



A Letter in Ordinary Time

Dear Teams of the Mid-Atlantic Region,

On May 24, 2015, the Feast of Pentecost, we were installed as your Regional Couple, so it was with a reflective posture that we approached prayer on our anniversary date. It is fitting also that this is the routine time of Team Evaluations. As you approach your individual Team Evaluations, we hope you find the specialness in each other and growth as a team that we have found in getting to know you better.

Growth and change are always a part of the Teams' movement. This spring we traveled to Newark, New Jersey to do an Information Session, as we set sights to start English-speaking Teams there. A recent phone conversation with the director of Marriage and Family Ministries has begun dialog for Teams to be started in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Jorge and Noelia Sousa, our Super-Regional Responsible Couple, and Father Manuel Sousa, Spiritual Advisor for the Super-Region, have completed two tapings with EWTN about Teams. We will keep you posted as to their airing.

Growth takes some effort; change is inevitable. As we look to where we might serve Teams in its changing complexion, we immediately thought of Lolita Jardeleza, whose updated article appears in this issue. Lolita is witness to the fact that not only does she receive support in Teams as a widow, she is a viable contributing member to the Teams Movement.

We have been invited and attended Team meetings, sector retreats and picnics, a Mothers Day brunch, and a baptism. From these ordinary celebrations of life, we have learned so much about the Mid-Atlantic Region and how very gifted and special you all are!

We were especially happy to have two of our newest Sector Couples attend training in Houston, Texas this past year. Kevin and Sheila Johnson, Sector Couple of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Jeremy and Sarah Greiner, Sector Couple of Alexandria, Virginia, found the training sessions to be practical and valuable. Featured in this newsletter are articles written about their Sectors by the Johnsons and Greiners. It is our intention to highlight the other Sectors in future communications. Getting to know our Sectors will aid in strengthening our Region.

As we begin Team evaluations, let us do so with enthusiasm and light hearts, confident in our love for each other. Has this past year, brought valuable lessons of forgiveness and

reconciliation, support and encouragement, affection and friendship? If so, then we are on the right path. Let us celebrate this specialness that Teams brings!

Janie and Bob Mericsko
Responsible Couple for the Mid-Atlantic Region

Reflection on a Lifetime in Teams

When my husband, Jack, and I used to give talks about the Teams of Our Lady, he claimed that we were born in it. We joined Teams in December, 1964. Our team, Washington 4, was one of the first ten teams in the Washington, D.C. area. At the time these teams came from Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C. Washington 4 consisted of four couples: Pat and Mary Kilner, Tom and Betty Pollins, Barry and Lois Noonan and ourselves. We were piloted by Andy and Loretta Favret. We had a series of chaplains which included Msgr. Joaquin Bazan, Fr. Gene Ahern SJ, Fr. John Cordoue SJ and Fr. Barry McGoldrick SJ, Fr. Hilary Hayden OSB, Fr. Robert Mordino, and Deacon Pete Pallard among others. One might say that our most illustrious chaplain was Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston who was our chaplain in 1973.

I would say that our spiritual formation from then on came totally from Teams. The notion of a married couple being spiritual together was quite new at the time. Before that, a man and his wife became holy by acting as much as possible like a priest and a nun. The notion of finding holiness in their being married to each other was ground-breaking. Until Teams' focus on conjugal spirituality, couples strove towards holiness like a husband and a wife heading towards Richmond in separate cars—he in the Knights of Columbus, she in the Sodality. Then Abbe Caffarel and his first teams came up with the novel idea that couples should head for holiness traveling in the same car with each other—that their vehicle for holiness was precisely their being married to each other.

At our first Teams retreat, the chaplain asked, "Do you discuss your spiritual life with each other?" One of the husbands asked, "What spiritual life?" It was heady stuff in the beginning. We had to learn mental prayer. I had trouble with that so I would ask priests and religious to explain it to me. Fr. Cordoue said, "Prayer that is not vocal is mental." We were to spend 10 minutes daily in mental prayer. So I would try and when I thought 10 minutes had passed, I would check my watch only to find that I had only prayed for 5 minutes. My cousin, Fr. Bernard, Carmelite vicar of the Philippines, said, "Empty your mind so that you can hear the Lord." I emptied my mind and fell asleep. I read all the books on prayer I could lay my hands on and after I read one I couldn't pray mentally for months, I was so confused. Then I heard Catherine Doherty (foundress of Madonna House) explain mental prayer as thinking about God the way one did when one first fell in love—first thing upon awakening, last thing before sleep at night. That I understood!

Back then we had ten obligations and we called them that instead of “endeavors.” We drew up our rules of life. We learned how to have meaningful Sitdowns. We prayed as a family. We prayed as a couple. We welcomed visiting Teams family members into our homes. We went on annual retreats. Our team preferred family retreats and at the time we were the team that had the most children. The Babendriers had 13 children, we had 11, the Kilners had 9, the Pollinses had 6, the Noonans and Gneccos had 4 each—a total of 47! We did this at the Aquia Cana Colony (managed by Madonna House) or at nearby campgrounds. Such happy and holy mayhem! The other four obligations were: attending the meeting, studying and answering the discussion questions, reading the monthly newsletter from France, and contributing to the support of the movement’s financial needs. We told new Teams’ couples that the only acceptable excuses from attending the meeting were childbirth and their own death. We actually answered the discussion questions on paper and sent them on to the discussion couple who would meet with our chaplain in preparation for the meeting.

We were like high school freshmen at the time. We did what was expected of us. We had little “report cards” where we toted up whether we did our obligations or not. In turn we had a little coupon where we added up the totals and sent that to our Liaison Couples in France with our monthly report of the meeting. They, in turn, would write back to us and coach us on our efforts towards holiness. In our report, I mentioned that I did my mental praying while I ironed and our Liaison Couple wrote back and said that didn't count.

There always seemed like a dearth of leaders back then and because there were not that many teams yet, they had to use Jack and me. I always believed that were others available, we would not have been tapped. We were the first Responsible Couple of our team and also Liaison Couple to some teams. We piloted two Spanish teams in Miami in the late 60's by correspondence. We served on Sector Teams and were the first editors of the Magnificat and as such served on the Regional team. From 1973-1976 we became Sector Couple for the Maryland Sector because we were the only LCs who did not remove our names from the candidates’ list. That's when I penned this little verse:

*The Holy Spirit is notorious, they say,
For the way He chooses His tools.
He bypasses the wise and the prudent
And insists on using fools!*

That's how we qualified! The Sector Team usually consisted of three couples. When we came into the job, we pulled a couple from every Team and we had Sector gatherings every month. We devoted the first year into Building Community, the second into Deepening Prayer and the third into Gospel Living. We even had a Sector event involving the entire family. We also had a Sector newsletter called the **Memorare** where we featured a team a month. Jack and I had a wonderful time visiting every team! Those were halcyon days!

In 1998, my beloved Jack went on to the Father. I did not want to leave our Team—it was home for me. Not too long after, another member, Sue Podrasky, also went Home followed by Suzanne Redmond. We were decimated! Out of the six couples, we now consisted of three who were

widowed and three couples. Then Dave Uppole suffered a serious heart attack and they moved down to Florida. We eventually just stopped meeting.

However, in 1999, Rockville 4 lost their chaplain, Fr. Bill Talentino, OFM Cap. who was assigned to the Capuchin missions in Papua New Guinea. The team was unable to find someone to be their chaplain when he left and asked me if I would be willing to be their "chaplain." Happily, I was allowed to be that and irony of ironies, a widow now belonged to TWO teams! When a chaplain was found for them, they asked me to stay on and I was very happy to do that. The Rockville 4 meetings are like evenings of recollection. Then 7 years ago, the Babendreiers of the then no longer existing Washington 4 joined Rockville 4 and so I am now having my cake and eating it too, praise God! This coming December, I will have been in Teams for 52 years!

There was a time when I carried the history of Teams in the area in my head but that was back in the 70's. In the ensuing 35 years, the hard drive in my head has become overfull. One of my sons suggests that I download a lot of the data in there. As I enter my 84th year, this old gray mare just ain't what she used to be. In the late 70's the then Sector husband introduced Jack and me as the Team antiques. After 37 more years what does that make me?

In Teams, however, one doesn't get fossilized. Teams somehow make us richer, like humus in forests. Our being in Teams led Jack into the diaconate, our being involved with the Family Life Board and the archdiocese in the 80's, my going to Papua New Guinea as a missionary in 2001, teaching in the Philippines in 2003, being professed as a Secular Franciscan in 2005. Back in the early days, we also had the Young Mother's groups initiated by Sue Madigosky and Bible Study groups as well. What I have learned about love and marriage and parenting in Teams I have taught in my Christian Lifestyle and Sex Respect classes at the Academy of the Holy Cross. What I have learned about prayer and walking with Lord, I pass on in the retreats I give. The Teams ideals and values like openness, communication, building community, spiritual growth, deepening prayer and living out gospel values ripple farther and wider than we might think, please God.

What Teams does is attach us to the Vine that is the Lord and as long as we are attached, He makes us bear fruit. We don't have to grunt and groan to bear this fruit anymore than a grape or tomato has to. We simply have to let Him have His way with us and use us in the vineyard as He sees fit. Teams teaches us to grow into holiness by "doin' what comes natur'lly" after hanging out with the Lord and each other.

I earnestly pray that as I was born in Teams I will also die in Teams. Let us praise God mightily that we are members of the Teams of Our Lady!

Lolita Jardeleza
Washington, DC 4

Alexandria, Virginia—Our Newest Sector

The Alexandria Sector is a vibrant and growing sector of Teams of Our Lady in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, just south of Washington DC in Northern Virginia. Over six years ago Chris and Joanna Hitzelberger restarted Teams of Our Lady in Alexandria when, with the support of the pastor at Blessed Sacrament Parish, they proposed to the members of the women's rosary group at Blessed Sacrament that they consider joining Teams of Our Lady with their husbands. A number of us did, and while the membership of that group has changed over the years, three couples, Andrew and Maria Bremberg, Jeremy and Sarah Greiner, and Alex and Kristin Passantino, have been members of Team Alexandria 6 since the start. These three couples piloted five new teams in Alexandria bringing the total number of teams up to six.

Around this time, the Regional Couples were being added to the organizational structure of Teams in the U.S., and the newly installed Mid-Atlantic Regional Couple decided to make Alexandria, which had previously been in the Southern Maryland Sector, its own Sector. Since the Brembergs and Passantinos had done the bulk of the piloting, the Greiners volunteered to be the designated Sector Couple, although the three couples work together as a team to plan sector events, hold informational sessions to start new teams, and manage the other business of the Sector. As the other teams in the Sector gain longevity, we will ask more couples to join the Sector Team and eventually replace us.

Our Sector teams range in age from teams of young couples with no children to teams with older couples whose children have left the home, although the majority of our couples have school-age children. We try to group couples at similar stages in life together in a team as we find that having similar life circumstances fosters the fastest building of friendships. Because so many of our couples have young children, we try to have Team events for families throughout the year, such as our December Christmas party, our Mary is Our Mother's Day brunch in May, and our Teams cookout in August. In the fall we have our Teams Retreat together as a Sector. Last year we held a very rewarding retreat in a new location, the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington D.C. The focus of the 264th Pope's pontificate and of the Knights of Columbus who run the Shrine on marriage and the family made them a natural home for our annual couples retreat, and the Shrine staff went out of their way to accommodate us and make us welcome. In addition, the Shrine offers half-day retreat "Domestic Church Days" throughout the year which our Teams couples and their children can attend.

So far, our new teams have come from couples who belong either mainly to Blessed Sacrament parish (four teams) or mainly to St. Rita's parish (one team). In April we will be piloting two new teams made up mainly of couples from St. Rita's parish. In the future we hope to reach out to St. Mary's parish, the largest Catholic parish in our city (and the oldest in the Commonwealth of Virginia), and to St. Joseph's, a Roman Catholic Church founded and run by the Josephites to serve the African-American community in Alexandria.

Jeremy and Sarah Greiner
Responsible Couple for the Alexandria Virginia Sector



Alexandria VA 9 Team: Marie Mavretich, Martha Picarello, Kate and Zachary Ford, Vanessa Kelly, and Anthony Picarello.



Alexandria VA 9 Team: John Mavretich, Angela and Pete Howard, Patrick Kelly, and Father Donald Planty.



Patrick Kelly, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, and Venessa Kelly smile joyfully while Pope Francis blesses baby Kelly during his visit to Washington DC earlier this year.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Sector: A Family Legacy

On a spring evening in March 1990 Jim and Mia Holman held their first Teams of Our Lady Information Session at Our Lady of the Assumption in Strafford, PA. There to guide them were two couples from Long Island New York, Mia's brother Mike Leavy and his wife Patty along with Jim and Tricia Matthews.

But the connection to the Empire State does not end there, the Philadelphia Sector can actually trace its history back to a young Long Island couple, named Tom and Florence Leavy, Mia's parents. In 1964 they joined Teams of Our Lady to spiritually nourish their marriage. Through their journey with the Teams' movement, Tom and Florence were setting an example for their young children. Mia recalls all the wonderful events she attended with the six other Teams families. They celebrated New Year's Eve with Mass and a social, attended family retreats, and even had an annual Mardi Gras party before the start of Lent. This model of faith and fellowship among the seven couples led two of her siblings to join Teams when they married, one in Orange County, NY and the other in Long Island.

After Mia and Jim were married, they sought the same small group fellowship but there were no Teams active in the Philadelphia area. With an amazingly generous spirit, Mike, Patty, Jim and Tricia drove over 300 miles round trip to attend the information night that led to the first Team in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Twenty-six years later, the Holmans and the Toukatlys are still active members of the Strafford I Team.

In the mid 1990's, Mia and Jim followed the example of their piloting couple, Jim and Tricia Matthews, when they piloted the Strafford II and Villanova I Teams. Bridget and Kevin Hughes joined the Strafford I Team in 1999. It was through the Hughes' connections with Father Paul Dressler and a Catholic young adult group that the Philadelphia I and II Teams were formed. With the addition of the Villanova I Team came the official start of the Philadelphia Sector and Kevin and Bridget served as the first Sector Couple.

Over the next dozen years, the Philadelphia Sector continued to grow. Bob and Carlene West, another Strafford I couple, fostered the expansion by piloting the West Chester I Team. Soon afterward, Brian and Rosey Lester, the second Sector Couple, began the Drexel Hill I Team with the help of John and Charlotte Mulvihill, who have been part of the Teams or Our Lady movement for decades. Like many of the medical residents who formed the Philadelphia II Team, the Mulvihills lived in many states throughout their marriage, forming and becoming part of many Teams throughout the country. The relationships they formed provided them with many lifelong friends, including our current Mid-Atlantic Regional Couple, Janie and Bob Mericsko, whom they met while living in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, PA.

The interconnectedness of Teams couples does not stop at our own country's borders. About 15 years ago, a couple from Italy was stationed in the Philadelphia region and became active in the Stratford I Team. More recently, Hughes and Caroline Gerard of France were also brought to the Philadelphia area through their work and they joined the West Chester I Team. Like Mia, Hughes also came from a Teams family. His parents were active in Les Équipes Notre-Dame from Versailles, France. Both of these couples shared the universality of their Catholic faith and the support of the world wide Teams of Our Lady movement. This same global support was evident last fall when many of our Philadelphia Sector couples hosted Team members from across our country and across the world for the Pope's visit to Philadelphia.

The most recent growth of the Philadelphia Sector has been centered around St. Andrew's Parish in Newtown, Bucks County. After being involved with Teams in Massachusetts, Steve and Helen Shreiner moved to Pennsylvania for Steve's work. After a few years, they felt the Holy Spirit calling them back to the Teams movement, but there were no local Teams so they decided to hold an information session. The response has been overwhelming! By early summer, they will have formed six Teams at St. Andrew's Parish in less than two years. While in some instances the Holy Spirit is like a quiet whisper, other times it is a dynamic wind renewing and strengthening all those responding in faith.

As the current Philadelphia Sector Couple, Kevin and I would like to thank Jim and Mia Holman along with the two Sector Couples who served before us, Kevin and Bridget Hughes and Brian and Rosey Lester. Their example of faith and the desire to share the joy they found in Teams with other couples is similar to what Mia and her siblings witnessed in their parent's marriage. And just as the Leavys are responsible for a Teams legacy that stretches across New York and Pennsylvania, the Holmans, Hughes and Lesters have helped bring the "Married Spirituality" of Teams to more than 80 couples in the Philadelphia area.

Kevin and Sheila Johnson
Responsible Couple for the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Sector

Upcoming Events

July 12-15, 2016: National Teams of Our Lady Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina—Please join other Teams couples from the East Coast, West Coast, and everywhere in between, as we gather together to learn, share, fellowship, and pray. Meet our regional and national leaders. Hear dynamic speakers, enjoy breakout sessions and discussions, attend Mass, adoration, share meals and more! This time spent, immersed in the atmosphere of Teams, is a wonderful way to deepen the graces of your marriage and grow closer together in holiness and love. Talk it over with your family and your Team and register today at <http://toolevents.org> .

Please Keep in Your Prayers...

Couples of Service to the Team Movement—Please pray for all our region's responsible couples and our spiritual advisors.

Recent Deaths—Please remember in your prayers all departed Teams' members, spiritual advisors, departed family members, and those who mourn for them, especially:

Patrick Marin of the East Piney Branch 1 Team in the Maryland-East Sector,
Father Hilary Hayden of St. Anselm's Abbey in Washington, DC, and
Father Paul Wynants, a former Super Regional Chaplain.

Future Newsletters

Please take pictures and write up your Team events. Send these highlights to your Sector Couple, so our Regional Newsletter reflects our Teams' life.