

## **WHAT IS A TEAM OF OUR LADY? (1977)**

### **1. A Proposal**

“Come, follow Me!” Christ is calling each of us and each married couple. He invites us constantly to broaden His love so that witness may be given to that love wherever it may be.

There are couples who wish to answer that call. Although well aware of their weaknesses, these married couples have confidence in the sacramental grace given them by marriage and believe in the efficacy of fraternal mutual help and Christ’s promise - “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Some of these couples decide to form a Team and ask the Movement to help them. This is the basic proposal underlying the Teams of Our Lady.

2. An Image A Team of Our Lady is a married couple’s Christian community.

#### **2.1 A Community**

A “Team” consists of 5 to 7 couples, assisted by a priest, who freely decide to join together. No one is forced to come, or forced to stay. They continue as active members because of fidelity to the Spirit.

In order to attain the common end they seek, each of the participants agrees to “play the game” faithfully, in accordance with the rules of their community.

Such a community has its rules and needs which find expression in the choice of a certain number of common goals and the concrete means necessary to achieve those goals (see third part). As long as a couple participates in the life of the community, they accept as their own the decisions made by that community. Each “Team” forms part of a larger community, the international Movement of the Teams of Our Lady, and agrees to share fully in its life.

#### **2.2 A Christian Community**

A “Team” is not simply a human community. It comes together “in Christ’s name” and attempts to help its members to make progress in the love of God and in the love of one’s neighbour in order to answer fully the invitation of Christ.

It was Christ’s wish that a visible community be the meeting place where the love He brought us could find expression and actuality. He, Himself, assembled such a community promising it His presence and granting it His Spirit. He entrusted it with His Gospel of Good News which was to be announced to the world. The community is the Church, the “Body of Christ”, which is at the service of the community of mankind.

The Church herself is made up of small communities, each distinct in appearance. The structure of these communities may be very different from that of the Church but the

same life is present in each, just as each part of the human body shares the life of the whole body. The principle of life of the Church is Christ's own love for His Father and for all mankind. A Team of Our Lady is one of these small communities. As such, it link up with the Father (by its close communion with the Church) and yet remains in full contact with the world.

Its life is organised accordingly. The priest who "ensures that Christ be present as Head of the community" (Bishops Synod, 1971), helps the community by being a constant reminder of its true goal.

### **2.3 A Community of Married Couples**

In a distinctive way, a Christian home is already a Christian community.

On the one hand, such a community is found on a human reality, that is, the free, complete, definitive and fruitful gift of one's self through love. This is what a man and woman undertake in marriage. On the other hand, through Christ, this human reality becomes a sacrament, that is, a sign that displayed God's love for mankind and Christ's love for His Church and allows husband and wife to share in those two loves.

Christ's presence in a conjugal community is very special. His love for God and for men transforms human love from within. Consequently, human love lived in a Christian fashion is already, of itself, a witness to God. From the fullness of conjugal love flows the apostolic action of a Christian home.

The mutual aid that develops within a Team has a distinctive character. Each couple will help others to grow in Christ (married couples are constantly "under construction") and through their love, collaborate in the promotion of God's kingdom.

A Team of Our Lady asks for the special protection of our Blessed Mother. In this way, the members of Teams underline their conviction that there is no better guide on the path to God than "she who held the first place among the humble and poor of the Lord, those who confidently await and attain His salvation" (Lumen Gentium, 55).

### **3. A Way**

Only one "way" exists for all Christians: namely, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God. "Happy are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28).

The Teams of Our Lady do not impose a particular type of spirituality on their members. They simply want to help them advance, as a couple, along the path signposted by Christ. For this reason, stress is placed on three points:

- a direction to life
- concrete suggestions for particular practices (Endeavours)
- Team spirit

### **3.1 A Direction to Life**

This is based on the love that Christ came to bring us: “Love the Lord, Your God, with your whole heart, your whole soul, and with all your mind and strength. Love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12: 30- 31). To grow in such love is a lifetime’s work. The Teams of Our Lady want to help their members in this effort and thus require the following points of collaboration:

- For mutual aid toward their growth in God’s love, couples should:
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  - carve an important place in their lives for prayer,
  - become familiar with God’s Word, and make a consistent effort to live it more fully,
  - frequent the sacraments regularly, especially the Holy Eucharist,
  - energetically strive to grow in knowledge and the practice of Christian asceticism.
- For mutual aid towards growth in love of others, couples should:
  - put into practice true mutual help as a married couple - listen, speak and share in all matters, but especially with regard to spiritual matters,
  - preoccupy themselves to the full human and Christian education of their children,
  - open their homes in a spirit of friendship and hospitality,
  - bear effective witness of Christ’s love, especially by acceptance of ecclesiastical and civic duties.

### **3.2 Concrete Suggestions for Particular Practices (Endeavours)**

Experience shows that unless one undertakes a certain number of specific practices, general directives for one’s life will remain unattainable. The Teams of Our Lady propose the following to their members:

- to undertake a number of “obligatory” practices (these are six in number, and constitute what are called “the obligations”)
- to request an accounting and assistance of the Team with regard to these practices (the so-called “sharing on obligations” at the monthly meetings).

The six obligations are the following:

1. A regular reading (or hearing) of the Word of God.
2. A daily period set aside for true “conversation with the Lord” (prayer).
3. A daily time between husband and wife for conjugal and if possible, family prayer
4. A monthly in-depth talk between husband and wife in the Lord’s presence (the duty of sitting-down).
5. A drawing up (and monthly revision) of one’s rules of life.
6. A yearly retreat (at least two days) made together as husband and wife, if possible, in order to withdraw into the presence of the Lord and effect a spiritual accounting of the past year.

### **3.3 Team Spirit**

The Team is not an end in itself, but a means for the benefit of its members. It allows them:

- to live together key moments of common prayer and mutual sharing
- to help each other truly progress in the Lord and bear witness to Him.

There are generally three aspects, or turning points, in the life of a Team, just as there are in the life of any Christian community:

- with Christ, the Team turns toward the Father and welcomes His love;
- in Christ, the Team shares that love - "they are united in heart and soul" (Acts 4:32);
- urged by the Spirit, the Team sends its members into the world to reveal that love.

Primarily, there are three aspects to be found in the course of the monthly meetings.

These normally include:

- a meal, which is more especially an occasion for fostering a spirit of friendship;
- a communal prayer, which is the center and summit of the meeting and which, sometimes, can take the form of an Eucharistic celebration;
- a "sharing" (on endeavours) and a "pooling", where mutual aid is at its strongest, especially with regard to spiritual and apostolic help for one another;
- a discussion on the theme under consideration for the month, wherein the members especially deepen their grasp of the Faith.

However, the life of the Team is not limited to the monthly meeting. In accordance with the initiative of each group, prayer (in the company of other members and for their intentions), and mutual sharing and assistance prolong the groups' activities during the month. There is one couple "in charge" elected each year by the members of the Team who undertakes to ensure that all participate effectively in the life of the community so that mutual help will be really efficacious and each member will feel truly recognised, loved, and accepted by the group.

The couple in charge has the duty of inviting each member to participate actively in the Teams of Our Lady;

at the individual Team level:

- by attending the monthly meeting,
- by preparing for that meeting through prayer and reflection and particularly by writing out one's considerations of the monthly theme;

at the Movement level:

- by keeping informed about the life of the Movement, especially by reading the Newsletter of the Teams and, more particularly, the Editorial,
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- by making an effort to live according to the directives common to the Movement and to promote the Movements interests,
- 
- by attending the meetings organised at different level of the Movement

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- by a willingness to share in the Movements life and apostolic mission,
- 
- by accepting service responsibilities
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- by paying the annual dues (based on a fair appraisal of one day's earnings),
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- by including in one's prayers the intentions of each and every member of the Movement.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Teams of Our Lady is a Movement of spirituality for married people. It offers its members a team life and some concrete means to help them progress as a couple in God's love and the love of their neighbour. Teams of Our Lady thus prepares couples to become witnesses in a manner freely chosen by each couple. In this way, Teams of Our Lady, even though they are not a movement for action, are nevertheless, a Movement of active people.

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