

THE BULLETIN



OF FRIENDS OF FATHER

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ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL
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EDITORIAL

“Open yourself up to hope”

Maria-Carla et Carlo Volpini



“For God, what is important is that man, by recognizing his poverty, opens himself up to hope. Consequently, God grants this hope by going beyond man’s expectations. So therefore, open yourself up to hope!”¹

Father Caffarel, in his book entitled “One Hundred Letters about Prayer”, invited a young friend (and us too, by implication) to live and experience the dimension of hope. Hope is a word that immediately projects us into the future, and on to tomorrow...Hope for another life...Hope for the Kingdom to come...

By talking about hope in the future, we run the risk of never really making it concrete and real in the present. And yet it is hope in the present, today, that we should be announcing and proclaiming. Above all, when it belongs to our world and to our married vocation: our hope for a conjugal love that lasts our whole lifetime together. But in order for the love between a man and a woman to exist and be—this love union that we so want to tell other couples about—it is important to nourish it, help it to grow, feed it with tender words and gestures, with receptiveness and reciprocal forgiveness.

The heralding of hope means succeeding in conveying the dimension of a married or conjugal love that lives and experiences the relation of love just like

¹ Father Caffarel, *Présence à Dieu. Cent lettres sur la prière*, Paris, Feu Nouveau, 1967
Paris, Parole et Silence, 2000

and as a sign of the relation of love that God has with man. This love that liberates, that welcomes, that forgives and that gives itself up as a gift.

This is a love that liberates our whole potential and makes us become adults who are simultaneously serene and aware of the unreached goals, the unsatisfied desires, and the unfulfilled dreams. This is a love that frees us from all fear and helps us become ourselves in true fullness, clarity and authenticity. Is it not in freeing us that God loves us?

This is a love that receives, that accepts us as we are with all our limitations and incoherence, but with the certainty of being loved long before loving. Is it not God who loved us first?

This is a love that forgives and gives. It is a love that before judging understands the other's needs, that before demanding rights for itself is attentive to the desires of the other and smoothes over conflicts, that without forgetting the demands of 'me' makes room for 'us', that with giving up its own individuality, makes room for otherness. It is a love that is renewed and every day is able to take up again the way forward.

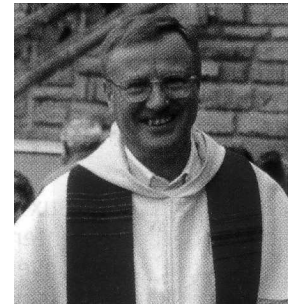
In this manner, hope does not belong to the future but to the present, since we are the ones who give life to hope when through dialogue, the Sit-down, the frequent reading of the Bible, we achieve and build a love that is not and does not want to exist just for one day, but rather for a whole lifetime.

Heralding or proclaiming hope is not a question of who, how, when and in what way? Rather it is a question of life that should concern primarily our couple if we wish to proclaim and announce it to other couples.

The Postulator's Report

“God never dreams”

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits , o.p.



Even when a lot of love is present in a couple's relationship, certain tensions can also coexist that are the result of the fact that the other person does not live up to our expectations. If we are not careful, this discrepancy can be the source of much suffering, and even perhaps, of unnecessary suffering. “My husband never says anything. He's always quiet. He is totally taken up with his work. And I feel that I hardly exist for him.” Is this woman right to think like this? And the ensuing reproaches do they not risk creating an even bigger gap between them? Without wishing to exhaust this question, here are Father Caffarel's very healthy thoughts on this matter:

“For goodness sake, Mrs X, if you expect Stephen to be exactly the husband you dream about, you will never love him! Just begin by loving him as he is, for even in Heaven, he will never be the man you dream about, he will be the man he is.” Well, let me tell you—and this is the great thing I like to tell people—God, He knows how to love and He loves me just as I am, with my good points and bad, with my good actions and my sins. When God loves someone, He loves them just as they are and He tries to, I was going to say “kindly” guide them towards what He expects of them. He does not wait for us to be as He dreamed of us being to love us. God never dreams!”

(Father Caffarel, in “Radioscopie” by Jacques Chancel, 15 March 1973)

**State of the Advancement of the Cause,
of the work of postulation,
of the theologians and historians
and of the Diocesan Commission**

Marie-Christine Genillon, Vice-postulator



Here is some news about the state of the cause and how far along we have moved in 2009-10. This report is now only presented once a year.

The meetings between the postulator and the vice-postulator were few and far between this year, since the main evidence has now been collected. However, they would like to receive written texts from non-French speaking witnesses, together with simple accounts from people who live and put into practice Father Caffarel's spirituality and thereby attest to his reputation of holiness.

The research work has continued and moved ahead. Mgr Fleischmann has digitalized all the conference talks and various texts that Father Caffarel gave and that had been collected together by Marie-Christine Genillon. She went through all the new dossiers and correspondence that was sent to the Postulator and that has been partially digitalized by Monsignor Fleischmann.

This means that all this material is now available to historians who come to work in the International Leading Team's offices (ERI).

The theologians have received most of Father Caffarel's published work, while all the unpublished and digitalized documents have been sent to them either in paper or CD format.

Both historians and theologians are currently working to put together the dossiers that will be studied by the diocesan committee.

In October 2009, the diocesan committee started the hearings again and were able to hear the principal witnesses. This committee is very anxious to receive written accounts by non-French speaking witnesses, through the local correspondents.

As can be seen, the work is progressing and everyone is participating in moving the Cause forward with competence and generosity.

2009 Association Financial Statement

Philippe Deney
Treasurer



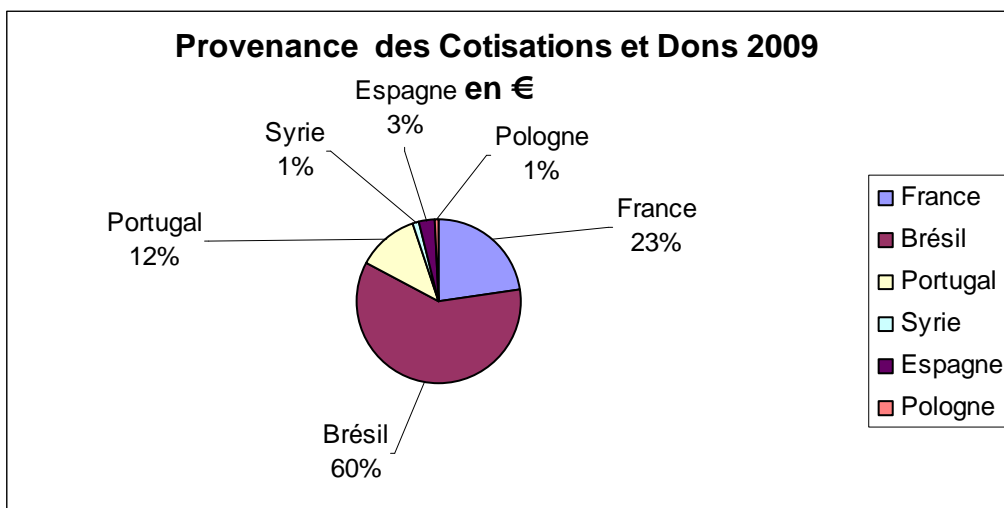
At the end of December 2009, the state of the earnings and expenses of the association looked like this:

Expenses	Budget	Actual
• Travel costs	5 000 €	1 781 €
• Office expenses	1 000 €	1 289 €
• Postulation team	15 000 €	9 110 €
• Secretarial aid for copying etc.	10 000 €	5 879 €
Total	31 000 €	18 059 €
Earnings		
• Subscriptions	9 000 €	18 590 €
• Subsidy from the International Leading Team (ERI)	10 000 €	0 €
• Gifts	3 000 €	967 €
• Sale of Merchandise		35 €
Total	22 000 €	19 592 €
TOTAL	- 9 000 €	+ 2 612 €

Just like in 2008, the expenses remain less than were budgeted for during this period. Many actions were accomplished by reducing travel costs, including the postulation team and the diocesan inquiry committee who need to meet and interview the various witnesses. The theologians and historians work far away, but thank goodness for Internet! The Secretarial and Office expenses were kept to a minimum, thanks to a large team of volunteers who gave much of their time. For example, they thought up and put together the Information letter. They also digitalized Father Caffarel's writings.

The earnings from the subscriptions are greatly above what had been allowed for in the budget. The level of subscription renewal is very good, despite the lack of systematic individual reminders. The simple fact of including the subscription renewal form in with the Information letter has been enough to jog people's memories. As a result, we decided, just like in 2008,

not to ask for a subsidy of 10,000€ from the International Teams of Our Lady and to carry it forward to future years as the state of the Cause evolves.



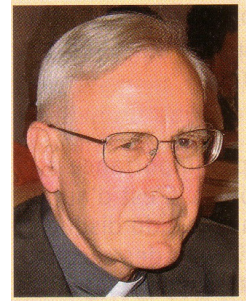
As in previous year, the subscriptions and gifts come from the two countries where the Teams of Our Lady are the most visible: Brazil and France (representing 83% of the subscriptions total in 2009). Other countries have started to become organized, like Portugal. The setting up of local correspondents for the association remains a constant objective, because it would allow us to increase the number of members and would add extra weight to the cause. Indeed, it is essential to demonstrate that throughout the world, many, many people are sympathetic to Father Caffarel and that they wish to support our cause.

Perspectives for 2010:

The current financial situation of the association means that we can continue with the organization of the Paris symposium in early December 2010 about Father Caffarel's thinking, with the proviso that a sufficiently good level of subscriptions is maintained.

**“From the Teams of Our Lady
to the House of Prayer”**

Symposium on Father Caffarel
Paris, Collège des Bernardins
3-4 December 2010



Mgr Fleischmann

The organisation of our symposium is gradually falling into place. Academics familiar with the religious history of the 20th century, theologians, participants in the movements founded by Father Caffarel—the Teams of Our Lady, the Spiritual Movement for Widows in particular—in all, about twenty lecturers will participate to highlight the central characteristics of the personality, work, thinking and spirituality of Henri Caffarel.

The first day, Friday, December 3rd, will centre on the personal career of Father Caffarel and his presence as a priest in his century.

On Saturday, December 4th, more time will be spent thinking about about marriage, conjugal spirituality, the deepening of private prayer. We will rediscover the importance of what Father Caffarel brought to all these domains.

The four half-days will be under the alternating presidency of two academics who know the Teams of Our Lady quite well, Mrs Agnès Walch and Professor Xavier Lacroix and two bishops, Monsignor Jérôme Beau, auxiliary bishop of Paris and Monsignor Guy Thomazeau, who knew Father Caffarel very well, will close the symposium.

The detailed programme is available on www.congres-caffarel.fr together with the registration form to be downloaded.

How to participate in this colloquium? Registrations can be received from July, separately for each day, or for the two days, within the limits of the available places. A one day 25-€ contribution is asked (15 € for the priests and the students).

Archives

Father Henri Caffarel :

Marriage & Priesthood



While the Teams of Our Lady continue to encourage us in our role as Christian couples, the year for priests simultaneously offers us a moment of reflection about the priest's ministry.

In order to illustrate “the affinity that exists between marriage and priesthood, this link that unites the priest to the Christian family,” we chose this text by Father Caffarel. It was first published in 1947, in n° 14 of the ‘Anneau d’Or’ (Golden wedding bands) under the title of:

THE HOME AND THE PRIEST

(Due to the length of the text, it has been edited in places and this is shown by .../...)

It was at the end of the first retreat for couples that I had preached, many years ago now. For three days, I had spoken to roughly fifteen couples about the dignity of their vocation and their mission and place in the Church. They had responded to me with marvelous confidence. Some had revealed themselves as souls of great generosity, not skimping on the gift of God and not cheating with his law. Others had confided in me their difficulties and struggles. In the face of their bravery and humility, I had experienced great admiration and had discovered the greatness of human love when the grace of God inhabits it.

.../...

Returning to my room later and closing the shutters, I caught a glimpse of lights through the trees. “They have gone home”, I thought, remembering the

couples at the retreat, “And in those homes tonight, there is certainly more ardent human tenderness and a greater love of God than before.” An unexpected thought hit me and I was stuck by the obvious affinity that exists between marriage and priesthood, the link that unites the priest to the Christian family. How beautiful those couples are! And it is this happiness, this fullness that Christ asks his priest to sacrifice... How wonderful is the gift of the disciple to his Master! How is it that the person who has given up love and paternity is precisely the person who has the power to kindle the flame in the hearth of the home? What is this paradox? ... No, it is not a paradox, but a mysterious correlation between Orders and Marriage. Indeed, it would be very superficial to believe that the priest holds back from founding a home through contempt for love and the family. It is not disdain but devotion: he is the lamb marked for the sacrifice, so that God may bless the entire flock. Thus the renouncement of one explains the pure and fervent love of the others... Looked at in this light, it seems obvious that priest and couple should understand and support each other. Is it not appropriate for the couple to have fervent gratitude towards the priest, realizing that his sacrifice is in direct proportion to the happiness and intensity of their family life, and that the couple pray that Christ’s friendship transfigures the loneliness of the apostle?

The priest, on his side, will not be jealous of the happiness and fulfillment in the couples’ lives, but will be happy to see divine blessings flourish. These are the very blessings that it is his vocation to call for precisely for them, at dawn and again in the evening, when he finishes reciting his breviary.

At Mass, the union of the priest and the faithful could be even closer. When the priest presents the host and the chalice during the Offertory, should the people not offer up the priest and pray for him: “Receive him, Lord; it is the gift of the human family, and just as in a moment the host becomes the living Christ in his hands, may, we pray you, this child of man and woman be in our midst another Christ, immolated, prayerful, forgiving, blessing...?”

Why is it that the relationship between priest and couple rarely reaches this level? Probably because to a greater or lesser extent each party is unaware of the life and ideal of the other, as if the two vocations were located in two worlds foreign to each other?

In order for esteem and mutual love to grow and develop, priests need to deepen their understanding of the greatness of marriage and couples need to understand the dignity of the priestly vocation. May couples, to whom *Anneau d'Or* often speaks about their 'great sacrament', allow me to talk to them today about the Sacrament of Orders.

The Mystery of Priesthood

If you want to understand a priest, you must open your Gospels and see how He to whom this title truly belongs actually lived.

When we say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, this tells us about his origins and shows us that everything about him relates to the Father in terms of recognition and filial piety. But it tells us nothing about his mission on earth amongst men. When we say, however, that he is the priest, then his whole earthly mission begins to yield its secrets.

Priest, peacemaker, mediator—these various synonyms are the key to the mystery of Christ. Restoring the alliance between God and humanity, whose pardon he obtained through his own sacrifice, re-establishing the violated order, just as one rebuilds a ruined cathedral, by being the very angular stone himself. This resumes the whole priestly mission of Our Lord and is the light through which we ought to contemplate the scenes from his life.

.../...

The apostles meet Jesus on a hill in Judea. As soon as they see him, they fall on their knees (Mt, 23, 18-20). As they get up, they hear the words that decide their future, their life and their death. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Then Jesus extended his hands over them and "While he was blessing them, he ... was taken up into heaven." (Lk, 24, 51) These words of Luke's are very evocative: they imply that the Ascension did not interrupt the blessing and that Jesus Christ, from above, never ceases to extend his hands over his apostles. It is much more than a just moving gesture. It signifies the taking possession of. A mysterious power is communicated to them, that profoundly transforms their spiritual being, and that connects and adapts them to Christ. He who up until now had used his own body to go and meet men, talk to them and sanctify them, will henceforth use his apostles, who will be an extension of him,

because they are not just priests in his image and beside him, but through him and in him. Just like branches of the same tree, the sap comes to them from the trunk.

In their turn, the apostles will lay their hands upon and will create new priests who in their turn will lay their hands upon...The branches multiply, but form a single tree. Priests multiply, but there is only one priesthood, only one priestly activity and it is Jesus Christ who exerts it through his priests.

.../...

Priests therefore perpetuate and propagate the priesthood of Jesus Christ. It was evident that he had to become multiple in order to be all things to everyone! The priestly institution was invented by his love to come forward and meet us. And how can we not believe this? All we need to do is to observe and listen to priests to be convinced that through their gestures some one else is working, through their lips another is speaking. And who else, except Christ, can say, "I absolve you", "This is *my* body. This is *my* blood."

.../...

Would I amaze you by admitting that a priest dreads almost as much to attract by his human gifts as to push away by his failings? Because his mission is not to attract the hearts of men to himself, but rather to Him, whose servant he is. No matter who the priest is, be he a Lacordaire or a Dom Bosco, his true greatness does not appear in his works, nor does it sparkle in his words. It is not evident. It is totally inward turning. It is supernatural and cannot be known or detected except through faith. Blessed are those who, by means of and through a man with his failings or gifts, manage to find the priest, the only priest, Jesus Christ.

The Priest's Mission

When we realize that Jesus Christ continues to exert his priestly function through the priest, it is easy to see that the same term *mediator* can be used to define both the mission of Christ and that of the priest. This word situates the priest immediately. He is the man who *is in the middle*, not in order to separate, but rather to unite. He is the man that goes from the One to the others, from God to men, in order to bring about a rapprochement and an alliance. Peace between God and humanity in general was brought about by Christ's death, but it has to be made real between God and each individual

man. Indeed, it implies more than just the usual meaning of peace. It implies love, communication, ‘betrothal’ even according to the Bible, between each individual person and their God.

.../...

Although the priest knows he carries the most precious message of all, nonetheless he still quakes when he is with people. What a responsibility it is to talk about God! Will he be able to find the words capable of evoking the true face of the Father? These men to whom he speaks have been deceived so often by false prophets and mistaken in their quest for happiness and the absolute, will they not turn away from him and be skeptical?

However, there are hearts that open, eager for the grace of the sacraments and the word of God that answers anxious questions, the rule of life, and nourishment for the soul. Then the priest experiences a mysterious joy that is like no other, for the life that was in him, he has suddenly managed to communicate it.

.../...

Prayer, which is really a homecoming to God, plays a large part in his life. He resorts to it to renew his courage and to find anew his original impetus. He longs for, like the worker, peace in his home. He had left burdened with divine graces; he returns with his heart filled with requests, distresses, good actions and the sins of men. When at night, people and beasts are resting in the sleepy village, a light burns in the window of the presbytery: the parish priest is keeping watch and praying. He pleads, intercedes and offers himself up for all the inhabitants. Like Moses perhaps to whom Yahweh offered another regency, he refuses to break away from “a stiff-necked people.”

.../...

The priest fully becomes a mediator at the altar. Mass is the highpoint of his priestly life. In fact, his whole ministry has no other objective but to bring all those, for whom he is the representative, to this meeting with God. At the Offertory, when he presents the bread and wine for sacrifice, it is not only something that he does in the name of the faithful, but he also offers them up too, with their living and vibrant hearts. At Communion, it is God entirely who is given by the hands of his servant. Here is where God and man tightly embrace. And for one moment, the mediator is no more than a witness before these men and women who have found their Father, who take God away with them in their hearts and whom God takes away in his Heart.

The Home and the Priest

Now that we are aware of the mystery and mission of the priest, it is time to consider the place that Christian couples ought to make for him in their thoughts, devotion and prayers.

.../...

A priest often understands what a family thinks of a him as soon as he crosses the threshold.

In some homes where his words and his actions are judged casually, the parents' politeness could be deceiving, but the attitude of the children is very revealing.

In some homes, he is received with true cordiality—not so different to that with which we welcome any other good friend of the family. But upon leaving them, he feels uneasy. He has been accepted for his human gifts and not for his supernatural ones. He as a person has attracted them rather than his role in the ministry of the Lord. Here too, there is no real understanding of what priesthood is.

However, when he reads confidence and respect on the children's faces who look at him straight in the eye, he is sure that the parents have that deep understanding and they know how to instill it in their sons and daughters. And so it is in this peasant dwelling that the head of the family, at the beginning of the meal, asks one of his three sons to welcome the Lord's messenger. Or in this other home, where he is asked to bless the table and to preside over Evening prayers. Or at these senior-school teachers' house where parents and children bow as he leaves to receive his blessing.

If the priest gets to know the family better, he will see that the clergy's efforts to spread the Kingdom of Christ are followed with attentive sympathy. These efforts can be at parish level or else in missionary countries. The priest sees that the children are brought to an ordination or to departure on mission and that these ceremonies are very informative and yet so ignored by many Christians. And if the priest read in people's souls, he would discover in the heart of that father or mother the fervent desire that Christ come to their house to recruit his apostles. A simple desire that is 'left to Christ', for they know that it is Christ who decides and not the parents. But it is up to the parents to create a climate where vocations can be nurtured and grow. Perhaps one day they will have the joy of receiving the first blessing given by their newly ordained son. And so, kneeling before him, they will pay tribute to that higher paternity that has been invested in the fruit of their love.

When the priest leaves these one of homes to return to his apostolic duties, he feels stronger. He knows that the retreat he is going to preach has been accepted, that the healing of the mother in danger that he spoke about will occur. His ministry has been recognised and in return, he includes the aspirations of this family in his prayers and masses.

Since these families practice Christian hospitality, the priest knows that he can easily ask them to help out with preparing someone to be christened; or that fellow who needs the stability and balance of a healthy family; or that betrothed couple who is in search of advice. As long as his action is not supported and completed by the devotion of a family, the priest's actions can remain precarious. He is worried about the newly converted man, the young couple all by themselves, and the vocation of someone else that is threatened by a hostile environment.

Respecting, welcoming and helping priests is great, but it is not everything! Couples need to pray for him. For the parish clergy to start with. Surely it is normal to expect help from those to whom you consecrate your heart and your time? Why is it that so often the faithful appear so distant from their clergy? Indeed they are often more prompt to criticize rather than to help out. And when a priest falters, they are indignant. Should they not ask themselves first about their share of the responsibility? Did they support and protect him in their prayers? Do they not realize that the enemy always aims at the chiefs, the men who poke their head above the parapet?

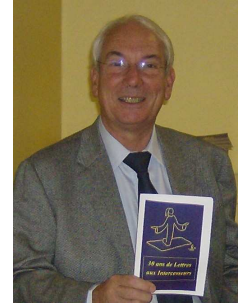
Even more rare are those who pray for their bishop, despite the invitation in the missal to do so. They talk about him as if he was a civil servant and yet he has received the fullness of priesthood! Everyone seems to forget that he is the spiritual head and father of the diocesan church, the authentic successor of the apostles amongst them, responsible for them before the Father. Maybe the Esquimos should come and evangelize France! Because when *they* talk about their bishop, they call him “the big chief of prayer”!

How could I finish this article without mentioning that priest to whom all Catholic gazes are turned and whose face it is enough to contemplate to learn that he is a man of prayer and penance and that he feels heavily “the solicitude of all the churches”? Jesus Christ on top of the hill cried over the large town. “How many times have I wished to assemble your children, like the hen with her chickens...” A similar pain must tear at the heart of Pius XII when faced with this divided humanity that is threatened with catastrophes. May he at least know that he is understood by your families and supported in your prayers.

HENRI CAFFAREL, Priest

Intercessors

Jean-Michel Vuillermoz



The man of prayer works at God's work, he intercedes for the world.

Every man ought to unceasingly deepen his search for God and should constantly ask himself what kind of a relationship he has with God.

In the Old Testament, God sought a dialogue with man. Abraham ended up interceding with God in man's favour and he was the first in a "*long line of intercessors.*"

Starting with the weakness that made him like us, Christ is able to communicate all the wealth and grace that comes from the Father, our God. Christ who gives himself up and intercedes incessantly for all men.

But let us listen to Father Caffarel:

« During the hottest part of the day, the patriarch, seated at the entrance of his tent, raised his eyes and caught sight of three angels, ambassadors of Yahweh. He got up, kneeled before them and offered them hospitality. And Yahweh renewed his promise of descendants and also let him know that he was on his way to Sodom and Gomorrah, in order to judge them. Abraham became the advocate of these criminal towns and his prayer, that is the first one we read in the Bible (Gen 18), is an intercession in favour of the guilty. It is an intercession that is confident, clever, daring and pathetic. Abraham thus inaugurates a long line of intercessors that spring up in Israel throughout the ages.

Some six centuries later, it is Moses' turn ; you could say that he is the stereotypical intercessor. Infuriated by the incredulity of his people, Yahweh tells him, "*Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.*" (Ex 32, 10). And we understand from the beginning that Moses is the one who *will not let*

God do what he intends. Nor does he accept to break away from the people, despite the fact that he could receive a more glorious position. God appointed him as leader of this people and so he becomes its defender and intercessor with the Lord himself.

Judges, kings and prophets, coming after Abraham and Moses, will plead in turn for this ‘*stiff-necked people*’ and again and again will obtain mercy and clemency for it. But misfortune on those centuries where God found no intercessors! “*I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.*” (Ez 22, 30)

Let us admire this definition, or rather this portrait of what an intercessor is: he is a man who will build a wall to protect his brothers and will watch the gap through which the punishment could arrive.

Of course, all the intercessors in our Bible are really only figurines, or preliminary sketches for the great and only Intercessor, Jesus Christ. There he is, the man God was looking for: standing in the gap, his arms extended, he intervenes. More efficiently than Abraham, he pleads for the criminal world and because he allied himself with human nature, to the point of being indissolubly linked in the Incarnation—and *Verbum caro factum est*—henceforth, human nature is reconciled with the Father.

Once and for all, Jesus Christ gave himself up and once and for all, he established a bridge between humanity and divinity. In one way, the intercessor’s mission is finished. But it is also true to say that he wants to be present throughout time and space in order to continue on earth his role of intercessor until the end of time. And to accomplish this, he counts on us, his disciples. It is up to us now to remain in the gap and to watch out and protect. It is our role to plead undoubtedly for the huge crowd of people, but also and most particularly for that portion of ground, time, and humanity where it is precisely our mission to embody Christ and to continue his intercession.

Many times in my life as a priest, it seems to me that I have been surprised by the Lord’s strategy. In order not to turn away from that guilty family or from that unchristian little village, he has called forth from their midst someone who prays. And he blesses this place, this human group where he has a cherished child. It could be the young person who is ill, a humble peasant, or the poor country parish priest ardent with prayers...

The intercessor's prayer is nothing other than Christ's own prayer otherwise it would be nothing. It would not exist. Christ's own prayer, inspired in them by the spirit of Christ. This Spirit, one of whose names is the Paraclete: advocate, defender, and intercessor. And undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit pleads for those in whom he dwells, but at the same time, precisely through them and with them, he intercedes for humanity.

What all intercessors, inspired by the Spirit, ask for in their poor language of men on earth, Christ glorious at the Father's right hand is there to translate it into heaven, because he is alive! The Lord is risen from the dead and "*he always lives to intercede for us*" as Saint Jean and Saint Paul declare. (1 Jn 2, 1; Heb 7, 25)

Intercession is truly one of the great words in the vocabulary of prayer. It is its utmost function because it is evidence simultaneously of a great love of God and of a great love of men ».

*(Special edition of The Wedding Ring, 135/136, May-August 1967,
Being Present for God)*

**“Intercession is much more than pleading for our brother's cause,
it is allowing the all-powerful love of God, who is in a hurry to set up
his kingdom, to make its way through us.”**

Father Henri Caffarel

Testimony

Father Caffarel in Brazil : A living presence amongst us



Silvia et Chico Pontes

(ERI - Liaison couple for the American zone)

At the very moment when the Teams of Our Lady Movement in Brazil was getting ready to celebrate its golden jubilee, May 13th, 2000, and when we still were lucky enough to count of the active presence of Nancy Moncau, our ‘Dona Nancy’, who with her husband Pedro had been at the origin of the Movement in Brazil, we asked her to write a book about our history. “*The Teams of Our Lady in Brazil, An Essay about their Origins*” was the result, and the whole spirit that Father Caffarel left engraved on our history exudes and permeates the 300 or so pages that make up this book.

Dona Nancy tells us that the first seven years of the Movement were marked by the constant exchange of international correspondence. While the Liaison Couple, Madeleine and Gérard d’Heilly “*gave us instructions about the rules and methods of the movement, Father Caffarel inspired us with its spirituality and soul.*”

Far be it from us, however, to depict Father Caffarel as merely a historical figure in story of the Teams in Brazil. He is more than just a memory or a fact of the past. He is a living presence, a word of life that continues to resonate in the Team members’ hearts throughout our country.

When we think about Father Caffarel, it is impossible not to realise that his priesthood marked his whole personality. He was a man of prayer, full of faith, with a devoted missionary spirit.

We also like to recall his physical presence in Brazil. Way back in 1957, he stayed with us for about twelve days, and this was the first of three trips he made to see the Brazilian team members.

At the time, there were only 10 Teams in São Paulo and 3 others elsewhere, and Father Caffarel officially instigated the first Sector.

“The presence of a father with his spiritual children, who admired him and drank up his words avidly,” was the memory of him dating to that first visit.

They were the words of a father who ardently wished to pass along to his children the solid foundations of spiritual conjugality. They were challenging words, filled with life, but conveyed with benevolence by someone who had discovered an even greater love in the heart of his God.

A small tape recorder meant that we were able to record the unforgettable advice given during those days. *“A Christian is always moving ahead. The day he stops, he becomes an idol worshipper. We join the Teams to help each other mutually, because we do not want to stop our progress. There will be days when we will feel discouraged, tired...but it will be then that we will have the support of our friends. Tell them: If I fall asleep, wake me up. If I am tired, encourage me. If I fall, help me get back up.”*

He was well aware of the snares, the dangers even of being too active. He was concerned about training and education. *“I beg you, please never stop training and learning. If being involved and in action stops you training and learning, then action will be your downfall.”*

Father Caffarel knew that he had offered a precious pearl to the Brazilian team members. This is why although he simultaneously encouraged growth—*“found a team in the main areas of Brazil”*—almost obstinately he also made a plea that the inner spiritual life become more intense every day. *“My advice is the same: a maximum amount of mysticism, and a maximum amount of discipline.”*

In October 1962, almost five years later, Father Caffarel returned to Brazil to check on the result of his exhortations. The **13 Teams** had now grown to **167**—impressive growth in such a short period of time!

During this trip, Father Caffarel came in contact with the casual attitude and joyful spirit of our people. It was during the football World Cup and any Brazilian worth his salt could not bear to miss a match played by his national team. But who would dare to ask Father Caffarel to change the time of his talk

that coincided with one of the matches? A few men who could not stand it any longer went and talked to him. A little bit surprised, and without really understanding how a match could be more important than a talk, he conceded. In the book about our history, there is the story about how everyone was jumping up and down in front of the television in true Brazilian fashion—*“insulting the referee, commenting on the badly executed passes, explaining what the trainer and coach should and should not have done. Discretely seated at the back of the room, Father Caffarel watched all this. It must have been a one-off experience for him!”*

But it is true that when the match was over and spirits had calmed down again, everyone went and took their places in the conference room, grateful and above all very attentive.

Beyond these moments where he met with a reality and culture he did not know, Father Caffarel never lost an occasion to shake up some teams where he had detected some symptoms of fatigue or apathy and to suggest some serious changes to them. All suggestions were accepted with respect and obedience.

Recently, on May 13th 2010, the Teams in Brazil celebrated their 60th anniversary and there is the feeling in the air, for all those who read his famous editorials, his books, his talks and his ‘reminders’, that he continues to talk to us with the same enthusiasm, the same demanding nature and the same love. In the huge network of Teams scattered throughout the main areas in Brazil—just as he would have wanted—the tremendous certainty that God blessed couples and that he gave them great potential to be happy and to become saints, resounds so very strongly. It is this presence, so alive in the spirit of Father Caffarel that makes the faithfulness to the fundamental intuitions that he revealed to us so solid and strong. It is his paternal and continuous insistence that incites us to seek out training and further learning.

It is with great hope that we await the day when, for the good of the Church, the holiness of his life will be proclaimed.

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