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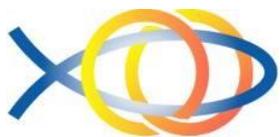
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Introduction

The Satellite Team (ST) “The Young Couples” intending to produce a review document on the religious experience of young couples of Teams of Our Lady and their need for catechetical instruction concluded that it would only be possible to work seriously on this subject based on data provided by the young couples themselves, otherwise it would be a personal reflection on the basic ideas and experiences of the three couples who form this team and risk being far from reality.

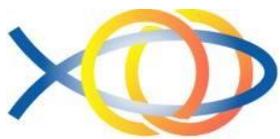
For this a survey was conducted in 5 languages¹ (French, English, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish) directed to all the young couples of our Movement. It was conducted through a website where each Super-Region (SR) / Attached Region (RR) was able to respond via the Internet.

The number of responses received per SR / RR, totally anonymously, can be found in the graph in annex 4 of this document.

A survey was also carried out amongst all SR couples with more general management questions for the respective SR on the dominant religion, and how the catechesis is currently organized, preparation of engaged couples, etc. This survey is in annex 3 of this document.

The objective of these surveys was not to produce a scientific study based on the responses obtained, nor to conduct a review per SR / RR, but to gather information to help better appreciate the reality of the lives of young couples of the Teams of Our Lady (END).

¹ The wording of this survey is available in annex 2 of this document.



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Given the richness of the responses, we decided to broaden the review to other aspects of the lives of young couples.

The survey of young couples has allowed us to understand the form and context in which these couples have made their Christian initiation, the various religious experiences that they have lived through, the participation or not in the movements of the Church, the stimuli that led them to enter into the sacrament of marriage, their views on the different forms/ways that couples have to commit today, the difficulties felt in their everyday lives, and the factors that have more value in their married lives. The survey has also permitted us to know what led them to join END and how to live and understand its teaching.

The present document is based on 3 subjects:

- Young couples - initiation, training and religious experience
- Young couples and marriage
- Young couples and relationship with the END

Each of these parts presents a review of the subject, based on survey responses, and when the opportunity presents itself, a small reflection made by the Satellite Team.

This discussion provides suggestions and questions to be evaluated later by the International Leading Team (ERI), as well some proposals for the resolution of difficult issues raised by young couples.

The paper does not pretend to be an exhaustive work on the answers obtained in the survey. It does not pretend to be a statistical study. All responses were considered regardless of their percentage. We used its content only as a basis for the response to the request of the ERI. Nevertheless, a preliminary study was done by each SR which sent more than 10 responses. This work consisted in the analysis of the summary of responses with the aim to work on the larger universe of responses to the survey - about 1400. This work as well as the graphics derived from the responses is already available to the ERI and can be sent to those interested SR/RR.

Beyond the responses collected in the survey, a number of other works were also taken into account, notably: the Young Couples survey conducted in 2005 by SR Italy, the work entitled "A Concept Paper on young adults in Australia" directed by Australian couple Ron and Angela Waanders in 2008, and again the findings made during the Crossroads meetings at the International Gathering of Regional Couples in Rome 2009, and finally the reports and suggestions of the SR/RR included in this document.

ST "Young Couples", May 2011

Chapter I – Young Couples: initiation, formation and religious experience

It is essential to consider that the answers were provided only by young couples already integrated in the Teams Movement. These are particularly responsible and motivated couples who – among all those to whom the questionnaire was delivered – decided to cooperate by answering it.

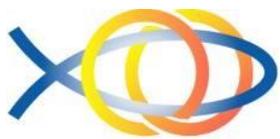
In some countries the number of couples who answered the questionnaire was very low. Hence, as regards the Religious Education of the young couples belonging to the Equipes Notre-Dame (Teams Movement), some points of merit and some food for thought can be identified.

1| Initiation to faith

Those who have started the individual pathway to faith

When the specific questions were answered, there was a unanimous indication of family as the source\origin of one's own pathway to faith: sometimes the example received is stressed, whereas in some other cases the normality of following said choice and pathway.

The importance of family as a place of initiation to faith is particularly stressed in France, Brazil and Italy. In Brazil, and also partially in Portugal, the family does not only initiate to faith, but often provides catechesis.



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In all the countries involved in the survey the percentage of people who were baptized is very high (ranging between 80 and 90%), whereas it is lower in the case of Eucharist and Confession (between 65 and 75%) and Confirmation (60% approximately).

Sometimes differences are recorded between men and women (percentages for men are lower than for women, sometimes even significantly).

In all countries there were small percentages of people who discovered their faith as adults (in Brazil, it may also happen that a religious pathway is started and then, as adults, people change their creed and ask to be baptized; also in the United States similar experiences were reported). Among those who received the sacraments in adulthood, some have done so by personal choice and others with the objective of being able to marry a believer.

Everywhere as people get older, their participation in religious and ecclesial life decreases, but the motivation and awareness of those who participate in it increase.

2 | Catechetical Formation

School, parish and family.

For all SR, catechesis is associated with the preparation for the stages of the personal sacramental pathway: Baptism, Confession, Eucharist, Confirmation, and Marriage.

Couples indicate as major places for their catechesis **parishes** and **schools** (sometimes specifying Catholic schools). Also the family was indicated as a preferential place where catechesis was received: this happens particularly in Brazil and Portugal.

In some countries Parishes were indicated as the main place for catechesis (in these countries schools have a significantly lower rate). These countries are the following: the United States² Italy, Portugal, Brazil³, Spain⁴ and Canada. In the French-speaking African countries, catechesis is managed by dioceses.

Conversely, Parishes and Schools are on an equal footing in the following countries: France, Latin America⁵ and Belgium.

Australia is a different case since a survey carried out in 2007 reported a decrease of Catholics' participation in the ecclesial life and sacramental pathway. However, parish, school and family involvement remains the central focus in the Sacrament program for children who do wish to receive the Sacraments.

Almost all countries reported a small percentage of people who receive sacraments as adults, some of them by individual choice and some others in view of the marriage with a believer.

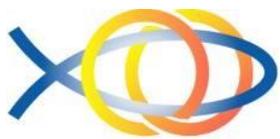
While comparing answers to questions 2 and 4, we realize that basically the rate of those who expressed their need to start a spiritual pathway is far higher than the rate of those who really

² Besides the traditional sacramental pathway, roughly one third of people who answered the questionnaire reported they had taken part in different pathways such as the program R.C.I.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults).

³ Where the family also plays a significant role.

⁴ Where schools are also particularly active.

⁵ With a strong family participation.



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undertook this spiritual pathway before entering the Teams Movement. We may assume that it was not always easy to find the pathway to take.

The need expressed to delve into the faith principles is very often given as motivation for following a spiritual education pathway. Probably the search for these spiritual education pathways outside parishes, which is more widespread than the experiences made in parishes, shows that there is a scarcity of education "quality" in the courses provided by parish communities.

In all countries catechesis is envisaged to prepare for marriage (courses are organized under different terms and conditions). Sometimes attending these courses is mandatory, some other times not⁶.

3| Religious experience

After the period of catechism instruction associated with the sacraments of initiation, most couples (Brazil, Spain, South America, Portugal) enter a phase of "lethargy" in terms of religious practice. These couples believe that their religious lives up to the time of their joining END could be summarised as basic practice which they describe as: regular or sporadic attendance at Mass on Sundays and in some cases also associated with practice of prayer.

Couples who justify this attitude attribute it to the lack of knowledge, lack of motivation, lack of supervision for part of the family and also because they do not give priority to religious life in this phase of their lives.

Maybe we can take some conclusions from this fact or at least ask some questions.

Catechism instruction and the sacraments did not stimulate these young couples to desire more profound knowledge nor to live with the sacraments frequently.

Perhaps the catechism instruction that these couples have received remained disconnected with the time. Training given to children does not evolve in relation to the development of the person, is rendered obsolete and ceases to give answers.⁷

Each of the ages of life needs to meet their maturity, under pain of a relapse in the corresponding maturity.

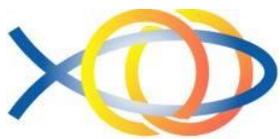
The Europe of Benedict in the Crisis of Cultures - Joseph Ratzinger - Library Editrice Vaticana 2005

On the other hand, there are many couples (with a greater percentage in Italy and France) which at the end of their catechism training are integrated into the movements, courses, experiences in parishes or voluntary groups which have helped them to deepen their knowledge and live the faith with more intensity, by participating in a more active role in church life.

Many of these couples explicitly indicate the value of such training and of family instruction as the main reason for choosing this path. Sometimes, this path was followed as a natural continuation of the catechism formation for the sacraments while remaining within the parishes. Other times, it grows in groups or movements, in order to deepen religious/spiritual life.

⁶ Belgium and Syria

⁷ Today, catechetical formation is longer compared to what was done 30 years ago and support for children and young people has been extended. However, we do not know if this has brought any changes to the religious life of the young adults of tomorrow.



reality?

The average rate for those who follow a spiritual and/or religious path is 60%, for approximation.

There is a very long list of movements, groups and experiences at the level of the parish or voluntary groups which appears in the responses to the survey.

The most referred to are:

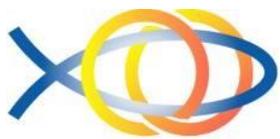
- Groups of young people, prayer, music, song, faith
- Equipes Notre-Dame Youth
- Pastoral of children, engaged couples, newlyweds, family, health, liturgy
- Ministers of Communion
- Vincentians
- Neocatechumenal Way
- Christian Courses
- Course for engaged couples
- Pre-confirmation Course
- Meetings of hope
- Matrimonial meetings
- Charismatic Renewal
- Movement Alliance
- Catechists
- Scouts
- Franciscan Youth
- Opus Dei
- Tandem Teams
- Taizé
- Agape...

Among the main motivations for couples to have undertaken a spiritual path we can cite the following:

- The desire to share in the heart of a community;
- The desire to better understand the principles of the faith;
- The desire to deepen their own vocation and find answers to questions;
- The need to practice solidarity and charity (as practitioners);
- The desire to improve a poor catechism instruction;
- The need to be prepared to answer questions from their own children;
- The willingness to confront and interact well with people of other creeds;
- The desire to serve as catechists.

4| Deepening the catechism formation

A necessity! Why? Areas of deepening.



Regardless of the life/course lived up to the present, the vast majority of couples (over 70%) expressed the need to deepen their catechism training and we are open to that.

From the different responses received, we have identified two major sources for this motivation:

- Preserve, protect and put into practice a faith that was already chosen.
- Search, deepen, clarify and put into practice that which is not fully discovered / understood.

There are several factors that are common to almost all couples from all the SR and which are the basis of this need. Many feel they have had insufficient training or have forgotten much of what was taught to them in childhood. This created a gap or a need for deeper knowledge :

- to help develop their spiritual growth.
- to give them the confidence to teach their children.
- to communicate with people of other religions.

It was clear that the amount and type of catechism instruction received was not successful. It was not successful at 2 levels. Firstly, it appeared to have been inadequate at the level of knowledge transfer and secondly it did not stimulate the desire to know more on how to live a better life of faith.

People have forgotten what they learned in childhood⁸ : the catechism, the Bible, theology, the laws and rites of the Church, the reality of Christ and prayer. These are the themes for which they express the desire to deepen their knowledge/understanding.

This gap in training for couples is very worrying.

We know how important it is that people have a clear faith. It is only its form that we can help grow and spread. Without a basic religious education, it is a very difficult progress.

The gaps in the catechetical formation of couples have many "nuances". In some cases, there will even be a need to begin from the start and in other cases one must deepen knowledge.⁹

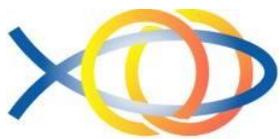
For this reason, the Movement should find a flexible and well structured form to respond to this important need for couples.

Such training should not be confused or mixed up with training on the Pedagogy of the Movement.

The time and place to transmit all information regarding the movement is the 'Piloting'. It is a special time and should be dedicated to this alone. If couples do not have sufficient catechism training to interpret and/or assimilate the teaching of the Movement, we should facilitate this before the start of Piloting, through a course appropriate to their shortcomings. This training course should be well structured, stimulating and appropriate to the requirements of the lives of young couples and should

⁸ As already reported, for those who responded to the survey, the majority must have received their catechesis only as far as the first communion or solemn communion. Even those who have attended Catholic schools where they received religious training for longer, later admit to the same difficulties

⁹ "All the young people had difficulties in implementing the Endeavours. They then perceived that they could not read the Bible or pray or meditate. "Crossroads Meeting Rome 2009



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introduce the couples, gradually, to the practice of prayer, mutual support, sense of engagement with paired teams and the desire to learn more and more.

These training courses should be directed only to couples who manifest a Christian formation and/or inadequate catechesis.¹⁰

After piloting, the Movement should be preoccupied with the maintenance and updating of the rules of the Movement, so that its charisma is not distorted or its drive stopped. At the same time, but in a separate form, it should provide courses for training and deepening in the topics most important for couples, always taking into account the different levels of requirement.

Already Father Caffarel, in his speech in Chantilly, drew attention to the importance of the Movement to be sensitive to the different desires of couples. There must be room for everyone, regardless of their situation and their pace.

We have no right to abandon couples who are very behind, either in terms of thought or in terms of practice, but who, despite this, want to belong to the END.

(...) There are couples in the END from 10, 20,30 years and who have the need to go further.

(...) In the same way that we must begin low, perhaps it is necessary to help those who want to go further.

Speeches of Chantilly - Henry Caffarel -1987

Chapter II – Young Couples and Matrimony

Generally speaking, the young couples in Teams of our Lady who responded to the questionnaire share the same ideas and difficulties as regards the way they understand and live Matrimony.

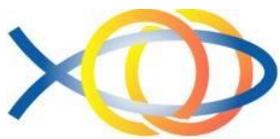
Regardless of the Super Region (SR), Attached Region (RR) or continent they come from, regardless of the education, initiation and catechetical formation they received, regardless of their different religious experiences, there are some strongly marked features that allow us to arrive to some conclusions and to draft a profile that in a certain way represents young Teams couples' experience of matrimony and the way they view this sacrament.

1| Young couples and the sacrament of matrimony.

Since all these couples are Teams members, it is not surprising that most of them justify their option for the sacrament of matrimony as a form of conjugal commitment by the value they attribute to this sacrament.

Responding couples do not share the same concept of value. The value attributed to this sacrament has different roots. The majority of them believe that the sacrament is a **blessing/gift from God**, which makes the sacrament so special and valuable. These couples express their will to make God take part

¹⁰ There are already experiences of this kind, particularly in Brazil, where couples have the opportunity to receive catechetical instruction before starting piloting.



reality?

in their union, as they believe that marriage involves three parties (the two of them and God) and that that is also a condition for the success of marriage for life. They attribute to God the grace of supporting, illuminating and nourishing the conjugal union.

The sacrament of matrimony makes them feel more committed to each other, and they view it as a way to place their love on God's hands. The choice of this sacrament is the best way for them to engage one vis-à-vis the other. **The couple's vocation is celebrated.**

Some choose the sacrament due to their respect for God, the Church and faith, while considering that this is the right way to assume a commitment before God and society; they also think this is what is most in line with the religious instruction they have received and with their religious path (marriage is both a sign and part of a pathway to faith). The importance attributed to the sacrament is also referred to as a way to provide their children with a Catholic family environment.

Along with these positions, some couples admit to having been influenced or urged by their families or society or to having chosen the sacrament of matrimony because of family tradition or of the beauty of the ceremony. The latter motivation is always presented together with others and therefore it is not the only reason to opt for the sacrament of matrimony.

Some of these couples who married in the Church for pure family tradition were not committed to the Church and professed no faith at all or didn't have any religious knowledge at the time of their wedding.

One couple declares that they were living as domestic partners when they joined the Movement and that it was thanks to the Movement that they discovered the importance of the sacrament of matrimony; as a consequence of this discovery they opted for the sacrament¹¹.

We may conclude that the value attributed to the sacrament is often associated with something that has nothing to do with it and that there is no clear, deep theological notion of the meaning of the sacrament and of what it brings to the couple.

In fact the analogy of the sacrament of matrimony with the union of Christ to the Church is not easily understood, and it is even more difficult to adapt it to the couple's everyday life.

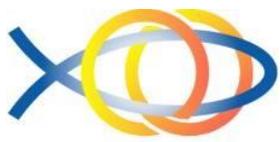
Finally — the ultimate reason for marital fragility — many Christians hardly understand the fact and the implications of the sacramental character of their matrimony.

Families – Shadows and Light, Cardinal Danneels

In short, generally speaking, young couples opted for the sacrament of matrimony because they associate it with a blessing, a gift or the presence of God at the moment of their commitment and for the rest of their lives, as the support and guarantee of the indissolubility of their union. They did it taking into account their education and religious experience, their family environment, their respect for God, the Church and faith and because they consider it to be the basis to start a Christian family.

Everywhere, the decision to prepare for marriage is considered a significant opportunity to resume or deepen spiritual education.

¹¹ This is an exception that probably went unnoticed by the Movement's officials. This being an unacceptable practice in the Movement, it shows how we can really be evangelizers if we put the Movement's methodology at the service of couples, and not couples at the service of the methodology! This is worth reflecting on!



2| Other forms of commitment

Patterns of the union between a man and a woman are more and more diversified. They are indicative of different sensitivities and of ways of living associated with every ancient or emerging culture. States are aware of these realities and more and more often have legislated on these new relationship patterns aiming at legally protecting those who choose to unite themselves according to one of such patterns. We tried to find out how young couples react to the various types of commitment and how they position themselves before them.

Faced with the various types of commitment presented to the young couples, respondents are divided into two antagonistic postures. On the one hand, couples having chosen the sacrament of matrimony accept that other couples may choose differently; on the other hand, a group of couples won't accept any form of commitment other than the one taken inside the Roman Apostolic Catholic Church.

Tolerance and respect — Love above all!

The reasons presented by the first group are mostly based on their sense of tolerance and respect for the others' freedom and beliefs. Many think that Jesus or God is above religions or that God is in every religion. They argue that the most important thing is love, respect and the will to sincerely commit to each other. This idea is present in practically every SR; in some cases they maintain that, if those three conditions (love, respect and the will do sincerely commit to each other) exist; God will also be present in the couple, irrespective of the chosen form/formula of commitment.

These couples reject the right to pass judgement on other couples' beliefs and ways of thinking. They maintain that everybody must be coherent with their faith and culture. A general negative judgment was passed vis-à-vis those who celebrate the religious marriage in a superficial way.

Some don't see any reason why couples that don't celebrate the sacrament should be discriminated against. Others accept and defend second unions (marriage of divorced people) and regret that the Church and the movements are losing these faithful.

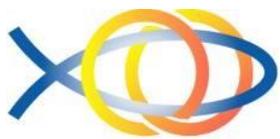
The sacrament of matrimony — the commitment!

The second group, more than the first one, refrained from justifying their option. Those who presented a justification argue that only the sacrament of matrimony is valid and that Catholics should respect the Church's laws. They won't accept other religions and acknowledge no value in unions founded on anything other than the sacrament of matrimony.

The certainty emerging from the replies concerning the value of the sacrament of matrimony related to the uncertainties as regards their own marriage vocation shows that, to a certain extent, such couples have an overly dependent perspective to formal aspects of the sacrament rather than to its essence or content.

This group is the most critical of domestic partnerships and of pre-marriage intercourse and goes as far as to call them sinful.

Opting for receiving the sacrament of marriage is universally seen as an important moment to choose to return to or to initiate an itinerary of spiritual formation.



reality?

Domestic partnerships and pre-marriage unions

Couples accepting domestic partnerships and pre-marriage unions maintain that such situations may contribute to a deeper knowledge within the couple and consider that they can be beneficial if they are taken on a temporary basis and with a view to marriage. Others accept domestic partnerships because they consider that it is the union and the commitment to each other that constitute marriage.

Some couples say they lived a pre-marriage union or that they have the testimony of love from couples living in this situation and therefore accept and defend it. Such experiences are considered as positive and in a certain way led them to the sacrament.

Civil marriage

Civil marriage is, in a very expressive way, accepted by almost all couples, but nearly always as a way to abide to the civil law and simultaneously with some other commitment spiritually involving the couple. In Brazil the cost of Catholic marriage is so high that it is often postponed, thus giving rise to other forms of unions.

However, some argue that in civil marriage there are witnesses of the union and therefore God accepts it.¹² In some countries the percentage of those who recognize value in civil marriage as against religious marriage is higher since the former is interpreted as a precise commitment towards society (France).

In Australia civil marriages are twice as many as religious marriages and 70% of marriages are preceded by a period of mere living together. Catholic marriages account only for 10% of the marriages celebrated.

Also in Belgium religious marriages are very few and a high divorce rate is recorded for Christian couples.

Conversely, in Syria, civil marriage does not exist.

3| What do you expect from me? What do I expect from you?

The last question in the questionnaire was intended to understand how each member of the couple views his/her role in the relationship.

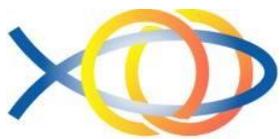
We tried to find out how each of them understands that relationship and how they think they are called¹³ to act in this particular context.

Identifying each spouse's way of acting would allow us to have the actual image of matrimony as it is experienced or at least understood by young couples. If we come to know how they act and become integrated in this relationship, we will learn how they understand and experience conjugality.

These data would give us an insight as to what distinguishes the deepest structure and dynamics of a relationship between husband and wife lived under the Grace of the sacrament of matrimony from other types of relationship.

¹² This idea is probably based on the fact that the sacrament of matrimony is celebrated by the spouses and not by a member of the clergy.

¹³ Called =Vocation



reality?

From the answers to this question we can conclude that most couples don't know or can't clearly express the way they are/act in the conjugal relationship. From their answers it is impossible to find out whether their difficulty is the result of their lack of reflection and insight as regards the question asked. However, it is obvious that such awareness doesn't exist or is not clear.

The great richness and variety of answers given as to the identification of one's own marriage vocation is partially a sign of the diversity which characterizes each person's pathway to faith, but is also the sign of a marriage education process which does not help to fully understand the ultimate goal and significance of one's own vocational "call".

In their answers, both men and women refer the question to the family or professional context and omit the conjugal context. Often the marriage vocation is fully placed on an equal footing with the parent and family vocation. Women, in particular, find it very hard to reconcile their role as mothers and their role as workers. This uneasiness affects also the spiritual dimension

Women have a stronger tendency to associate their call to marriage with spiritual and religious values as well as with household tasks: being a good mother and a good wife (nearly always in this order), educating their children, vouching for Christian education, spiritual life and family union, running the house, taking good care of their husband and children, being a catechist, being able to bring God's word to those who need it.

Men relate their call to marriage to more anthropological values, which have to do with the family's survival and safety: becoming a good father, being a good character example, providing material goods, safety and financial stability, protecting against the world's problems.

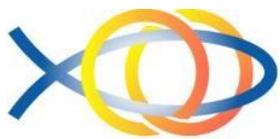
Anyhow they end up eluding the question by stressing what really is their main concern within the family universe.

For the great majority of spouses giving a detailed answer (only about one half of the respondents) it is easy to express the way they live their maternal/paternal vocation, their professional calling, how they relate with their families and their communities, with God, with faith and with the Church... but ironically they can't define how they understand and live their calling to marriage.

(...) true love accepts the other in order to liberate him, to allow him to fully become himself.

Families – Shadows and Light, Cardinal Danneels

Most couples do not have a clear idea on how they should or wish to act in their spouse's life. However, it was possible to collect a few testimonies that indicate a greater understanding of that dynamics. These couples associate their calling to marriage with "making" the spouse happy, giving himself/herself without losing their identity, loving and respecting the spouse's rights and limits, being a support to their growth, being flexible, being a good listener, a companion, a friend, being faithful, being there for them, having some degree of complicity, being docile, joyful, witnessing God in married life, being responsible for each other's sainthood...



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To love someone, rather than satisfying him, is to have the ambition of making him grow, outdo himself, wear himself out, give himself, in short, to love. However, we can only get there if we are fully convinced of that and if we make him see that in order to be able to blossom, to accomplish our mission and to reach sainthood; we have an urgent need of him, of his gifts, of his help, of his love.

At the crossroads of Love – Henry Caffarel

Sometimes also the vocation dynamic dimension was mentioned as a discovery process throughout the whole life. Also those who have not yet understood the significance and the sense of their vocation underlined the importance of kindling communication, respect and love for the other.

Besides couples having answered that they are aware of their vocation in the relationship, a few couples responded that they didn't understand the question, didn't know how to answer, haven't yet discovered that vocation or even that they were not aware that such a vocation exists.

4| The difficulties of everyday life

Couples' everyday life has changed a lot in the last few years. Women entered the labour market very often as an addition to the regular household work; new families live far away from their original families, which makes mutual support impossible; houses are smaller; there are fewer jobs and sometimes both spouses have to be breadwinners; responsibilities towards the children are a source of concern and, to a great extent, determine the couple's choices.

This is the general panorama in which all present-day couples fit in, particularly those who answered the questionnaire.

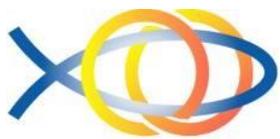
Life as they live it today (hectic, worried, divided, uncertain and insecure) doesn't give complete freedom of action to young couples who have to cope with great difficulties in order to consciously decide how they wish to live.

There is neither couple time nor prayer time

Out of all the problems that worry couples the most or cause them the most uneasiness, on top of the list is the lack of time for the couple and for prayer. This is common to all SR and IR.

In most cases, the lack of time is related to professional commitments and schedules, namely: travel time to/from work, more than one job, the situation of those studying and working or spouses' different work shifts.

Children's life and education are also time-consuming. A great part of the parents' "free" time is spent taking care of the children (transportation, hygiene and food preparation), who have more and more activities in and out of school. In general, the concern with the children's education and safety determines the whole dynamics of families' everyday life. The obligations towards their children, besides being considered as one of the main reasons for the lack of couple time and prayer time, are also what cause more uneasiness in young couples' everyday life. In most SR this item appears next to the lack of time for the couple and for prayer.



reality?

Other situations are also pointed out, which are common to several SR, namely: interference by the extended family (in some cases due to the fact that they live in the same house or depend on them financially) and employment instability.

5| Why do couples split up?

Without doubt, couples from every SR point out three facts they consider the reasons why couples split up :

- **Communications issues**
- **Immaturity of one or both spouses**
- **Inability to adapt to a life of sharing.**

This is the view of all SR, except for the United States SR, that replaces immaturity of one or both spouses by financial problems.

The alleged causes are many and varied. The couple is poorly protected by society and by its laws; preparation for marriage is insufficient; love among the young is premature and immature; it starts immediately in the body, genital contact, never to reach the level of a spiritual union of hearts (...)

Families – Shadows and Light, Cardinal Danneels

These three issues by themselves would require a deeper reflection at the Movement's level so as to allow an evaluation of why they exist.

In the face of such a unanimous certainty on the part of young couples, we think it would be very important to understand:

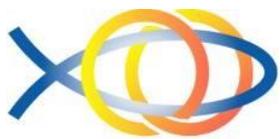
- Why is communication between the spouses so difficult?
- What is the spouses' immaturity due to? Where does that immaturity lead the couples to?
- Why can't they adapt to a life of sharing? What are the consequences for the couple?

If the Movement succeeds in identifying these causes, it will be easier to help young couples to be aware of them and to make an effort to eliminate them.

After having identified such causes, it will be possible to prepare study topics, retreats and workshops in which these issues may be approached at different levels:

- Firstly, examining and identifying how present they are in the couple
- Secondly, indicating strategies helping and supporting couples to solve problems and to eliminate these risk factors that is above all risk factors to the couple's happiness.

We think this is the point that needs to be stressed — **the couple's happiness!** Discovering the meaning of matrimony and how it is a challenge for each spouse to outdo himself/herself as a person.



reality?

(...) But the real path of love growth is spiritual; it implies heart conversion, a real change in oneself, a new birth, exceeding oneself.

Families – Shadows and Light, Cardinal Danneels

Separation is no longer a taboo issue, a reason for segregation, and is now accepted by society much more tolerantly. Even within the Church there is now a stronger tendency to look on separated couples with greater charity and even with some sense of responsibility.

We learned very recently that there is already a serious reflection on this extremely important issue of divorced and remarried couples.

We have no doubt that we are advancing towards a situation in which couples will be able to separate in a context of respect and of acceptance of their choice without losing any rights in their religious and worship practice. When that happens, couples must, more than ever, try to find and understand the sense for them to remain together. The value of the sacrament of matrimony is bound to be discovered, and no one is better equipped to promote and take part in that discernment than our Movement.

Therefore, the accent must be put on the couple's happiness. A happiness based on each spouse's awareness of the conjugal relationship. A happiness that lives together with difficulties, with discouragement, with disheartenment, with the deserts each one is bound to cross.

It is known that the older generations' married life experience found support in values, beliefs and social and political framing that have nothing to do with our present-day situation. Many couples or one of the couple members remained in the relationship for many reasons that are now unacceptable or don't make any sense any more.

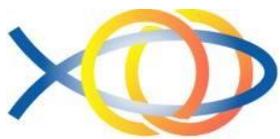
For young couples it's not enough to tell them that marriage is for life because that's what God wants, because the Church says so, because it has always been like that, or because it's in the nature of things and that's what right... such arguments work is until the first clash, until the first difficulty or disenchantment occurs.

In order to remain together and thus honour their commitment, some couples appeal to the spirit of sacrifice, a few even say that life is a constant sacrifice and others mention an effort rather than a sacrifice and argue that the former is essential to maintain marriage.

If there isn't a deeper sense for them to remain together in adversity, it's not the more or less extended idea or belief that "marriage is for life" that will maintain them together. All these arguments fall apart when they get no answers for the suffering that has taken hold of the couple and are not able to transform that suffering into growth and renewal.

Young couples need more and more to find a meaning, a reason to remain united in the face of the various difficulties that discourage them or even make them unhappy. That reason can't be any reason: it must be deeply rooted in **love and freedom**. Nobody can be entirely happy if they feel constrained, forced to live in a situation of suffering. Suffering must be the result of a choice and for that it must have a meaning based on love.

Besides the three items mentioned above (lack of communication between husband and wife, immaturity of one or both spouses and inability to adjust to a life of sharing), couples point out other



reality?

factors they consider as important causes for couples to split up. Some of these factors end up referring to one of the factors above, and in some cases they are a consequence of one of them.

In the detailed answers young couples indicate the following causes for couples to split up:

Knowledge — knowing oneself and knowing the spouse

Not knowing oneself and not knowing one's spouse are two other aspects referred to as being responsible for couples to split up.

(...) I asked myself what makes the union of the spouses alive, strong and progressive. Mutual trust? **Care and** love for each other? Conjugal life? Collaboration: ... it is true that all this helps, but there is one factor that seems to me to be basic, essential: mutual knowledge. (...)

At the crossroads of Love – Henri Caffarel

This situation indicates an awareness of the need to turn to oneself and to the other. Such an attitude allows a constant examination of who we are and who we wish to become. As far as the other is concerned, it also allows to better understand his/her limits and the challenges he/she faces when seeking to come nearer the person they try to become.

If this attitude of self-awareness and awareness of who our spouse is doesn't exist, we become victims of our own often unexplainable emotions as well as of the pressures of everyday life, which will impel us to situations we would never conscientiously chose.

If we don't turn to ourselves and to our spouse, we'll live exclusively turned to the outside world, dominated by the society's glaring lights that surround and seduce us, that consume us and offer us little or nothing at all. If we don't turn to ourselves and to our spouse, we'll live without knowing and understanding that we really are, we will be changed into mirrors of the surrounding reality, unable to make decisions.

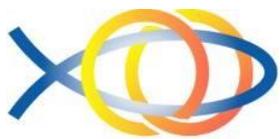
Relationship with God and with the Church

Absence of God in their lives, poor religious instruction.

For many couples, the absence of God in married and family life, poor religious instruction and poor religious practice also play a great part in couples' separation.

Underlying this idea is the conviction that faith and religious practice contribute to the couple's harmony and happiness. This is surprising as all SR couples indicate an increase in the number of divorces of Christian couples in their SR.

It would be interesting to understand how exactly these couples' faith and religious practice have contributed to the cohesion and happiness in their married life. Sharing this could be very interesting for the couples who, despite being Christians and even being part of the Movement, haven't so far reached this understanding or haven't experienced it.



Factors external to the couple

These factors include economic crises, financial problems, unemployment.

The **influence of the media** that trivialize marriage, sexuality, family and commitment. It's obvious that couples suffer because of external factors that interfere in their everyday life and are prejudicial to their harmony.

Preoccupations regarding the couple's and family's subsistence and safety as well as the legitimate ambition to attain a certain social and economic level, may cause the attention to divert from the essentials. Above all they project the spouses to a level of dissatisfaction that, if not corrected through promoting higher values, can be fatal to the couple. They will excessively focus on promoting and dedicating time to work and to activities that may increase their income and promote them socially, in detriment of the time they need to improve their relationship and to take care of each other.

If, adding to this attitude, couples live with separate finances (as couples mention in their answers to the questionnaire), competition will worsen the atmosphere in their relationship.

The influence of the media can actually be very dangerous, in particular if there is no conjugal culture of judging and defining the values they wish to live. Otherwise, married and family life may be urged to follow stereotypes massively spread by the media as happiness factors.

In most cases, the egoic notion of self-esteem is intrinsically related to how the others value us. We need the others to give us some idea of identity and, if we live in a culture that greatly compares our value to what we possess, if we are unable to see beyond this collective illusion, we'll be doomed to run after things for the rest of our life, in the vain hope of finding in them our value and the fullness of our idea of identity.

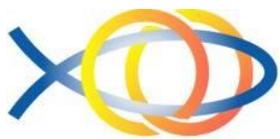
Eckhart Tolle, A new earth, New York, Dutton, 2005.

Education, values and attitudes

The list of the aspects related to the couples' lack of formation at various levels, the kind of values ruling their lives and the attitudes proceeding from these two circumstances is rather long, but we think they deserve to be presented here.

This list gives a very clear idea of the situations that are the basis for couples' separation, from the respondents' point of view:

- Lack of spirit of sacrifice allied to the lack of idea of marriage as a commitment for life
- Ignorance concerning the meaning of the sacrament of matrimony,
- Getting married for the wrong reasons: pregnancy, social event, a fashion issue, for the sake of appearances, to get away from their parents' house, passion/physical attraction... instead of love,
- Disrespect, infidelity, verbal and physical abuse,



reality?

- Tendency to individualism — separation of spouses' financial life (separated bank accounts and discussions over each other's expenses),
- Selfishness, no sense of sharing,
- No preparation before and after the wedding,,
- Immaturity to face and solve difficulties
- No perseverance, no sense of the gift of oneself, self-sacrifice and generosity,
- Valuing money and work to the detriment of the family,
- Early marriages, forcing couples to skip stages they will try to retrieve later on, after getting married,
- Women don't tolerate some of their husbands' attitudes (which in the past were taken as normal) such as infidelity, life outside the couple, and abuse of any kind...
- No sense of commitment — couples get married convinced that they will split up if it doesn't work.

6| Meaningful factors in married life

One of the questions in the questionnaire consisted of arranging a series of items in order of importance to married life. This is another issue in which couples from every SR and IR are in absolute unison.

There is no doubt that the majority of couples consider **communication/dialogue between husband and wife** as the most important thing in their married life¹⁴

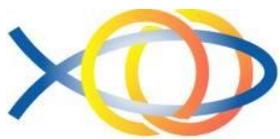
This awareness of the importance of dialogue and effective communication within the couple indicates a great progress in the growth and evolution of married life. In fact, nowadays the success of the marriage relationship depends more and more on this communication, on equal sharing between two human beings who freely confide in each other in order to discover each other, to help each other and to live the great challenge of sharing life on a daily basis.

The marriages chosen by parents or relatives, which no longer exist, the marriage relationship based on the husband's financial power versus the wife's dependence and submission is also becoming rarer and rarer thanks to the women's emancipation. The marriage relationship based on the fear of separation because of its consequences to which the woman would be exposed in society as well as in the family also tends to disappear.

In fact, besides all the difficulties it faces, the marriage relationship tends to subsist thanks to the love between the spouses. Nowadays people become freer and freer of social, economical, family and religious interdependence forcing them to remain in a relationship that fails to fulfil them or make them happy.

More and more people want to get married because they love each other (although sometimes they don't know exactly what love is), and more and more they remain married because they love each other and it makes them happy.

¹⁴ *Most probably this is already a result of their experience of the Endeavour of the "sit-down".*



reality?

If, on the one hand, this awareness is already real, on the other hand little or nothing is being done in this domain. In fact, even couples who assume that the dialogue in the couple is very important admit they don't practice it or that their dialogue is of poor quality. The reason for this, according to couples from every SR, is the lack of time, as mentioned above.

If we count the time spent with work (including travelling to and from work) and with the children's activities, there is little time left for the couple and the family; if to this we add social commitments, volunteer work or activities in the parish or in movements, which in general take priority over the time for the couple, there's no time left for spouses to look at each other, to listen to each other, to forgive each other, to take care of each other... to love each other!!!

To take care of our love is to make it grow when we share choices; it's to make our deep conversations into gifts so our words do not remain on the surface of our communication...

... To take care of our love means the real acceptance of inevitable differences that are present in each of us and in our past, it means to experience with a happy disposition the two-way need for forgiveness.

*"I will always take care of you" (Isaiah 49:15) Carlo and Maria Carla Volpini
International Gathering of Regional Couples — Rome 2009*

What future awaits the couples that fall into this trap?

What can we do to help them and help one another? In a way, we all have surely gone, or are bound to go, through such experiences.

It is worrying to see that couples aware of the importance of communication and dialogue for the quality of their relationship don't make enough efforts for that dialogue to become a priority in their lives.

This leads us to think that the Movement should focus on this in order to discern its reasons and to make suggestions to help improve the quality and quantity of the dialogue within the couple.

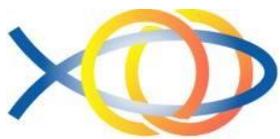
Immediately after communication, couples from every SR mention the following items, not necessarily in this order¹⁵:

- **Spirituality**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Children's upbringing.**

These couples are strongly convinced that the quality in married life is in direct proportion to the quality of the spiritual life, of the exercise of forgiveness and also of the success in the children's upbringing. The latter item is so present in couples' life that even couples with no children mention this item as a concern to bear in mind in the future.

Some couples from Latin America and Brazil SRs state that, when answering this question, they arranged the items according to their ideal, not according to what they actually practice daily. On the

¹⁵ Only the Attached Region of Lebanon makes a different evaluation. In this RR, although considering communication as the most important factor in married life, they value the other items differently. In general, they attribute a greater importance to physical image and professional success than the couples from the other SR. Sexuality is also in the middle of their list, with no comments or references to the subject.



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other hand, some couples from the Italy SR state that the order chosen is not the ideal but the one they practice in their everyday life. They add that they deeply regret this discrepancy.

Therefore, there is a gap between the ideal thing and reality! It is this gap that impels us, that makes us move forward, and therefore it's a cause for hope and not discouragement.

All personal or family decisions are strongly determined by the children's activities. Such decisions include type and number of jobs, holidays, spare time, personal enrichment or well-being activities, social or play activities/amusement for the couple, etc.

If on the one hand it is commendable and desirable that Christian couples are deeply responsible for their children, on the other hand there is a certain imbalance between the attention devoted to the children's upbringing, education and safety and the attention devoted to the couple, at all levels. The attention devoted to each spouse is even more neglected. They usually undervalue activities related to personal well-being. In some cases this is due to lack of time, in other cases it is not considered so important to their development as persons.

From the answers to this question it became clear that couples value less their physical image, their professional success, their social life, their time for personal activities, i.e., all aspects related to personal faith or to relationships with the others.

They value most communication, the children's upbringing and "*God's matters*". They even say: "*God is enough...*", "*God is more important*" and "*God in the first place*".

As far as importance to married life is concerned, between these two extremes there are two items occupying the 5th and 6th positions in all SR:

relating to employment and sexuality.

Some couples justify that the position attributed to employment (and even to professional success) is related to the struggle for life. They consider that the financial aspect is of great consequence in their lives and that the career, although not the first value, is what sustains the family, and therefore it creates confusion.

Such justifications are understandable in places and situations where employment is scarce, precarious and unstable.

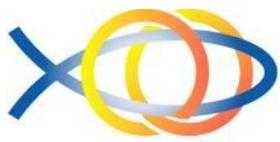
But we can't but reflect on the position attributed to sexuality.

The question asked refers to the married life and not to family life.

We notice that the children's upbringing and employment although not closely related to the married relationship, interfere with and determine its quality. We therefore conclude that for most respondents these items are more important than sexuality.

This means that for most couples the children's upbringing is more important to their married life (not family life) than sexuality. References to sexuality are very scarce in all SR.

This subject is treated with a lot of indifference, which is in line with the percentage attributed in terms of importance to the married life. From the very few couples commenting on their reply we can perceive that sexuality is not at all an important aspect of conjugal love, not determining the couple's happiness. At the most, it is seen as a complement, poetically speaking as the wax of the love's candle, or as an act of celebration. Besides these testimonies, sexuality is either ignored or placed after God and the family or as not being the most important thing in marriage.



reality?

This is undoubtedly a matter to be taken into account by the Movement. Something has already been done in order to bring this subject to the couples' reflection. But, from these replies, it is obvious that it is not enough or that it is necessary to go thoroughly into and clarify the issues related to sexuality.

Surely the weight of centuries living under the threat of sinfulness, in which sex was accepted for procreation purposes only and, according to Ksawery Knotz¹⁶, boring and grey, there's still a lot to be done.

It is in the Movement's hands to contribute to spreading the importance of sexuality lived with joy, pleasure, sauciness and renewed surprise, in which the spouses in their intimacy dictate the law.

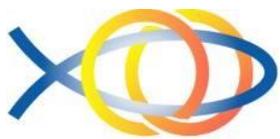
The sex taboo has always been so strong for the Catholic Church that it still has difficulties in admitting that the function of sexuality can go beyond mere procreation, that even in the recent times of Council Vatican II, in the middle of last century, it hasn't been able to approve a text — with a thousand nuances and hesitations — in which one could start sensing that the exercise of sexuality can also be an instrument of knowledge between people and therefore associated to pleasure and different from the mere procreative act.

Juan Arias, *The Bible and its secrets*, 2004

Chapter III – The END Experience of Young Couples

1 | END –What Couples look for in the Movement?

¹⁶ Ksawery Knotz is a Franciscan monk. He has just published a self-help book intended for Christian couples to discover their sexuality. The book is entitled *Sex as you don't know it: for married couples who love God* (Sw. Pawel ed.). The book aims at changing Catholics' attitude towards sex. Knotz maintains that having a good sex life is part of a happy marriage and of a more spiritual religious experience. According to the author, "married couples celebrate their sacrament, their life with Christ also during sex".



reality?

Motivations

Young Couples join END in search of spiritual growth and for spiritual support in their life as a married couple. The majority of couples come from a traditional faith background that most describe as basic. However a large percentage of young couples in END around the world have been on another faith journey prior to joining the Movement. No matter the path, they have a strong history of faith developed by the example of their family that was then developed further by school and parish.

The majority of young couples have had numerous other faith experiences before joining END. As individuals they may have been involved in parish or broader Church based activities. They come to END because it is a couple focused spiritual experience that serves to strengthen their marriage. They may have had a personal experience with a family member or friend being in the Movement already and have therefore witnessed firsthand the charisma of the Movement. Apart from the spiritual needs of young couples, END provides an opportunity for like minded couples to share on life's journey and hence helps to develop interpersonal relationships and friendships with people they may never have otherwise met.

We can summarise here the motivations for couples to join the END:

- Joined for spiritual growth, to do something as a couple in the church and for spiritual support, even to strengthen the likelihood of staying together as a couple.
- Joined also because of a past history with teams
- Joined because of the structure of spiritual support and the opportunity to broaden interpersonal relationships
- About a quarter of respondents stated they joined Teams on the recommendation of family, friends or priests and some also joined to make new friends

2| Pedagogy of END

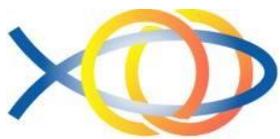
The experience?

According to the recent survey of young couples in END, the actual experience of being in a team has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for all but a few couples around the world.

Couples made countless positive comments on this experience and describe progress in their personal and conjugal growth, through the pedagogy proposed by END. These advances are evident mainly in the improvement of certain values: practice of forgiveness, tolerance, respect, love, care, perseverance, understanding, patience, affection and faith in God.

Through the END methodology, couples have learnt to overcome difficulties; improve their communication; and improve their ability to reflect and consider issues of importance in their conjugal spirituality.

The Endeavours, in particular the 'sit-down', was seen as a useful tool to deepen levels of communication. Couples felt that being in END made them better people. Their life as a couple was enhanced by knowing they were on a similar journey to other couples in the END. Participating in END provided them with 'quality couple time' that was hard to find in other aspects of their daily life. END



reality?

was a source of joy and was like an extended family but that is not to say that there weren't areas that needed to improve.

Regardless of the difficulties that couples have with time and motivation, the vast majority of couples (more than 80%) say that the END¹⁷ are meeting expectations and in many cases exceed expectations.

Couples agreed that their support for the END did increase sharply.

These are the main themes:

- Growth as a couple – able to practice forgiveness, tolerance, respect, love, care, perseverance, understanding, patience, affection, faith in God.
- Learnt to overcome difficulties, improved communication, reflection and dialogue as a couple deepening conjugal spirituality
- Were better people, shared their life with other couples
- Participation in Teams can provide 'time out' from normal daily schedules and 'time for' couples
- Teams met expectations and in some cases exceeded expectations
- Team's method is a useful tool to improve communication; the sit-down helps couples to take stock of their lives.
- Teams was a source of joy and was like an extended family

3| Difficulties and criticisms

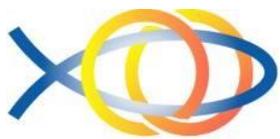
The couples interviewed responded in quite a similar manner to the questions on pedagogy proposed by the Movement. However, they encountered difficulties with certain aspects of the method and expressed some criticism regarding the means used to implement them.

The following list summarizes the difficulties that were noted from couples in all regions:

- Financial concerns (Brazil) are a concern for some countries
- Lack of time (often due to care of children, other every day pressures) and lack of motivation affect the majority of couples from accepting service in the Movement, following the Endeavours¹⁸ and focussing more generally on Team life.
- Lack of training / formation e.g. for Service to the Movement etc
- Study themes designed for older couples, are complex, boring and difficult to understand
- The majority felt joining teams was a big step towards growing as a couple.
- Excess of bureaucracy, lack of support and poor communication from the hierarchy
- Some discrepancies with levels of commitment of couples within the group.

¹⁷ Some SR had a large number of couples in Piloting, at the time of responding to the survey, in particular the SR of Brazil

¹⁸ Especially couple prayer



reality?

- Team methodology was difficult for some couples – e.g. embarrassed to pray together, lack of motivation or discipline, team was too big and managing children was difficult for team meetings.
- New technologies were not fully utilized by the Movement
- The movement has not been adapted or been made compatible with the life of young couple

Lack of time, motivation, discipline and commitment.

There are a number of factors that make it difficult for young couples to follow the END method. The overriding difficulty was the lack of time¹⁹ often due to the demands of family life – caring for children, work commitments etc. but lack of motivation was also seen as a big problem.

Time and motivation not only impacted on their commitment to base team life but also to service to the movement. The lack of motivation and discipline of some young couples within a team can be a source of frustration to other couples in the same team. They state that there can be quite a discrepancy between levels of commitment or spiritual maturity of couples within a team.

The comments relating to the Endeavours are a good example of varying levels of spiritual maturity (for example, some couples found praying together embarrassing).

Large teams small homes ... financial difficulties!

There are some logistical problems experienced by a few teams who felt their team was too big (presumably in terms of accommodating them in their homes) and managing all the children during team meetings was an issue.

Linked in with the housing issue is the concern for some couples over finances, making it difficult for them to participate in broader END activities.

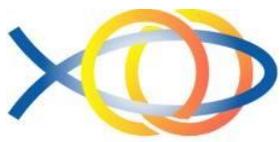
Bureaucracy, inadequate down the line communication

Some young couples have felt alienated from the broader movement and have stated that they feel a lack of support from the hierarchy. While they feel that there is excess bureaucracy they also feel communication down the line is poor. They thought that new technologies were not fully utilized by the movement.

Many couples also refer to the social character of the Movement, often pointing to some emptiness of spiritual content. In situations where the Movement takes on this character, some couples feel disappointed and discouraged and show a tendency to abandon it.

The pressure young couples feel to participate in all the activities organized by the Movement is also referred to. They feel a lack of support and understanding as regards their absence, and this disturbs and frustrates them.

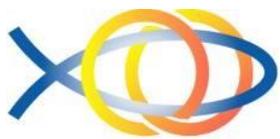
¹⁹ Frequently due to preoccupation with children, with work commitments and other pressures on a daily basis.



Subjects of study

There were numerous comments made about the value of the study topics for young couples. Many of the responses stated that the study topics were complex, boring and difficult to understand. To the young couples it appeared that study themes were designed for older couples. There was also a general feeling that there was inadequate formation and training for things like service to the movement or even for base team life in some circumstances.

In terms of recommendations for future study topics, it needs to be noted that young couples are generally time poor. Topics need to be interesting to hold a level of motivation. Material needs to be easy to read and reflect upon and shouldn't be too long. Topics should be focused on real issues that relate to their lives as young couples in a modern world where job and financial security can be a source of great stress.



Conclusions

The founding charism of the END is a gift and a treasure. It is the source and the compass of our Movement

But remaining stationary with procedures, in repeating techniques or models, in confusing the means with the goals may, gradually, empty the meaning of some practices and conceal what is most important that the Movement has given to the couples.

So there is a need for constant attention to the signs of the time and a constant reflection on the necessary adjustments to the method without betraying the founding charisma.

Already in 1987, Father Caffarel drew our attention to this problem. He even made an assessment of changes and issues that would merit more attention from the Movement.

We should not be afraid to continue this practice, it is essential that the Movement does not remain paralysed and debilitated, but renewed on learning in each epoch to teach couples that for which it was created - to help them discover and live the spirituality of marriage.

Nowadays, couples face a different world that changes each time with greater speed. The reality of young couples who belong to the Movement has much in common, even if they live in South America, in Europe, in India, in Syria or in the USA.

After this work, it is possible to generalize, by plotting the following profile for these couples.

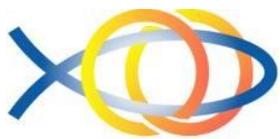
Young couples of END, had a strong Christian family upbringing which placed them on the path of Christian faith. They have done their catechetical training in the parish and/or school and in some cases assisted by the family. Most followed the normal schedule of catechesis in their communities. After confirmation, most go on to a basic religious practice, attending Sunday Mass at least sporadically, and some prayer practice. Others are stimulated to enter Church Movements that somehow introduce a more assiduous practice of the sacraments, prayer and religious practice in general.

Regardless of their journey they feel the need for greater catechetical training and are open to receive it. They want to know more about the Bible, religion, catechism, Jesus Christ, etc.

The time of marriage is almost always a time that will mark their lives, either because it awakens faith again, or because it is the peak of their religious and spiritual journey. Some people discover the Christian faith on this occasion, due to the influence of the other partner, others change their religious orientation for the same reason.

Anyway, the lack of preparation for marriage seems to be common to all. Despite participation in the movements of the church, in participation in the CPM (marriage preparation courses), it seems that couples do not acquire a clear awareness of what the sacrament of marriage is or that they are called to live and act in the context of the marital relationship.

They have serious difficulties to manage the available time and in a conscientious manner settle on their priorities in their lives. Work, family security, education of children, are daily concerns that



reality?

frequently prevent the couple from living their conjugal relationship in a healthy way. The couple has less and less time to communicate, to live, to take care of each other, to love each other.

Sexuality seems to be a subject of great indifference to these couples, they avoid making any comment on the subject or simply say it is not important. There were few who were willing to share their ideas on the subject and they said that sex is a factor of great importance for the well-being and growth of the couple.

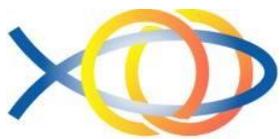
They do not have time for prayer or for reflection. Couples have been driven to live in a frantic way, manipulated by society, gradually losing their power to control their lives according to their wishes.

They often get into END through friends, relatives or priests. The expectations are generally high. They seek a space to share with other people with similar values, where they can grow spiritually. The teaching of the movement is very well accepted and when they fail to achieve, attribute this more to themselves than the method. Good practice of the methodology of END appears to visibly advance married life and family life, especially at the spiritual level. The greatest difficulties are almost always the result of lack of time.

On the subject of study themes, there are opposing positions, but perhaps the majority is more critical in finding the issues not well adjusted to their desires, hard to understand, complex, or highly theoretical. There is also a rather widespread criticism on the red-tape installed in the Movement, little openness, being too social and the lack of vision on the current dynamics of young couples.

The Movement has an obligation to prepare for the reception of young couples and give them practical responses for them to discover and experience the spirituality of marriage in the world they inhabit. For this it must be attentive, be open about the world around it, and with freedom to provide answers to the challenges which lie ahead.

The Holy Spirit does not fail to give inspiration!



Tips and Suggestions

Here are some tips and suggestions to address a number of the questions posed by young couples in this work. We took into account the most important and urgent issues following the analysis of survey responses and comments made by the SR/RR after the release of a draft document distributed for analysis and comments.

Religious and Catechetical Education

Young couples urgently need to be guided to receive catechetical instruction at several levels. They also need to be supported so as to receive training in and/or outside the Movement. Training that should enable them to grow spiritually and contribute to the spiritual growth of the society and of the community where they live. Only this way will it be possible to create a Church of clarified Christians and participate in the construction of that same church and of the world.

We propose to:

- Create specific programs for couples who want to enter the Movement but who display a very inadequate religious education and catechesis. This program should provide some basic principles of personal religious training as well as the essential foundations of marriage. **The religious education of the couples must be distinct from training in the Movement²⁰.**
- Create programs and/or distribute those that already exist on different subjects (Catechism, Bible, Christ, Church, Prayer, Marriage ...) that can be presented to the couples according to their needs.

These programs, when they are destined mainly for young couples,²¹ should be attractive (use the latest technology and current methods of dynamic groups) and they must consider the daily difficulties experienced by couples, including: lack of time, the difficulties with where to leave the children, etc...

Marriage

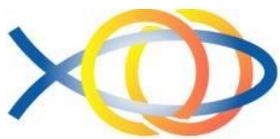
The END is a Movement of conjugal spirituality that aims to help couples live their sacrament of marriage every day.

The Movement has an obligation to help couples discover the challenge that is the sacrament of marriage. Perhaps it is one of the greatest challenges currently in the Movement.

Being a movement of married couples, nothing is more urgent than helping couples to understand what this relationship consists of, what each person should expect from it, and what is required of us to give.

The END is a pilot Movement contributed to the Church the recognition of the importance of spirituality of marriage. It would be unfortunate to suffer with this and to not continue to promote the debate and the deepening of the doctrine and teaching of Marriage.

It's urgent to create a team dedicated to continuously work on the theme - The sacrament of marriage!



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20 In "Formation in the END: a way" see chapter III

21 These programs should also provide for couples who are already well prepared and who require greater development, through a few specific topics so that they can grow spiritually.

We propose to:

- Explore and deepen the doctrine of Marriage and the thoughts of the Church on all issues linked to Marriage.
- Consider the most crucial challenges of marriage, in particular: the immaturity with which young people marry, the inability of young couples to adapt to a life of sharing, the difficulty for spouses to establish and maintain good communication / dialogue etc ... (These aspects have been identified as main reasons for the separation of couples).
- Discern how young couples live and understand sexuality. Promote forms of explanation and dissemination on this subject (topics of study sessions, debates, workshops, CD, etc). These themes must be aired by young couples or professionals (psychologists, sexologists, doctors, anthropologists, sociologists, etc..) with the intention of addressing sexual reality in a clear, open and current way.

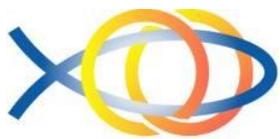
The Teams of Our Lady

Given the fact that young couples have great difficulties in managing time, to educate and care for children, and above all to dedicate themselves to each other, the Movement must adjust its methodology, without losing its charism and its mystique.

New technologies must be utilised more by the Movement, so that communication with young couples is the fastest and most efficient way possible.

We propose to:

- Maintain as a priority the Training of Pilot Couples because their role is the essential condition for the success of piloting, with the establishment of good habits for future team life. It is very important to establish regular meetings in the Sectors so that Pilot Couples can share their experiences, their difficulties and help one another in managing the piloting of their teams.
- Adjust the duration of the piloting to the needs of each team. Each team has its own rhythm/pace and requires different follow-up. Due to the lack of catechetical formation, young couples may have difficulties internalizing and assimilating each of the Endeavours in a single meeting. We propose in this case, that each Endeavour is treated over two meetings: in the 1st with a theoretical presentation and in the second sharing the experience of this Endeavour.



- Plan information/training²² sessions with short courses and with content condensed and well presented, easy to understand and which provoke reflection afterwards and the will to further deepen understanding. This strategy aims to increase the importance of quality over quantity.
- Review the type of training given to couples with the aim of integrating them into the service of the Movement. Couples feel unprepared to carry out tasks of responsibility in the Movement. May be there needs to be a review of how to recruit couples for this type of training.
- Invest in the training of liaison couples as a form of guarantee of good liaison between all members of the Movement which will enable the smooth flow of information and ideas, particularly between the Sector and the teams.
- Use the Sector and Region Meetings to provide training or discussion on topics of interest to couples. They have no time to spend in meetings with no content, only based on socialising, with programs that are repeated year after year.
- Develop study topics which are easy to read and which focus on topics which are current and adjusted to the most ardent desires of young couples. Themes centred on real events that have relevance to their lives and help them understand issues important to their growth as individuals, as couples and as families.
- Discern what lies behind the lack of motivation of couples for the Endeavours, the study theme or for participation in the life of the team and the Movement. Take measures to better help them.
- Promote sharing with older couples, and younger couples, (transportation, accompanying, telephone and internet contact, help for school children ...)
- Look at methods that assist couples to care for their children while they actively pursue Teams life. Look at activities and create support structures ("baby-sitting") that release parents (physically and psychologically) to allow them to attend programs proposed by the Movement (retreats, training, meetings, etc.).

²² This method requires more work in the preparation of the subjects. They must, at the same time, be very appealing, profound and specific.

Annexe 1

Spiritual\Religious education in detail:

United States: almost all answers pointed to an interest to delve into one's own spiritual education. Many experiences were indicated before entering the Teams Movement.

France: Before entering the Teams Movement, almost everybody followed spiritual education pathways: 20% within parishes, 80% both inside and outside parishes (various groups, movements, etc.) A deep-felt search for meditation and prayer was reported. Data showed a remarkable awareness and desire for spiritual research. 80% of couples clearly expressed their desire to deepen their religious education.

Italy: Before entering the Teams Movement almost everybody followed spiritual education pathways: roughly 60% outside parishes, whereas about 40% within parishes. Virtually all couples expressed the need to deepen their religious education.

Australia: A survey carried out in 2007 in this country showed a trend pointing to a gradual reduction of the faithful' participation in ecclesial life (especially between 25 and 35 years of age). Among the main reasons we can recall: mixed marriages; disagreement with the Church principles (regarding issues such as sex and abortion); little time available; scarce importance attached to Mass; no involvement in the parish community; wrongs suffered on the part of some members of the clergy. A previous survey carried out in 2001 showed that many of those who defined themselves Catholics have, however, a detached attitude vis-à-vis the Church life. Hence the Church has to rise up to a great challenge.

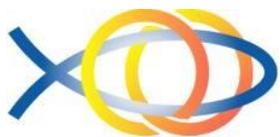
Portugal: More than 70% of the couples who answered the questionnaire expressed their interest in deepening their spiritual education pathway. Nevertheless about 65% of them considered they had a minimum (basic) religious life before entering the Teams Movement. 50% took part in religious experiences inside and outside parishes.

Brazil: Almost 80% of couples stated they wanted to delve into their religious education, but practically 60% of them stated they had a "basic" education before entering the Teams Movement. They only confined themselves to attending the Mass (not even regularly). The reasons are scarce preparation and motivation, also resulting from the family of origin, or little attention paid to religious life. 40% of couples had spiritual experiences within movements, courses or parishes.

Spain: 90% of couples stated they wanted to start a pathway to delve into religious issues. Nevertheless only 60% of couples think concretely they had a "basic" education until entering the Teams Movement (go to Mass and pray). 40% of couples started a spiritual pathway also before entering the Movement, by taking part in movements, groups, communities and parishes.

Latin America: Even though 75% of couples expressed their desire to deepen religious issues, almost 90% admitted they had no experiences along these lines until entering the Teams Movement, except for basic sacramental education and Mass on Sundays. Conversely, those who started such a pathway indicated they had done so by participating in movements, groups and parishes.

We have more limited information from the following countries:



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Canada + French-speaking Africa: the little information we have points to a basic religious education provided by dioceses and parishes (in Canada pathways can be undertaken to deepen religious education and grow in faith).

Belgium: there is an increase of the Islamic religion; the sacramental education is provided by parishes and religious schools. Also lay people contribute to this education together with priests. There exist facilities and structures for young people to undertake their pathway to faith.

Syria: Islam is the dominant religion. Religious education is provided mainly by Christian schools and by priests, in particular. Special religious education sessions are organized with catechists so as to grow in faith.

Lebanon: basic religious education is provided by and in parishes.

Annexe 2

Satellite Team - Young

END | ENS | TOL

Questionnaire 1 -To be answered by Young Couples – younger than 40 years old and less than 10 years in the Movement.

ONLY to be filled by hand by the couples that don't have access to the Internet

How to Answer?

1° Tick the most appropriate option that describes your experience

2° Try to provide brief and objective answers.

SUPER REGION _____ Couple Age : _____ Male
 Female _____ Children (if any) _____ Number _____
 Years in the Movement _____

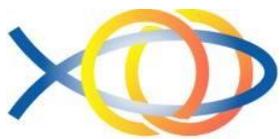
1. How was your Christian initiation done? (catechism, sacraments, etc... others)

WIFE:

- Baptism as a baby Baptism as a child Baptism as a Teenager Baptism as an Adult
- Reconciliation as a child Reconciliation as a Teenager Reconciliation as an Adult
- 1st Communion as a child 1st Communion as a Teenager 1st Communion as an Adult
- Confirmation as a child Confirmation as a Teenager Confirmation as an Adult

Where did you receive your Sacramental preparation?

School based



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Parish based

Other: _____ (provide details below)

Comments (wife):

HUSBAND:

Baptism as a baby Baptism as a child Baptism as a Teenager Baptism as an Adult

1^aCommunion as a child 1^aCommunion as a Teenager 1^aCommunion as an Adult

Reconciliation as a child Reconciliation as a Teenager Reconciliation as an Adult

Confirmation as a child Confirmation as a Teenager Confirmation as an Adult

Where did you receive your Sacramental preparation?

School based

Parish based

Other: _____ (provide details below)

Comments (husband):

2. Do you feel the need to go deeper in your catechism formation?

Yes

Maybe

No

Additional Comments:

3. Why did you choose the sacrament of marriage? (Tick all that apply?)

For the beauty of the ceremony

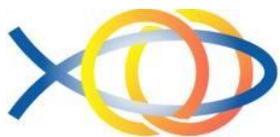
The party

For the value that we attribute to the sacrament

For family tradition

Other : _____

Additional Comments:



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What other kind of marriages / relationships do you find acceptable in your point of view? Why?

- Civil Marriage
- Marriage Celebrations in another Christian church (non catholic)
- Marriage Celebrations in another religion
- Civil Union
- Pre-matrimonial union
- Other : _____

Additional Comments:

4. What was your life and faith journey up until you joined the Teams Movement?

- None
- The basics - Catechism, first communion, etc
- Other : _____

Additional Comments:

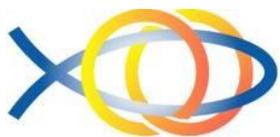
5 What made you join Teams? **(Tick all that apply)**

- Spiritual Support
- Increase in Human Relations
- Spiritual development
- Social life
- Religion Education
- To make new friends
- A friend's recommendation.....
- We felt the need to develop our couple spirituality
- Other : _____

Additional Comments:

6 Are the Teams meeting your expectations? Why?

- Yes
- Without defined idea
- No
- Other : _____



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Additional Comments:

7 Do you have any difficulty with the challenges proposed by Teams?

	endeavours	study topic	base-team life	service to the movement
No difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of formation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of motivation ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Additional Comments:

8 Has being a Teams member helped you grow as a couple? In what way?

- Yes
- Some
- No

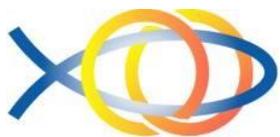
Comments:

9 What are the problems that worry you the most and cause you the most uneasiness in everyday life — in terms of couple, family and work?

(Tick all that apply)

- Extra curricula activities of the children
- Day-care centres / Children's schools
- Lack of couple time
- Lack of time to pray
- Work travel time
- Schedules and related travel time
- Job instability
- Interference by the extended family in the couple & children life
- Other : _____

Additional Comments:



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10 In your opinion, what are the reasons that lead couples to split up? **(Tick all that apply)**

- Love and respect issues
- Communication issues
- Abuse issues – verbal, physical, emotional ...
- Cultural / Educational / Religious issues
- Family issues
- Financial issues
- Work related issues
- Immaturity of one or the other spouse
- Unable to adapt to shared life
- Other : _____

Additional Comments:

11 Rate the following aspects in order of importance in your married life using a scale of 1 to 10:

(1= Most important to 10 = Least important)

- Communication / husband-wife dialogue
- Children upbringing
- Job
- Spirituality
- Physical image
- Sexuality
- Professional success
- Personal hobbies
- Social life

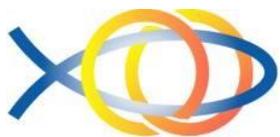
Forgiveness

Additional Comments:

12 What do you think is each one's vocation in the relationship between husband and wife? How are you called to act in the context of this relation?

WIFE:

I understand my vocation well



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I haven't determined my vocation yet

I am not aware that a vocation exists.....

I don't know how to answer

I don't understand the question

Other : _____

Wife's Answer:

HUSBAND:

I understand my vocation well

I haven't determined my vocation yet

I am not aware that a vocation exists.....

I don't know how to answer

I don't understand the question

Other : _____

Husband's Answer:

End

Thank you very much!

Annexe 3



Satellite Team Young



END | ENS | TOL

QUESTIONNAIRE 2

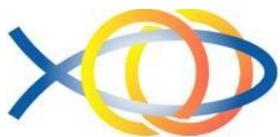
To be answered by Super Region Couples and Isolated Regions Responsible Couples

Note 1: Each question refers to the geographic area of each Super Region. In some of the larger Super regions it is possible that each question will have different answer depending on the specific way of life of that area.

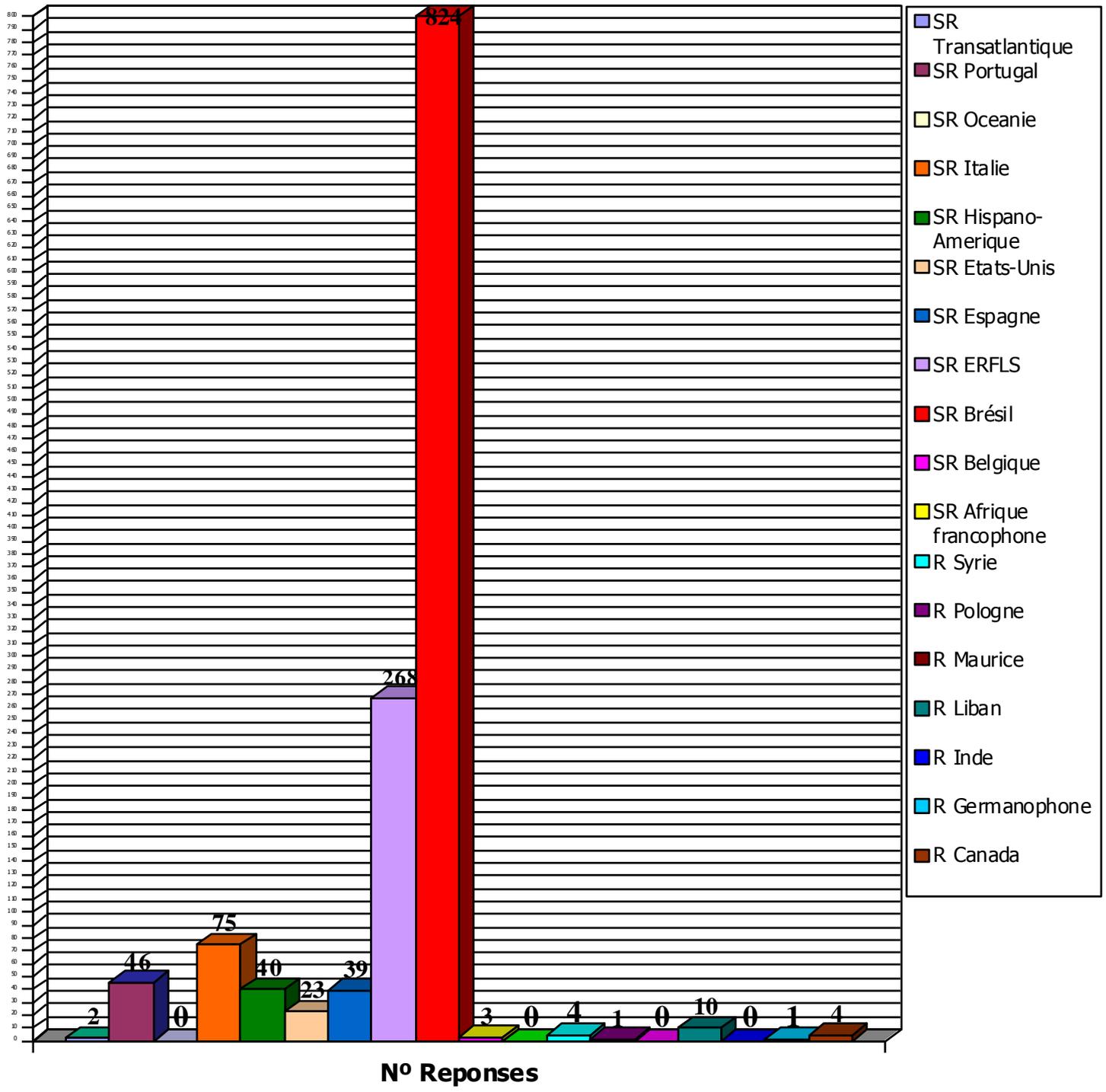
Note 2: Try to provide brief and objective answers to help avoid subjective interpretation.

SUPER REGION: _____

1. Which is the dominant religion in your SR?
2. Is there a catechization plan? What does it consist of?
 - a. At what age does catechism begin and end?
 - b. Who teaches catechism?
 - c. Are there catechisms published by the Church?
 - d. What documents are used to support catechism teaching?
3. What is available to encourage the involvement of young people to help them develop their faith and live Christian values? (What programs are offered at schools and parishes)
4. Are there marriage preparation courses? How do they work? Is attendance compulsory?
5. Is the percentage of Christian marriage increasing or decreasing?
6. Is the divorce rate of Christian couples increasing or decreasing?



GRAPH



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