



LETTER FROM THE INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAM  
TO TEAM MEMBERS AROUND THE WORLD  
TURIN 2024

Dear Couples and Spiritual Counsellors of the Teams of Our Lady:

We have come to the end of this 13th International Gathering, where we have been encouraged to return home with burning hearts, eager to be messengers of hope and missionary instruments of God's love. As Jesus says in Matthew's account, "*.. words flow out of what fills the heart*". (Mt 12:34)

The celebration of this meeting of faith has not been a fortuitous or isolated event in the journey we share. In Fatima 2018, a roadmap was developed for the six-year period 2018-2024 under the theme "**Do not be afraid, let's go out!**". Since then, we have progressed through an annual itinerary which has sought to awaken the intrinsic sense of mission that has been in all of us since our baptism. In the course of these six years, this sense of mission has developed in all of us. It is not a condition acquired by the mere transmission of an idea, but it is a consequence of our very encounter with Christ. To be instruments of God's merciful love, requires an intimate communion with the Lord that reaches its fullness in the Eucharist, and this is what we have experienced in the gathering that we are concluding today.

As Henry J.M. Nouwen notes in his book "With a Burning Heart", a beautiful meditation on Eucharistic life: "*God desires communion: a unity that is vital and alive, an intimacy that comes from both sides, a bond that is truly reciprocal. It is not something forced or wilful, but a communion freely offered and freely received. God goes as far as is necessary to make this communion possible. [..]*"

With our hearts full of joy given all that we have experienced, we come to the moment of conveying to you the outcome of the discernment carried out to orientate the life of the Movement for the coming years.

**"Called to live in communion".**

It is easy to understand that all evangelisation is based on an experience of encounter, and it is in these encounters that an attitude of welcoming must be awakened. We welcome the Lord who has this deep desire to meet us. We also welcome the people we meet, from those closest to us to those furthest apart, and in the most diverse situations. We look, we listen, we talk to each other, we open our hearts so that we can begin to communicate, act and serve. These two words: **Encounter and Welcome** are part of the meaning we want to give to this general orientation for the next 6 years: **Called to live in communion.**



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The general orientation endeavours to animate the life of Teams of Our Lady in the next six years: **Called to live in communion**, and is also part of a process that the Church is engaged in. Through Synodality, the Church is seeking a process of communion, which we, as Teams, have been practising since our beginnings. As Pope Francis reminded us in the Audience of 8<sup>th</sup> May this year, co-responsibility between spouses and priests is one of the valuable contributions of our movement. Our harmony with the Church is strengthened by recognising the gift we have received, convinced that we have much to contribute.

It is therefore essential that to live communion we are fully aware of our charism, because by recognising the specifics of our movement we remain united. The charism is a reality that stands above cultural differences, adaptations, and inculturations. We must clearly recognise who we are - couples called to live the holiness of our sacrament, together with priests who accompany us on our journey. Our way of doing this is through the small communities that are the teams. We do so conscious of this identity, but not in the sense of believing ourselves to be in possession of moral perfection, which would make us proud. Instead, we are called to live in the perfection of love, as Fr Caffarel reminded us. Strengthened by this way of being Christian and recognising from our reality other situations, we commit ourselves to collaborate, to help, and to serve... without blurring or diluting ourselves, because we cannot betray our charism, which is a gift of the Spirit.

We are called to an encounter, called by God, to accept a gift, which is communion. It is not something that we do. It is something that we receive freely from God, like everything else in our lives. After this encounter with Christ, we respond from our own reality, to become missionaries of his Kingdom. Our way of understanding communion in the Church and in the world in which we live, is the union of believers with Christ, strengthened in our community which is Teams of Our Lady.

This orientation has many references from the Gospel and especially from the apostolic letters. We hear the call to communion strongly in St. Paul's letter to the Philippians: "*If you are willing to give me the consolation of Christ and soothe me with your love, if you are united in the same Spirit and have compassionate hearts, give me this great joy: be of one accord and of one mind and of one love*" (Phil 2:1). It speaks to us of a growing Church that needs to be rooted in Christ, lived in community and developed with an attitude toward serving the world.

We also find references in the fundamental texts of the movement. The Complement to the Founding Charter of 1976, describes for the first time that we should live in harmony with the Movement's orientations. It proposed as a permanent orientation, the Commandment of love which Jesus Christ gave to us: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength... and your neighbour as yourself*" (Mk. 12,30-31).

Far from being a self-absorbed proposition, communion is recognised in the Church as one of the signs of identity of the missionary disciple. It is through communion that the Church is founded. We walk as a family in faith and communion and, welcoming this gift, we are witnesses in the world. We thus propose some guidelines that can be developed in the coming years, with some particular emphases depending on what is



happening in the Church, and the results of the Synod. The first three orientations will be:

- **Called to live in communion with Christ:** It will be accompanied by the new study topic, *On the Road to Emmaus*. We too recognise Christ walking beside us and we are nourished by his Word and by his presence in the Bread and Wine. We too go out to witness and to serve.
- **Called to live in communion with our spouse:** From the anthropology of human love, "Love is much more than love", this topic will help us to understand our love made sacrament and lived as a vocation.
- **Called to live in communion as a family:** With the teaching on the life of the families of the Bible, and from their attitudes, we will deepen the spirit of living as welcoming families, not only inwardly, but also outwardly. It is about taking up and updating our understanding of welcoming, one of the ten original obligations of the Founding Charter.

It is premature to establish the focus and orientations for the following years, for we must be attentive to respond to the signs of the times and the directives of the Church in a changing world. We will discover how to live communion also in the team, with the movement, with the Church and in the world.

Father Caffarel said in words addressed to the members of the International Leadership Team in 1981: "There is no true renewal if one is not faithful to the original charism. Renewal of the Movement can only be achieved by deepening the charism which is a gift of the Spirit. As such, it cannot be manipulated. To renew the Movement, one must join in the internal growth of that charism. It is not necessary to look elsewhere. It is as if, after having found a fountain with abundant water, when it seems to us that it is beginning to run dry, we go to look for water elsewhere. What we have to do is to go deep where the vein of water is sure to be found".

We are therefore convinced that this intuition of the Holy Spirit is still present and that, being faithful to it, we must renew our fidelity by building on the rich history of our movement with impetus. Faithful to the gift we have received, while at the same time updating it without distortion during this historic time in the Church, we propose to live deeply the proposition that Teams offer us. We humbly recognise that Teams of Our Lady is the work of God and that it is He who guides us.

With this certainty, before you and before Him, and with a burning heart, we commit ourselves to be faithful to the mission entrusted to us, for the good of Teams and the Church.

May our Heavenly Mother and Patroness of the movement accompany us on this journey.

Let us go with a burning heart.



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So be it,

Clarita and Edgardo Bernal Fandiño  
and Alberto Pérez Bueno

Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer

International Responsible Couple 2018-2024  
Responsible Couple 2024-2030

International

