

Teams of Our Lady  
International Leading Team

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# the Mission of Couples in the Teams Movement

STUDY THEME

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## PRESENTATION

The word mission, for many years, had a meaning connected mainly with formation of a catechetical type and that is why it seemed to the layman that mission should be a specific commitment for religious and priests. Indeed, the etymological root of the word mission (the Latin verb *mittere*: to send) indicates more an action and it is in this sense we can understand that lay Christians have had difficulties understanding, up to now, the responsibility and duty of mission .

Why then do we present to our Movement a study theme specifically related to the commitment of mission for each team couple?

What reason led the ERI to ask the Satellite Team "Pedagogy"<sup>1</sup> to work on this subject and develop a study theme to offer for reflection to the whole Movement?

Simply because with time and with constant attention to the signs of times that the Second Vatican Council has always strongly encouraged, the Church - and consequently the movements, our Movement and all more aware and engaged Christians – realized that over the years everything has changed. If society anywhere in the world, no longer finds the basic references on which, for centuries, it was founded and developed and must now find a new balance and new values, likewise faith must be renewed and also renew its transmission to new generations without abandoning its basic principles.

It is no coincidence that precisely on the anniversary of Vatican II, that the Church is preparing the next Synod of Bishops on the theme "*Nova evangelizatio ad christianam fidem tradendam* - The new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith."

It is necessary, however, to give a new and more current meaning to the words that form the basis of Christian mission: "*Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16: 15): not because faith requires "new clothes" but because our faith accompanies all generations, and our God is close to all men, of all time.

The journey to get to understand this "need" that exists today of a new way to understand the meaning of mission was long, but has paid off.

Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* <sup>2</sup> of 1975 spoke of "*a new period of evangelization*" (EN 2), "*a new impulse*" (EN 2, 5), but it was Pope John Paul II who developed the concept of a new evangelization, when he declared in Poland "*a new evangelization has begun, as if it were a new proclamation, even if in reality it is the same as ever.*" (L 5)<sup>3</sup> and further specifies that this is not about a re-evangelization, but rather "*a new evangelization: new in its zeal, in its methods, in its expressions.*" (L 5)<sup>4</sup>

But it is Benedict XVI who speaks to us today about a true "*educational emergency*" by including, among the objectives of the Church, the ecological education of the human person, including human ecology and environmental ecology. He states that "*Any project of new evangelization, any project for the announcement and transmission of the faith is only possible by taking into account that it is men and women who, with their lifestyle, give strength to the evangelizing commitment that they themselves live.*" (L 22)<sup>5</sup>

We arrived at a total change in the meaning of the word mission: it is no longer "doing" but "**being**" and it is with this perspective that it no longer concerns only the priests and religious, but

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<sup>2</sup> Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, Rome December 8, 1975

<sup>3</sup> Pope John Paul II, Homily at the Shrine of the Holy Cross, Poland, June 9, 1979

<sup>4</sup> Pope John Paul II, XIX Assembly of CELAM, Port au Prince, Haiti, March 9, 1983

<sup>5</sup> cf. *Caritas in veritate* 51; L 21



every Christian believer, each of us.

Again, we note with joy that Fr. Caffarel had intuitively understood this reality when he asserted that "*the team-members are called courageously to take their responsibility in the Church and the world.*"

Given the reality of today, as Christians we must once again be "*ready to answer anyone who asks us the reason for the hope within us.*"<sup>6</sup> As a Movement, we are called to discover the original beauty of our charism, remembering that no charism is given to us only for ourselves but for the good of everyone.

When Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement, asked Pope John Paul II: "*What will the Church be in the third millennium?*" He replied, "*it will have the charismatic dimension of Mary, it will be a church of listening, of attention, of service!*"

With the intuition of Fr. Caffarel, with the characteristics of Mary to whom the Movement is entrusted, with the constant and continuous pursuit of the Church, the Teams Movement should feel more involved and ask itself how it can "**be Church today**" by living our specific charism.

Being a Church of listening should mean asking ourselves "*what are the needs of today's couples?*"; being a Church of attention should mean asking ourselves "*who needs us today?*"; being a Church of service should mean asking ourselves "*how can we meet this need?*"

This study theme "*The Mission of couples in the Teams Movement*" is relevant and its purpose: to live a new evangelization means becoming more mature in faith, means that the Spirit reassures us, means seeking and finding not new ways of "saying" but new ways of "being."

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Responsible Couple ERI

Paris, January 2012

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<sup>6</sup> cf. 1 Pt 3, 15

## INTRODUCTION

***“If the Teams Movement is not a sower of men and women ready to assume courageously their responsibilities in the Church and in society, it loses its reason for being.”***

(Father Henri Caffarel)

The Teams Movement has the mission of helping, encouraging and preparing its members so that each one **“can courageously assume their responsibilities in the Church and in the World,”** Father Caffarel reminds us.

However, experience shows us that in Teams many couples want to become involved, but do not know how nor where to begin. Nevertheless, when an opportunity presents itself, they step forward, become involved and dedicate themselves to it wholeheartedly.

During the conference in Chantilly (1987), Father Caffarel explained in a very prophetic way the importance of the mission of the Teams Movement. He recognized that it had been undervalued. His words echo to the Movement, the calling of the magisterium - since Vatican II - so that the Church engages in new and updated evangelization. From then on, there was discernment by the Movement which led to “Second Wind” (in 1988). Twenty years have now passed, and at this time we cannot guarantee that couples of the Teams Movement are all truly involved in the Mission at the heart of the Church and of the world.

The Church calls for commitment to the *“New Evangelization,”* a term introduced in 1979 by Pope John Paul II which means announcing Jesus here and now, with *“new ardor, new methods and new expressions.”* In the post-conciliar document *Christifidelis Laici*, the People of God was alerted: ***“No one should be idle,”*** the world secularized and in lack of evangelical values claims for the message of Jesus. Following his predecessor and advancing *“into deeper water,”* Pope Benedict XVI emphasizes the importance and necessity of the ***“audacity of Christians to never stop looking positively at all the ways to establish forms of dialogue that reach the deepest longings of men and their thirst for God.”***

And thus, this Study Theme, **The Mission of the Couple in the Teams Movement** - written by the Pedagogy Satellite Team - has for its objective to encourage the married couples to experience mission in its different aspects, whether it be between themselves, the family, the Church, the Movement, the world.

It is important to clarify that we do not intend to discuss the concept and ideas of mission per se, even though these are important subjects. What we want to emphasize is the exchange between the couples about their mission: their difficulties, their concerns, their projects and their successes, while confronting what they are doing with what they would like to be doing.

Through sharing their **“life experiences”** and through the exchange based on the questions proposed for each meeting, the couples can enlighten each other on the options taken for their mission, as well as encourage each other, thanks to the witness of other couples about their mission.

This Study Theme consists of eight meetings:

**First Meeting:** Mission, general ideas and concepts

**Second Meeting:** The Mission of the Couple in the Teams Movement. Challenges and perspectives

**Third Meeting:** The Couple in the Teams Movement in their Mission to each other

**Fourth Meeting:** The Couple in the Teams Movement in their Mission in the family

**Fifth Meeting:** The Couple in the Teams Movement in their Mission in the Movement

**Sixth Meeting:** The Couple in the Teams Movement in their Mission in the Church

**Seventh Meeting:** The Couple in the Teams Movement in their Mission in the World

**Eighth Meeting:** The Mission of the Teams Movement

**Evaluation Meeting**

**Appendix:** Plan of the Monthly Meeting

“DARE TO LIVE THE GOSPEL”, theme of the 11<sup>th</sup> International Gathering of Teams of Our Lady, is to assume a life centered in the figure of Jesus Christ, making all things new (Rev. 21, 5), being his witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1, 8).

In this perspective , we wish that the sharing and the experience of each meeting on this Study Theme may revive in each couple the promises of their Baptism, and awaken enthusiasm, while recalling that *“It is the mission of each couple which gives the Movement its history.”*

## FIRST MEETING

### MISSION: GENERAL IDEAS AND CONCEPTS

*For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth.”*

(Acts 13. 47)

#### A. Objectives

- To discern and deepen the spirit of Christian mission and its practice.
- To develop the dynamic of missionary spirituality.
- To encourage the members of the teams in determining their mission.

#### B. To work on during the month

##### Life experience

Our mission is to reveal God’s love to others. During the month, we suggest that you, in the light of this study theme, identify among your daily activities, those that fulfill this mission.

##### Study Theme and Reflection

When we speak of “**mission**” many ideas may come to mind: the vocation of the Church which is to be “*light to all nations*,” those who leave to evangelize in other countries, those who serve others through their profession, the devotion of parents for the formation of their children, the undertaking in which we work, and many other areas.

But what is the commonality among all these different ideas? In each one we can perceive something of **mission**, that which **directs the action** of persons and institutions.

In the dictionary the first definition that we find is the following, **mission is a function or a power which is given to someone to do something; it is a charge, an obligation.**

Thus we can perceive that in each mission there **is someone who sends, someone who is sent (the missionary) and the mandate (the why of the mission itself).**

In our vision of faith we believe that God sends us all: “*As the Father has sent me, so am I sending you*” (John 20, 21). The power always comes from the one who sends and not from the one who is sent. He who is sent is essentially a servant.

But what mission does He bestow on us?

## Our common mission: to cultivate and preserve Creation

At the beginning God bestowed on us a mission that we share with all men. We find it in the first pages of Genesis, when Creation was entrusted to man to be cultivated and protected (Gen 2, 15).

Through his Word God invites all men to build a world which corresponds to his Plan for Creation: a society in which we respect life in all its forms, thus revealing God's love for all his creatures.

## The mission of Christians: to announce the Good News

Through our baptism God gives us a second mission, which engages us even more in his loving plan for humanity: *"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation."* (Mark 16, 15). Thus the mission of the Church is the mission of Christ himself: to proclaim that God loves mankind so much that He was born, that He died, that He rose from the dead, and that He lives forever.

Integrated in the Church, we share with it the mission of Christ which is to reveal the love of God to all men. Since the time of our baptism we have received the power and the grace to accomplish this mission and they are renewed in us, Christian couples, through the sacrament of marriage.

We may think sometimes that this mission means doing extraordinary things. Perhaps we could come to that point, but the first step is much simpler, though no less important: to live God's love deeply, to let him mold our hearts and our lives and keep us open to his action in us. Thus, like Jesus, we can give his love which lives in us, and also give of ourselves.

*(...)But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.*

(Lumen Gentium, no. 31)

## Ways of living the mission

We have discovered the treasure of God's love, and our heart doesn't know how to keep this richness for itself. We want to share this great joy.

Announcing the Good News can be something very explicit as, for example, when we teach our children or when we speak of our faith to our friends. But it can equally come through the witness of a life of love - **"See how they love one another."** The witness of a life rooted in God can manifest itself through actions of promoting peace, justice, human dignity; through helping others; through

serving those who have the greatest need in our profession and in our circle.

Therefore, **to proclaim, to give witness and to serve** are part of the missionary life whose dynamism is capable of transforming the world around us.

*“The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who, despite all his or her human limitations and defects, lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of God and of transcendent realities. But everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary.*

*The evangelical witness which the world find most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity toward the poor, the weak and those who suffer. The complete generosity underlying this attitude and these actions stands in marked contrast to human selfishness. It raises precise questions which lead to God and to the Gospel. A commitment to peace, justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel when it is a sign of concern for persons and is directed toward integral human development.”*

(Redemptoris Missio. No. 42)

*“In both accepting and proclaiming the Gospel in the power of the Spirit the Church becomes at one and the same time an “evangelizing and evangelized” community, and for this very reason she is made the servant of all. In her the lay faithful participate in the mission of service to the person and society.”*

(Christifideles Laici, no. 36)

### **Missionary spirituality**

It is the same Spirit of God that lives in Jesus Christ which lives also in us. It inspires and guides us in our mission. To have a missionary spirit impels us to not keep the experience of God's love for ourselves, but to boldly communicate it in all ways possible.

We must be receptive to the action of the Holy Spirit, let ourselves be formed by Him. We are only true missionaries when we set ourselves on the path to sanctity.

Jesus says: « You go before me ». It is He who accomplishes all things.

The missionary spirit is nourished by the Eucharist. It evangelizes us and makes us evangelizers. At the table of the Father we celebrate the life which is given for us. It sends us out on our mission. Holy Communion reinforces our commitment as a visible sign of the love of the Father.

*“The missionary is a person of the Beatitudes. Before sending out the Twelve to evangelize, Jesus, in his ‘missionary discourse’ (cf. Mt 10) teaches them the paths of mission: poverty, meekness, acceptance of suffering and persecution, the desire for justice and peace, charity – in other words, the Beatitudes, lived out in the apostolic life (cf. Mt 5, 1-12). By living the Beatitudes, the missionary experiences and shows concretely that the kingdom of God has already come, and that he has accepted it. The characteristic of every authentic missionary life is the inner joy that comes from faith. In a world tormented and oppressed by so many problems, a world tempted to pessimism, the one who proclaims the ‘Good News’ must be a person who has found true hope in Christ.”*

(Redemptoris Missio, no. 91)

## Questions to share as a couple and in the team

In order to deepen our understanding of mission, we suggest the following questions:

- ✓ To be in a state of mission is first of all a mental attitude. How do we experience this? Do we feel ourselves to be missionaries in all experiences of our life?
- ✓ “Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation!” (Mark 16, 15) In our mission how far can we go? In what framework, in what places are we called to accomplish our mission as Christians?
- ✓ The mission of revealing the love of the Father is accomplished by proclaiming, witnessing and service. Which of these seems the most challenging to us? Which is the most important for us at this time?

## Orientations for:

- **Hearing the Word of God, Prayer and Conjugal Prayer**

**Luke 4: 17-19, 21**

*“They handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: ‘The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favor.’ Then he began to speak to them: ‘This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.’”*

- **The Sit-Down**

For the sit-down this month we suggest that you reflect on your own perspectives and understanding of mission.

- ✓ While reviewing the everyday events of our month, have there been occasions of our mission in action? What are they?
- ✓ The mission of revealing the love of the Father is accomplished through proclaiming, witnessing and service. In which of these areas do we ourselves feel more called to action? Are we open enough to take on other forms of mission?

- **The Rule of Life**

What new actions has the sit-down suggested to us? Individually or as a couple, let us choose one of these actions as a rule of life for the coming month.

## C. For the Team Meeting

**Meditation Text** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)



**(John 17, 18-23)**

*“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake I consecrate myself so that they too may be consecrated in truth. I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have given them the glory you gave to me that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.”*

**To share as a team**

- **Life experience**

During the course of the month, let us review our daily lives and the opportunities we have to proclaim the Good News of the love of God. During the Sharing, let us share with our teammates the discoveries we have made concerning our mission.

- **Questions on the study theme**

For a deeper understanding of the theme, we are invited to share the results of our reflection as a couple on the questions suggested.

## SECOND MEETING

### THE MISSION OF THE COUPLE IN TEAMS OF OUR LADY - CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

*“I have glorified you on earth and finished the work that you gave me to do.”*

(John 17, 4)

#### A. Objective

- To become aware of the riches that we receive through our mission as a couple.
- To review our life acknowledging the challenges we face, in order to take on the call that we have received **the gifts** that the Lord has given to us, and the choice of our **commitments**.
- To study the possibilities of our commitments as a couple, in view of mission.

#### B. To work on during the month

##### Life Experience

In order to become aware of the challenges and the possibilities of our mission as a Christian couple, we propose the following process during the month:

- Share during your Sit-down the experience of one aspect of each one's mission.
- Pray to the Holy Spirit that He might fill us with his light and His strength so that we may better **listen, understand, discern and act**.

##### Study Theme and Reflection

###### The gifts to set out on our mission

- **We are invited**

To set out on our mission is to accept the invitation of Our Lord Jesus to follow a path toward sanctity. It is to dare oneself to be led by the Good News of Jesus Christ, that it may give meaning to our life. This dynamic must always be sustained by prayer.

- **We are sent**

If we speak of the mission of the Christian couple, it means that we have experienced that there is a sending forth. And this sending forth comes from the person of Jesus, and from the life of the

Church. From the time of “*Go forth and announce the Gospel...*” through the contemporary exhortations of the Popes, as Christians, and as married Christians, we have received the invitation, the requirement and the mandate to announce the Good News.

- **We have the gift to be witnesses**

Every gift received gives us the possibility of taking on a commitment. The Christian couple has not only received a call, but also the gifts to respond favorably to it. God’s grace accompanies sacramental life and confers on Christian couples the necessary gifts. These gifts are neither the power to dominate, nor the power of strength, but the power to be witnesses. Christian spouses have received gifts to enable Christ to be present in their lives.

- **We take on the mission**

The more this challenge calls us, the more it demands of us. Mission is a call that we have received. Through Baptism we as Christians have received the mission to render account of God’s Grace. Through marriage we as Christian couples have received the mission of revealing God’s Love. The first mission, the most basic mission of the Christian couple is this: to make God’s Love visible, no more, no less.

Love is not limited to a word, a feeling, or a sentiment. It is a delicate service, a task of great responsibility. It is not a matter of “doing things” or of undertaking “loads of activities.” Undoubtedly all that is part of it; however, above all, it is a matter of BEING: that the spouses be “the living and palpable presence of the Love of God.”

**A few words from the Church**

- **Lumen Gentium – 31**

The real vocation of the laity consists of searching for the reign of God specifically through the management of temporal concerns, that they be regulated according to God...In this way, they are named by God.... in order to make Christ known to others especially by the witness of their life, spreading faith, hope and charity.

- **Address of John Paul II to the Regional Responsible Couples of the Teams Movement (January 20, 2003)**

5. Nourished by the Bread of Life, and called to be “**light for those who search for truth**” (L.G.35), especially for their children, husband and wife will be able to fully live the grace of their baptism in their specific missions in the heart of the family, in society and in the Church. That was equally the insight of Father Caffarel who did not want anyone to join a team **as an escape but in order to learn to be outwardly giving to all.**”

7. The encouragement to witness unceasingly and explicitly the grandeur and beauty of human love, of the couple and of the family.

- **Christi Fideles Laici of John Paul II:**

32. Engrafted to the vine and brought to life, the branches are expected to bear fruit: ‘He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit’ (*John 15:5*). Bearing fruit is an essential demand of life in Christ and life in the Church. The person who does not bear fruit does not remain in

communion: ‘Each branch of mine that bears no fruit, he (my Father) takes away’ (*John 15:2*).

At this point **communion begets communion**: essentially it is likened to a **mission on behalf of communion**. In fact Jesus says to his disciples: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide’ (*John 15:16*).

Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other; they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that **communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion**. It is always the one and the same Spirit who calls together and unifies the Church and sends her to preach the Gospel ‘to the ends of the earth’ (*Acts 1:8*).

33. The lay faithful, precisely because they are members of the Church, have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel: they are prepared for this work by the sacraments of Christian initiation and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

### The Challenges

- **To let ourselves be touched by God**

*“A leper came to him and pleaded on his knees: ‘If you want to, you can cure me.’ Feeling sorry for him, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. ‘Of course I want to!’ he said. ‘Be cured!’ And the leprosy left him at once and he was cured.*

*Jesus immediately sent him away and sternly ordered him, ‘Mind you say nothing to anyone, but go and show yourself to the priest, and make the offering for your healing prescribed by Moses as evidence of your recovery’.*

*The man went away, but then started talking about it freely and telling the story everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer go openly into any town, but had to stay outside in places where nobody lived. Even so, people from all around would come to him.”* (Mark 1, 40-45)

How can someone touched by the love of God remain quiet? It is impossible! Perhaps that is why many Christians remain silent: they have not been touched by the healing love of God. They remain full of fear and apprehension; they live as the lepers did, isolated from the community. Since our baptism Jesus touches us and says to us: “Be cured!” More than that he has given us his Spirit. We must say anew to the Lord: *“If you wish, you can cure me.”* And he will do it each time, because he wants us to be sanctified and filled with the life of the Spirit. **Therefore, once touched by the sanctifying love of God, we are going to be converted into true witnesses of this Love in the world.**

It is Jesus who told us: “I am sending you into the midst of wolves” and “shake the dust from your feet.”

- **To be open and available.**

We are invited to understand the evangelical demand as a “dare” to live in a new way, and to place our whole being at the disposal of the action of the Spirit. We become well aware that in order to believe, to hope, to love, to listen, to look at, to discern, to understand, to give life, to become truly engaged, it is necessary **to be open minded and available.**

- **To put the Word of God into practice**

We strive to assure that the result of reflection, prayer and mutual exchange can be welcomed, understood and lived by each of the couples in the team.

- **To pray and witness**

We must spread the great news to the ends of the earth: Christ has come to save love. Those who despair must find hope. Couples in crisis must find joy. It is essential that there be an increase in the number of couples in which husbands and wives get down on their knees together, pray together in adoration, give thanks together, offer themselves together to God, and join together in his service. (Father Caffarel. French Monthly Letter, April 1959).

- **To be in the service of God**

The Christian life is not limited to adoration, to praise, to asceticism, to the effort to deepen one's interior life. It is equally pledged to the service to God wherever He calls us: family, profession, society. Therefore, couples that come together to deepen their spirituality, far from looking for ways to escape the world, learn to serve God in the world for their whole life, through Christ's example. (Father Caffarel.. French Monthly Letter – June 1950).

- **To be builders of unity**

Jesus is present in the world and continues his masterpiece of unity by his invisible action. By uniting husband and wife with their children, He begins this great unification of humanity. Thus, He creates the family to be the smallest cell of the Church, but at the same time the most fundamental and the most solid.

That love, that “communion in love” which Christ creates within the couple calls out to be spread. This couple then becomes a unifier wherever they live. Communion is installed in the places where the couple acts providentially. (Father Caffarel. The Apostolate Beyond the Couple).

### Perspectives

The preceding reflections lead us to very positive outlooks for us, Christian couples. We receive so much as part of the Teams Movement. We have followed a path of initiation, leading to a deepening of our conjugal spirituality.

It is up to us to promote changes in the following ways:

- To become aware that we have received much and we have much to give to others. That changes the heart and encourages us to give more of ourselves.
- To reveal to others the grace of being married, and the joy of living as a couple.
- To arrive at the point that “**mission**” is present in a permanent way in our life.
- To transform into reality the affirmation that “*the teams are made up of active people.*”
- To add the subject of “**mission**” to the sharing of the team, and that that may become a permanent subject during the formation period in the Movement.

We must become aware that in “**daring**” to give of ourselves completely, in a more committed and satisfied way, to our spouse, to our children, to the Church, to those who live around us... **we will be on a missionary path**, as on a launching pad so that each one may be light and leaven for others.

Thus, our return will be one hundredfold, as Our Lord has promised us. And as couples in the Teams Movement, we will encourage others to “**dare**” to live the **Movement** in a more profound and



## Questions to share as a couple and in the team

We are now going to deepen our reflection on Challenges and Perspectives of Mission and on their role in our life. First we will reflect as a couple; then together with our team.

Let us share a **few ideas**:

✓ **How are we open and available** to “dare” to try a new way of living, in which we put ourselves entirely at the disposal of the action of the Spirit? Mention a few concrete actions.

✓ **How do we pray? How do we give of ourselves?** Father Caffarel tells us: “that there (must be) more and more couples who kneel down together, who pray in adoration together, who give thanks together, offer themselves together to God, and, **together, place themselves at his service.**”

✓ **Have we included the subject of Mission in our conjugal prayer?**

Let us share a few of the **Perspectives**:

✓ We have received much and we have much to give to others. **How do we involve ourselves in this?**

✓ How, in the future, in our team, will we share our successes and our difficulties with the way that each one takes on his mission?

✓ **What are the main signs of progress made by each one?**

## Orientations for:

- **Hearing the Word of God, Personal and Conjugal Prayer**

### Jeremiah 1: 4-10

*The word of the Lord was addressed to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I have appointed you as prophet to the nations”*

*I said, “Ah, Lord; look, I do not know how to speak: I am a child!”*

*But the Lord replied, “Do not say, “I am a child”. Go now to those to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. **Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you, it is the Lord who speaks!**”*

*Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me: “There! I am putting my words into your mouth. Look, today I am setting you over nations and over kingdoms, to tear up and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”*

- **The Sit-Down**

Reflect and share on the following sentences:

✓ *How can he who has been touched by the love of God remain silent? It's impossible!*

Think about occasions when we have received a loving “touch” from God, just as God touched Jeremiah. Remember and talk about them.

✓ *Once touched by the love of God we become true witnesses of this Love in the world.*

When do we see ourselves as witnesses of God’s love among those around us?

Does our home reflect God’s love? How? What must we do to create an atmosphere more conducive to this experience?

- **Rule of Life**

After having had a sit-down, choose, individually or as a couple, a concrete suggestion for a rule of life.

## C. For the Team Meeting

**Text for Meditation** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)

**The call of Paul: Galatians 1, 11-16**

*“The fact is, brothers, and I want you to realize this, the Good News I preached is not a human message that I was given by men, it is something I learnt only through a revelation of Jesus Christ. You must have heard of my career as a practicing Jew, how merciless I was in persecuting the Church of God, how much damage I did to it, how I stood out among other Jews of my generation and how enthusiastic I was for the traditions of my ancestors ... Then God, who had specially chosen me while I was still in my mother’s womb, called me through his grace and chose to reveal his Son to me, so that I might preach the Good News about him to the pagans.”*

**To Share in the Team**

- **Life Experience**

Sharing is the opportunity to exchange ideas with the team on this topic.

- **Questions on the study theme**

Let us share now the questions suggested above to be prepared for the meeting.

## THIRD MEETING

### THE MISSION OF THE COUPLE IN TEAMS TO EACH OTHER

*“Love is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes. Love does not come to an end.”*

(1 Cor 13, 7-8)

#### A. Objective

- To understand the mission of couples in relation to each other;
- To reinforce the process of mutual development of the couple from the human and spiritual stand poi
- To perceive how the husband-wife relationship can reveal the love of God and be a witness of this love.

#### B. To work on during the month

##### Life Experience

Let us, as a couple, recall times on our path through life as a couple. Do we take the opportunity to determine or to experience the influence of our spouse on our human and spiritual growth?

##### Study Theme and Reflection

During a conference for teams, Mgr Dagens, Bishop of Angouleme (France), affirmed the close relationship between spirituality and mission, by emphasizing the impossibility of separating these two essential elements of the vocation of the couple. By this affirmation, he invited couples to this revealing and prophetic mission: to be **witnesses of married (conjugal) love** in a secular society in which Christianity is not recognized.

Many of us are going to wonder how to be witnesses. Others may ask themselves: “**Have we really been witnesses?**”

##### The demands along the way

At the time of their marriage many couples decide to forge a path together which, according to Father Manuel Iceta, “*converts them into ‘sacrament,’ into a sign of God’s love for each other, for their children and for others.*” Did they make this decision consciously? Were they perhaps naïve? But they undoubtedly were very generous. It is precisely this initial attitude of confidence which must be developed.

However we cannot stop there. We must constantly stay alert. All along the way challenges are numerous.

Respect for the rhythm and progress of the other, the welcoming, the attention, forgiveness requested and given, openness in exchanges, inherent faithfulness of love, absence of preconceived notions, acceptance and encouragement of the other as a different person, the capacity to marvel with one's spouse, needs not always understood but accepted, not without suffering at times, are going to gradually build up a new reality which begins the day of the marriage and which accompanies us throughout our life.

According to the words of Father Caffarel: *"It is necessary to move along a path toward each other, every day, along unknown roads, trying to discover the inner life of the spouse, while searching for that which can arouse his/her attention, interest, tenderness, while discovering what can lead to true communion."*

### Sacrament of Marriage – Sacrament of Service

We have been called to Marriage, which is as much a sacrament of service as is the sacrament of Holy Orders. However we have a minimal understanding of the idea of "service."

In Marriage we receive a mission to serve each other, to step out of ourselves to bring forth the happiness of the other whom we have chosen. Albert Schweitzer, a twentieth century theologian and Alsatian physician, states that "only those who will have searched and will have found what it means to serve, will be truly happy."

In service, we abandon our own selfishness. Our capacity to love grows in proportion to our attention to the needs of others.

### The First Mission of the Christian Couple

Thus it is that the priority of the couple is to the one closest to us, our spouse, entrusted to us by God. It is very important to note that each of us is a beloved child of God, and as such we do not belong to each other. Our spouse has been **entrusted** to us so that we can make him/her happier in every way. Certainly this task strongly increases our responsibility before God.

We can therefore affirm that **the mission at the heart of the couple is a mission of sanctification**. We are called to be missionaries for each other in our Christian marriage. *"We are called to grow unceasingly in this communion, through daily fidelity to the marriage promise of total mutual gift"* (Familiaris Consortio #19).

In this mission of sanctification of each other, the couple must make an effort to be an icon of God for each other. An icon is much more than a memory or simply an image. To be an icon is to reveal God, it is to make God present in the life of the spouse. Among Eastern rite Christians the icon is the presence of the sacred; it is grace in action.

### Mission in the direction of agape love

True conjugal love cannot be limited to erotic love, or be confused with it. Longtime married couples will agree in saying that the great foundation of their life together is not limited to sentimental love. This love of feeling and of passion, Eros, which attracted them to each other, has likewise matured.

Happy are those who have understood that love is not just a feeling or a passion. Love is a decision, the decision to maintain that first commitment of love. Feelings come and go. It is the commitment to the long term that sustains the couple.

Happy are those who agree to follow the road of agape love. They tirelessly continue to build a true and deep union. It is in loving each other each time a little more, body and soul, that the couple



progresses toward sanctity.

For Christian couples, the real task, according to Father Caffarel, is to become aware that the “*new commandment*” relates to them, then to involve themselves in **converting their love into conjugal charity**. That is precisely the teaching of the Teams Movement: to encourage conjugal charity.

Father Caffarel warns us in affirming that “*to convert conjugal love into conjugal charity is no easy task. Husband and wife are well aware that it is necessary to develop a communion of souls. The new commandment demands of the spouses that they work incessantly toward this communication at the soul level.*” The school of true love moves us from ‘holding back to offering of self.’

It is on this road toward agape love, that each couple is invited to travel through the mystery that is the other, endeavoring to discover, to welcome and to entrust each other to the other.

Little by little they reveal themselves to each other in the depths of their soul, and they share God who dwells there. And then they understand that what unites them is something much stronger than what once attracted them to each other. They pass from romantic love to charity-love, to total love that is revealed in their attitudes and their behavior: **they search for sanctity in marriage and through marriage**.

Union of the vine and its branches is necessary so that interior renewal can take place in our hearts. Therefore, if we are not tied to the love of God by prayer, by reading the Word of God and by the sacraments, it will be very difficult for us to live out our mission as a couple. Only growth in the spiritual dimension will allow us to answer effectively to the crises that afflict couples and families.

### **From the mission within the couple to the mission of the couple**

From the moment that the couple perceives that each one is called to be a permanent channel of God’s love for the other, and that each one has the obligation to keep this channel open, for one’s own sanctity, the couple realizes as well that the new commandment, this “**Love others as I have loved you**”, once awakened in the couple, spreads out into all situations that surround them. Father Caffarel loved to repeat over and over again that marriage is the giving of oneself to the other, so that together they may give to others.

Our founder, in his presentation “**The Teams Movement in the face of atheism,**” reiterates his invitation to couples, that they open their hearts and become aware of their mission in a world won threatened by atheism. The love that unites the couple cannot close in upon itself. On the contrary, that love strengthens them for their mission, which is specifically theirs. We are called to be witness to those who see us, those all around us, that our married love is a reflection of the love of God.

In 1970, at another presentation, Father Caffarel declared to the Teams couples that God’s thinking on love and marriage did not only concern the sanctification of the couple, but equally the witness of that couple to the world: “*It is an extremely demanding task to be witness of the living God,*” and he added: “*if we limit ourselves to the gift of one to the other, the two streams will form a pond. But in a pond, the water quickly becomes stagnant. But, if by more than giving of ourselves to each other, we together give ourselves to others, then a river of running water is formed. More than ever, I believe that the Christian couple has a very important role to play in the Church and in society.*”

## **Supporting Texts**

### **The Couple in God’s Plan**

“*God said: Christian couple, you are my pride and my hope...*”



*When I created heaven and earth, and the great lights in the sky, I saw in my creatures traces of my perfections and I found that that was good.*

*When I covered the earth with a great mantle of fields and flowers, I saw that that was good.*

*When I created endless numbers of animals, each according to its own species, contemplating in these living and abundant beings a reflection of the outpouring of my life, I found that that was good.*

*From all my creation there came forth a great hymn, both solemn and joyful, celebrating my glory and my perfections.*

*And still, there was no image of my most secret, most fervent life.*

*And at that moment I felt surge within me the necessity to reveal the best of myself: and that then became my most beautiful invention.*

*And so it is, human couple, that I created you, “in my image and likeness,” and I looked, and this time I found that that was very good.*

*In the middle of this universe, where each one of my creature sing my glory and celebrate my perfections, there came forth love to reveal my Love.*

*Human couple, my beloved creation, my privileged witness, do you understand that you are most dear to me among all creatures? Do you understand the great hope that I have placed in you?*

*You are the bearer of my reputation, of my glory. You are the great source of hope for the universe, because you are love.”*

(Father Caffarel, paraphrasing the French poet Charles Peguy)

*“Made in the image and likeness of God, man is a rational and free creature, capable of knowing and loving, and who only succeeds in knowing himself through the sincere gift of himself. (cf. GS 24). On the one hand, being made in the image of God is a witness of the gift of the Creator. On the other hand, it likewise expresses a mission: man and woman are called to live “together” with each other, and even more, they are called to live one “for” the other. We can thus affirm that since the beginning by an act of creation, God confides human beings to each other. Each one then becomes responsible for the other, in religious respect and faithful to God’s design.”*

(Evangelization and Culture of Human Life – Italian Bishops Conference, May 1990)

## Testimonies

1. When we married, we asked the Lord for the strength and enthusiasm to build strong relationship as a couple in order to become faithful witnesses of his love.

Today after being married and in a team for 22 years, we understand that through spontaneous prayer our mission “**of being a Couple**” has been revealed.

The first service to which we have been called was **to listen**: to what was in our heart, to our spouse, to the Word of God, to our children, and to all those who visit our home, looking for help in their life choices.

Through marriage we have been called to motherhood and fatherhood, but the time has never been decided by us.

Our three children were born independent of our choosing. In spite of our total openness to welcoming other children, we have not had any. The Lord called us to fruitfulness in our life, not only vis-à-vis our children, but in the whole of our life, for our whole life, and for all lives.

He called us to live in communion with each other; it is love that determines our actions and

the small daily aspects of our life.

For us, mission does not imply leaving the house, but staying there and building strong relationships. It is not work, it is a lifestyle that reflects what the couple is: **a permanent fruitful unit like the Trinity**. You, Me and Us. Together we are something greater and different from the sum of two individuals. We are a gift for each other, and the sharing of love makes the couple capable of facing unexpected situations, and being messengers of unity.

Mariolina and Lorenzo Lorusso  
(SR Italie)

2. Let us now talk about the mission of the Teams couple, based on these testimonies:

We have been married for 40 years, and we joined the Teams Movement 25 years ago.

Before becoming part of the Teams Movement, we recognized that our responsibility to each other began on July 10, 1971 when we said YES to each other in the sacrament of marriage.

From that moment on we have tried to share everything in our life, including prayer and sharing our finances. We can state without any hesitation that, from the beginning, there was constant dialogue and prayer which enabled us to smooth out the roughness and to welcome as small pebbles, instead of large stones, the disparities which came up, as for example concerning certain aspects of the education of our four children. The slogan that guided their education was the sentence from the Gospel: “Jesus grew in wisdom, in size and in grace.” We have often failed, but the Lord knows that we have always tried to do our best.

What changed in our marriage after our becoming part of the Teams Movement? At the very beginning, the call of Father Caffarel to our responsibility of each one to the other, not only for our happiness and our personal growth, but more especially for our SANCTIFICATION (fulfilled within the couple and within the team).

And this we pursue, with some failures, but by getting up again, knowing well that we are not alone. The Holy Spirit (through our founder) has given us the Endeavors, which are instruments to strengthen our fragile selves (we refer to personal prayer, conjugal prayer, the rule of life and the duty of the sit-down).

Walking the path in union with other couples, in a climate of mutual aid, is an inspired form of support in order to overcome obstacles that present themselves.

If that is good for us (although we do not always value it sufficiently) why not share this “good news” with other couples?” It is why we set aside part of our time to apostolic activities and to various services to which we are called by the Movement.

Maria Fernanda and Antonio Felgueiras  
(SR Portugal)

## Questions to share as a couple and in the team

The couple is called to live an incarnate spirituality. It is in the most ordinary happenings of daily life, good or bad, that we can meet God, who is always ready to love and pardon us indefinitely.

✓ How well do we carry out the Endeavors, particularly conjugal prayer? Do we associate them with the human dimension of our conjugal life?

In his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope John Paul II wrote: “**Two actions are very characteristic of Jesus’ mission: healing and forgiveness**”. If we want to follow Christ, these actions must become part of our lives.



- ✓ How do we behave in order to heal each other and to forgive each other?
- ✓ How do we let the Lord take part in this healing process?
- ✓ As a couple, united through the sacrament of marriage, how does the Lord reveal himself in our relationship?

## **Orientations for**

- **Hearing the Word of God, Personal Prayer and Conjugal Prayer**

*“My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognize what is best.”*  
(Philippians 1, 9-10)

- **The Sit-Down**

*“Charity is the Christian name for love, which includes the love of husband and wife for each other. Conjugal dialogue comes forth from charity and leads to charity, or it is not a dialogue.”*

(Father Flavio Cavalca<sup>7</sup>)

During your sit-down, in light of what has been presented in this study theme, review the following:

- ✓ How has each of us contributed to the growth of the other, in the various aspects of our life?
  - ✓ What impediments have there been to greater growth?
  - ✓ Can we make some concrete suggestions to share after this experience?
- **The Rule of Life**
- Following the Sit-Down, if there are any difficulties in our relationship, let's try to set up a Rule of Life which will strengthen our life together.

## **C. For the Team Meeting**

### **Text for Meditation** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)

#### **(Tobit) 8, 5-8**

*“<sup>5</sup>She stood up and they began praying for protection, and this was how he began:*

*You are blessed, God of our fathers,*

*blessed, too, is your name*

*forever and ever!*

*Let the heavens bless you and all things you have made*

*for evermore!*

*<sup>6</sup>It was you who created Adam, you who created Eve his wife to be his help and support;*

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<sup>7</sup> Father Flávio Cavalca was the Spiritual Counsellor of the SR Brazil from 1999 to 2004



*and from these two the human race was born.*

*it was you who said:*

*'It is not good that the man should be alone;*

*let us make him a helpmate like himself.'*

*<sup>7</sup>And so I do not take my sister for any lustful motive;*

*I do it in singleness of heart.*

*Be kind enough to have pity on her and on me,*

*and bring us to old age together."*

*And together they said, "Amen, Amen."*

## **To Share in the Team**

- **Life Experience**

The time of sharing is a good time to share with the team what the significance of the month's life experience is for each couple.

- **Questions on the study theme**

Discuss the questions suggested above.

## FOURTH MEETING

### THE MISSION OF THE TEAMS COUPLE IN THE FAMILY

*Families are living communities of God's love bearing the fruits of the Spirit.*

*"These fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."*

(Galatians 5, 22-23)

#### A. Objective

- To witness within the family values of acceptance, love, forgiveness, tolerance and understanding;
- To encourage a life of prayer and spirituality;
- To strengthen and support family life.

#### B. To work on during the month

##### Life Experience

Let us focus on our mission as a couple in our family, how we pray as a family, and how we reflect Christ's love in our marriage and in our relationships with our children.

##### Study Theme and Reflection

As a married couple we share in the ministry of Christ, forming a small "**domestic Church.**" Everything that we do to build a loving and lasting relationship with each other becomes part of our Christian ministry. We help each other grow in faith and love, and we do the same within our families. It is through the parents' love for each other that the children witness love, respect and fidelity. We are their first models. As we treat each other, children learn how to treat others. We have our weaknesses and challenges and our aspirations; how we handle them is noted by our children. The manner in which we speak to and about others will be absorbed by our children. Respect, tolerance, joy, happiness, as well as the way we face sadness and disappointments become an integral part of their lives. As we reach out to others in difficulty, in need, our children will learn lessons of compassion and true charity.

In his book, "Marriage, Sacrament of Hope and Challenge," William P. Roberts writes of the importance of being truly present to children, not just physically, but personally. "*Personal presence involves being here for children, offering oneself in communicative gift to them and being responsive to their self-giving and communication. Being present to children in this way takes many forms: playing with them, openly demonstrating affection, taking seriously what they have to say, answering their questions honestly and on the appropriate level, sharing walks, and becoming a creative and integral part of family activities. When children are small, personal presence means reading and*



*listening to stories, wiping tears, sharing treats and encouraging the latest accomplishment in art, music, sports. As the children grow older, personal presence manifests itself by being willing to listen to them when they come in late at night, bearing with them through their struggles, inviting free expression of opinion and sharing with them on a deep level insights born out of one's own experience."*

Spirituality develops in the family in proportion as the couples deepen their own conjugal spirituality. Thus, the richness of the couple's spirituality bears fruit. The Word of God becomes the center, and prayer becomes the natural manifestation of this relationship of God with the family.

### Prayer

It is through us, their parents, that our children first learn about God and our Catholic faith. We are the primary religious educators. When we are committed to a faith-based life in Christ, our home will reflect Christ's love. This helps us to nourish the faith of our children; they feel and absorb the religious environment in their home.

Prayer becomes a natural part of life for all members of the family if the practice begins early. A short nightly prayer over the very youngest, simple prayers for young children at meal time when the family meets together, and at bedtime, help children learn at an early age the importance of the presence of a loving God in their lives. These practices will grow and change as the children grow, but the importance of prayer should never diminish. Regularly including prayers for vocations will keep the family keenly aware of the need for priestly vocations. Perhaps seeds will be sown!

Young children may bring home simple prayers learned in school or in a religion class and be eager to add them to family prayer. Children can take turns preparing and leading prayers. Incorporating prayers for each other within the family, for others in need, helps children develop concern for others.

All kinds of prayer can be used: Bible stories, Scripture, the Rosary, meditations, songs and prayers that everyone knows, spontaneous prayers of praise, thanksgiving, petition, and forgiveness. There are endless possibilities! There are times when you may\* invite whoever is present to join with the family in prayer.

Satisfying all ages can be very challenging, but adjustments can be made in family prayer as family dynamics change. No one should be forced to participate. Tolerance and patience will have the best long-term results.

Be free to talk to your children about your relationship with God and how you maintain it. Listen to their questions, their doubts if they have any, and answer them with love. Dialogue is the basis of brotherly love. Love your children with the unconditional love God shows us. When children become adults we may not approve of some of the decisions they make, such as choices of partners, co-habiting, etc. but it is important that we maintain relationships with them, and that we always pray for them. It is a way for them to feel God's love when we help them to understand why we believe and act as we do, and when we show our love even if they know that we do not approve of their behavior.

All can grow in knowledge and love of God's Word through regular contact with Scripture. Attending Mass together, whenever possible, presents the opportunity to hear God's Word, receive the Eucharist, and to start a new week in communion with each other, centered in prayer.

Thanks to family prayer our children will become accustomed to turning to God in all situations in life, and to praying for and loving others. According to Father Caffarel, there is no better way to promote charity within the family than through family prayer.

A word of caution to couples whose zeal may lead them to too much involvement in their parish. When dedication to outside activities drives children to resentment against the Church, it is

time for the husband and wife to reassess their commitments. Isn't this a time to give your children more attention? There should be ongoing dialogue between husband and wife concerning outside commitments when the children are still small and need more of our time and attention. As the children grow including them in these conversations will certainly benefit family communication, understanding, and family harmony.

### Missionaries

We must be missionary couples within our own family. It is through us that our children will learn to understand their responsibilities in life, to embrace good values, and to show concern for others. They learn the importance of obedience, of loyalty, of honesty and fairness, of forgiveness and asking for forgiveness.

Are we in the habit of coming together as a family to review activities and responsibilities within the family? Do we also discuss priorities and values? Children love to be involved in decision-making and family life. When we practice tolerance, respect and forgiveness within the family, children learn about unselfish love and generosity, both prerequisites for a happy marriage and functional society.

Do we respect and welcome the specialness of each child? Are we firm but clear in our expectations? Do we meet with them individually regularly to keep communications open? Do we find time for special one-on-one times with a child, for an ice cream or lunch, or even a walk together? These are excellent opportunities for each parent and child to develop warm and loving relationships – particularly when these meetings continue with older children.

Our children learn how to get along with others, by observing the way we care for the elderly in our family, our neighbors, the way in which we welcome new life, or in celebrating family events or in gatherings with friends. Our children learn when they see us respect others, regardless of their age, mentality, socio-economic or cultural situation. As our children witness love, respect and interconnectedness between parents, grandparents and other elderly relatives or family friends, they learn how to respect and warmly treat this older generation.

Do we include our children in decisions concerning acts of charity? We need to include them even when they are young and, as they grow older. There are so many ways for a family to participate in community activities in order to bring attention to the marginalized in our society. There are invaluable lessons to be learned!

When we celebrate significant moments in life together, whether they be family events, such as birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, or religious events such as Christmas and Easter, a baptism, First Communion, Confirmation, weddings, even funerals, the family comes together in a special closeness that reinforces the importance of the family, but principally the spiritual connection of God's love empowering their family.

In conclusion, in his text "At the Service of the New Commandment" (1965), Father Caffarel affirms that **"parents must be ready to live a loving relationship with their children, which means to love them with God's love,"** and he encourages us by adding **"which only develops little by little, and at the cost of great effort."**

### Supporting Texts

*"Parents are the first and most important educators of their own children and they also possess a fundamental competence in this area: they are educators because they are parents.*

*...The family is called to carry out its task of education in the Church, thus sharing in her life and mission. The Church wishes to carry out her educational mission above all through families who are made capable of undertaking this task by the Sacrament of Matrimony, through the 'state of grace'*



which follows from it and the specific 'charism' proper to the entire family community.

...Certainly one area in which the family has an irreplaceable role is that of religious education, which enables the family to grow as a 'domestic church.' ... Families, and more specifically parents, are free to choose for their children a particular kind of religious and moral education consonant with their own convictions. Even when they entrust these responsibilities to ecclesiastical institutions or to schools administered by religious personnel, their educational presence ought to continue to be constant and active.

...The fourth commandment, 'Honor your father and mother' is closely linked to the whole process of education. Fatherhood and motherhood, this first and basic fact in the gift of humanity, open up before both parents and children new and profound perspectives. The commandment calls for a child to honor its father and mother but it also enjoins upon parents a kind of corresponding or symmetrical duty. Parents are also called to 'honor' their children, whether they are young or old. This attitude is needed throughout the process of their education, including the time of their schooling. The 'principle of giving honor,' the recognition and respect due to man precisely because he is a man, is the basic condition for every authentic educational process.

... The gospel of love is the inexhaustible source of all that nourishes the human family as a 'communion of persons.' In love the whole educational process finds its support and definitive meaning as the mature fruit of the parents' mutual gift."

John Paul II "Letter to Families" (February, 1994)

"The Church calls the couple and the family to become what they are called to be according to God's plan for them. Thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, they are aided by grace in this endeavor. That supposes, surely, on the part of the couple and the family a minimum of community tie with the Church in order to benefit from what the Church wants to and can bring to the family.

...God calls a man and a woman joined in marriage to form a community of love, a community of love that is stable, fruitful, faithful, generous to each other. It is a union of minds, hearts and bodies, with respect for differences between them. The family that they found, with the children that they bear and with the diversity of the generations that constitute their family, is called to be this community based on affection and mutual love. ...The risen Christ becomes the family's companion on the road and communicates the transforming force of his love. It is the gift of God first of all which forms the couple and the family and permits them to become, day after day, what they are called to be."

Conference du Cardinal Ricard, December 12, 2010: "The Church an opportunity for the couple and the family, the couple and the family an opportunity for the Church"

## Testimonies

1. When we became part of Teams of Our Lady, we had been married for three years and had three daughters, two-year-old twins and a one-year-old. Thanks to retreats, our studies, and frequently hearing the Word of God, we have learned to understand our first mission as parents: to reflect the love of God. We are the first catechists of our children.

The years passed, First Communion, then Confirmation, youth groups...

But when they entered university we noticed their absence at Mass, which we had always attended together. Every Sunday there was an excuse: one time an exam, another time group study... They were losing interest in the Mass.

During a Sit-Down we talked about this situation. We were in agreement that God had provided these children to us, and that our first mission was to show them His Face and His Love.

However, we were afraid that we were not demonstrating the trust that had been placed in us.

Mothers' Day was approaching, and I, Regina, got up early, and I made a poster that I hung on the wall in the living room: "I have nothing to celebrate. I have failed in my primary mission: to reveal the love of God to my daughters."

It was a very powerful moment in our family, but the grace of God sustained us. He was there among us. That Mothers' Day we all went to Mass together, and during the Mass we were able to praise and thank God for his mercy.

Regina Lucia and Cleber Marin

SR Brazil

2. Teams of Our Lady has had a great influence in our lives. Our children have grown up in Teams.

At the present time family prayer only takes place on Sundays, or whenever we come together for special occasions. But we always remember how it used to be.

Even if we were very busy with our six children, we sat down to dinner together. One of the children would give the blessing. After the main course we paused for sharing: "What did I love most today? What made me laugh?" That time was always very amusing, because some of the children had a very developed sense of humor. But the action of God in our lives was always emphasized when we ended by saying: "*for everything, let us give thanks to God.*"

On birthdays the practice was a little different: everyone shared what they most appreciated about the child whose birthday it was. There was always lots of laughing and joking; and each child raced to be first, because after hearing the comments of the seven of us, there wasn't much to add. The child celebrating the birthday was always a little embarrassed, but down deep he really loved the attention he was receiving. When they are older they will also be able to share their memories, of Christmas and New Year's celebrations.

Without Teams of Our Lady, we would not have such wonderful memories.

Declan and Deirdre

SR Transatlantique

## Questions to share as a couple and as a team

For the exchange of ideas as a couple and then later as a team, we suggest the following:

✓ How important is family prayer in our daily life? How has that changed as the children grow? How have we handled reluctance to participate, and how have we been successful in overcoming resistance to family prayer?

✓ How do we communicate with our children on matters of faith and Christian values? How do we keep the lines of communication open with each one? Do we take the time to listen to their concerns, their disappointments and their joys? Do we follow them in their "spiritual growth?" How?

✓ How can we help and encourage other couples who may be experiencing difficulties in their family situations? How can we encourage openness and support among the couples?

## Orientations for

- **Hearing the Word of God, Personal, and Conjugal Prayer**



*“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

(Col 3, 12-17)

- **The Sit-Down**

- ✓ In what way do we as a family come together to pray? As children grow, circumstances change. How have we adapted to these changes? What hinders family prayer? What can we do to overcome impediments?

- ✓ Do we as a family maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other, of openness, of dialogue, of forgiveness? How can we improve in any of these areas?

- ✓ Can we recall any special moments when we felt especially inclined to share our faith with our children? How did we do that? In what ways do our children reflect their faith-life? How can we help, what words or attitudes should we have to “give life” to our children?

- **Rule of Life**

As you reflect on the suggested topics for a sit-down this month choose one area in which you want to improve. What can you work on this month? Choose this for a rule of life.

## **C. For the Team Meeting**

**Text for meditation** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)

**(Ephesians 3, 14-21)**

*“This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every family, whether spiritual or natural, takes its name: Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God.*

*Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen”*

### **To share in the team**

- **Life Experience**

Share with your team what has been happening in your life.

- **Questions on the study theme**

Discuss the questions suggested above.

**FIFTH MEETING**

## THE MISSION OF THE TEAMS COUPLE WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

*“All of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other.”*

(Rm 12. 5)

### A. Objectives

- To develop a greater understanding of the mission of the Teams couple to aid in the growth of the Movement and as a source of growth in the couple’s relationship to each other.
- To better understand the various possibilities of service in the Movement.

### B. To work on during the month

#### Life Experience

Discover the various possibilities of carrying out our mission as a Christian couple in the Movement, particularly in our own Sector. Evaluate the possibility of assuming one of these missions as a couple.

#### Study Theme and Reflection

Through our baptism we are tied to the mission of Christ, to know how to reveal God’s love to humanity, in every dimension of life. This mission starts with those who are closest to us.

It seems obvious to us that life in the heart of the Teams Movement reveals a call to mission, in which we are all called to undertake our **mutual evangelization**. We evangelize each other through the witness of the wonders of God in our lives, but also through service and mutual support.

We may consider, for example, specific areas of service at different levels of responsibility in the Movement. However, as Father Caffarel reminds us: *“an important service is also undertaken by those who pray, who sacrifice, who make spiritual offerings of great value.”*

*“A living Movement is a Movement which is gradually built up each day, thanks to the action of each of its members. In this work each one assumes personal responsibility, according to his particular talents, resources, time and generosity.*

*A Movement declines rapidly when its members abandon the role of builders and adopt an attitude of renters!*

*All of you who are members of the Teams Movement, do you do your share in building the Movement? I invite you to put this question on the table. Because a Movement must be living in order that it may grow. (...) The development of the Teams Movement can signify a very important contribution for the renewal of the Church.”*

*(Father Caffarel)*

## Within the team

The idea that we are all called to live out a mission for each other is at the root of our Movement, even if it is not clearly understood. Obviously in the Teams Movement there is a sharing of responsibilities, starting with taking turns with the role of Responsible Couple.

If we agree to be part of a team, we acknowledge that one day we will be Responsible Couple of the team. If all the couples are called to evangelize each other, the Responsible Couple is invited to give a little more, to become more directly involved in this mission for a set period. It accomplishes its mission at the same time within the team and beyond.

Como afirma Pe Mário José Filho<sup>8</sup>:

*“Without any doubt we can say that the Responsible Couple of the team, through the exercise of its mandate, fulfills a missionary role which consists of revealing, orienting, guiding, and above all, encouraging the couples of the team in order to bring about a deeper experience of Jesus Christ.*

*This is the mission that the couple receives when it is elected to lead its team. To be a connection within the Movement (Sectors, Regions, other teams, other movements), to circulate the SEVE (is this a newsletter? If it is, replace SEVE with “the newsletter” – but not with the quotation marks) which nourishes our spiritual conjugality; that is to say, to motivate couples to live the Endeavors, it is to guide the team meeting, after having prepared in a special way the DISCUSSION with the spiritual adviser.”*

*(Father Mario Jose Filho, Monthly Letter – Brazil, October 1997)*

Every month, In teams where this position exists, the Animator Couple of the meeting shares with the Responsible Couple the mission of spiritually encouraging the couples in the team.

## Beyond the team

It may happen that we are called to other levels of responsibility in our Sector or in our Region, on a national or international level, perhaps as Liaison Couple, or on the occasion of an event. The different areas of mission in the Movement are described in the document **“Responsibility in the Teams Movement.”** (ERI, 1993).

We must never forget that wherever we are called to serve, it is there that God wants us to be witness of his love, shepherds of his flock, not because we deserve it, but because He, in his goodness, wants us to share in the mission of his Son.

A mission in the Movement demands constant improvement on our part. In fact “at the moment that the one in charge becomes self-satisfied, he no longer gives life to the members of

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<sup>8</sup> Father Mario José Filho was the Spiritual Counsellor of the SR Brazil from 1994 to 1999



Teams.” (Father Caffarel)

*“Teams couples put the gifts they have received from God at the service of their own team, of their Sector and of their Region:*

*By taking part in the common effort to live fully community life and to broaden mutual help;*

*By giving support to those who respond to the call to serve in a position of responsibility;*

*By taking part in new initiatives that are launched in response to the growing aspirations of couples.”*

(Guide of the Teams of Our Lady)

### Spirit of Responsibility

We realize that in serving the Movement the principal objective is **to encourage** couples in the growth of their conjugal spirituality.

Moreover, we are at the service of the **whole**. When we agree to serve, we affirm the ties among the couples, the teams, the whole Movement. We are channels for spiritual riches, the vigor of the Teams movement, through which we nourish each other. In this way we make our contribution so that the Movement, present on five continents, remains faithful to its founding charism, and so that it may be lived in all its rich diversity.

Experience in the Teams Movement has shown us that that is only possible when responsibility is carried out in a collegial way.

*“Much more than a method, collegiality is a state of mind that characterizes the practices of our Movement, so that together we can discover the will of God. (...)*

*Collegiality can be defined as a ‘co-participation’ of the diverse and complementary gifts that the Spirit has given to each one, in a common search for truth, and for a deeper encounter among us.*

*It is in this sense that collegiality has for its objective to search together for the will of God in our Movement. That includes reflection, discussion, discernment, and search for consensus in a climate of confidence, loyalty and co-responsibility among the members of the community.”*

(The document “Exercise of Collegiality in the Teams Movement” – ERI 2003)

### Participation in the Mission of Christ and of the Church

No matter what responsibility has been entrusted to us, we cannot lose sight of its connection to participation in the Mission of Christ and of the Church. Therefore, our responsibility is an opportunity to make manifest the Good News about Marriage.

In this way our service to couples in the Teams Movement can be understood as a contribution to Family Ministry. And this contribution is made in two ways. First, our mission in the Movement is

mutual encouragement of each other in the quest for conjugal spirituality. Hence we are united in the same objective as that of Pastoral Ministry to bring the Gospel to couples and to families. Secondly, our mission leads us to spiritual and doctrinal formation of the couples in the teams. Thus we can become qualified agents in family ministry.

*“Live Teams of Our Lady as a ‘service of couples to couples.’*

*To put oneself in the service of the Movement is a real necessity: it makes us servants of the couple, of the family, of the Gospel, of marriage and of life.*

*Love has no limits; it motivates our commitments in the Movement of Teams of Our Lady, which are services of the Church. Therefore we become instruments of the Holy Spirit, and we experience the active presence of the Lord in ourselves, and as a couple. He knows the weaknesses and the limitations of those who choose to follow Him, but He gives each one the capacity to carry out his mission.*

*It is good to recall the words of Father Caffarel: ‘Teams respond to the needs of our time, for the couple and for marriage; that is why we need couples who love each other, who create an image of family and society, and who dedicate themselves to the service of the Movement.’”*

(Letter from Lourdes, 2006)

## Testimonies

1. At first it was an invitation, a call to respond to our need to determine the will of GOD in our marriage and in our family life.

Little by little, as a baby learning to walk, we have taken our first steps in the Movement. At the beginning, weak and insecure, but happy because the path and the direction responded to what was in our hearts... Slowly, little by little, He was revealed to us, thanks to our timid beginnings, but always present in the Hearing of the Word, in our conjugal prayers, the retreats we experienced together, in the duties of the Sit-Down, in our monthly team meetings, etc.

And gradually as we grasped the true sense of the Movement, we were more convinced, more impassioned, and consequently more engaged in it. And as we gradually became more involved, we became better witnesses. Through the action of the Holy Spirit we have been called several times to serve, as Responsible Couple of our team, then as Liaison Couple, later as Sector Couple, then Regional Couple, and recently as Responsible Couple of the Province.

We have learned to be more open, more welcoming and more attentive to those around us. We have learned that material and spiritual riches must be shared.

We have learned also that we cannot get there alone, nor without effort. The Lord is impatient to grant us this grace. What at the beginning may have seemed difficult, quickly became necessary, a dedication of heart and soul. We can no longer live without this marvelous Movement which has brought us nearer to God, and which has changed our lives. And, like St. Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, we dare to say: **“And I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me.”** (Galatians 2, 20)

Hermelinda and Arturo

SR Brazil

2. Married for 26 years, we are a bilingual couple, without children. Duarte is from Saint Michel, in the Azores, where the first language is Portuguese, and Linda was born of immigrant parents and grew up in Fall River, Massachusetts. In order to help Duarte make the transition to American culture more easily we befriended others in our Holy Spirit parish. Our participation with several groups in the parish led us to Teams of Our Lady.

The most important bonds we have as a couple are our love of God, our love for each other and



our love for others. We consider that the sacrament of marriage is a constant search for personal development and spiritual growth.

Our mission in the heart of our family does not depend on its size. Our family tie is made of husband and wife and an elderly mother. We are a mini-church of Christ. Our role of caregivers has taught us the true meaning of “sacrificial love,” so that we have had to put aside our desires for independence and freedom in order to care for an elderly, sickly mother.

Through daily reading of the Bible, meditation on the Word, participation in the Mass and Eucharist, we have been drawn closer together, recognizing God’s presence within us and His plan for us. We try to carry out God’s will for us by our actions and by being living examples of God’s love on earth. This is our method of evangelization.

Our team is made up of five couples and a Spiritual Advisor. Each couple brings a different aspect of family life. Each one is at a different level in spiritual and social development. This diversity allows us to learn a lot from each one’s experience. It teaches us to love and respect each other.

To grow, to spread our love of God and of the Church, this is our mission as a Teams couple. The study theme, the monthly meeting, the endeavors all teach us the way to make God the center and goal of our life. Our team is an extension of our family, in which we continue to grow toward sanctity. Our commitment to stay faithful to the team requires open communication. It requires us to listen to each other attentively, that we may be constantly forgiving, and that we may love each other unconditionally.

Duarte and Linda Silva

SR USA

## Questions to share as a couple and as a team

In order to deepen our understanding of the mission of the couple in the Teams Movement, let us use the following questions in order to share our ideas as a couple and in the team:

- ✓ In one of his writings Father Caffarel asks us the question: “All of you, members of Teams of Our Lady, do you contribute to the edification (enlightenment, uplifting) of the Movement?” How are we to respond to this?
- ✓ What does our team do so that we become a source of missionary couples for the Movement?
- ✓ In carrying out a responsibility in the Movement, what is our state of mind in doing it? What shows that our service in the Teams Movement is part of Christ’s mission?
- ✓ How do we help the couples in our team or in our Sector who carry out responsibilities in the Movement?
- ✓ Do we feel that our way of living the mission within the Teams Movement contributes to strengthening our conjugal life?

## Orientations for

### • Hearing the Word of God, Personal Prayer and Conjugal Prayer

*“If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should wash each other’s feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you. “I tell you most solemnly, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the man who sent him.”*

John 13, 14-16

- **The Sit-Down**

Let us examine how we live our mission in the Movement!

- ✓ “Teams couples put the gifts they have received from God at the service of their own team, of their Sector and of their Region.” (Guide of the Teams of Our Lady) What gifts do we think we have received? How do we put them to good use?
- ✓ What responsibilities (services) have we already assumed in the Teams Movement? Have we carried them out with a true missionary spirit?
- ✓ How available are we at present to live out our mission in the Movement? In what way of service? In what activities?

- **The Rule of Life**

✓ Based on our reflections during the Sit-Down, what are the attitudes or actions to which we are called? What might we consider as a Rule of Life for us as a couple?

## C. For the Team Meeting

**Text for Meditation** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)

**1Peter 5, 2-3**

*“Be the shepherd of the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge but be an example that the whole flock can follow.”*

### To Share as a Team

- **Life experience**

During our sharing this month, let us deepen our understanding of the different forms of mission within the Movement. Let us share with each other what discoveries we have made.

- **Questions on the study theme**

Let us share the result of our reflection, made as a couple, on the questions proposed for greater understanding of the theme.

## SIXTH MEETING

### THE MISSION OF THE COUPLE IN TEAMS OF OUR LADY IN THE CHURCH

*“The one who provides seed for the sower and bread for food will provide you with all the seed you want and make the harvest of your good deeds a larger one, and, made richer in every way, you will be able to do all the generous things which, through us, are the cause of thanksgiving to God.”*

## A. Objectives

- To witness as a couple through our activities within the framework of family ministry;
- To engage in dialogue with the Church in support of our mission;
- To encourage couples to have a more active role in the expansion of the Kingdom.

## B. To work on during the month

### Life Experience

Let us make a conscientious effort this month to review and assess our Church commitments.

### Study Theme and Reflection

As Monsignor Fleischmann<sup>9</sup> said in Rome in 2003, *"The life of the couple has in itself much of what characterizes the Church. Where a Christian couple lives, there the Church already begins to live."*

Since the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's, we the "Ecclesia domestica" (the domestic church) have been called to greater service within the Church. Although Teams of Our Lady is not a movement of action, Teams has responded to the call of Vatican II to become more active in service to others. We are a living cell and are thus called to bring Christ to others. Our mission within the Church is one of service.

The purpose of this chapter on our mission within the Church is to clarify what this means for us today, as couples of Teams of Our Lay, and to offer suggestions for service, as well as to explore the benefits for us and for the Church.

First of all, it is most important for all of us to keep in mind the importance of evaluating regularly our specific role in the mission in the Church. We recall the words of Father Avelino Pertile: *"The Church needs people who allow God to dwell in them. Those who listen to God, those who pray, they are the ones who are active, interested and sensitive to the needs of others and of the Church."*<sup>10</sup>

The type and the degree of commitment can vary. They depend on the situation of the couple; newly married, childless or parents of young children, of teenagers, or of young adults still living at home, whether working or in retirement. Calls to service change. We need to re-evaluate our commitments regularly, pray about and be open to what God may be calling us to do at the time. It is important to remember that our first mission is to our marriage and our family. Each couple must determine the call to which the Lord wants them to respond.

### A Movement of Conjugal Spirituality

<sup>10</sup> Father Avelino Pertile was the Spiritual Counsellor of the SR Brazil from 2004 to 2008.

What is the specific role of **Teams couples**? What is their responsibility?

The wish of our founder Father Caffarel in the document "Second Wind" (1988) is that *"the teams have a specific objective: to help couples to live their sacrament of marriage to the fullest. But, at the same time, they have a missionary objective: to announce to the world the values of Christian marriage, through their word and through the witness of their life."*

We belong to a movement whose charism is CONJUGAL SPIRITUALITY or, as Nancy Moncau<sup>11</sup> said: *"the art of two people living God's plan as a couple."* Through our closeness we are on the road to sanctity, thanks to the Sacrament of Marriage. But at the same time, it invites us to "take up" our mission. Couples are nourished in the Movement to be able to serve. The Teams Movement is the source where couples find the courage and the spirit to place themselves at the service of others, in service of the Kingdom of God.

Thus, Teams couples can become involved in pastoral activities that strengthen their marriage. They can also encourage initiatives in parishes or dioceses, if these activities do not yet exist. In this way they will make their contribution to the Church to celebrate and deepen the sense of marriage as a sacrament and as a vocation.

Through their participation couples of the Teams Movement can bring to others the good news of Teams of Our Lady, when their actions and their conduct encourage other couples: what couple does not thirst for happiness for each other in their marriage?

Within their own team, missionary couples have an important role: their participation is to encourage the other couples to realize that they too must be missionaries for each other.

One of the riches of the Movement is that it is made up of couples who come together *"in the name of Christ,"* who support each other in small communities. We do not always encounter that in pastoral service groups. It is the **witness** of *"see how they love one another"*, lived within the teams, and which must be extended through all the pastoral work of the Church.

No one is alone in missionary work; through prayer there develops a necessary permanent tie with the community.

It is important to keep in mind that possibilities for service are endless, and that they depend on the creativity of the couples and the needs of the local Church.

### The Importance of Participation of Active Couples

As Father Caffarel has written ("The Mission of the Christian Couple"): *"There are couples whose vocation is to collaborate in a very direct way with the apostolic hierarchy, giving all their time to a task of the Church..."*

Each couple can choose the area in which they can best serve, according to their own gifts. Possibilities vary from country to country, from one diocese to another, from one parish to another. However, as **couples**, we must use our personal talents for service to the Church, most especially in service to couples and to families.

Involvement in Family Ministry opens many possibilities, such as organizing meetings which can enrich the faith life of the parish, welcoming new families into the parish, assisting unmarried couples, those separated or divorced, widows and widowers.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy and Pedro Moncau were the beginners of the Teams of our Lady Movement in Brazil in 1950.

Involvement in programs for those preparing for marriage or conjugal life is an excellent opportunity for the couple to review their own path in life and thus to share the riches of marriage and life as a couple.

Another interesting and useful suggestion is certainly that of encouraging attendance at Mass for families with very young children by offering child-centered opportunities for them. Suggestions can range from baby-sitting to pre-catechetical groups, depending on the age and maturity of the children. Most importantly the children and their parents must feel welcomed from the very youngest age. We, as Christian couples, have a great responsibility in this regard.

In proportion to the number of Teams couples involved in service, especially concerning couples and families in the community, these little communities, formed by the teams, become living examples of the Kingdom of God. The Teams Movement will be known and integrated into the life of parishes. And in this dynamic characterized by community service, couples become enriched a little more each time and they discover the best way of using their gifts in the service of the Church, the People of God.

It is important to emphasize that at the first contact with a parish, the Teams couples can express a priority for service to couples and families. In their enthusiasm for bringing the Movement to others, many times they make the mistake of first urging the approval of the priests, normally overwhelmed with work, to serve in the Movement as Spiritual Advisors.

Aside from these possibilities for action, there are many others, indispensable to the life of the parishes and of the Church, in which the couple can be involved as individuals. We can say it again: possibilities are endless, and ***“no one may remain inactive, since the call of the Lord Jesus, addressing everyone, is very clear and always present: “Go, you also, to my vineyard.” (Mt 20, 3-4)***

Possibilities are infinite. Through prayer, always through prayer, the Lord will reveal what he expects of each one of us: *“The Church needs the one who is searching to draw closer to God, the one who prays, the one who strives for the top of the mountain, as Moses did when he wanted to meet God in order to listen to him and to receive the directions of what he was supposed to do and how he was to go about it,”* as told to us by Father Avelino Pertile.

Through our participation, and through our attempts to reach others, *“we respond to the call of the Church to a new evangelization, based on human and family love.”* As Pope John Paul II mentioned in his message at the time of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter, ***“Today the Church has great need of a married laity, enriched by a formation where faith and life nourish each other. Christian couples also have a missionary duty to other couples and a duty to help them. They legitimately desire to pass on to them their experience and show them that Christ is the source of all married life.”***

## Supporting Texts

*“While Teams is not a movement of action, Teams members are definitely people of action, in the sense that they benefit from the ample spiritual nourishment of Teams and then freely determine what the Lord has called them to do. In the same way each member is a missionary, wherever he or she is, according to each one's personal choices. It is true, again, that Teams as a Movement do not commit themselves to collective endeavors, because couples in Teams must hear and answer the Lord's call for themselves. However, this fruitful freedom to choose our commitments must not obscure for us the fact that the Movement has its own charism and that we cannot turn a deaf ear to our fellow men and women, especially to the call of our bishops in the area of pastoral efforts concerning the family. It is also important for Teams to be open to all without distinction as to class or race, and to pay more attention to their country's needs, preferably as they are called to do so by the local Church.”*

## Evangelical Discernment

*The discernment effected by the Church becomes the offering of an orientation in order that the entire truth and the full dignity of marriage and the family may be preserved and realized.*

*This discernment is accomplished through the sense of faith, which is a gift that the Spirit gives to all the faithful, and is therefore the work of the whole Church according to the diversity of the various gifts and charisms that, together with and according to the responsibility proper to each one, work together for a more profound understanding and activation of the word of God. The Church, therefore, does not accomplish this discernment only through the Pastors, who teach in the name and with the power of Christ, but also through the laity: Christ "made them His witnesses and gave them understanding of the faith and the grace of speech (cf. Acts 2:17-18; Rev. 19:10), so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life." The laity, moreover, by reason of their particular vocation have the specific role of interpreting the history of the world in the light of Christ, in as much as they are called to illuminate and organize temporal realities according to the plan of God, Creator and Redeemer...*

*Christian spouses and parents can and should offer their unique and irreplaceable contribution to the elaboration of an authentic evangelical discernment in the various situations and cultures in which men and women live their marriage and their family life. They are qualified for this role by their charism or specific gift, the gift of the sacrament of matrimony.*

Pope Paul VI, "Evangelii Nuntiandi"

## Testimonies

1. Although we each have our own commitments, Louise and I have always felt privileged when we can serve together.

Not only has that helped us to know each other better and to love each other more, but it has also allowed us to be witnesses of our lasting commitment to each other in spite of life's difficulties.

Married for forty years we are considered a loving couple and one which does not hesitate to become involved when our faith is involved. We have a firm conviction that true evangelization takes place on the part of Christian men and women who live their faith each day and who are not afraid to affirm their convictions.

In spite of our differences we call on God to help us discern how we can best serve Him. Louise usually accompanies me for celebrations of baptism, and when she is unable to participate an important element of the celebration is missing. Her warm welcome and loving presence assure that together we present an image of the Church which is also present in the life of these young couples, these families who (in Quebec, at least) seem to become more and more removed from practicing their faith.

If we are conscious of our individual role as witnesses of the Gospel, we are convinced that together our witness will be heard more clearly and by more people.

Louise and Yvon Boucher, Deacon

Region Canada

2. We have been married for twenty-five years and have two sons. For the last ten years we have been members of Teams of Our Lady.

We wish through each of our activities to collaborate with God and to serve others. We try to be faithful to the Church, and we are always ready to respond to the call of our bishop and our priests.

Among our responses to the call, we can cite the decision of Lucyna to change professions, and to take up again the job of catechist at the school, at the time that religion was reintroduced in the school and there was a need for catechists,

We considered the invitation of our priest to Krzysztof that he become a Eucharistic Minister to be a great grace for our marriage. In bringing Jesus to the sick and suffering we have learned important lessons about suffering.

We try to participate actively in our parish. Our activities are especially tied to the spiritual needs of the family.

Well aware of the great threat in our contemporary world to marriage and the family, we have been participating for several years in programs for engaged couples preparing for marriage.

We encourage couples to grow closer to each other, and to God.

God is present in our marriage. We want to share what we receive.

Service to others in the name of Jesus Christ strengthens and reinforces our own marriage.

Lucyba and Krzysztof Wysoccy

Region Poland

## Questions to share as a couple and in the team

For the sit-down, and then later to share with the team:

- ✓ Based on the suggestions for the Sit-Down, let's evaluate our present commitments in the Church.
- ✓ What changes might we introduce in our life as a couple concerning our mission in the Church, after having read the Study Theme and Reflection?
- ✓ What long-term goals do you see as possibilities for future actions?
- ✓ In what ways can Teams couples support each other in their mission in the Church?

## Orientations for

### • Hearing the Word of God, Personal and Conjugal Prayer

*"Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate. Do not judge, and you will not be judged yourselves; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned yourselves; grant pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and there will be gifts for you; a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will be poured into your lap; because the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back."*

Luke 6, 36-38

### • The Sit-Down

- ✓ In light of what we have read so far, let us discuss as a couple regarding our involvements beyond our own marriage and family life?



- ✓ Let us share as a couple what each of us thinks of the involvements of the other. Is this a time when there should be some changes? How do we understand God's calling to a more active participation in the Church.

- **The Rule of Life**

Let us consider a new direction of service in our faith community. If possible at this time, this could be a new rule of life.

## C. For the Team Meeting

### **Text for Meditation** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)

#### **Matthew 5, 14-15**

*"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hilltop cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven."*

### **To share as a team**

- **Life Experience**

During the sharing let us discuss what was suggested under Life Experience.

- **Questions on the study theme**

Let us share at this time the questions suggested earlier.

## SEVENTH MEETING

### THE MISSION OF THE TEAMS COUPLE IN THE WORLD

*“And he said to them: ‘Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation...’ They went out preaching everywhere.”*

(Mark 16. 15. 20)

#### A. Objectives

- To become more fully aware of the specific and irreversible mission of the Christian laity in the world
- To encourage couples to respond to “*the unwavering call of Jesus,*” to follow him in the mission of being Light in the world
- To show the importance of formation of the laity in the process of “*knowing in order to be able to witness*”
- To make known to couples that “**vocation and mission**” are two inseparable dimensions of conjugal spirituality

#### B. To work on during the Month

##### Life experience

It is suggested that during the course of the month the couples try to become closer to those with whom they work, those in their neighborhood and in their parish community. They should strive to understand try to understand better their surroundings.

##### Study Theme and Reflection

#### The Mission of the Laity in the World

We recommend the reading of the Apostolic Exhortation “Christi fideles Laici (1989) which helps us to clarify the mission of the laity in the world. It invites us to a conscientious awareness of the gifts received and of the responsibilities that all should undertake.

That does not mean that they have to change what they are doing in the world, but on the contrary, that they live a normal life: study; work; making friends, whether social, professional, or cultural, for example. In other words, by following the Dogmatic Constitution “Lumen Gentium” (LG), “*They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their*

*existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.*” (LG 31) Thus, this text motivates the faithful laity to act according to an evangelizing spirit to manifest Christ to others, principally through the witness of their lives.

The world, this Immense “*vineyard of the Lord*”, then becomes the place where each one puts to work the Christian vocation he has received.

More than anything we are called to Love, to an attitude of love, to behavior of love. In the Gospel of John (John 21, 15-18) Jesus asks Peter three times “*Peter, do you love me? Then feed my lambs.*” And it is only when he is assured of Peter’s decision, to know that he will be capable of giving up everything to follow him, that he calls him: “*Follow me*” (John 21: 19). Jesus wanted an honest **commitment** from Peter, and not just a simple statement of a feeling.

Moreover, in the Gospel of John, Jesus told his disciples that his joy would be great, as well as theirs, if they were to obey this commandment: “*Love one another, as I have loved you*” (John 15, 12-17). Jesus knew that there is joy in loving, in giving oneself to others. These attitudes of detachment compel us to grow, to break down the walls of our self-centeredness and encourage us to reach out to others.

### The importance of formation – Knowledge in order to witness

There are numerous possibilities for formation of the laity. Parishes often present classes and meetings. Dioceses organize conferences, large formation meetings. Furthermore, the Teams Movement has the custom of inviting couples to continually improve themselves through retreats, formation sessions, and various kinds of meetings, including those which take place during the International Gatherings every six years.

We must be convinced that the vocation of the laity is to follow the path toward sanctity, a call to self-denial, to renounce everything that moves us away from the Light. We are called to transform the world from within, as a leaven; The action of evangelization must be understood as a **permanent calling of Jesus**. Citing the Document de Puebla (1979) it is necessary that in the church-world relationship, “*the laity must be people of the Church in the heart of the world, and those in the world in the heart of the Church.*”

In order for that to be realized, we must always concern ourselves with the unity between our faith and our life. This concern is clearly present in the documents of the Council. It is restated in a document of the national Conference of the Bishops of Brazil, “*what is desired for the life of the lay Christian is unity and communication between involvement in temporal concerns and the life in the Spirit which springs forth from communion with Christ, founded in Baptism, in order that the laity may be sanctified in the world.*”

The mission of the Church, people of God, is evangelization. It is to bring to reality Christ’s mission. We the Church must be disciples, must live the Gospel, in imitation of Jesus Christ. We must heed the calls of the world, while facing human situations. But without a good foundation, it will be difficult for Christians, whatever their good intentions, to use their gifts in service to others.

In looking around us we find a great variety of organizations, services, communities and movements manifesting a very great ecclesial dynamism: it is the expression of the diversity of gifts (1 Cor 12, 4-14, 25-31) the great number of possibilities of service, of freely giving what we have freely received, because “*no one is allowed to be inactive*” (Christifideles Laici).

We are invited to give up everything, “*to abandon everything*” in order to follow Jesus. After having chosen this path we must deepen our understanding of what that means. It is a necessary

condition of witnessing. To witness is to live the Gospel in the world, with the love of God. In the Scriptures, we discover several instances of meetings with the Risen Lord. It is what happened to Mary Magdalene, to the disciples of Emmaus, to the apostles on the day of Pentecost. All felt called to go forth to announce the Good News of the meeting with Jesus. They felt themselves sent out on a mission from that very day when their life was changed forever.

### The Teams Couple - A missionary couple

In 1965 Father Caffarel recalled this for the couples: *“Each time try to develop a deeper awareness of the vocation of our Movement and its mission in the Church. That is the reflection to which I invite you today. Notice the expression that I have used: ‘a deeper awareness.’ More than a new idea, it is a matter of a deepening.”*

On another occasion our founder invited the Teams couples to open their hearts and to take on a sharper awareness of their mission in a world gripped by atheism (Teams of Our Lady facing atheism, 1970): *“This mission of the couples, still more urgent in a world invaded by atheism, demands an evangelical life.”*

Also during 1970, in a meeting, Father Caffarel confirmed for the Teams couples that God’s thinking about love and marriage was not summarized simply in the sanctification of the couple, but in the witnessing that the couple would bring to the world, while *adding “to be a witness of the living God is an extremely demanding task”*.

That is why it is so important to bring to light that this mission, tied to the Christian vocation of the couple, has always been a concern of the Movement and of its founder. As Christian couples we cannot content ourselves with being the beneficiaries of the apostolic action of the Church. We must assume our mission of *“active subjects”* in the apostolate.

In his message for the tenth anniversary of the Charter, Pope John Paul II exhorted the couples: *“We must answer to the call of the Church for a new evangelization, founded on human love and family life. Today the Church has great need of married persons who have received formation in which faith and life are fully integrated.”*

The challenge is great: couples in the Teams Movement must be signs and witnesses of Christ, in a society that is less and less Christian. They live in a secular society where many people do not know Christianity.

If we intend to respond simultaneously to our vocation as a Christian couple united through the sacrament of marriage, and to what the world expects from us, we must have the courage and determination to live and announce that *“marriage is in the service of Love, Goodness, and Sanctity”* (Guide of Teams of Our Lady). The greater the challenge, the greater is the grace of God that we depend on. It will be through the witness of a life filled with love that we will have **a power of persuasion, a strength of penetration and of expansion never seen until the present time**. As stated by Maria Carla and Carlo Volpini in the Introduction: *“... live a new evangelization means to seek and find not new ways to ‘say’ but new ways of ‘being’.”*

We can reaffirm that Teams of Our Lady is a Movement of Conjugal Spirituality which proposes to its members a **“team life”** and concrete means to help them to progress in their marriage and in their family in the love of God and of each other. Therefore, let us prepare ourselves to be witnesses. It is up to each couple to choose its mode of action. Even if the Teams Movement is not a movement of action, it is a movement of active couples who are not afraid to confront difficult situation in the world today.

In conclusion, remember the words of Tó and Zé Moura Soares<sup>12</sup> regarding the commitment of the Teams of Our Lady: *"Living the New Evangelization is in fact plunging in reality where its situated, 'constructing ways of reading' and interpreting of ideas, situations and effective values of and Christians find, at the individual or couple, engaged performance forms that permit, in practical terms, the Gospel with **Daring Faith, Hope and Charity.**"*

## Supporting Texts

*Mission is a theme that is very present in the postconciliar Church. The decree Ad Gentes of the Vatican II Council – on the subject of missionary activity of the Church- affirms that “the pilgrim church is missionary by its very nature.” This declaration has been a very strong motivation for deepening understanding of the concepts of mission and missionary, constantly present in pastoral projects in our time.*

*Formerly, mission was understood to be the principal activity of the Church among pagans, bringing back more lambs to the flock of the Good Shepherd. This idea has evolved towards the awareness that in human life everything is mission. This conceptual awakening validates the action of the human being as a participant in the Kingdom of God, while revealing that mission is not only a kind of ecclesiastical activity. For the adult Christian who is conscientious, mission does not limit itself to Church-related tasks. Everything that one does has a missionary dimension, such as clearly religious duties, as well as any action flowing from one’s human dimension. Each one is a missionary when he fulfills his duty, conscientious that he does it for the greater glory of God, for the good of all, and for the building of a history in accordance with the principles of citizenship, and according to the demands of the Gospel.*

*In the early part of the century, very much confused and full of misconceptions, the Christian was strongly called to mission. He alone, the light of the world, succeeds in projecting some clarity that can guide others to make their own choices, and to find the right way. He alone, the salt of the earth, has the power to prevent human values from being destroyed in a society unjust, materialistic, and indifferent to God who is always present. Undoubtedly forgetting about mission contributes a great deal to the threats that weigh on humanity, while moving away toward a faraway future, a time of freedom and grace, a day of justice and brotherhood.*

D. Geraldo Majella Agnelo

Cardinal Archbishop Emeritus of Salvador – Brazil

*“...It is the mission of the whole Church to reveal in our times the true face of God and, in a particular way, it is equally a mission of the couples.*

*I can guess your reaction: ‘Mission is big; too big: we have neither the time, nor the capability’. And I reply to you: you are especially capable to carry out this mission, precisely because you are couples. Likewise, you have your own charism to be witnesses in the world that is waiting. It is not necessary that you remove yourselves from your family and professional duties. It is not a question of setting out on a faraway crusade.*

*I am explaining this to you: it is through your conjugal love, it is through your family life, without suspecting it, that the atheistic world awaits a witness... The first witness that you must give is through your way of living, and then through your word.”*

Father Henri Caffarel – In the Face of Atheism

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<sup>12</sup> Couple member of the ERI, from 2006 to 2012

## Testimonies

1. When we were married we were unaware of the true dimension of our mission as a couple, united through the sacrament of marriage. It was only after a long time in Teams that we began to understand that our sacrament was a grace received from God, and that we were to share it with others. Little by little our life began to be transformed. The orientations and the teachings of the Movement brought us closer to God. Father Caffarel said: ***“You who are married, you can never stop hearing God, listening to him, since within your home He speaks to you in a thousand ways.”*** It became a reality for us. This discovery of the love of God in our home gave a very special significance to our lives. We began to research the mission that God had prepared for us and which was summarized in this paragraph taken from the “Formation of Pilot Couples:”

***“The mission of the Christian is to announce Jesus Christ by his life: to be light and salt in the world. The mission of a member of Teams cannot be different, but it is more demanding: it is a matter of revealing God who lives and acts in the marriage.”***

Since that day we have been trying to show the world the values of Christian marriage. Not only through our life witness, but through concrete actions in our daily life, in our home, in the family, work, the parish, our children’s schools, in the Movement and with all the people around us. In today’s world we want to bring to everyone a message of God’s love. We want to allow them to feel that in spite of the numerous attacks against marriage, in spite of many couples in conflict and so many separations, marriage is a path of love, of goodness and of sanctity. Our mission is to be instruments for **transforming lives**, as ours has been transformed by fully living our love as a couple, a reflection of the love of Christ.

Fabio Alberto and Constanza Lopez Gil

Super-Region Hispanic-American

2. To be in mission in the service of marriage can take several forms, for example: marriage preparation for engaged couples, conjugal counseling for married couples. This service is most often personalized, made **“to order”**. This mission can also lead to the promotion of Christian marriage, less **“personalized”** addressed to a greater number of people.

We have been called as a couple to this second form of mission: to update the Internet site of our Super-Region in order to reach and interest the greatest number of **“persons in their search for God”** in what concerns Christian marriage. **“Marriage, path to happiness... with the condition of being followed,”** it was the incentive for the construction of the new site. But how to express it simply and with conviction in order to interest the internet generation often assailed by multiple contradictory messages and which makes them feel entitled to apparent happiness, easy and immediate, to the detriment of a deep, sincere and lasting love?

That mission has led us to remain faithful to the expectations of today’s young couples concerning marriage in the church, to work with material adapted from competent writers, to find good visuals, which are appealing, but at the same time which make sense and capture the attention of the internet generation. Thus we have put into practice the invitation of Father Caffarel to live **“a love which is always more creative.”**

This mission has likewise led us to reflect on our own conjugal life: our marriage, does it really witness the richness of the sacrament of marriage?

Dominique and Francois Aubert

Super-Region France Luxembourg Suisse

## Questions to share as a couple and in the team

Pope Paul VI exhorted Christians to be “a leaven of salvation” and Father Caffarel exhorts us to be witnesses of married Christian life.



- ✓ Where do we as a couple stand with regard to these two callings? Do we understand our role? Where could we do more?

In the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* we can read: ***“In the genesis of atheism, believers can have an important role...”***

- ✓ To what can we attribute this affirmation? What face of God do we reveal to the world? What can we do to better know the real face of God?
- ✓ What importance have we given to our Christian formation, necessary for our mission?

## **Orientations for**

- **Hearing the Word of God, Personal and Conjugal Prayer**

### **Mt 20, 3-4, 6-7**

*“Going out at about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace and said to them, ‘You go to my vineyard too... Then at about the eleventh hour he went out and found more men standing round and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ -- ‘Because no one has hired us’ they answered. He said to them, ‘You go into my vineyard too.’”*

- **The Sit-Down**

In light of the Life Experience suggested,

- ✓ What have we been able to put into practice?
- ✓ What difficulties have we encountered? To what can we attribute these difficulties?
- ✓ How can we overcome them, in order to be a missionary couple?

- **The Rule of Life**

After having a sit-down, let us concentrate on the difficulties met, and let’s try to overcome them by participating in some organization, social action, or other.

## **C. For the Team Meeting**

### **Text for Meditation** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)

#### **1 John 5, 3-5**

“This is what loving God is keeping his commandments. And his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world: our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

### **To share with the team**

- **Life Experience**

Let us share with each other during the sharing what this month’s life experience has meant for each one of us.

- **Questions based on the study theme**

Let us share based on the questions suggested above.

## EIGHTH MEETING

### THE MISSION OF THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY AS A MOVEMENT

*“If the Teams of Our lady are not a training ground of men and women who are ready to assume courageously all their responsibilities in the Church and in society, they lose the very reason for their existence.”*

(Father Henri Caffarel)

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying: *‘Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?’* I answered, *‘Here I am, send me!’*”

(Is 6, 8)

#### A. Objectives

- To clarify with their members, the Mission of the Teams Movement;
- To understand that the Teams Movement is there to aid the couples to be active in the Church and in the world;
- To show that one of the great challenges of the Teams movement is “to help their members to fully live their mission”.

#### B. To work on during the month

##### Life Experience

Become aware of all that we have received from the Lord throughout our life, as members of Teams of Our Lady

- What positive changes have we experienced?
- What response did we used to make to the call of the Lord? How do we respond at the present time?

##### Study Theme and Reflection

###### What the documents of the Movement tell us

In order to recall the Mission of the Teams of Our Lady for its members, we cite a few documents:

###### Guide of the Teams of Our Lady – Chapter XI – Mission

**The Teams of Our Lady is a Movement that helps its member couples to be active in the Church and in the world.**

The Teams Movement, as such, can participate, out of concern for the Church, in its Pastoral ministry principally in areas relating to couples and the family.

**The mission of the Movement: The Teams of Our Lady have a specific and direct mission: to help couples to live fully their sacrament of matrimony.**

### **The Second Wind (1988)**

To live in communion with each other in order to respond to a vocation and carry out a mission.

No matter what the spiritual level of a couple is, each one must make an effort to learn to live in communion within this little community of faith which is the team. It does not mean to stay closed in on oneself, or to consider the team an end in itself. Inevitably communion tends to be transformed into a gift for the others. **The Teams of Our Lady is a Movement of spirituality, and true spirituality leads each one to share what he has freely received.**

### **The Founding Charism (1987)** (Speech given by Father Caffarel in Chantilly)

- “The third aspect of the founding charism, which has not been sufficiently understood it seems to me, but to tell the truth, it takes years to be able to understand it, is **the mission of the Teams Movement.**”

**Because the Teams Movement has a vocation which is to help couples to be sanctified. The Teams Movement has a mission in the Church.** It must unceasingly hold fast to these two aspects: **Vocation and Mission.**”

- “Fifth revolution: notice, I give the word ‘revolution’ an amusing twist: i do not claim that this has not been disclosed before, but it is all the same very characteristic. Previously, sanctity was often conceived of as ‘Cultivate your spiritual beauty.’ But *when one speaks of the sanctity of married persons, one recalls the words of Christ: ‘The tree will be judged not by its beauty, but by its fruits.’*”
- *“I regret that the Teams Movement, in this perspective of its mission, has not followed the programs of marriage preparation.”*
- *“And I have a second regret, that the marriage counselors who are in many cases products of Teams, have not been formed and sustained by the Teams Movement.”*
- *“...there are couples who have been in Teams for 10, 20, 30 years, and they still feel the need to advance further.”*

### **To develop Teams members with definite talents**

There are training sessions that can only become useful and possible after having belonged to an institution or a movement for a certain amount of time. They encourage and enrich certain “attitudes” that their members are going to assume little by little.

Today we often encounter among members of Teams those who are deeply imbued with certain attitudes such as:

- ✓ Hospitality;
- ✓ Brotherly concern;
- ✓ A spirit of service.

But it is equally true that one frequently meets members of Teams who lack;

- ✓ Persistence and commitment;
- ✓ A sense of mission and of being gift to others

It is an important challenge for the Teams Movement to propose “training about mission.” For us who have received so many riches and graces during the time we have belonged to the Movement... **We are called to give more; the Lord awaits our response.**

### Service of the Teams Movement to its couples

We mention here some of the services proposed by the Movement for couples:

- One of the greatest challenges of the Teams Movement is “to help its members to fully live the Mission.”
- To be watchful that fidelity to the Founding Charism be maintained, at the same time allowing necessary creativity in order to be able to respond to present challenges.
- The structure of the Movement is at the service of the couples, and not the couples at the service of the Movement.
- To help the couples to fully live the sacrament of marriage on their path to sanctity.
- The Movement must promote the creation of opportunities so that the couples can take on and carry out their Mission.
- To accompany the process of growth of the couples and help them in their development, as a mother who encourages and corrects.
- Throughout this process, it is important to respect each one’s progress.
- The Movement must remain attentive and be open to its couples, in order to bring about necessary discernment and provide answers for them.
- Through its word and the witness of its couples, the Teams Movement announces to the world the values of Christian marriage.

The greatest service that the Movement could provide to its couples is to encourage them to become involved for the long term in the various aspects of the Mission, to motivate them and to offer them concrete solutions. Thus, with more experienced and more committed couples, the Movement itself will be able to become more dynamic and to grow in service, in the Church as well as in society. With many, with very many Missionary couples, the Teams Movement will be more active and will serve as a beacon for all couples.

### Supporting Texts

#### The Second Wind ( ERI 1988)

“The Movement’s gift to the Church is its participation in the building of the Kingdom of God based on a new image of the couple.”

“Teams of Our Lady has one specific direct objective: to help couples fully live their sacrament of matrimony.”

“At the same time they have a missionary objective: to bear witness by their lives and words to the values of Christian marriage.”

### **Christifideles Laici, John Paul II 34**

#### ***The Hour Has Come for a Re-Evangelization***

*“Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world...*

*... in virtue of their participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, fully part of this work of the Church. Their responsibility, in particular, is to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response, consciously perceived and stated by all in varying degrees, to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society. This will be possible if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the Gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work and society, an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the Gospel.*

*To all people of today I once again repeat the impassioned cry with which I began my pastoral ministry: ‘Do not be afraid! Open, in deed, open wide the doors to Christ!’ Open to his saving power the confines of states, and systems political and economic, as well as the vast fields of culture, civilization and development. Do not be afraid! Christ knows ‘what is inside a person.’ Only he knows! Today too often people do not know what they carry inside, in the deepest recesses of their soul, in their heart. Too often people are uncertain about a sense of life on earth. Invaded by doubts they are led into despair. Therefore-with humility and trust I beg and implore you-allow Christ to speak to the person in you. Only he has the words of life, yes, eternal life.”*

### **Questions to share as a couple and in the team**

Let us exchange ideas on the Mission of the Teams Movement for its members, and on its role as we actually see it in our lives. First we should discuss them as a couple, then we can exchange our ideas at the team meeting:

- ✓ How, in your sector or your region, does the Movement help its members to accomplish their mission?
- ✓ How are we living out our mission as a couple today?
- ✓ How does each member of the team live out its mission today?

### **Orientations for**

- **Hearing the Word of God, Personal and Conjugal Prayer**

*“These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them as follows: Do not turn your steps to pagan territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town; go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. You received without charge, give without charge.*

*Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with a few coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the workman deserves his keep.*

*Whatever town or village you go into, ask for someone trustworthy and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his house, salute it, and if the house deserves it, let your peace descend upon it, if*



*it does not, let your peace come back to you. And if anyone does not welcome you or listen to what you have to say, as you walk out of the house or town shake the dust from your feet. I tell you solemnly, on the day of Judgement it will go as hard with the land of Sodom and Gomorrah as with that town.*

*Remember, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as serpents and yet as harmless as doves.”* (Matthew 10, 5-16)

- **The Sit-Down**

We often note that many couples want to become committed to something, but they do not know where nor how to do it. We also note that when they do find opportunities, they move forward with it. Convinced that this is true, it would be very good to help couples learn about possibilities open to them and encourage participation in mission.

Discuss the following as a couple:

- ✓ Have we missed opportunities to take on a mission outside of the family?
- ✓ Have we benefitted from opportunities that were presented to us?
- ✓ How can we carry out our mission within our family at this time?

- **The Rule of Life**

At the end of the sit-down each one may choose a specific objective, individually or as a couple which can be adopted as a rule of life.

## **C. For the Team Meeting**

### **Text for Meditation** (Prayer for the Team Meeting)

#### **Matthew 28, 10, 16 - 20**

*“Then Jesus said to them: ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there.’”*

*Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said: ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.’”*

### **To share in the team**

- **Life Experience**

During the time of sharing we can share with the team how we have lived the “life experience” this month (see section B).

- **Questions on the study theme**

Let’s exchange our responses to the questions suggested above

## EVALUATION MEETING

### THE COUPLE IN THE TEAMS MOVEMENT IN THEIR MISSION

*“Let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.”*

(Romans 12. 2)

#### A. Objective

To undertake at home, then share with the team, a serious and calm review of the year’s work on our Mission as Christian couples of Teams of Our Lady. As its name indicates, it consists of an evaluation meeting to plan for the future, drawing on aspects of our couple life which need to be strengthened, preserved, and if necessary, corrected.

#### B. To work on during the month

##### Life Experience

Throughout the year we have seen the vital importance of our Mission as Christian couples, members of the Teams Movement, in our relationship as a couple, then in our relationship with our children, our family, the Movement, the Church, and society.

It is now time to review what has been accomplished. It is clear that evaluation is an indispensable element in order to make progress. We are going to follow the classic methodology of **to see-to judge-to act**.

Our life experience this month will consist of having an **extended Sit-Down**. During the course of the month each couple will have the opportunity to make in the presence of God a genuine life review. The husband and wife will have enough elements for their sit-down, **by glancing over their lives, their commitments and their answers**. Undoubtedly this review will lead them to make some specific rules of life.

First, they will carefully examine their life: **TO SEE**. This does not mean external questioning, but an internal review. That is why this review must be deeply sincere.

Then, at a second time, **to judge** requires that we look at our life in the light of the Gospel. It does not mean to search for faults, errors or mistakes, or even to accuse each other. In the light of the Word of God, we can perceive in a clearer way the contrast between the Christian proposal and our own life.

At a third time, **to act** is the next natural step, and we discover that there are things that could be improved in our life. What we have discovered in our life, in the light of the Lord, now requires improvement, and now we must plan how to implement any necessary changes.

It is important that each couple be able to work on the different aspects of a life review and their present commitments. The evaluation will be made over the course of more than one sit-down, giving as much time as necessary to each aspect, which will surely result in several sit-downs during the month.

## **The Sit-down**

Begin the sit-down by reading the supporting texts below, followed by a prayer together.

Then, after a brief silence begin to dialogue, based on the following questions:

### **TO SEE**

A year of reflection and consideration of our life in the presence of the Mission has allowed us to SEE many points:

- Which are the points that we question the most?
- How do we “see” our mission up to the present?
- On what points do we feel strongest and most committed?
- On what points do we feel weakest?

### **TO JUDGE**

Let us continue in the light of the Gospel the life that we have led as a couple, in our family, in our team, in the Church.

- Have we felt ourselves “messengers” of the Lord, so that we can make his message known and in order to live in harmony with the message?
- Analyze the different areas in which we are “messengers,” and how we have been messengers:
  - ✓ With our spouse
  - ✓ With our children
  - ✓ With those around us
  - ✓ In the Church
- Pope Paul VI said that “only your personal and deep union with Christ can assure the fruitfulness of your apostolate, whatever it may be.”
  - ✓ In what way have we been united to Christ in the various aspects of our mission?
- Review the areas of action in our personal and married apostolate.
  - ✓ Are we satisfied with them?
  - ✓ Should we make some changes?

### **TO ACT**

After TO SEE and TO JUDGE there still remains for us the commitment of TO ACT in light of the discernment that we have made.

- Now is the time to make a plan, in the presence of the Lord, of some concrete actions that will allow us to move forward in our Mission.

- Let's try to be as specific as possible in the areas and the actions decided upon.

## Supportive Texts

### After having heard Paul VI

*“It is October 15, 1967. Twenty-five hundred members of the clergy from every country are participating in Saint Peter’s Basilica at a Mass concelebrated by the Pope and twenty-four cardinals and bishops.*

*The voice of Paul VI resonates in this vast space. He recalls that the “**Christian vocation**” is equally the “**vocation of the apostolate.**”*

*And then, according to the Pope, what is it that assures the effectiveness of the action of the Christian laity? The union with Christ! “**Uniquely your personal and deep union with Christ, says Paul VI, is going to assure the fruitfulness of your apostolate, whatever it may be**”. How are we supposed to understand that? We know: the binding of the Christian to Christ is something very different from the moral union between two friends that mutually guarantees their affection and harmony of thought. In order to make us understand what that consists of, Christ makes the comparison between the vine and its branches: the Christian lives with Christ, for Christ and in Christ, and it is from that that rivers of living water burst forth. That union is so intimate that St. Paul was able to exclaim, ‘I live, but not by myself alone, but it is Christ who lives in me.’”*

Henri Caffarel, February 1968

### Recipients and messengers

*“If you have an urgent and important message to have sent to one of your children in a faraway place, you will choose your messenger with care: someone who is reliable, conscientious, trustworthy and diligent.*

*Paul VI has chosen the Teams of Our Lady to spread a message of extraordinary doctrinal and spiritual richness, to all the corners of the earth, to all those couples who want their marriage to be a success, who desire to grow in love, to find God together as husband and wife, to be sanctified not outside of their married and family life, but in their marriage and through marriage, to become children of God.*

*I am completely convinced that you have immediately understood, that you are not only the recipients, but also the messengers for the millions of couples that the Pope, as he has stated, holds deep in his heart.*

*It is completely just that we rejoice in this choice. But we must hasten to understand our responsibility. And that involves each one of us: men, women, spiritual advisers. No one can think that it only applies to everyone else...*

*Messengers need an imagination capable of discovering the thousand ways, the thousand opportunities to carry the message to all, through all the means of modern and current outreach, as much for young couples as for older ones.*

*Paul VI has affirmed for us: ‘You have great things to do.’ Get to work! But also, and above all, let’s begin to pray, recalling the words of Christ: ‘Without me you can do nothing.’”*

Henri Caffarel, March 1970

## The Rule of Life

During the course of the sit-down, set some objectives to work toward in the coming year.

## C. For the Team Meeting

Keeping in mind the special character of this meeting, it is possible that it will last a little longer than usual. It is important that the team define the methodology to follow. As a suggestion we propose the following schedule, but do not forget to include the sharing and the Endeavors:

### **For reflection on the Word of God** (Prayer for the meeting)

#### **John 12, 24-26**

*“I tell you most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honor him.”*

### **To discuss with the team**

At the time of the discussion on the theme each couple should speak about the strong points of their life experience as acknowledged during the proposed sit-down.

Critique the points presented by each one and indicate what might be priorities for the coming year.

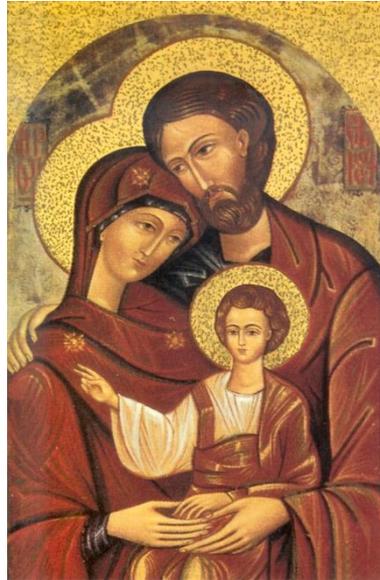
It is suggested that each couple keep a record of the evaluation made, in order to critique what were identified as priorities and compare them with those suggested in the future.

We remind you to choose a study theme for next year.

### **Magnificat**

The meeting ends with Mary’s prayer, in union with all the Teams couples throughout the world.

## APPENDIX



### THE MYSTIQUE OF SHARING ON THE ENDEAVORS

#### THE ENDEAVORS

- Listening to the Word of God
- Personal meditation
- Conjugal prayer
- The rule of life
- Monthly sit-down
- Retreat

#### THE THREE ATTITUDES

- Assiduous search for the will of God
- Search for the truth about ourselves
- Experience of encounter and communion

## PLAN OF THE MONTHLY MEETING

### 1. THE MEAL

The meal is introduced with a simple prayer. It must have an environment of mutual support.

### 2. THE PRAYER

- a. Initial prayer
- b. Reading and hearing the Word of God
- c. Personal prayers
- d. Intentions

### 3. SPIRITUAL SHARING

Exchange of experiences with the **Endeavors**, seeking everyone's progress.

It would be good to add a reflection on **life in the team and in the Movement**.

### 4. THE POOLING

We pool our life experiences. We share with the other couples our personal, married, family and professional life, our engagements... in a spirit of mutual support and charity.

### 5. THE STUDY TOPIC

Together, we go deeper into our faith. The study topic has been prepared by the couples and their reflections sent to the couple in charge of the discussion that month.

### 6. MAGNIFICAT AND FINAL BLESSING

## SUGGESTIONS OF PRAYERS FOR THE TEAM MEETING

### INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and set them on fire with your love.

**V.** Send us your Spirit and all will be created.

**R.** And you will renew the face of the Earth.

**Let us pray:** Lord our God, with the light of the Holy Spirit, you have formed the hearts of your faithful. Make us obedient to Your Spirit and we shall appreciate what is just; give us the grace of experiencing always His comforting presence.

**R.** Amen.

## **PRAYER FOR THE SHARING**

Lord Jesus, at this time of sharing about our lives, we remember that all the graces of our Sacrament come from you and that love only makes sense when it seeks in a concrete way the good of each other and of our families.

May this time help us to grow. That is why we pray to You: teach us to speak of our weaknesses and imperfections with humility, asking everyone's pardon; help us to speak without vanity about our successes and our joys, as an encouragement and mutual aid, giving thanks to God.

At this time we also wish to remember and pray for couples who are suffering and who are experiencing difficult times, especially those in our team, that our help for them may increase. Amen.

## **PRAYER FOR THE BEATIFICATION OF THE SERVANT OF GOD HENRI CAFFAREL**

God, our Father,  
You have instilled in the heart of your servant Henri Caffarel  
a depth of love which has drawn him without reservation toward your Son  
and inspired him to speak about Him.

Prophet of our time,  
He has shown the dignity and the beauty of the vocation of each person,  
following the word of Jesus directed to all: "Come, follow me."

He has filled couples with enthusiasm for the greatness of the Sacrament of Marriage  
which signifies the mystery of unity and fruitful love between Christ and the Church.  
He has shown that priests and couples are called to live the vocation of love.  
He has guided widows: love is stronger than death!  
Inspired by the Spirit, he has led many believers on the path of prayer.  
Possessed by a burning fire, he lived totally in you, Lord.

God, our Father  
Through the intercession of Our Lady,  
We ask You to advance the day  
when the Church will proclaim the sanctity of his life,  
so that all will discover the joy of following your Son,  
each one following his vocation in the Holy Spirit.  
God, our Father, we ask Father Caffarel for ... (Indicate the grace requested)

*Prayer approved by Monsignor Andre VINGT-TROIS – Archbishop of Paris.*

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