

ORIENTATIONS of the TEAMS OF OUR LADY for 2006 - 2012

During the gathering in Rome of the Regional Couples of the Teams of Our Lady throughout the world in January 2003, consideration was given to the Movement's Orientations for 2006-2012. After discussion, it was decided that the general Orientation would be:

**"TEAMS OF OUR LADY, COMMUNITY OF COUPLES,
REFLECTING THE LOVE OF CHRIST »**

"Love one another as I have loved you" Jn 13: 34

This Orientation translates into four key aspects of Teams:

♦ The Team: a Church community

"May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you"

Jn 17: 21

To deepen team life as a community of Faith, Hope and Love, in faithfulness to the charisms of the Teams of Our Lady.

♦ Teams of Our Lady serving

"Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty"

Jn 15: 5

Life in the Teams of Our Lady as a "service of couples for couples"; each team member being an animator in the Movement, present and active in the Church and involved in society.

♦ Teams of Our Lady welcoming today's couples

*"Whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me,
welcomes the one who sent me" Jn13: 20*

Couples bearing witness to a happiness rooted in the Gospel and proclaimed in a language that is meaningful to all generations and backgrounds.

♦ Teams of Our Lady: missionaries of the sacrament of marriage

"Peace be with you! As the Father sent me, so am I sending you" Jn 20: 21

Teams and couples given the mission to spread married spirituality and offering the ideal of the sacrament of marriage to the young generations.

1. THE TEAM: A CHURCH COMMUNITY

◆ To deepen team life as a community of Faith, Hope and Love

To rediscover the team as a lay community in the Church, accompanied by a spiritual counsellor. It is a place of initiation to Christian perfection in response to the call to holiness.

Team members have the conscious desire to live out their faith in community. Even if their daily life is not always easy, their team is a special place in which they form a community. The team makes it possible to live out their faith rooted in community in the broad sense of the word, encompassing the Movement, the parish, the diocese and the universal Church.

Mutual help in the community is the expression of fraternal love between team members. It is a love that opens up to other dimensions through their involvement in the life of the Church, as well as in society in various caring, social, political, trade union etc. activities.

The faith and unity of a couple shows through their involvements when their life is rooted in a strong personal and married spirituality. Team members are helped in their activity by the Movement's orientations that leads them to a greater commitment as a couple.

◆ Faithfulness to the methods of the Teams of Our Lady.

Team life grows as a community of Faith, Hope and Love thanks to the sharing of experiences and to the practice of the 'endeavours'. The time of sharing on the endeavours during the team meeting is one of the high points of what the Movement asks of its members.

- Orientations are "priorities" (aims or aspirations) that the Movement adopts every six years so as to respond more fully to the call it receives from the Lord and from the Church. They are not to be confused with the Rule of Life which is a personal means of growth in faith and in the spiritual life.

Like all Christian communities, we are called to practise the following three principal aspects of Christian community life:

- With Christ, we turn to the Father to welcome his love,
- In Christ, we share this love as did the first disciples: *"The whole group of believers was united heart and soul"* (Ac 4: 32).
- Moved by the Spirit of Christ, we are sent into the world to reveal his love.

This is why, during the years 2006 to 2012, the Movement calls us to be *"Teams of Our Lady, community of couples, reflecting the love of Christ"*.

- In this context, the practice of the 'endeavours' is an essential source of strength to the Teams of Our Lady. They are specific to the Movement and its main help to live in accordance with its charisms and spirit.

The methods of the Teams of Our Lady are based on the team as an essential community for couples of our Movement. Within the team, we seek "to be" rather than "to do". Hence the methods will lead us to give a new direction to our life, rather than consist in carrying out the 'endeavours' as a duty.

It is the responsibility of every team member to pass on to their team the spirit of the methods of the Teams of Our Lady, as well as to practise the 'endeavours' without which we cannot progress. Hence for each team member, the demands of the 'endeavours' go hand in hand with a full adherence to the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady, bearing in mind that *"No one is compelled to join the Teams nor to remain in them; but those who belong must play the game fully"* (1947 Charter). The 'endeavours' are reference points and supports rather than efforts that have to be carried out by sheer will power. This is not inconsistent with the practice of discipline and with the free acceptance of demands that encourage us to go further along the way to holiness to which the couple is called.

The Eucharist, the heart of the Christian life and of the life of the Church, is essential to team members and must be the object of spiritual mutual help as for the rest of the Christian life.

We need to rediscover the sharing on the 'endeavours', at the monthly team meeting, as the central point of community life for the benefit of team members. It helps us not to see the team as an end in itself and not to experience the meeting as cut off from the rest of the month.

We must avoid seeing our teams only as a friendship group, or as a debating group, but as a real community of faith gathered together by Christ. To that end, it is important not to neglect prior conditions: the quality or content of the sharing and to be attentive to the consequences or repercussions on the spiritual life of the couples who share as a team.

Through spiritual sharing (or sharing on the 'endeavours'), couples today are more open to the Spirit¹. It is the spiritual sharing that acts in us and helps us to grow in all aspects of life. A good sharing on the 'endeavours' is a way of reinforcing the cohesion of the community as well as the spiritual quality of the couples.

As for the other valuable times of the team meeting, they require equally meticulous attention, for each member contributes in his/her way to the well-being of the community gathered in the name of Christ - a community that welcomes him/her as a friend.

- It is important to think afresh about the symbolism of the meal at the team meeting for *"human beings have not yet invented anything better than a meal to meet together and forge bonds"* (the Charter) ...and to celebrate a feast. Was it not at a meal that Jesus began his public

¹ This sharing is not to be confused with sharing on important events of the month (or 'pooling') ; there is confusion on this point and some clarification is necessary.

life? Is it not the Eucharistic meal that brings together the children of God?

- *"Praying together is the best way of meeting one another in depth, of acquiring a common mind and of becoming aware of the presence of Christ among his followers"* (the Charter).
- We draw attention to a more targeted choice of study topics, a choice more focused on specific points that concern a particular team at the stage it is and in its particular context. The best way must be found to prepare the discussion time and for the exchange of views to be done in truth and to be a real time of Christian formation for each member of the team.
- Fraternal correction, the daily practice of quiet personal prayer, the monthly 'Sit-down', the reevaluation of the time of spiritual sharing at the meeting are all remarkable means placed at our disposal. We must encourage each other as team members to focus our attention on the elements of the Movement's charism.
- We must also commit ourselves to come out of our limited circle and to be active Christians in the Church and in the world.

We want to reinforce the general practice of saying the *Magnificat* daily as a prayer of communion between all team members of the world.

2. TEAMS OF OUR LADY SERVING

◆ Team members at the service of their brothers and sisters in the Movement

"Couples do not consider their entry into the Teams of Our Lady and their acceptance of the Charter as an end in itself but as a starting point. Love is the law of the Christian couple and as love has no limits, love knows no rest" (1947 Charter).

It is precisely because love has no limits that it extends to being committed to serve in the Movement.

Generally speaking, it is wonderful to see new couples grow thanks to the service they have agreed to carry out. When we agree to serve, we become instruments of the Holy Spirit. Thus, no team members would be caught unprepared in their work if Christ should call on them.

All team members who have held responsibilities in the Movement have felt the active presence of the Lord, whether it was in the joys of success and in attentiveness to others or in failures, sadness, difficulties or trials. The Lord knows the weaknesses and limits of those who accept a mission and he gives to each the means to carry it out.

There seems to be difficulties in making team members aware that providing a service in our Movement is a genuine way of carrying out a mission within the Church. The responsibilities of Liaison, Pilot, Information, Sector, Regional or Super-Regional Couples are not always looked upon as services to the Church. Many think that it is better to get involved in promoting solidarity, catechesis, preparation for marriage, baptism or in the numerous forms of service available in the Church than to serve team members in our Movement. There is also a real need to make our fellow team members

understand more fully that serving the Movement is to serve the couple, the family, the Good News of marriage and of life.

Missions within the Movement are growth enhancing; they help us to blossom and develop at the same time as they help our fellow team members to grow in their spiritual life. All say they feel they are accomplishing the work of God when they provide a service and accept a responsibility within the Movement. This is one way of being attentive to the sign of the times, of being directly connected to the reality of the life of men, women, couples and Church communities. To undertake a mission is a positive way of responding to the Lord's call to serve. This call is freely accepted and given without thought of reward; each service is for a limited time.

In this context, the role of Liaison Couple needs to be reinforced so that Liaison Couples may pass on experiences and testimonies of team members' involvement in the various communities in which they live.

It is good to recall the words of Father Caffarel: *"The Teams are meeting the needs of couples and of marriage for our times and, for this, we need couples who love, who create the image of the family and of society and who commit themselves to the service of the Movement"*.

With regards to mission within Teams, we reaffirm the fact that the role of a leading couple is essentially one of a couple who pray, who are faithful to the Charter, who are animators, who listen to the difficulties of teams and of couples in their care.

◆ Team members present and active in today's Church

We will not go over again what has been said and studied since our international gathering at Saint James of Compostella in 2000 on the theme: "To be a couple today in the Church and in the world". That orientation related to the personal experience of involvement as a couple in the Church and in the world. It caused us to re-focus our Christian action on our commitment to the Church, stressing its social aspect, as well as a commitment to develop married spirituality.

As a movement of baptised and married couples, we must commit ourselves and commit our couples to be active in the local church, in parish community, because our Movement relates to the parish.

We are invited to take part in the work of evangelisation in the world and to be evangelisers particularly through the catechetical instruction of adults and of young couples.

We must seek new ways for teams to feel still more part of the Church. This can be brought about by means of the following initiatives. This list is not exhaustive.

- Contacting seminarians in their last year so that they can find out about Teams and inviting them to be spiritual counsellors of teams.
- Offering parishes well-prepared documentation on Teams.
- Cooperate in completing the formation of team members in the faith.
- Being active in the parish or Christian community to which we belong.
- Talking to priests about our lives as couples.
- etc.

Father Caffarel once said: *"We must re-invent every day the Movement of Teams of Our Lady"*.

3. Teams of Our Lady welcoming today's couples

◆ Couples witnesses of happiness rooted in the Gospel

To be a welcoming community, the team must show that it lives a fraternal and community life. Its members must give proof of their conviction of the importance of receiving the sacraments regularly - not out of obligation, but from free choice.

The Teams of Our Lady contain couples of different generations and we must bear in mind what Father Caffarel said in this connection at Chantilly in 1987: "*The Teams of Our Lady have not sufficiently taken account of the fact that spirituality evolves with the age of couples and with the situation in which they find themselves*". No doubt, this is a point we must bear in mind and work at.

During these coming years, let us be attentive to the problem of routine in long established team; and also sometimes to the problem of lack of involvement and Christian formation of young teams.

The formative way of the Teams of Our Lady must be expressed in today's language even though we consider it broadly adapted to today's world. We need to adapt it to various cultures and to simplify it without making it colourless. At the same time, we must leave scope for greater deepening for those who want to go further.

We are a movement of formation that must help us to grow in knowledge of mankind, theology and of the content of our faith; we must take steps to ensure that piloting, training, the study topics we produce... all take account of this.

Moreover, let us pay particular attention to our relationship with spiritual counsellors: in our contacts with them, we have the mission to speak to them in truth about the couple, marriage and the family.

Let us not be afraid to talk to people around us about the Teams of Our Lady, what they bring to our marriage and to us individually. Let us go deeper into our commitment to Teams by deepening our knowledge of them and let us be proud to belong to them. They do not relate only to our private life.

We must, of course, make use of modern technology to spread knowledge of our spirituality, our study topics, etc.

◆ The Good News of marriage proclaimed in a language understood by all generations and all backgrounds.

We must take all necessary initiatives to help team members and the Movement as a whole to be more attentive to the needs of our time and to learn to communicate and share on married and family spirituality as it is practised in the Teams of Our Lady. We need to do so in a way adapted to this twenty first century. We must have our eyes and ears opened to all that goes on in the world, be attentive to what some call "the prophecy of the world" and be receptive to what comes from God so as to receive and enhance the value of what is good.

To be welcoming to today's couples, our teams, as small Church communities, must be open to ecumenism whilst remaining deeply rooted in the Catholic Church, our mother. We must tackle the question of religious diversity that frequently arises. In this context, how are we to refer to the sacrament of marriage since it is not recognised by all Christian denominations?

The Teams of Our Lady must pursue and intensify their research into all aspects of marriage and particularly into its sacramental character.

We must give particular attention to young people - this must be our ongoing preoccupation - to those who are far from the Church, to those who are making a fresh start, to those who do not know Christ and the Gospel, and to those for whom marriage has no clear and essential significance.

Our Movement must understand with love and mercy the new realities experienced by couples and be at the service of society for all that relates to marriage and the family. Pope John Paul II reminded the Teams' leaders gathered around him in January 2003 of our Movement's duty to accompany couples who cannot or do not want to live out the sacrament of marriage.

Let us together seek out ways in our Movement to be close to those who face a crisis in their marriage or a marital breakdown. Let us open our heart and take initiatives so that new groups and movements, based on our charism, may arise that respond to the new situations in which couples find themselves.

Let us seek also to support and help couples who have not yet separated as a result of marital breakdown and who can enter a remedial process. Let us get a deeper understanding of the work of team members who, outside of the Movement, develop programmes for remarried divorcees.

Many speak of the promotion of evangelisation, of "community experiences" in Brazil, of "Tandem" in France as ways of helping couples to join Teams gradually and of helping couples who are making a 'new start' to progress along the way to conversion. It is also necessary to pursue the work of research into sexuality.

The pressure of modern life can also stimulate us and lead us to come out of ourselves and bear witness fully to the way our Christian life in Teams helps us to face the difficulties of life and of the world.

4. Teams of Our Lady, missionaries of the sacrament of marriage

- ◆ **Teams and couples entrusted with the mission to spread married spirituality and to explain the sacrament of marriage to the young generation.**

We are at the service of the Good News of love between man and woman which is at the heart of the founding charism of Teams and which we have the responsibility to spread in the world.

There are many ways we can help people to discover the mystery of human love in its spiritual dimension: forgiveness, charity, listening, mutual giving, giving freely, commitment... We must show that marriage is a way to happiness in which love is constantly renewed, that conjugal dialogue and sharing as a team help us to know one another better, to be open to the other and welcome him/her as a gift and also to welcome the unexpected from God.

We must stress attentiveness to others and material and spiritual mutual help that are practical means of going beyond our limitations as a couple. Let us include in married spirituality the mission to evangelise, since we are sometimes in danger of losing its significance in enjoying each other's company.

The covenant between man and woman, image of that between Christ and his Church, is a pillar of married spirituality and vocation. A fundamental element of this spirituality is the very love between husband and wife and their unconditional

commitment in marriage. We must help people to discover that God loves the couple and that the couple is God's gift to humanity and is a gift of itself to God.

Teams must be spread as a movement that helps its married couples to develop their understanding of faith and share it with all married couples. They must continue to spread married spirituality in the Church and their experience of marriage. They must help couples to follow a path of Hope, Faith and Charity. The sacrament of marriage is a vocation and a covenant. The relationship of the couple with God within the Church gives them a new spiritual wealth. We must show ourselves capable today of saying it to the young generations. Such is our mission of married couples.

Conclusion

We will not forget Pope John Paul II's message to the leaders of the movement in Rome in January 2003:

- When he invited us to take up again the heritage Father Caffarel left us on the greatness and beauty of marriage, on the call to holiness linked to married and family life, on a spirituality proper to couples,
- When he asked us to develop and deepen the theme of covenant to which couples are called by Christ in the face of the threats facing the couple and the family,
- When we listened to him asking us to discover or rediscover the Eucharist as the source of Christian marriage which can give us the necessary audacity to be welcoming to people, forgiveness, dialogue and communion of hearts,
- When we listened to him saying to us that we must reinforce or help to reinforce couples' participation in sacramental life and in Sunday mass as a support in facing and overcoming obstacles and tensions,
- When he asked us to make full use of the graces of our baptism in our own missions, to participate ever more actively in the Church's ministry to the young, specially when engaged to be married and in the early years of their marriage,
- When he stressed the mutual appreciation of priests and couples and invited us to pass on fearlessly the Lord's call to our children,
- When he encouraged us to practise the 'endeavours' with attention and perseverance, especially personal, conjugal and family prayer,
- When, referring to couples in difficulties, he repeated his spiritual concern for separated, divorced and remarried-divorced couples who, by virtue of their baptism, are called to participate in the Christian life whilst respecting the Church's rules,
- When he encouraged us to bear witness ceaselessly to the greatness and beauty of human love.

MAGNIFICAT !