



Teams of Our Lady

THE REGIONAL COUPLE

The International Leading Team
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This document was produced by the Satellite Team "FORMATION"
for the Movement of the International Teams of Our Lady

PRESENTATION OF THE DOCUMENT

The CHARTER of the Teams of Our Lady describes the founding CHARISM and methods of our Movement. It is the means of preserving the unity and enthusiasm of our first member and of developing our Movement under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

“Teams are grouped in “Sectors” and the Sectors in “Regions”. Sector Couples and Regional Couples are responsible for the smooth running of the teams entrusted to them.”
Charter of the Teams of Our Lady, 1947

The Charter indicates in this way the place of the Region within the structure of the Movement. You will note that teams are grouped in intermediate entities (eg Sectors) to strengthen the unity of members so as to ensure the good functioning of teams.

The object of this document is to explain the role of the Regional Couple and to help them in the course of his period of service. It will draw from the various documents produced by the Movement on responsibility and service. The following are among the most recent of these:

- ❖ Responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady, ERI (International Leading Team) 1993
- ❖ Guide to the Teams of Our Lady, ERI 2001
- ❖ Practice of Collegiality, ERI 2002
- ❖ Call to serve in the Teams of Our Lady, ERI 2004.

These documents give the main principles and outlines of service as they apply to a Region. Flexibility, a gentle touch and adaptability are desirable out of consideration for each country's culture, mentality and sensitivities. In this way, responsibility and collegiality will be exercised to best advantage.

In this particular document on the responsibility of a Region, we will lay more stress on the aspects of formation and reflection than on the aspect of organisation

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Chapter 1. DESCRIPTION OF A REGION

“The Region is composed of several neighbouring Sectors and provides mutual help between them. It is a centre of communication and of communion between Sector Couples, members of Sector Teams and other couples who provide services.”

Guide of the Teams of Our Lady, International Leading Team 2001, p 34

1. The Region

The Region is composed of a group of Sectors. In a Region, Sector Couples and team members are called to offer their talents and gifts according to their particular charism and availability to serve the couples of the Movement.

There are two types of Regions depending on their connection within Teams' structures:

- ❖ Regions that are part of a Super-Region
- ❖ Regions directly linked to the International Leading Team

These different types of connection result in different types of organisation.

1.1 *Place of the Region in the Movement*

The Region has a special place at the heart of the organisation and animation of the Movement. Its relatively small size makes it easy for the Regional Couple to know all Sector Couples personally, which is essential to create a close sense of belonging to the Movement.

The principal function of the Region is therefore to ensure a double bond of belonging and of solidarity between Sector Teams and between these and the Movement as a whole. Without this Regional liaison, life is not transmitted to the Sectors. These are then liable to become impoverished and drained of vitality and to disappear.

1.2 *Importance of the Region*

It seems to us that the Region is the level of responsibility at which we begin to perceive, to feel and to understand the importance of our Movement, its universality and internationality.

Clarifying their responsibilities is important in helping the Regional Couple in carrying out their service; it ensures that team members are faithful to the charism of the Teams of Our Lady and its orientations.

The Regional Couple coordinate several Sectors. They receive a great variety of testimonies and of shared experiences on the life of the Sectors.

They are the “hinge pin”, listening and transmitting. They are attentive to new needs, open to the signs of the times and to the “unexpected” from the Holy Spirit. Through the Regional Couple, teams get rooted into the Movement and their work of reflection is nourished.

Each team is indeed an authentic Christian community that is influenced by the characteristics of the territory in which the Region is established.

1.3 Service

“The responsibility for a Region is entrusted by the Movement to a couple known as “Regional Couple”. Their mandate is for four years. They are chosen in a spirit of communion and service in accordance with the procedures laid down by each Super-Region. They are appointed by the Super-Regional Couple.

“Responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady”, ERI 1993. P22.

1.4 Regional Responsibility

The call to responsibility is described in the International Leading Team’s document “Call to Responsibility” of 2004 and Regional Couples need to consult it when arranging for a successor.

Every position of responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady is a service:

“The Movement is not structured on the same basis as political democracies. We do not “serve” because we have submitted our candidature, campaigned with a manifesto and been elected by majority vote. We have been called – not because of some merits of ours – but because the Lord has cast his eyes on us.”

“Call to Responsibility”, ERI , 2004, p. 4.

Following this call to serve, official confirmation by the Leaders of the Movement underlines the importance of the responsibility. The call is a **“sending out on a mission”** (Lk 9: 1-6) and a way of participating in the kingship and priesthood of Christ. (Catechism of the Catholic Church – 1546).

1.5 Call to responsibility - appointment

The couple who accept the responsibility of a Region is convinced that it is a service in the name of the Lord who provides them with the means and necessary gifts. They do not need to worry about what they will say or do. *“The Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you”* (Mt 10: 20).

The call from the Lord is at his initiative and not ours. We respond to his loving gaze on us as a couple.

The reward will be great in heaven for *“Anyone who has will be given more and will have more than enough”* (Mt 25: 29) for he was worthy of his master’s trust since he made the talents entrusted to him bear fruit.

Finally, when we hear his call, we listen to the Lord and, like Samuel, we say: **“Speak, Yahweh, for your servant is listening”** (1 Sam 3: 10).

“The Regional Couple is called by the Super-Regional Couple or by the International Leading Couple, in consultation with the Sector Couples of that Region.”

Guide of the Teams of Our Lady, ERI, 2001, p. 34

“In the service of the Lord, work not halfheartedly but with conscienciousness and an eager spirit.”

Romans 12: 11

Each Region chooses its own method of finding a new Regional Couple. However, in order to avoid a unilateral, arbitrary and ad hoc choice, the call to serve is done in consultation with others in a spirit of collegiality. The official appointment is made by the Super-Regional Couple or, in the case of a Region linked directly to the International Leading Team, by the International Leading Couple via the Couple leading the Zone.

1.6 Duration of the mandate

“A couple is chosen as Regional Couple for a period of four years”
Guide of the Teams of Our Lady, ERI, 2001, p. 34

1.7 Regional Responsibility is as a couple

The responsibility for the Region is assumed as a couple. They pool their gifts, talents and charisms in the service of the Region.

The Regional Couple must have a good knowledge of the Movement. This is why they are strongly recommended to follow a training session specifically geared to their service (an international session). They will carry on their training during their time of service. Throughout this time of service, the Super-Regional Couple and the couple leading the Zone will help them discern the needs of their Region.

It is the Regional Couple's main concern to maintain the right spirit and functioning of Sector Teams. They watch over their progress and ensure that team members draw as much benefit as possible from the Movement in which they have placed their trust and thus become true witnesses of the Gospel.

They acquaint themselves about available resources that can help them resolve the difficulties their encounter.

The activities of the Region are the responsibility of the Regional Couple working with the members of the Regional College. Nevertheless, they are personally answerable to the Movement of the Teams of Our Lady for the decisions they take and for carrying them out.

When the College cannot reach a conclusion, the Regional Couple makes the final decision at the request of the College. They do so in good conscience by virtue of their responsibility. They must pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit and act always in the spirit of service.

The exercise of collegiality in the Teams of Our Lady, ÉRI, p.11

Regional Couple liaise with the Church, the Movement and leaders within the Region.

1.8 Exercise of responsibility

The Regional Couple exercise their responsibility in a spirit of service. They practise collegiality through their Regional Team on the basis of a few broad guidelines:

- ❖ Working as a team by fostering trust and friendship.
- ❖ Discovering the particular gifts that each member can contribute in the service of the Support Teams and of the Region.
- ❖ Stimulating reflection by study and discussion and making sure that each member freely expresses their ideas.
- ❖ Acting as a conciliator in a spirit of fraternal charity so as to achieve a consensus in decision-making.

“Exercise of Collegiality”, Teams of Our Lady, May 2001, p.11

2. The Regional Team

The need to establish a Regional Team only applies to Regions directly linked to the International Leading Team. These Regions correspond in practice to a country (Syria, Lebanon, Poland, Canada, Mauritius, etc) or to a group of countries (Germany-Austria, etc.).

In the case of Regions that are part of a Super-Region, the Regional Team will be very limited in composition and appropriateness.

2.1 The reason for the existence of a Regional Team

In the case of Regions directly linked to the International Leading Team, a Regional Team is required for the functioning of the Movement just as, on a bigger scale, in the case of Super-Regions.

The Regional Team does not exist only for the purpose of sharing out tasks. In a spirit of co-responsibility and collegiality, it benefits from the variety of opinions, thoughts, gifts and talents of its members.

The animation of the Region is first and foremost a spiritual animation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To listen to the Spirit, it is preferable to be a group that prays and exchanges points of views and ideas in a spirit of fellowship, openness and humility. It is only through such a collegial and prayerful work of reflection that true discernment is possible and facilitated.

2.2 Composition of the Regional Team

a) In the case of a Region directly linked to the International Leading Team

The Regional Team mirrors the community of teams in the Region.

“The Regional Couple call on other couples and on a priest Spiritual Counsellor to assist them in their work of reflection, discernment and animation. Together they constitute the ‘Regional Team’ called to work collegially and to live in real communion.”

Responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady, ERI 1993, p. 22

This text confirms the need of a Support Team for a Region as for all animating structures in the Movement.

In the past 15 years, Teams have developed the concept of structures of responsibility operating as a team or college. This approach is realised at Regional level by the setting up of services provided by as many couples as necessary (see below).

a) In the case of a Region included in a Super-Region

The Regional Team is composed of the Regional Couple, an assistant Regional Couple and a Spiritual Counsellor.

2.3 Creation of the Regional Team

It is not possible to give a general rule governing the creation of a Regional Team because the local situation can have an enormous influence on its composition. Nevertheless, experience shows that the Regional Team should not have too many members if it is to be efficient.

Its composition depends on the personality and style of working of the Regional Couple, the needs and characteristics of the Region itself as well as on the procedures in place in their Region. Nevertheless, one must look for complementary gifts among the members of the Regional Team so as to work in a spirit of shared responsibility and of collegiality.

An ordinary team must not become the Regional Team. To do so would rob the Region of a wealth of diversity. It is therefore preferable to ensure that various age groups are represented.

2.4 Functions of the Regional Team

The Guide to the Teams of Our Lady mentions the following functions that the Regional Couple share with the Regional Team: spiritual animation, liaison, organisation of activities, expansion of the Movement.

“They are helped by a Regional Team and a Regional Spiritual Counsellor. Together they are responsible for the animation, liaison, formation, expansion, reflection, discernment and the fostering of unity of the teams in the Region.”

Guide of the Teams of Our Lady, ERI, 2001, p. 34

2.5 The Regional Spiritual Counsellor

The Spiritual Counsellor of the Region is a priest who advises the Regional Couple and their Support Team. He is chosen by the Regional Couple after consultation with their Support Team.

The priest Spiritual Counsellor of the Region helps to keep the teams in communion with the Church as a whole and open to its life.

The Regional Team involves him in its work of discernment, its important decisions and its activities. It is therefore relevant to keep him informed of the precise situation of the Region. He helps the Regional Team to consider its problems in the light of the Gospel.

The spiritual animation of the Region is thereby enriched by his presence at meetings of the Regional Team and at the activities of the Region. His contribution is particularly important when retreats and training or renewal sessions are being organised.

In collaboration with the Regional Couple, he will make himself available to other Spiritual Counsellors in the Region who might need him to cast light on certain subjects or may need his encouragement and discernment.

“Furthermore, his advice and help might facilitate contacts with the hierarchy and the clergy.”

The priest, Spiritual Counsellor in the Teams of Our Lady, ERI, 1993

2.6 Life of the Regional Team

The life of the Region is first and foremost based on prayer. There is a danger, at meetings, of spending too much time on organisation and not enough on allowing oneself to be penetrated by the breath of the Spirit. There needs to be balance between prayer and action.

Friendship, brotherhood and mutual trust are essential to the life of a Regional Team.

Belonging to a Regional Team is different from membership of an ordinary team. The latter exists for the benefit of the couple and of fellow team members, the former for the service of the Region and of the Movement. One is long term, the other temporary and for specific mission.

The “Intercessors” can contribute their spiritual help and prayer that the Spirit may accompany, enlighten and guide the Regional Couple and the Regional Team in the exercise of their responsibility.

3. The Regional College

Whereas the Regional Team – whatever its form (see above) – is a small group of couples that helps the Regional Couple more directly, The Regional College is a liaison grouping that meets regularly and includes:

- ❖ the Regional Couple,
- ❖ the Sector Couples,
- ❖ and the members of the Regional Team (at least the Assistant Regional Couple and the Regional Spiritual Counsellor).

At the suggestion of the International Leading Team, the Regions establish a Regional College operating as recommended by the International College. ***This is henceforth the only indispensable Regional consultation grouping.***

This form of consultation is recent in the Movement. It is a grouping for reflection and exchange for the collegial exercise of responsibility within a Region. It is part of the development of the spirit of collegiality, a method of working that has become the rule in the Teams of Our Lady for a number of years.

The Regional College makes decisions to meet needs as they arise.

Chapter 2. SERVICES AND TASKS OF A REGION

“Be servants to one another in love, since the whole of the Law is summarised in the one commandment: You must love your neighbour as yourself”

Galatians 5: 13-14

1. Introduction

The Region is given the responsibility by the Movement of providing services that will help couples in its Sectors to live out their married spirituality with the help of their Spiritual Counsellors.

To that end, Regions must carry out some specific tasks that do not double up on those carried out by Sectors but that further the same objectives.

Each Region gains experience in these matters, perfect their own methods and apply them. Services provided by Sectors are explained at length in the Document on Sector Couples (ERI 2004) which clarifies the various tasks to be done by various people.

In this chapter we review the different services to be provided and we highlight the peculiarities of the Region’s tasks. In most cases, the Region’s role is to check that these services are implemented in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Movement.

The Region will help Sectors as required and may even take over from a Sector in the event of its inability to provide Sector services or because of problems.

The Regions provides the Sectors with the means for training, managing, communication etc...so that they can carry out these services.

2. Initiation services

All services dealing with the formation of new teams are grouped under this heading. Notably:

- ❖ “Spreading the word” or expansion,
- ❖ Information,
- ❖ Piloting.

2.1 *Spreading the word*

“Spreading the word”, in its widest sense, consists in making known God’s wonderful plan for human love: namely that ***Christian marriage is a path to Love, Happiness and Holiness.***

2.2 *Information*

Information that follows on spreading the word, consists in explaining what is the married spirituality offered by Teams. Information is therefore intended for couples who are already seeking a way of living out spirituality as a couple.

2.3 Piloting

When a new team is created, the Sector Couple appoints a Pilot Couple who will accompany this team during its time of piloting. The Region is also able to organise weekends for new teams.

3. Support services

3.1 Liaison

Liaison consists essentially in establishing links between the Regional Couple and the Sector Couples.

3.1.1 The spirit of liaison:

The need for liaison appeared very early in the development of the Teams of Our Lady. The time came when it was no longer possible for Father Caffarel or the leaders of the Movement to maintain a close link between all teams. The object of liaison is to facilitate communication and to permit all teams, all Sectors and all Regions to live, in the first place, in close relationship with the Movement but also with each other.

The Charter tells us:

“Although very useful, the Letter of the Teams, on its own, is not sufficient to ensure that the ties between the Leading Team and teams generally are as close and fruitful as desirable. It is for the various levels of leadership in the Movement to make them so.

Through frequent mutual contacts, leaders at various levels pass on the motivation they receive from the Leading Team and keep the latter informed of the desires and needs of teams. Thanks to them, the relationship between teams and the Leading Team have a note of brotherly cordiality instead of being purely administrative.”

Charter of the Teams of Our Lady 1947

For Regional Couples and their Support Team (if they have one), liaison is both an objective way as well as a brotherly way of seeing how individual leaders are operating.

It reminds leaders of the advantages of remaining united among themselves, with other Sectors and with the Movement through taking part in activities and being guided by the priorities and orientations of the Movement.

Liaison serves the needs of the Region as well as those of the Sectors. It makes it possible for the Region to know how lively are the teams in the Sectors, to know their needs and difficulties and to plan activities and sessions for training and spiritual renewal.

The Regional College is a very special form of liaison.

Establishing liaison is made easier by the variety of ways in which it can be done. It offers ways of making liaison attractive, desirable and fruitful.

Choosing the way of establishing liaison requires discernment from the Regional Couple. Nevertheless, one should always give preference to *“personal and face to face liaison. Personal contact and communication transmits life and encouragement”*.

“Responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady”, ERI, May 1993, p.19

3.1.2 Link with the Super-Region or with the International Leading Team

Just as liaison is essential to the vitality of a Region, so it is for the Super Region and for the whole Movement.

Thanks to regular contacts, bonds of friendship and trust are created between the Regional Couple and the Super Regional Couple and with the Couple in the International Leading Team who are responsible for the Zone to which the Super Region belongs.

3.1.3 In relation to the Church and society

The Regional Couple is the representative of the Movement within the Region. It is therefore their responsibility,

- ❖ **to promote married spirituality:** to help couples to discover God's wonderful plan for human love and to bring out the value of the sacrament of marriage as a source of love, a path to happiness and a means to holiness;
- ❖ **to make the Movement and its treasures known** to couples, priests, deacons, the hierarchy of the Church, people active in pastoral ministry and diocesan organisations dealing with marriage and the family;
- ❖ **to take part in the pastoral ministry to the family** and to establish contacts with other movements of spirituality for couples and the family;
- ❖ **to develop Teams couples' awareness** of their personal mission in the Church and in the world;
- ❖ **to find ways of transmitting** the ideals and spirituality of the Teams of Our Lady. The Regional Team must exercise imagination and creativity and place themselves in the social context of their region, whilst remaining faithful to the spirit and formative way of Teams;
- ❖ to discern the new signs of the times.

It is important that the Teams of Our Lady should answer the Church's call for a new evangelisation founded on human love and family life. The Church today has a great need of married lay people who have received a formation in which faith and life are mutually nourished. Christian couples have also a missionary duty to help other couples to whom they rightly wish to pass on their experience and to show that Christ is the source of all married life.

John Paul II – 50th anniversary of the Charter, 1997

The Regional Couple should under no circumstances take over from a Sector Couple in their dealings with their local Church.

3.2 Animation (to give a soul to)

Bearing in mind the orientations proposed by the Movement and the peculiarities and needs of the Sectors and of the Region as a whole, the Regional Couple and their Support Team...

- ❖ will try to discern what will help couples to live out more fully the Movement's ideals;
- ❖ and will devise and carry out a pastoral plan of action for the Region based on the needs of the Sectors.

It is a collegial task carried out by the Regional Support Team, helped by prayers for discernment.

In practice, it is a matter of helping Sector Couples and their Sector Teams to help couples in their Sectors to live fully according to the charisms of the Teams of Our Lady,

- ❖ by helping Sector Teams to be true Christian communities;

- ❖ by creating and maintaining the unity and cohesion of the Region by helping Sector Teams to know one another and by forging bonds of fellowship and solidarity with the wider Movement;
- ❖ by making the Movement's orientations known and more fully understood so as to help the spiritual life of couples;
- ❖ by encouraging Teams couples to involve themselves within and outside of the Movement.
"Responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady", ÉRI, May 1993, p.19

3.3 Formation

The Regional Couple should encourage the formation/training of team members in the Region and more particularly the formation of Sector Couples, Responsible Couples of teams and of couples responsible for various services such as liaison, piloting, expansion and information.

"Sessions are an important time in the life of Teams. Their purpose is to transmit and deepen the couples' knowledge of the spirit and methods of the Movement. Having thus deepened their understanding of the ways of the Teams of Our Lady, couples are strengthened in their commitment. They live better the life of the Movement and are better able to fulfil their responsibilities."

Guide of the Teams of Our Lady, ERI, May 2001, p. 42

3.4 Organising the activities of the Region

To fulfil their triple mission (animation, liaison, formation), the Regional Couple and their Support Team consider organising a number of activities: meetings of all Sector Teams, Regional Gatherings, Formation Sessions open to all Sectors, retreats, days of study and reflection, etc...

It is important that the Regional Couple should periodically bring together the Sector Spiritual Counsellors of the Region to help them to obtain a deeper understanding of their role and their place in their Sector Team through sharing their experiences.

4. Services for the promotion of deeper spirituality

These services organised within a Region are for the benefit of team members and aim at helping them in their spiritual journey:

- ❖ Renewal sessions and retreats;
- ❖ Formation sessions;
- ❖ Sessions for a deeper understanding of the charism and formative way of Teams;
- ❖ Regional Gatherings.

These services can also be organised at a higher level between Regions, within a Province (a subdivision of a large Super Region) or even at Super Regional level.

5. Support services

These services only exist in a developed way in isolated Regions linked directly to the International Leading Team and, more particularly, to the Couple responsible for the Zone in which the Region is situated. They are necessary for the functioning of the Region and for the circulation of information.

The Secretariat,
The Regional Treasurers,
The Regional Newsletter,
The 'Intercessors',

5.1 The Secretariat

The Regional Couple choose a couple from the Regional Support Team to carry out the duties of Regional Secretary.

The Secretariat keep in its records a copy of the basic documents of the Movement, the international study topics and the Regional records. They also keep the correspondence and documents received from Sector Couples.

The Regional Secretary pass on the following to the couple responsible for the Zone:

- ❖ A copy of the minutes of the meetings of the Regional Support Team and of the Regional College.
- ❖ The list of members of the Region, the Regional Newsletters and Sector Newsletters (if they have one).

5.2 The Regional Treasurers

The Regional Treasurers keep the accounts of the funds used in financing regional running costs and activities as well as mutual help between Sectors.

These funds are raised in accordance with methods approved by the Movement and in accordance with local customs and legal requirements.

5.3 The Regional Newsletter

The Newsletter (if the Region has one) permits the circulation of information on the life of the Region and of the Movement. It promotes solidarity and a sense of belonging to the Region. It weaves bonds between teams and team members.

In the case of Regions, linked directly to the International Leading Team, the newsletter should, in addition to local news, contain at least the following:

- ❖ The 'Letters from the International Leading Team' consisting of letters from one of the couples in the International Leading Team and from the International Spiritual Counsellor.
- ❖ International news

The publication and circulation of the Regional Newsletter may make use of a variety of medium: paper, internet, etc...

5.4 The 'Intercessors'

The Movement depends on prayers for the fulfilment of its mission. Over the years a network of 'Intercessors' has developed. These undertake:

- ❖ either to commit themselves to pray for one hour a month at a specific time and on a specific day of their choice and, if possible, to do so during the night;
- ❖ or to commit themselves to fast one day a month on a specific day,
- ❖ or to offer the daily trials and suffering of their life in union with Christ, for married couples and the institution of marriage.

One cannot stress too strongly the need for prayer to support married couples and the institution of marriage as well as the life of the Movement, its expansion and discernment.

Chapter 3. REGIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

“Give a shepherd’s care to the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, as God wants; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Do not lord it over the group which is in your charge, but be an example for the flock”.

1 Peter 5: 2-4.

1. The way responsibility is exercised

The way responsibility is exercised in the Teams of Our Lady is inspired by the unique example set by Christ. He exercised his influence by his attitude of listening, welcoming, dedication, giving freely and by his openness of heart. It is in this spirit that we exercise responsibility. The Regional Couple seek to guide the flock entrusted to them with a pastoral attitude.

We do not grab hold of our Region: it is entrusted to us by the Lord and by the leadership of the Movement. The Regional Couple practise self-denial in the interest of team members when responding to their needs.

1.1 Spirit of service

1.1.1 Humility :

This is what the Guide to the Teams of Our Lady has to say about service in Teams:

“Responsibility in the world is often synonymous with power. When Christ washed the feet of his disciples, he showed us, in the Teams of Our Lady, another way of exercising responsibility: by putting ourselves at the service of our brothers and sisters. Responsibility in Teams is an invitation to greater love and all responsibilities are calls to serve.”

And the Lord reminds us:

““If I then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you can copy what I have done to you. In truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. (Jn. 13: 14-16)

We are called to self-denial so as to give ourselves to others because we serve.

1.1.2 Trusting in the Lord

“Blessed are the poor” (Mt 5: 3). The poor of the Beatitudes are those who put themselves totally in the hands of God’s Providence. They are those who, following St Paul’s example, acknowledge their weakness: *“It is when I am weak that I am strong”* (2 Co. 12: 10). When I acknowledge my weakness and the limits of my resources and when I put all my trust in the Lord and put everything in his hands, he can act through me making use of all the gifts with which he himself has endowed me. It is then that I am strong in the Lord.

Blessed are those who do not boast of the gifts they have received from the Lord, but in whom praise spring up quite naturally. *“My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit exults in God my Saviour...for the Almighty has done great things for me”* (Lk 1: 46-49).

If the Regional Couple do not know the answer to some question they take the trouble to find out.

1.1.3 Human and Evangelical attitudes

Many qualities and attitudes help in carrying out responsibilities. However, all these qualities and attitudes are not expected from any one person. Is there such a person? We must look for complementary qualities within the couple and the Regional Team.

Personal qualities :

- ❖ Humility and charity
- ❖ Attitudes of welcome, listening attentively and forgiveness.
- ❖ A praying couple.
- ❖ Knowledge of the founding charism of Teams.
- ❖ Love of Teams.
- ❖ Being patient but demanding.
- ❖ Ability to empathise with people.
- ❖ Openness of heart and mind.
- ❖ Missionary spirit.

Organisational qualities:

- ❖ Leadership
- ❖ Dynamism, determination and consistency.
- ❖ Self-confidence and trust in one's Regional Team.
- ❖ Ability to express oneself and to communicate by word of mouth and in writing.
- ❖ Ability to consult, to share and to work as a team.
- ❖ Wise judgement, discernment and foresight.

The Regional Couple should look on their responsibility as a **ministry** and not as a *task*, as a **service** and not as a *job*.

1.1.4 Preparation for taking on the responsibility of a Region

To prepare oneself to assume the responsibility of a Region is a way of life to be found:

- ❖ it deepens the way of life already experienced in one's team and in previous responsibilities;
- ❖ and adapts it to the new responsibility.

There is no doubt that accepting a new responsibility leads us to pray more, to put ourselves that much more into the hands of the Lord and to be more humble.

At the spiritual level:

- ❖ **To discuss** matters during a Sit-down, since assuming the responsibility of a Region is done as a couple and the couple must preserve its balance.
- ❖ **To pray** with more intensity, giving pride of place to interceding for all Sector Couples who constitute the Regional College, bearing in mind all the couples that Teams might be able to help.
- ❖ **To draw nourishment** from the Word of God and the sacraments so as to persevere in the mission entrusted by the Lord.

At the functional level:

- ❖ **To get to know** the Movement, the Super-Regional Couple, the Provincial Couple, the couple responsible for the Zone, Sector Couples and Responsible Couples of teams in the Region.

- ❖ **To get a picture** of the Region: to know the Sectors (their composition, years of existence, progress, peculiarities, etc...) the Responsible Couples of teams, the Spiritual Counsellors, the couples taking on and those already holding a responsibility in the Movement.
- ❖ **To get trained** by attending sessions organised by the Super-Region and by the Movement.
- ❖ **To seek help:** by creating a complementary Regional Team with different skills and gifts to assist them (see Chapter 1 regarding the creation of a Regional Team).

At the level of formation

“It is not that we are so competent that we can claim any credit for ourselves; all our competence comes from God. He has given us the competence to be ministers of a new covenant, a covenant which is not of written letters, but of the Spirit; for the written letters kill, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Co 3: 5-6).

The leaders of the Movement have encouraged formation/training because “the future of the Movement and its unity are dependent on it”. This applies to Regional Couples and obviously refers to the formation that they must arrange at their own initiative or that they will receive in the course of an international session. This formation entails acquiring a deeper understanding of both recent and founding documents of the Movement in order to become imbued with their contents, strengthened in their commitment and so as to learn to pass their contents to others. The formation will comprise an initiation in working as a team and knowledge of the Movement and of its international dimension.

It is preferable that a new Regional Couple should have previously been a Sector Couple

2. Succession and replacement

It is advisable that the Regional Couple should, at the very beginning of their term of office, consider who might be able to replace them at the end of their four-year term of service. This allows time for essential discernment with the Super-Regional Couple or with the couple from the International Leading Team responsible for the Zone. It also allows time for formation of the new Regional Couple, for a satisfactory handing over of responsibility to them, and for them to free themselves of other commitments they may have at the time.

Chapter 4. THE REGIONAL COUPLE'S WAY OF WORKING

“Responsibilities in the Teams of Our Lady are exercised by couples, that is to say by the two spouses together. They do so with the help of other couples in a support team and helped by a priest-spiritual counsellor, in a climate of co-responsibility, of collegiality, of trust and of communion.”

Guide to the Teams of Our Lady, ERI, May 2001, p. 38

1. Managing and organising

Today, we cannot rely only on the availability, the generosity and goodwill of couples to assume a responsibility. Voluntary work and commitment must make use of the well-organised methods and general management principles that are applied in modern times. The Regional Couple will add the Teams' collegial approach to these modern working methods in carrying out the various aspects of their mission.

1.1 The working process

Planning: setting priorities and orientations that need to be ratified collegially by the Sector Couples;

Programming: establishing a programme of activities for the year in keeping with the priorities and orientations;

Organising: organising and carrying out the programme of activities;

Evaluating; carrying out a thorough evaluation of the past year and targeting priorities for the coming year.

1.2 The collegial approach

1.2.1 Being open to collegiality

Collegiality can be defined as a pooling of varied and complementary gifts given to each of us by the Spirit and used in a common search for truth and deeper relationship between us. It entails a sharing - and not an authoritarian attitude - and a disciplined and methodical way of working. It does not negate the leading couple's mission but goes beyond our individual potential. It can only be the fruit of the Spirit.

1.2.2 Practising collegiality

The individual personality of each member of the Regional Team must be respected. Each member must feel loved and welcomed by the other members, their ideas respected and their contribution appreciated.

1.2.3 Working as a college

Working as a college entails good communication, transparent sharing, attentive listening and mutual trust. It is difficult and requires a lot of time, listening, openness and tolerance.

We must accept that we need others and that others need us. We must be prepared to be challenged; we need therefore much good sense and realism, to show total loyalty to others and be able to count on the trust and loyalty of others.

Finally, there is no doubt that working as a college does not negate the Regional Couple's particular mission which is to make the final decision and assume responsibility for it.

Cf. "Responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady", ERI, May 1993, pp.12-13

1.2.4 Principles of collegiality

In the course of its history, the Movement has progressively developed a spirit of collegiality in the way it operates in order to achieve a good relationship and sound decisions. This practice is underpinned by certain principles:

Equality confers the same rights and duties on all members and thus creates the indispensable conditions for true collegiality.

Transparency encourages the free expression of ideas in total freedom and trust.

Discussion is not a debate between opposing opinions and convictions; this would undermine a collegial work of reflection and discernment.

Balance between collegiality and leadership is a good indication that the attitude of service, openness and shared responsibility has been maintained during discussions and decision-making.

The practice of collegiality is found at all levels of responsibility and service in the Movement. "There must be a place of discernment, transparency, reflection and decision-making at each level of responsibility in the Movement".

"The Exercise of collegiality in the Teams of Our Lady", ERI May 2002, p. 6

1.2.5 Check-list for animation and evaluation

The following is a summary of the various aspects of a good working team.

A good relationship between members facilitates exchanges. It is therefore important that people should feel confident to express freely their opinions and suggestions. In a spirit of collegiality we must "team up" in an attitude of respect and fraternal welcome. We must therefore watch the following points;

- ❖ Be welcoming
- ❖ Be relaxed (avoid emotional outbursts)
- ❖ Create a climate of exchange and trust
- ❖ Take an objective view of conflicting ideas
- ❖ Create favourable physical conditions

Achieving one's objectives is often guaranteed by the application of a number of rules that facilitate the participation of all members of the team. The discussion leader will therefore make a point of using the following practices to ensure the success of the meeting:

- ❖ Set out the rules of the game
- ❖ Be aware of the time
- ❖ Encourage participation
- ❖ Invite contributions
- ❖ Clarify the roles
- ❖ Ensure an ordered discussion.

The three levels (content, climate, procedure) are complementary and the absence of one or the other may adversely affect the desired objective and a harmonious team life.

2. Bringing people together

To keep alive people's motivation and that of couples who hold responsibilities within the Region, it is advisable for the Regional Couple to bring them together once a year in order to train, encourage and affirm them in their commitment.

3. Purpose of activities

The Regional Couple and their Regional Team are totally free to be creative in the way they serve the Region. They will choose activities in accordance with the priorities set following the Sector Couples' annual review. The purpose of these activities is to encourage fellowship, renewal, deepening, formation and a feeling of solidarity and of belonging to the Movement.

4. Participating in the meeting of the International College

A newly appointed Regional Couple of a Region linked directly to the International Leading Team take part in the meeting of the International College during their first year of service, accompanied by their priest Spiritual Counsellor. They will thus experience the worldwide nature and unity of the Movement.

Chapter 5. THE REGIONAL COLLEGE

The important role of the Regional College, which brings Sector Couples together, is to keep the Teams of Our Lady fully alive in their Region, to cause the sap of the Movement to flow.

It is preferable to restrict “activities” and to define clearly the role of the Regional Couple in order that they may concentrate their energies in animating the Region, giving it cohesion and strengthening the members’ sense of belonging to the Movement. To achieve this, they will need to delegate and allocate tasks and responsibilities to the members of the Regional Team and, as necessary, to members of the Regional College.

This chapter does not lay down compulsory activities binding on the Regional Couple. Because of the different conditions and peculiarities of Regions, each Regional Couple need to be able to exercise a lot of initiative and creativity in inculcating the spirit of Teams in their Region.

1. Meetings of the Regional College

1.1 *Conditions for the success of meetings*

The words: NEEDS, POSSIBILITY AND DIVERSITY sum up well the characteristics of meetings of the Regional College. To succeed and be effective, these meetings need to be planned realistically, prepared carefully and led in an orderly way. This requires a good preparation of the agenda. Everything that can be done in writing beforehand should be done so as to take full advantage of the time of the meeting to discuss, deepen, challenge, share and set guidelines or identify new and imaginative initiatives.

To minimise the number of journeys in cases where distances are significant, the meetings of the Regional Team and College are held during the same weekend. There is also something stimulating in the intense experience of a weekend. Nevertheless, there is a danger that tiredness may cause us to react emotionally and blur our capacity to think clearly and make decisions.

1.2 *Object of the meetings*

- ❖ To maintain a vital link between the Regional Couple and Sector Couples;
- ❖ To bind more closely together the teams in the Region and further their faithfulness to the Movement.
- ❖ To organise, at the beginning of the year, a meeting of Responsible Couples of teams in the Sectors. It provides an opportunity for the Regional Couple to know the new Responsible Couples of teams and it helps the Regional Couple and their Regional Team to know each other better;
- ❖ To show Sector Couples the various forms that liaison can take;
- ❖ To help Sector Couples to know each other better by sharing their experiences of team life in their Sectors;
- ❖ To study with Sector Couples the minutes of the previous regional meeting. These minutes will help Sector Couples to understand better the situation in the Region, the needs of Sectors and to set priorities collegially, establish a plan of action and be guided by it in animating the future activities of the Region;
- ❖ To transmit relevant information;
- ❖ To evaluate the activities and life of the Region during the past year in the light of the plan of action proposed at the beginning of the year.

1.3 Suggested sequence of the meeting

Broadly speaking, the meetings of Sector Couples have a specific aim and character. They must be functional but - without being a copy of ordinary team meetings - they must draw inspiration from them and include the following:

- ❖ A time of prayer.
- ❖ A time of 'pooling' experiences in the life of each Sector Team.
- ❖ A time for reflection: a formative and revitalising time for the members themselves and for their Sector Team (it could be based on a talk by the Regional Spiritual Counsellor).
- ❖ A time for sharing on the orientations and the life of the Movement, the priorities of the Region, the Teams' formative way, the charism of Teams or concerning some plan of action of the Region.
- ❖ A time for evaluation of the various matters discussed and on the meeting itself.

CONCLUSION

The role of the Regional Couple is one of guide and pastor. It is both human and spiritual. The Regional Couple and their Regional Team must remain faithful to their commitments out of love for the Lord and for those for whom they are responsible.

To animate a Region is to give it life. Although it is desirable to become competent it is equally desirable to draw close to the Lord regularly. Daily prayer, the Eucharist and meditating on the Word of God are the special ways of drawing close to the Lord and to be submissive to his will.

The Regional Couple model themselves on Christ: they are there to love and serve like Christ the other members of the Region.

May Christ and his Spirit accompany you throughout your time of service to your Region!

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