



# EQUIPES NOTRE-DAME

8ème RASSEMBLEMENT INTERNATIONAL  
FÁTIMA 94

Fatima, July 23, 1994

## LETTER FROM FATIMA

Dear Friends in the Teams, gathered here from many different countries,  
Dear Friends everywhere in the world,

As we come to the end of this gathering, the last of our international gatherings before the close of the 20th century, we address this letter to you, who have shared with us here such an in-depth experience of the Church, and we would ask you to convey personally to your team, and to your sector, the message which the Movement now entrusts to you.

We have come together here from the four corners of the earth: recently formed Teams, which have all the dynamism of youth; mature Teams, full of experience and wisdom; older Teams which, with faithfulness and perseverance, have lived through changes in the Church and in the Movement.

Teams from countries which fall into a variety of different categories: those which have recently come into the Movement : Korea, Chile, Romania, Hungary; those in which the Movement is expanding rapidly and those in which it has reached a certain maturity: Africa, Germany, Austria, Spanish America, Australia, Canada, the United States of America, Great Britain, India, Ireland, Mauritius; those in which the Movement first took root: Belgium, Brazil, Spain, Portugal and Italy; and finally France, where it was born. Teams also from our sister-Movement, "the domestic Church", here from Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine.

Ancient continents united to young cultures.  
All our children, present here or in our hearts.  
All of us united to Mary who goes before us on the path of faith.

There is a lovely saying of St. Ireneus: "God's glory is this : that man should live". In that saying is to be found the dual aim of the Teams: the glory of God and the ever increasing vitality of couples. In this world which more and more is heading towards a culture of death, but to which Christ has promised his spirit till the end of time, it is necessary, humbly but resolutely, to make all life blossom. In responding to this vocation, without even realising it, we are collaborating in building the Kingdom of God.

This vocation seems far removed from the realities of everyday life, where there are difficulties in our work, economic uncertainty, breakdowns in communication, lack of mutual understanding within marriages, family disputes, our team sticking to the letter rather than the spirit of the rules, the daily routines and the insecurity of our world...

It is for this reason that the Teams of Our Lady offer a way to help us in the form a worthwhile method to follow. But the method is not an end in itself. It is given to us to make us fit for the particular service that the people of God expects from us.

It rests on three supporting pillars:

- the orientations,
- the endeavours,
- team life.

It is of the first of these, the orientations, that we want to speak to-day. They are a way of helping us understand and achieve full married spirituality.

Spirituality calls us to live out all the realities of our life according to the Spirit, searching for the will of God. It also calls us to take responsibility for our own life as a couple and, together, to decide on clear guidelines to achieve this spirituality. Each couple, therefore, on its own, can choose successive guidelines, but the Movement can also suggest or propose or offer some to its members. The orientations bring to our attention certain aspects of our Christian vocation and evangelical attitudes, so that over a number of years, both as a couple and within the team, we may develop and deepen them, and in that way gradually incorporate them into our life as a couple.

Traditionally, the Movement utilises phrases from the Gospel to express its orientations, and presents them to the couples at the end of international gatherings.

After the last gathering in Lourdes, following a lengthy deliberation on the aspirations of the Teams, and a fervent request to the Holy Spirit, the Movement's wish was not to propose too specific an orientation but rather, with the document "**A Second Wind**", to bring about an in-depth reflection at every level. It wanted each couple, team, sector, region and super-region to stop and question itself, "to recover the internal thrust" of the special gift (charism) God has given to the Teams, and allow itself to be renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Many creative initiatives have surfaced in different countries. Others, conceived by the International Leading Team, have been proposed by it to the whole Movement. But the demand has not been satisfied. Do you not feel that the door remains open and that we should cross the threshold and press forward with more determination?

The spirit of the "**Second Wind**" is on the threshold of a new stage. The time has come to propose, for the years ahead, an orientation which is very precise and at the same time very wide because it seeks to make married spirituality receptive to its mission.

It may be summarised in these words: "Invited to the Marriage Feast at Cana" and then it is based on three phrases taken from the Gospel of John:

"They have no wine".  
"Do whatever He tells you".  
"Fill the jars with water".

### **"They have no wine"**

It is Mary who speaks to us. With a disarming and tender realism which is very close to our experience of life as a couple and as lay people, she helps us to examine ourselves and to look around us.

Mary calls us first of all to stop, to take stock of ourselves and listen, in order to come to discover the "wine" which is missing, in our family and in our relationship with our spouse :

is it the wine of our love which has been rendered insipid by life's routine?  
or the wine of our understanding which demands a constant renewal of listening?  
is it the wine of forgiveness to give new life to what was lost?  
or the wine of hope and joy whose source is outside ourselves?

Mary calls us to leave our homes, from our cosy organisations, our ready-made opinions and our long established confidence, to approach others, to look, to listen, to share the good news, to "suffer with", and not to shirk from attending to the needs that we become aware of.

What is missing in our team, in the Movement or in the Church:

is it the wine of friendship which is always ready to make a new effort?  
or the wine of gratuitousness which does not expect to be thanked?  
or is it the wine of service which seeks no power?  
or the wine of community which wipes out all barriers?...

What "wines" are lacking in our world? Let us not wait to be asked. It is up to us to be attentive to the real world which surrounds us. It is by observing with love that we will discover what is lacking:

is it, for a great many young couples, the wine of a love to be built?  
or that of a love to be revived and reaffirmed after crises?  
is it the wine of nearness and presence in the face of distance and fear?  
or the wine of solidarity to make up for so much indifference?  
or the wine of peace and justice to save the world from death?

### **"Do whatever he tells you"**

Mary tells us also not to act blindly or according to our own standards only. We are to listen to the Lord and act in the way he asks us because it is only He who can change the poor water of our nature into wine.

It is a total call to prayer, to attentiveness to the word of God in order to know what He is saying, and a call to savour and ponder on the Word and make it incarnate in our lives.

A total call to contemplative prayer without which we can never discover what is the "name" that the Lord gives us, the "name" which marks out for us the portion of the vineyard in which he wants us to work. Contemplative prayer means also that we allow ourselves to be led by the Lord. If we are our own guides, we will multiply our efforts and the weight of the task will crush us. If the Lord is the shepherd, He will, in unexpected ways, give new life to what we are doing.

### **"Fill the jars with water"**

We know that the water we are going to bring is of little worth, but, without it, the Lord could not act because of the choice He made: the choice of becoming incarnate in our history, of always making the earth his starting point, of relying on the work of men, and of making us partners in his work of redemption.

During this meeting in Fatima we have just had a celebration like that of the Marriage Feast at Cana. Jesus and His mother were with us.

For many of us, the wine was beginning to run out. Each of us, at our deepest level, knows to what extent the Lord has warmed our hearts with "new wine".

Through our sacrament of marriage, we were invited to the Marriage Feast at Cana. To-day we have been invited once again. Because the feast is not over. And the dialogue between Jesus and His mother is being repeated endlessly everywhere in the world.

Many couples were not able to come: couples from our team, from our sector, from our country ; couples who do not belong to the Movement ; couples who are searching, couples who feel alone and who feel lost.

It is because we have been invited that we are here. We have been the privileged witnesses of an initiative of love, faith and hope. The others expect of us that we will bring them back this message. We have no right to leave them out in the cold, not to invite them to share in the marriage feast. Through our baptism and through our marriage we have received more "talents" than we realise. We will only discover them if we make them bear fruit. We cannot bury them or they would be taken away from us. Because of belonging to the Teams of Our Lady we have a specific task to perform in building the Kingdom of God. It is not in fear but with the confidence of faithful servants that we will have to account one day for all that has been given to us.

*Mercedes et alvaro Gomez-Ferrer*

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