in God. This involves having Christian Hope.

“Christian Hope is based on Jesus’ promise for us all.” *‘He who believes will have eternal life.’* (John 6:47) “Hope acts in us like an ‘engine’ that propels us towards love in the service of our brothers and sisters ... As long as we maintain a living Hope in ourselves, we seek to imitate Jesus who is the source and object of this Hope, this will lead us to listen frequently to his Word and Teaching, as well as to imitate his way of life. All this sustains us, animates us and keeps us away from sin so as to dedicate ourselves to others.” Andres and Sylvia Merizalde, ‘Hope,’ Houston, 2001.

In looking at the framework of our Movement:

- ❖ Our team meeting - as a learning environment of awareness, of dialogue, of meeting with Jesus, through our encounter with other Team couples and spiritual counsellors and a loving interaction with all present.
- ❖ Our pooling and our study topic - educate us in matters of faith, relationship, social awareness.....
- ❖ Our study of Scripture helps us to know the person of Jesus and presents to us the challenges of the Christian life.
- ❖ The purpose of our Endeavors is to help couples to grow in Christian life, through taking concrete steps towards this goal, and supporting each other on our journey through sharing on these steps.

Teams of Our Lady

Our Movement is a movement of Christian initiation and also a movement of Christian perfection. The attendance at our meetings and the adherence to its rule, will guide us in our lives. We need to look at the **Charter**, not as a ceiling but as a springboard into the fullness of Christian life. It should lead us to respond to the will of God in different ways according to our gifts. These will most certainly create a “Chosen Race, a Holy People, a Nation set apart.” This is what we need to be, to fully respond to our Baptismal vows. We have been given the direction by Jesus and the power by the Holy Spirit, it only takes our will to decide this is how we wish to live.

Our Vocation

To achieve the essential aim of our Movement, to strive for holiness, perhaps we can take our guidance from:

- ❖ *The Second Wind: A Look Toward the Future* – Father Caffarel in 1987: “Marriage is at the service of sanctity. This without doubt is the most specific vocation of Teams; not only to call lay people, married lay people to holiness but to affirm that human sexuality can be a path to holiness. This is still a new path in the Church ...”

- ❖ Father Caffarel speaking in Rome in May 1959: “But I have another, even more fundamental reason for thinking that movements of perfection for married laity correspond to an urgent need in the Church. It is important today that the holiness of Christ be present in all sectors of modern life. Our world has an urgent need for holy laity. By that I mean, men and women who are completely given to Christ, filled with his charity and guided by his Spirit. Sainly workmen, farmers and company managers, saintly artists and scientists, saintly politicians. They must be saints, missionaries, and perhaps even martyrs. We must not expect them to appear by magic. They will spring forth only from deeply Christian families; they will be educated and strengthened only by these movements of perfection we are speaking of.”

- ❖ Pope John Paul II speaking on a qualitative renewal of the Church said: “These new movements, instead, are oriented, before all else, toward the renewal of the individual These movements are made up for the most part of lay people who are married and have professions. The ideal of the world’s renewal in Christ springs directly from the fundamental duty of baptism” Pope John Paul II, ‘Crossing the Threshold of Hope,’ page 168, English edition.

- ❖ To return to our Charter – the bedrock of our Movement: ”Couples founded the Teams of Our Lady, with the first objective being: they intend to fulfill their baptismal vows.”

Discussion Questions for the Team Meeting

Please write your answers, exchange them with your spouse, and after your discussion as a couple, forward them to the Discussion Couple. Please remove any material that is too personal, or that you do not wish to share.

1. In today's busy world:
 - how can we as individual grow in holiness?
 - help our spouse grow in holiness?
 - grow as couple in holiness?
2. In your opinion, how does the combination of all of the Teams endeavors lead us to holiness and to a change of perspective on life?

The Sit-Down

Suggestions for individual preparation and couple discussion at the monthly sit-down.

After Jesus read the words from Isaiah in Luke 4: 18-19, He said "This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen."

How as couple do we help each other live out this mission in our life and fulfil our baptismal vows?

Behavioral Change

For your consideration

Jesus asks us to "*learn from Me as I am gentle and humble in heart.*" To be gentle and humble in heart takes great strength of character, needing affirmation and support in today's consumerist society. How in the past have we helped each other to grow in these virtues?

After the Team meeting we can reflect on this individually, then share as a couple and practice these values with increased awareness throughout the month.



TEAM MEETING FORMAT

SIMPLE MEAL WITH LIGHT SHARING

- Each person shares highs and lows of the month.
- Others listen without comment or passing of food.

TIME FOR SCRIPTURE 1 Timothy 4:6-11

Some people have missed the way to these things and turned to empty speculation, trying to be teachers of the Law; but they understand neither the words they use nor the matters about which they make such strong assertions. We are well aware that the Law is good, but only provided it is used legitimately, on the understanding that laws are not framed for people who are upright. On the contrary, they are for criminals and the insubordinate, for the irreligious and the wicked, for the sacrilegious and the godless; they are for people who kill their fathers or mothers and for murderers, for the promiscuous, homosexuals, kidnappers, for liars and for perjurers -- and for everything else that is contrary to the sound teaching that accords with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, the gospel that was entrusted to me.

TIME OF MEDITATION – a period of about 5 minutes silence.

SHARING ON THE MEDITATION - The intent is prayerful reflection, not discussion.

PRAYER INTENTIONS

- Pass card or cross, so people can pass gracefully and the team knows when the prayer is complete.
- The team should respond at the end of each person's turn.

PSALM 4

Response: Lord take pity on me and hear my prayer.

When I call, answer me, God, upholder of my right.
In my distress you have set me at large;
take pity on me and hear my prayer!

Response: Lord take pity on me and hear my prayer.

Children of men, how long will you be heavy of heart,
why love what is vain and chase after illusions?

Response: Lord take pity on me and hear my prayer.

Realize that the Lord performs wonders for his faithful,
the Lord listens when I call to him.

Be careful not to sin, speak in your hearts,
and on your beds keep silence.

Response: Lord take pity on me and hear my prayer.

Loyally offer sacrifices, and trust in the Lord.
Many keep saying, 'Who will put happiness before our eyes?'
Response: Lord take pity on me and hear my prayer.

Let the light of your face shine on us. Lord,
to my heart you are a richer joy than all their corn and new wine.
In peace I lie down and at once fall asleep,
for it is you and none other, Lord, who make me rest secure.
Response: Lord take pity on me and hear my prayer.

DEEP POOLING

SHARING ON ENDEAVORS

- Regular reading of the Word of God.
- Daily period of Meditation.
- Daily Conjugal and Family Prayer.
- Monthly Sit-Down.
- Rule of Life.
- Yearly Retreat.

DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY TOPIC Discussion Leaders

- Written responses are returned to the couples prior to discussion.
- Introduce the topic and have two or three open-ended questions ready to use during the discussion.
- Try to include EVERYONE in the discussion, directing comments away from those who tend to dominate the discussion.
- Be prepared to bring discussion back to central theme when inappropriate tangents arise.
- Don't let discussion run over allotted time unless it is important to continue.
- Let people finish their comments; don't cut them short.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

MAGNIFICAT TO CLOSE THE MEETING

THE MAGNIFICAT

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
And my spirit exults in God, my Savior,
Because He has looked upon His lowly handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward,
All generations will call me blessed,
For the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is His name,
And His mercy reaches from age to age
For those who fear Him.
He has shown the power of His arm,
He has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones
And exulted the lowly.
The hungry He has filled with good things,
The rich sent empty away.
He has come to the help of Israel, His servant,
Mindful of His mercy -
According to the promise He made to our ancestors -
Of His mercy to Abraham and to His descendants forever."

Our Lady, Queen of Teams, Pray for us!

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY
United States Super Region**

Reformatted March 2012

May not be reproduced without permission.

**info@teamsfourlady.org
www.teamsfourlady.org**