



DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY MOVEMENT



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**TEAMS OF OUR LADY
INTERNATIONAL LEADING TEAM**

International Leading Team
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CONTENT

FOREWORD	7
INTRODUCTION	11
First wave of expansion (1939 -1959).....	13
Second wave of expansion (1960 - 1969).....	13
Third wave of expansion (1970 - 1999).....	13
Fourth wave of expansion (2000 - to date).....	14
I. GROWTH	15
FIRST WAVE OF EXPANSION (1939 -1959)	15
France (1939) - Luxembourg (1950) - Switzerland (1947).....	16
Belgium (1947).....	22
Egypt (1947).....	26
Brazil (1950).....	28
Tunisia (1951).....	35
Morocco (1952).....	37
Mauritius (1953).....	38
Senegal (1953).....	39
Belgian Congo (First stage) (1954).....	40
Spain (1954).....	41
Portugal (1955).....	45
Canada (1956).....	47
Colombia (1957).....	49
Germany (1958).....	53
England (1959).....	55
Japan (1959).....	59
Austria (1959).....	60
Algeria (1959).....	60
SECOND WAVE OF EXPANSION: (1956 – 1969)	61
Madagascar (1954 - 1962).....	61
Guadeloupe (1956 -1960).....	62
United States (1958 -1960).....	63
Italy (1959).....	66

Australia (1961).....	68
Vietnam (1962).....	72
Lebanon (1963).....	72
Ireland (1964).....	73
India (1969).....	76
THIRD WAVE OF EXPANSION: (1970 -1999).....	79
Syria (1975).....	79
Central African Republic (1976)	83
Democratic Republic of the Congo (Second Phase) (1977)	84
Puerto Rico (1978).....	86
Mali (1980).....	87
Cameroon (1983).....	88
Mexico (1983)	88
Trinidad and Tobago (1983)	90
Argentina (1984).....	92
Costa Rica (1985).....	93
Togo (1985).....	96
Burkina Faso (1985)	98
Peru (1987)	99
Ecuador (1988).....	103
Dominican Republic (1988).....	108
Guatemala (1991).....	108
Gabon (1991)	112
Chile (1992).....	114
Rwanda (1994).....	117
New Zealand (1995)	119
Paraguay (1996).....	122
Benin (1997).....	123
FOURTH WAVE OF EXPANSION: (2000 to date)	124
Lithuania (2000)	124
Philippines (2000).....	124
Poland (2001).....	130
Nigeria (2005)	134
Ivory Coast (2008)	136
Jordan (2011).....	136
Guinea (2013).....	136
Chad (2014)	137
Cuba (2017)	138

II. FORMATION	141
THE FORMATIVE ACTIVITY OF FATHER CAFFAREL.....	141
The ultimate goal, holiness	142
Asceticism	143
Christian marriage listening to the Good News.....	145
The Prayer	146
The Christian meaning of the team meeting.....	147
THE FOUNDATIONS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION.....	150
Human love	151
The Sacrament of Marriage	155
Conjugal Spirituality.....	157
The means to achieve Conjugal Spirituality.....	159
Team life	161
The mission of the couples and of the Movement of Teams.....	162
Our Lady patron saint of Teams	165
CONCLUSION	167
ALPHABETICAL COUNTRY LIST.....	189
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	191

FOREWORD

To be able to give this book today to the Teams of Our Lady movement, is a reason for much joy. This book allows us to know the genesis of what we have become in each country where we have had the grace to establish, consolidate, grow and mature the movement.

In our personal lives it is vital to know our origins in order to understand who we are as well as the cultural, familial and social context in which our character has been forged. In the same way, in the Teams of Our Lady movement it is fundamental to know where we started in order to understand the journey to where we are today and to know where we are headed.

This book is not only a window to the past but also a way to understand its relationship with the present we live in and the future we build in our daily lives. This is a process that consolidates our identity and allows us to value and understand the richness of the diversity that unites us on this path that we have the grace to walk together.

The pages of this book are a chronicle that emulates the “Acts of the Apostles” in the Teams of Our Lady, where thousands of disciples who had ardor in their hearts, were and continue to be, untiring sowers of this good news that the Spirit inspired in Father Caffarel and those young French couples more than eighty years ago.

With the editors of this book, we were tempted to make an explicit recognition of all these “spearheading” couples involved in the process of expansion and internationalization of the movement. In the end, avoiding the danger of incurring omission, we prefer to highlight without distinction the missionary spirit that, throughout its history, each of the members of the movement has had, as disseminators and tireless workers of this vineyard that every day multiplies its branches.

There is no doubt that the orchestrator of this surprising and wonderful irradiation of Teams of Our Lady worldwide, has been The Holy Spirit, as the second part of this research highlights. This has allowed, throughout the history of the movement, not only the breath of missionary spirit in the couples that carried out the expansion, but also the preservation of unity where it has been sown, from a solid and permanent formation that has made life the charisma, the mysticism and the pedagogy, which is the inheritance of the thoughts of our founder, Fr. Henri Caffarel.

The readers of this book will be able to perceive in the world map how the Holy Spirit's breath has made the Teams of Our Lady what it is today, having found fertile ground in more than 92 countries on five continents. These pages do not have a quantitative emphasis on the reality of the movement today, because as we said, its purpose is different. Although they mention the current dimension of the movement, the dizzying growth that we have experienced in recent decades and the constant rate of growth that is maintained today, these figures will fortunately soon lose their relevance.

In the process of writing and compiling this, our history of the movement, we need to thank Constanza and Alberto Alvarado, a Colombian couple who were members of the ERI from 1999 to 2005, for the meticulous and rigorous research they carried out, as well as each of the Super Regional (SR) couples who collaborated with them, contributing documentation of the history of the movement in their own countries and later revising and enriching the drafts of the final text. We trust that this book will have many new editions in the future, due to the need to incorporate appendices that continue to reflect the expansion and dissemination towards the countries that still do not know this wonderful charisma of which we are the depository today.

At the end of the book, we have considered it appropriate to include an appendix that outlines the evolution of the structure of responsibility in the movement. This structure has guided the movement throughout its history. It is also important to list the names of the couples and priests who have helped, from these positions of responsibility, to write the history of our movement.

We ask Our Lady, model and intercessor in this journey, to continue to support our movement so that every day we can be faithful to the principles that inspire us.

CLARITA AND EDGARDO BERNAL FANDIÑO
International Responsible Couple 2018-2024

INTRODUCTION

In a conference given by Fr. CAFFAREL, founder of the Movement of the Teams of Our Lady, a year before he retired from the Movement, he expressed this profound feeling, part of his spiritual testament:

“When a father has many children, his joy is immense but so are his worries. I have four thousand children. I am the father of a very large family, with many joys and many worries. But when parents discover that their children, once grown up, maintain all their confidence in their father and mother, their joy is exceptionally great. That is my joy: to see that that small number of teams that I found in Brazil, fifteen years ago, became a very large number and still maintains the same confidence.”¹

These words were spoken by Fr. CAFFAREL in São Paulo, Brazil, in September 1972. At that time he expressed his joy for the accelerated growth of TEAMS in that country, but above all for the “confidence” that his children - as he called them - had in him.

However, his great concern was that: **“Growth can be a danger if in-depth formation does not accompany it.”**² But, in addition, his conviction was that it should not be perceived as a human success, but as the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit. It seems important to us, therefore, to take these two elements (growth and formation) as the two axes on which this research revolves, always against the backdrop of God’s permanent action through his Holy Spirit.

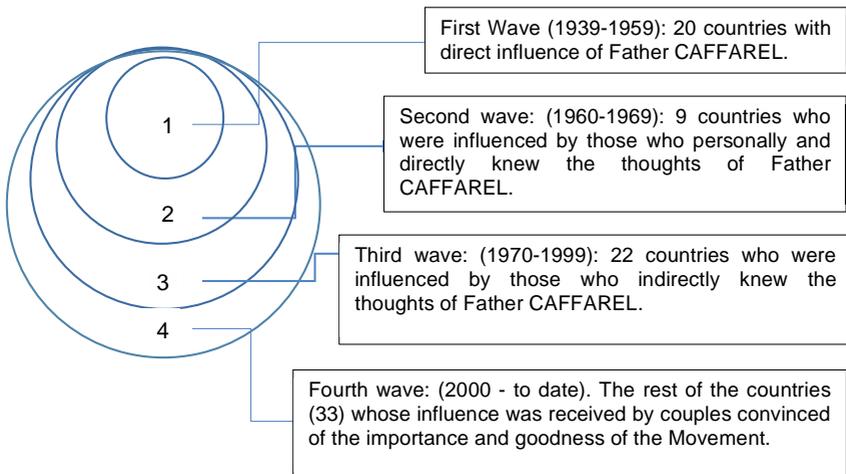
¹ Fr. CAFFAREL. *Spiritual Testament*. Conference given in Sao Paulo, September 1972. In Teams in Brazil. Nancy Cajado Moncau. *Essay on its history*. Nova Bandeira Produções Editoriais, 2000.

² Nancy Cajado Moncau, *EQUIPES DE NOSSA SENHORA NO BRASIL -Essay on its history*, Nova Bandeira Produções Editoriais, Sao Paulo, 2000. p. 65.

The development of these two axes, growth and formation, constitutes therefore the thread of the present investigation and the organization of the work in two main parts: The growth of the Movement and the formation. As for the first, we will refer to the moment and the way in which the Movement arrived in the different countries, through Fr. CAFFAREL and countless couples and priests who continued in this endeavor. Regarding the second axis, and taking into account the founder's insistence that quality is more important than quantity, here we will refer to the direct influence of the founder on the formation of the first teams and the essence of that formation according to his thinking.

Taking the image of the successive expansive waves generated by the stone thrown on the surface of a lake, we would also like to visualize how the Movement of Teams of Our Lady expanded geographically from the moment that Fr. CAFFAREL threw the first activity of the Movement outside the French border. In that sense, we can visualize the process of development and internationalization of the Movement through four waves of expansion, characterized by the direct or indirect influence of the Founder, as follows:

EXPANSION WAVES OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEAMS



From this fourth wave, we will refer to 9 countries for which we have obtained information.

FIRST WAVE OF EXPANSION (1939 -1959)

The first wave of expansion occurred during the first twenty years of the Movement's life and is composed of the following countries, by continent: A. EUROPE: France (1939), Belgium (1947) and Switzerland (1947); Luxembourg (1950); Spain (1954); Portugal (1955); Germany (1958); England (1959); Austria (1959). B. AFRICA: Egypt (1950); Tunisia (1951); Morocco (1952); Mauritius (1953); Senegal (1953); Belgian Congo (1954); Algeria (1959). C. AMERICA: Brazil (1950); Canada (1956); Colombia (1957). D. ASIA: Japan (1959).

SECOND WAVE OF EXPANSION (1960 - 1969)

The second wave of expansion took place between 1960 and 1969 and was made up of the following countries: A. EUROPE: Italy³ (1959); Ireland (1963). B. AFRICA: Madagascar (1962); Republic of Congo (1962). C. AMERICA: Guadeloupe (1956)⁴; United States⁵ (1958). D. OCEANIA: Australia (1961). E. ASIA: Vietnam (1962); Lebanon (1963); India (1969).

THIRD WAVE OF EXPANSION (1970 - 1999)

The third wave of expansion began in 1975 and lasted until 1999. The following countries⁶ are part of it: A. AFRICA: Central African Republic (1976); Cameroon (1983); Democratic Republic of Congo (second stage - 1977); Mali (1980); Togo (1985); Gabon (1991); Rwanda (1994);

³ Even though the Movement arrived in Italy in 1959, it is classified in the second wave of expansion because it did not arrive there because of the direct influence of Father Caffarel.

⁴ Like Italy, the Movement arrives without the intervention of Fr. Caffarel.

⁵ Like Italy, the Movement arrives without the intervention of Fr. Caffarel.

⁶ The second phase of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is included.

Burkina Faso (1985); Benin (1997). B. AMERICA: Puerto Rico (1978); Mexico (1983); Trinidad and Tobago (1983); Argentina (1984); Costa Rica (1984); Peru (1987); Ecuador (1988); Dominican Republic (1988); Guatemala (1991); Chile (1992); Paraguay (1996). C. ASIA: Syria (1976). D. OCEANIA: New Zealand (1995).

FOURTH WAVE OF EXPANSION (2000 - TO DATE)

The fourth wave of expansion refers to the last 20 years of the Movement's life. There are 34 countries listed, with nine countries at the top of the list for which we have information: A. EUROPE: Lithuania (2000); Poland (2001). B. AFRICA: Nigeria (2005); Ivory Coast (2008); Guinea (2013); Chad (2014). C. AMERICA: Cuba (2017). D. ASIA: Philippines (2000); Jordan (2011).

Today, a little more than seventy years after our foundation, the Teams of Our Lady have reached five continents, 93 countries, with just over 14,000 teams, that is around 74,000 couples which is equivalent to around 148,000 members and 9,076 priests⁷ serving as spiritual counselors. Few Church movements have, in the words of the Founding Charter, a “shock force made up of volunteers” of a similar magnitude and quality and present in almost every corner of the world. However, more important than the numerical expansion of the Movement, is the unity in the Spirit lived by the totality of the teams expanded throughout the world, thanks to a sustained process of formation.

If the creative action of the Movement in extension was important, no less important was the formative activity that responded to the uneasiness expressed by Fr. CAFFAREL in the sense that: ***“Growth can be a danger if in-depth formation does not accompany it”***. Hence the importance of examining carefully, in the second part, the formative activity carried out directly by Fr. CAFFAREL, especially regarding those aspects he emphasized; related to the mysticism, charism and pedagogy of the Movement.

⁷ Teams of Our Lady. 2020 statistics - 2019 data.

I. GROWTH

The progressive development and internationalization of the Movement required a stronger decentralization for the animation of the Teams, without producing the deterioration of the unity of the Movement. *“The day when each country or each region adopted its own structures and methods, there would no longer be a single Movement but as many, in as many countries as there are,”* said Fr. CAFFAREL, rejecting the model of a federation of national Movements. *“On the level of spirituality, there are no frontiers”*.⁸

It is impressive to observe, through the complex and laborious process of internationalization of Teams of Our Lady, the fulfillment of the affirmation of its founder in the sense of the universality of conjugal spirituality. In this process, the direct action of the Spirit cannot be overlooked, without which this would have been impossible.

Let’s see, in a detailed way, how this prodigious work was carried out through the four waves of expansion mentioned.

FIRST WAVE OF EXPANSION (1939 -1959)

The first wave is composed of those countries that received the direct influence of Fr. CAFFAREL, either because he personally initiated the teams or because he participated directly in their spiritual formation or because he gave a definitive voice of encouragement to the founders, as in the case of England. In this first wave, we also mention some of the couples that were part of the Leadership Team to whom we owe a just recognition for the impulse they gave to the nascent teams. The review will be done in

⁸ Cited by: Paul and Marie-Jeanne Vercruyssen, *The history of the Notre-Dame teams in Belgium*. p. 21.

strict chronological order of the creation of the Teams in the respective countries.

France (1939) - Luxembourg (1950) - Switzerland (1947)

This review begins with these three countries because the Movement began jointly in them, and to this day all three are part of the Super-Region which bears their names.

It was in the parish of St. Augustine in Paris that a woman, then her husband and then three other couples: Frédéric and Marie-Françoise de La CHAPELLE, Michel and Ginette HUET, Gérard and Madelaine D'HEILLY, Pierre and Rozenn de MONTJAMONT, came to ask Father CAFFAREL: “How does our life, full of human happiness and concerns, allow us to respond to the demands of God’s love? Doesn’t the requirement of holiness concern us, the married people? Our priest (Father CAFFAREL) told us: *“It concerns you too, it is a certainty”*. Then we understood that we had to attentively and passionately search for God in our marriage”⁹

Thus, the birth of Teams in France goes back to February 25, 1939 when those four couples met for the first time with Fr. CAFFAREL, in an apartment in Paris, in response to his invitation: *“Let us seek together with total openness of heart, to understand God’s view of our homes in order to respond better to his call.”*

That first group took the name: “Our Lady of Joy Group”. It’s not by chance, from their start, these groups and later Teams, were placed under the patronage of Our Lady.

“And we, young couples of this team,” said Pierre and Rozenn DE MONTJAMONT, “were those rich people, with a treasure that we did not know. We thought we were a bit poor, like beggars sitting on a quilt full of unused wealth. In short, we were false poor [...] From that first night, we

⁹ Text by Pierre and Rozenn de Montjamont, November 20, 1977. International Archive of Teams of Our Lady.

began to pray together with devotion and then together seek the gaze of God over our marriage [...] Our spiritual father taught us to serve our marriages better, which revealed to us an essential discovery for which we are immensely grateful. This is, that it is not only possible to sanctify ourselves through marriage, but that it constitutes a call to holiness.”¹⁰

The first group of married couples thus created multiplied in spite of the war. Its fundamental orientation became clearer little by little: awareness of the graces of marriage and the decision to make human love and the love of God grow together, the former drinking from the latter all the sap and all its strength. We were all convinced, Fr. CAFFAREL said, that *“the family is a school of holiness, not a holiness received but a holiness under construction that is made and remade every day by the very practice of conjugal and family life.”*¹¹

Starting in 1942, the Parisian groups began to expand in the province. In order to maintain a bond between them, a bulletin (*“Letter to Young Couples”*) was created, the first issue of which was published in October 1942. At that same time, about a hundred couples were registered, of which many were in the province (Nantes, Troyes, Amiens) and were made up of about 15 teams working to the rhythm of short retreats, quarterlies, conferences and monthly meetings. In 1944, the number of groups continued to grow, both in Paris and in the province.¹²

After the years of the Second World War, marriage groups multiplied. In 1945, a photocopied bulletin followed (*“Groups of Our Lady of the Homes”*). On December 25 of that same year, the first editorial of Fr. CAFFAREL appeared: *“God the first beloved”* in which he framed the guiding principles of the Movement: *“May God be the first to be sought, the first to be loved, the first to be served in your home”*. And the condition: *“Love one another.”* It is thus a matter of realizing the symbiosis and synergy of two

¹⁰ Pierre et Rozenn de Montjamont, Op cit.

¹¹ Paul and Marie- Jeanne Verduyssen. The Teams of Our Lady, a historical overview. 23rd November 1999. Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

¹² Teams of Our Lady. HISTOIRE DES EQUIPES NOTRE-DAME 1938-2015. Op. Cit.

loves: mutual love and the love of Christ, the former depending on the latter, in the Christian couple.¹³

In March of that same year, 1945, the magazine *L'Anneau d'Or*, a booklet on conjugal and family spirituality appeared, created by Fr. CAFFAREL as a complementary space for the Teams, for the service of its members to be able to share their experiences and testimonies, and as an instrument to better understand “conjugal spirituality”. This magazine, as will be seen later, had a great influence on the expansion of the Movement beyond the borders of France. “In October, Fr. CAFFAREL was appointed by Cardinal SUHARD, responsible for the couples’ groups and the magazine *L'Anneau d'Or*. In December of the same year, 1945, in the province teams were registered in Lyon, Dijon, Nantes (4 groups), Reims, Rouen, Angers, Poitiers, Orleans, Amiens ... and abroad (Belgium)”.¹⁴

Regardless of the previously mentioned, the official beginning of the Movement is placed in the year 1947, on the occasion of the promulgation of the Foundational Charter in a ceremony carried out on December 8 of that year in the Church of Saint Augustine, in Paris. “*But, in fact, it was in that same year, after that period of slow maturation, when we witnessed an explosive proliferation of marriage groups in France and the French Union, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Egypt, Canada, and no doubt other places*”¹⁵ according to the written testimony of Fr. CAFFAREL.

The “*Charter of Teams of our Lady*,” dated December 8, 1947, was announced in January 1948, along with a call to adhere to it without reticence. In that same year, Liaison Couples were established, and the Leadership Team was officially created: Fr. Henri CAFFAREL, Gérard and Madelaine D’HEILLY, Charles RENDY, Pierre and Geneviève POULENC. In March 1950, the Leadership Team was enlarged by a Belgian couple: the HALKINS. In October 1951, the PILLIAS and the MAUNIERs joined; the LAMBERTS were appointed secretaries of the Leadership Team. In

¹³ Ibid. p. 17.

¹⁴ Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF OUR TEAM. Op. cit.

¹⁵ P. Henri CAFFAREL. *L'Anneau d'Or*. Sign of time, sign of grace -Groups of homes. No 30 - November - December 1949, p. 86.

June 1952 the SIPSOMs joined. On June 24, 1953, it was established that the Leadership Team is made up of 6 couples, 3 of which form a reduced committee. At that time the GAYs became part of the team, while the reduced committee was composed of SIPSOM, GAY and PILLIAS; the other three were VILAREM, LAMBERT and MONIER. Fr. DE VAUMAS was chaplain.¹⁶ Jean Allemand, the biographer of Fr. CAFFAREL, presents the following report on the internationalization of the Movement:

*“In 1947..., Teams of Our Lady had crossed the northern border of France to establish themselves in Belgium: the first team began in Tilff in February 1947, followed by others in Liège and Brussels in the same year. In 1950 there were 18 teams in Belgium, 4 or 5 in Switzerland, which together with France makes 122 teams. Plus Tunisia and Luxembourg in 1951, that makes 153 teams. The following year, teams were established in Brazil. A first Dutch team is launched in Belgium. The total number rises to 178. Next comes Spain (1954), Mauritius Island (1955), Holland, Morocco and Canada (1956), etc. In this year, 1956, the number of teams is 470. ... In a short and concise way, this list is indicative of the international momentum of the Movement”.*¹⁷

Fourteen years later, in 1961, the situation was as follows: (See Table N.º 1)

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Jean Allemand, Henri Caffarel - A man seized by God. Teams of Our Lady. 1997, p. 92.

Table N.° 1
**Status of Teams of Our Lady
 1961**

No	Country	Number of Teams
1	France	628
2	Switzerland	30
3	Luxembourg	7
4	Germany	19
5	Austria	2
6	England	3
7	Italy	1
8	Spain	44
9	Portugal	34
10	Algeria	9
11	Tunisia	10
12	Morocco	5
13	Senegal	2
14	Ivory Coast	2
15	Mauritius	11
16	Canada	10
17	United States	4
18	Guadeloupe	3
19	French Guiana	1
20	Brazil	42
21	Colombia	2
22	EPC	13
	Total Teams	882

Source: Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF THE NOTRE-DAME TEAMS 1938-2015.
 Document produced by the S.R. France, Luxembourg, Switzerland.

As can be seen, the multiplication of Teams was very rapid. The couples were happy to make their friends aware of the Movement, a movement that responded to their aspirations. The spread of the magazine *L'Anneau d'Or*, marriage retreats, which were then a novelty, to which the members of the teams invited their married friends, as well as the professional travel abroad of some of their members, contributed greatly to the expansion of the Movement.

It was Fr. CAFFAREL himself who, at the time of his retirement from Teams in 1973, made a synthesis of the evolution of the Movement in France during this first decade:

“The period from 1937 to 1940, although so short, was decisive. A generation of young married couples was irresistibly driven to inquire before the Lord about the Christian riches of love and marriage. They sensed that admirable discoveries were about to happen. Two loves were their strength, their joy and their reason for living: the love of Christ and conjugal love. They were ready to respond unreservedly to the demands of one and the other. -Knowing that the second cannot find its full meaning and dynamism without the first-

From 1940 to 1945, what was later called conjugal and family spirituality was developed. There was great enthusiasm to decipher the almost unexplored territory of Christian spirituality and to live these discoveries as a team, under the rule we had given. Difficult life conditions: war, occupation, poverty, forced them to be not content with pretty ideas but rather to adjust their lives to them.

From 1945 onwards, the groups multiplied in France and beyond its borders; the Movement became aware that it had a responsibility as a Church: what we had discovered and lived through, we were obliged to share with all Christian households who aspired to live their marriage to the fullest. The magazine “L'Anneau d'Or”, founded in the same year, 1945, became the means for dissemination. We had the great hope that the renewal of Christian marriages would contribute to a new youthfulness of the Church”¹⁸.

¹⁸ MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF OUR TEAMS. A DIEU. May June 1973.

Belgium¹⁹ (1947)

In 1946, Fr. CAFFAREL had gone to Belgium several times, seeking the collaboration of two professors and the director of a magazine, for the editing of his magazine *L'Anneau d'Or*, which played a predominant role in the expansion of the Movement in this country.

Already in December 1945, the HALKINs, a couple from Tilff (near Liège), while passing through Paris, were invited by their friends the POU-LENCs, a French couple, to a meeting of their marriage group. Enthused by what they had just discovered, they decided to make these groups known and to promote their creation in their own country. In January 1946, they welcomed Fr. CAFFAREL into their home and invited friends. Successive information meetings were held without leading to the formation of a team.

Once the ground had been prepared, it was necessary to collaborate with another couple (French-Belgian) to make the project a reality. “It was thanks to them that we were able to hold the first team meeting in Tilff on February 11, 1947, with six other married couples.”²⁰

In September 1947, Fr. CAFFAREL preached at the first retreat for married couples in Belgium, in the former abbey of Kortenberg. As a result of this retreat, 4 couples decided to create a team in Brussels: two French couples who had lived this experience in Paris and Rouen respectively, and two Belgian couples who were friends of the Tilff couple. Thus, in November 1947, team 1 of Brussels was born.

In addition, seven couples from Liège, who had also participated in this retreat, formed another new team in December of the same year (Liège 1). This team remained until 1951/1952, when most of its members dispersed mainly to Brussels where they joined the teams of that city. Jean Allemand mentions that “the teams from Liège and Brussels that were

¹⁹ Cfr. Paul and Marie-Jeanne Verduyck, *The history of the Notre-Dame teams in Belgium*. (S.D.).

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 5 (NOTE: The document cited omits the names of the persons and couples cited.).

formed after this retreat were composed of couples who were subscribers to *L'Anneau d'Or* and sympathizers.²¹

At the beginning of 1948 there were 3 teams in Belgium. After a retreat in April, two more teams were born, one in Brussels and one in Waterloo. In September of the same year, Fr. CAFFAREL preached a second retreat in which 26 couples participated. The following month, under his direction, the beginning of the local organization was inaugurated, with a spiritual counselor (SC) from Brussels (who died in 1996) who guaranteed the spiritual direction of the team leaders and the beginning of the secretariat. The first meeting of this team took place in Brussels on November 5, 1948. At the end of that same year another team was formed in Liège.

In January 1949, six teams were represented at the Leadership Team meeting in Paris. In October of the same year Fr. CAFFAREL returned to Kortenberg where he led a retreat, this time reserved for the responsible couples of Teams. In January 1950, he agreed to preach another retreat in Brussels, but on the condition that a minimum of 150 couples attend. More than 350 people came to listen to him.

In May 1950, the first two Belgian sectors were formed, one with a center in Brussels and the other in Liège. In February 1952, the Brussels Sector already had 24 teams. In November 1953, six other teams were created in Liège²².

THE FLEMISH TEAMS

“In 1952, the SC of Antwerp invited some Flemish-speaking couples to a retreat in Kortenberg; there he presented them about Teams and the translations he had made of the *Charter* and the Editorial of *L'Anneau d'Or* on the sit-down. From there team Antwerp 1 was born, piloted by a couple from the Anveres 1 team. In January 1953, the first Monthly Let-

²¹ Jean Allemand. Henri CAFFAREL. A man seized by God. Teams of Our Lady, 1997. P. 93.

²² Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY. Op. Cit.

ter in Dutch appeared, inspired by the French Letter; many other documents were translated and eventually adapted taking into account cultural differences”²³

In February 1956, the Flemish Teams obtained from Paris the creation of an organizational structure that was unprecedented in the Movement: the Dutch “province”, an experimental title given for three years. It was headed by a responsible couple and a complete provincial team, with a SC. It enjoyed a great deal of autonomy over the Antwerp (1956) and then Bruges (1957) sectors, as well as over the Flemish and isolated Dutch Teams.

THE CRISIS AND ITS OUTCOME

In March 1960, the Leading Team “put an end to the failed 3 year experiment, the Dutch “province”, due to some demands which did not fit into the general organization of the Movement. In August 1960, the Dutch-speaking leaders opted for total autonomy.

As far as the French-speaking movement is concerned, the crisis ricocheted very strongly.

In spite of the intervention of many ecclesiastical and lay personalities and of the members of the Teams themselves who were unable to understand what was happening, the crisis broke out when the Belgian Episcopate, in its annual assembly on July 25, 1960, set the conditions that henceforth should be met by any movement of married spirituality “*to be authorized in our dioceses:*”

1. “The appointment of priests assigned in our dioceses to marriage teams as spiritual advisors is to be made by us.
2. The appointment of the leadership teams of the spirituality movements will only become effective with the agreement of the chap-

²³ Ibid. p. 9.

lain who represents the episcopal authority, either at the national or diocesan level, an agreement which will otherwise normally be granted.

3. In application of these principles, unless those marriage teams meet these conditions, they will not be accepted in our Belgian dioceses”.²⁴

“Considering that these conditions could not be applied without affecting the nature of Teams, the Leading Team announced in its letter of September 15, 1960, that it was resigned to “letting all the Belgian Teams couples leave us.” At the time there were 310, of which 208 were French-speaking teams. In a private letter, dated October 8, 1960, Fr. CAFFAREL wrote in his own handwriting: “*Do everything you can in front of all those who meet you so that they may keep in front of their Bishop a deeply religious attitude that is imposed on every true child of the Church.*”²⁵

In a private letter, dated September 15, 1960, Fr. CAFFAREL wrote:

*“We are faced with a painful alternative. Either radically modify the structure of Teams of Our Lady if we want to keep your teams within the Movement, or, if we do not think it is necessary to make these transformations, let all the Belgian Teams’ couples separate from us... Fidelity to the spirit, to the methods, to the characteristics that from the beginning constitute the originality, the force of expansion, the brilliance of Teams of Our Lady, force us to opt for the second alternative”.*²⁶

Finally, “on March 26, 1962, two years later, a letter from the Leading Team announced, ‘*on the happy feast of the Annunciation*’ that an agreement had been reached between the Belgian episcopate and the Leading Team, and that activities could be resumed in Belgium, once the new Sector SCs had been appointed, (Fr. CAFFAREL said): ‘*Let us thank Our Lady! And*

²⁴ Lettre Card. Van Roey, 02-09-1960. Teams of Our Lady, International Archive.

²⁵ Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY. Op. Cit. p. 13.

²⁶ Letter from Fr. CAFFAREL. Paris, September 15, 1960. Teams of Our Lady, International Archive.

the 400 members of the Teams who, in various countries, once a month, dedicated an hour of nightly prayer from the day we instituted this prayer when the serious difficulties in Belgium arose.²⁷

On June 28, 1962, the Leading Team gathered more than a thousand team members in Brussels to reconnect. The meeting, presided over by Fr. CAFFAREL and the couples of the Leading Team, was closed with a Eucharist in the middle of which “*Monsignor Lagasse, Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Malines-Brussels, was charged with maintaining contact with the Belgian Teams by our new Cardinal Monsignor Suenens. We all had a feeling of gratitude for all those who, by their competence and their dedication, allowed Teams to flourish in our country*”.²⁸ The 166 teams registered in October 1958 grew to 422 in 1967.

Egypt (1947)

In relation to the birth of Teams of Our Lady in Egypt, it is recorded that, in February 1947, Fr. CAFFAREL went to Cairo and Alexandria to give several lectures and preach retreats.²⁹ Fr. CAFFAREL himself announced in the sixth editorial of the Letter of Teams: “*After the Mass on the first Saturday of February, to be celebrated at 6:30 (9, rue Gustave Flaubert), I will take the plane to Egypt. There are married couples there who have asked me to give various lectures in Cairo and Alexandria and to preach a retreat (from the 7th to 10th) which I entrust to their fraternal prayers*”.³⁰

In reviewing the correspondence contained in the Movement’s international archive, there are some later references that confirm the existence of Teams in this country some years ago. A first epistolary reference

²⁷ Letter from Fr. CAFFAREL. Paris, March 26, 1962. Teams of Our Lady, International Archive.

²⁸ Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY. Op. Cit. p. 14.

²⁹ Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY. Op. Cit.

³⁰ Teams of Our Lady. Monthly letter. Editorial. February 1st, 1947.

on the origin of Teams in Egypt, is found in a letter from Alexandre and Clémance COBEIN, a couple probably responsible for Teams in Egypt, addressed to Mr. PILLIAS on April 19, 1954 in which they thank him: “The letter of March 26 and the Charter for Teams... We are going to give these documents to our group of married couples and we will not let them ignore your offer to ask questions after a first reading of the CHARTER.³¹ Later, in September of the same year, some contacts with Egyptian couples³² were made.

A second reference, refers to another letter dated June 30, 1963, in which Mr. Guy ARRAULT answers a question from the Leading Team, about the Teams in Egypt: “it would be useful, in fact, to specify that the existing teams are extremely autonomous because the local culture is in favor of independence [...] All these particular aspects make the teams live in a somewhat closed circle and talk in their meetings mainly about their personal successes before anything else [...] Consequently, there are quite a few who consider themselves very different from the Western countries and it is necessary to have a program corresponding more to their temperament”.³³

The third reference corresponds to a letter from Father Raymond GARGOUR, S.J., addressed from Cairo to Fr. CAFFAREL on June 4, 1964, in which he reports: “I continue to serve as chaplain general of the Cairo Teams and I am asked for Topics of Study.”

Consequently, it can be stated that Teams was developed in Egypt between 1947 and 1949, from Fr. CAFFAREL’s trip to Egypt in February 1947, between resident French couples who, for work reasons lived in that country, according to the testimony of Fr. CAFFAREL himself.

³¹ Cf. Teams of Our Lady, International Archive.

³² Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF OUR TEAMS. Op. Cit.

³³ Teams of Our Lady, International Archive. Mr. Guy ARRAULT, seems to be a French military man on mission in Egypt. He, along with his wife Geneviève, belonged to the Villefranche 1 team (Rhône - France).

Brazil³⁴ (1950)

The birth of Teams in Brazil had a dynamic of its own: strictly speaking, they were not taken but brought at the express request of the Brazilians. In fact, in November 1949, a group of couples affiliated with the Marian Congregation listened to a lecture by the Dominican-Canadian father, Marcel Marie DESMARAIS, who had recently arrived from Europe, and who spoke about family. At the end of his conference, he mentioned that while in France, he had met the “couples’ groups of Fr. Henri CAFFAREL”, related to the magazine *L’Anneau d’Or*, whose aspirations were similar to those lived by them.

Due to his good knowledge of French, Pedro Moncau³⁵, was designated to contact Fr. CAFFAREL. He did so in a letter dated November 30, 1949 requesting documented information about his proposal, to which he received an immediate response from Fr. CAFFAREL, on December 15, 1949:

“You can’t imagine the joy and excitement I had when reading your letter. Equally impressive was the thought that, across the ocean, relationships could be established, thanks to L’Anneau d’Or that I founded and whose direction I took on... I don’t want to be satisfied with just sending you the documentation; I want to tell you how much your letter interested and touched me. To discover that, on the other side of the world, there are married couples with the same Christian ambitions and aspirations, who make a similar effort, is infinitely comforting. It is very good to think that we can help them in their efforts.”³⁶

³⁴ The central ideas of this section were taken from Nancy Cajado Moncau’s book, *EQUIPES DE NOSSA SENHORA NO BRASIL -Ensaio sobre seu Histórico*, Nova Bandeira Produções Editoriais, São Paulo, 2000.

³⁵ Pedro Moncau was the person appointed by God to take the teams to Brazil. His concern for knowing the Movement deeply led him to have Fr. CAFFAREL himself say: “Pedro is one of the people in the world who best learned what the Teams are” (*Ibid.*, p. 127).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

This letter of the Founder was considered by Nancy Moncau as the Birth Certificate of Teams in Brazil.

Thus, says Nancy Moncau:

“1950 marks a new phase in our life. We made the discovery of Teams of Our Lady. Through it we had the same impression that a sailor must feel who, having lost his way, glimpses on the horizon a ship that will be able to lead them to a good port. We made the discovery of God’s thought about human love; the true sense of the flesh, until now considered more or less suspicious; and the dimensions of paternity. We discovered the sense of community of family and understood that, in deciding to make our home a living cell of the Church, it is in the construction of the church itself that we are working.³⁷

In this way, a fruitful epistolary communication began through 130 letters³⁸, between the MONCAU couple and Fr. CAFFAREL. He sent them the documentation through Gérard D’HEILLY, the first liaison couple. The documents were translated for the first team of Teams Our Lady which was launched in São Paulo on May 13, 1950 and composed of five couples. Helping them was Bishop Aginaldo GONZÁLES who, due to his delicate state of health, was replaced after the first three meetings by Fr. Oscar MELANSON, CSC. This is how Brazil became the first non-French speaking country to welcome Teams of Our Lady. Not without first receiving some advice from the founder of the Teams of Our Lady: *“Allow me, however, to invite you to begin only with couples who are very deeply desirous of understanding in depth the demands of their faith and living them deeply. It is better to go slowly and with a sure step; it is better to have few teams in a region, but teams who are joyful, bearers of a clear message”*.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid, p. 23.

³⁸ Information provided by Peter Nadas. February 2020.

³⁹ Quoted by Jean Allemand. Henri CAFFAREL: A man seized by God. Teams of Our Lady. p.96.



Team 1 of São Paulo, founded on May 13, 1950. From left to right: Mercedes and Alberto CRUZ, Andreotti and Aurea, Aienza and Domingas, Nancy and Pedro MONCAU. Absent: Sally and Athur VOLPI and Cecilia and Pedro SANTORO.

The first team was piloted by correspondence from France by couples who were well acquainted with the Movement and who soon traveled to Brazil to meet the couples of the Team personally. This piloting continued for several years, firmly directing the development of the Movement in this country. The frequent visits of European couples, members of Teams, reinforced the formation of the first teams.

Following the advice of Fr. CAFFAREL, only two years later, in 1952, the second team was formed.

In July 1957, Fr. CAFFAREL made his first visit to Brazil.⁴⁰



Father Oscar MELANSON, CSC - SC of the first Brazilian team.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

“It was a Pentecost, according to Pedro Moncau, only then we really understood the whole dimension of the Movement, all the demands of its spirituality... The fruits of that visit were very important and visible. He had the gift of awakening a true missionary spirit in all those who attended his conferences and enjoyed his conviviality. Encouraged by a great enthusiasm and by a better knowledge of the richness of the Movement, the couples left ready to found teams in all the places they could reach. Since then, the Movement has been expanding in Brazil...”⁴¹

In this regard, the MONCAUS wrote, we cannot fail to convey to them the words that Fr. CAFFAREL addressed to us upon his return to France and which are still relevant today:

“My recommendation,” he wrote, “is the same as the one I made to them personally: The maximum of mysticism and the maximum of discipline. It is necessary that the teams be, above all, the barn where the Lord finds men and women capable of giving testimony of Christ before their brothers, both in the humblest places and in the highest strata. However, this will not be possible if our teams are not true schools of Christian life, examples of charity, schools of prayer, cenacles where the apostles of Christ open their hearts to the Spirit of God. It is necessary that each one of you strive, daily, towards that Christian perfection to which Jesus Christ invited us when he said:



Pedro and Nancy MONCAU, the couple who initiated Teams in Brazil, accompanied by Fr. Henri CAFFAREL, on the occasion of his first visit to Brazil in July 1957. São Paulo - Brazil.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 60.

‘Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. You need to help each other achieve that perfection.’⁴²

As for the maximum of mysticism and discipline recommended by the founder, many couples were reluctant to accept the rules of the game proposed and tried from the beginning to introduce reforms that would make the compromise easier. However, this was not allowed by those responsible for the moment: “With great sadness, says Nancy MONCAU, we have seen couples leave who we would have liked to keep at our side and whom we personally esteemed very much. Nevertheless, we have respected their opinion and their freedom. We have the clear impression, Pedro wrote to Fr. CAFFAREL in 1960, “that many lay people and priests are still not convinced that marriage is a path to perfection.”⁴³

This was a consequence of the low esteem of the laity within the Church, since the Second Vatican Council had not yet taken place, and



Valinhos. First Training Session. Nancy and Pedro MONCAU, Fr. Henri CAFFAREL, on the occasion of his second visit to Brazil, and Fr. Lionel CORBEIL, SCE, São Paulo, October 1962.

it was difficult for a strictly lay movement to enjoy the sympathy of the clergy, notwithstanding the valuable collaboration of not a few priests, among them, Fr. Oscar MELANSON and Fr. Lionel CORBEIL.

On his first visit in 1957, Fr. CAFFAREL found 13 teams formed. Five years later during his second visit in November 1962, he found 167 teams. The Move-

⁴² MONCAU, Nancy and Pedro. Lecture given in Aparecida - Brazil, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Teams of Brazil. May 1980. Teams of Our Lady, International Archive. Pg. 5.

⁴³ MONCAU, Nancy. THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY IN BRAZIL. Extract from the third chapter of the biography of Pedro Moncau, sent to Louis and Marie D’Amonville in a letter dated October 1992. Teams of Our Lady. International Archives.

ment was in full expansion. In 1972 he made a third visit and that year he found 350 teams.

This third visit that lasted 16 days, the most abundant in fruits precisely in relation to the “profound formation” on which he insisted so much. “The two weeks that Fr. CAFFAREL spent among us were so dense that their impact has marked us until today,” says Nancy MONCAU⁴⁴. In fact, with an intense schedule, he held two training sessions, three days each, in two different cities, one in Itaicí and the other in Florianópolis, with 150 couples and two priests attending, plus three General Meetings, in São Paulo, Florianópolis and Rio de Janeiro, with hundreds of couples, dozens of priests and several Bishops and guests representing various family movements.

It is appropriate to mention here the creation of the Interregional Coordination Team -ECIR- a structure designed for a totally new situation due to the distance between the two countries (Brazil and France) and the size of the former. This structure, agreed upon by Fr. CAFFAREL and the MONCAUs, was established in November 1962 and lasted until 1999, when it was replaced by the Super-Region.

Fr. CAFFAREL also returned to France very well impressed by the result of this, his third visit to Brazil:

“Invited by the leaders of Teams, I just spent fifteen days in Brazil. There I had numerous occasions to meet both leaders and the members of the teams. I participated in a Training Session for leaders in the



Fr. Henri CAFFAREL giving a lecture during his third visit to Brazil, September 1972 São Paulo, Brazil.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.115.

vicinity of São Paulo (approximately 200 people) and another one in Florianópolis (approximately 100 people).

This was my third trip: the first fifteen years ago, the second ten years ago. Once again, I noted that in America as in Europe, the same difficulties, the same problems are encountered, as well as couples committed to the Movement who bring moving testimonies about the transformation that team life has brought about in their couple and family life. At no time did I feel like a stranger (despite the language I do not understand); I experienced the same quality of fraternal friendship and the same spirituality.

*I was particularly impressed by the order, the method, the rigorous organization and that policy of training leaders which, after three years, has shown itself to be particularly effective and promising. It was a whole harvest of memories, of observations, of reflections that I brought with me. So many friendships, old and new”.*⁴⁵

In summary, the experience of Brazil shows clearly the necessity that the message of the Gospel and of the Movement be transmitted in a personal way by those who live it deeply. In this case, who better than the founder himself, but in other cases, as we will see later, by members of Teams, some of whom knew Fr. CAFFAREL personally, and others convinced they have lived the charisma, the mysticism, and pedagogy of Teams.

In any case, as Pedro and Nancy MONCAU expressed it: “We have no doubt that we owe everything to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, because the beginning and expansion of the Movement, without that help, would have been more than impossible”.⁴⁶

In the process of expansion of the Movement in Brazil, one should not ignore the work done by the liaison couples (Gérard D’HEILLY, Jean

⁴⁵ MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF OUR TEAMS. RETURN OF THE BRÉSIL. November-December 1972.

⁴⁶ MONCAU, Pedro and Nancy. Testimony of Pedro and Nancy. Paris, 1977, Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

PILLIAS, Pierre POULENC and PICOT) who between 1949 and 1959 through correspondence, successfully transmitted the guidance and vision of Fr. CAFFAREL on all aspects of the Movement, including a serious call to keep discipline in the whole organization.

This discipline comprised several fundamental stages: First, the admission of a team to the Movement, which depended on a formal acceptance to commit to follow the guidelines (Admission was approved by the Leadership Team in Paris.) Secondly, after two years, the team requested the solemn commitment of all team members to accept the Statutes with all their obligations, while at the same time stating they understood this was the path that would lead them to holiness.

Note, likewise, the origin of the devotion of Teams of Brazil to the person of Fr. CAFFAREL, who is considered a true father. This enthusiasm and devotion to the person of the Founder, perceived by the leaders of the International Leading Team (ERI) Gérard and Marie-Christine DE ROBERTY, together with their Counselor, Mgr. FLEISCHMANN during his 2003 visit, became a motive to introduce the cause of beatification for Fr. CAFFAREL.

Tunisia⁴⁷ (1951)

Francis and Germaine de BAECQUE, a French couple linked to Teams in France, were assigned to Tunisia for work in May 1949. At the time, Tunisia was a French protectorate where the French colony had about 250,000 people composed of farmers, concentrated mainly in the north of the country, industrialists, traders and temporary officials in the high positions of public administration and a large number of officials mainly in the government.

During the 1949-50 school year, the DE BAECQUE family made contact with the French people living in the capital and its surroundings (100 km around); they told them about Teams and tried to start a small group.

⁴⁷ LES EQUIPES EN TUNESIE (1947- 1958). Teams of Our Lady, International Archive.

In November 1950, they invited Fr. CAFFAREL for a week, including the two corresponding weekends. On the first of these, he was invited to a one-day retreat on the theme of conjugal spirituality; about a hundred people attended. During the second about twenty married couples were invited to a retreat from Friday to Sunday. As a result of his visit, the first teams were created in Tunisia. The White Fathers accepted to be the SCs of many of the teams. Michel and Marie-Jo SOURDILLAT were named the liaison couple.

In November 1951, Fr. CAFFAREL returned and gave the same two retreats as the previous year. He was also invited to the rural area where he established contact with farmers at a meeting in Thibar, at the White Fathers' novitiate and agricultural training center.

In this way, Teams developed very quickly with the support of the Archbishop who chose them as a family vocation movement, as well as influencing the various social milieus. "On September 18, 1952, the Tunisia Sector was created."⁴⁸

The annual retreats continued to be repeated yearly, with the presence of Fathers CARRÉ and D'HEILLY, the latter, during the years 1953, 1954 and 1955, moved around the country. A sector was created with the spiritual assistance of Fr. André COLLINI who was later appointed bishop in 1962.

When the BAECQEs left in April 1954, they left the sector in the hands of Norbert and Germaine BOURRET. There were, at that time, a dozen teams over two thirds of the country's territory. A team made up of naval officers in Bizert, operated as a center for the dissemination of the Movement.

In July 1954, Tunisia obtains its autonomy, which creates a great disturbance among the French who try to return quickly to their home country. In June 1955, BOURGUIBA returned to Tunisia and took over the leadership of the government, making negotiations with France even more difficult. In May 1956, the country obtains total independence. This fact accelerates the return of the French to their country and the Tunisian teams disappear.

⁴⁸ Histoire des EQUIPES Notre -Dame. Op cit.

Morocco⁴⁹ (1952)

The origin of Teams in Morocco is presented in a somewhat confusing and at the same time surprising way from the study of existing archives.

In an unsigned letter (attributed to some SC), dated February 8, 1952, it is affirmed that, “at present there are no groups of couples constituted in Morocco, at least belonging to Teams of Our Lady... Nevertheless, on February 20 of the same year, in a letter signed by Y. BARBARIN, it was affirmed that: “It is difficult for me to speak to you in detail about all our groups which are very diverse. I will limit myself to providing you with some details.”

For Jean PILLIAS this situation was absolutely surprising, according to a letter dated December 31, 1952: “Through Mr. BARBARIN, on the occasion of his visit to Paris, I received very precise information about the existence of 24 groups in Morocco; however, I confess that I was very surprised to hear for the first time about the existence of so many teams in Morocco”.

Several requests for documentation on Teams of Our Lady were registered between 1956 and 1966: a letter dated December 16, 1958 from Gilbert and Nicole FERRY of the Leadership Team to Mr. and Mrs. MELANO, residents of Kenitra states: “We hope that you will be able to see Fr. CAF-FAREL in Casablanca during his visit.” Finally, in a letter dated February 8, 1956, Michel and Bernadette FOUCARD confirmed the existence of teams in Casablanca and Rabat.

Much later, in a letter from Henry and Marie-Odile CHAUVIN to Pierre and Silvie NÖEL, dated March 20, 1985, it is stated that: “*Unfortunately, there have been no Teams in Morocco for more than fifteen years*”, that is since 1970, which leads one to think they did exist before that date.

An explanation was given to us, in the sense that those first groups were all made up of French couples living in Morocco at the time, but that

⁴⁹ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

as a result of the war in 1956, all the French left the country and, consequently, those teams ended.⁵⁰

So far, we have no information about the renaissance of Teams in Morocco.

Mauritius⁵¹ (1953)

In 1953, Father Jean MARGÉOT (who was later ordained bishop and then appointed cardinal), after a meeting with Fr. CAFFAREL in Paris, on his return to Mauritius, contacted Vincent KOENIG, whose spiritual director and friend he was, and proposed the formation of a team for some young couples. The team was made of six couples who wanted to increase their faith in order to love God and their spouse better. They were: Rose May and Pierre DU MÉE, Françoise and Vincent KOENIG, Rosy and Alphonse RAFFRAY, Sylvie and Pierre NOEL, Jacqueline and Edouard ANTELME, Gilberte and Gérard NOEL. The first meeting took place in October 1953 in the home of Pierre and Ros May DU MÉE.

In 1955, the second team was created with five couples and, at the end of 1958, a “Coordination Team” was created for the first five teams whose responsible couple was Paul and Yolande BRUMAN with Fr, MARGÉOT as SC. The liaison couple in France were: Marcel and Marie-France PAVIE. In December 1970, a new region was created, bringing together the teams of Mauritius, Reunion and Madagascar under the leadership of a Mauritian couple, Cyrille and Colette D’ARIFAT. In December 1977, Father MORTIER and Edmond and Janine TOCCHIO led a training session and held several meetings in Mauritius⁵².

Mauritius today has 59 teams divided into three sectors.

⁵⁰ Interview with Gérard and Marie-Christine DE ROBERTY, June 29, 2017.

⁵¹ “Former National Leaders with an Open Heart. In the Letter of the Teams of Our Lady of Mauritius. No. 18 - Octobre, 2013, pp. 32-34.

⁵² History of Equipes Notre-Dame. Op. cit.

Senegal⁵³ (1953)

The first teams in Senegal were initially made up of French aid workers and missionary Fathers generally sent on mission for a period of two years. The members of these teams, once they had finished their service, returned to France without leaving a written memory. Their interest was not expansionist but mainly to live the joy of sharing and helping each other in their life as a couple.

Senegal, the capital of French-speaking West Africa at the time, was the first African country to know Teams, whose first team began activities in 1953 with couples of French origins, promoted by Mr. BALLERAU and his wife who, at the time, lived in Senegal. Fr. Henri CAFFAREL visited Dakar in 1954 to encourage and support this first team.

It was much later, with the help of a missionary priest, that the Senegalese and other Africans began to integrate. Starting in 1970, they took to heart the expansion of the Movement in Senegal.

Thus, through fruitful exchanges and discussions, it was possible to rebuild the Dakar 1 team composed, among other couples, by Graziella and Louis ARQUIER, Jacqueline and Miche BOSCH, Jeanne and Robert MARTET without forgetting the JOURDANS, the LATRASSEs and the SC Yves GOUGET.

Pauline and Libourne SAGNA and Angélique and Jean Pierre DIATTA should be mentioned as Senegalese pioneer couples. Angélique continues to belong to Teams and was part of the attendees of the International Gathering of Fatima in 2018. Her husband Jean Pierre passed away years ago.



Pauline y Libourne SAGNA – Pioneer couple in Senegal.

⁵³ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE – History of Teams of Our Lady.

Similarly, we should mention Fr. Jean Marie NDOUR, who has 26 years in Teams; today he is the current SC of the Region.

In 1960, 2 teams were registered in Dakar and in 1966 3 teams, Dakar 1 and 3, but Dakar 2 and 4 had disappeared, while Dakar 5 had just separated from Teams.

Belgian Congo⁵⁴ (First stage) (1954)

As a precedent, it is necessary to mention that in Central Africa at that time (1951) there were several teams, one of them in Brazzaville formed by European couples. It should also be mentioned that in the parish of Notre-Dame in Pointe-Noir there was a group of “Christian married couples” who followed a fairly free path of spirituality.

From the analysis of correspondence found in the international archive of Teams in Paris, it is deduced that in 1955 there was a team in Coquillat Ville, but the date when it was created is not known (probably in 1954). It seems the SC was Fr. CALCIUS of the mission of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart. However, it is recorded that in August of the same year, a second team was formed after a retreat. It says the SC is the same as the first team and a couple from that team serves as the liaison couple.

Later, Father J. DELCOURT, became part of the Movement of Teams of Our Lady and, under the direction of the couple DESCUBES DE CLAMART, formed Teams in Congo in 1962, with the participation of six couples. Due to the movement of the couples for different reasons, they progressively reduced to three.

Precisely for this reason, Fr. DELCOURT sent a letter to Fr. CAF-FAREL, asking him to be a little lax in receiving new couples, since at that time they were required to study the Charter in depth (for three months) before becoming part of a team. In response to this request, on June 4,

⁵⁴ See also in the section Second wave of expansion: i. Democratic Republic of Congo.

1962, Fr. CAFFAREL, through another person (whose name was not recorded), responded favorably to Fr. DELCOURT.

The official creation of the first team in Kolwezi, Zaire, was in September 1967, on the initiative of a Belgian priest, Fr. BONNET. It was formed with seven African couples and became official in September 1973. The following commentary is made about this team:

“...However, we see the embryo of an Africanization (of Teams) being drawn, for which we are very happy... we attach copies of two study topics: Love and Marriage, revised and corrected in order to make them more accessible to African couples, which we found very appropriate and well adapted...⁵⁵

Spain⁵⁶ (1954)

Teams of Our Lady arrived in Spain through Barcelona and, almost immediately, thereafter, Madrid, Seville, Valencia and Vigo.

In Barcelona, the contacts with Fr. CAFFAREL begin and in June 1954 the responsible couple for the foreign teams, Jean and Jacqueline PILLIAS, visited Barcelona for four days to share about the Movement. In July of the same year, piloting of the Barcelona-1 team begins.

Pep PEREÑA and Manel NIUBÓ, having read the magazine *L'Anneau d'Or*, asked themselves the question, “Why don't we do something similar here?”

“This is how we began, bringing together a group of Christian families that soon led to the first “Mare de Déu” team in Barcelona and would later spread throughout Catalonia and the whole of Spain”.

⁵⁵ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

⁵⁶ Barrecheguren-Fernandez, Jaime and Maria Jose. Spain- Summary History. Document reviewed by Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer. Valencia, February 26, 2017.



A group of the first married couples in Barcelona.
Fr. CAFFAREL is bent over, and a priest in a cassock,
the spiritual counselor of team No. 5 in Barcelona named
Francesc VERGÉS Y VIVES.

Because the group in Barcelona consisted of ten or twelve couples, it was divided in two, following the directions of Paris. The couples PEREÑA, PLABOSCH, VILA, BELLORBÍ, NINOT and PUYOL formed the Barcelona-1 team. They sought the advice of Fr. Joaquín ROIG, pastor of a parish in Barcelona. Today the team is made up of the PUYOL-SERRA couple, three widows and another spiritual counselor⁵⁷.



Barcelona. A procession in which Father CAFFAREL
is among the first four and among the next four is the SC,
Francesc VERGÉS Y VIVES, with glasses and looking down.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.1.

In Madrid around 1956, a group of married couples of which the ASENS were part, learned about the existence of Teams through a brother who lived in Barcelona. They got in touch with the Movement in Paris and with the help of Constantin and Geneviève SIPSOM and materials received from Barcelona, began the piloting of Madrid-1, with Father Florencio LÓPEZ OLIVARES as SC.



Almagro 2 Team, Central Region, Spain Super-Region.

In Seville, the first teams were created in 1958, 1959 and 1962.⁵⁸ “When we wrote to Paris to ask for entry into Teams of Our Lady, they found it excessive to start so many groups at once, so it was decided the first piloting group would begin with the couples BORRERO-CARRERO, GAMERO-ROJAS, DE LA CONCHA-ABREU, PLANAS-DE ALFONSO and VILLALVA-BASABE. This first piloting was carried out by the ARAGAY couple and was done from Barcelona, by mail, practically without documentation, but with a lot of good will from everyone.

At the same time teams are piloted in Seville, piloting begins in nearby towns and other locations where team members have friends: Villafranca de los Barros, Jaén, Jerez de la Frontera, Rio Tinto, Linares, Málaga,

⁵⁸ Cf. Teams of Our Lady. The Teams of Our Lady in Seville. November 2005.

Cordoba, Huelva, Granada....the piloting couples attended from Seville all meetings.

In 1959, a Responsible Couples Day was organized with the assistance of Father CAFFAREL and the SIPSOM couple, from the Leading Team of Paris. In Madrid, in 1960, a Teams conference was organized, the first to be held in Spain. It was directed by Father CAFFAREL with the assistance of couples from Spain, France and Portugal.

In Valencia, between 1957 and 1961, Father Santiago MARTÍNEZ, with the help of the ASENS from Madrid, piloted the first four teams from groups that had their roots in the movement “*For a Better World*” founded in Rome by Father LOMBARDI, S.J.

Thus, the Movement began its rapid spread throughout Spain. In barely five years the teams in Spain multiplied by six. In the 64-65 school year there were already 277 teams, distributed in three Regions: Barcelona (including the Northeast of Spain from the Basque Country and Navarre), The Middle (including the Northwest of Spain up to Galicia) and South (including Extremadura, Andalusia and Levante).



Illescas Sector. Teams Santa Cruz 1 and 2.

Portugal⁵⁹ (1955)

In May 1955, the first two teams were born almost simultaneously in Lisbon. As a result of a series of retreats preached by Fr. Alphonse D'HEILLY, Team 1 was formed. Their first meeting took place at the home of Maria and Pedro AVILLEZ, on Avenida Emilio Navarro, in Cascais. With the collaboration of their partners, Team 2 was soon formed in Lisbon. In mid-June 1956, Team Lisbon 3 was created. The fourth in Almada (1956) and the fifth in Oporto (March 1957).



Sintra-Portugal- Couples of the Lisbon 1 Team, with their children.

In the same year, Fr. CAFFAREL visited Lisbon and gave his full support to the new Movement. “...We had the joy of hosting Fr. CAFFAREL in our home in Paço d’Arcos when he came to Lisbon to give his support to the Movement which was just beginning”⁶⁰

In Porto, the teams were born differently from those in Lisbon. In 1956, the first team came about as a result of a request for information directly from the Secretariat in Paris. Emilia and Manuel CUHNA were the first to meet Fr. CAFFAREL personally in his office in Paris. They re-

⁵⁹ TEACHING. The Teams of Our Lady in Portugal. Origins and Stages. NOW Publications. 2005.

⁶⁰ Maria Teresa and Fernando PINTO LETTE. Op. Cit. Pg. 40.

membered this meeting very well, because they returned from it enthusiastically to promote the Movement in Porto. The piloting of the first team was done remotely from Paris. On November 7, 1957, the Porto 1 team received a letter from the Leading Team, telling them “*we receive you with an open heart into the great family of the Teams of Our Lady*”.⁶¹ Then, on June 5, 1958, Team Porto 2 was officially admitted into the Movement. From then on began a rapid dissemination of the Movement along with various apostolates.



Porto-first team, from left to right, Fr VARGAS, Carlos and Eduarda FREITAS, María Jesús and Carlos BEIRES, Emilia and Manuel CUHNA, José and María Augusta BEIRES, María and Francisco ABRUNHOSA, Susana and Carlos SOUSA GUEDES.

In 1956 the first team was formed in Coimbra, at the initiative of Fr. Mario BRANCO, who already had an in-depth knowledge of the Movement. Shortly thereafter, a second team was formed, and many others would follow, generally made up of people from the university. From the beginning, the Movement was very well received by the bishop of the diocese, who gave it all his support.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 56.

On the work of deepening the faith and conjugal spirituality, the SC Fr. Manuel LEAL PEDROSA states:

“Much is due to Fr. CAFFAREL, whom I had the grace to meet and listen to in various circumstances and places. His passion, discipline, capacity for reflection, spirit of faith and prayer deeply marked the Movement and, very particularly, those who had the privilege of sharing with him. He made us perceive that his action, together with that of the responsible team that supported him, was a breath of new life that the Spirit of God was communicating to his Church.”⁶²

Canada⁶³ (1956)

The first dissemination of Teams in Canada was recorded in Teams archive in March 1956⁶⁴, and started as follows:

Through the reading of the magazine *L'Anneau d'Or* a group of young couples from the Scouts group, decide to invite Fr. CAFFAREL to meet them to learn about his Movement. From this meeting, on August 7, 1956, Team 1 of Montreal was born. It was created by Ghislaine and Fernand BÉLANGER and Gabrielle and Gérard LAPOINTE. From that moment, Teams quickly flourished in the province of Quebec, both in Montreal and in Quebec City, and its surroundings.

Several visits from members of the Leadership Team, later the Leading Team, and then the International Leading Team (ERI) are registered in this first period of formation of Teams in Canada. The following are the most important visits: October 1964: Father VAN WYSBERGHE and the SIPSOMs (at that time 24 teams were registered in Canada). September 1968: Father Henri CAFFAREL. April 1969 and December 1970: Michel and Bernadette FOUCARD. November 1972: Daniel and Magdeleine FLACH. October 1977: Jean and Annick ALLEMAND⁶⁵.

⁶² Testimony of Father Manuel Leal Pedrosa. Ibid. p. 71.

⁶³ Cf. Canada - 60 years - Hommage (PowerPoint). Historique Canada (Word). ERI, Teams of Our Lady in the World Today, P. 36.

⁶⁴ Teams of Our Lady. Op. Cit.

⁶⁵ History of Equipes Notre-Dame. Op. Cit.

In 2001 Father Augusto GARCÍA, a Colombian member of the Eudist community, formed the first team in Edmonton, Alberta, on the west side of Canada with Spanish speaking couples.



Alberta. First annual retreat. May 29th, 2004.

In April 2006, a couple from Colombia who belonged to Teams in their country moved to London, Ontario and in 2007 formed the first team. Both teams are Spanish speaking.

In the fall of 2007, the first team of the Toronto Sector begins its piloting guided by a couple from the city of Buffalo, New York. This pilot couple traveled 2 hours each month to offer the piloting to 6 couples. This is how the Durham 1 team starts its trajectory in the province of Ontario. This team is English speaking.

In December 2012, the first Portuguese language team is created in Edmonton. In 2013, in Ottawa, the first English-speaking team is created. With great enthusiasm, in 2014, 18 Spanish speaking couples start piloting in Winnipeg, guided by the Edmonton team. In 2016, a team of young couples begins piloting in Portuguese, having moved from Brazil to Calgary, Alberta.



Winnipeg. Attendance at the first annual retreat. 2016.

Recently, with open arms and great solidarity, Canada welcomed a group of couples from Syria in the province of Quebec. These couples who belonged to Teams in Syria today continue their journey in the city of Montreal. It is the first Arabic speaking team in Canada.

Colombia⁶⁶ (1957)

It all began with the visit of Fr. Henri CAFFAREL to Colombia in 1957, on his return from his first visit to Brazil. He was formally invited by Fr. Rafael SARMIENTO, National Director of Catholic Action, who, in the name of the Colombian Episcopate, visited him in his office in Paris and invited him to “come to our country and spread the seeds of his admirable Movement...”, Fr. CAFFAREL responded: *“I accept and in the name of Jesus and Mary, we will throw the net in the Colombian soil”*. Initially, a meeting was held with Fr. CAFFAREL in a theater in Bogotá, with a full house. Later, Fr. CAFFAREL met, for a week, every night, with about 15 couples in the house of Ignacio and Cecilia CARRIZOSA.

⁶⁶ Teams of Our Lady. 50 YEARS. Teams of Our Lady. COLOMBIA 1961 -2011.

This first trip occurred from July 19-30, 1957. The result of this trip was the creation of two teams that were entrusted to Pierre and Geneviève POULENC, as a liaison couple. The following are the members of these first teams.

First team: Alvaro ORTEGA and Beatriz Lleras de ORTEGA; Carlos ARBELAEZ and Leonor CARRIZOSA de ARBELAEZ; José Vicente LOMBANA and Lucía CÓRDOBA de LOMBANA; Gabriel SUÁREZ and Josefina SUÁREZ de SUÁREZ; José María ESGUERRA and Ana PORTOCARRERO de ESGUERRA; Luis Carlos DE ANGULO and Helena PIÑEROS de DE ANGULO; Ignacio CARRIZOSA and Cecilia RESTREPO de CARRIZOSA. The SC of this first team was Fr. Jorge RESTREPO.



Bogotá 1957 - Members of the First Team. In the second row in the center Fr. Henri CAFFAREL. On his right Fr. Rafael SARMIENTO and Fr. Jorge RESTREPO.

Second team: Alfonso MARTÍNEZ and Estela MARTÍNEZ de MARTÍNEZ; Fernando VÉLEZ and Lucía ESCALLÓN de VÉLEZ; Manuel CARRIZOSA and María Teresa RICAURTE de CARRIZOSA; Julio OSORIO and Leonor PIEDRAHITA de OSORIO; Alfonso UCRÓS and Inés ARCINIEGAS de UCRÓS; Rito MUÑOZ and Odilia HERNÁNDEZ

de MUÑOZ; Pablo HENAO and María Helena DE BRIGARD de HENAO; Carlos TORRES and Cecilia SALDARRIAGA de TORRES. The SC of this second team was Fr. Luis MONTALVO.

In a letter to Pierre POULENC, dated July 23, 1957, Fr. CAFFAREL tells him about his impressions of his visit to Bogotá:

“My dear Pierre,

My journey is going on as planned. It is possible that here in Colombia the Movement will have great growth and importance. It seems that many couples are ready to live the experience of Teams and Father Sarmiento, because of his great importance at the head of all Latin America, seems determined not only to support it but to actively develop it.

I have been meeting every night with the 15 base couples. They are going to form 2 or maybe 3 teams [...] So, here too my trip seems to have been very providential. Now, I am more aware than ever of the considerable role that Teams can play in the most diverse Christian environments. It is certainly a great joy, but at the same time it brings me an immense responsibility.⁶⁷

On September 16, 1957, two months after Fr. CAFFAREL’s visit, Cecilia and Ignacio CARRIZOSA wrote to the Leadership Team: “Father CAFFAREL has made the deepest most profound impression on us and has initiated us into a new life, creating a bond of friendship in Christ, the fruits of which will surely be great.”⁶⁸

For a long period of time, communications between the nascent movement and the Leadership Team were cut off. The cause of this silence was unknown and continued until, in September 1961, “Antoine DE LA PANOUSSE together with his wife Solenge made a business trip to Colombia. At the express request of the Leadership Team⁶⁹, they made contact

⁶⁷ Letter from Fr. Henri CAFFAREL to Pierre Poulenc, Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

⁶⁸ Letter from Cecilia and Ignacio CARRIZOSA to the Leadership Team. Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

⁶⁹ From 1960 onwards, the Leadership Team changed its name to Directing Center.

with the couples of the first team. They found two teams: the first one was made of 12 couples, several of whom had been with the team from the start; the second one, with 8 couples, had started in May 1961". They meet, then, with the first group of couples. They told the group "*You must start again,*" and offered to be the Team's pilots. In January 1962, the Leadership Team in France informed the Movement about the official admission of Team Bogotá¹ in December 1961.

In 1969 there were already 15 teams in Bogotá, 2 in Fontibón and 1 in Cali. Thus, the teams began to grow in Colombia with the generous and intrepid support of the Bogotá teams.

In July 1977, Father Roger TANDONNET, together with Louis and Marie D'AMONVILLE, the Counselor and members of the International Leading Team respectively, visited the Teams in Colombia. In November of the same year, Marcelo and Esther MOREIRA DE AZEVEDO, held a formation session and reorganized the Region.⁷⁰ It is essential to mention the important participation of this Brazilian couple who had known Fr. CAFFAREL personally and who were appointed liaison couple of the Latin American teams outside Brazil, in July 1977. Their influence was decisive. Thanks to them the Movement in Colombia drank the spirit of the Founder through the charism, the mysticism and the pedagogy of Teams of Our Lady, receiving a fundamental impulse for its future development.

Thanks to the support of the Bogotá teams, Teams arrived in Neiva in 1975, but the first attempt failed. Later, in September 1982, an information meeting chaired by Father Alberto ARENAS, S.J. and the couple of Julio and Luz Clara GARCÍA, took place in the Colonial Temple of Neiva and was attended by twenty invited couples.

The first team meeting was held at the home of Edilberto and Amelia GUTIÉRREZ; 13 couples and Father Manuel Antonio PARRA attended. The pilots, Julio and Luz Clara GARCÍA, traveled 250 km from Bogotá on Saturdays, and on the same day held the preparatory meeting with the ple-

⁷⁰ History of Equipes Notre-Dame. Op. cit.

nary meeting in the evening. On Sunday they returned to their home. That perseverance was what motivated the pioneer couples to walk in Teams. In order to grow and to know the mystique of the Movement, the couples had to go to Bogotá to participate in the different events. The dynamics of Neiva's Teams led to the subsequent creation of the Southern Colombia Region which today has 10 sectors and 103 teams.

Another fundamental place in the development of Teams in Colombia was the city of Pereira. In fact, Nora and Ernesto FRANCO, a married couple from Teams of Our Lady of Bogotá, who sowed the seeds of the Movement in various parts of the country, created Teams 1 and 2 in Pereira in 1993 with the support of Bishop Fabio SUESCUN MUTIS, who before being appointed bishop had been a SC of a team in Bogotá. Nora and Ernesto accompanied these two teams as pilots, acting as SC was Father José Manuel ACOSTA who had known Teams in Africa.

Today, Pereira's teams are the leaders of the Colombia-West region, which has 10 sectors and 86 teams. Progressively, the Colombia-North region was created with 5 sectors and 52 teams; the Colombia-Northwest region with 5 sectors and 45 teams; and the Colombia-Southwest region with 14 sectors and 106 teams. Today the Colombia Super-Region has a total of 62 sectors, 519 teams, 3,015 couples, 29 widows and widowers, 405 SC and 7 spiritual companions.⁷¹

Germany⁷² (1958)

Teams of Our Lady in Germany started simultaneously in different locations with independent origins. In the Archives of the Leadership Team there is mention of a first dissemination in Germany on March 4 and 5, 1956.⁷³ Each group first met some time before its creation at the Paris

⁷¹ Teams of Our Lady in the World Today. 2018. P. 25.

⁷² EQUIPES NOTRE -DAME.

⁷³ History of Teams of Our Lady. Op. cit.

meeting and the first Formation Session took place in Koenigstein from May 10-14, 1961, with 40 people in attendance⁷⁴.

In the fall of 1958, the STRIEWE couple, together with the BURG-GRAF couple and some French couples, attended a briefing on the Movement of Teams of Our Lady. The STRIEWE couple and three other couples decided to join. The team was led by the SEIFRIED couple from Frankfurt and two years later in 1960 it was officially welcomed by Teams. Sometime later, Paderborn became the fifth sector, following Essen, Freiburg, Munich and Vienna.

Fr. Heinz SCHRECKENBERG arrived in Paderborn in 1964, where he got to know Teams, which at that time had 12 teams. When he was transferred to Dortmund, he founded a team that was integrated with the Paderborn group. Fr. Heinz SCHRECKENBERG has been active in German Teams for 50 years and he continues to be SC actively in German Teams.

In 1959, Lothar RYBKA was concerned about the spiritual needs of couples. He invited some of them in June of the same year and presented Teams to them. In July, the first team was founded in Munich with the couple RYBKA, DIETRICH and SCHULZ. Later, the first team was joined by the couples FRENZEL, BREHMER, FISCHER and DÜCHS. For 10 years their SC was Fr. Johann FINKENZELLER. The RYBKA couple continued to create more teams and finally joined team 3.

Fathers Karl-Adolf KREUSER and Gilbert NIGGL were the most formative SCs for the Munich sector and in general for the entire German-speaking region. The groups in the cities of Bad Brückenau, Hof and Freising, Bavarian Allgäu and the autonomous province of Bolzano were very close.

The SCHAU couple joined after the arrival of Fr. Eugen WALTER, who recommended Teams to them. In October 1958, this couple invited other couples to join as well. This is how the first team was created in Freiburg. Their SC was for a long time Fr. Eugen WALTER.

Peter PESCATORE from Luxembourg spoke to the BUNDSCHUH

⁷⁴ Ibid.

couple from Karlsruhe about Teams. Emilie BUNDSCHUH and Hiltrud KESSLER participated in a meeting in Paris and returned very enthusiastically. Together with three other couples, they founded the first team in Karlsruhe in 1959. The SC was Fr. Kaplan GLUITZ. The team was officially integrated into Teams in Paris in 1960. Later Edith and Horst DUT-TWEILER managed for several years to form teams in Karlsruhe and the surrounding area.

In the southwest sector, there is now a team in Sindelfingen and another in Villingen-Schwenningen.

In 1988 the couple Rosa and Wilhelm PLESKEN moved from London, where they were part of a team, to Aachen and wanted to continue being part of Teams. Thus, they founded the first team in Aachen piloted by a Belgian couple with a Dutch SC, Fr. KLEYNEN.

South Tyrol sector

Fr. Josef INNERHOFER created the first team in this German-speaking Italian region in 1965. The first couples were GASTEIGER, FRISCH, ZELGER and GROHE. The first teams initially belonged to the Munich sector. Later, due to the expansion of the Movement, they formed their own Sector.

England⁷⁵ (1959)

Teams were introduced in England by Harry and Clotilde MEIGH. Harry was born in 1923, in a small-town north of Paris. In 1937, amidst signs that announced a coming war, his family moved to England. At the beginning of the war, he joined the company of royal engineers and participated in the first advance party of the infantry that landed on the beaches of Normandy on D-day. He was then assigned to Belgium where he met his beloved wife Clotilde.

⁷⁵ HOBAN, Tom and Maureen. Part of a presentation to the Super Regional Gathering in Dublin, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Teams in Ireland. August 2014.



Harry and Clotilde MEIGH.

It was after five years of marriage the MEIGH couple first heard of Teams of Our Lady through a letter from Friar DEMAUX, the priest who had blessed their marriage. He was the uncle of Geneviève SIPSOM, who together with her husband Constantin, was the couple responsible for the Leadership Team in Paris.

Geneviève had sent Harry and Clotilde a copy of the Founding Charter of Teams. However, their first reaction was that this organization was too “holy” for them. The priest friend then suggested that they try being part of a team by “correspondence”. They did so. Their team was made up of couples from Holland, France and North Africa in which French was used as the common language.

The first pilgrimage of Teams to Rome was in May 1959. Harry and Clotilde were chosen at random to represent their team. It was an unforgettable experience for them. On their way back from Rome, full of enthusiasm, they stopped in Paris to meet Fr. CAFFAREL. They told him about their desire to create a team in England, but they were worried that the English couples would find spontaneous prayer very strange for them, as well that “participation” would be extremely difficult. Despite their fears, Fr. CAFFAREL encouraged them by proposing that they “*have a rehearsal and see what happens*”.

Shortly after their return to England, they attended a conference by Fr. O’Leary who mentioned the family movements in America but recommended one of French origin called “Teams of Our Lady”. Driven by the speaker’s recommendation, they immediately sought the names of couples who might be interested in this experience.

They finally found six couples including Greg and Judith AMSTRONG, an Australian couple who were on sabbatical from Oxford and knew about Teams. This couple would later be chosen to start the Melbourne 2 team in Australia during the summer of 1960.

Thus, the first meeting of Cheltenham 1 took place on November 26, 1959, in the same spiritual environment that all new teams experience, with the additional impact of something completely foreign to many English Catholics: that the laity would gather in a house to pray together.

With the support of Bishop RUDDERHAM, who after many questions became convinced of the importance of the new movement, a second team was created in Cheltenham. However, it was necessary to overcome the opposition of not a few priests, particularly the older ones. The most surprising thing was the criticism of a SC, Fr. PRETOC, who said that too much time was spent in prayer and participation, because he saw personal prayer as a Protestant practice. Harry and Clotilde replied that openness during prayer was the only element of team life that above all others created a special bond between couples.

The team discussed the priest’s arguments and all but one of its members agreed to put their full trust in the Movement’s methods. “There must be a good reason for everything,” they said, “and they also felt that with only two years in the Movement, they were not in a position to start making changes.”

During this time, Teams spread to other regions of the country as a result of an article published in the Catholic Herald towards the end of 1962 highlighting the importance of the family in the life of the Church. A couple from the Cheltenham team wrote to the newspaper reporting

that such groups already existed in England. As a result, 11 letters asked for information about Teams... two of them were successful. What good fruit!

In the meantime, the MEIGHs went to the north of England to provide information. There, two teams emerged that were piloted by the MEIGHs, who traveled 400 km every month to attend a meeting with each team during the weekend.

John and Peggy CORRIGAN were part of the first team founded in the north of England. After John's death, Peggy went to visit her daughter in New Zealand where she began to pilot the first six teams in that country.



From left to right: The second person is John CORRIGAN.
The fourth person is Peggy CORRIGAN.
The fifth person is Clotilde MEIGH.

At the same time the CHARLESWORTHS, who had started a team in Australia and now were in England, piloted the first team in London. Over time teams developed in the Southwest, Northeast, North and London.

Japan (1959)⁷⁶

In an Editorial by Fr. CAFFAREL, there is an exceptional note on the birth of Teams of Our Lady in Japan, citing extracts from two letters received from a missionary in that country. It can be assumed that Fr. CAF-FAREL knew this priest and that he had had frequent epistolary communication with him, regarding the implantation of Teams of Our Lady in Japan. For this reason, we classify this country within this first wave of expansion with direct influence from the founder. The note reads as follows:

“I know that you will understand me and that you will experience great joy in reading some passages taken from two letters of a missionary from Japan: The first one I found on my return from Rome (1959). In it, he said:

‘Having arrived at my mission center, I send you a cordial greeting. At the moment we are working on the translation into Japanese of the Founding Charter and other documents of Teams of Our Lady. I will start with a group of couples from my parish. In July I will have the opportunity to speak about the Movement to a large group of priests and lay people in order to make it known in Japan as well. By that time we will have had everything translated... We want to remain here in total union with the Center, since we are not far from it.’

A new letter from a few days ago: “On October 23rd we had our meeting, our first meeting. In this community of couples, it is very well perceived, as the Lord is in our midst. The first team that now has five couples is therefore on its way in Japan. I personally have firm conviction that many others will follow.”

Thus, the first team was created in Japan in October 1959.

⁷⁶ MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF TEAMS. “QU’ILS SOIENT UN “Année - n. 4 - Janvier 1960.

Austria (1959)

Fr. KROISBACHER, a family counselor in the Archdiocese of Vienna, was introduced to Teams in France and was fascinated by the goals of this couples' movement. Almost at the same time, he found a contact of Teams in France where he met Fr. CAFFAREL. In 1959 he founded the first Teams of Our Lady in Vienna. The couples: FALKNER and PAUL are, so to speak, the "grandparents of Teams" in the Vienna area. The first groups had no connection with Paris. They were guided by the letters and prayers of their liaison couple.

Helga and Fritz HANNAK, were active member of Teams of the Linz Sector for a long time.

Algeria⁷⁷ (1959)

In a document dated 1961, it is said that the Most Reverend Fr. LE BAUT, Prior of the Dominicans, insists on establishing as quickly as possible, a Sector in Algeria, and suggests the MARTINs, as responsible couple and Fr. MOLLARET, S.J. as SC.

The following teams are listed: Algeria (5 teams); Oran (2 teams); Phillippeville (1 team); Bône (1 team); Tizi Ouzou (1 team). This leads to the conclusion that teams were created years ago, probably before 1960.

The global evolution of Teams of Our Lady between 1961 and 1966 can be seen in Table N.º 2.

⁷⁷ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

Table N.° 2
**Evolution of the Teams of Our Lady
 1961 - 1966**

Year	Month	Number of Teams
1961	October	1027
1964	September	2033
1966	October	2086

Source: Teams of Our Lady. HISTORY OF THE NOTRE-DAME TEAMS 1938-2015. Document produced by the S.R. France, Luxembourg, Switzerland.

SECOND WAVE OF EXPANSION: (1956 – 1969)

The second wave includes countries who were influenced by people who knew Fr. CAFFAREL personally. Here, the members of the Leadership Team, which in 1960 took the name of Leading Team (today ERI), and some priests who were friends of Fr. CAFFAREL play an important role in the expansion.

Madagascar⁷⁸ (1954 - 1962)

The first contacts were made on April 15, 1952. The first team was created on September 2, 1954 with 6 married couples and a Lazarist SC.

Later a document of the International Archive of Teams, recorded its official foundation in 1962 with 4 teams.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

⁷⁹ DATE OF BIRTH OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY IN THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT AT THE END OF 1969. Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

Guadeloupe⁸⁰ (1956 -1960)

In the archive of Teams, you will find some historical information:

A letter from Jean PILLIAS of the Leading Team, dated February 18, 1956, addressed to George and Odette ANCION of Guadeloupe, in which he mentions two priests interested in Teams of our Lady: One is Msr. l'Abbé LACROIX, who learned about Teams in France, the other is Fr. VERGRIETTE, Archpriest in Point-à-Pitre who received a complete set of documentation on Teams in 1951.

The second, a letter from Pierre and Elvira DESSOMMES dated April 27, 1956, who belonged to a correspondence team, addressed to the PILLIAS in which they report an interview with Fr. ROSEAU, who was familiar with *L'Anneau d'Or* and showed interest in Teams. He was willing to be the SC of an eventual team. He also gave them a list of couples who could form a team. The DESSOMMES contacted them and said that there is hope. These are their names: Mr. and Mrs. GOTLANT, Mr. and Mrs. PÉDURANT, Mr. and Mrs. GINET-BRUMANT.

The third, a letter from the Leading Team dated April 5, 1960, addressed to Pierre BERNARD of the Toulon 1 team, reported there are 2 teams in Guadeloupe and 2 in training. In a previous letter dated June 17, 1959, it was shared that Pierre and Thérèse GROSBORNE were the responsible couple in charge of Guadeloupe.

In another letter from the Leading Team dated May 31, 1960, addressed to Abée GILLET, the creation of a new team in St. Claude - Guadeloupe is mentioned.

From the above references it can be inferred that Teams in Guadeloupe were most likely created between 1956 and 1960.

⁸⁰ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

United States⁸¹ (1958 -1960)

The “seeds” of the Teams of Our Lady Movement were “planted” in the United States between 1958-1960 by French, Belgian, Brazilian and Portuguese couples who had come to the United States, bringing the love of Teams with them.

François and Annie VILAREM had moved from Paris to Los Angeles, California, where they formed the first team. Alain and Rosemary ENTHOVEN were members of that team. Rosemary recalled the “*feeling of joy and spiritual adventure, of openness and simplicity that the VILAREMs brought to the meetings*”. The VILAREMs requested and received help from Geneviève and Constantin SIPSOM of the Leadership Team in Paris.

At almost the same time in Washington DC, a Belgian couple, Jean and Agnes VAN DER MENSBRUGGHE started the Washington I team. Similarly, in Boston, MA, a French couple, Jack and Maria JOUBERT, started the Boston I team. (Both were primarily French speaking.) Harold and Rachel NEEL of Sèvres, France, were named the Liaison Couple of these early teams.

In 1960, a Brazilian couple, Luciano and Alice DE SOUSA MARQUES joined two married couples in New York: John and Mary MEE and Bob and Jean CINCOTTA, to start a team on Long Island. A second team was formed shortly thereafter with the SCALERAS couple.

In 1961, the ENTOVENS moved to Washington DC and met Andy and Loretta FAVRET, Jack and Gerry LAVAN and John and Barbara GREEN. Together they formed Team Alexandria I. In Boston, Ed and Leslie COSTELLO started Team Boston 2. By the end of 1961, there were 7 teams in the USA and by 1963 there were 15. The USA was now a region and Pierre-Yves and Susie TIBERGHIE became the Regional Responsible Couple.

In 1964, the USA held its first National Training Session in Stafford, VA, led by the FAVRETS, and assisted by the TIBERGHIEs, the

⁸¹ Harry and Josie GIESKE. History of Teams of Our Lady in the USA, 2019.

SIPSOMS and Fr. VAN WYNSBERGH of the Leading Team in France. Following this, three “coordination teams” (pre-sectors) were established in New York, Los Angeles and the Capital District. Lou and Eileen GARAVENTE became the first Sector Responsible Couple in New York and Andy and Loretta FAVRET became Sector Responsible Couple in the Capital District. Then, in 1967, the FAVRETS were asked to assume the role of Regional Responsible Couple, replacing the TIBERGHIENS, thus becoming the first couple in the United States to assume the role of National Responsible Couple. John and Barbara GREEN became the first couple to head the Secretariat. In 1970, Frank and Marilyn LYNN (NY) were named Regional Couple, followed by Bob and Marie WALLACE (DC) in 1973, and Dick and Lee SMITH of Rochester, MN in 1976.



Loretta and Andy FABRET.

By the end of 1980, Teams in the US had reached about 200 teams. To better serve the future of the Movement in the USA, the SMITHS, FAVRETS, WALLACES, LYNNNS and Frs. GALLAS and DILL met in Bethany Beach, DE. As a result of this meeting, the reorganization of Teams of

Our Lady in the United States into three Regions within a Super-Region took place. The SMITHS were named the first Super-Regional Couple, with Ray and Jean MORRISEY as North East Regional Leaders, Gary and Peg HARMON as Central Region Leaders, and Harry and Josie GIESKE as Mid-Atlantic Region Leaders. John and Kathy BONDY assumed the Secretariat of the SR and Fr. Richard FEITEN took over as the first SC of the SR. Jean-Claude and Jeanine MALROUX of France were appointed as the Liaison Couple between the US and the International Leading Team (ERI).



front row, left to right. Dick and Lee Smith, Loretta and Andy Favret. Back row - Fr. Edwin Dill, Bob and Marie Wallace, Frank and Marilyn Lynn, Fr. Frank Galles.

1980. Bethany Beach meeting, DE.

In 1981, the first Portuguese-speaking teams were formed in Turlock, CA. At the invitation of Fr. Ivo ROCHA and Fr. José Carlos SIMPLICIO, Alberto and Maria Almira RAMALHEIRA and Fr. Victor PINTO came from Portugal to Turlock to form the first four teams. By 1987, the Portuguese teams had spread to Hanford and Tulare. The RAMALHEIRAs and Fr. PINTO also formed Portuguese teams in Bedford, MA. In

1984, the first English-speaking team began in Turlock. By 1991, there were four Portuguese sectors in the United States, becoming a region with Antonio and Mary BORBA as the Regional Responsible Couple. This new Region was later integrated into the U.S. Super-Region.

In 1988, the Canadian Teams, with Camille and Ginette ST. ONGE as a Regional Couple, joined the U.S. Super Region. Later, in 1993, they were moved to report directly to the International Leading Team. During these years, Spanish-speaking teams were also initiated in several areas: Maryland-Virginia, South Carolina, California and Oregon.

In July 1991, the U.S. Super-Region met at Mount St. Mary's College in Emmitsburg, MD, the first meeting of the ERI/SR College and an International Training Session that was held outside of Europe.

Following the SMITHS as SR Couples, were Harry and Josie GIESKE, Bob and Pat VERHELLE, Ralph and Jackie TYGIELSKI, Ted and Eileen KOSNIK, Joe and Inez VARAO, Jorge and Noélia SOUSA, and the current SR T.J. and Ellen HOLT.

As the U.S. teams continued to grow to about 800 teams, another reorganization took place in 2015 which divided the country into four provinces with 16 regions.

Italy⁸² (1959)

In 1959 Teams of Our Lady entered Italy almost simultaneously through Turin and Rome.

In Turin, the effects of the Second World War were still felt very strongly at the end of the 1950s. Many problems derived from the war were still being strongly felt, however the fervor for new expectations and projects was perceived within the people.

⁸² Teams of Our Lady. Turin, March 21, 2009, at the SERMIG (Young Missionary Service) of Borgo Dora square.

In this city, a small group of young people who were part of Catholic Action and the Catholic University Federation (FUCI), lived this transition with an approach to faith, derived from a solid positive Christian formation. In particular there was a group of young people (men and women) who had continued to meet as believers, in search of some concrete way to realize their aspirations. This is how they approached Teams.

It all began in 1958, on the initiative of the French superior of a convent of nuns where the group met with some frequency. At this same time, Fr. RANWEZ, S.J., a Belgian Jesuit and spiritual counselor to a Belgian team, was staying in the convent. The Mother Superior suggested the group spend an evening with him to exchange experiences. The meeting was decisive for the group, giving birth to the Turin 1 and Turin 2 teams in 1959.

In the same year, the Rome 1 team was born in a parish in Rome on the initiative of a young couple of Lombard origin. This team is closely monitored by a couple from Paris who were in charge of new teams outside France.

At the same time, in a religious institute in the city, another group of couples had been meeting one Sunday a month for some years, with a wise old Belgian Jesuit theologian, Father ARNAU, S.J. He made them aware of the demands of Christian life in the light of the Word. At the same time, he informed them about the existence of the Teams Movement and guided them towards its spirituality and method.

In May 1959, during the International Gathering of Teams in Rome, Fr. ARNAU, S.J., invited the couples to participate to meet some of the participating couples. Thus, Rome 2 and Rome 3 were born.

Teams arrives in Italy at a very particular moment in history. On the one hand, coming out of the war Europe was trying to rebuild itself. On the other hand, in the Church there were winds of renewal and confrontation around the new approach of the Second Vatican Council. Young couples certainly perceived a new climate of hope for change and confrontation with the theology of marriage.

“Fr. CAFFAREL, being appointed member of the *Council Commission for the Lay Apostolate*, contributed his intuition and knowledge enriched by his own experience.”⁸³



First team of Pescara 1970.

The spread of the Movement in Italy was very rapid. Team members from Turin began to create teams throughout Italy. Thus, in 1965, the first Sector was created with 25 teams in Turin, Rome, Fossano, Verona and Genoa. In 1970, Teams are present in Piemonte, Liguria, Lombardy, Tuscany, Abruzzo, Marche, Pescara and Umbria.

In 1978, the Super-Region of Italy was created, composed of three Regions. Today it has seven Regions and Teams are present in the whole Italian territory from south to north except for the Aosta Valley.

Australia⁸⁴ (1961)

Max and Stephanie CHARLESWORTH sent us a detailed document about the origin of Teams in that country. From it we extracted the following information:

⁸³ Brother Angelo PALERI. The word of the postulator of the cause. *Le Bulletin des amis du Père CAFFAREL*, No. 20, January 2017, p. 7.

⁸⁴ Max and Stephanie Charlesworth in consultation with Greg Armstrong. *The Teams of Our Lady Movement (Equipes Notre-Dame) and its Beginnings in Australia*.

The origin of the Teams of Our Lady in Australia is due to the CHARLESWORTHS, who had their first contact with the Movement when they were in Louvain, Belgium, in 1974. There they met their neighbors Jeanne and Joseph LEGRAND (who had accompanied Father CAFFAREL to Rome to see the Pope during the difficulties of Teams with the Flemish bishops); they helped them in many circumstances when they were dealing with their two little babies. The LEGRANDS had mentioned Teams in passing, but being young at the time, “we didn’t realize it,” they said. It was only in 1956, when we had just moved to New Zealand, that the LEGRANDS sent us some literature about Teams. They also suggested we might be interested in becoming members of these Teams since we were once again strangers in a foreign country. This time the idea seemed very important to us, so we became members of one of those teams scattered throughout several countries which operated via correspondence.

Meanwhile Greg and Judy ARMSTRONG, an Australian couple in England, had come into contact with Teams and had joined the first English speaking team, started by the MEIGHS in Cheltenham. When they returned to Melbourne, they brought the idea of Teams with them. Thus the idea to establish Teams in Australia came from these two couples, who had had experience in the Movement abroad. As Greg ARMSTRONG and Stephanie CHARLESWORTH were siblings, contact and discussion were easy and continuous.

The CHARLESWORTHS had returned from Auckland to Melbourne in late 1958. At that time we talked about Teams to our parish priest at Glen Iris, Father Bernard O’Connor and some of our friends. There was much enthusiasm about the idea at the time, as the formation of common interest groups among married Catholic couples was “in the air” so to speak. There were, for example, the Christian Family Movement and the Cana Movement.

So we decided to form a team and contacted the Paris headquarters, which appointed a French couple to reach out to us. Their names were Sylvie and Jean. In March 1961, we went to the meeting of Parents and Friends

in the parish and talked about Teams. We had two or three preliminary information meetings attended by about a dozen couples. Eight or nine of them wanted to continue in a group.

Our team now (1961) consisted of Peter and Barbara WERTHEIM and Kevin and Ruth O'HAGEN from our original study group, and Jeanne and Frank JOHNSTONE, Carmel and John BRENNAN, Jack and Pat KROHN, Ed and Kath CURMI from the Parish. This team was assigned Melbourne's number 1.

Fr. O'CONNOR became our chaplain. A little later, Vic and Françoise KOENIG from Mauritius joined us. The latter had been in the Teams Movement in Mauritius and had written to Paris asking for the name of an Australian team. Their practical experience as active team members was invaluable, as we were beginning only with long-distance experience via correspondence.

Meanwhile Greg and Judy ARMSTRONG had also returned to Melbourne. By May 1961 they had written to Paris about starting a team in Melbourne. They then held several information nights and soon a second group was established that was committed and wanted to move forward.

The members of this team were Joan and John THOMAS, Peter and Margaret GILL, Albert and Mary SPANGARO, Jim and Joan BOWLER, Harold and Helga ROWE and Barbara and Peter JENKINS. Following the advice of Father GOLDEN, SJ, of Newman College, Greg approached a young assistant priest at the Cathedral, Father Frank LITTLE, and persuaded him to take on the position of chaplain, at least temporarily.

In his memoirs, Greg writes: "Forty-three years later, I remain a member of that same team. Perhaps because I lived both my professional life and my social life surrounded by people who were either indifferent to or hostile to my metaphysical convictions, my Team had been my life's only real experience of a Christian community."

Melbourne Team 1 organized information meetings for other interested couples, both within and outside the Parish. Three other teams emerged from these meetings.

From her experience of team life at this stage, Margaret CODY writes:

“The other important thing for me is that I became a member of Teams before I even became a Catholic, so the journey in married spirituality was accompanied by my journey into the church. The friends from our subsequent team in Melbourne are still among my dearest friends, as are several other Melbourne team members. As a recently arrived young couple from New Zealand with no family or friends in Australia, Teams of Our Lady offered a sense of family, deep friendship and an experience of community.”

Teams 1 and 2 worked closely together at this stage and together they found other interested couples to complete these teams, to pilot them and to act as “liaison couples”.

Inevitably, some of the couples and SCs moved to other states over the next few years and it was thanks to the WERTHEIMS that Teams began in Queensland, and the O’HAGENS in Bendigo and then Wangaratta. A group of bowlers started the first team in Canberra. The MCK-INNON’s moved to Sydney in the mid-sixties, and started three teams, in 1965, 1966 and 1973. Sydney 1 lasted 13 years. The MCKINNONS were also responsible for starting two teams in Nowra in 1972, mainly among naval personnel. Meanwhile, Father GOLDEN, who moved to the University of Adelaide, founded the first team in that city. A little later, Father MCGINLEY, who had been transferred to Perth, started the first team there.

One thing we remember, say Max and Stephanie CHARLES-WORTH, was an observation by Father CAFFAREL, which seems surprising today: “*We should always be learning and willing to move forward.*” He didn’t want his own ideas to be established to the letter. He said that “*we must live in the present and reinvent structures and teaching in accordance with the signs of the times.*” He predicted that he would leave the Movement to retire when he saw his role elsewhere. In fact, in 1973 he retired from Teams of Our Lady to direct the School of Prayer in Trou-

tures, France, and to write on spiritual subjects, although he always kept in close contact with the Movement of the Teams of Our Lady.

When Peter and Jan RALTON took over responsibility for the Region, Australia joined with Oceania to form a Super-Region with considerably wider responsibilities. The RALTON led Super-Regional Team, with five Regions of its own, covers all Australian states, as well as Fiji, New Caledonia, Hong Kong, New Zealand and the Philippines.

Vietnam⁸⁵ (1962)

Two references found in the international archive of Teams in Paris state the following:

First reference: “On May 19, 1960, the SIPSOMs, who were part of the Leading Team, sent Teams of Our Lady material to a French couple (Doctor Louis DOUSTE-BLAZY) who had been part of a team in Toulouse, in preparation for a meeting with a Vietnamese couple and a Bishop of Saigon”.

Second reference: In a document of the same International Archive, it is recorded as being officially founded in 1962 with 2 teams.⁸⁶

Lebanon⁸⁷ (1963)

In 1963 Teams of Our Lady arrived in Lebanon through the Lebanese couple Charles and Paulette AZAR who had been part of a team in the Parisian Region. Thanks to their testimony, the number of teams began to grow progressively.

In September 1966, a team - Beirut 1 - was reported to have been founded in 1963 by Charles and Paulette AZAR, one of whose most active

⁸⁵ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

⁸⁶ DATE OF BIRTH OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY IN THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT AT THE END OF 1969. Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

⁸⁷ Souad and Edouard BORG. History of Teams in Lebanon.

members was the KHOURI couple. The liaison couple was the Jordanian couple Joseph and Monique AJRAB who had been part of the same AZAR team in Paris. After its formation, this team tried to form two other teams - Beirut 2 and 3 - but without success, the couples did not want to continue. The AZARs tried to create another team with Arab couples, but to no avail⁸⁸.

In 1972, Lebanon is created as a Sector with Robert and Nelly SIKIAS as responsible couple, accompanied by Fr. Sobhi HAMWI, S.J. as SC. Thus, new teams were created with very good prospects for the future.

In 1975, war breaks out. Teams also implode, going from nine to four. However, according to Minutes of the International Leading Team, two Arabic language teams were announced to have been launched this same year.⁸⁹ During the years of war, Georges and Marie AZAR live their responsibility of Sector Couple in really difficult conditions.

In 1986, despite the disastrous consequences of the war, a new team was formed: Jounieh 2 and from that moment, the Movement began to be reborn. In the year 2000, for the first time, Teams of Our Lady of Lebanon participated in an International Gathering, in Santiago de Compostela. In 2003, the Region of Lebanon was created, with three sectors and 30 teams.

Ireland⁹⁰ (1964)

A meeting between the married couple of John and Bernadette BLAYNEY and a French Jesuit, in the summer of 1963, sowed the first seeds for the development of the Teams Movement in Ireland. Pierre de LAVALETTE introduced them to Father Jack KELLY the following year, and in February 1964, the first meeting of the Irish team took place with the participation of John and Bernadette BLAYNEY and Fr. Jack KELLY

⁸⁸ Region Report. September 1966. Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

⁸⁹ Histoire des équipes Notre-Dame. Op. Cit.

⁹⁰ Elaine et John COGAVIN. Ireland - Development of Teams - 2013.

as the first SC who had had experience with Teams in France. Harry and Clotilde MEIGH travelled from Cheltenham to help form the first team.

At that time, Ireland developed as part of the Teams of Great Britain and in 1974 became a Sector of the English region with Robert and Aoibheann DALY, as the first responsible couple for the Sector.

In 1984, to facilitate growth the Irish Sector divided into three sectors with a Regional coordinating couple, John and Bernadette BLAYNEY appointed to be responsible for the development of Teams in Ireland. They were supported by Gerry and Frances ROCHE and Pat and Mary MOLUMBY. In January 1989 Ireland became an independent region.



Year 1965/66: Colette and Bill ELLISON, Marieange ZAKERZEWSKI, Billy LONG, Monique LONG, Michael NESTOR, Mary ORR, David ORR, Father Peter LEMASS, John BLAYNEY, Bernadette BLAYNEY, Andre ZAKERZEWSKI, Sheila NESTOR.

The first team formed in 1964 and subsequent teams were part of the English region and only became an Irish Sector in 1974. In 1989, Dublin was established as an independent Sector of the Irish Region.

Teams began in Mullingar in 1979. Oliver and Anne Marie LEAVY were encouraged by Fr. Christy FOX to set up teams in the Mullingar midlands. Their first SC was Father Michael SMYTH, who is now Bishop of

Meath and continues to support them. Mullingar became an independent Sector in 1984.



Year 1980. Back row: Martine DONAGHY, Father Hubert DELANEY, David ORR, Pat CLINTON, Paddy DONAGHY, Colette ELLISON, Billy LONG, Bill ELLISON Seated: Bernadette BLAYNEY, Mary ORR, Monique LONG.

The first team was formed in Belfast in October 1979 and became a separate Sector in 1984. The Belfast Sector included teams started in Greenisland and Lisburn.

Teams started in Cork in 1982, then became a separate Sector from Dublin in 1992. In 1997 through the piloting of Barry and Geraldine DALY they formed the first team in Limerick. That same year Cork organized its first weekend of team responsible couples at the Dominican Retreat Center in Montenotte.

Liam and Dolores CORCORAN of Mullingar drove the first team in Galway in 1990. Mullingar continued to provide piloting resources until Galway was established as an independent sector in 1998. Esteban and Margarita O'NEILL led the development of Teams in the west from the beginning, and not surprisingly, became the first responsible couple for the Galway Sector.

Since the formation of the first team in February 1964, constant attention has been given particularly to the formation and growth of Team couples, and of the movement in general. Regular formation and development sessions were held around the theme of conjugal spirituality and the formation of leaders, with the support of the English Teams and the International Movement. From the beginning, a priority has been to maintain good communication with the bishops, priests and religious of the church in Ireland. The result of this communication has been to maintain close relations with all of them. No team, Sector or Region, has been without a SC until today and every parish where Teams exist is strongly supported in its pastoral activities by Team members.

The most important event in the history of the Movement was the establishment of Teams in Ireland as an independent region in January 1989. From this moment, the formation was assumed by the Regional leadership. Each year a weekend of renewal and development is organized for all responsible couples. This type of event focuses on the deepening and renewal of all members of Teams in the charism, mysticism and pedagogy of the Movement, cultivating a spirit of mission and fidelity to the spirit of Teams.

India⁹¹ (1969)

Teams are installed in India in September 1969, in the city of Mumbai, thanks to the efforts of Jacques and Maies EVERARD from France with five other couples. Fr. CASANAV, S.J. was the SC and Cecil and Antoinette D'SOUZA, the responsible couple.

The second team in India started in Kerala in Alleppey on January 30, 1971 with five couples, thanks to the enthusiasm of Cecil and Antoniette D'SOUZA. Mgr. REYNOLDS was the SC and Zacharia and Mary, the responsible couple.

⁹¹ Teams of Our Lady. A guide to couples India Region. Directory - 2016.

The third team started on June 11, 1972 in Calcutta, mainly due to the efforts of Rethna and Annamma SWAMY from Alleppey. Fr. Alfred J. FERNANDEZ was the SC and Vincent and Gemma CASTELLINO the responsible couple.

In August 1977, Roger and Beatrice SCHMITT from France, visited the existing teams in India in order to try to expand the Movement in other dioceses⁹². The fourth team was started in Ernakulam in October of the same year, thanks to the efforts of this French couple, with the encouragement and blessing of Cardinal Joseph PAREKKATTIL, Archbishop of Makulam. Father Jacob AERANAT was their SC and John and Rajamma KANDATHIL, the responsible couple.

In 1978 another team was started in Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala, with the blessing of the Reverend Benedict Mar GREGORIOUS, Archbishop of Trivandrum. Fr. Samuel Mannil RAMBAN was the SC and Mathew and Mary VARGHESE the responsible couple.

In November 1979, the first Formation Session of Teams was held with the participation of 24 couples and 7 priests.⁹³

In 1985, Margaret and Vincent LANGFORD from England took over as the Regional couple in India. They in turn, assigned Rethna and Annamma SWAMY from Alleppey, the task of ensuring communication between India and England, working as the responsible Regional partner in India.

In 1987, in Alleppey, a newsletter was created, named “*Link and Light*” as a step to make the region of India independent. In 1987, India was elevated to the level of an ERI dependent region. On March 23, 1991, at the Regional Conference held in Alleppey, Thomas and Kunjamma MALAYIL took over as the first Responsible Couple for the independent Indian region.

From this date onwards, each Regional Couple, during their term of office, together with the SCs, have been making every effort to attract more young couples to this Movement in other parts of India.

⁹² History of Equipes Notre-Dame. Op. cit.

⁹³ Ibid.

Currently (2019) there are 23 teams in the Indian region spread over four sectors: Trivandrum, Alleppey, Ernakulam and Kozhikode, Kannur of Kerala. In total there are 124 married couples, 15 SCs and 11 widows.

Table N.º 3
Date of founding* of Teams in the different countries
and their development at the end 1969

Date	Country	# of teams
1939	France	1509
1947	Belgium	467
	Switzerland	51
1950	Brazil	329
	Luxembourg	12
	Tunisia	4
1953	Mauritius	35
1953-55	Senegal, Congo, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Algeria... (teams composed of French and Belgian people)	33
1955	Spain	531
	Canada (Québec)	63
1956	England	18
1957	Portugal	217
1958	Germany	54
	United States	38
1959	Austria	29
	Italy	74
1961	Australia	21
	Colombia	17
1962	Madagascar	4
	Vietnam	2

Date	Country	# of teams
1963	Lebanon	4
	Ireland	2
1968	Japan	1
	Congo Kinshasa	3
	Republic of the Congo	3
1969	India	1

Source: International Archive of Teams of Our Lady Paris.

*This date corresponds to the official approval of the teams by the Leading Team and not to the date of the first team meeting.

Information on the general growth of the Movement (1955-1969):

1955: 400 teams

1958: 1.000 teams

1962: 2.000 teams

1966: 3.000 teams

1969: 3.550 teams

NOTE: A team usually consists of 5 to 7 couples.

Paris, April 9, 1970

THIRD WAVE OF EXPANSION: (1970 -1999)

Syria⁹⁴ (1975)

As an antecedent to the development of the Teams in Syria, it is worth mentioning the influence of the magazine of *l'Anneau d'Or*, quoted in a letter from Fr. Marie CLARY (Franciscan) in Damascus to the Leadership Team, dated October 30, 1946, which reads: "The six issues of *l'Anneau d'Or*

⁹⁴ Cf. History of Teams of Our Lady in Syria, document sent by Marie ZEIN and Rachid ELIAS.

which were sent to us seemed very interesting and appropriate to bring about the renewal of the Christian spirit which is needed everywhere. For this reason, we are very grateful for them, and we have shared them with young couples here and in Egypt.”⁹⁵ However, Teams only saw the light of day in 1975 according to the account of their initiators Marie ZEIN and Rachid ELIAS.

We met in 1968. We were looking for God’s will and his plan for each of us. A spiritual sympathy was born among us, which in spite of all our missionary activities and our commitments to the service of the Church, did not prevent us from evolving towards a mutual love that was crowned by marriage... Three years later, we began to feel a void: we needed a conjugal spirituality and spiritual nourishment to achieve a greater maturity in our life as a couple...

So we asked Fr. Camil HUSHIMED, S.J., a Jesuit friend of Rachid, for advice to help us find a Church movement specialized in married life. At that time he was chaplain of the J.E.C. Immediately, Fr. HUSHIMED thought of his brother Maurice and his wife who were part of Teams of Our Lady in Beirut, Lebanon. Immediately we were invited to attend, with the HUSHIMED’s, the meeting of their team Beirut 3: “Come and see”. That same afternoon, we made our decision: “This is the Movement we are looking for.”

The Teams International movement chose Charles and Paulette AZAR as a pilot couple, to assist us... The AZARs did not hesitate to leave their three children, once a month, to make the trip between Beirut and Latakia, to attend our meeting and return the same evening. “How many obstacles were overcome and how many unconditional sacrifices made with such generosity!”

The team in Syria (Latakia 1) took 4 years to consolidate and stabilize (1975), thanks to the support of its first SC, Fr. Camil HUSHIMED, who was known for his perseverance, dedication and spiritual and human culture.

⁹⁵ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

In 1976, Fr. HUSHIMED, Jean and Nawal MAKHOUL and Rachid and Marie ELIAS participated in the International Gathering of Teams in Rome. This meeting was a turning point for us: we decided to make the Movement known in the main cities of Syria (Damascus, Aleppo and Homs). To achieve this objective, we dedicated one week each month for the purpose of launching new teams. It took a year to create the first teams in Aleppo and Damascus. The obstacles were numerous: translation, printing and dissemination in Arabic of the subjects originally written in French.

The most difficult thing was to convince the Church hierarchy (Patriarchs and Bishops) of the need for such a Movement, since such an official license was indispensable to legalize the creation of the Movement before the State. However, we were not alone; the Holy Spirit was working with us. We were therefore welcomed by the hierarchy and recognized as a movement of the Church. In this we recognized a sign: The Lord blessed this work and committed us to continue.

It took us 20 years to be able to consolidate and stabilize Teams in Syria and to form the responsible couples capable of taking over. Tony and Widad SABEH, from the Aleppo 1 team, were appointed as the national responsible couple, ensuring our succession. From that moment on, the succession continued in a normal and regular way. For our part, we hope that the couples in Syria will continue to find in marriage a path of love, happiness and holiness, thanks to the Teams of Our Lady.



Syria 2019. Members of Teams.

In 2000 the responsibility passed to Georges and Nouha SAÏD of Aleppo, with Fr. Rami ELIAS, S.J. as SC.

This period was distinguished by the strengthening of contacts with the different sectors, the insistence on spiritual retreats, the organization of Formation Sessions and the efforts for the expansion of the Movement to the interior and exterior.

In 2005, Fares and Carole KASABJI from Aleppo, assumed responsibility with Fr. Zygmunt KWIAOUTKOWSKI S.J. as SC. The emphasis was on the translation of the documents into Arabic and the starting of the website.

In 2010, when Aamer and Samya ADIB from Damascus took over, the number of teams reached 75 with 270 couples.

In 2011, the war began with all its difficulties. Many families dispersed or emigrated. Those who remained suffered from the anguish and fear of the future. The war provoked doubts in the faith of some couples, while in others it contributed to deepening their faith, increasing their adherence to prayer and deepening their spiritual life. Nevertheless, all have felt their membership in Teams has given them a strength and hope which has helped them to overcome these difficult circumstances.

Razek and Mimi ABED of Latakia took over responsibility in 2014, with Fr. Rami ELIAS, S.J. as SC.

Toni and Joceline ZERBE from Aleppo took over in 2018 with Fr. Rami ELIAS, S.J. as SC. However, six months later, Fr. ELIAS joined the Lord in heaven as a result of a car accident. He was succeeded by Fr. Sami HALLAK, S.J.

Peace and calm have slowly returned to the country; both the number of couples and teams have been reduced as a result of migration. Toni and Joceline have found the need to restructure the Movement, activate its expansion, restore the spiritual life of the couples, etc. Difficult tasks that require much prayer and discernment.

The Movement in Syria in 2019: 42 teams, 15 widows, 37 SC.



Syria 2019. Members of Teams.

Central African Republic⁹⁶ (1976)

The Movement arrived in Central Africa in 1976 thanks to a former French couple, Gisèle and Paul HUMMEL, who were already members of Teams. The first Bangui 1 team was composed mostly of French couples living in the country. This team gradually dissolved as the French couples returned to France after their missions in Central Africa was completed.

Many years later, in 1993, with the arrival of another French couple Chantal and Gabriel TANDEAU De MARSAC, the Movement received a new impetus with the launch of the Bangui 2 team. The first SCs were Fathers Gilbert HERAULT and Philippe REYNAERT.

Among the African couples who pioneered the Movement in Cameroon are Aminata and Jean SAMBA, Brigitte and Fulbert KALAMBANI KOTTO and the couples ABLEFONLIN and ZINZINDE.

⁹⁶ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE. History of Teams of Our Lady.

Democratic Republic of the Congo (Second Phase) (1977)⁹⁷

A recent account⁹⁸ indicates that Teams of Our Lady were created in the parish of Christ the King, diocese of Kalemie-Kirungu, ville de Kalemie, Province of Tanganyika, in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1977.

In 1972, a vice-president of the “living community” (a parish structure that allowed Christians to deepen their religious formation), Jean-Pierre KAHYA, had the idea of bringing together young couples in a group called “young homes”. The members of the group were the couples: LUBANGI, NGOY, MUNGA, NGOY, KAKUDJI and KAHYA.

After a few years of Jean-Pierre’s absence, he returned in 1976 and with the support of Fr. Albert Bongaert, he resumed activities with couples interested in deepening and consolidating their married life. Thus, on January 17, 1977, the first meeting of the group was held with Fr. BONDUE.

In 1980, Bernadette THOREAU, a member of Teams in Liege, Belgium, arrived in Kalemie to visit her brother, Fr. BONDUE. Bernadette took advantage of her stay to participate in the meetings of the “young homes” group. On her return to Europe, she asked the secretariat in Paris to send them documentation on the Movement. This is how they received a package with the Charter and the “green notebooks”. The group became the first Team of Our Lady and took the name of Kalemie 1.

Years later⁹⁹, the Spirit of the Lord inspired Roger NIOLI to speak with Sister Cécile JOSSERAND who was preparing to leave for France

⁹⁷ Formerly called Belgian Congo, also popularly known as DR Congo, Democratic Congo, Congo-Kinshasa or Eastern Congo and called Zaire between 1971 and 1997.

⁹⁸ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE - History of Teams of Our Lady 2019. In the case of this country, we have distinguished two phases in terms of the origin of the Teams. The first refers to the former Belgian Congo whose origin dates back to 1954 and we have classified it in the first wave of expansion along with other African countries whose teams were made up of French or Belgian couples living there. The second phase refers to the current Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose origin is recorded in 1977.

⁹⁹ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE. History of Teams of Our Lady.

on vacation. He asked her the following question: “Is there an international movement in the Catholic Church for Christian couples in the style of missionary priests or nuns like you?” Sister answered him in no uncertain terms: “Yes, in France there are Teams of Our Lady” and without promising anything, on returning from her vacation, Sister gave the NIOLI couple six brochures on Teams offered by Anne and Philips DUPARDON, members of Teams in France. This happened during the year 2004-2005.

After some years of observation and much effort, the NEOLI couple succeeded in having the family pastoral commission created in the Archdiocese of Brazzaville in the parish of St. Gregory. On January 5, 2008, on the feast of the Epiphany, at the end of Mass at 7:00 p.m., Father Clément MBUMBA shared about Teams. The response led to a meeting between Bernadette and François ITIERE, a former member of Teams of Senegal, and the NIOLI, ITOUA and POTO couples, who formed a working group to accompany the ten couples who had shown interest.

On February 18, 2008, the NIOLI couple addressed a letter to the International Leading Team (ERI) requesting the official recognition of Teams in the Republic of Congo. The ERI, through the couple Odile and Jean JAUIJAY, the responsible couple for the region of French-speaking Africa, gave a positive response. Official recognition of the Movement took place on Sunday, July 6, 2008.

As pioneers of the Movement in the Republic of Congo, we must mention: Justine and Roger NIOLI, Bernadette and François ITIERE(+), Jacqueline and Bernard NGANKALA, Marie Jeanne and Henri KAMBISSI, Odile and Ambroise NDOSSA, Céline and Virgile MOUKALA, Justine and Prospère GAVIERE, Louise and Pascal ONGAGNA (+).

Puerto Rico¹⁰⁰ (1978)

On September 23, 1978 the first team of Teams of Our Lady was created in Puerto Rico. This is achieved thanks to Campo Emilio ARIZA, a young Colombian priest residing in Puerto Rico, who was ordained a diocesan priest in 1975.

“Father Campo Emilio, a faithful believer in the mysticism of Teams of Our Lady and their discipline, formed groups as he went along, that is, in all the towns where he worked. He was convinced of the benefits each couple could obtain through the union of the sacraments of marriage and the priesthood, and from a better understanding of the mission of married Christians, so he dedicated much of his time and effort to the organization and dissemination of Teams”¹⁰¹.

Fr. Campo Emilio took on the task of recruiting couples among those nearest him and began with a group of seven couples.

On September 25, 1978, Team 1 of Puerto Rico held its first information meeting. It was attended by: José and Isabel, Gabriel and Luisa, Rubén and Lydia, Teodoro and América, Tite and Milagros, Felipe and Tirsa, Cheo and Marina. Teodoro and America TOLEDO were named Responsible Couple of the nascent Movement. They began by organizing afternoons of reflection, spiritual retreats, presentations on the Movement, preparation of pilot couples and other activities. All of these were subjected to a rigorous process of evaluation in order to improve as they went along.

In 1980, Marcelo and Esther MOREIRA DE AZEVEDO, a Brazilian couple who had known Fr. CAFFAREL personally, visited Puerto Rico. While there, they carried out a series of programs on mysticism, charisms, and the pedagogy of Teams. Their visit left great fruits for the development for the Movement. Before leaving, they confirmed the TOLEDOS as responsible for the Teams of Camuy. The work of formation of Teams was continued by the successive links from France and Spain via written mate-

¹⁰⁰ Teams of Our Lady. History of the 25 Years of Teams of Our Lady in Puerto Rico.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 1.

rial and clear directives to continue. In 1981, four couples from Camuy and Fr. Francisco CONCEPCIÓN, traveled to Bogotá, Colombia to participate in a Formation Day.

In 1982, several couples accompanied by Fathers CAMPO and CONCEPCIÓN, attended the International Gathering in Rome and the Formation Day at the Nazareth house in the same city. From that moment on, the Movement progressively expanded to the towns of Maunabo and Barranquitas.

In mid-1985, ERI members Mercedes and Alvaro GÓMEZ-FERRER, accompanied by Spanish priest Manuel ICETA, visited the island. Their visit had three purposes: to direct a Formation Day; to name the new Responsible Couple of the Region and to create new sectors. They also took advantage of the trip to visit the Dominican Republic.

The new Regional Responsible Couple were José and Isabel MORALES and the new SC, Fr. Campo Emilio ARIZA. Maunabo became a Pre-Sector, with Cholo and Ana ELBA as Responsible Couple, while Camuy and Barranquitas became Sectors, with José and Marilyn FRANQUI, and Holly and Carmen ZAYAS as Responsible Couples, respectively.

From Camuy, Teams expanded to Vega Baja and Jayuya. Maunabo expanded towards Humacao, Cidra, Yabucoa and Gurabo. Barranquitas, in turn, expanded to Naranjito and Juncos.

Mali¹⁰² (1980)

According to a letter from Jeanm and Chantal LUC addressed to Madeleine and Antoine BERGER (sent by Fax) dated 08/12/1994*, it is deduced that Teams in Mali were founded by Fr. Alain LAFONTAINE around 1980, and the Responsible Couple was the TOCCHIOs. Fr. LAFONTAINE had been SC of a team in Toulouse, France for 5 years. At the date of the letter (1994) it is said that there were 14 teams in SAN (Mali).

*Date format as in the Spanish version of this document.

¹⁰² Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

However, a comment from the LUCs states: “Our impression is that these teams have existed, but currently they are revolving around themselves and the lack of resources has not allowed them to change”.¹⁰³ Thus, in the beginning, the members of these Teams had understood that the Movement was a mutual aid cooperative. Only later, when the members of these Teams attended Training Sessions, did they understand the meaning and pedagogy of the Movement¹⁰⁴.

Cameroon¹⁰⁵ (1983)

The first Team of Our Lady is created in Douala in 1983, thanks to the French couple Françoise and Bernard BOUCHER. This team was made up of the following couples: Kathleen and Frédéric BELINGA AWONO, Charlotte and Chrétien FOUSSOUO, Louise and Bernard DJEUKAM, Agnès and Zacharie BEBINE, Edwige and Simon TCHOULA, Félicité Germaine and Robert DIBANGUE. Fr. Clément NJEWEL was the SC for this team.

It was also a French couple, Agnès and Michel DU CORPS, who introduced the Movement in Yaoundé in 1990. The first team in the capital was composed of the following couples: Agnès and Henri ROBEN, Nicole and Daniel FRAENARD, Joseph and Justine SANY. Fr. Louis CESBRON was the SC for this team.

Mexico¹⁰⁶ (1983)

In the archives of Teams in Paris, there is early mention of contacts between 1957 and 1961, but they did not lead to the creation of any Teams of Our Lady.

In June 1983 when the Colombian couple, Beatriz and Florentino RODRÍGUEZ, arrived in Mexico for work, they gave an announcement at

¹⁰³ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

¹⁰⁴ International Francophone Africa.

¹⁰⁵ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE. History of Teams of Our Lady.

¹⁰⁶ Teams of Our Lady. Teams of Our Lady in Mexico. 2018.

mass about Teams of Our Lady. A couple approached them interested to know more about the Movement. This couple gathered friends they had met while in a youth group, the Centro Politécnico de Proyección, and thus the first Mexican team was formed on June 18, 1983.

As a result of their pleasant experience with Teams of Our Lady, the couples of the first team continued to invite more couples from the same youth center. In 1990 there were already 11 teams in Mexico.

In 1994, the first sectors were formed in the State of Aguascalientes, State of Mexico and Mexico City. Later, they expanded to the city of León Guanajuato. There, with the help of the priest rector of a Jesuit school, they formed five teams from the parents of that school.

Due to the expansion of Teams in Mexico, the Hispanic American Super Region formed the Mesoamerican Region. Mexico was given the responsibility of encouraging and training the teams in Mexico, Guatemala and El Salvador. In 1997 Costa Rica and Panama were added.

Thanks to the growth of the Movement in Mexico and Central America, in 2000 the Mesoamerican Region was restructured, and several other regions were formed. Among these was the Mexico Region due to the fact that Teams had already expanded to the cities of Monterrey, Toluca, Guadalajara, Manzanillo, Colima and a team in the State of Guerrero.

In 2013, due to the geographic position of the U.S.-Mexico border, the Mexico Region began welcoming couples from Laredo, Texas to integrate them into Teams in Mexico, because those couples were Spanish-speaking. Due to the large number of teams formed in Laredo, a Sector was quickly formed.

In 2016, the expansion of Teams in Mexico reaches Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, and is by now already a sector.

In January 2018, the Mexico Region consisted of 115 teams, 600 couples, 11 widows and widowers and 100 Priests as Spiritual Counselors. They are present in Mexico City and 8 suburban municipalities of the State of Mexico, as well as in the cities of Aguascalientes, Guadalajara, Colima, Manzanillo, León, Monterrey, Ciudad Victoria and Laredo, Texas. The ex-

pansion to Tijuana (Baja California), Torreón Coahuila and Querétaro will begin soon.

In the second half of 2018, the Mexico Region was divided into the North Central Mexico Region (made of Mexico City, State of Mexico, Monterrey, Ciudad Victoria and Laredo, Texas) and the Western Mexico Region (made up of Aguascalientes, León, Guadalajara, Colima and Manzanillo).

Trinidad and Tobago¹⁰⁷ (1983)

Fr. Neil RODRÍGUEZ, CSSP priest of Trinidad and Tobago, learned through a 1977 article in the “*Observatore Romano*”, about the existence of the Teams of Our Lady Movement. He thought that a movement supporting Christian marriage would be useful to the couples of Trinidad and Tobago, so in October 1983 he wrote to Alain and Isabelle DE LAYRE, of the secretariat in Paris. As Trinidad and Tobago is English-speaking, his request for information was referred to Jim and Theresa PRATT, a couple from the North East of England.



Fr. Neil RODRIGUEZ, CSSP.

¹⁰⁷ HISTORY OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY MOVEMENT IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, 2019.

On November 29, 1983, they became the Team 1 Pilot couple, via correspondence and with the help of Maldon and Allyson PANTIN. This Team, named Our Lady of Guadalupe, still exists today.

At first there were only two teams. In 1986 Maldon and Allyson PANTIN were asked to be the first Responsible Couple for the sector, and officially appointed 18 months later. Teams expanded to the island of Tobago in 1994, but their existence was short lived. In 1995, the Sector was elevated to Pre-Region status and was led by the PANTINs, Franklin and Vicky POLLIDORE and Stephen and Wendy JOHNSTON with Fr. Neil RODRIGUEZ advising.



Maldon and Allyson PANTIN.

Trinidad and Tobago became a Region in August 2001. At that time the Movement had 21 teams in 5 sectors, with 102 couples and 6 SCs. Present for the inauguration were the first regional couple from Trinidad and Tobago, Stephen and Wendy JOHNSTON, the first SC of the Region, Bishop Francis ALLEYNE and Paul and Helena MCCLOSKEY, the Responsible Couple for Teams in the United Kingdom.

Fr. Neil RODRIGUEZ continued to serve humbly as SC for various teams within the organization until his death on February 1, 2013. He will always be fondly remembered as the father of Teams of Our Lady in Trinidad and Tobago.

The couples who have led the Team Movement in Trinidad and Tobago since the beginning are as follows: Maldon and Allyson PANTIN, Franklin and Vicky POLLIDORE, Stephen and Wendy JOHNSTON, Seamus and Franci CLARKE, Jeffrey and Pasqualina HOFORD, Gregory and Shamagne BERTRAND, Dwight and Christine GONSALVES, and from 2017 to present, Peter and Linda KOWLESSAR.

Argentina¹⁰⁸ (1984)

On February 9, 1953, Fr. Juan BERRÓ GARCÍA wrote to Fr. CAFAREL from Córdoba, Argentina, requesting information about Teams along with the collection of the magazine *L'Anneau d'Or*. On March 27th of the same year, Jean PILLIAS of the Leading Team sent him the requested documentation¹⁰⁹.

Between 1984 and 1987, in the cities of Córdoba, Comodoro Rivadavia, Mendoza and Lomas de Zamora in Argentina, Teams of Our Lady began to develop simultaneously but without contact between them. In the first two, Teams arrived through two couples who had belonged to Teams in Spain and Italy. In the remaining two, it arrived via priests who had known the Movement in Europe.

In 1987, Mercedes and Álvaro GÓMEZ-FERRER, ERI couple, and Fr. Manuel ICETA, spanish counselor, visited Argentina and each city where Teams existed. Their aim was to link the teams scattered around the country. Paco and Claudia ECHEGARAY from Córdoba were appointed as responsible for the Argentina Sector and in charge of coordinating with the rest of the teams in other cities.

In 1988, a couple from Mendoza, one from Comodoro Rivadavia and another from Córdoba, accompanied by a priest from the latter city, traveled to Lourdes and not only met personally while there, but also began to organize the communications which would take place in Argentina from then on. In Lourdes they attend a day seminar for New Teams where they deepened their knowledge of the Charism, Mysticism and the Pedagogy of the Movement.

In 1989, similar seminars were organized in the mountains of Córdoba, with the economic support of the Santa María Foundation. They

¹⁰⁸ Teams of Our Lady. History of the Southern Region. Typed document.

¹⁰⁹ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

were coordinated by a Spanish couple the CHICHARROs and Fr. ICETA, who traveled for this purpose.

During those seminars, with the help of the Spaniards, the Argentine Responsible Team (ERA) was formed. It was composed of a couple from each of the cities where Teams operated, under the responsibility of the couple from Córdoba.

In 1991, the first gathering of the HispanoAmerica Teams took place in Bogota, Colombia. The couple responsible for the ERA and their counselor attended.

In June 1992, on the occasion of the first day seminar for Experienced Teams held in Argentina, Igar and Cidinha FEHR, from the International Leading Team, visited. Their mission was to shape Argentina as a Region, to include Teams which were newly developing in Chile, thus creating the Argentine-Chilean Region.

In January 1994, the Responsible Couple of the Argentine-Chilean Region, traveled to the second meeting of the HispanoAmerica Super-Region which took place in Bogotá, Colombia. While there, the Southern Region was created, comprised of Argentina and Chile and later Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia.

Costa Rica¹¹⁰ (1985)

In May 1985, with the support of a Spanish couple residing in Costa Rica for work and with the help of a Spanish Jesuit priest from the Parish of Lourdes de Montes de Oca, in San José, Costa Rica, the first team was established with six couples from the parish. This first team was initially piloted in person. Later, due to a transfer of the Spanish couple, piloting continued through sporadic telephone contact and by mail. This first team began their journey in the Movement with the limitations inherent in the distance between Spain and Costa Rica.

¹¹⁰ Teams of Our Lady in Costa Rica, a historical review - 2018.

Efforts were made to grow the Movement in different communities, but the attempts were unsuccessful. Over time this team shrank and lost its link with Spain. One of the founding couples, Jorge and Dora SOLIS, remain members of Teams in team 8 of Sector A.

In February 1992, in the town of Cedros de Montes de Oca, belonging to the same Parish of Lourdes, the second team in Costa Rica began. The initiative came from the couple Jorge and Hortensia BERMÚDEZ QUIRÓS, who were a very committed and active couple within the Parish, specifically in catechesis in preparation for Marriage and in Journeys of Christian Life, a very popular movement at that time. Hortensia had a sister, Flory, who along with her husband Luis, were part of St. Joseph Team 1, so they were asked to take on the piloting of the new Team. With material for piloting sent previously by Teams from Spain, eight couples with experience in pastoral work were gathered by Jorge and Hortensia and so, in February 1992, the piloting of Team 2 began with many shortages. The commitment and spirituality of Jorge and Hortensia is what contributed to the establishment of Team 2. Of those nine couples, the following currently remain in the Movement: Victor GUILLEN and Deyanira PORRAS (+), Mario GARCIA and Maritza ZUÑIGA.

Given that Costa Rica was under the responsibility of Teams of Our Lady of Colombia; those responsible for that country asked Agustín and Hersilia CAMPOS to contact Teams of Costa Rica with two intentions: to meet with the two existing teams and to designate a couple that would participate in the Fatima Gathering in 1994 on behalf of Costa Rica. Agustín and Hersilia designated Jorge and Hortensia BERMÚDEZ as the liaison couple with Colombia and as participants in the Fatima Gathering. The BERMÚDEZ were able to live the experience of the internationality and unity of Teams and perceived in person the magnitude of the Movement.

With the creation of Team No. 2, a new and fruitful stage began for Teams in Costa Rica, due to the perspective needed to begin the expansion of the Movement in that country. Thus, several of the couples of

Team 2 were in charge of initiating the piloting of several teams: 6 teams in Sector A (Downtown San José) and 4 teams in the area of Los Santos (Sector B). The expansion of the Movement continued in this same way with other teams in other parts of Costa Rica (Sector C, Sector D).

Víctor GUILLEN and Deyanira PORRAS (+) (2001 - 2004), take on the responsibility to continue and consolidate Sector C (in Cartago), and start Sector D (in Heredia). The third shift in responsibility is that of Luis CESPEDES and Celia CUBILLO (2005 - 2008), who had the task of consolidating the existing sectors and restructuring Teams in Costa Rica.

Over time expansion to other places was supported with members of Teams of other Sectors other than A. The fourth shift of responsibility in Costa Rica was Mario GARCIA and Maritza ZUÑIGA (2009 - 2012). During their time, Sector E was formed.

In addition, the HispanoAmerica Super Region commissioned the Costa Rican Teams to expand the Movement to Nicaragua and Panama. It began with an attempt in Panama, but with negative results. Later in 2011, during the responsibility of Mario and Maritza, Teams in Panama (Divala - 1 team) and Nicaragua (Granada - 2 teams) began. They had the support of some brave and committed pilots who took on the challenge of accompanying the teams in these neighboring countries. Presently this seed has grown to 7 teams in Nicaragua and 3 in Panama, despite some problems of recognition by the Hierarchy, mainly with Teams in Panama.

In 2012 the South-Central American Region was created, consisting of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, due to their structure, organization and financial independence.

More than 30 years have passed since that first approach by Teams of Spain, and 26 years in which the Teams of Costa Rica, Panama and Nicaragua have become established, expanded, and grown in strength.

Currently the South-Central American Region has 5 sectors, 51 teams and 266 couple in Costa Rica; 6 teams and 28 couple in Nicaragua;

3 teams and 15 couples in Panama, under the responsibility of Ronald NÚÑEZ and Dunia BARRANTES (2017 - 2020).

Togo¹¹¹ (1985)

Teams of Our Lady arrived in Togo through Chantal and Luc DICK, a French couple from Senegal. In October 1985, the first meeting of the first team called Lomé 1 took place with SC Gérard GUIDON. This first team was made up of three French couples: DICK, DE LAMARSELLE, and LATRILLE and four Togolese couples: AKPALO, QUASHIE, BILERE, and EKLO.

Later, in October 1986, some young Togolese couples who wanted to follow in the footsteps of their elders created team Lomé 2. The team was piloted by the DICKs and consisted of Chantal and Luc Dick, Fortunée and Ignace EKLO, Edith and Barthélémy BILERE, Scolastique and Nazaire KETEHOULI, Marie Reine and Joseph AGBOLI, Lambertienne and Henri SENOU, Jeanne and Philippe DE FANTI and later Bernadette and Sylvestre MINLEKIBE.



Anniversary of 15 years of Teams in Togo - Lomé, July 2000.

¹¹¹ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE – History of Teams of Our Lady - 2019.

Thanks to the dynamism and determination of the Togo Teams, Teams was born in Benin in 1997, The Ivory Coast in 2008 and Guinea in 2013. Togo, the true locomotive of the maritime region of the West, prides itself on being among the pioneers of the Movement in these countries.



Delegation from Togo to the Training Session with some members of the ERI.
July 1997.

This is also the case in most of the countries of French-speaking West, Central and Great Lakes Africa. It was always through expatriate Christians or missionaries that the Movement arrived and was established. Local couples took over to spread it and join with other local couples.

Faced with the multiplication of Teams in the various African countries, the need for coordination became evident. This is why the French leaders of the Movement in French speaking Africa established the relationship between the various Sectors by creating the Coordination (ECAAF) in 1996.

In 2001 the Region was created. The Super-Region was born in 2005 with the aim of entrusting its management to the Africans, which subsequently happened in 2010. At that time it comprised three Regions (West, Center, Center-South). Bernadette and Sylvestre MINLEKIBE

were appointed as the Responsible Couple of SRAF at the International School of Madrid, in July 2010.¹¹² Today, they are a member couple of the ERI.

Burkina Faso (1985)¹¹³

We have the following for background to Teams of Our Lady in Burkina Faso:

In a letter from Constantine and Geneviève SIPSOM of the Leading Team, dated March 31, 1960, there is mention of the existence of a team in Ouagadougou, whose SC was Fr. Robert OUEDRAOGO.

On the same date the same authors wrote: “A married couple, members of our Movement, Jean and Ghislaine GOSSELLIN have just arrived in France after a stay in Ouagadougou. At the end of their stay, they met some couples who were studying the Charter of Teams and were eager to enter our Movement. Among these couples were Lucien ZONGO and Paul OUEDRAOGO.”

In a later letter addressed to M. Michel LUNVEN and dated February 28, 1964, it is stated that there are currently no teams in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso).

Finally, a recent document¹¹⁴ states that the Movement arrived in this African country thanks to Fr. Michel GUILLIOT, a missionary priest from Nimes (France) who had been assigned to Kaya. It was he who formed the first team in Burkina Faso in 1985. Its members were: Clémentine and Isidore BOUDA, Stéphanie and Florent OUEDRAOGO, Hélène and Edmond SAWAODOGO, Henriette and Isidore ILBOUDO, Josiane and Constant OUEDRAOGO.

¹¹² Brief history of Teams of Our Lady in Francophone Africa. Lomé 2019.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE – History of Teams of Our Lady - 2019.



Héléne and Edmond SAWAODOGO.

Peru¹¹⁵ (1987)

As an interesting precedent, the archives of Teams in Paris have a letter from Antoine and Solange DE LA PANOUSE, dated April 28, 1966, addressed to Mr. and Mrs. CINTIJOCH of Barcelona, Spain, asking them to send a series of documents from Teams to Marcel and Zaira AWAD, in Lima, Peru¹¹⁶.

In 1987, Enrique CAMACHO, a Friar in the Dominican order serving as Director-Advisor of the Diocesan Family Commission of the Diocese of Chimbote, asked his brother in the order, Fr. Mark HEATH of Washington, D.C., to put him in contact with one of the representatives of the Teams Movement. Friar CAMACHO already knew about its existence through



Friar Enrique Camacho, O.P.

¹¹⁵ HISTORY OF OUR LADY'S TEAMS IN PERU -2018.

¹¹⁶ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

information sheets he found in one of the Dominican convents in the United States.

Fr. Mark HEATH, put him in contact with the couples Angela and Francisco and Marcelo and Esther MOREIRA DE AZEVEDO of Teams of Our Lady of São Paulo, Brazil, who sent him the information material on Teams. This communication happened on March 20, 1987.

On April 20, 1987, Friar CAMACHO received a package containing six founding letters and the Gathered in Christ material for three team meetings.



Fr. Thomas Kraft, O.P.

On May 14, Friar Enrique CAMACHO happily answered the team members from São Paulo and announced he had already formed his first team. On May 28, 1987, this team would have had its first meeting with the participation of Father Tomas KRAFT, OP, as counselor. He had already worked with Teams in the United States of America.

Thus, Chimbote becomes the first city where the Teams of Our Lady begin to walk in Peru.

The Lord blessed the marriage of Sabina and Adalberto ESPINOZA MINCHOLA, who at that time were participating in marriage renewal (REMA) with Fr. CAMACHO. He gave them materials about Teams to read and study.

The ESPINOZA MINCHOLA couple gathered seven other couples who attended the San José Obrero Parish in Laderas del Norte. The couples that made up Team No. 1 at that time were:



Adalberto and Sabina ESPINOZA MINCHOLA.

Sabina MINCHOLA and Adalberto ESPINOZA (+), Celia BAZÁN and Enrique DURAND, Ana GONZALES and Hernán LÓPEZ, Emma ZAPATA and Marino VILCHEZ, Clara TORRES and Nicanor QUIJANO (+), Alix FERNÁNDEZ and Luis VELARDE, Gladys BLAS and Julio SERNAQUE.

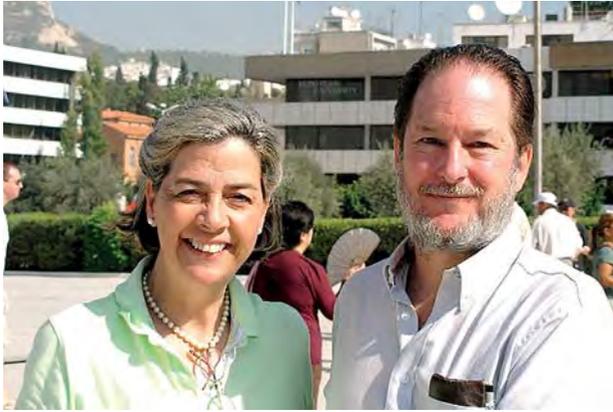


Chimbote Team No. 1.

The first SC was Father Tomas KRAFT, OP, who today lives in Kenya and is seeking to form more Teams of Our Lady. The first Responsible Couple for Team 1 was Sabina and Adalberto ESPINOZA (+) who in addition constituted the first Dissemination, Information and Pilot couple of Teams in Peru.

Later, Angela and Francisco, Esther and Luis Marcelo AZEVEDO from São Paulo, Brazil, indicated it was up to them to make contact with the Responsible Couple for Teams in Colombia, so the growth of Teams in Peru would be guided by Teams of Colombia.

One of the couples important in the history of Teams in Peru were Colombians Andrés and Silvia (+) MERIZALDE, who were in Peru several times, first in Chimbote and later in Lima.



Andres and Silvia Merizalde.

In 1994, Peru was present at the International Gathering in Fatima, Portugal, through their Responsible Couple Hernán and Ana LÓPEZ. They were accompanied by the person responsible for the introduction of Teams in Peru, Fr. Enrique CAMACHO.

Ten years later, in 1997, the Movement arrived in Lima, and Team 1 was formed in that city. Later, two sectors were born as part of the Hispano-America Super Region: Chimbote and Lima.



Andrés and Silvia Merizalde from Colombia with members of Teams, at a Training Day in Chimbote.

In the year 2004 these two sectors are united in the Peru Pre-Region. Two years later the Episcopal Commission of Lay Apostolate extends the recognition to Teams of Our Lady and ratifies Mario and Mariella GUTIERREZ CHIA as Responsible Couple of the Peru Pre-Region. That year the reorganization and expansion of the Movement begins in Peru.

Later, in the city of Chimbote, two sectors were formed: Chimbote Sector and San Pedro Sector. The growth did not have the same speed as in the first years, several teams were lost. But the teams that remained, remain firm and convinced of the graces and benefits the Movement brings to their spiritual growth.

In November 2014 Peru was formed as a Region. Thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, Peru has grown from two initial sectors to nine thriving and hopeful sectors.

Ecuador¹¹⁷ (1988)

As background to be considered, it is necessary to mention the announcement of the creation of the first team in Ecuador, composed of French couples living in Quito. This was mentioned in a letter dated November 30, 1977, addressed by H. DU MAZEL to “le Commandant (sic) and Mrs. BRESSON” in Paris. This letter also mentions a series of documents on Teams will be sent. They are also asked to contact Esther and Luis Marcelo DE AZEVEDO in São Paulo, Brazil, who are in charge of Teams for Latin America.¹¹⁸ Later, the Proceedings of the ERI announce the creation of a team in Quito, Ecuador, in June 1983.¹¹⁹

Nevertheless, it wasn't until March 14, 1987, on the occasion of a Parents' Meeting held at the Jesuit School of San Gabriel in Quito, when 4 couples and a widowed mother formed the first team in Ecuador. They

¹¹⁷ Teams of Our Lady. Ecuador, Screenplay of the Silver Jubilee short film of Teams of Our Lady in Ecuador.

¹¹⁸ Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

¹¹⁹ History of Equipes Notre-Dame. Op. cit.

received advice from Fr. Federico SANFELIÚ, who had experience as SC in teams from Spain and Mexico. They contacted the Movement in Colombia and received generous assistance and encouragement from Alberto and Constanza ALVARADO and Antonio and Olga Lucía ARANGO.



Ecuador. Quito Team No. 1, 1988.



Ecuador. Quito Team No. 2, 1992.

After a Formation Day in Bogotá in 1991, in which couples from Team Quito 1 and its SC were invited, Team 2 was formed with couples related to the Don Bosco Technical School. In 1992 Teams 3 and 4 started.

Ecuador had 3 SC at that time. That same year, the first Formation Day was held in Quito, encouraged by the couple Olga Lucía and Antonio ARANGO and Fr. Héctor CUBILLOS from Colombia, and attended by couples from Chimbote (Peru).



Quito. First Formation Session. 1992.

In 1992 the Ecuador Sector was created under the responsibility of Martha and Hugo BUSTOS. This contributed to 4 new teams joining the Teams family. With them, a successful Formation Day was held in January 1994 at the San Gabriel School. In the same year, Martha and Cristobal MANTILLA took over the responsibility of the Movement.



Ecuador. Formation Session. San Gabriel School of Quito, 1994.

In 1997, the Pre-Region of Ecuador was created with 13 teams. Martha and Cristobal MANTILLA were named the Responsible Couple. In 1998 Sylvia and Andres MERIZALDE took over as Responsible Couple for the HispanoAmerica Region and gave a great and loving impulse to the Movement in Ecuador. They were joined by Fr. Héctor CUBILLOS, the current bishop of Zipaquirá (Colombia) who contributed greatly to the formation of the spirit of the Movement in Ecuador.

In January 1999, Anita and Rafael CEVALLOS were entrusted with the responsibility for the Pre-Region and 3 months later for the Region. They consecrated the Ecuadorian Movement to the Virgin of the Home. By that time there were already 18 teams in Quito and three sectors.

On April 21 of the Jubilee Year 2000, the Lord blessed the Movement with the beginning of Team 1 of Guayaquil, which was officially welcomed in April 2002. The couples that formed it were: Charbel and Marilú SAAB, Responsible Couple for the Team, Pepe and Julia FERRETTI, Pepe and Anita LASSO, Carlos and Mariela SILVA, Jaime and Cynthia ORELLANA and Dago and Sandy BEDOYAL.

A month later, Marilú and Chárbel SAAB, with the support of Fr. Gustavo CALDERÓN, S.J., rector of the Javier School, presented an evening of information on the Movement to some parents of the same school. As a result of this meeting, four new teams of eight couples each were formed and began piloting. The counseling priests for these piloting teams were all from the Society of Jesus. These four teams were welcomed on April 27, 2003. The Guayaquil Sector was formed with these five teams, and the SAABs were named the Responsible Couple. In that same year, Cati and Carlos UBIDIA assumed the responsibility of the Ecuador Region, which they continued to lead until 2008.

In 2004 Guayaquil already had 9 teams and was developing rapidly. This continued in a sustained way throughout the following years and by 2012 Guayaquil had 36 teams.

On May 7, 2006, Catalina and Pedro CABELLO took over responsibility of the Guayaquil Sector from Marilú and Chárbel SAAB. The

restructuring of the Guayaquil Sector also began, with the creation of Mini Sectors I and II.

On September 14, 2008, during the closing Mass of the First Meeting of the Ecuadorian Region, Marilú and Chárbel SAAB were named the new Responsible Couple of the Ecuadorian Region and Catalina and Carlos UBIDIA of Quito the new Responsible Couple of the Central Province.

In the middle of 2005, Fr. Paco ESPINOSA, from the Borja School in the city of Cuenca, invited several couples from the school to an informational meeting about Teams of Our Lady. As a result of this meeting 7 couples signed up, who, along with Father Paco and the piloting couple Marilú and Chárbel SAAB, formed the first team in this city and started piloting on November 18, 2005.

On November 19, 2006, with Fr. Eugenio SOLAESA, who replaced Fr. Paco as SC, the following couples officially joined the Movement: Ricardo SERRANO and Belinda RODRÍGUEZ; Germán MONTESDEOCA and Indira GONZÁLEZ; Diego AVILA and Ruth PESÁNTEZ; Pablo MERCHÁN and Mónica PAUTA; Patricio ARGUDO and Tatiana VÁSQUEZ. A year later, the following joined the group: Jorge and Vicky JARAMILLO; Luis Felipe JARAMILLO and Silvana ASTUDILLO; Fernando and Fabiola CÁRDENAS.

Today Marilu and Chárbel SAAB are responsible for the Hispano-America Super-Region.

In 2010, Cuenca Team 2 and 3 were welcomed; currently there are 5 teams with prospects for further expansion.

Teams of Our Lady, being a movement of the Catholic Church, has made itself present to its hierarchy. Some of its members have been participating in outstanding ways in ecclesial and apostolic activities through parish initiatives and social assistance, directing the Couples' Meeting, pre-marital courses, charity activities, the School for Parents and being part of the editorial staff of the Magazine "*Ser Familia*".

Dominican Republic (1988)

In August 1985, Puerto Rico Teams tried to bring Teams to the neighboring Dominican Republic. Mercedes and Alvaro GÓMEZ-FERRER, a couple from the ERI, accompanied by the Spanish counselor P. ICETA organized a visit to the capital. They were accompanied by a couple from Puerto Rico and Fr. Campo Emilio ARIZA. And within two years the project began to bear fruit.

On November 20, 1987, Teams arrived in Gaspar Hernández, Dominican Republic via Puerto Rico and Fr. Campo Emilio ARIZA. He was accompanied by José (Chito) and Marilyn FRANQUI. Fr. Lucas MARTÍNEZ was their first SC.

Later, in 2002, Teams arrived in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic, thanks to contacts established by Fr. Salvador ENCARNACIÓN who had met Teams in Puerto Rico through Father Luis VELÁSQUEZ. The initiating couple of this first team was Esther and Victor TEJADA.

At that time, the teams of Gaspar Hernández and Santo Domingo did not know each other. So when they met, the Santo Domingo Sector became part of the Pre-Region with a seat in Gaspar Hernández.

Finally, Milagros and Negro HIDALGO are chosen as the new Pre-Regional Responsible Couple and Father Lucas continues as national SC. The HIDALGOs were natives of Gaspar Hernández but moved to Santiago and took the Movement with them.

Guatemala¹²⁰ (1991)

At the beginning of January 1991, after celebrating Sunday mass in the parish of “Nuestra Señora de la Asunción” in the city of La Nueva

¹²⁰ BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE START OF OUR LADY’S TEAMS IN GUATEMALA.

Guatemala de la Asunción, Father Gustavo Rodolfo MENDOZA approached Juan José and Rosángela PRATDESABA - ZEA and told them about “Teams of Our Lady”. He had learned about Teams during a recent trip to Europe and its aim to improve conjugal spirituality and the sanctification of spouses through the sacrament of marriage. He explained he intended to initiate and promote this movement in Guatemala and invited the PRATDESABA - ZEAs to join. He did the same with other couples who expressed their willingness to attend a first informative meeting.



Father Gustavo Rodolfo MENDOZA HERNÁNDEZ.
First Counselor and Founder of Teams in GUATEMALA.

Fr. MENDOZA had been in France a few months before and almost by chance had heard about the existence of Teams of Our Lady. While staying at the house of a French couple, the wife left for a meeting (Teams). The husband stayed to attend to their guest and shared with him about Teams.

Father Gustavo MENDOZA held the first meeting on February 2, 1991 in the house of the PRATDESABA-ZEAs, in the capital city of Guatemala. Eight married couples had been invited and the following attended: Iris and Enrique AZURDI; Gerónimo Alberto ALVAREZ;

Juan José and Rosángela PRATDESABA-ZEA; Uri and Eduardo RUBI, Ramsés and Miriam CUESTAS; Samuel PEREDA and Carmen PINTO, but not all joined the Movement.



The First Teams of Our Lady Team in Guatemala.

With very little knowledge of what the Movement of the Teams of Our Lady was, Gerónimo Alberto ÁLVAREZ DÁVILA, called Colombia on February 10, 1991, to speak with Antonio and Olga Lucía ARANGO-NOGUERA (at that time the Responsible Couple of the HispanoAmerica Region). The ARANGO-NOGUERAs became their Pilot Couple. A few weeks later a package of information about the Movement was received from Colombia. It included The Foundational Charter, copies of The Monthly Letter, and an attentive note thanking them for their interest in the Movement with complementary information, a message of support, and prayers for the beginning of Teams in Guatemala.

From that meeting on, they tried different techniques since very little was known about the mechanics of meetings. Father MENDOZA knew the most about it, but the information he had received was not enough to make the team feel safe. Therefore, every so often they tried a different way of conducting the meetings.

The only thing that was clear was that in each meeting there should be a time of prayer and a time to instruct on the Endeavors and the way in which they were being fulfilled. Although the names of the Endeavors were known, their spirit wasn't known in depth. Thus, the first year passed and the first retreat was held in the Convent Monte San Francisco. The talks were distributed among members of the team and under the direction of the SC.

A few months later with the withdrawal of some couples from the initial team, other couples were invited: Luis MÉNDEZ and Claudia VÉLEZ, Alejandro SAGASTUME and Conchita CHINCHILLA, Mario Roberto RÍOS and Martita GUTIÉRREZ, Mario Edgardo RAMÍREZ and Doris HERNÁNDEZ, who enthusiastically breathed new life into the team.

When Father MENDOZA traveled to Mexico in 1993 and contacted the Responsible Couple for Teams in Mexico, the first Training Day was scheduled and organized by the Mexican couple Jean Claude (Nino) and Hortensia DUVAL. In order to take advantage of their trip to Guatemala, a group of approximately twenty-five more couples were invited and learned about the Movement. Many couples left this meeting motivated and four more teams were formed.

During this event, the Guatemala sector was formed. The DUVALs confirmed Father Gustavo Rodolfo MENDOZA as SC and named Juan José and Rosángela PRATDESABA - ZEA as the first Responsible Couple of the Sector. They held the position until 1999.

The Movement grew with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Blessing of Our Lady. When the PRATDESABAs handed over the position in September 1999, expansion had already begun.



Rosángela ZEA and Juan José PRATDESABA.

There were two teams in Chicamán, municipality of the department of El Quiché, and two in Santa Ana, department of the Republic of El Salvador. Sectors A and B of the city of Guatemala had been added and combined with the aforementioned teams forming the Central North America Pre-region. This Pre-Region and the Central South America Pre-region, headed by Costa Rica, merged as a result of a reorganization decided by the ERI due to the growth of Teams in Hispanic America.

In September 1998, Teams in Guatemala consisted of two Sectors with 6 and 7 teams; 36 and 41 couples; and 5 and 6 SCs respectively. In addition, there was a Sector of Isolated Teams composed of two teams formed in Chicamán, municipality of the department of El Quiché, and one in Santa Ana, department of the Republic of El Salvador. This Sector had a total of 16 couples, 3 SCs and 4 couples in piloting.

The Movement of Teams of Our Lady expanded from Guatemala to the Republic of El Salvador in 2006 and to the Republic of Honduras in 2008, thus becoming the North Central American Region we know today. As of November 30, 2018, this Region included: Guatemala with 55 teams; Honduras with 29 teams; El Salvador with 7 teams.

Gabon¹²¹ (1991)

Feue Elisabeth BEA-BEA visits a French priest, the parish priest of the Three Kings in Libreville, and asked him: “Is there a movement in the Church for Christian couples?” Fr. Jean-Pierre GAILLARD told her there was and asked ERI information on Teams of Our Lady. He tasked a couple from his parish, Marie-Paule and Antoine TOMO-OBIANG, with spreading the spirituality of Teams.

¹²¹ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE - History of Teams of Our Lady.



Marie-Paule and Antoine TOMO-OBIANG.

This is how in 1991, piloting began for the Libreville 1 team. The priest served as both SC and pilot. Very quickly team Libreville 2 was born in 1992, with the TOMO-OBIANGs as the piloting couple. Libreville 3 and 4 formed in 1993, followed by Libreville 5 in 1994, and Libreville 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 in 1995.

The first team in Libreville was composed of: TOMO-OBIANG, BEA-BEA, NDOUTOUME NGOME, OUM, NVIANG and EFFA EN-DAMANE.



First team of Our Lady in Gabon- 1991-.

It is necessary to make special mention of Monique and Benoit GUILBERT, a French couple and member of Teams. After the beginning of the Movement in Libreville, they served as piloting couple for many teams in the capital as well as Port-Gentil and the oil city of Gabon.



Monique and Benoit GUILBERT with the Second Team of Our Lady in Gabon -1992-

Chile¹²² (1992)

The first attempt to bring Teams to Chile was made by a French couple: François and Toinette DE MUSSY. François arrived with his wife to work as an engineer for a coal company in Lota. They had the idea of forming a team with other couples working for the same company. In October 1954, the Lota team began and was composed of five couples and accompanied by a SC, Father Mario SANDOVAL of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. However, this team experienced many difficulties since most of the couples were not convinced of the spirit of the Movement and the demands included in the Charter.

¹²² "THE BEGINNING OF OUR LADY'S TEAMS IN CHILE", prepared by Violeta and Pedro Paredes, members of Santiago's Team No. 1 May 1st, 2017.

Everything seems to indicate it soon ceased to exist.¹²³ Nevertheless in March 1979, the Archives of ERI record the creation of this first team in Chile.¹²⁴

In the mid-1980s, the Chilean couple Beba and Claudio VERDUGO had been part of a Brazilian team in the city of Jundiaí, in the state of Sao Paulo. It was team of Igar and Cidihna FEHR, international Responsible Couple from 1994 and 2000.

The VERDUGOs, motivated by the FEHRs, tried to promote Teams in the Chilean capital, forming a team that met several times in 1991, but was not successful in the long run.

Towards the end of 1991, the VERDUGOs visited a new Chilean couple, Violeta and Pedro PAREDES, who in December of the previous year had also returned from Brazil. They proposed to again try to form a team. Thus, in March 1992, they began to pilot four couples. In the middle of the year Father Claudio BRISON, a priest of the O.M.I. (Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate), joined them as SC.

During this process, they received a visit from the Responsible Couple of the Southern Region, Marichu and Pocho ALVAREZ, who lived in Mendoza-Argentina, which is only 250 km from Santiago. They offered their support and assistance, checked how piloting was being carried out and met the community interested in knowing the methodology of Teams. This first group officially became Team No. 1 (Our Lady of Mount Carmel) on December 21, 1992 in a private Eucharist celebrated in the Parish of St. John the Evangelist, located in the Commune of Santiago. The Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Father Claudio BRISSON.

In July 1994, at the invitation of the ERI, Mila and Felipe ROJAS, attended the International Gathering of Teams, in Fatima, Portugal. In

¹²³ Cf. letter from Francois et Toinette of MUSSY, dated May 7, 1956. Teams of Our Lady, International Archive.

¹²⁴ History of the Teams of Our Lady. Op. cit.

the middle of the same year, the PAREDES accompany their daughter for the catechesis of first communion in the Parish of Saint Bernadette of the Commune of Providence. They take the opportunity to introduce Teams to the attending parents. This is how Team No. 2 (Our Lady of Lourdes) was born. This was made official in May 1996, in a Eucharistic celebration celebrated by Fr. Juan PALMA. Constanza and Alberto ALVARADO, Responsible Couple for the HispanoAmerica S.R., and Mari-chu and Pocho ALVAREZ, Responsible Couple for the Southern Region, traveled to Santiago for this ceremony.

Team No. 3 (Our Lady of the Assumption) also begins in St. Bernadette parish, after a presentation made to a group of couples participating in baptism preparation. Mila and Felipe ROJAS were the pilot couple for this group which became official on April 29, 2001.

In the last week of January 2005, the PAREDES were invited to participate in the family missions taking place in the most deprived neighborhoods of several cities in southern Chile. The missions lasted for one week, during which time they were housed as a group in a local school. In addition to the daily door-to-door mission, various support and integration activities were organized to help meet the needs of the community. The missions were coordinated by the local parish priest, Father Reinaldo MÉNDEZ, with the assistance of couples from that community, Barrio de Santa Elena, in the city of Coronel and is 550 km south of Santiago. Together with the priest, a presentation on Teams was given to the couples in attendance. From this a new team was formed and piloted with the help of Fr. Reinaldo MENDEZ. After 10 meetings, Team 1 (Nuestra Señora del Carmen) in the city of Coronel, was made official on July 30, 2006. Two years later, three teams had already been formed in the city of Coronel.

In subsequent family missions carried out in the city of Arauco, 30 km south of Coronel, other informational meetings on Teams occurred. The Responsible Couple for the Santiago Sector at the time, Gilda and Miguel LABBE, together with Paulina and Eduardo STURLA, partici-

pated in these family missions, with the support of the local parish priest, Father Flavio TORRES. Piloting of this large group (more than 15 couples) began and led to the creation of 4 teams in 2009.

Rwanda¹²⁵ (1994)

In the Italian Letter No. 84, May 1995, we find the only reference to the beginning of teams in Rwanda, and it is a very sad story. From it we will extract the essential. It is the testimony of the Italian priest, Fr. Tito OGGIANI MACAGNINO, SC of Rwandan Team Ndera 1 which he had founded in February 1994, in Kigali (Ndera).

“After a second meeting held on the first Sunday of March with nine couples in attendance, a third meeting was scheduled for Saturday, April 9 at 3 p.m. at the Kienkiro shelter on a hill near Ndera. On April 6, after the deadly attack on the President of the Rwandan Republic, anarchy exploded, and a homicidal mob took over the hills. On April 7, I met my friends from Teams in the garden of the seminary of Ndera. About two thousand people had come there to take refuge terrified by the escalation of violence rapidly spreading over all the hills. On Saturday, April 9, the day we had set for our third meeting, we were violently attacked by seven militia officers armed to the teeth, and we locked ourselves in the seminary halls. In a few moments, all hell broke loose: dead, wounded, a general riot... Half an hour later, around noon, the seminary seemed deserted. There were only a few dead, many wounded and five priests waiting for the worst. On April 12, I was repatriated to Italy by order of the Consul and everything seemed to have ended there.

Four months later, the civil war had ended with the victory of the Rwandan Patriotic Front... with one million dead and three million refugees beyond the border. The couples from Teams suffered

¹²⁵ Letter from Don Tito OGGIANI MACAGNINO, SC of the Ndera Team 1. “Teams of Our Lady also have their martyrs”. Italian Letter No. 84, May 1995. Teams of Our Lady. International Archive.

through the storm. Three founding couples were killed; two others were declared “disappeared”; another took refuge in Zaire, while three others were reunited. The surviving couples took care of the orphans of the murdered couples and of their own families in spite of the serious challenges of supporting themselves. These are the martyrs of the Church of our days... both those who died and those who survived faced enormous difficulties.

The Teams movement should be proud of these young martyrs. “And if the blood of martyrs is the seed of new Christians”, as Tertullian said, then the blood of the Teams martyrs should give birth to new Teams...as if the persecution of the first centuries of the Church had been repeated in Rwanda!”

Ten months after the dispersion, here is the status of the members from Ndera Team 1¹²⁶:

- “Pierre Célestin and Janvière KABASTINGA: in exile in the Goma refugee camp in Zaire
- Bernard and Béatrice MPONIYIMIGABO: the husband in prison in Kigali; his wife, a teacher and housewife, with five children in her care, without work.
- Emmanuel and Jeane SEBULIMBWA, teacher and nurse; both alive with their two children in Reméra. He is out of work.
- Faustin and Félicité MUREGO: killed with two of their five children. He was a teacher and she a housewife. The three orphaned children (2 girls aged 5 and 9 and a boy aged 11) live with an uncle in Kicukiro.
- Innocent and Donata NKUNDIMANA, driver and teacher were killed. They left two orphans: a five-year old boy lives with his grandmother and a two-year old girl lives at her aunt’s house in Reméra.

¹²⁶ Letter from Jean BWANDINGA to Don Tito OGGIANI MACAGNINO, dated January 14, 1995.

- Eugène and Immaculée, teacher and housewife, both killed; they left two orphans aged 13 and 9.
- Philippe and Stéphanie, nurse and worker, disappeared.
- Jean and Mukabanyana DAMASCÈNE, employed and teacher, disappeared.
- Jean and BWANDINGA, Responsible Couple for the Ndera team, student and teach two daughters, everyone in good health.

In 2018, the document “Teams of Our Lady in the World Today”*, states there are teams there today.

New Zealand¹²⁷ (1995)

In early 1995, Peggy CORRIGAN from England was visiting her daughter in New Zealand and approached the Plimmerton parish priest, Fr. Michael SWEERE, with information about Teams. After reading the material, Fr. Michael agreed that Peggy should start a team and thus the Movement of Teams of Our Lady began in Plimmerton in 1995. The first team had five couples and Father Michael as SC. Shortly thereafter a second team was formed with retired couples and Fr. John HEIJNAN as SC. A third team was formed after a family weekend in the parish. This team is still very active and has three couples from the original group.

There were seven teams in the area in the first stage, one of them was piloted in the area of Central Hawkes Bay. There are currently 2 teams in Wellington.

Fr. Michael was chaplain to all but one of the teams while in the parish. He said it was a wonderful way to be in touch with so many parishioners and be able to talk about the things that really mattered in life. When he left, he continued to encourage the teams and often offered

* Teams of Our Lady in the World Today. 2018.

¹²⁷ History of OUR LADY’S TEAMS in Oceania.

Mass at Team retreats and helped with the sacrament of reconciliation.

He was very enthusiastic about Teams, saying it was the best thing he had seen. He was unsuccessful in starting Teams in any of the other parishes he was in, although he tried and was supported by the teams he had previously counseled.

Father John HEIJNAN, an Assumptionist priest, was a team chaplain for several years after coming from the Netherlands in 1958. He was involved in marriage ministries including Teams, from 1995 until about 2000.



Fr. Michael SWEERE.



Teams in Wellington 2016.

Much later, in 2018, the Movement started on the North Island of New Zealand. Bishop Steve LOWE, of the Diocese of Hamilton, had heard about Teams through various sources connected to the Movement in England. At his invitation, representatives from the Super-Region of Oceania made several visits to the diocese to give informational sessions, initially Faye and Kevin NOONAN and Bishop Frank MARRIOTT. They were followed shortly afterwards by Penny and Peter CAHALAN to conduct Pilot

sessions. By the end of the year 4 new teams had been formed in Hamilton and Mount Maunganui. These were followed by the formation of the first team in the Diocese of Auckland. In 2019 Bishop LOWE celebrated a welcoming Mass for the new teams in Hamilton Cathedral. Helena and Paul MCCLOSKEY, the Responsible Couple from the United Kingdom, attended this Mass.

The Responsible Couples from each of the three cities formed the first Sector Team in this new phase of the Movement in New Zealand. In 2019 they attended a Formation Retreat in Australia to more deeply experience the Movement of Teams of Our Lady.



Welcoming Mass for the new teams in Hamilton, 2019.



Auckland Team 1, 2019.

Paraguay¹²⁸ (1996)

Teams arrived in Paraguay in 1996 through Alberto and Constanza ALVARADO who at the time were the Responsible Couple for the HispanoAmerica Super Region. The Family Ministry of the Archdiocese of Asunción put the ALVARADOS in contact with Fr. Wenceslao YUBERO, parish priest of Nuestra Señora del Carmen. Fr. YUBERO had just come from a vacation in Spain and returned with information about the Movement of Teams. He immediately coordinated a meeting between two groups of couples from his parish and the ALVARADOS.

This is how the ALVARADOS narrated this providential encounter:¹²⁹

“In 1996 we decided to travel to the south of the continent to promote Teams in that region. We requested letters of introduction from our archbishop in the city of Bogotá, for the archbishop of Asunción who kindly put us in contact with the couple in charge of the Family Ministry in that city. When we arrived in Asunción, this couple told us about a Spanish priest, parish priest of Nuestra Señora del Carmen, who had brought information from Spain about the Teams movement. Without wasting any time, our hosts took us to the mentioned parish, where we met Fr. Wenceslao YUBERO. While we were explaining about Teams, he took out a thick packet of documents from a desk drawer: it was the information he had brought from Spain about Teams of Our Lady. Without any hesitation, he made an appointment for the next day for them to share the Movement with a group of couples. Once the appointment was made and the information shared, the first two teams started in Asunción. The first sprout of the seed that fell on fertilized soil”.

The teams that emerged from this meeting: ASU (Asuncion) 1 and ASU 2, on July 29, 1996, their SC was Fr. YUBERO; likewise, he was

¹²⁸ Teams of Our Lady. History of Teams of Our Lady in Paraguay - 15 years of history 1996-2011. Asuncion 2011.

¹²⁹ Ibid. p. 39.

the SC for ASU 3 and ASU 4, which formed in 1997. He continued to be SC until Fr. Martin CALVO joined ASU 2 and Fr. Miguel CASTRO joined ASU 3. ASU 1 was formed by: Juan Carlos and Maria Del Carmen PRONO, Ruben and Socia REYES, Angel and Ruth SERVIN, Ruben Dario and Ana Maria DELGADO, Marcelo and Maria Elsa LATOURRETTE, Hernan and Lourdes SCHITTNER, Daniel and Raquel AMARILLA. ASU 2, was formed by: Enrique and Sachi GALANO, Rubén and Rita FERREIRA, Cristian and Gladys BAZÁN, Gustavo and Sandra N, Sixto and Carme AMARILLA, César and Sonia RIQUELME. In 1998, ASU 5 is created. In 2000, ASU 7 and ASU 8 are born. ASU 9 and ASU 10 in 2001.

In 2011, after 15 years of Teams in Paraguay, there were already 32 teams, 22 in Asunción, 1 in Sanber, 2 in Guara, 1 in Limpio, 3 in San Ignacio, and 3 in Villarrica.

The first groups were piloted from Mendoza, Argentina, by Mari-chu and Pocho ALVAREZ from Mendoza 1. After a year, the ALVAREZs directed the first Training Day for the Teams of Paraguay.

Benin¹³⁰ (1997)

This country, Togo's neighbor, received information about Teams through the Togo sector during the visit of an expatriate couple. The husband was originally from Benin and the wife from France. This couple piloted the Cotonou 1 team in 1997. The team remaining in contact with the Togo Sector until Benin was created as its own Sector.

¹³⁰ Brief history of Teams of Our Lady in Francophone Africa.

FOURTH WAVE OF EXPANSION: (2000 TO DATE)

These are the countries where Teams have arrived since 2000. These Teams have been created thanks to couples and SCs convinced of the importance and benefits of the Movement. The following is the story of nine countries from whom we have received information.

Lithuania¹³¹ (2000)

Teams of Our Lady in Lithuania have their origin from a family that moved from France to Lithuania in 2000. Rimvydas and Claire BACK created the first Team in Vilnius, the capital. Lithuania is a small country (2.5 million inhabitants) with an old and unique language. By 2009, Teams were located all over the country. There are currently 21 teams and 17 priests, including three bishops. In Vilnius there are 6 teams and in Kaunas, the second most important city, there are another 6.

Philippines¹³² (2000)

The first Team from the Philippines was established on Cebu Island in 2000, under the supervision and guidance of Fr. Jose BURGUES, a Spanish priest who had been a SC in France and Spain, along with the support of a married couple from Australia. Six couples came together to form Team Cebu 1. Leleth and Troy SORONO, using piloting materials sent from Australia, was the first Responsible Couple along with Fr. BURGUES as SC.

¹³¹ Teams of Our Lady. Teams of Our Lady in the World Today. Op. Cit. P. 50.

¹³² Ibid. p. 48.



Meeting of Cebu 1.

The first team was formed with couples who lived and worked in the community where the Casa de Formación Escolar is located, in Guadalupe, Cebu City. Coincidentally, the island of Cebu is where Christianity was also first introduced to the Philippines in 1565.



Leleth and Troy SORONO with Father José BURGUES
2003 Marie Christine and Gérard de ROBERTY, Leleth and Troy SORONO
with M. FLEISCHMANN.

In 2001, the second team was formed with couples whose husbands were seafarers and were absent for much of the year. If at sea, the wives would still meet for the monthly Team meeting and often discussed the study topics and results with their husbands via Skype.

The third team in Cebu was formed in 2002 when Elaine and John COGAVIN of the International Leadership Team visited the Philippines on the first of their three visits. They presented the Teams to the bishop of the diocese.

During 2004, Fr. BURGUES' team from France financially supported the establishment of a Mission Project for the growth of the Teams in Cebu. Leleth and Troy SORONO assumed the responsibility of coordinating the project. Several attempts were made by Cebu Team couples to establish more teams there and also in Mindanao but were unsuccessful because Teams was not formally recognized by the dioceses.

The fourth team was formed in 2005 from the hard work of Muyen and Edlin DE LOS REYES after they took over as the new Responsible Couple of the Sector. During this time, there was a concerted effort to establish a new team at Zamboanga in Mindanao, piloted from Cebu



Cebu Team 4, with Sue and Andrian FORDHAM.

using remote piloting material. Unfortunately, in 2007 the remote piloting ceased when the parish priest was assigned to another position.

In 2006, the Oceania Region provided an important stimulus that helped strengthen the capacity of the Cebu Sector. This consisted of the development of a Pastoral Sector Plan based on the planning document developed by the ERI. This allowed the Cebu Sector to review its development towards the fulfillment of its objectives of maintaining and promoting conjugal spirituality among local married couples and those living in other parts of the Philippines.

Fr. Jose BURGUES, who had presented Teams to Cebu in 2000, was reassigned to Florida, USA in 2007. He was replaced by Fr. Miguel ARTOLA as Vice-Provincial Superior of the Philippines and Japan. Fr. Miguel quickly visualized the importance of Teams for the growth of spirituality among married couples in the local parish community and has since strongly supported the Movement.

In 2009, Bebie and Jimmy SUICO accepted the role of Responsible Couple for the Cebu Sector.

On September 5, 2010, at the annual Foundational Charter Mass and Formation Day, the Cebu Teams celebrated the tenth anniversary of Teams in Cebu City with the attendance and participation of all Team members. By then, the Cebu Sector was firmly established.

Team 5 was formed in 2011, made up of young couples who were formerly youth members of the Calasanz Cultural Center.

In September 2012, the new Sector Couple, Yengyeng and Junjun SARIGUMBA, were elected; they led the Teams for the next three years. During these years, the Cebu Sector formed a strong organizational structure to take responsibility for its many annual activities and to carry the message of Teams to their local community. In September 2012, the first of five annual visits by elementary school teachers from the Diocese of Sandhurst took place in Bendigo, Australia. The visiting teachers met in communion with the teachers from Piarist School, followed by a lunch hosted by the team members.

During this time, Teams developed closer ties with the local Piarist Fathers community. They became more involved with regular Sunday Masses, special holiday ceremonies, and major events such as the ordination of new priests. At the same time, the Piarist Fathers continued their strong support of the Cebu Sector as they had always done, with the priests and deacons acting as spiritual advisors to the Sector Team and individual teams.



Cebu Sector. Team members with the SC.

In September 2015, at the annual celebration of the Foundational Charter Mass, Adrienne and Enan LAVISTE, members of the newest team, Team 5, accepted their new role as Responsible Couple for the Sector. During a visit in 2016 by two couples from the Oceania Region, ten years after the introduction of the Sector Pastoral Plan, the Cebu Sector reviewed their progress towards the goals it had formulated. The visit gave the members of Cebu a renewed enthusiasm and commitment to the Movement.

In the next period of its development, the Sector became even more active in strengthening the conjugal spirituality of the team members. The highlight was the first weekend retreat for the couples of Teams. This retreat has now become a regular activity in the Sector's annual program. From a practical point of view, the Sector also developed its capacity by

creating an Information Team to offer better informational programs for potential new members, as well as Training Sessions for existing Team members.

An important innovation occurred in 2018. At that time, two couples agreed to share the role of Responsible Couple for the sector. Cherrlyn and Emil PUGOSA and Genna and Butch REDULLA made this arrangement since their husbands lived for long periods away from home.



2009. Jan and Peter RALTON together with the Sector Responsible Couple Adrienne and Enan LAVISTE and Helena and Paul MCCLOSKEY from the ERI.

Over the past few years (2000-2019), the ERI has provided extensive assistance to the Cebu Sector through regular visits by ERI members (Elaine and John COGAVIN in 2002, 2005 and 2008, Jan and Peter RALTON in 2009). They encouraged team members and met with bishops and Church officials in the hope that Teams would be formally recognized by the dioceses, although to date this has not been successful. The ERI invited all couples of the Sector and several Piarist Fathers who were spiritual counselors to attend the International Gatherings (Lourdes, Rome, Fatima). The Oceania Region also organized their attendance at formation activities and team meetings in Australia (2001, 2008, 2017 and 2019 in Brisbane, Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide).

Their attendance at these Meetings, both international and in Australia, has been and continues to be of great benefit to the Cebu Sector and its missionary work of spreading the message of Teams to others as well as maintaining their deep sense of conjugal spirituality.

Poland¹³³ (2001)

In the case of Poland, the background to the official creation of the Movement is very important for understanding the evolution of the Teams of Our Lady in that country¹³⁴.

In 1974, teams of couples, called the “Domestic Church”, were set up in several Polish cities. This was a branch for households dependent on a wider movement called “Light and Life”, founded in the 1960s by Father Blachnicki.

During a trip to Paris, Sister Hedwige SKUDRO, a Sacred Heart nun linked to this movement, came into contact with Teams of Our Lady. With the help of Sister Léonarde de Czerna, she began to translate the documents of the Teams and circulated them among married couples. Some of them attended the Teams meeting in Rome in 1976. In the same year, Sister Hedwige organised a week of prayer in Troussures under the direction of Father Caffarel.

From 1981 onwards, several French couples, accompanied by Cyrille and Jacqueline RATY from the ERI, went to Poland to continue the contacts that would continue in the following years. Training sessions were provided by the CHAUVINs in 1985 and 1986 and by the D'AMONVILLEs from the ERI in 1987 and 1988. In that year, 50 people attended the International Meeting in Lourdes.

¹³³ Lucyna et Krzysztof WYSOCKI. History of Teams in Poland.

¹³⁴ We thank Mercedes and Alvaro GÓMEZ-FERRER a letter in which they explain with detail these antecedents that they witnessed. Here, we provide a short summary of the extended document.

From 1990 onwards, Álvaro and Mercedes GÓMEZ-FERRER from the ERI were responsible for maintaining the relationship with Poland. They travelled there on several occasions, sometimes accompanied by Father Bernard OLIVIER, Spiritual Counsellor of the ERI. He asked that their request be accepted to continue a more intensive relationship with the Polish Teams, using the documents of the Teams of Our Lady. This included their study themes, publishing the editorials and the letters of the ERI, participating in the International Meetings, and offering Formation Sessions.

In 1994, twenty couples, including one from Ukraine and one from Slovakia, two priests and Sister Hedwige, attended the International Meeting in Fatima.

In 1995, the number of Teams reached 2,135, as well as 119 from outside Poland. In this regard, Sister Léonarde de Czerna wrote: “I believe that one day all the “dispersed” couples will unite and become one, under the direction of the central leadership in Paris”.

One of the Formation Sessions held in that year was attended by the GÓMEZ-FERRERs and attended by the BERNARDZs who were in charge and Father Marian (chaplain of the Domestic Church), plus several priests and couples and the “General Moderator”, priest and head of “Light and Life”. There was strong disagreement between the representatives of the Domestic Church and the Light and Life movement. The Light and Life Movement established, in its statutes, that it would be in charge of everything in the Domestic Church: themes, documents, guidelines, election of counsellors, etc. The Gómez-Ferrers then intervened before the “General Moderator” of Light and Life to clarify that the Teams of Our Lady and its statutes had been recognised by the Holy See as a lay movement with its own charism and specificity. The “General Moderator” argued that a supra-diocesan movement was dangerous and that it could not be autonomous within the Church. The next day, the bishop in charge of family pastoral care cancelled the planned meeting.

In a long communiqué to the ERI, the GÓMEZ-FERRERs explained the events that had taken place. They analysed the pros and cons in order to make a decision with regard to the Domestic Church, given the position of the Light and Life Movement and the idiosyncrasies of the Polish Church. On the other hand, there was a legitimate desire of the Domestic Church to remain faithful to two charisms: the initial one of Light and Life and that of the Teams. They believed it was a historic and providential occasion to continue to help the Domestic Church, to make these couples more aware of their role in the Church and more confident in their responsibility as lay people who had walked with the Teams for 20 years. On the other hand, it was important to help the Counsellors to assume their complementary role with the couples, not as “moderators” but as “companions on the way” in the same community.

Finally, the ERI considered the difficulties of such a massive incorporation; the maintenance of the link between these teams and Light and Life, with all that this entailed; and a very clerical formation of the members. The ERI decided to take the option of not continuing the “status quo” with the Domestic Church and instead start the diffusion of the Teams of Our Lady from scratch.



August 2001. Cichowo - Poland, Visit of Gérard and Marie-Christine DE ROBERTY.

Finally, the day arrived in 2001 when the Responsible Couple for ERI, Marie-Christine and Gérard DE ROBERTY, visited Poland at the invitation of a group of Polish couples interested in the Movement of Teams of Our Lady. They were couples belonging to twelve dioceses who had had the opportunity to get to know the Movement, but without officially belonging to it. Many of them decided to commit themselves to the path proposed by Teams.



Malgorzata and Joachim GRZONKA, first responsible couple of the Sector. Fr. Karol MEISSNER, SC.

In May 2002, the Movement of Teams was formally launched in Poland. In December of the same year, there was already a Sector composed of 20 teams that included 93 couples and 18 SCs.

The Movement began to develop widely and sectors were created in the main cities: Warsaw, Poznan, Katowice, Wrocław, Bydgoszcz. For this reason, it was necessary to create the Poland Region.

Around the same time, two Polish couples went to Belarus at the invitation of the missionaries of the Holy Family. There they informed fifteen couples about the conjugal spirituality which is the primary objective of Teams and helped form several teams. A similar situation occurred in Slovakia, where several teams now form a Sector.

In 2005 the Polish Region was created, composed of four Polish Sectors, the Belarusian Sector and the Slovak Sector.

In 2013, two Polish couples from the Belarusian Sector went to Odessa in the Ukraine at the invitation of a Polish priest living there. After having informed them about Teams, a dozen couples decided to commit themselves to the Movement. The first two teams from Odessa were piloted by a couple from Warsaw. Every month, the couple traveled the 1,200 km that separate these two cities. That same year, three other teams also started piloting in Odessa.

In 2014, the Poland Region expanded to 7 Sectors in Poland, plus the 2 sectors in Belarus and Slovakia and several teams in Ukraine and Norway. In addition, information meetings were held and Teams were created in the Czech Republic. In 2015, during the Responsible Couples meeting in Rome, the Super-Region Poland-Central Europe was officially established. It has three regions in Poland, a Sector in Belarus, a Sector in Slovakia, a Sector in Hungary, several teams in Ukraine and in the Czech Republic, as well as teams of Polish immigrants in Norway and Germany. Currently, the Polish Super Region has 194 teams, 920 couples and 182 SCs.

Finally, it is necessary to record the enthusiasm of the couples and their commitment to serve the Movement and its development. The situation of the Catholic Church in Poland is undoubtedly a very favorable factor for this development. Many Catholics are practicing, and priests are abundant. Young people who receive the sacrament of marriage and who wish to deepen their spiritual life, have the opportunity to do so in various movements, of which Teams is one.

Nigeria¹³⁵ (2005)

Teams arrive in Nigeria through Martine and Emmanuel SALLAH, who for work reasons, had been transferred from Togo, where they were already part of the Movement, to Nigeria.

¹³⁵ AFRIQUE FRANCOPHONE – History of Teams of Our Lady - 2019.



Martine and Emmanuel SALLAH - Founding couple of Teams in Nigeria.

In February 2005, the SALLAH couple went to visit Fr. Roger ZUÉDAH, then the parish priest of the cathedral of Niamey, to talk to him about Teams of Our Lady. The meeting was fruitful as it led to the creation of the first team in Nigeria, whose members were: Martine and Emmanuel SALLAH; Suzanne and Dieudonné TOLEFON; Myriam and Maxime COMPAORE; Habsatou and Mesmin KOKOYE; Annie and Noël DADJO; Évelyne and Bruno ATCHESSI.



Teams of Our Lady of Nigeria in Niamey with the Bishop and SC, Fr. Zuédah.

Ivory Coast¹³⁶ (2008)

Fr. Hippolyte MEL, a priest of the diocese of Yopougon and who had been a SC of a team in France, spoke about the Movement to a group of friendly couples with whom he walked. He contacted Odile and Jean JAU-JAY, the couple in charge of the Super-Region of French-speaking Africa from 2005 to 2010.

Odile and Jean then invited Bernadette and Sylvestre MINLEKIBE, Responsible Couple of the West Region, to meet them in Abidjan, capital of the Ivory Coast, for 10 days to share about Teams. As a result, six couples who were friends of Fr. MEL, formed a team with him as SC. Prior to leaving, piloting began with an explanation of the Foundational Charter followed by two team meetings; the subsequent meetings were piloted remotely. This is how Teams in the Ivory Coast were started in 2008, although there is a reference to the existence of Teams in that country in January 1961¹³⁷.

Jordan¹³⁸ (2011)

Teams of Our Lady in Jordan began on September 11, 2011 with two teams from the region of Syria accompanying them. There are 10 teams in Jordan consisting of 65 couples and 9 SCs.

Guinea (2013)

In December 2013, Ignace and Fortunée EKLO, the Responsible Couple for the Western Region, went on an informational mission to Conakry. As a result of the mission, the first team was launched in Guinea.

¹³⁶ Brief history of Teams of Our Lady in Francophone Africa.

¹³⁷ Teams of Our Lady. HISTOIRE DES EQUIPES NOTRE-DAME 1938-2015.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 28.

Chad (2014)

Teams of Our Lady arrived in Chad in 2014 thanks to the mission carried out by Marie Nicole and Jean Paul ONOMO METALA, a Cameroonian couple, at that time the Responsible Couple for the Central Region.

The first meeting of the first team was held on March 23, 2014 with the following couples: Julienne and Samuel SOULANOUDJINGAR, a former Teams couple from Gabon, Pulchérie and Toussaint GREBE, Alice and Jean Clément DABIRE, Chantal and Guillaume DOULKOM. Fr. Raymond MADINGAR, parish priest for the cathedral, was the SC of this team, baptized N'Djamena 1.



First Team of Our Lady in Chad - March 23, 2014.



Marie Nicole and Jean Paul ONOMO METALA.

Cuba¹³⁹ (2017)

In February 2016, the ERI, through the HispanoAmerica Super Region, asked the Mexico Region to take charge of bringing Teams to Cuba. After looking for options and contacts, and overcoming all the obstacles this represented, the Responsible Couple of the Mexico Region visited Father Manuel UÑA, a Dominican priest of Cuba on December 25, 2016. This meeting discovered that through providence, patience, prudence and presence, Our Lady would make Teams a reality in Cuba.

The following day, December 26, less than 24 hours after entering Cuba, and with God's blessing, the Mexican Regional couple managed to meet with the Archbishop of Havana, Monsignor Juan DE LA CARIDAD GARCÍA. He granted them an appointment for March 2017 at the retreat of the National Commission of the Family of Cuba. The Responsible Couple for the HispanoAmerica Super-Region and the Responsible Couple for the México Region attended this meeting and presented to the Archbishop about Teams. They obtained his authorization to form teams in Cuba if they found the help of a priest.



Fabio Alberto and Constanza LÓPEZ, responsible of the Hispanoamerica SR with F. Juan de la GARCÍA-LÓPEZ-MUÑOZ, and Leticia and Guillermo MUÑOZ, regionals of Mexico.

¹³⁹ Teams of Our Lady. Teams of Our Lady in Mexico. 2018.

By the grace of God, a Cuban couple was invited to Mexico in October 2017 for the First Gathering of the Northern Province. This was attended by the Responsible Couple for the ERI, To and Ze MOURA SOARES. This meeting created the spark for the Cuban couple to commit to form a team on the island, thanks to the testimony of the 280 couples and 40 SCs attending from Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Mexico. Finally, in December 2017, the first Team of Our Lady was born in Cuba.

II. FORMATION

THE FORMATIVE ACTIVITY OF FATHER CAFFAREL

Based on the research carried out on the process of internationalization of Teams of Our Lady, we have identified 20 countries in which Fr. Henri CAFFAREL has intervened directly in the formation and spread of the Movement. This in itself, must be considered an action of great importance, since it demonstrates the founder's conviction on the need to offer, to the greatest number of couples, the possibility of taking advantage of this path of sanctification as a couple. Furthermore, it gives testimony to the untiring activity of the founder who was able to expand his work to four continents in only 20 years.

But if his action in spreading Teams was surprising, his involvement in the formative activity is no less surprising. He was convinced that growth can embody a great danger if not accompanied by a profound formation.

What, then, was the formative activity of Fr. CAFFAREL? What was the essence of the profound formation to which he referred? It is repeatedly mentioned that the Founder strengthened the expansion of the Movement through short and long spiritual retreats, formation days, conferences, talks, meetings with responsible couples, and extensive epistolary activity, however, in most cases, we do not know the content of his interventions. Fortunately, his involvement in the formation of Teams in Brazil left us five conferences, given during his three visits to that country between 1957 and 1972. He did so in order to accompany its dissemination and to form the couples who entered the Movement. From the analysis of these conferences, we can extract five central ideas that

constitute what Fr. CAFFAREL believed should be the essence of Teams of Our Lady and the unity required by a Movement with its unique direction.

The ultimate goal, holiness¹⁴⁰

He begins by asking himself, what is Christian holiness, and then answers, *“Rather than presenting you with a theory, because I am very afraid of theories, I would like to present not holiness but a saint: St. Paul.”* In this way, he begins a journey through the life of the saint, pointing out the central aspects of his spirituality which led him to holiness.

It all began with a personal encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus: Jesus stands before him and knocks him off his horse. This encounter with the person of Jesus began his journey to holiness. This is the general law of holiness. The consequence of this personal encounter with Christ is a conversion of life: “All things that I formerly held as advantageous, as riches, I now consider as garbage, because of Jesus Christ. He then illustrated with another phrase of the saint, a concept very dear to Fr. CAFFAREL, **“asceticism.”** “I have not yet reached holiness, however, I continue my career trying to attain Christ’s perfection, having been claimed by Him myself”. In this short text he says, one finds a wonderful definition of Christian asceticism. The end: sanctity, the means: effort, the journey.

However, St. Paul does not achieve this by himself; he has an inner strength that drives and sustains him: the love of Christ. Moreover, he has a great confidence that nothing can take him away from this fundamental love: “I am flaunting my weakness, so that the power of Jesus Christ may dwell in me. For it is when I feel weak that I am strongest.”

In short he concludes: *“Holiness for this man is Jesus Christ. It is not a theory, it is a person, for whom he nourishes an infinite passion”.*

¹⁴⁰ P. Henri CAFFAREL. “L’ascèse”. Fourth Conference held in Sao Paulo, Brazil 1972.

Asceticism¹⁴¹

In the same conference in which he addressed holiness, Fr. CAFFAREL referred to the theme of asceticism, which should be considered as a complement or fundamental way to achieve holiness. To understand its importance, let's first look at how he introduced the subject. It seems at present this topic is quite overlooked in Teams of Our Lady.

*“One day I had the idea of launching the term ‘**asceticism**’,” says Fr. CAFFAREL, “I had reflected for a few months on the spiritual evolution of Teams, conducted surveys, paid close attention to the teams, and it seemed to me that the Teams were, as they say in aviation terms, losing speed.*

I carefully investigated this loss of speed, and on reflection, found that one of the causes was the following: Christians of Teams, often forget that Christian life demands effort. As St. Paul says, it demands the death of the old man in order for the new man to emerge. For this reason, while in Rome I used the term asceticism.

I knew well that by using it, I would make some people's hair stand on end and others their eyes to open wide. I also knew I would arouse the indignation of those who believed that I would transform young couples into monks and nuns. However, I was happy to use a term that would make an impact. Knowing if I simply said, ‘we have to live a more Christian life’ everyone would have heard and approved, but no one would have reflected.

*The term **asceticism** has caused impact and the purpose of this conference is to understand this term well.*

Let us look at its meaning according to Fr. CAFFAREL's thinking. *“To understand asceticism, and above all **Christian asceticism**, we must first consider the meaning of the term proposed by Jesus... I will define it with the phrase from the Epistle to the Galatians: ‘I have been crucified*

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me'. This is what we are striving for and Christian asceticism is the path that leads to that goal.

Immediately Fr. CAFFAREL gives the example of St. Paul, by making a detailed reference to the spiritual life and holiness of the apostle, a matter we discussed when we referred to holiness. He concludes by stating: *"This is a brief sketch of the incarnate holiness of a marvelous man. Holiness is for him, Jesus Christ. He is not a theory, but a man, for whom he feeds an infinite passion"*.

Then Father CAFFAREL asks himself about the means to achieve asceticism, and he remembers something he had referred to earlier: *"If our religion does not consist of a personal search for Christ, why practice asceticism? All of this is of no interest except to the extent that it leads us to the proposed goal. Let us ask ourselves the question: Do we really want this holiness that consists in the attaining the perfection of Christ? This is the basic question. If we do not want it, it is not worth talking about asceticism"*.

He continues to refer to what he called the fundamental objective of Teams: "holiness, nothing more and nothing less".

Why are so many Christians afraid of holiness? The answer is the great contempt they have for it. "The path to holiness, the founder states, is not a desert, it is love that tends towards fullness, it is an intense life ... So the end is holiness. Not to tend towards it, on the one hand, is already to deny Christ. To be afraid of it, is not to be intelligent in rejecting his love... It is necessary to take the path to reach the goal...

*It is enough to understand well, **we are not alone**. Our holiness is not based exclusively on our work alone, it will consist of work done by two people: Christ and me. He is the one who does the essential work, but He asks for our help. And here is asceticism, the help that man brings to this work of the Holy Spirit in him, for his sanctification... Asceticism is the work of self-education that must last a lifetime... As-*

cticism then, is an intelligent effort for my development throughout life, the Christian in me, me as the Son of man and me as the Son of God.

He ends his lecture by stating:

“This love of Christ towards which we tend, is what he (St. Paul) calls the great passion of our life. But we will not achieve it without the practice of asceticism; however, there are two of us who practice this asceticism driven by the force of our love for Christ, and if we are one of those Christians open to the Holy Spirit, it will be the same Spirit who will be our educator throughout our lives”.

Christian marriage listening to the Good News¹⁴²

One of the Endeavors the Movement proposes as a means to approach the person of Jesus is “regularly listening to the Word of God”. In the second conference given in Brazil in 1972, Fr. CAFFAREL focused on the Gospel.

The Gospel is the Good News of the victory of Jesus Christ over sin, over suffering and over death. This is what the early Church understood by the word Gospel. St. Augustine said that the Gospel “is the very mouth of Jesus Christ” ... It is the living, permanent voice of Jesus Christ who remains with us according to his promise: “I will be with you until the end of the world”. It is the word of Jesus addressed to each one of us individually. The Gospel is a personal letter and not just a word addressed to my ears or my mind, it is the Word of God.

Moreover, the Gospel has a great “purifying” effect. Anyone who listens to the Word purifies his heart. One day Jesus said to his apostles: “You will be pure because of the word I have spoken to you”. The word of Jesus is like a ray of light that penetrates a dark room; when the darkness is removed, the light shines.

¹⁴² CAFFAREL, Henri, “Listening to the Good News”. Second conference of Fr. CAFFAREL. São Paulo, Brazil, 1972.

The Prayer¹⁴³

In his third lecture, Fr. CAFFAREL begins by making the distinction between vocal prayer and mental prayer to refer explicitly to this second method. He further subdivides mental prayer into two aspects. *Meditation*, which is mental prayer where reflection predominates. *Contemplation*, as mental prayer of those who have progressed to being able to remain for a long time before God in silence, without worrying, with the feeling that something important is happening. This is a little like two spouses, who after having spoken, remain silent without saying anything to each other. They are happy to remain one beside the other in silence, very attentive to the other.

Fr. CAFFAREL said for his part, *“I am convinced that in Brazil as elsewhere, the Movement will progress if there is a great concern for prayer and all its members are initiated into mental prayer. On the contrary, the Movement will age and decline if it lacks prayer.”*¹⁴⁴

Love, for its growth, demands deep and total intimacy of body and soul. The relationship of love between Christ and me demands mental prayer, and only it can make this love grow. This which occurs on the plane of our relationship with Jesus, occurs in exactly the same way on the plane of the relationship between man and woman. Lack of intimacy, lack of progress in intimacy, and lack of progress in love threatens the life of the couple.

Next, Fr. CAFFAREL makes a long presentation on the importance and main characteristics of mental prayer. At the end he presents the following synthesis of the graces of prayer:

“(i) It opens a channel between man and God, through which his graces flow. The great saints became so because they were souls of prayer. ii) Prayer is food for the soul as bread is food for the body. If I do not open

¹⁴³ Henri CAFFAREL. “The Prayer. Third conference given in Sao Paulo, Brazil. 1972.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. P. 2.

myself to God's action through prayer, I shall remain spiritually, morally, physically and psychologically sick all my life. iii) Christian prayer is fundamentally a relationship, an encounter with Jesus Christ. Hence the need for prayer to become passionate about Him. iv) Prayer does not consist only in communicating with Christ but in opening oneself to His prayer. Whoever opens himself to Christ, Christ comes to dwell in him, because for Christ, to live is to pray. If he lives in me, he prays in me.

The Christian meaning of the team meeting¹⁴⁵

It was in his first conference in São Paulo in 1957, entitled ECCLESIA, that the Founder wanted to project a look of faith to the monthly team meeting and achieve God's point of view on it. It is a long and deep conference from the theological point of view and developed in three parts.

In the first part, he refers extensively to the history of the universal Church, as the great encounter of all the children of God around Christ present; in the second part he deals with the theme of the *little Church*, affirming that: “*when the monthly meeting takes place in any of your homes, in which the couples, one after the other, enter the house of the one who receives them, there an encounter takes place (...) that can constitute an Ecclesia*”, because “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them*” (Mt 18:20). The little Church has a center: Christ who is invisible but present in her. This is the role of the priest, a sign of Christ's presence in the Church. But Christ also communicates to the little Church, the Holy Spirit and the Father through the Spirit.

Finally, in the third part he presents the conditions for a team meeting to be a small church:

First condition: Faith. “*When you gather in a house at night for the monthly meeting, you hear Christ asking: ‘Do you believe? It will be fulfilled, then, according to your faith. It will depend on your faith, then, that your*

¹⁴⁵ Henri CAFFAREL. “Ecclesia. First conference given in São Paulo, Brazil, 1957.

meeting will be an “Ecclesia”. Hence the importance of placing yourself in Christ’s presence at the beginning of every team meeting.

Second condition: Rupture. *“He who says “Church” says convocation: convocation by God who calls his own. If one comes to the team meeting, it is because God called you. That calling, also says leaving, breaking from (rupture from) that to which one is tied. The spiritual participation in the Endeavors, done with humility and dedication, is an excellent purification.*

Third condition: Gathered in the name of Christ. *“Notice well what the Lord says. He does not say: When two or more are gathered together, I am in the midst of them. No, he says very precisely: ‘When two or three are gathered in my name,’ that is the key to the matter. Summoned by him, one answers his call and is there in his name. Consequently, if you come to the team meeting only because of good friendships, because of their sympathy, that is not meeting in the name of Christ.*

Fourth condition: Mutual aid. *“Gathered in the name of and in union with Christ, united by fraternal love. If there is no fraternal love, there is no Christian assembly, there is no Christian love should I say ... And the team dinner? It’s a good, human way to remake this fraternity and to rebuild it in Christ. ‘Among them they put everything in common.’ This defined the first apostolic Church and should define your team meetings. On the material level you must practice this mutual aid. Likewise, the Sharing must lead to taking care of one another.*

Fifth condition: Listening to Christ. *“Sometimes certain groups of Christians have the tendency to think that it is enough that there is love and that love is Christian charity. But no! There will not be a true Christian assembly if you do not listen to Christ, present. To love one another, certainly is an indispensable condition, but to love one another in order to unite and listen to Christ. Hence the need to leave time to listen to the Word of God in our team meetings, and it is there where the priest fully takes his place, being as the first disciples said, “the minister of the Word”.”*

Sixth condition: Respond to God. *“Listening to the Word of God, but also responding to it is the sixth condition to be satisfied... First you listen to*

God who speaks, and then you respond to him. Man's response to the word of God is faith. Unfortunately for us, Westerners of the 20th century, faith is nothing more than an adherence of the spirit, while in biblical terms faith is the impulse of a whole life based on the word of God. Faith takes us completely and makes us give ourselves totally to God... This faith will be expressed in the prayer of the team.

Seventh condition: Union with the Church. *“Neither the fervor of a small gathering of Christians, nor the fervor of prayer itself necessarily make a Christian assembly. This gathering could be a simple sect, but many sects have great fervor but are not “Ecclesia” since Jesus is not in their midst. For what reason? Because they do not live all this within the Church... From there, liturgical prayer, because liturgical prayer is the voice of the larger Church that echoes in the small Church.”* It is not in vain that the Movement insists that each team has a spiritual advisor. This is not a whim, but the product of a deep faith in the sense of church that every team has. *“I have told you what I think about the team meeting. The Movement is worth what the meeting is worth. If all the teams made an effort to live the team meeting well, the Movement would be renewed and”* he added: *“we must know very well what a team meeting is: it is a supernatural reality. The founder of the first team was Jesus Christ with his apostles, that is the model team. The model of any Christian team, the model of Teams.”*¹⁴⁶

“Fr. CAFFAREL did not speak only with words, commented Nancy MONCAU, he spoke with his heart. The conviction with which he expressed himself, the inner strength that he transmitted with simple words and sober gestures, the total absence of oratory resources, of superfluous words, useless adjectives, reinforced the content of his conferences and gave them a strong sense that captivated... Teams of Our Lady, he told us, cannot limit themselves to be a conservative Movement of the faith, they must be the spark. It is not enough to know the Master's teachings, it is necessary to possess the Spirit

¹⁴⁶ MONCAU, Nancy and Pedro. Lecture given in Aparecida - Brazil. Op. cit. Pg 5.

of Christ, the same Holy Spirit that, at Pentecost, transformed timid followers into ardent witnesses of the Lord¹⁴⁷.

We have briefly analyzed the direct influence of Fr. CAFFAREL in the development and internationalization of the Movement of Teams of Our Lady through a remarkable activity that led him to visit several countries, spreading the good news of marriage. In addition, and no less important, was his formative action. Following the experience in Brazil in detail, we have been able to point out, what for the Founder is the essence of the Movement. The essence every team should know and deepen. This same essence is what guarantees the unity required by a Movement of universal character and a unique direction.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

In 1955, Fr. CAFFAREL expressed his conviction regarding the internationalization of the Movement in the following terms:

“The physiognomy of Catholicism is far from being the same in all countries, as different as their cultural situation and their social and political development are: nevertheless, it seems evident that Teams are adapted to all. If this is so, it is because they are situated at a level of depth that is not affected by these differences. When it is proposed to Christian couples to form small Christian communities and to practice the counsels of the Lord: fraternal love, mutual help, community prayer, meditation on the Word of God, one finds only children of God who have the same needs, the same aspirations since they have a common Father and live the same divine life... Teams of Our Lady are suited to different countries because Teams seeks the essential: the search for the thought and the will of God on Christian couples”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p.116.

¹⁴⁸ H. CAFFAREL. TWO FINDINGS, ONE CONCLUSION. MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NOTRE-DAME TEAMS. IX° year, n° 1 - October 1955.

Four years later, in 1959, in the face of the great leap forward made by the Movement towards internationalization, a new problem had arisen concerning the international structure of the Movement, explained by the Founder in these terms:

*“Would it be necessary to establish an autonomous national leadership in each country or to conceive a great Movement with a single leadership? The question was widely debated at the international meetings, finally opting for the formula of the Single Movement. Certainly not for ease [...]. It was necessary to go in the direction of the most perfect unity as a response to the obsession that Jesus revealed to us in his Holy Thursday afternoon prayer: ‘That they may be one as we are one’”.*¹⁴⁹

How to achieve that unity, the essence of internationalization? Unity is achieved to the extent that a single thought based on the charism, mysticism and pedagogy of the Movement is shared with full fidelity. Let us see how the elements from the thoughts of the founder have been gradually built: human and conjugal love, the sacrament of marriage, conjugal spirituality and the means to achieve it, and the mission of the couples and of the Movement.

Human love

At the base of the Founder’s thought is his conception of human and conjugal love:

“Love,” he wrote in December 1958, “is a very great, very holy reality, which is incarnated in the most carnal part of being, but which must progress toward the most spiritual. This human, mutual love, of a man and a woman, even if it is located outside of the person, constitutes the initiation to a deep inner love. Thus, we are constituted in such a

¹⁴⁹ H. CAFFAREL. L’Anneau d’Or. VOCATION AND ITINERARY OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY. May - August -, 1959. Special issue, p.267.

*way that the senses introduce us into the sphere of the spiritual. Sexuality, [...] this carnal attraction (well lived, it is understood) makes beings meet, and little by little access a superior love, until they reach that love totally impregnated by the love of God that is called conjugal charity.*¹⁵⁰

Such an approach was something that at that time was totally revolutionary, because to affirm sexuality is a factor of sanctification and sexual pleasure is a holy reality willed by God is something that does not yet cease to amaze some people. The hierarchy itself was unable to understand the subject, as Fr. CAFFAREL himself testifies to this difficulty:

*“When we planned the pilgrimage to Rome in 1970, and the Pope asked us on what theme we wanted him to speak, I proposed he give a talk on the human and Christian meaning of sexuality. We even prepared a thirty-page note on the subject, which was reviewed by Paul VI. But he responded: “The question is not yet mature. I cannot accede to your wish”.*¹⁵¹

It took another twenty-five years for His Holiness Benedict XVI to corroborate the **prophetic** approach of our founder in his encyclical: “Deus caritas est”: “...man is a being made of body and soul... But neither the flesh nor the spirit loves: it is man, the person, who loves as a single creature, of which body and soul are a part. Only when both are truly fused into unity is man fully himself. Only in this way can love (eros) mature to its true greatness.”¹⁵²

From there we can define conjugal love as “a deep desire of integral complementation between two people of different sex, which drives them to give themselves to each other in order to realize a common life whose

¹⁵⁰ Henri CAFFAREL. FOR A SPIRITUALITY OF CHRISTIANITY ... In the l'Anneau d'Or NUMBER 84 - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1958 - P. 251.

¹⁵¹ Conference of Father CAFFAREL at the Meeting of European Regional Leaders. Chantilly, Sunday, May 3, 1987.

¹⁵² ENCYCLICAL LETTER DEUS CARITAS EST OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF BENEDICT XVI TO THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND DEACONS, MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS, AND ALL THE LAY FAITHFUL IN CHRISTIAN LOVE (December 25, 2005) No. 5.

purpose is to make the other one grow”. Thus, they will be one flesh and one spirit.

Erich Fromm distinguishes two attitudes of human beings towards life. One is the “way to have” that is selfish, the other is the “way to be” of delivery and donation that is altruistic. In conjugal love there are two driving forces: a force that seeks to “be loved” by the other and another force that drives to “love the other”. The first one corresponds according to him, “to the way of ‘having’. It means to lock up, to imprison or to dominate the ‘loved one’, but this turns out to be asphyxiating, annihilating, mortal, and not life giving. True love corresponds to the “way of being” and consists of the surrender of oneself to the other. It is caring for the growth, welfare and happiness of the other at any cost.”

Conjugal love consists then, in doing good to one’s spouse and giving oneself completely to him or her, without forgetting the carnal dimension of the human being, which also has its own requirements. In this regard, Fr. CAFFAREL affirmed: “*Recognizing the role of the body in the union of man and woman is essential. Despising it under the pretext of a greater spirituality is not an authentically Christian attitude, nor is it exalting it or denying its demands.*”¹⁵³

Sympathy, friendship, tenderness and desire for one another are feelings present in conjugal love. These favor the perception of what is good for the other, provoke the will to do them good, and in short, to love them. However, true conjugal love surpasses feelings. It is a decision.

In Fr. CAFFAREL’s reflection on conjugal love early in his priestly life, while a military chaplain in the war, it is said that he lived this decisive experience:

“On the occasion of his call to the army, Fr. CAFFAREL, already ordained a priest, spoke with one of his battalion mates in a hay barn where the troops spent the night. This soldier spoke to him about his wife and

¹⁵³ Henri CAFFAREL. THE CHARNELL COMMUNION. Monthly Letter of the Teams of Our Lady. September-October, 1971.

children...and the conversation led them to evoke God. The soldier spoke to Fr. CAFFAREL thus: “One cannot be at the same time of God and of the wife. Either the husband or the wife becomes jealous of God, or God becomes jealous of the spouse”... Challenged by this affirmation, Fr. CAFFAREL began to deepen what should be done and said to help Christian couples to unify the love of God and the love of spouse. Years later, in 1949, this dilemma was non-existent for Fr. CAFFAREL: *“Thus, they enter into marriage having in their hearts these two loves: their great human love and the love of Christ. It is the task of theologians to know how to live these two loves beautifully and at the same time, and this is what is at the origin of all this effort to elaborate conjugal spirituality. They come together to help each other live this spirituality, and there is the origin of marriage groups”*.¹⁵⁴

He has spoken of this experience many times while presenting to the Movement and in other circumstances. In a lecture on marriage in 1942, entitled “To Meditate” he said: *“According to what Christ has done for love, it is strange that some imagine God jealous of the love of man and woman. Far from being jealous, He is their ‘accomplice’. He does not observe them from above or afar. He dwells in them and associates with them to multiply their children.”*¹⁵⁵

Thus, in Fr. CAFFAREL’s thinking, conjugal life lived with an authentic love of dedication to one’s spouse, is the sure way to find God and achieve holiness.

In the words of the founder:

“The loving relationship of man and woman, which underlies the specific reality of the couple, is at once a reflection of God’s love, a participation in this love, and a path towards it. This is the profound meaning of the sacrament of marriage, that ‘great mystery’ of which St. Paul speaks (Eph. 5:32). Married people have no need to seek any other way

¹⁵⁴ Henri CAFFAREL. L’Anneau d’Or, SIGN OF THE TIME SIGN OF GRACE, NUMBER 30 - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 1949.

¹⁵⁵ History of Teams of Our Lady in Belgium.

*of sanctification than their love, taken up and transformed by divine love... Thus, by loving each other more and more, body and soul, and by fulfilling the mission of their love, they both advance towards holiness”.*¹⁵⁶

The Sacrament of Marriage

*“Let us start from the notion of Christian marriage”, said Fr. CAFFAREL, “This is not only the reciprocal gift of man and woman, it is the gift, the consecration of the couple to Christ. From that moment on, in the couple who give themselves, by giving themselves, open themselves to Christ and He becomes present in them”.*¹⁵⁷

Marriage as a sacrament is called to be a visible sign of God’s love, the gift of Christ and the unity of the Church. This is the reality the Movement wants to accompany, encourage, strengthen and spread. With this conviction Teams base their conjugal spirituality on the sacrament of marriage.

*“When it is said that marriage is a sacrament,” says Fr. CAFFAREL, “this means that all the realities of marriage are bearers of graces for the spouses who live according to the divine will. It is in and through conjugal life as a whole, that Christ communicates his grace to each of the spouses”.*¹⁵⁸

The graces received through the sacrament of marriage are many and varied: “Christ is the source of this grace... He remains with them, gives them the strength to follow Him by taking up their cross, to rise after their falls, to forgive one another, to carry one another’s burdens, to be ‘subject to one another in the love of Christ’ and to love one another with a supernatural, delicate and fruitful love.”¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, there is a

¹⁵⁶ Henri CAFFAREL. The Teams of Our Lady. Growth and mission of Christian couples. Texts presented by Jean and Annick ALLEMAND. Secretariat of Teams, 1988. P. 14 and 15.

¹⁵⁷ Henri CAFFAREL. MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF OUR TEAMS. Twenty-first year - n. 7 - April 1968.

¹⁵⁸ Henri CAFFAREL. POUR UNE SPIRITUALITÉ DU CHRÉTIEN MARIÉ. Op. cit. P. 253.

¹⁵⁹ CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. No. 1642.

very important grace of which little is spoken, it is the “grace of state”. It consists of the permanent assistance of the Holy Spirit to spouses in order to carry out all obligations and responsibilities proper to married life in a Christian way.

On the other hand, a double and reciprocal covenant are given in the sacrament of marriage: the covenant the spouses promise each other through the sacrament and the covenant Christ promises to the spouses. This is the “great mystery” of which St. Paul speaks regarding marriage, and at the same time the great gift of God to the couple: God the most faithful, is committed to the couple and the couple can have full confidence in this faithful love, thanks to the presence and help of Christ.

A couple from a Team of Our Lady who married after several years of conjugal life provided this testimony:

“Our relationship had always been difficult. My husband’s temperament was complicated. He was possessed by anger and despite his efforts, would vent it on those closest to him: me and our children. We lived in fear. We struggled to improve our relationship, but this was impossible to achieve. Only when we received the sacrament of marriage did our lives begin to change radically. Having Jesus in our couple was the secret of our change. A person who has Jesus in his life must live in peace. So it was with our marriage. This is palpable in us.¹⁶⁰

Human love in the sacrament of marriage is the material sign that reflects God’s love. This is the mission of the couple united to Christ in marriage: to make God’s love visible to all those around them. In other words familiar to Team members: to show the world that marriage is a way of love, happiness and holiness.

¹⁶⁰ Unpublished testimony.

Conjugal Spirituality

Fr. CAFFAREL didn't make explicit reference to conjugal spirituality in any of the five conferences in Brazil. Time was too limited to refer to all substantial themes of the charism, mysticism and pedagogy of the Movement. Nevertheless, on other occasions he referred to conjugal spirituality, a central theme of the Teams Movement and would be impossible to omit when speaking on the essence of Teams.

First, it is necessary not to confuse spirituality with spiritualism. The latter divides man into spirit and matter, exalting the spirit and crushing the matter, which leads to a kind of angelism, a tendency as harmful as the opposite: materialism exalting matter and annihilating the spirit. The Christian spirituality that commits the whole being consists in "living integrally according to the Spirit".

So one should not mistake its meaning, especially when it is about conjugal spirituality which represents the soul of our belonging to the Movement of Teams of Our Lady. It is possible conjugal spirituality is what has attracted couples to the Movement, due to their desire to grow in Christian spirituality, as a couple who have received the sacrament of marriage.

According to Fr. CAFFAREL, "*conjugal spirituality is the art of living the evangelical ideal that Jesus proposed to his disciples within marriage.*"¹⁶¹ In other words, it answers the following questions: How to live conjugal and family realities in a Christian way? Or: How to live the demands of Christian life while married? Therefore, "*the science and the art of sanctifying oneself in and through marriage is conjugal spirituality.*"¹⁶²

"It is a matter," he explained, "of Christianizing all family life. [...] Not only discovering but desiring to carry out the idea of God in all these fields. Moreover, to seek what can be rightly called a Christian style

¹⁶¹ CAFFAREL, Henri. "COME AND FOLLOW ME. In: MONTHLY LETTER FROM THE TEAMS OUR LADY. 16th year - n. 2 - November 1962.

¹⁶² CAFFAREL Henri. "LIMINARY". MONTHLY LETTER OF THE TEAMS OUR LADY - XX° year - n. 7 - April 1967.

of the home: a Christian style of interpersonal relationships between spouses, parents and children, parents and grandparents, home and friends; a Christian style of the environment: the house, meals, expenses; a Christian style of daily activities: work, rest, getting up, going to bed, evenings, hospitality. How can we make all this Christian, show that it is Christian, that all this makes the grace of Christ shine out? An everyday Christian style... a Christian style of the great events: birth, illness, trials, marriage, death... To live these events in a Christian way. And all this, "so that God may be glorified in all things".¹⁶³

This vision of holiness has been corroborated by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*, when he states: "We are frequently tempted to think holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and bearing witness everything we do, wherever we find ourselves."¹⁶⁴

In an editorial written by Fr. CAFFAREL on the essence of the Movement, he stated without hesitation:

"The organization can be different or the pedagogy and functions of the leading teams could be modified, yet Teams of Our Lady would not be radically transformed. But if you replace or suppress conjugal spirituality with another monastic or celibate type, this would be the end of the Movement. Everything would lose its meaning: pedagogy, general framework, obligations (aids)... since all this has no meaning except in relation to conjugal spirituality [...] I am not afraid to say the reason for the existence of the Movement, its end, is to bring its members to know and live conjugal spirituality."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Henri CAFFAREL. DEFINITIONS. LETTRE MENSUELLE DES ÉQUIPES NOTRE-DAME - XX^e année - n. 7 - avril 1967.

¹⁶⁴ GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANÇOIS ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD (March 19, 2018) No. 14.

¹⁶⁵ CAFFAREL, Henri. LETTRE MENSUELLE DES ÉQUIPES NOTRE-DAME - XX^e année - n. 7 - avril 1967.

The basis of conjugal spirituality is the sacrament of marriage, as Fr. CAFFAREL himself declared. It is the *covenant between Christ and the couple*.¹⁶⁶ This means that spouses live the covenant of Christ with their spouse, and from this supernatural reality, receive the graces proper to the sacrament to develop their conjugal spirituality through which they reach holiness. Thus, Christ (through the sacrament) is committed to the couple. It is He who accompanies and helps them on the path to holiness, through spirituality.¹⁶⁷

We have been called to holiness, the goal of conjugal spirituality. But in addition, Fr. CAFFAREL clarifies: *“A saint is not like most people imagine them to be, a sort of champion who performs feats in the field of virtue and great spiritual demonstrations. Instead, they are a person seduced by God, who gives their whole life to God... You have been called to holiness. It is in and through marriage that you will achieve it.”*¹⁶⁸

To the above, we will add that conjugal holiness is not something achieved. It is something lived. It is the result of a life lived as a couple according to the new commandment of Jesus expressed through compassion with one’s neighbor: *“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”* (Lk 6:36). It is, therefore, compassion which we should imitate for it constitutes God’s way of being.

The means to achieve Conjugal Spirituality

There is a close relationship between the pedagogy of Teams and their organization, and between conjugal spirituality and the spiritual progress of the couples. The entire pedagogy and organization of Teams is aimed at helping households to build their lives around conjugal spirituality by re-

¹⁶⁶ CAFFAREL, Henri. MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF OUR TEAMS. Twenty-first year - n. 7 - April 1968.

¹⁶⁷ CAFFAREL, Henri. “A CHURCH IN REDUCTION. MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NOTRE-DAME TEAMS. Special issue - March 1962.

¹⁶⁸ Henri CAFFAREL. SÉDUITS PAR DIEU. MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF OUR TEAMS. XVth year - n. 10 - July 1963.

serving time in their lives for prayer, conjugal dialogue and mutual help for their spouses and team. Mutual help is the name of the commandment of love in Teams, said Fr. CAFFAREL, and is the backbone of the Movement. Team life requires taking into account personal and couple decisions, and making praiseworthy efforts at gradual conversion in their journey.

According to Fr. CAFFAREL, the Eucharist is the privileged means of achieving conjugal spirituality:

“The Eucharist occupies the central place in the life of the Christian, but it should not be separated from other elements of this Christian life where some prepare the ground for it, and where others are its fruit. I will limit myself to mentioning three of irreplaceable importance: the cultivation of faith, mainly through contact with the Word of God; prayer, I refer to mental prayer (meditation); and love of neighbor, a love at once living and effective ... Thus, the sacrament of marriage will be “over-activated” by its relationship with the Eucharist and will fully yield its fruits of fidelity, purity, apostolic radiation, and conjugal holiness.”¹⁶⁹

For their part, Teams have developed their pedagogy based on three basic pillars: the Endeavors, team life including team meeting, and life orientations. These have the objective of helping households to create three fundamental attitudes: the diligent search for the will of God, the search for truth about themselves, and the experience of encounter and communion between couples.

Spirituality cannot be understood without conjugal and personal prayer. In the Teams’ pedagogy, prayer is present in all three pillars:

- In the general orientations of life, prayer is suggested under the forms of personal prayer, meditation, formation, asceticism, and frequency of the sacraments;
- In the six Endeavors the first three refer to prayer;

¹⁶⁹ Henri CAFFAREL “Des privilégiés qui s’ignorent”, L’Anneau d’Or, No. 80, May-August 1958, p. 239.

- In the team meeting, after listening to the Word the couples pray by giving a personal response to the Word of God, and make a brief prayer of praise, petition or thanksgiving.

The sense of progress that is essential to conjugal spirituality, understood as the journey to holiness, is given to us through the “rule of life”. This consists of setting concrete goals for personal progress that are reviewed each month during the team meeting by each of the spouses at the time of participation.

The “spiritual retreat” is the privileged moment to know the will of God for each spouse and the couple itself, through a face to face contact with the Lord, in a calm environment of deep prayer and reflection.

“The ‘Sit-Down’, considered as one of the greatest intuitions of Fr. CAFFAREL, is the most specific proposal of the Movement of Teams of Our Lady. It is an important instrument because it enriches the spirituality of the husband and wife. It helps them to live better in mutual forgiveness and to grow in conjugal love, love of God and love of others, in their path towards holiness”.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, it is a great instrument for mutual knowledge and acceptance, recognition of our qualities, and acceptance of our shortcomings and defects.

Team life

All the above is lived and reinforced through team life whose main expression is the Team Meeting. For Fr. CAFFAREL a team is a community of faith, a small church under certain conditions: Meeting in faith; breaking our attachment; meeting in the name of Christ; uniting with Christ through brotherly love; listening to Christ present through his Word; responding to Christ through personal prayer and team prayer (of thanksgiving, praise, or petition).¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ ERI. GUIDE OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY. 2^a. Version 2018. (5.2.4).

¹⁷¹ Cf. further back: The Christian meaning of the team meeting.

But, in team life and in particular in the team meeting, there is something essential, and therefore unique to Teams: **the presence of the priest** as a member of the team. This characteristic was conceived not as the product of a theological reflection but as the fruit of the experiences of the first couples and the founder himself at the start of the Movement. Fr. CAFFAREL describes this experience:

“In the absence of precise ideas about the doctrine of Christian marriage, a very deep intuition filled these couples with hope and led them to a priest... ‘it is not possible that God does not think of this human love that is our wealth and our joy as something very beautiful and great; we would like to know it and for you to reveal it to us’. Listening to them, I guessed without difficulty I would cruelly disappoint them if I had been content to do nothing but give them legal definitions and offer them moral rules [...]. My answer was then: ‘let us search together, let us join together and launch ourselves into discovery’ [...]. Each of us contributed their experience: the priest, his knowledge of marriage and the whole of Christian doctrine; they contributed their fresh experience of love and marriage. [...]”

And he concluded: *“No less evident to me was the fruitfulness of the collaboration between the priest and the couples. Not only to me, to them as well. One of them expressed it very well, when one day in his prayer, he thanked God for ‘the marriage of our two sacraments’. The priest brings the doctrine, the couples bring their experience and from this conjunction comes the art of Christian living in marriage”*.¹⁷²

The mission of the couples and of the Movement of Teams

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News to every creature.” (Mark, 16:15) Such is the charge that Jesus left us at the end of his life. The Good News is nothing other than the very person of Christ. The

¹⁷² Henri CAFFAREL. VOCATION AND ITINERARY OF THE NOTRE DAME TEAMS. - THE ORIGINS. In the L'Anneau d'Or. NUMBER 87-88 - MAY - AUGUST 1959 - Special Issue. P. 261-262.

essence of the sacrament of marriage is the love of the couple in the style of Christ who is at the same time the material sign which reflects the Love of God. In other words, couples united by Catholic marriage are a sacrament of God's love.

“The team, a community of faith, reaches full maturity “when, prompted by the Spirit of Christ, it sends its members out into the world to reveal this love.”¹⁷³ The community loses its meaning if it remains closed in on itself. Its reason for being lies in its commitment to the world. Christ in fact, out of love, gave his life for the whole world, not just for a particular people. In this sense, Fr. CAFFAREL expresses: *“Making God known, proclaiming his love, is the first aspect of the apostolic mission of the couple.”*¹⁷⁴

This action of making God known and proclaiming his love is based on life's testimony, allowing us to be imbued with the love of God expressed through the love of individuals in their married life. This is what seduces other couples to involve Christ in their marriage.

“The basis of the Christian education of families lies in the formation of our children in the faith and in Christian values. This formation is achieved fundamentally through the process of “imitation” rather than through discourse, in a proportion of three to one, according to social psychologists. So we don't have to worry so much about what to say to our children, rather we should worry more about giving them examples of our love and living what we believe”.¹⁷⁵

However, *“The apostolate is not reduced to a testimony or a personal influence, it is also a task”*, said Fr. CAFFAREL...¹⁷⁶ And among several other forms of apostolate, he emphasized hospitality in the home: *“In the heart of the home, ‘cell of the Church”*”, he said, *“the guest finds Christ, and this is why*

¹⁷³ Teams of Our Lady. What is a Team of Our Lady? 3. A PATH - Team Life -.

¹⁷⁴ Henri CAFFAREL. THE MARRIAGE, THIS GREAT SACRAMENT. THE APOSTLE'S HOME. The L'Anneau d'Or Special Number 111-112 - May - August 1963. P. 423.

¹⁷⁵ Teams of Our Lady. Alberto and Constanza ALVARADO. Conference. X° International Meeting. Lourdes, September 2006.

¹⁷⁶ Henri CAFFAREL. THE MARRIAGE, THIS GREAT SACRAMENT. THE APOSTLE'S HOME. The L'Anneau d'Or. Op. cit. P. 428.

*the exercise of hospitality constitutes an authentic apostolate [...] But to seduce the guest, it is necessary that this love radiate, that the home be simple, true, joyful and loving. This is the only way to generate enthusiasm”.*¹⁷⁷

But there is something else. Fr. CAFFAREL wondered about the vocation of the Movement in today’s world. Let’s listen to him:

*“It is no longer a question of simply being a conservative movement which keeps faith in the Church, it is a question of being a spark of renewal, even a spiritual revolution. And if Teams, in the days after the Council, are not this spark of renewal in the Church, they will be marginalized and new movements more boldly revolutionary, I hope, will spring forth to work for the “modernization” of the Church... We want Teams of Our Lady to be useful in the coming century. However, this means they have to be rethought according to the Church that today needs them more than ever.”*¹⁷⁸

This is precisely what, well into the twenty-first century, the ERI has reflected on for the future of the Movement in the light of Pope Francis’ exhortation to the universal Church “for a new stage of evangelization” (EG 1). For this reason, it produced the document “The Vocation and Mission of the Teams of Mary at the Dawn of the Third Millennium.”¹⁷⁹ It first returned to the initial topics, as Fr. CAFFAREL invited, to distinguish the elements of the vocation and mission linked to the founding charism; secondly, it emphasizes the essential features of the change of era in which we live, and finally, it offers clues for the mission.

With respect to these clues, he begins by declaring that: “There is a substantial challenge and a fundamental objective for our Mission: to help discover and live the true nature of human love, which today’s culture tends to disfigure”. To make the spirit of the new missionary activity a reality, we recall and explain the key words from Pope Francis: to discern, to welcome,

¹⁷⁷ Henri CAFFAREL. “A CONFERENCE. MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NOTRE-DAME TEAMS. XV^e year - n. 9 - June 1962.

¹⁷⁸ Henri CAFFAREL. THE TEAM MEETING. First lecture given in Brazil, 1972. Introduction.

¹⁷⁹ Teams of Our Lady. “Vocation and Mission of Teams at the dawn of the third millennium” 2018.

to accompany. In relation to the latter, specific fields of action are defined: education and transmission of the faith, preparation and accompaniment of marriage, couple's in crisis, couples who have formed a new union, elderly people, and spiritual reflection and its dissemination.

He concludes by stating: Evangelizing is not an optional invitation but a constant duty. **“To evangelize is to recognize oneself in the missionary Church”**. It is to recognize God's call... The Mission of the Movement is to form, frame and motivate couples to be agents of the Good News and to announce to the world in which we live the values of the Gospel within the couple and the family. These are pillars that support the bridge we must cross and that force us more and more to a commitment based on the stability of love.

Teams can carry out an evangelizing action of incalculable dimension in the “outgoing Church”, according to Pope Francis. Therefore, Teams cannot limit spirituality to itself, but must be carried out in a pastoral perspective which is indispensable for the transformation of the world.

Our Movement could be reduced to the strict observance of a rule without taking the trouble to look around to see who “becomes a neighbor.” Fr. CAFFAREL never separated our vocation from our mission. He said these two aspects must always be taken into account.

Fr. CAFFAREL concludes: *“More love in the homes, more charity in the teams, and more missionary dynamism.”*

Our Lady patron saint of Teams

Teams are consecrated to Our Lady: *“Devotion to Mary is not optional,”* affirms Fr. CAFFAREL., *it is the recognition of a fact. Better yet, it is the recognition of God's plan. In this plan, Mary is not a simple ornament, she fulfills a unique function: with Christ the new Adam, the new Eve is at the origin of Christianity”*.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Henri CAFFAREL. A GREAT YEAR. In the L'Anneau d'Or. Number 54- November -December 1953. P. 130.

The first denomination the Movement had was “CAFFAREL groups”. However, this did not excite the founder much. He decided to cut short this custom and thought of something a little more classic and authentic, to put Teams under the patronage of a saint. Then, he said, I copied Péguy taking his children and putting them in the arms of the Virgin. This is why Teams have been called TEAMS OF OUR LADY.

“You are gathered together to seek Christ, to imitate him, to serve him. But you will not get there without guidance. There is no better guide than the Virgin. I would like our teams to exercise their faith under the infinite tenderness of Mary, that each couple experience this trust and security which dwells in the hearts of children when their mother is present. I would like this to be one of our characteristic notes. Then I will have full confidence in the future. May all our Teams be a cathedral to the glory of Our Lady.”¹⁸¹

We think what has been said in the previous seven points, constitutes a synthesis of the thoughts of Fr. CAFFAREL as a prophet of our time with respect to the basic formation on which the unity of the Movement should be based at the international level. This is what the teams must know, assimilate and live faithfully to avoid the danger of extending the Movement without a deep formation.

¹⁸¹ Henri CAFFAREL. OUR LADY. MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE NOTRE-DAME TEAMS. II ° year, n° 7 - May 1949.

CONCLUSION

The figures related to the development of the Movement give us some idea, in quantitative terms, of what the expansion of Teams of Our Lady has meant from its birth until today: Of the 93 countries where the Movement is currently, the research obtained information on 60 countries, a figure equivalent to 64.5% of the countries with active teams. The first three waves of expansion (1939-1999), into which we divided our study, reflect an approximate growth of one country per year. In the fourth wave (2000-), the growth rate increased to approximately 1.75 per year.

In the first wave of expansion, the Movement reached four continents: EUROPE (1939), in 1950 it reached AFRICA (Egypt) and AMERICA (Brazil). In 1959, it arrived in ASIA (Japan). By the end of the second wave it had reached all five continents, arriving in OCEANIA (Australia) in 1961. In the fourth expansive wave, in full development, the Movement has expanded to 93 countries.

Beyond the figures, it is interesting to examine factors behind the expansion of the Movement, which we can divide into two categories: physical and spiritual. With respect to the first, we must highlight the squadron of missionary priests and lay people of all nationalities, led by Fr. CAFFAREL, through whose spontaneous action Teams of Our Lady reached the five continents and 93 countries where they are present today. The detailed description of how this feat was accomplished is full of valuable information and anecdotes. It is sometimes joyful and others painful, as in the case of Uganda where the first martyrs of Teams of Our Lady gave their lives for Christ.

The first wave of expansion (1939-1959) which reached three continents, was driven directly by Fr. CAFFAREL. His untiring travel, initially within Europe and then Africa, America and Asia, ultimately visiting al-

most 20 countries, is truly exemplary. His praiseworthy work of accompaniment through spiritual retreats, conferences, meetings and letters with the first members of Teams, in each of the countries where he took the Movement, is a testimony and at the same time, a warning of how to avoid that which worried him so much: ***“Growth can be a danger if in-depth formation does not accompany it”***.

The second wave of expansion (1960-1969), which reached all five continents, was carried out by couples and priests who knew Fr. CAFFAREL personally and lived his spirituality and the spirit of the Movement. In this way, they were able to transmit to the 9 countries where they took Teams of Our Lady, the charisma, mysticism and pedagogy of the founder.

The third wave of expansion (1970-1999) was led by those couples and priests who indirectly knew the thoughts of Fr. CAFFAREL, but who assimilated it and lived it in depth. Their missionary activity reached 22 countries on five continents, in a period of 30 years.

During the fourth wave of expansion, couples and priests convinced of the importance and goodness of the Movement have managed to take Teams of Our Lady to 33 countries. From these countries we received information from 9, which is a significant sample of what the expansion of the Movement has been during the last 20 years, across the five continents.

The dissemination in all cases, was carried out face to face, in a personal, spontaneous and generous way through both couples and priests of their own accord. This was also achieved in a circumstantial way, due to occasional relocation of Team members to different countries for work or the transfer of priests to a new parish or country. The support or rejection of the hierarchy drove the success or failure of the dissemination.

However, what was fundamental in the process of expansion was the personal conviction of both couples and priests, about the importance of Teams of Our Lady to the development of conjugal spirituality. As a result, the geographical-political borders and cultural barriers of the various countries were overcome, demonstrating that the Spirit of Jesus, being universal, is above political, economic, social and cultural differences.

Regarding the spiritual factors of the internationalization of the Movement, the formative activity given by the founder and those who succeeded him on the essentials of the charism, mysticism and pedagogy of the Movement, is at the heart of the development and internationalization of Teams of Our Lady. If there is anything that is striking, it is to see that this spirit is made manifest, in an unbroken way, wherever there are teams around the world. The essence of the spirit of Teams of Our Lady, the charism, mysticism and pedagogy, was made clear by the founder through the way he preached in Brazil, during his five formative conferences given between 1957 and 1972.

However, he makes the following fundamental statement: *“if our religion does not consist of a personal search for Christ, then asceticism, methods, practices and techniques are useless.”* And then he asks: *“Do we really want this holiness which consists in the conquest of Christ? This is the basic question.”* If we do not want it, everything else is not worthwhile... From there, the other teachings make sense: Holiness as the ultimate goal, no more and no less and asceticism or the effort to live it through the six Endeavors. Among which, Fr. CAFFAREL emphasizes the diligent listening to the Word and deep prayer-meditation, based on a personal, face to face dialogue with the Lord.

“The ‘Sit-Down,’ considered one of the greatest intuitions of the founder, is the most specific proposal of the Movement of Teams of Our Lady. It is an important instrument because it enriches the spirituality of the husband and wife. It also helps the members of Teams to know and live conjugal spirituality through the sacrament of marriage and to announce to the world the values of Christian marriage.

The charism is achieved by remaining united in the name of Christ, and by living the deep meaning of the team meeting. Fr. CAFFAREL summarizes the seven conditions by which a team meeting is a small Church: faith in the presence of Christ; breaking with the outside world; gathered in the name of Christ; mutual help; listening to Christ; responding to God and Union with the Church.

The foundations of internationalization are supported by five pillars according to Fr. CAFFAREL:

First, his conception about human and conjugal love: love is a great, holy reality, which is embodied in the most carnal aspect of being but must make progress toward the spiritual. Conjugal love, for its part, is a deep desire of integral complementation between two persons of different sex, which impels them to give themselves mutually to realize a common life which has the purpose of making the other one grow.

Secondly, the sacrament of marriage, which Fr. CAFFAREL said is not only the reciprocal gift of man and woman, but also the consecration of the couple to Christ. From that moment on, in the couple who give themselves, by giving themselves, open themselves to Christ and He becomes present in them.

Next, the founder refers to conjugal spirituality based on the sacrament of marriage. According to Fr. CAFFAREL, “Conjugal spirituality is the art of living the evangelical ideal that Jesus proposed to his disciples within marriage.” In other words, it responds to the following questions: How can we live the realities of marriage and family in a Christian way? Or how can we live all the demands of Christian life while married? Therefore, he affirmed, “Conjugal spirituality is the art and science of sanctifying oneself in and through marriage.”

Regarding the means for building conjugal spirituality, Fr. CAFFAREL considers the Eucharist to be at the heart of the Christian’s life and therefore of Teams. However, it must be united with the Word of God and mental prayer (meditation) and to love of neighbor, a love that is both living and effective... Thus, the sacrament of marriage will be “over-activated” by its relationship with the Eucharist and will fully yield its fruits of fidelity, purity, apostolic radiation, and conjugal holiness”.

On the other hand, in team life, and particularly in the team meeting, there is something essential and therefore proper to Teams: the presence of the priest as a member of the team. This characteristic was conceived not as the product of a theological reflection but as the fruit of the experi-

ences of the first couples and the founder himself at the beginning of the Movement.

The mission, being an essential condition of every baptized person, is equally so for Christian marriage. At the beginning of the Movement the emphasis was on “witnessing”. Fr. CAFFAREL said: “Making God known, proclaiming his love, such is the first aspect of the apostolic mission of the couple... The apostolate is not reduced to only a testimony or personal influence, it is also a task.” Over the years and on many occasions, the Movement, has deepened this theme. Recently, the International Gatherings of Fatima 2018, offered some clues by declaring: “There is a substantial challenge and a fundamental objective for our Mission: to help discover and live the true nature of human love, which the present culture tends to disfigure.” From there, it pointed out several concrete fields of apostolate according to the current needs of society.

Fr. CAFFAREL crowns his work by consecrating Our Lady as patroness of Teams: “You are gathered together to seek Christ, to imitate him, to serve him. But you will not get there without a guide. And there is no better guide than the Virgin. I would like faith to be exercised in our teams under the infinite tenderness of Mary, that each couple experience this trust and security which dwells in the hearts of children when their mother is present. I would like this to be one of our characteristic notes. Then I will have full confidence in the future. May all our Teams be a cathedral to the glory of Our Lady.”

Using the modern terms of strategic planning, we can make the synthesis of the charism, mysticism and pedagogy of the Movement, originally taught by Fr. CAFFAREL and enriched over the years, in the following terms:

Teams of Our Lady have:

A “mission” (charism): to bring its members to know and live conjugal spirituality through the sacrament of marriage and to announce to the world the values of Christian marriage.

A “vision” (long term goal): “Teams of Our Lady have as their essential goal to help couples seek holiness, no more and no less”.

A “strategy” (mystique): Gathered in the name of Christ (as a team); Mutual, spiritual and material help; Testimony of life and mission.

Some “mechanisms” (pedagogy): The orientations of life; the Endeavors; team life.

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In 1972, a year before Fr. CAFFAREL retired* from the Movement, he expressed this profound feeling as part of his spiritual testament: “*When a father of a family has many children, his joy is immense but so are his worries. I have four thousand children.*”¹⁸² Today, almost 50 years later, the figure is close to 150,000, scattered throughout the world. On May 3, 1987, five years after his retirement* from Teams of Our Lady, during a conference given to the European regional leaders of Teams in Chantilly, France, he offered a premonitory explanation of this miracle that is Teams of Our Lady, through a retrospective view of the work done so far:

*“In the beginning, we did not suspect the future, nor did we say: ‘The Holy Spirit has moved us to do this or that.’ Only today, after 40 years, faced with the development of Teams, have I thought that with the first four couples in 1939, there was something more than a good idea, there was something more than a simple enthusiasm, that that meeting was more than a casual encounter, that Providence and the Holy Spirit were there for something, and now I thank the Lord for that.”*¹⁸³

As we come to the end of this work, we’re deeply moved because it has been possible to verify through this research, the providential way in which the Lord allowed the seed of Teams of Our Lady to fall into the fertile soil of the various countries on the five continents of the world. For this to be possible, it took the collaboration of an army of hundreds of couples and

* According to records Fr. Caffarel retired twice.

¹⁸² Fr. H. CAFFAREL. Spiritual Testament. Conference given in Sao Paulo, Brazil, September 1972.

¹⁸³ Conference of Father CAFFAREL at the Meeting of European Regional Leaders, Chantilly, dimanche 3 mai 1987. Pg. 2.

priests, true missionaries, to spread the seed to the 93 countries where the Movement is present today and to care for the sprouts and fertilize the plants of so many nascent teams throughout the world. Thus, that short but profound parable of Jesus was fulfilled to the letter: *“This is how it is with the kingdom of God; it is as if a man were to scatter seed on the land and would sleep and rise night and day and the seed would sprout and grow, he knows not how.”* (Mk 4, 26-27).

However, we believe the main conclusion of this research is the recognition that the Holy Spirit is the true force behind the wonderful development and internationalization of Teams of Our Lady. Beyond that, the recognition of what we could call the extraordinary “miracle” of the unity of the Movement which is breathed in the base teams and in its members. This is thanks to the spirit which has fertilized the process of expansion and growth of the Movement, based on the charisma, mysticism and pedagogy of Teams of Our Lady, inspired by the thought of its founder.

This unity is not only the product of the formation effort carried out in a systematic and permanent way by the various structures of the Movement, but also of the grace of a God committed to a work inspired by His Holy Spirit. Here, nothing more has been done than to gather the fruits of the work carried out by the pioneers of the internationalization of Teams of Our Lady. We recognize and give thanks to them and Fr. Henri CAFFAREL and leave a record of the essence of his thought, the foundation of the unity of the Movement.

May Jesus continue to develop providentially through time, space and under the patronage of Our Lady the Virgin Mary, this his work (Teams), and above all, help it remain faithful to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is the best tribute Teams of Our Lady can pay to the memory of its founder, Fr. Henri CAFFAREL, and to so many couples and priests committed to the development and internationalization of the Movement.

APPENDIX

What guarantees the stability of institutions and the preservation of the spirit that gave them birth, is an adequate and permanent organisational structure headed by people who are convinced of their *raison d'être*. This is the case with the Teams of Our Lady movement. It has been led by couples imbued with the original spirit of its founder, Father Henri Caffarel.

For this reason, we believe it is of the utmost importance to record the evolution of this organisational structure, as it went through a series of evolutionary phases: from Leading Team, to Directing Centre, to Responsible Team (which had an international advisory board for several years), and finally it became the International Responsible Team - ERI (at which point the international advisory board ceased to function).

But it is also important to highlight the names of those couples who, throughout the history of the Movement, have managed to preserve and transmit its charism, mysticism and pedagogy, always adjusting them to the signs of the times.

The evolution of the organisational structure and the chronology of the Movement's Responsible Teams throughout its history is presented below.

RESPONSIBLE TEAM OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY

1947-1973

First team: Fr Caffarel, Gérard and Madeleine d'Heilly, Michel and Geneviève Huet, Frédéric and Marie-Françoise de la Chapelle, Pierre and Rozenn de Montjamont

Names appearing often until 1947: Gérard and Madeleine d'Heilly, Jean and Odile Barcat, Pierre and Michèle Goutet, Jacques and Claire Chapsal, Mr and Mrs Curaux, Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Lucien and Renée Michon, Charles Rendu

1948: ESTABLISHMENT OF A LEADING TEAM

LEADING TEAM

January 1948: Fr Caffarel, Gérard and Madeleine d'Heilly, Charles Rendu, Pierre and Geneviève Poulenc – Spirituality: Jean and Odile Barcat, Lucien and Renée Michon

September 1954: Fr Caffarel, Fr de Vaumas, Geneviève and Constantin Sipsom, Jean and Jacqueline Pillias

November 1956: Fr Caffarel, Fr de Vaumas, Fr Joly, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Lucien and Benjamine Sagot, Jean-Marie and Anka Rosset, Albert and Eliane Meeus (Belgium), Edouard and Anne-Marie Berthier (Switzerland), René and Claudette Leclerc

May 1957: Fr Caffarel, Fr de Vaumas, Fr Joly, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Lucien and Benjamine Sagot, Albert and Eliane Meeus (Belgium), Edouard and Anne-Marie Berthier (Switzerland), René and Claudette Leclerc, Bruno and Martine du Roselle, Francis and Germaine de Baecque

December 1957: Fr Caffarel, Fr Joly, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Francis and Maya Labitte, David and Dina Hansen (Belgium), Edouard and Anne-Marie Berthier (Switzerland), Lucien and Benjamine Sagot, Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Pierre and Elise Comar, Marcel and Marie-France Pavie, Gilbert and Nicole Ferry

DIRECTING CENTRE

May 1962: Fr Caffarel, Joseph and Madeleine Mondésert, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom – Secretariat: Fr Joly, Alphonse and Marthe Dannenberger, Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Marie and Marie-Thérèse Ferry

December 1962: Fr Caffarel, Joseph and Madeleine Mondésert, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom – Secretariat: Fr Joly, Alphonse and Marthe Dannenberger, Michel and Bernadette Foucard

1963 or 1964: Fr Caffarel, Jean and Janine Irigoïn, Joseph Mondésert, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom – Secretariat: Fr Vinson, Edouard and Marguerite Jumaucourt

December 1965: Fr Caffarel, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Jacques and Germaine Veyron – Permanent couple: Michel and Bernadette Foucard

1966: Fr Caffarel, Pierre and Marie Françoise Garang, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Jacques and Geneviève Veyron – Permanent Couple: Michel and Bernadette Foucard

1968: Fr Caffarel, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Jacques and Françoise Laplume, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Germaine Veyron – Permanent Couples: Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Michel and Bernadette Foucard

1969: Fr Caffarel, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Jacques and Françoise Laplume, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Germaine Veyron – Permanent Couples: Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean Allemand

1970: F. Caffarel, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Jean and Miette Bernardi, Patrice and Christiane Brunet, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Jacques and Françoise Laplume, Christian and Claude Richard, Pierre and Jeannine Roland, Germaine Veyron

RESPONSIBLE TEAM

1971: Fr Caffarel, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom

Council: José-Luis and Maria-Jésus Areito (Spain), Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Jean and Miette Bernardi, Patrice and Christiane Brunet, Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Christian and Claude Richard, Pierre and Jeannine Roland, Germaine Veyron

1972: Fr Caffarel, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom

Council: José-Luis and Maria-Jésus Areito (Spain), Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Andrew et Loretta Favret (USA), Daniel and Magdeleine Flach, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Christian and Claude Richard, Pierre and Jeannine Roland

1973: Fr Caffarel, Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Daniel and Magdeleine Flach

Council: José-Luis and Maria-Jésus Areito (Spain), Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Christian and Claude Richard, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, Paul and Marie-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium)

1974: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Daniel and Magdeleine Flach, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Paul and Marie-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium)

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean et Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady,

Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1975: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Daniel and Magdeleine Flach, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Alain and Isabelle de Layre

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1976: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Alain and Isabelle de Layre

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1977: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Alain and Isabelle de Layre, Roger and Béatrice Schmitt

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew et Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1978: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Ver-cruysse (Belgium), Alain and Isabelle de Layre, Roger and Béatrice Schmitt

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1979: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Pierre and Marie-Françoise Garang, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Ver-cruysse (Belgium), Alain and Isabelle de Layre, Roger and Béatrice Schmitt, Edmond and Janine Tocchio

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon et Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1980: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Ver-cruysse (Belgium), Alain and Isabelle de Layre, Edmond and Janine Tocchio, Cyrille and Jacqueline Raty

Pierre Caubel comes to work at the secretariat in a permanent part-time capacity.

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1981: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Alain and Isabelle de Layre, Edmond and Janine Tocchio, Cyrille and Jacqueline Raty

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel et Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis and Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1982: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Edmond and Janine Tocchio, Jean Claude and Janine Malroux, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Spain)

Council: Francis and Germaine de Baecque, Giorgio and Carla Beghi (Italy), Jean and Miette Bernardi, Henri and Claudette Boisselier, Léon and Annette Dabin (Belgium), Andrew and Loretta Favret (USA), Michel and Bernadette Foucard, Jean-Pierre and Françoise Hébré, Valdemiro and Maria-Isabel Libano Monteiro (Portugal), Jean and Marie Mouton-Brady, Constantin and Geneviève Sipsom, José-Luis et Maria-José Soto Torres (Spain)

1983: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Jean Claude and Janine Malroux, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Spain), Paolo and Franca Nanni (Italy)

Council: Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Erwin and Emilie Bundschuh (Germany), José María and Magdalena Gil Robles (Spain), José María and Marilys Trullás (Spain), Daniel and Janine Guelton (France), Bernard and Odile Petit (France), John and Bernadette Blayney (Ireland), Luigi and Giovanna Oliveto (Italy)

1984: Fr Tandonnet, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Jean and Annick Allemand, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Edmond and Ja-

nine Tocchio (Switzerland), Jean Claude and Janine Malroux, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Spain), Paolo and Franca Nanni (Italy)

Council: Erwin und Emilie Bundschuh (Germany), Michel and Anne Schmitz (Belgium), Dirce and Ruben de Moraes (Brazil), José María and Magdalena Gil Robles (Spain), José María and Marilys Trullás (Spain), Daniel and Janine Guelton (France), Bernard and Odile Petit (France), John and Bernadette Blayney (Ireland), Luigi and Giovanna Oliveto (Italy)

1985: Fr Tandonnet, Jean Claude and Janine Malroux (Responsible Couple), Jean and Annick Allemand, Louis and Marie d'Amonville, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium), Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Spain), Paolo and Franca Nanni (Italy)

Jean Claude and Janine Malroux take on responsibility for the Responsible Team on 1st January, Louis and Marie d'Amonville leave the Responsible Team on 30th June, Paul and Mari-Jeanne Vercruysse (Belgium) are replaced by Louis and Annette Dabin, Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy start at the end of the year.

Council: Erwin and Emilie Bundschuh (Germany), Michel and Anne Schmitz (Belgium), Dirce and Ruben de Moraes (Brazil), José María and Magdalena Gil Robles (Spain), José María and Marilys Trullás (Spain), Daniel and Janine Guelton (France), Bernard and Odile Petit (France), John and Bernadette Blayney (Ireland), Luigi and Giovanna Oliveto (Italy), Pedro and Anita Pessoa de Carvalho (Portugal), Gary and Peg Harmon (USA)

INTERNATIONAL LEADING TEAM (ERI)

1986: Fr Olivier (Bel), Jean Claude and Janine Malroux (Fr) – Responsible Couple, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es), Paolo and Franca Nanni (It), Peter and Dorothee Bitterli (Switzerland), Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy (Fr), Léon and Annette Dabin (Bel)

Council: Erwin and Emilie Bundschuh (Ger), Michel and Anne Schmitz (Bel), Dirce and Ruben de Moraes (Br), José María and Magdalena Gil Robles (Es), José María and Marilys Trullás (Es), Daniel and Janine Guelton (Fr), Bernard and Odile Petit (Fr), John and Bernadette Blayney

(Irl), Luigi and Giovanna Oliveto (It), Pedro and Anita Pessoa de Carvalho (Pt), Gary and Peg Harmon (USA)

1987: Fr Olivier (Bel), Jean Claude and Janine Malroux (Fr) – Responsible Couple, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es), Paolo and Franca Nanni (It), Peter and Dorothée Bitterli (Switzerland), Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy (Fr), Léon and Annette Dabin (Bel)

There is no longer an International Council.

1988: Fr Olivier (Bel), Jean Claude and Janine Malroux (Fr) – Responsible Couple, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es), Paolo and Franca Nanni (It), Peter and Dorothée Bitterli (Switzerland), Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy (Fr), Léon et Annette Dabin (Bel)

Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es) take on responsibility for the ERI after the gathering in Lourdes.

1989: Fr Olivier (Bel), Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es) – Responsible Couple, Jean Claude and Janine Malroux (Fr), Peter and Dorothée Bitterli (Switzerland), Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy (Fr), Léon and Annette Dabin (Bel), Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira (Pt)

Jean-Claude and Janine Malroux leave the ERI at the College in London. They are replaced by Benoit and Marie-Odile Touzard (Fr). The Dabins are replaced by Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira (Pt), also at the College in London.

1990: Fr Olivier (Bel), Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es) – Responsible Couple, Peter and Dorothée Bitterli (Switzerland), Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy (Fr), Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira (Pt), Benoit and Marie-Odile Touzard (Fr), Igar and Cidinha Fehr (Br)

1991: Fr Olivier (Bel), Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es) – Responsible Couple, Peter and Dorothée Bitterli (Switzerland), Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy (Fr), Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira (Pt), Benoit and Marie-Odile Touzard (Fr), Igar and Cidinha Fehr (Br)

1992: Fr Olivier (Bel), Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer (Es) – Responsible Couple, Peter and Dorothée Bitterli (Switzerland), Jean-Jacques and Françoise Crepy (Fr), Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira (Pt), Benoit and Marie-Odile Touzard (Fr), Igar and Cidinha Fehr (Br)

1993: Fr Bernard Olivier, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer – Responsible Couple, Antoine and Marie-Magdeleine Berger, Peter and Dorothee Bitterli, Igar and Cidinha Fehr, Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira, Benoît and Marie-Odile Touzard

Gérald and Lise Tremblay agree to join the ERI to replace Peter and Dorothee from July 1994.

1994: Fr Bernard Olivier, Alvaro and Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer – Responsible Couple, Antoine and Marie-Magdeleine Berger, Peter and Dorothee Bitterli, Igar and Cidinha Fehr, Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira, Benoît and Marie-Odile Touzard

Gérald and Lise Tremblay and Gabriel and Marie Peeters attend the College in Fatima, where they join the ERI to replace Peter and Dorothee, and Alvaro and Mercedes.

1995: Fr Cristobal Sàrrias, Igar and Cidinha Fehr – Responsible Couple, Antoine and Marie-Magdeleine Berger, Gérald and Lise Tremblay, Gabriel and Marie Peeters, Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, Tom and Maureen Hoban

Alberto and Maria Almira Ramalheira, and Benoît and Marie-Odile Touzard, are replaced after six years in the ERI by Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, and Tom and Maureen Hoban.

1996: Fr Cristobal Sàrrias, Igar and Cidinha Fehr, – Responsible Couple, Antoine and Marie-Magdeleine Berger, Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, Tom and Maureen Hoban, Gabriel and Marie Peeters, Gérald and Lise Tremblay

1997: Fr Cristobal Sàrrias, Igar and Cidinha Fehr – Responsible Couple, Antoine and Marie-Magdeleine Berger, Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, Tom and Maureen Hoban, Gabriel and Marie Peeters, Gérald and Lise Tremblay

1998: Fr Cristobal Sàrrias, Igar and Cidinha Fehr – Responsible Couple, Antoine and Marie-Magdeleine Berger, Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, Tom and Maureen Hoban, Gabriel and Marie Peeters, Gérald and Lise Tremblay

Gérald and Lise Tremblay decide to leave the ERI due to Lise's health.

Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty replace Antoine and Marie-Magdeleine Berger on the ERI after the College meeting.

1999: Fr Cristobal Sarrrias, Igar and Cidinha Fehr – Responsible Couple, Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, Tom and Maureen Hoban, Gabriel and Marie Peeters, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Alberto and Constanza Alvarado

Alberto and Constanza Alvarado replace the Tremblays after July.

2000: Fr Fleischmann, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, Alberto and Constanza Alvarado, Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Tom and Maureen Hoban, Carlos Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise

Fr Fleischmann replaces Fr Sarrias, and Gérard and Marie-Christine Roberty replace Igar and Cidinha Fehr and become Responsible Couple for the ERI.

2001: Fr Fleischmann, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Duarte and Maria Teresa da Cunha, Alberto and Constanza Alvarado, Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Carlos Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise, Elaine and John Cogavin, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini

Philipe and Brigitte Deney-Delacroix take on the role of the ERI Secretariat, but they are not members of the ERI.

The Cogavins replace the Hobans and the Volpinis replace the da Cunhas in July.

2002: Fr Fleischmann, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Alberto and Constanza Alvarado, Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Carlos Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise, Elaine and John Cogavin, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini

2003: Fr Fleischmann, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Alberto and Constanza Alvarado, Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Carlos Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise, Elaine and John Cogavin, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini

2004: Fr Fleischmann, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Alberto and Constanza Alvarado, Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Carlos

Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise, Elaine and John Cogavin, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini

2005: Fr Fleischmann, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Alberto and Constanza Alvarado, Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Carlos Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise, Elaine and John Cogavin, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini

Paco and Maru Nemesio replace Alberto and Constanza Alvarado in July

2006: Fr Fleischmann, Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Elaine and John Cogavin, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini, Carlos Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise, Paco and Maru Nemesio

Chico and Silvia Pontes replace Carlos Eduardo and Maria Regina Heise, To and Ze Moura Soares replace Jean Louis and Priscilla Simonis, Hervé and Genéviève de Corn replace Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty, and Roberto and Carla Vio replace Philippe and Brigitte Deney-Dela-croix, who had been in the role of Secretariat without being members of the ERI.

Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini replace Gérard and Marie-Christine Roberty as Responsible Couple in July.

2007: Fr Fleischmann, Fr Epis, Fr Londoño, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini, Elaine and John Cogavin, Hervé and Genéviève de Corn, To and Ze Moura Soares, Paco and Maru Nemesio, Chico and Silvia Pontes, Roberto and Carla Vio, Peter and Jan Ralton.

It is the starting point of a new ERI, with the new Responsible Couple, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini, and a new Spiritual Counsellor, Fr Epis. Fr Londoño is invited to assist at some ERI meetings over the next few years, when Fr Epis is unable to attend on account of his health. Peter and Jan Ralton replace the Cogavins.

2008: Fr Epis, Fr Londoño, Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini, Hervé and Genéviève de Corn, To and Ze Moura Soares, Paco and Maru Nemesio, Chico and Silvia Pontes, Jan and Peter Ralton

Peter and Christiane Annegarn take on the role of Secretariat for the ERI in October.

2009: Fr Epis, (Fr Ricardo Londoño), Maria Carla and Carlo Volpini, Geneviève and Hervé de Corn, To and Ze Moura Soares, Maru and Paco Nemesio, Silvia and Chico Pontes, Jan and Peter Ralton, Christiane and Peter Annegarn.

2010: Fr Epis, (Fr Ricardo Londoño), Maria Carla and Carlo Volpini, To and Ze Moura Soares, Chico and Silvia Pontes, Maru and Paco Nemesio, Hervé and Geneviève de Corn, Jan and Peter Ralton, Christiane and Peter Annegarn.

2011: Fr Angelo Epis, Fr Ricardo Londoño, Maria Carla and Carlo Volpini, To and Ze Moura Soares, Geneviève and Hervé de Corn, Paco and Maru Nemesio, Peter and Jan Ralton, Chico and Silvia Pontes, Peter and Christiane Annegarn

Welcome to Vasco and Ana Varela.

2012: Fr Jacinto Farias, Tó and Zé Moura Soares, Mahassen and Georges Khoury, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Ana and Vasco Varela, Graça and Roberto Rocha, Jan and Peter Ralton, Isabel and Paulo Amaral.

The new ERI starts after the International Gathering at Brasilia in July.

2013: Fr Jacinto Farias, Tó and Zé Moura Soares, Mahassen and Georges Khoury, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Graça and Roberto Rocha, Helena and Paul McCloskey, Françoise and Rémi Gausse, Beca and Pedro Bobone.

As a consequence of the resignation of Ana and Vasco Varela, the ERI vote and unanimously approve their replacement by the responsible couple from Spain, Amaya and José Antonio Marcen-Échandi, who will begin their role after the 2014 College meeting. Isabel and Paulo Amaral leave the ERI and are replaced by Beca and Pedro Bobone.

2014: Fr Jacinto Farias, Tó and Zé Moura Soares, Mahassen and Georges Khoury, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Graça and Roberto Rocha, Helena and Paul McCloskey, Françoise and Rémi Gausse, Amaya and Jose Antonio Marcen-Échandi, Beca and Pedro Bobone

As of this year the ERI is composed of eight couples.

2015: Fr Jacinto Farias, Tó and Zé Moura Soares, Mahassen and Georges Khoury, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Graça and Roberto Rocha, Helena and Paul McCloskey, Françoise and Rémi Gausse, Amaya and Jose Antonio Marcen-Échandi, Beca and Pedro Bobone

2016: Fr Jacinto Farias, Tó and Zé Moura Soares, Mahassen and Georges Khoury, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Graça and Roberto Rocha, Helena and Paul McCloskey, Françoise and Rémi Gausse, Amaya and Jose Antonio Marcen-Échandi, Beca and Pedro Bobone

2017: Fr Jacinto Farias, Tó and Zé Moura Soares, Mahassen and Georges Khoury, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Graça and Roberto Rocha, Helena and Paul McCloskey, Françoise and Rémi Gausse, Amaya and Jose Antonio Marcen-Échandi, Beca and Pedro Bobone

2018: Fr Ricardo Londoño, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal Fandiño, Paola and Giovanni Cecchini Manara, Mariola and Elizeu Calsing, Dora and João Pedro Sousa, Hermelinda and Arturo Zamperlini, Paul and Helena McCloskey, Antoine and Thérèse Leclerc, Sylvestre and Bernadette Minlekibe.

The new ERI starts in July in Fatima.

2019: Fr Ricardo Londoño, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Bernadette and Sylvestre Minlekibe, Thérèse and Antoine Leclerc, Helena and Paul McCloskey, Mariola and Elizeu Calsing, Dora and João Pedro Sousa, Paola and Giovanni Cecchini Manara, Faye and Kevin Noonan, Marcia and Paulo Faria

Faye and Kevin Noonan start their service replacing Helena and Paul McCloskey, and Marcia and Paulo Faria replace Hermelinda and Arturo Zamperlini.

2020: Fr Ricardo Londoño, Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Bernadette and Sylvestre Minlekibe, Thérèse and Antoine Leclerc, Mariola and Elizeu Calsing, Dora and João Pedro Sousa, Paola and Giovanni Cecchini Manara, Faye and Kevin Noonan, Marcia and Paulo Faria

Alberto and Mercedes Pérez-Gómez-Ferrer replace Dora and João Pedro Sousa at the end of the year.

ALPHABETICAL COUNTRY LIST

Algeria (1959)	60
Argentina (1984)	92
Australia (1961)	68
Austria (1959)	60
Belgian Congo (First stage) (1954)	40
Belgium (1947)	22
Benin (1997).....	123
Brazil (1950).....	28
Burkina Faso (1985).....	98
Cameroon (1983)	88
Canada (1956).....	47
Central African Republic (1976)	83
Chad (2014).....	137
Chile (1992).....	114
Colombia (1957).....	49
Costa Rica (1985)	93
Cuba (2017).....	138
Democratic Republic of the Congo (Second Phase) (1977)	84
Dominican Republic (1988).....	108
Ecuador (1988)	103
Egypt (1947).....	26
England (1959)	55
France (1939)	16
Gabon(1991)	112
Germany (1958).....	53
Guadeloupe (1956 -1960).....	62
Guatemala (1991)	108

Guinea (2013)	136
India (1969).....	76
Ireland (1964).....	73
Italy (1959)	66
Ivory Coast (2008).....	136
Japan (1959)	59
Jordan (2011)	136
Lebanon (1963).....	72
Lithuania (2000)	124
Luxembourg.....	16
Madagascar (1954 - 1962)	61
Mali (1980).....	87
Mauritius (1953).....	38
Mexico (1983)	88
Morocco (1952)	37
New Zealand (1995).....	119
Nigeria (2005)	134
Paraguay (1996).....	122
Peru (1987).....	99
Philippines (2000)	124
Poland (2001).....	130
Portugal (1955)	45
Puerto Rico (1978)	86
Rwanda (1994).....	117
Senegal (1953).....	39
Spain (1954)	41
Switzerland (1947).....	16
Syria (1975)	79
Togo (1985)	96
Trinidad and Tobago (1983)	90
Tunisia (1951)	35
United States (1958 -1960)	63
Vietnam (1962).....	72

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