

Paris, 7 March 2001

To: Super-Regions, Isolated Regions,  
Isolated Sectors

Dear friends,

We realised, at the last meeting of the International Leading Team, that many team members who attended the last Gathering at Santiago of Compostela were puzzled at the orientation of the Movement (or 'priority', to use the new term) for the next six years and even did not understand. The incomprehension must be even greater for others and so we asked ourselves what would be the most efficient way of making team members throughout the world aware of this 'priority'.

This is why we have drafted a letter, addressed to them, of which we attach a sample and which could be sent to you by e-mail in your own language.

**We ask you to be kind enough to distribute this letter by whatever means you consider most appropriate so that each team member may receive it personally.** We would like to stress very specially the need to personalise this message, for it seems imperative to us that, in order to live in communion in our Movement, each member should be imbued with this orientation. It is given to our Movement in union with the Universal Church and is in line with Pope John Paul's Apostolic Letter "Novo Millennio Ineunte" which concluded the Jubilee.

We believe that we are correctly interpreting the wishes of the College when we ask you to ensure that the orientation "To be a Christian Couple today in the Church and in the World" is seen, not only as a study topic, but truly as a turning point in the life of the Movement. Having celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Charter, the Movement has reached maturity but we want it to be always new. Members of the Teams of Our Lady must be mature, demanding and responsible Christians, able to discern the signs of will of God and to carry it out in every aspect of their life. Members of the Teams of Our Lady must be motivated to acquire an active attitude in their married ministry so as to accomplish their specific mission in the Church and in the World, as individuals, as couples and as a Movement.

To that end, may we suggest that you organise meetings, sessions and conferences and that you write articles to explain clearly the 'priority' of the Movement for the six years to come.

If you require further explanations and discussions, please contact your ERI Liaison Couple and advise them of the initiatives you have taken in this connection. At our next ERI meeting in

April, we would like to assess, not only how the study topic, but especially how the 'priority' for the Movement following Santiago, have been publicised and understood.

We thank you particularly for your support and your help and we send you our best wishes in union with Christ in prayer.

Gérard and Marie-Christine de ROBERTY  
International Leading Couple of the Teams of Our Lady

---

## **“To be a Christian Couple today in the Church and in the World”**

**Dear team members,**

At our 9th Gathering in Santiago of Compostela, we received the pressing invitation **“To be a Christian Couple today in the Church and in the World”**

This ‘priority’ for the next six years - which are the first years of a new millennium - is a response to Pope John Paul’s call in his **Apostolic Letter “Nove Millennio Ineunte”**: *“At the beginning of the new millennium, as the Great Jubilee is coming to an end and as a new stage begins in the Church’s journey, the words Jesus used to invite his apostles to **put out into the deep** to fish, echo afresh in our heart: **“Duc in altum”** (Put out into the deep). (Lk 5: 4).*

The Teams of Our Lady are a community of couples who want to live out all aspects of their lives in the sight of God: their personal life, their married and family life, their involvement and ministries in the Church and in society. Our spirituality leads us to seek an authentic spiritual and human way of life that cannot be pursued on our own.

*Aware of their weakness and of the limits of their strength, ...and because they have unshakeable faith in the power of fraternal mutual help, they have decided to form a team.”*  
(Charter of the Teams of Our Lady).

**To form a team**, is therefore to dare to come out of oneself, to be open, to lay aside our ready-made opinions, to leave our well-established security in order to approach others and to **‘put out into the deep’**.

“To be a Christian couple today in the Church and in the world” is to share with everyone the Good News of Jesus-Christ, taking account of our hopes and of our sufferings but without shirking the calls and needs that we discover on our way.

**Today**, at the beginning of the new millennium, it is urgent for us to carry out a mature, conscious, concrete, coherent and honest work of reflection on our mission and on our current commitments as baptised people living out their sacrament of marriage.

**We are called to go forward in hope**: *“A new millennium is opening before the Church and before us like a vast ocean in which to venture out, relying on the support of Christ”* (Pope John Paul II: “Novo Millennio Ineunte”).

**The new orientation** given to the Teams of Our Lady: “To be a Christian couple today in the Church and in the world” aims to be a response to this call.

### **The context of the present life**

The world in which we live has changed; what constituted our living environment is in the process of total decomposition and, at the same time, of full reconstruction. The ways of the past are no longer accepted and new ways are still in construction. The type of values acknowledged by society is continually changing.

Depending on particular countries and cultures, human beings have sought to free themselves from the constraints that faith can entail. Here, following a new rationalist culture, they reject all links between God and humanity. There, in a kind of forward flight, they drown

themselves in sectarian mysticism. Elsewhere, in trying to rediscover the illusion of a lost Paradise, they succumb to fanaticism and fundamentalism.

Is not this lack of discernment between good and evil linked in part to the absence of God, to the relativisation of truth and to a refusal to be guided by the person of Jesus Christ who is both man and God ?

This is why, faced with these challenges, each of us and, in the first place, each Christian is invited to draw up his/her own plan of life. This quest for meaning can experience many influences that need to be clearly identified if we are to live in authentic freedom. It is at this price that the human person will live fully in a world in which possessions have robbed us of our being and in which we have more but are less.

### **Christian life today**

By the end of the 20th century, the world had finally led contemporary society to the secularisation of life and customs. We progressively came to live in a society in which God had no place.

Even in countries most deeply rooted in the Christian faith, religion is increasingly losing its public influence. This has led many Christians into a very deep feeling of pessimism which translates itself in nostalgia for the past and in various forms of traditionalism.

For others, the prevalent individualism locks them up in their shell. They are Christians for themselves and this leads them into various forms of indifference which turns them away from evangelisation.

### **The vocation of the Christian couple**

For Christians who want to react to this situation - and we, in Teams, count ourselves among them - today's events are signs of the times which challenge us to ask, to think, to seek, to dialogue and to reflect on the dignity of the human person and on the present and future vocation of the Christian couple, united by their sacrament of marriage.

This process must end in new life commitments to bring more vitality to the Church and to contribute to the renewal of today's society. It is a question of getting involved in the building up of a civilisation of love which foreshadows on earth the Kingdom of heaven.

When we look with clear and honest eyes at the reality of our world, we observe that everything leads our contemporaries to live from day to day, without basing their lives on firm spiritual principles. **This is why the time has come to ask ourselves questions on the implications of the sacrament of marriage** that unites us and on the ministry that is entrusted to us in our families, in the Church and in society.

**A ready-made answer to this question will not be given to us.** As active Christians, we have to respond ourselves by calling on our mature conscience, on our ability to discern the constructive elements in the signs of the times and also on our generosity to live concretely in Christian Hope. We must also return to the sources of Scripture and to the teaching of the Church as the Movement has always received it.

### **To live in Christian hope**

To live in Christian hope consists in evangelising the present situation and in seeking, in the life of Christ, clear answers and new light on the problems and questions of our time. We must rediscover, at the heart of our vulnerability, the presence of God in Jesus Christ who loves us and gives us his Spirit. The Teams of Our Lady teach us to progress in self-discovery through sharing with our spouse and in the heartfelt experience of our mutual commitments. We are few in numbers and, accepting this reality, we are among those who believe that the

Church was not instituted to be the dough, but the yeast. We are called to become this yeast in the bread of the world.

The new orientation of the Movement of the Teams of Our Lady “**To be a Christian couple today in the Church and in the world**” opens us to this perspective. It aims to help us to become again the “yeast and salt full of flavour”, by thinking together about taking up or pursuing a mature and responsible Christian involvement in the building of this new millennium.

### **A suggestion**

The Teams of Our Lady suggest to team members throughout the world, a personal, conjugal and community exercise in asking ourselves questions and in a work of reflection that would lead to a conversion of the heart in order to respond to the needs of the People of God and of the world.

The basis of this work of reflection is **the work done by many couples from different parts of the world**, but it is, first and foremost, a personal in-depth reflection that will produce concrete results in the daily life of each of us. **We invite you therefore in the course of these years to nourish your research** through regular meditation of the Gospels, through pondering articles, books or talks which deal with all current spheres of human sciences and, finally, through living out prayerfully the graces of your sacrament of marriage. **The Word of God is our treasure.**

We have invited all leaders of the various regions of the world to point out to you the signs of the times corresponding to the real situation of life in your respective countries, for we wanted to avoid suggesting that you begin a work of theoretical reflection too far removed from your living experience.

**The three study topics which have been produced to punctuate your journey** are therefore a pressing invitation to ask yourselves questions individually, as a couple and as a team **in order to aim at a changed way of life.**

**This questioning** correspond to a need written into every human being who seeks to know and to love. It is this need that urges us to ‘put out into the deep’, to come out of ourselves and to pursue our journey of spiritual and human growth.

We invite you to open yourselves trustfully to receive an answer from another person or persons, so as to benefit by the experience and outlook of someone different from you. When we refrain from asking ourselves questions, the reference points begin to fade and the signs of the times are no longer visible. Do not hesitate to voice essential and new questions that are not those suggested in the study topic. Are not the best answers to be found in the questions that we succeed in expressing and in asking courageously?

### **Our work of reflection will evolve in three phases:**

- **The human person and his/her plan for life**, through their living experience and through their sacraments of baptism and of confirmation. To live out the Beatitudes today.
- **A reflection on the couple today, image of God the Trinity**, invited to revisit their sacrament of marriage in order to express self-giving, forgiveness and renunciation in their married life and so to bear witness to their human covenant, as a sign of the covenant between God and humanity.
- **A reflection on our mission in the Church and in the world** so as to be always ready to give an account of the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3: 15), sign and concrete presence of the

love of God in and through our married and family ministry, called to heal what is wounded and sick, but also to journey joyfully anew along the way to holiness.

To respond generously to this call to reflection and commitment, let us assume our own three dispositions of heart and mind: **to see better, to hear better and to share better.**

To be specific, each study topic covers two phases, corresponding to two or more meetings:

- **1st phase: to become aware of the reality** of our present environment and to discover how it influences our Christian behaviour.
- **2nd phase: to reflect in order to change and get involved**, to discover together the paths to follow to bring about a change in our way of life, leading to active and specific involvement.

At each stage, let us share our questioning and let us decide the questions that we will discuss together at the following meeting.

Dear friends, **we are like the first disciples on the day of Pentecost**, locked up in our Upper Room and yet ready to proclaim loudly to the world the Good News of the Gospel. Let Christ blow upon us the life-giving gift of the Spirit and propel us into the great adventure of evangelisation.

**Our Lady, who prayed with the disciples in the Upper Room**, accompanies us on the way. We are consecrated to her and we set out in her name. Let us be guided by her tender affection; she will take us to her Son if we know how to listen and to let ourselves be loved. By welcoming Saint John at the foot of the cross, she welcomed us as her children. **Let us have the wisdom and simplicity of children so as to be couples that are daily more Christian in the Church and in the world.**

\* \* \*