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ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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EDITORIAL

The “PLACE” of the COUPLE

Maria-Carla and Carlo Volpini



Group living no longer responds to the deepest need of a young personality. One must have communion, one-on-one rapport, this dialogue where two autonomous human beings share the best of themselves. This communion is found first in friendship, then later reaches fulfillment, more specifically, in conjugal love and in marriage, for “It is not good, said God, for man to be alone“¹

When we re-read the writings of Father Caffarel, we are still struck by the relevance of his message and we become even more convinced how right we are to call him “Prophet of marriage.”

The words we recall once again testify how easy it is, even in a good marriage, to fall into loneliness if we are not careful and vigilant to create an ever intense and vibrant dialogue within the couple.

Sometimes it seems that living in a happy and joyful family climate may be sufficient to guarantee conjugal unity; but instead the couple, by its very nature, requires a special dimension to allow conjugality to grow at every level. The dialogue which must be established within a couple cannot be the same as that which is established within a family; the gestures that a couple must exchange cannot be those reserved for the children or for other members of the family, even when made in a most loving way. This is also true for our glances, our attention, our words...

¹ H-. Caffarel, *Aux carrefours de l'amour*, Amour et Solitude, p.114

Deep conjugal communion is friendship. It is a gift from the depths of one's heart and one's body. It is a harmony of emotions. It is a shared attitude of prayer. It is the sharing of life.

Father Caffarel understood well that the conjugal dimension is an intimate and infinite "place" that may be occupied only by the couple who lives it. And so, as so often it happens in our day, we forget to cultivate our "place" because we are spread out too thin amongst numerous relationships, as positive and as joyful as they may be. When we experience the temptation to identify the couple with the family, inevitably we end up experiencing loneliness.

"It is not good, said God, for the man to be alone", but this solitude at the depth of every man and every woman cannot be overcome, on the human level, except by another man or another woman who we feel completes us.

And so it is that *together, in the newfound reality born of marriage and built day-by-day within the marriage,* we can present ourselves to God.

Thank you, Father Caffarel, for reminding us of this and for explaining it so well! And thank you for giving us the means, through the method of Teams of Our Lady, to *experience our "place" as a couple to the fullest.*

The Postulator's Report

Henri Caffarel, Priest

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.



Troussures Cemetery. The horizon is big, an echo of the opening of Father Caffarel's heart to the world. A stone dominates his grave. Written there: "Henri CAFFAREL Priest. Come and follow me." Next are written the dates of his baptism, his ordination and his death. Father's wishes were to have only the word "priest" to define him, and this call of Christ.

Let's stop for a moment. In this year 2009-2010, the year of the priest, let's examine what Father Caffarel wants to say to us.

In 1955, Father Caffarel conducted a survey of the Teams of Our Lady: what did Team members think of the priest? The resulting presentation that Father Caffarel wrote in issues of *L'Anneau d'Or* (The Wedding Ring) that same year of 1955 is extremely rich and gave us a preview of what would come out of Vatican II Council.

At the end of a long and beautiful article, Father Caffarel asked, "Is it reasonable to expect a priest to be a saint?" He wrote: "If there is an affirmation, a certainty, that comes through in all your letters (in response to the survey), it is definitely this: "The priest must be a saint. We want, we demand that he be a saint." And Father Caffarel brought enlightenment to such an affirmation. Certainly, "A saint does more good than an honest man or even a 'pious functionary.'" But the sanctity of the sacraments and of the Word

comes from God and not from his minister. And he concluded with what is fundamental: if sainthood is an aide, everything “still relates to another less exceptional virtue which is faith. Faith: this should well be the word which sums up everything. The faith of the priest, which must reveal the presence of God and the will of God in the life of man. The faith of our faithful, who must see the priest, not with his faults or even with his virtues (because to admire his charity, his devotion, his prayer, is still to see with human eyes), but with the respect that his mission commands, and without first asking if how well or how badly he has accomplished his mission.” Wonderful description of what Father Caffarel wanted for himself, and how he inspired those around him.

Father added: “In this desire to ‘see a saint,’ does not a bit of illusion and lack of faith enter in? For –this he underlined – *sainthood cannot be seen, it is not done to be seen.*” Indeed, he explained, the faithful must always look upon the priest and the priest must look upon the faithful “with the eyes of faith. » Father Caffarel gave many examples – and every priest can recognize himself in these – where he is welcomed as the man of God. The priest gives life to God and “when he leaves, he is felt more strongly,” because his humble words – which point to those of God – has been heard, and also because the faithful choose to pray for him in turn: “taking care of his ministry.” Sainthood is communicated from the depths of our hearts, by faith. What a happy life! And so the Church moves forward.

(You may write Father Marcovits by postal mail, at the Association’s address, or by e-mail at: postulateur@henri-caffarel.org)

Father Caffarel at Chantilly : **An ever current spiritual testament**

Gérard and Marie-Christine de Roberty



In May 1987, we were a young Regional Responsible Couple attending the Conference of Father Caffarel at the Meeting of the European Regional Responsible Couples at Chantilly. There were two “clans:” the “young” and the “old”! We, the “young,” did not understand the attitude of the “old,” deferring to them with a curtsy and a bow. They made us “wide-eyed,” like nervous little kids in the back of the room

We were not aware of the importance of that moment: the importance of the spiritual witness that Father Caffarel was about to give to the TOOL.

He has not returned to speak like this before the Responsibles of the movement since 1973. For the “old”, his appearance was something very important; we, the youngest of all, did not realize its importance until afterward. When he spoke...everything he said was committed to memory in our hearts and our minds...immediately. It was very powerful.

We experienced the power of this talk, but we remained mostly unaware of the great respect that many of the old Teams members had for him: moreover, he himself was indifferent to it. We quickly understood that we had experienced a moment of grace...Because “this man spoke with authority,” and great simplicity as inspired by the Spirit.

In order to speak of such rich content contained in that privileged moment, what better way than to let Father himself speak of the founding charism of Teams of Our Lady. *“What is meant by ‘founding charism?’ Well, something totally different from just a good idea, rather an inspiration of the Holy Spirit which will be like a dynamic force which will guide the institution throughout the whole of its development and will allow it to fulfill its mission.”*

And then to develop the three themes which were dear to him, and which would give different orientations to the Movement of the Teams of Our Lady

retained by the different international Teams, during the following periods :

- The Second Wind 1988 – 1994,
- Guests at the Wedding at Cana 1994 – 2000,
- To be a Christian couple today in the Church and in the world 2000 – 2006,
- Teams of Our Lady, communities of couples, reflection of the love of Christ 2006 – 2012.

These orientations all respond to the criteria defined on that day, May 3, 1987, by Father Caffarel:

- *“To return to the source, because sometimes the spring has become clogged with sand, the spring which I call the founding charism.”*
- *“To keep in mind the needs and values of the period in which one is living. Each period brings new values to the Church and to society, some positive and some negative; there is no doubt that we must keep in mind the values which are positive and the needs of individuals. One has to verify to what extent these values, which one is envisaging adopting, are consistent with the founding charism.”*
- *“To see what has been imperfectly understood over the years. And what is it that we could not understand but which we understand better at the present time?”*

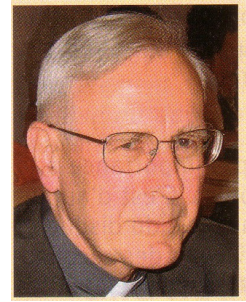
But let us again let Father Caffarel express himself, rather than draw our own conclusions, in wisdom and in faithfulness to the path of his life since the beginning when he said to the first couple : “Let’s explore together.”

“I am not going to reach any conclusion; to reach conclusions is your business, not mine. My role was simply to set out the facts and to invite you to be faithful to the founding charism, and to invite you to be creative within that faithfulness.”

Lastly, Father Caffarel invites us to pray Mary:

“Our faith in Mary, in her love, in her intercession, was there from the beginning of the Teams of Our Lady, and that is why, precisely, the Teams of Our Lady, have Our Lady in their title. It is not by chance, and so I invite you, more than ever, to renew that confidence in the Virgin Mary who will preside over the destiny of the Teams.”

A SYMPOSIUM
to examine in depth the PERSONALITY and the
ACTION of Father Caffarel



Mgr Fleischmann

Our Association, while supporting the cause of canonization, desires to contribute to a better awareness of the person and of the work of Father Caffarel. We deemed it worthwhile to invite a number of people with different areas of expertise to participate in a symposium at a scientific level.

“Le Collège des Bernardins” (Bernardine College), an institution for cultural and religious research for the Diocese of Paris, has agreed to include the symposium in their program, on December 3 - 4, 2010.

This symposium will be directed by Mrs. Agnes Walch, Lecturer of History at the University of Artois, author of a thesis on “Conjugal spirituality in French Catholicism, 16th – 20th Centuries.” Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, Postulator, is participating in the preparations, as well as Hervé de Corn, member of the office of Father Fleischmann, Ecclesiastical Counselor.

These two days will allow us better outline the personality and the action of Father Caffarel within the ecclesiastic and cultural context, beginning with his ordination in 1930, during the period of creating Teams of Our Lady, of *l’Anneau d’Or (The Wedding Ring)*, and the *Cahiers sur l’Oraison (Notebooks on Prayer)*, through the time of the Vatican II Council and beyond, then during the years dedicated to the House of Prayer at Troussures. And afterward we plan to publish the work of the symposium.

Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris, has willingly agreed to support this event.

Once we have finished drawing up the program, we will give you more precise information, on the website and in the next bulletin.

Archives

Father Henri Caffarel :

Marriage and Mission

“Marriage is a path to holiness.”



Witnessing to the “good news” of Christian marriage is the mission of the Christian couple, in the very heart of the couple and of the family, as well as before the world and in the Church.

To illustrate this mission, this year’s study topic for Teams, we offer you excerpts from a conference of Father Caffarel which appeared in a special May/August 1962 edition of “ l’Anneau d’Or” (The Wedding Ring) on the topic of :

“Marriage, Path toward God”

(Due to the length of the text, we’ve taken the liberty of noting some omissions marked by .../...)

THE APOSTLE COUPLE

For two Christians to be united is not only to be committed to one another; it is also to be committed together vis-à-vis the Church. Indeed, through marriage, the Christian couple takes its place within the Church and there finds itself commissioned with a public responsibility. This is just what Pius XII, in *Mystici Corporis*, wanted us to understand: “Christ has provided in a particular way for the social needs of the Church by the institution of two sacraments; Matrimony and Holy Orders.” What is the mission of the Christian couple within the Church? That is the subject of this conference.

Through the sacrament of marriage, the couple, both as a couple and as a whole, is incorporated into the Body of Christ. Two words can help us enter

into the wisdom of this Mystery: that of “cell” and of “organ.” The household is the “Cell of the Church, » as John XXIII said in 1959 to the thousand pilgrim couples from Teams of Our Lady. This expression serves to underline well that the “couple-cell” takes its life from the very life of the whole Body. As the soul is fully present in every cell of the body, so also are the mystery and the life of the whole Mystical Body present and actualized in every Christian couple.

.../...

Proclaiming Divine Love

The first aspect of the couple’s apostolic mission is to make God known, to proclaim His love.

The author always revels in his work: the sonata of the musician, the canvas of the painter which gives us access to the inner life of the artist. In the same way, in immense creation, all created things speak of God: the starry sky, of his immensity; an infant’s clear eyes, of his purity; the love of a man for his son, of his fatherliness.

What does this great human reality which is the couple reveal about God? That God is not, as contended Mr. François-René de Chateaubriand, “the eternal bachelor of the universe,” but rather a community of persons who love one another: The Father and his Word in the unity of the Spirit. Man and woman, united in love, are a living example of the divine community. It was to them also, and to them first of all, that Christ addressed his words: “Be one as my Father and I are one.” Be two who give to each other so that together you may give to this third person, who is the infant - your love incarnate and personified; and so you may be like a mirror reflecting the life of the Trinity.

These two in one who are the married man and woman evoke also the two in the one Mystical Body which are Christ and the Church. The alliance of the man and of the woman is, and should be, the image, the “epiphany” of the union of Christ and the Church.

Therefore it must be said that the primary aspect of the apostolic mission of marriage is to give man a glimpse of the intimate mystery of the Trinity, as well as this other mystery which is born of the first: the union of divinity and

humanity, of Christ and the Church, an unbreakable and fertile union which never ceases to give birth to children of God.

Just as it would not mean anything to us to learn that God is our Father if there were no human fathers, so also would the intimate love of the divine persons and the union of Christ and the Church be incomprehensible to us if there were no fruitful union of the love of a man and a woman.

Therefore God depends on you, the married couples, so that men and woman may have a glimpse of these three great mysteries: Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption. This is the primary aspect of the apostolic mission of the couple. And it is thanks to this most noble motive that you are able to love one another, to live as one, to be fruitful.

But there are other methods to cooperate with the work of God.

Mutual Sanctification

It is first with respect to your spouse that God wants your cooperation. Recall the words Pius XI wrote in *Casti Connubii*: “This mutual molding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, is the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony not be looked at in the restricted sense as instituted for procreation.” So this is not a luxury, or the happy initiative of a budding young married couple, who take responsibility for the spirituality of each other. This is a mission, a divine mission. Through the sacrament of marriage, you accept responsibility for the sanctification of your spouse, following the example of Christ who became incarnate and accepted responsibility for the salvation of humanity.

.../...

Cooperating with Christ in the sanctification of your spouse is essential to your apostolic mission. “You are for me,” the Lord tells each one of you, “an envoy, a witness, and indispensable aide for the sanctification of your spouse. It is true that I work in many different ways to make you both into saints: In the form of the Eucharistic bread, I nourish your Christian life; in the form of the priest, I pardon you when you fall into sin; but in the most moving form, that of a tender spouse, attentive, considerate, loving, I want to be close to you night and day, revealing my love to you, holding you more closely.”

.../...

Apostolate to the family

If each spouse is charged with a mission toward the other spouse, as the two are made one, they are charged with a mission toward others, and first of all toward their children.

.../...

Your primary method of contributing to the sanctification of your children is to love them with great tenderness, to want them to blossom and develop, to work at their development .../... and to pass on to them the Word of God.

.../...

But, as you well know, your apostolic mission is not limited to your children. There are people all around you who are waiting for your witness: what will you do for them?

.../...

Your riches are of two sorts: human riches and the riches of grace.

First, human riches: The first, the source of all others and the most precious: your conjugal love – as long as the love is kept alive. As one among you said in response to a survey conducted by Teams: “An apostolic couple must be a loving couple: That’s the only way to make others envious.” Your conjugal love yields a variety of loves: fatherly love and maternal tenderness, filial love and brotherly love, so many loves which make the Christian household a unique place in the world. These diverse and engaging aspects characterize the household depending on the hours and the events: meals and evenings, work days and holidays, painful times, singsong times...

.../...

The Christian married couple does not content itself with offering its human riches, with allowing others to witness important truths through their example. They give their guest the riches of grace which they have themselves experienced.

This great spiritual treasure is the presence of Christ, who enables the family community to become a “little church,” according to the words of Saint John Chrysostom. “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there will I be also;” and Tertullian added: “When two are gathered, there is the Church.”

.../...

And so the Christian couple and the family present themselves to us as a link between the world and Church hierarchy, through their welcoming apostolate, their “function of mediation.” This is indeed a big role; yet, after everything I’ve just told you, isn’t it the one that fits best?

Apostolate outside the home

.../...

This charity, this “communion in charity” which Christ brings to the married couple, must radiate outwardly from the couple who must work for unity in the place where they live, who must establish this communion in the places where they are providentially placed. Very often their efforts to create unity take place on a basic human level; but the couple must recognize that this human unity is already set in motion by unity from above.

.../...

But the apostolate is not only a testimony and an influence, it is also an assignment. There are apostolic activities which a husband and wife may undertake and pursue together. Some activities even demand the commitment of a dedicated couple: formation of engaged couples, welcoming catechumens, assisting newlyweds, rescuing broken marriages....

I would be remiss here if I did not speak of those couples who travel to new Christendom, alongside the missionaries. There, more than any other place, Christian couples must, according to the words of John XXIII to the Teams of Our Lady pilgrims, be living examples as they proclaim, illustrate, and demonstrate the joys and the difficulties of Christian marriage to all those whom the priests teach through the word.

.../...

It goes without saying that this type of vocation is not for all married couples, and that it often is the case that husband and wife cannot practice the apostolate together. The reason may well be simply that they do not spend their days in the same place. No matter! The essential is not that they be always together physically, but together morally. I enjoy recalling this old memory: One day, in the subway, two workers behind me were talking about a friend. One of them said, “Oh, man, it’s so obvious that he’s a guy who is

happily married!” Indeed, isn’t that what matters: that each of you devote yourself to the task of bringing richness to your marriage? One of you wrote, *“The way in which each spouse speaks to others about his or her partner, about their marriage, can in itself be an apostolate.”*

.../...

~

Just as Saint Paul called the couple Aquila and Priscilla “my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,” it is important that Christ be able to say this of every Christian couple.

Testimonies about Father Caffarel

Mgr Michel and Fina Naaman
TOOL-SYRIA

- Hello! ...
- Yes? ...
- We would like a testimony concerning Father Henri Caffarel.
- Okay. Very willingly, and with great pleasure!

It's a shame... it's a real shame that I did not know Father Caffarel personally...but, only through his writings, his books...and especially through the book written by Jean Allemand: Father Henri Caffarel, a Man Captivated by God, which I translated into Arabic, and which TOOL in Syria published and distributed.

Through his writings, I see the man, Henri Caffarel... the priest Henri Caffarel, in love with Christ and his Church... I feel he is right in front of me: alive, excitable, passionate, speaking with his whole being: his eyes, his body, his hands...and, above all, with his heart, indwelt by God, indwelt with the love of God which he wants to praise, to sing, and to share with everyone, and especially with married couples :

“Be aware that you are the most beautiful sign of the love of God, complete, incarnate, forgiving, pacifying and invincible.... “

Remain these living icons of His love, despite your own vulnerable and fragile condition. You are strong in spite of everything, for Jesus is the third person within your couple...for God is with you.

Charles and Paulette Azar
TOOL-Lebanon

It was upon returning to our hotel that we met Abbot Caffarel, short of stature, ascetic in appearance, very focused, and who seemed to carry himself as if he followed an inner direction.

Twelve years after we discovered TOOL, we discovered its humble founder and dynamic driving force. It was in April 1962 that Paulette and I learned about Teams. We had been married for one year, and I was on a French government scholarship for one year of specialization in the printing and publishing business, in Paris.

It was a period of new beginnings. By adopting the Charter, Teams of Our Lady renounced the formula of a “couples’ club” and put to good use their experience of communion as couples, in order to penetrate further into unchartered territory with this height, this breadth, and this depth of the eternal communion of the three divine Persons who we commonly designate as “Mystery.”

The impetus behind this initiative of laics toward the knowledge of God, the Holy Trinity of the Bible, was based not just on philosophical or rational reasoning, but based on practical experience, documented by their leader, who was the Abbot Caffarel.

We were not able to meet the Abbot in the little time that remained in our year of specialization, but he was present at all our meetings with the Parisian Teams: because at all of these meetings, the Teams presented to us ideas that came from him on the demands of the Charter, the grandeur of marriage, the presence of God, the missionary commitment, and the vision of the kingdom.

Upon our return to Lebanon, we started Teams. The strong support of the Spirit which indwelt the Abbot molded us little by little. We were introduced to prayer through the Workbooks on Prayer, and we followed the Correspondence Courses and in so doing spent many evenings with the Abbot.

The three Teams of Beirut became like a great tree. We then went on to found in Syria what would become, thanks to the Latakia I Team, another great tree. Both here and there, many couples came to Teams to deepen their

communion. They also drew from Teams many graces for their apostolic commitment during a very difficult period in the history of the region. The return of the People of the First Alliance, their encounter between Eastern Christians and their revival of the age-old conflict with the doctrine of Islam, had caused turmoil. In order to have within this context a clear vision of the plan of the Master of History, and to proclaim one's support and to work toward the realization of this plan, the Christian had to have knowledge of Holy History and of the central role of Jesus the King. Teams offered and encouraged the study of Biblical study topics, a discipline of life, asceticism, and a presence and openness to the suggestions of the Holy Spirit. The Syrian Team even gave us a martyr: Boulos Mestrih.

Having placed our trust in the Abbot, whose directives supported by testimonies came to us through the monthly Letters, the Study Topics, and *l'Anneau d'Or*, we experienced conjugal chastity. That is why, from the moment that *Humanae Vitae* was published, we immediately expressed our support of the Holy Father, and we joined with two other couples to attend the pilgrimage of the Teams to Rome in 1970. Pilgrimage and support for the Pope.

It was there that we met the Abbot in person, upon returning to our hotel after the visit of the Cardinals of Furstenberg and Garonne, with the d'Amonvilles and the Central Director (who would become, in 1986, the ERI or International Leading Team), then at lunch at the French Embassy, at Mass at the Circus Maximus, and at Saint Paul Outside the Walls.

We will never forget the extreme care of the Central Team Director and of the Abbot, who chose us among the five couples who would be presented to the Holy Father during the audience at Saint Peter. This face-to-face meeting with the Holy Father Paul VI, and the mission with which he would charge us for Lebanon, are still present to us spiritually as a special attention from the Lord with respect to us, and this made us aware that the Lord truly knows us by our name.

It was after having understood the meaning of the message of the Holy Father to the Teams that we elaborated in our notes: “ *I have seen and felt the filial attitude with which the Abbot Caffarel and the Central Director listened to the support of the Pope on conjugal spirituality ... The miracle of love*

between the Abbot Caffarel and the Pope,...this faithfulness in the visible love of Christ for the Church which brought about the miracle which was the declaration of the Holy Father, this forward leap which will exceed Humanae Vitae: the recognition of marriage as a vocation of holiness...and the introduction of the couple of Joseph and of Mary as the summit of this holiness.”

Our more personal encounter with the Abbot took place during the retreat at Assisi which followed the pilgrimage. This retreat for thirty couples was directed by the Abbot.

There, we were able to meet with him, and the first gift that he offered us from his inner spring was the revelation of the presence of Jesus in us, and the invitation that He makes to us to place ourselves very often in His presence. Paulette holds onto the memory of the important points of a personal interview with the Abbot. It was then also that we were able to have access to the depth of his vision on the life of a couple within marriage desired by our God, which is the communion of Three Persons.

The Abbot has expressed himself at length through his writings in *l'Anneau d'Or* the Workbooks on Prayer. He has taught us much through the courses on prayer that we have followed by correspondence. We have profited much as a family from his advice and directives within our life as a couple, in the building the character of our children, and in our commitment to the service of the Church and her missionary fields.

Today we can say that Abbot Caffarel was a **prophet**, sent at an opportune time by Our Holy Father of the Heavens, to warn of the decline of conjugal relations, initiated by a diabolical machination and fed by the media, which are leading the free world toward a catastrophe in which the entire planet strongly risks paying the price.

The current violence of terrorism propagated by those adept at pagan or political doctrines, and which grips the West, is nothing but a reaction of rejection to what the Christian civilization of the past has become. A civilization which no longer assures a pagan and orphaned world of the fatherhood/motherhood which it needs to live.

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I renew my (we renew our) membership in the Association
“Les Amis du Père CAFFAREL” for the year 2010,

And I(we) remit the annual dues of :

○ Single member: 10 €

○ Member couple : 15 €

○ Member / Benefactor : 25 € or more

Check or money order payable to “Les Amis du Père Caffarel”

On the back of this form, please list the names of friends to whom you would
like us to send a membership application.

Please send information and a membership application
to the following friends:

Last name :.....
First name(s) :.....
Address :.....
.....
Zip code :.....City/State :.....
Country :
Telephone :.....
Email :.....@.....

Last name :.....
First name(s) :.....
Address :.....
.....
Zip code :.....City/State :.....
Country :
Telephone :.....
Email :.....@.....

Last name :.....
First name(s) :.....
Address :.....
.....
Zip code :.....City/State :.....
Country :
Telephone :.....
Email :.....@.....

Last name :.....
First name(s) :.....
Address :.....
.....
Zip code :.....City/State :.....
Country :
Telephone :.....
Email :.....@.....