

CANONICAL STATUTES OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY

FOREWORD

The Teams of Our Lady (Equipes Notre-Dame, END) originated with a group of four couples, who wished to respond fully to the demands of their baptism in and through their married life, and with a priest, Father Henri Caffarel, who foresaw the spiritual richness of the sacrament of marriage.

The first Team meeting was held in Paris on February 25th, 1939. The Team's Charter was drawn up on December 8th, 1947, at the instigation of Father Henri Caffarel and of those responsible at the time. It constitutes the true founding act of the Movement, which placed itself under the patronage of the Mother of God.

The primary aim of this foreword is to place these statutes within the context of the original intuition of the Movement's foundation and to thus allow the Teams to move forward with daring and confidence, faithful to the founding charisms.

As is clearly stated in the Team's Charter, note n°1 and as Father Caffarel reminded all at Easter 1988 in an anthology of founding texts for the Teams, the Teams of Our Lady, from the start, wished to be a "Movement for married spirituality and not simply a friendly group of Christian couples who wanted to escape isolation, nor a family Movement, nor Catholic action Movement." Similarly from the beginning, it brought together not individuals, but couples who want to progress towards holiness in and through marriage.

The central intuition of the first meetings, which would give rise to what would be called 'married spirituality,' is indeed therefore that couples united by the sacrament of marriage are called to holiness not despite their marriage, but in and through it. We find it difficult today to understand the novelty such a notion exemplified fifty years ago. Today still, it is a field to be tilled.

By being with young couples, Father Caffarel discovered the meaning of this 'great mystery' that St Paul spoke of (Ep 5, 32). The only way for couples united through the sacrament of marriage to seek an alternative route to holiness is through their love, seized and transfigured by divine love. As Father Caffarel loved to repeat, "*Marriage means giving yourself to each other to give yourselves together.*"

Another intuition grew out of these first Teams: the parallel between two relationships of love: that of the human person with Christ and that of the couple. Both have a similar evolution: after the joy of the first meeting comes one day the trial of the dark night and of apparent absence. Then it is necessary to hold on in faith and fidelity.

In 1945, an editorial that had a great impact appeared in the *Golden Ring*, a magazine for married and family spirituality set up by Father Caffarel - 'A Little Known Duty'. In this editorial, Father Caffarel inspired by a passage in St. Luke from which he derived

the principle: “a house will end up falling down if you do not keep an eye on the roof,” launched the duty of the ‘sit-down’. In couples who do not stop to think, get caught up in the routine their marriage will crack and fissure.

But because they are aware of their weaknesses and limitations, because they realise everyday how narrow the door is and how the long term is difficult, ever more couples decide to join a team within a structured Movement that is flexible and rigorous.

Inspired by experience that goes back over fifty years, the Teams are convinced that the Movement responds more than ever to the needs of couples and the Church. This Movement, currently located in about sixty countries, wishes to be the bearer of a Christian testimonial in the world.

In conformity with Canon 299, paragraph 3 of the Canonical Code, promulgated on January 25th, 1983, the International Leading Team of the Teams of Our Lady Movement, along with the Super-Regional and numerous Regional Couples, unanimously decided to adopt the following statutes.

These statutes were approved ‘*ad experimentum*’ for 5 years by his Eminence Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity during an audience with His Holiness John Paul II on March 26th, 1992. The Decree of Recognition of the Teams of Our Lady as a private association of the faithful, according to the norms of canons 298-311 and 321-329 was promulgated on April 19th, 1992, on the Feast of the Resurrection.

These statutes were definitively approved on July 26th, 2002, date of the feast of St Joachim and St Anne, the Blessed Virgin’s parents, in a decree from the Pontifical Council for the Laity under the presidency of Cardinal James Francis Stafford.

Their aim is

- To provide for the coherence and growth the Movement in line with and faithful to the original intuitions, while allowing for the necessary adjustments, according to the new needs that could occur in relation to the various contexts of time and place;
- To ensure the anchoring of the original intuition of the Teams of Our Lady Movement in the Church and to therefore obtain confirmation of the recognition of its special features;
- To serve as a reference point for the Movement’s members and those in responsibility and as a guarantee for the Church authorities;
- To define the institutional expression of the attachment of the Teams of Our Lady to the Holy See.

Article 1 – Denomination and Qualification

The official name of the Movement is “Equipes Notre-Dame” shortened to END. This denomination is common to the whole of the Movement, without prejudice to the use of official translations. Where necessary, the subtitle, “Movement for Married Spirituality” is added.

The name Equipes Notre-Dame may be translated in the languages of the countries in which it is established with the agreement of the International Leading Team (ERI).

The END, as a lay movement, is an international private association of the faithful, presided over and governed by its members. It has a legal personality, according to canons 298-311 and 321-329 of the Code of Canonical Law, promulgated January 25th, 1983 and in compliance with the present statutes. This Movement forms a spiritual community of universal character within the Church.

Article 2 – Headquarters

The Movement's headquarters are situated in Paris, 49, rue de la Glacière, 75013 Paris, France. It could be moved to another location if the International Leading Team (ERI) so decided.

Article 3 – Aims and Essential Characteristics

The aim of the END is to help Christian couples discover and experience all dimensions of the sacrament of marriage, by remaining faithful to the teachings of the Church.

A movement of spiritual training and resourcing, the END help their members progress in their love of God and their love of their neighbour; they appeal to mutual help so that their members can accept personally and as a couple the concrete conditions of their married, family, professional, and social life according to God's will; they encourage them to become aware of their evangelic mission within the Church and the world through the testimonial of their married love and through any other means of action they decide upon.

Article 4 – Members

Members are defined as those Christian couples, united by the sacrament of marriage, who support, with a view to putting them in to practice, the aims and methods of the Movement, as were defined in the latest edition of the Charter (May 1972), in the fundamental documents that brought it up to date and by the present statutes.

'The Guide to the Teams of Our Lady,' published in May 2001 by the ERI after the International College's approval, is based on all the aforementioned documents it contains, together with the present statutes. It lays out the rules and regulations governing the conditions for the life of the Movement and of its members. It is the reference document, detailing how the Movement works and can only be modified by the ERI after consultation with the International College.

Any couple, who fulfils the conditions of the first paragraph of the present Article 4, may join the Teams. After an introductory period of at least a year, spent with a Team and accompanied by a Pilot Couple, who explains the various aspects of life with the Teams, each couple commits to the Movement or decides to leave it.

Every member may leave whenever they choose.

The SR/RR may decide upon the exclusion of one or more members in their region for reasons of non-compatibility or serious difficulty in relation to the association's commitments. This decision is based on the evidence of the local Responsible Couple, but those excluded are entitled to the right to defend themselves and even to appeal, if necessary, to the ERI.

Article 5 – Team Life and Mutual Help between Members

The Team is a true ecclesial community and constitutes the Movement's basic cell. The specific vocation of the Teams of Our Lady, as a Church Movement, is to encourage and facilitate small communities of couples, who seek to fully live a Christian life in their home and their family.

After a Piloting and introductory period, the Team as such commits to the Movement, which accepts the Team, or it decides to leave the Movement.

Made up of five to seven couples, the Team chooses a 'Responsible Couple' every year. This couple is helped by a priest 'Spiritual Counsellor'/chaplain, who renders the link between the priesthood and the Church visible.

The monthly meeting is the highpoint in the life of the Team. Everyone prepares for this meeting, which comprises a simple meal, a time for prayer, a time for sharing or pooling of each members' experiences and preoccupations, an exchange on the subject topic, which is linked to the aims and essential characteristics of the Movement, as well as a time of sharing on the Endeavours, explained below.

The Teams of Our Lady members commit in fact to making an effort personally and as a couple to accomplish the Endeavours: a personal Rule of Life, a time of true married dialogue every month in order to seek out together the will of the Lord (the Sit-Down), listening to the Word of God, daily personal prayer, family and couple prayer and an annual retreat. In order to succeed in these Endeavours, they also commit to helping each other mutually as a Team and to participating in the activities and life of the Movement.

Article 6 – Responsible and Organisational Bodies

1) Various bodies of responsibility and organisation are at the service of the fraternal communion with a view to accomplishing the Movement's goals:

- The Liaison Couple is in charge of ensuring the liaison between various teams;
- The Sector Couple is in charge of running a group of 5-20 Teams with the help of a Team, called a Sector Team, comprising a few couples and a priest, Spiritual Counsellor/chaplain to the Sector;
- The Regional Couple in charge of running various sectors
- The Provincial Couple in charge of liaising with various Regions, when the Super Region is too large a territory;
- The Super-Regional Couple in charge of running various provinces or regions.

Responsible Couples to the Sectors, Regions, Provinces, Super-Regions will make sure to constitute a service team to help them exercise their responsibility. This service team is made up of a few couples and a priest Spiritual Counsellor/chaplain, who help them collegially in a spirit of communion and trust. Each of these responsible couples must answer to the Movement's hierarchy.

All these responsibilities together with the services rendered by Teams' couples for administrative duties, translation etc. are done on a volunteer basis, without payment.

2) The International Leading Team (ERI) collegially assumes the general responsibility of the Movement. It exercises this role in close collaboration with the Super-Regional couples.

The ERI comprises six to eight couples, who are assisted by a priest Spiritual Counsellor/chaplain. These couples are chosen by the ERI itself, once it has consulted at large and notably with the Super-Regions. The choice of ERI members should be inspired, inasmuch as is possible, by the international character of the Movement.

ERI members serve for a maximum of six years.

The ERI chooses a Responsible Couple from amongst its members or from amongst couples who belonged to the preceding ERI. Only in exceptional circumstances may the ERI Responsible Couple be chosen from the members of the College. If this is the case, the chosen couple must participate in ERI meetings for at least a year before beginning to exercise their responsibility.

The ERI Responsible Couple is in charge of running and coordinating the ERI. This couple takes on the everyday running of the Movement and regularly gives feedback on its mission to the other ERI members. The mandate is for a maximum of six years and they are the official representatives of the movement.

Before beginning the nomination procedure for the Responsible Couple, the ERI makes sure that the Pontifical Council for the Laity has no major objections to their choice.

The ERI has access to an International Administrative office, run by the General Secretary Couple of the ERI, who look after the administrative aspects and functioning of the ERI.

The Liaison Zones are made up of Super-Regions, Regions or Sectors, which are directly attached to the ERI, as well as countries, which do not yet have a Team at this level. The ERI is responsible for them.

Specialised service teams called 'Satellite Teams' may also be called upon by the ERI to help it fulfil its mission. The ERI will make sure that the international character of these teams, whose members serve for a limited time defined by the ERI, is preserved. A member of the ERI is responsible for them.

The ERI may call upon experts, priest or laity, to help them in their reflection.

If the post of ERI Responsible Couple falls vacant, the corresponding mission will be exercised, after election to the ERI, for a provisory period and for a maximum period of one year, by the member couple who had obtained the majority vote, until such a time as another couple is called upon to take on the succession definitively, according to the rules of the present Statutes.

3) All responsibility exercised by each level is given to couples, who are Team members, for a limited time frame, usually 3-5 years. Couples mentioned in paragraph 1 of the present Article are chosen according the rules fixed by the Movement's official documents in a spirit of communion and service. The couple responsible for the general organisation that they belong to proceeds with their nomination, once the outgoing responsible couple and all competent people have been consulted.

Concerning the nomination of SR and RR Responsible Couples, this is inevitably made in consultation with the ERI.

Administrative offices are created according to the needs of different countries, with the agreement of the ERI and are placed under local responsibility, in collaboration with the International Administrative office.

If the post of Responsible Couple falls vacant, the corresponding mission is assumed by the Responsible Couple of the level to which the post depends. Upon the advice of its team, Responsible Couple may ask a couple, who are members of their team, to fill the post.

Each Responsible Couple, from the Sector level up, represents the Movement in their geographic area. This representation only concerns the domains covered by Article 3. The Responsible Couple must report back regularly on its initiatives, decisions and governance.

All documents, created by any part of the Movement and concerning the Movement's pedagogy, its rules of governance or which are to be made available to couples for their study or distribution, must be sent to the ERI for approval.

Responsible Couples, who exercise at a level of responsibility in the Movement, may be relieved of their functions:

- In the case of exclusion from the Movement, according to Article 4 of these Statutes;
- In the case of systematic refusal to respect the obligations inherent in their responsibility;
- In the case of practices that are not in agreement with the Church;
- In the case of violation of these Statutes, which would call into question the unity and communion of the Teams of Our Lady.

The decision to replace someone must be taken by the SR/RR Responsible Couples in charge, while ensuring their right to a defence and with the possibility of appeal before the ERI.

Article 7 — Priests Spiritual Counsellors

Priests bring the irreplaceable grace of their priesthood to the Teams. They are not in charge of governing, which is why they are called “Spiritual Counsellors.”

Team members choose the priest, **Spiritual Counsellor to the Team**, from amongst those priests, who legitimately exercise their priesthood and in conformity with Canon 324, paragraph 2.

The Responsible Couple of the Service Team and with the agreement of their hierarchical Responsible Couple chooses the priest, **Spiritual Counsellor to the Sector or other service Team**. It beholds the priest to talk to and get the agreement of his spiritual hierarchy before accepting the responsibility. The usual length of the commitment is three to five years.

The Responsible Couple, who is about to assume the service within the ERI, puts forward the priest’s name who is to be **Spiritual Counsellor to the ERI** and the Holy See confirms his nomination. The length of his mandate is six years maximum and should finish at the same time as the Responsible Couple’s.

Other priests may be associated with the reflection and spiritual animation of the Movement, at different levels of responsibility, depending on the circumstances and needs. They are chosen by the level who needs them and in agreement with the Movement’s hierarchy.

Article 8 — Administration of Property

The Movement’s resources comprise the annual subscriptions paid by members, together with gifts, subsidies and eventual bequests. These resources cover the running costs as well as those involved in activity and expansion of the Movement.

The Movement may acquire property, through purchase, donation or bequest, but will retain ownership only with a strict view to the fulfillment of its aims.

Whoever is involved in the finances of the Movement must account for the sums received and spent.

Every year, the ERI fixes the Movement’s financial policy, in particular the international Super Regions’ and Regions’ contribution, and they ensure that it is adhered to.

Civil, national or regional associations, of a juridical nature, may be established in the countries where the END are located. The decision to create them and their statutes are to be submitted for the ERI’s approval beforehand. These associations can possess and run property belonging to the END and will report back annually to the Movement’s local heads.

With a view to transparency and confidence, accounting documents of civil associations, set up by the regions or Super Regions, or to which they belong, are annually forwarded to the relevant instance. Similarly, the ERI hands over to the College all documents relevant to the various associations of which it is a member.

If one of these associations is liquidated, the goods and property are devolved according to the rules of each country. The international association will however make sure that the goods/property are used for the good of all of the Movement's members or of institutions that are related to couples and marriage of the countries administered by the aforementioned associations.

If the International Association of the END is liquidated, the ERI will devolve the goods and property to associations that pursue the same goals in conformity with Canon 326.

Article 9 – Revision of the Statutes

Any proposal to revise the present statutes is to be made either by the International Leading Team (ERI), or at the request of the Super-Region Responsible Couples with a majority of two thirds.

The modifications are fixed by the ERI after consulting the Super Regions according to the same procedure as that which was followed for the elaboration of the present statutes and submitted for approval to the Holy See.

Article 10 – Final Measures

The ERI and Super Regional couples ensure the compliance of the internal regulations and official Movement documents with the present statutes.

Paris, March 14th, 2014