



Priests and Couples are Called to Fulfil their Vocation of Love

At the end of the first retreat that he preached for about fifteen couples, Father Henri Caffarel was struck by the obvious, *“It was then that an unforeseen thought came to me and the affinity that exists between marriage and priesthood, the link that unites the priest to the Christian family, appeared clearly to me.”* (Cf. L’Anneau d’Or, n°14)

Baptised in the same Spirit, the priest experiencing the grace of his priesthood and couples experiencing the grace of their sacrament of marriage, each according to their own charism is called to a path of holiness. For almost 70 years now, the Teams of Our Lady have experienced the fruitfulness of this reciprocal spiritual support. As the 70th anniversary of the promulgation of the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady approaches, we would like to present to you some of Father Caffarel’s texts that deal with the sacrament of Holy Orders and the sacrament of Matrimony, that are qualified in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) as sacraments at the service of communion.

The large number of intentions that we bear in our prayers for couples and families, who suffer ought not to exempt us from also praying with as much fervour for priests. As Father Henri Caffarel reminded us, *“Is it not normal to expect this help from those to whom one dedicates one’s heart and time? Why does it so often seem that the faithful show so little solidarity with their clergy, that they are faster to criticise than to serve? And when a priest fails, they get upset. Ought they not firstly wonder about their share of the responsibility? Did they support him and protect him with their prayers? Did they really not realise that every leader is a man particularly targeted by the enemy?”* (Cf. L’Anneau d’Or, n° 14)

Enjoy the summer!

Elisabeth & Bernard Gérard

Spiritual Letter

The Vocation of Love

In order to understand the connection that Father Caffarel makes between the two sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony, we need to look at what the Catechism of the Catholic Church says.

“Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation. They ground the common vocation of all Christ's disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. (...) Two other sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, are directed towards the salvation of others; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. They confer a particular mission in the Church and serve to build up the People of God.” (§ 1533-1534)

Every word is important. Whatever our state of life, we have a common vocation: love, charity, the seeking of the salvation of others, and the universal call to sanctity encompasses all of this. When the rich young man was looking for his own specific vocation in order *“to inherit eternal life,”* Jesus answered him by showing him the vocation that was common to all, *“You know the commandments.”* (Mk 10:17-22) Then Jesus showed him his own one, as he invited him to leave

everything. Holy Orders, Matrimony each possess a specific way of living a common vocation, that of love.

How do priests and couples this vocation of love put into practice? Priests are given to the Church in order to be pastors, guides to encourage and strengthen the Lord's disciples, so that the People of God will be able to evangelise all of humanity. Couples too, in the midst of the world, demonstrate that the love of God is experienced in their human love, for they are "the smiling face of the Church" that draws people to God, "Look at how they love each other." Priests and couples progress on the path to holiness "by being at the service of others." Thus, the mission of priests and couples is first and foremost to experience their own vocation and "through it", they will discover all the services to render to others. Thus, the Church is built for the salvation of all men.

Perhaps there is a way of clarifying all this. Personally, I give all the retreats for priests that I preach the title, "The Happiness of Giving Life," the life of Christ, an incarnate life in our daily lives, sometimes very happy, sometimes tragic. Give God! Magnificent! Couples understand: giving life, giving life humanly to children and giving them the life of God in the Church, opening them up to human and spiritual life through education... But also, giving life to all those around them through the testimonial of their love. Widows and widowers also give life through the hope and the expectation of eternal life, through the spouse's absence, a difficult absence, but one that opens the heart to the eternity of love.

The burden of Intercession is indeed that of love: that life may be given in abundance, that life may be received in those hearts that suffer and would like to hope.

**Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.
Spiritual Counsellor to the Intercessors**

SELECTED TEXTS

"Priests are Jesus Christ's vocation that is perpetuated and propagated"

One Spring afternoon, the apostles had a meeting with Jesus on a mountain in Judea. As soon as they saw him, they bowed down to him. (Mt 28:17) Straightening back up, they heard the words that were to change their future, their life and their death. *"All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you."* Then Jesus lifted up his hands and *"while he blessed them, he ... was carried up into heaven."* (Lk 24:51) How evocative these words of Luke's are! They imply that the Ascension did not interrupt the blessing and that Jesus Christ, from up there in heaven, did not cease to lay his hands on his apostles. It is something more than just a moving gesture. It is a taking possession of. A mysterious power is communicated to them, that deeply transforms their spiritual being, that links them and adapts them to Christ. The one who up until now used his own body to go and meet men, talk to them and sanctify them, will from now on use his apostles who will perpetuate him, because they are not priests only in his image nor beside him, but through and in him. Branches of the same tree, it is from the trunk that the sap comes to them.

In turn, the apostles will lay their hands and create new priests, who themselves will lay their hands... The branches will multiply, but will form a single tree. Priests will multiply, but there is only one priesthood, only one sacerdotal activity and it is Jesus Christ who wields it through his priests. (Cf. L'Anneau d'Or, n°14)

Without being a substitute for the personal path of spouses, the union of a man and woman, sealed in the sacrament of matrimony, is a special way of uniting with God

God wants you as his assistant primarily in your relationship with your spouse. Remember what Pius XI wrote in *Casti Connubii*, (§ 24), “*This mutual moulding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other can, in a very real sense be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child.*” Therefore, the happy initiative of a young couple, this spiritual taking responsibility of the spouses for each other is not a luxury. It is a mission, a divine mission. Through the sacrament of matrimony, you are setting yourself up as the person responsible for the sanctification of your spouse, following in the footsteps of Christ, who became incarnate and responsible for the salvation of humanity.

A term that you know well underlines this reciprocal mission, that of “minister.” Because you are ministers, not only of your sacrament on the day of your wedding celebration but, despite being in a different sense, every day. A minister is a man who, for a predetermined task, acts in the name of another. Or even more precisely: through whom this other person acts. In marriage, this other person is Christ. As husband and wife, you have been charged by Christ, charged with a mission concerning your spouse. This is a job that Christ counts on doing through and with you concerning the person he has entrusted to you. As each person gives of themselves to the other person, he too wants to give of himself; he asked each person to welcome him by welcoming the gift of the other person.

Therefore, we must not hesitate in using the great word of *ministry* to characterise your married life. Just as we talk about the priestly ministry, so must we talk about a unique, original, irreplaceable conjugal ministry, received from Christ. (Cf. L’Anneau d’Or, n°111-112, (*Le mariage, ce grand sacrement* (Marriage, that great sacrament, untranslated), p 260)

The Priest, or more exactly the priestly body, at the service of the edification of the mystical Body of the Church

The Ascension must not mislead us. It is wrong to think that Christ, in bequeathing his teachings, his Eucharistic Body, the priests his ministers, left our world. The Ascension is the passage from one manner of being to another: from a visible presence to an invisible one. Christ did not escape from our universe. He is indissolubly attached to it through all the links of his humanity. With his glorious and invisible body, he is present amongst us. He will always be, just as he promised, “*Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*”

He is present and he acts. He is like a pole, a centre from which emanates all the supernatural energies of the Redemption, that do not stop working humanity in order to raise it up and transform it. Thus, he continues the mission that his Father had entrusted to him and that will only end with the last day. Until then, he continues to build his mystical Body, his Church, day by day, man by man. Let me make it quite clear that it is completely different from a recruitment, or an adhesion as if it were any kind of association. For Christ, it entails the participation of everyone in his death and resurrection, the bringing about in every-one of his redemption that is the passage from sin to grace, from death to life, to this new life: divine charity. It is a true recreation. That takes effect gradually, progressively as man opens up to the action of Christ, who appeals to him ceaselessly, as man opens up to this fire that must devour everything.

The law of incarnation is not obsolete, that led the Son of God to reach men through human means, to take on a body so that he could be seen, heard, touched. In order to attain the goal, we have just been talking about, the edification of the mystical Body, Christ’s action is available by means of something that he chose over everything else: the priest, or more exactly the priestly body, from

the Pope to the humblest parish priest. Christ communicates his sanctifying power to this priestly body, in a manner that is forever essential and contemporary. (Cf. L'Anneau d'Or, n° 60, nov-dec, 1954)

The Sacrament of Matrimony, as experienced by a couple, is a living sign of the mystery of the Church: The Church, spouse of Christ the Saviour

The couple, a true and authentic image of the union of Christ and the Church, in their behaviour do not only reflect the love, unity, indissolubility, fecundity of this union—inasmuch as it would only be a natural, exterior image, a simple symbol—but the couple is also the one in whom the mystery and life of the union of Christ and the Church are present and experienced. (...)

The expression *the union of Christ and the Church* underlines the duality in the unity, dialogue, and mutual love of Christ and the Church, who give themselves to each other. The comparison with marriage explains all this very well. Thus, the union of man and woman is inserted into the union of Christ and the Church, at the very heart of this union. The sponge is in the ocean, but the ocean is also in the sponge. The couple is in the union of Christ and the Church, but vice versa the union of Christ with the Church is in them. Thanks to this exchange, the union of man and woman becomes ever more visibly like its model, since the spouses are helped by grace to faithfully respect the demands of marriage. Invisibly, the union is transformed from the inside and becomes the authentic *image* of the union of Christ and the Church, and there is to be found the true reason of marriage, the one that Christ promised himself he would obtain by making marriage into a sacrament. (Cf. L'Anneau d'Or, n° 111-112, *Le mariage, ce grand sacrement*, p. 210-211)

Prayer for the Canonisation of the Servant of God, Henri Caffarel

God, our Father,
You planted deep in the heart of your servant, Henri Caffarel,
A fountain of love, which bound him totally to your Son
And inspired him with a wonderful capacity to speak of Him.

A prophet for our time,
He revealed the dignity and beauty of the vocation of every person
In the words Jesus addresses to each of us: "Come follow me."

He made couples enthusiastic about the greatness of the sacrament of marriage,
The sign of Christ's fruitful love for the Church and of His union with her.

He showed that priests and couples
Are called to live a vocation of love.

He was a guide to widows: love is stronger than death.

Prompted by the Holy Spirit,

He accompanied many Christians on the path of prayer.

Seized by a devouring fire, he was a dwelling place for you, Lord.

God, our Father,

Through the intercession of Our Lady,

We ask you to hasten the day

When the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life,

So that people everywhere will discover the joy of following your Son

In accordance with their particular vocations in the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we invoke the intercession of Father Caffarel for.....
(Indicate the particular favour being sought)

Prayer approved by Monsignor Andre Vingt-Trois – Archbishop of Paris.
“Nihil obstat”: 4th January 2006 – “Imprimatur”: 5th January 2006.

*In the case of a particular favour obtained through the intercession of Father Caffarel,
Contact: The Postulator,
Association "Les Amis du Père Caffarel"
49 rue de la Glacière – F 75013 PARIS*

GENERAL INTENTION

For families who, for reasons of health, bereavement or financial difficulties, cannot take holidays.
May they find comfort in the affection that unites them and that faithful friends manifest their support for them.
Lord, send your Spirit of consolation so that Hope will never leave them.

News

On the occasion of the celebration of the 70th anniversary
of the promulgation of the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady
Henri CAFFAREL
A PROPHET FOR OUR TIMES
An Apostle of Marriage and a Master of Prayer
December 8th & 9th, 2017
Collège des Bernardins, Paris

A Colloquium at the service of the Cause for Canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel.

This event, organised by the international Association of The Friends of Father Henri Caffarel," aims to show the influence of the thinking and intuitions of Father Henri Caffarel on the theology and spirituality of marriage and on prayer. Numerous speakers from different parts of the world will explore the universal influence of the thinking of a man of God.

A Eucharistic Celebration and festive moment for the 70th anniversary of the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady, December 8th, 2017, at 7pm in the Church of St Augustin, Paris.

Information and Registration from September 1st, 2017 onwards on the site www.henri-caffarel.org



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