Introduction

Sexuality and conyugal SPIRITUALITY

An invitation to dialogue

Dear couples and spiritual councelors:

During his entire life, Father Caffarel, permanently questioned himself about human love and the sexuality of couples. This concern has remained alive in our Movement throughout the years. It started with a survey launched by Father Caffarel in 1969 directed to all team couples. From the findings of this survey we started preparing a book that was never completed. This topic has also been explored by the International Responsible Team and by some Super Regions with the purpose of facing the challenge of supplying tools that would help couples understand their sexuality, as a source of richness and not of weakness, in order to achieve sanctity.

In 2007, when we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Teams of Our Lady founding charters, Father Olivier – in one of his last presentations – stated in the speech to the Teams of Our Lady, that our Movement still had a challenge: the incorporation of the treatment of sexuality in the route to sanctity.

At the 2012 Brasilia International School, which was the starting point of the current work of the International Responsible Team, IRT, the International School led by the responsible couples of Super Regions and directly related Regions, expressed the need that, with a second wind, the International Responsible Team will revisit the topic, considering it a priority to be studied and discerned. This petition was the origin of the satellite team that was created for such purpose and of the work that joyfully we show cast for you today.

Paraphrasing Jean Allemand, Father Caffarel's good friend and biography author, we want to underline with this work that the human being is one and that fulfilled human love includes all zones of the self. If one zone is not a part of the concert, love is not in harmony, it is divergent, and that is why we must give our sexuality the place it has in our completeness.

Dear couples, that your dialogues, or the 'sitdowns' prompted by these eleven booklets and the testimonials that come with them, be a source of grace and richness in your road to sanctity.

To and Ze Moura Soares
INTERNATIONAL RESPONSIBLE TEAM

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Introduction

Dear T.O.L. friends.

We are contacting you, beloved couple and sought in a special manner by our God. As a couple you are His favorite work and His best expression of love. Every kiss and hug you give each other are the best gift and the most tender caress God gives to this world.

When we started writing these booklets we imagined you interweaving the laces that keep your home united with your work, the children's school and the sites of your daily activities. We envisaged you tired, busy, almost without time to experience love with your words and the donation of your body. We pictured you concerned about the babies or small children or about the experiences of your teen agers or while the older children come and go. We have also imagined you in the peace and quietness of your home, enjoying your leisure time, prayer and the relaxation of being retired.

Every line, every paragraph, every one of the topics we present here have been enlightened by your joyful and creative image, because we are convinced that between "being limited to get old" or living with enthusiasm to "create and grow", you have chosen the latter.

The time we have dedicated to write and think of you has been a time of "excellence". Because dedicating time to love and to motivate love is doing the richest revolution: the interior one, the

silence revolution, the one done in the sole and most beautiful temple created by God: interiority.

Jesus elevated women to the same social and personal "category" of men and helped to dignify relationships among people; He has enlightened us to choose the path of positive and nurtured sexuality, that considers us sexed individuals and destined by our God to know, desire, love and enjoy each other, to be fertile, to organize our life and to give each other as a gift within love. This is the sexuality path that Jesus lived without fear, without apprehension and without imposing heavy burdens.

This path is positive, smells like mercy, forgiveness, understanding and dignity. It is a free, respectful path, full of responsibility and signs of God's love in every person we find walking through it. And for all these reasons, it is a demanding path.

You will realize that we have opted to follow God's example when He created our body (creating us as a whole), He admired it and recognized it was superb…, so extraordinary that he became one of us!, with our same hands, feet, arms and body to be able to touch, heal, love, enjoy, pray and caress. This was the best present God gave us: a body to give and share as a couple, accompanied by God that enjoys the love of couples that love each other.

We believe this is the path of sexuality that God wants us to go through and live: sexuality that is felt and lived in the light of the Gospel, and in Jesus' divine humanity. A sexuality that aims at

the encounter of husband and wife, shared enjoyment and the freedom of your self-giving.

Pope Francis tells us that there is another remedy to watch Jesus and set aside issues that are not proper nowadays. We have chosen love that creates and crops and not resulting from fear, sacrifices without love or the limitations that do not allow a human sexuality, as Father Caffarel insistently requested in the Chantilly conference: "it is not possible to have true sexuality morals without human quality in the experience of sexuality… Morality is predicated in marriage, what is permitted and what is prohibited is discussed, but there are no books at all for married Christians on "how to make love well", about the way to live copulation well (tell me if you know any, I don't!)"[1]

We shall discuss sexuality and spirituality: two drops of water fallen from the same rain: the rain of Gospel. And in front of this very interesting and exhilarating challenge we would like to express our deepest and most sincere wishes. But we consider that what is most important is what you say and share. Therefore we suggest:

that you open your arms and mainly your heart, to mutually show the new idea, our new feeling ant the last experience lived, so that reading your heart you are more concerned about your common interest – your project as a couple – than about your particular interests.

That holding your hands you read together, free of prejudice, of previous sad remembrances and

1.Father Caffarel. Chantilly Conference

decided to be authentic witnesses of your splendid and beneficial present.

That you reflect together, that you two give words to your feelings and that you also share those words and they become your joint property. And all this with the attitude that both of you are equally important. We grow if we reflect, if we meet, pray and dialogue in an equal level. If we have a dialogue thinking that either one can be mistaken and that the two of us have part of the truth, we assure our mutual communion. Our sexuality would not be so if we do not live and feel our encounters based on equality. If there are small domains, possessions and submissions as well as slight violence between us, sexuality could become pure genitality.

That you finish every topic you stand before the Lord to let yourselves be "warmed" and "tanned" by Him, as it happens with the wheat in the field, that with the patience of a "farmer"[2] waits for the summer sun to mature it to be then taken to the thresh. Let that "thresh" be your spouse's encounter and your encounter with God in your prayer.

Only love will permit the free and joyful expression of your sexuality by means of pacific silence, with hugs and caresses, with the accomplice gaze, with the "I love you" kiss and, whenever you desire with the giving of yourselves in the intimate encounter.

2.Expression of Father Caffarel in the first chapter of the book ""En presencia de Dios", ("In the presence of God"), PPC, Madrid 2015, translated by Mercedes Lozano.

We welcome you. Those who have prepared these topics open the door for you and give you the floor. We are on your side.

TWO SMALL SUGGESTIONS:

1.- Before reading, keep quiet for a while. Be in the "proper attitude", as Father Caffarel says because a "kind face is waiting for you", a pair of hands greet you and get close to comfort you. Be convinced that you are expected. "I am going to prepare a site for you". And He is in that site. His presence has made that your interior is a cozy home. That is what praying is about: "Peregrinate to the interior sanctuary to adore there the true God".[3] Tell the Lord what Father Caffarel suggests: "Lord, I love the beauty of your home and the site where your glory inhabits."

Stand in front of God's eyes and do not think He is a mute and passive witness of your words and ideas. Let him talk and that His words reach your hearts. And be sure that "willing to pray is already a prayer" and not necessarily to be free of feelings, distractions, remembrances or thoughts[4]

2.- Be prepared to Dialogue[5]: "Who amongst you, willing to build a tower does not sit first and calculates the expenses to see if you have everything necessary to finish it? (Lc. 14, 28-29)

Take time to facilitate the encounter; release your

3. Expression of Father Caffarel in the first chapter of the book ""En presencia de Dios", ("In the presence of God"), Chapter 1.
4.- Ibid
5.- P. Marcovits o.p. gave to those responsible of OLT., in St. Herblain, on November 20, 2011.

chains and leave behind the fear to dialogue and to the truth, because you need to build "your" tower.

Be ready to listen. Listen what the other says, what is not expressed and what is silenced. Listen to each other with your whole body. Listening is learning from his/her looks, words and all the gestures. While not listening is to give solutions, arguments and be surrounded by walls to defend your truth. Listening makes us supportive and accomplices. If you do not listen you become a judge or a teacher. If the tension between the two raises, postpone the dialogue. "Light is in the words of the other", P. Marcovits states.

The secret is "loving each other enough to know when both have to silence", to always accept the word of your spouse and always consider your couple a valid spokesperson.

Dialogue, listen, ask and respond. With all that you will comply with the Lord's mandate: "I was hungry and you fed me" (Mt. 25, 35). Your answer shall not aim at changing the other but rather it shall allow the other to find his path.

And finish the topic giving thanks to the Lord for having had this wonderful opportunity.

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