



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

CONCLUSIONS OF COLLOQUIUM

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It seems to me that one of Father Henri Caffarel's phrases could sum up our Colloquium. *"You need to believe in what you are doing, and do it with enthusiasm."* Father Angelo Paleri, the Roman Postulator of the Cause for the Canonisation of Father Caffarel, asked for this Colloquium to be held in order to demonstrate the international significance of the Teams of Our Lady's founder. The Colloquium's organisers measured the range of Father Caffarel's message and were profoundly convinced of his holiness. Enthusiasm carried them. For them as for many Team members, Father Caffarel is a Master and a Living person. He continues to teach us, and his life, personality and the tone of his voice always move us.

In order to give you some of the conclusions reached at this Colloquium, it seems to me that this question needed to be answered. "What are the prominent aspects that enlighten our knowledge of Father Caffarel?"

Firstly, let us say that God does things well. If there is one reality that characterises Father Caffarel, it is love. *"My very being is love,"* he cried out as an echo to the account of his vocation that was at the beginning of everything. The Lord prepared him right from this foundation encounter for his mission with couples and also with widows. We saw that, it was they who came asking for his help. Father Caffarel always answered these requests and his answer always was, *"Let us seek together."* An Apostle of Marriage and a Master of Prayer, the themes of the Colloquium, are two titles that belonged to him and are inseparable. They underlie everything from the beginning. Prayer was at the root of everything. *"I attribute truly everything to prayer in my life."*

Thus, Father Caffarel listened, sought and studied. It was not enough to have a pragmatic approach and to use that to find orientations for couples' lives. Father Caffarel wanted to base all this research on theology. *L'Anneau d'Or* for couples, *Offertoire* for widows, these magazines built what today we call conjugal spirituality. Spirituality that has no theological foundation, that is not anchored in the mystery of God, just is not spirituality. Father Caffarel's work—he showed us that he did not work alone and that he surrounded himself with priests and eminent laity—Father Caffarel's work was that of a "responsible" person, (meaning 'head,' 'in charge'). "Responsible" is the word, because you do not launch couples or widows or the rest of the faithful into space. *L'Anneau d'Or*, the Teams' Charter and his books were also material that a responsible person, a master, gave to those who trusted him.

Furthermore, and priests know this, get fiancés talking about their love and you will see, they are inexhaustible... Their whole life is beginning! Father Caffarel touched this essential point for couples. When he talked to them, each person of the couple was concerned and involved. Maybe this explains the expansion of the Teams of Our Lady. Couples talked about the Movement to each other and that led to couples joining. Even today, this is still the case, because couples want their relationship to last. When Pedro and Nancy Moncau discovered *L'Anneau d'or*, they wrote telling Father Caffarel that it was this path to holiness with others that they had been seeking. That was a moving and founding moment for all of us. God is the master and was the one who inspired this encounter, this quest on each



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side of the earth. And not only this encounter, but also this particular spiritual and theological quest. A charisma exists and it is God's gift to Father Caffarel and to Teams, that marriage is a path to holiness.

Along the same lines, we can say that Father Caffarel *"recast the marriage sacrament,"* going beyond the moralistic approach that was then in vogue. Marriage is based on the Pascal mystery. It is also based on the very mystery of God. To cite Father Caffarel, *"To get to the bottom of things, it is the richness of the love between the Father, Son and Spirit that makes for the richness of the union between Christ and the Church, and by repercussion, that of the Christian couple where the Mystery takes place. Let us not be afraid, in sketching out this Trinitarian theology of the couple, of becoming too abstract; nothing is more concrete, more alive, hotter, than this presence of the Trinity at work in human love."* God's love becomes incarnate in human love.

Henri Caffarel, Apostle of Marriage. Henri Caffarel, Master of Prayer. His fecundity had its source in prayer. *"A would-be monk,"* someone said of Father Caffarel and this description goes some way to explain his attraction to the monastic life as his calling to service in the Church. He himself put it magnificently, *"Is it possible to be acquainted with Fire without catching fire, to get close to Love without burning with a love for God and for men? Prayer and charity are in league."* At Troussures, he was an ardent priest as well as a man of silence before God. When he prayed, he was described in the following way. *"One would have said that he was both completely open and welcoming and completely an offering, just before his Lord and his God like a sheet unfolded in the sun, an image that he particularly liked to use when talking about prayer."* So many people learnt about contemplative prayer from him and through his charisma were able to enter into a personal and deep relationship with God. This contemplative prayer was the basis of prayer and the union of the couple.

A novelty in this second Colloquium on Father Caffarel is the use of testimonials in the form of video clips, showing how priests and couples, widows, Team members and others were touched by Father Caffarel, how their lives were transformed by his evangelical intuitions. Throughout all these testimonials, it is amazing to feel the presence of our founder with his piercing gaze and his passion for God. The fecundity of his message was obvious to us and we strongly felt the light he projected on the marriage sacrament, its complementarity with the sacrament of orders, the vocation of couples, the strength of love beyond death, the importance of prayer and the necessity of spreading Christ's reign throughout the world.

Through these clips, we were able to notice in a very convincing manner how Father Caffarel's thinking reached people of diverse cultures and languages. The same enthusiasm, the same adherence, the same faith emerged with dynamism and a surprising conviction from these different and complementary testimonials. What better way to convince us of the universality of Father Caffarel's thinking and influence in the world!

Let us conclude by giving thanks to God. And giving thanks too to his Church. *"A prophet of our times,"* according to Cardinal Lustiger's expression, Father Caffarel was supported, approved and guided by successive popes and by all the archbishops of Paris. Although he remained a Parisian priest, Father Henri Caffarel crossed borders through the strength of his influence. He induces and motivates us in an ardent quest for holiness.