

Henri Caffarel, prophète pour notre temps
Colloque International – 8 & 9 Décembre 2017

THE PRESENT DAY RELEVANCE OF TEAMS OR OUR LADY'S PROPOSAL

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Recognizing the evangelizing force of Teams of Our Lady and at the same time watching the different steps achieved by the Movement, we are led to wonder which dynamism allowed it to progress during the last seventy years in such a way as to be present in more than 90 countries all over the world.

What mysterious force enabled Teams of Our Lady to overcome the obstacles of so many cultures, while keeping its relevance, unity and fidelity to the founding charism?

What spirit supports Teams to be able to change and give a meaning to so many couples' lives despite the frailty and poverty we are made of?

In our increasingly pluralistic society, where secularism and individualism are accepted and everything seems hostile to any form of spirituality, we can only find an answer in the goals proposed by Father Caffarel, for Teams of Our Lady:

- A school of Christian life;
- A lab for conjugal spirituality;
- A centre to spread the sacrament of matrimony;
- A testimony of charity and mutual aid.

We know that it is a mystery of faith that teams have been and still are motivated by the spirit with which they were created: they were born from a breath of the Holy Spirit, beautifully understood and transmitted by Father Caffarel, and still keep their relevance in the defense of love's spirituality, in the families' fruitfulness and in the joy of brotherly testimony.

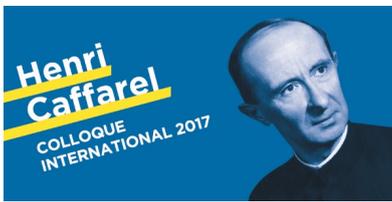
We can boldly say that Teams of Our Lady still continue to seduce couples today and lead them to build their homes on the **rock**, living a fraternal internationality in the respect for differences and in the richness of communion.

In the Charter Father Caffarel says that couples *"want their love, sanctified by the sacrament of matrimony, to be a praise to God, and a testimony to men showing clearly that Christ has saved Love..."*

At Chantilly, sharing with all the European responsible couples Father Caffarel, full of hope, makes a clearly positive assessment of the path covered by Teams of Our Lady. He then fully explains the points needing a progress and makes a clear call to the creativity of those who lead the Movement.

He hopes that Teams of Our Lady mission will serve to renew the anthropology of man, recognizing the complementarity of the sexes, developing mutual assistance and drawing our attention to the way couples get older and progress in their path to holiness, which should be dynamic, active, and participating in the world's evolution.

In the field of spirituality, he says that there are no borders (*"Vocation and itinerary of Teams of Our Lady"*, 1959), but he insists on the fact that Christian modesty must survive because we are poor fishermen and therefore we cannot boast of the mission received; this cannot discourage us.



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In confronting the world, we should walk next to the Church, letting God have his place in the intimacy of our relationship, reviving confidence and fidelity among couples where everything seems lost, helping to change the wounds of violence into openness to Love with the strength given by the Word.

Since the Word is not something inert and lifeless – but, on the contrary, something alive and active - it creates real life in every man, every couple and every team, making it always topical.

This connection between faith and life continues to exist, because faith without human experience gives no meaning to life.

Teams feel prepared to be questioned by the Gospel on the concerns of young people and to undertake a renewed effort to effectively proclaim the Gospel.

We are aware that young people should take advantage of our wealth. We must understand their positive positions, avoiding anything that can lead to mistrust, and at the same time valuing their lives and commitments, reinventing new ways of reaching them, in a catechesis adequate to their wishes and able to meet their needs.

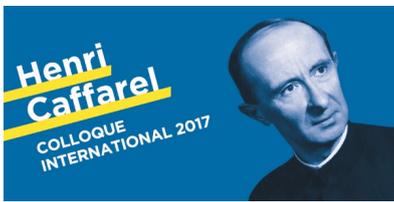
The Teams do not reject the current more and more secularized reality, as already recognized by Vatican II. However this does not mean that they accept the frightening pace of secularism that today's society seems to impose, forcing people to forget God.

The scope of the sacramental grace is the man and the woman, as well as what makes them one, what extends them, the children, the House, i.e. the total wedding, in its whole legal, physical, spiritual reality, [...] to the point that the physical human union between a man and a woman is part of the sacrament. *"Domestic life, is not only healed, elevated, sanctified, but becomes sanctifying"* (L'Anneau d'Or, n° 111-112, "Marriage, this great sacrament").

In the same context, Henri Caffarel shows us that the sacrament of marriage, where the active presence of Christ is deeply involved, is an essential part of the construction of the Church, even considering the couple united by the sacrament of marriage as a **cell of the Church**. Therefore, where a Christian couple lives, the Church begins to live, as well.

Besides, during the audience granted to the responsible couples of Teams of our Lady in September 2015, the Pope told us: *'I would like to insist on the missionary role of the teams our Lady. Every committed couple certainly receives much of what it lives in its Team, and its conjugal life is deepened, perfecting itself thanks to the spirituality of the Movement. However, after having receiving from Christ and from the Church, the Christian is irresistibly sent out to witness and transmit what he has received. "The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized."* (Evangelii gaudium, 120). *Christian couples and families are often in better conditions to proclaim Jesus Christ to other families, to support, fortify and encourage them. What you live as a couple and as a family – supported by the charism itself of your Movement – the profound and irreplaceable joy that the Lord makes you feel in your domestic intimacy between the joys and sorrows, in the happiness of having the presence of your spouse, in the growth of your children, in the human and spiritual fruitfulness that He grants you, all this is witnessed, proclaimed and communicated outside so that others, in turn will put themselves on this path".*

The treasure that couples receive in Teams of Our Lady should not be kept to themselves, but given to others. This way, they'll practise not only material and spiritual assistance, but also hospitality and generous welcome to all those who suffer and have difficulties in their love, as well as those who want a real life, recognized as children of the same Father.



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Couples in Teams of Our Lady chose to go out of themselves, to bear witness to their lives and to support those who need it, thus fulfilling a real Ministry in the pastoral care of couples and families, rather than making speeches that tire and disappoint.

In *Being Present to God: Letters on Prayer*, Father Caffarel explains that only those who know Christ by experience, through prayer can speak highly of God.

In fact, prayer is neglected, not to mention contemplation which is often mentioned and advised by the Pope who, like St. Thomas Aquinas, reminds us that '*individual contemplation is a penetrating individual and tasty knowledge*'.

We know that this spiritual negligence must be a great goal so that prayer becomes vital to us, supports and strengthens us in all environments, helping us to fight the growing individualistic and militant secularism of our days.

The Teams of our Lady, rebuilt between the reading of the past and their commitment to the present, make us look at the future with hope.

We end with the certainty that, if Father Caffarel was here, he would urge couples of Teams of our Lady to continue their path **towards holiness** in this hectic but wonderful world we live in.

United and driven by the same spirit, « let us search together... ».