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WHY THIS SPECIAL ISSUE?

In September 2006, at the Lourdes Gathering, the Decree opening the Cause of Canonisation of Father Caffarel was promulgated and since then the Inquiry Commission has worked hard.

‘The Friends of Father Caffarel’ Association regularly informs its members of its work through the Bulletin, that has reached its tenth issue.

With this special issue, we would like to share with you, who are here in Brasilia, the chronology of the Cause.

May these pages be a concrete example of our enthusiastic fidelity to the founder of the Teams of Our Lady, because we are in spiritual communion with him... We are convinced that his life of prayer, his profound thoughts about couples and the sacrament of marriage are precious for today’s society.

Join us in the hope of seeing the holiness of Father Henri Caffarel recognised by the Church.

For ‘The Friends of Father Caffarel’

Msgr François Fleischmann,

Former Spiritual Counsellor to the International Leading Team (ERI)

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**Father Caffarel,
from...**



to...



...Brasilia 2012

I - Father Caffarel in Brazil A living presence amongst us

Silvia et Chico Pontes
(ERI - Liaison couple for the American zone)



(Extracts from « *The Bulletin of the Friends* »,
N° 7 juillet-août 2010)

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.”*

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. Discreetly 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.

II - The Cause of Father Caffarel's canonisation

Why ask for the canonisation ?

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits , o.p.
Postulator



Who made this request ?

The "Equipes Notre-Dame", constituted as an association called "The Friends of Father Caffarel" - 49, rue de la Glacière, F-75013 Paris. This association is composed of all the members of the International College that is to say, the International Leading Team and the Super-Regional Couples of the Movement. The decision to request Father Caffarel's canonisation was taken by the International College at its meeting in July 2005.

The Movement "Hope and Life" and "Fraternity of Our Lady of the Resurrection" have associated themselves to this initiative.

Why was this request made?

1. *Because Father Caffarel is “a man gripped by God”*

In Latin America and especially in Brazil where Teams are most numerous, Father Caffarel is honoured as an exceptional person who is a living influence on everyone: there is a Father Caffarel ‘presence’ in Brazil. In France, where many have known him, he is still esteemed as one who gives life. “He has given us God”, say those who have known him. He has helped many lay people to discover the prayer of contemplation.

2. *Because Teams have received a “treasure”, they cannot keep it exclusively to themselves.*

Father Caffarel’s personality and his message on marriage are so relevant today and can do so much good to couples that it is important to promote them for the good of the Church and society. “**Marriage is a way to holiness**”, said Father Caffarel. He was “**a twentieth century prophet**”, said Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger

*Two reasons have therefore led Teams to ask for the opening of the Cause: **His reputation for holiness**
The content of his message on marriage.*

To whom was this request made?

It was made to the Archbishop of Paris because Father Caffarel was a priest of that diocese. On the 25th of April 2006, Archbishop André Vingt-Trois agreed to open the Cause of Father Caffarel’s canonisation by agreement with the bishop of Beauvais, in whose diocese Father Caffarel ended his days and after having consulted the Roman Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome. He established a canonical Commission of enquiry to study this Cause. The second stage will be for the Congregation of the Causes of Saints in Rome to ‘instruct’ this Cause.

Who is responsible for promoting the Cause of Father Caffarel?

The Postulator :

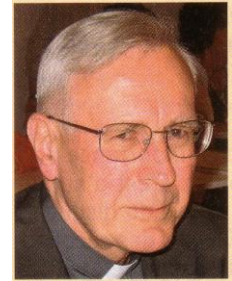
Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, a Dominican priest, assisted by a *Vice-Postulator*,
Madame Marie-Christine Genillon.

What is the role of every team member?

- 1 ***To give a testimony***. Contact: The Postulator, “The Friends of Father Caffarel”, 49 rue de la Glacière, F-75013-Paris (postulateur@henri-caffarel.org)
- 2 ***To get to know further*** Father Caffarel’s personality, his writings, the books he wrote.
- 3 ***To pray*** so that the holiness of this life be recognised by the Church and so that his message and person may do ever more good in the Church and in society. (cf. la prière)
- 4 ***Becoming a member*** of “The Friends of Father Caffarel”.

The opening of the Cause of canonisation

Mgr François Fleischmann
Former Spiritual Counselor of the ERI



The opening of the Cause of Father Caffarel's canonisation was requested by Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, appointed Postulator by Equipes Notre-Dame (promoters of the Cause) on the 21st of December 2005.

The "Decree of the opening of the canonical Enquiry into the Cause of canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel, Priest of the diocese of Paris" was signed by Archbishop Vingt-Trois, archbishop of Paris, on the 25th of April 2006.

The official presentation of the opening of the Cause of Canonisation was made in Lourdes during the International Gathering of Equipes Notre-Dame, on the 18th of September 2006, the tenth anniversary of Father Caffarel's death.

The "Decree instituting a canonical Commission of Enquiry into the cause of canonisation of the Servant of God Henri Caffarel" was signed by Archbishop Vingt-Trois on the 27th of April 2006.

The Diocesan Commission began its sittings on the 22nd of March 2007.

Two experts theologians, and three experts historians have all been appointed by Archbishop Vingt-Trois to verify the biography of Father Caffarel and to study all the documentary sources. They will have to identify the evolution of his thinking in his writings and in the movements and revues that he founded. They have to make sure that his writings are in conformity with the teaching of the Church and to evaluate his theological contribution.

Progress report of the Cause

A cause for canonisation is always born in the heart of all Christians. In the case of Father Caffarel's one, **everything started in Brazil, a country he visited three times**. The international leaders of the Teams of Our Lady came to realise that the **'presence'** of their founder was very marked there. And so, they asked for the Cause to be opened. The Brazilians opened the way. Currently, Father Caffarel is considered to be 'a prophet for our times', according to Cardinal Lustiger, and more and more in the future, he will become exactly that.

The Postulator and Vice Postulator for the Cause have met with a large number of witnesses and have received numerous international written testimonials. All Father Caffarel's articles, editorials, books and talks have been found, classified and digitalised..

We are now at the end of the stage dealing with the diocesan enquiry into the Cause for Father Caffarel before the dossier is sent to Rome. Once the witnesses have been heard and the Historic Commission's report has been received, the Diocesan Commission sends its conclusions to the Archbishop of Paris, who also receives reports from two theologian consultants. The Archbishop then decides whether to send the dossier to Rome. His decision should be announced at the end of 2012. Then, in Rome, will be written the *Positio* (position paper) summarising the life and holiness of the late Father Caffarel.

For many, Father Caffarel is a man of God. The Teams movement is asking the Church to recognise his holiness so that everyone, in the Church and in society, may live according to his example and message. Numerous testimonials of the graces or healings received attest to Father Caffarel's **"reputation for holiness"** and to the spiritual interest of Christians who expect enlightenment and encouragement from him on their route to God.



Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p., postulator
Marie-Christine Genillon, vice-postulator



III - But who is Henri Caffarel ?

Henri Caffarel : A man gripped by God

His life, his works

I. The man

Henri Caffarel was born on the 30th July 1903 in Lyon. He was baptized on 2nd August 1903 and ordained in Paris on 19th April 1930. He died in Troussures on the 18th September 1996, in the diocese of Beauvais where he is buried.

"Come follow me!". These words of the Lord are inscribed on his tomb, for, in March 1923, an event occurred which was to determine the direction taken by his whole life : *"When I was 20, Jesus Christ, in a flash became Somebody for me. Oh! It was nothing spectacular. On that day in March, now far distant, I knew that I was loved and that I loved, and that henceforth between Him and me it would be for life. The die was cast"*.

The young Henri Caffarel met *"Somebody"*. So everything he is going to found or organize will develop in the way the Lord will show him. Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger refers to Father Henri Caffarel as "a prophet of the 20th century". He was conscious that he was doing "a work of renewal for the Church".

Henri Caffarel was touched by the Lord's love. His ministry will be at the service of love, "**to be loved, to love**". The Lord's love is for him a source of dynamism and of life. He is immediately in complete harmony with couples desirous of developing their love hand in hand with the Lord.

Whatever the work that he undertook, Father Caffarel had a single aim: to put each person in front of the Lord, at the outset of every *vocation*.

Henri Caffarel concluded that : "***The die was cast.***" This indeed was a characteristic conclusion : "*There is nothing more to be said, one obeys, one does one's work, one does not become puffed up by what one has done, and when it is finished, one leaves.....*"

He is the personification of rigour, exactingness, precision as regards detail, the will to go right to the end, a sound sizing up of events and people, and the capacity to shed everything not in accord with the direction of "his vision".

II. The Movements founded (1939-1949)

Henri Caffarel responded to the appeal of couples who wanted to live to the full their sacrament of marriage. "***The demands of sanctity must be your concern. To respond to them, you have a sacrament which is yours, the sacrament of marriage.***"

The number of Teams of Couples increases. They are given a spiritual orientation, more and more lucid according as the couples discover the grace of marriage.

The publications, "**Letter to Young Couples**" (1942), "**The Wedding Ring**" (1945), left an indelible mark on a great many couples and their influence reached well beyond the Teams. Father Caffarel wanted his work to be understood by everyone so that the grace of God's love could be active in every individual. He wanted everyone to understand the greatness of marriage. The challenge is still there today.

A crucial moment in Father Caffarel's life was the drafting and putting into effect in 1947, of "**The Charter of the Teams of Our Lady**". The means set out in the Charter are demanding. "**The Endeavours**," particularly



"**the sit-down**", are characteristic of the daily life of couples. *"Having grasped the spirit of the Teams, you will have no trouble in accepting their discipline"*, says Father Caffarel. A couple living according to the Gospel, such is "**the way to holiness.**"

During this same period, two new movements are founded: the Movement for Widows "**Hope and Life**" and "**Our Lady's Fraternity of the Resurrection**", a secular Institute for widows. As always, it is not he who has "the idea" for these movements: people come to him, they tell him of their desire for a holy life; he discerns, gives encouragement and continuing support.

III. The Maturing (1950-1973)

The Teams of Our Lady develop steadily. A proper system of organization is put in place. Huge Gatherings are held : Lourdes in 1954, Rome in 1959, Lourdes in 1965... They are occasions for the deepening of the grace and the greatness of marriage.

Father Caffarel stresses also the **mutual enrichment effected by the sacraments of Ordination and Marriage**: two « complementary » sacraments for responding to the vocation of love.

The Teams debate some important issues: are they a **movement of initiation or of perfection** ? The balance between these two aspects must be found. Trials are experienced : at issue is the unity of the Movement and the liberty of the laity, their originality and their individuality. In this domaine Father Caffarel always showed himself to be in harmony with the Church, sometimes even in a very exemplary and courageous manner. He directs the team members towards their parish, their diocese, their apostolate in their profession and in the world.

At the age of 70, of his own accord, he quits his service of the Teams, having first ensured there was someone to succeed him.

IV. The Deepening (1973-1996)

The influence of Father Caffarel's fruitfulness is to be found in people's hearts, in the unique relationship of each person with God. Countless are the persons who discovered the Lord in the House of Prayer at Troussures. His enormous desire was to share with others the revelation he had had at the age of twenty. His final years at Troussures reveal the spring from which he poured out everything he had in him.

Father Caffarel, A Prophet of Marriage

« Marriage, Sacrament of Covenant »

The “PLACE” of the COUPLE

Maria-Carla and Carlo Volpini
Responsible couple of the International Team



«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”.» (H-. Caffarel, Aux carrefours de l’amour, Amour et Solitude, p.114)

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...

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*.

« A CHRISTIAN COUPLE »

God said, " Christian couple,
you are my pride and hope.



When I created the heaven and the earth and the many stars in the sky, I saw in my creatures the vestiges of my perfection and I found that it was good.

When I covered the earth with its great coat of fields and forests, I saw that it was good.

When I created the countless animals according to their species, I contemplated the reflection of my overflowing life in these living and bountiful creatures and I found that it was good.

Out of all my creation rose therefore a great solemn and jubilant hymn celebrating my glory and perfection.

And yet nowhere did I see the image of that which is most secret and fervent in my life.

And so the need arose within me to awaken the best of myself: and my best invention came into being.

This is how I created you, human couple, 'in my image, in my likeness' and I saw that it was very good.

In the midst of this universe where each creature is a hymn to my glory and celebrates my perfection, at last love burst forth to reveal my Love.

Human couple, my beloved creature, my privileged witness, do you understand why you, amongst all creatures, are so dear to me, do you understand the immense hope I place in you?

You are the carriers of my reputation, my glory. For the universe, you are the great reason to hope... because you are love."

Henri Caffarel

« Marriage, Path toward God »

**« Marriage is
a path to holiness »**
(Père Caffarel)

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. .../...

Through the sacrament of marriage, the couple, both as a couple and as a whole, is incorporated into the Body of Christ. .../...



Proclaiming Divine Love

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

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.

.../...

Vos richesses sont de deux ordres : richesses humaines et richesses de grâce.

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."

Apostolate outside the home

.../...

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....

.../...

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.*"

.../...

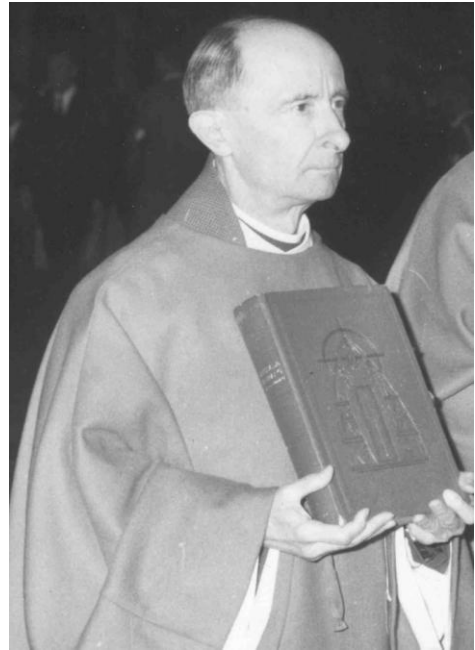
Just as Saint Paul called the couple Aquila and Priscilla "my fellow workers in Christ Jesus," it is important that Christ be able to say this of every Christian couple.

*(Extracts from a conference of Father Caffarel
which appeared in a spécial May-August 1962
edition of "l'Anneau d'Or")*

Father Caffarel and Contemplation

**Contemplation : the privileged time
of encounter with Christ**

*“It is all a question of knowing whether
eating is vital,
It is all a question of knowing whether
praying is vital.”*



Father's Caffarel message on Prayer

Maria-Carla et Carlo Volpini

The Kingdom of silence

“Let us suppose that during mental prayer you are inclined to remain silent and immobile, close to the God whom you do not see, but whom you are sure is there. Words seem superfluous, far less explicit and true than the silence of your being, offered to the Lord's gaze. After concluding your mental prayer, you are at peace, and as though renewed. Then search no further. The Holy Spirit has introduced you into the kingdom of silence.”

(Father Caffarel, *Being present to God: Letters on Prayer*, n.83,
Translated by Angeline Bouchard, 1983)

Because we live with continual noise, we've lost the habit of silence. We've especially lost the ability to sense the voice of silence. Sounds of life drown out the voice of our inner being, so we must listen for it very carefully and with complete focus.

Being constantly subjected to life's noises has caused us to lose the habit of dialoguing with God. In fact, we've no sooner put ourselves in His Presence when we immediately begin an inner dialogue which often is limited to a monologue. In reality, we are generally ready to ask, but rarely ready to listen.

Sometimes we are afraid of the silence: we want to fill every moment with things and with words. If we have nothing to say, we think that it is because we don't know how to pray or to how to be with God.

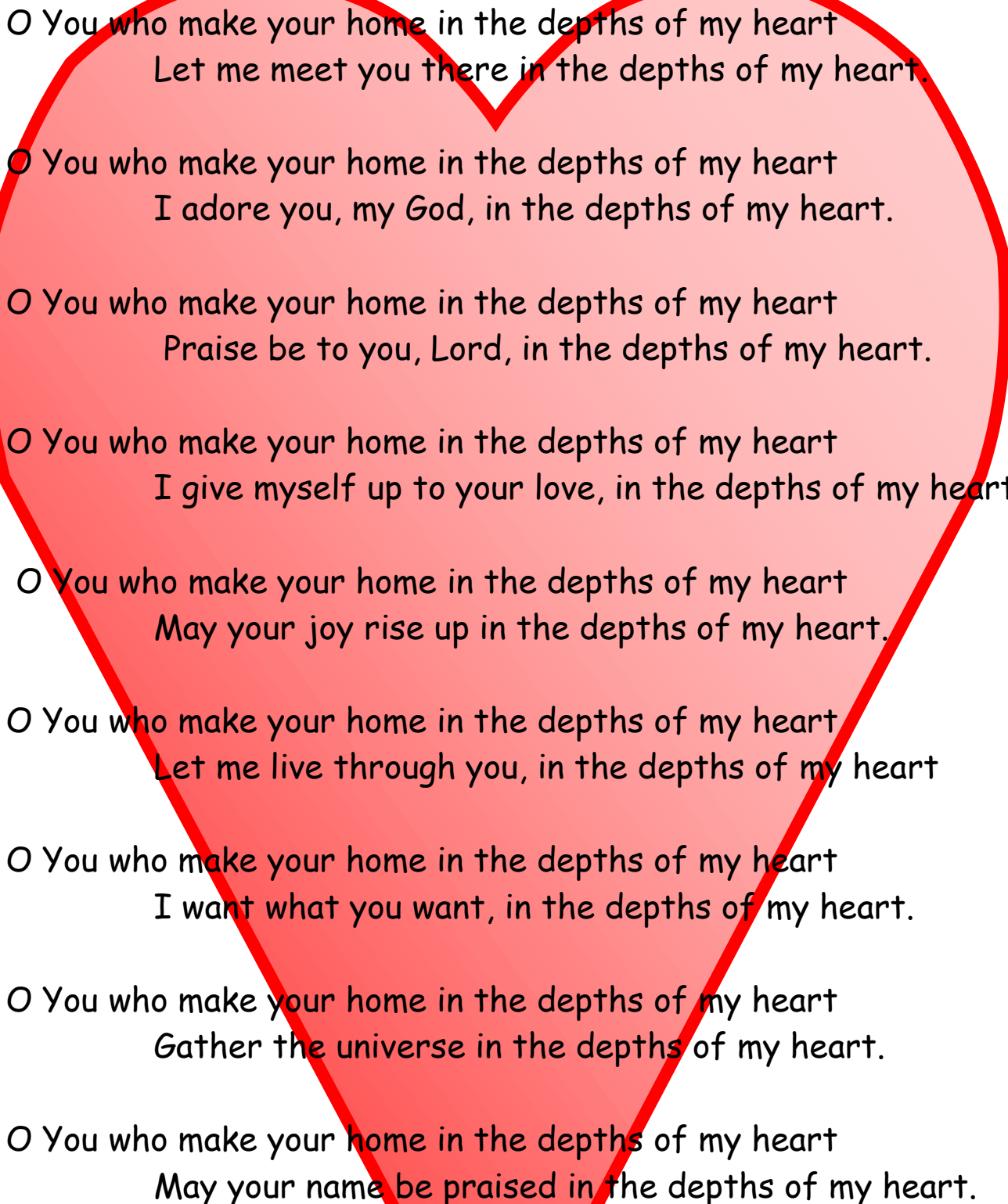
It is completely the opposite: to be in the presence of God, in silence, is to be with God.

We might say: If the Lord is "God of Time and Father of Life," and if the Eternity which predates our birth and which will continue after our death is His alone, and if his Presence reveals itself in a constant yet invisible way in our daily lives - throughout history and in our own little life stories, then it is only in these brief moments and bits of silence amidst life's noise that we may come to know Him and to hear Him.

So, it is truly within this silence that we may encounter the Lord. A silence which does not lock us into immobility or passivity, but which gives us a foundation to worship, live, and act.

Father Caffarel understood this and he still teaches it to us today.

O YOU WHO MAKE YOUR HOME...

- 
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
Let me meet you there in the depths of my heart.
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
I adore you, my God, in the depths of my heart.
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
Praise be to you, Lord, in the depths of my heart.
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
I give myself up to your love, in the depths of my heart.
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
May your joy rise up in the depths of my heart.
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
Let me live through you, in the depths of my heart
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
I want what you want, in the depths of my heart.
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
Gather the universe in the depths of my heart.
- O You who make your home in the depths of my heart
May your name be praised in the depths of my heart.

HENRI CAFFAREL

Letter on Contemplative Prayer

By Father Caffarel

“Booklets on Contemplative Prayer”
(December 1966)



“Listen to Him”

Whereas the Gospels offer us innumerable words of Christ, they only gave us three short sentences from the Father. How precious they should be to us! One of them is a word of advice, the only word of advice from the Father to his children. With what infinite and filial deference must we receive it and with what eagerness must we follow it!

This advice holds the secret to all holiness and is simple and expressed in three words: **“Listen to Him”** (Mt 17: 5), said the Father pointing to his Beloved Son.

To practice contemplative prayer is therefore the great act of obedience to the Father; it consists in sitting, like Mary Magdeleine, at the feet of Christ and to listen to his word or, better still, to listen to Him who speaks to us. It is indeed to Him, even more than to his words, that we must be attentive.

It follows that, to precede contemplative prayer by reading a page from the Gospel, is very commendable provided one reads it, not as a professor of literature, but as a lover who, through the words of a letter she receives, hears the beating heart of her beloved.

It is a great art to know how to listen. Christ himself warns us about it: *“Take care how you listen”* (Lk 8: 18). If we are on the edge of the path, or on rock, or in the middle of thorns, his Word will not grow in us. We have to be the good soil in which the seed finds what is necessary to germinate, develop and ripen

Furthermore, to listen is not only a matter of the mind: it is our whole being, body and soul, heart, imagination and mind, memory and will, that must be attentive to the Word of Christ, to be open to it, make room for it, to allow oneself to be besieged, invaded, seized by it, to give it our unreserved adherence.

You understand why I am using the word “**listen**” rather than “meditate”. It has a more evangelical tone and, especially, it indicates, not an isolated activity, but a heart to heart encounter or exchange that is the essence of contemplative prayer.

When, by contemplative prayer, we open the door to the Word of Christ, it converts us and makes us “pass from death to life” (Jn 5: 24); it resuscitates us; it becomes in us and for us a gushing spring of eternal life.

However, listening to the Word is not sufficient. “**Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it**”, said Christ (Lk 11: 28). They delight in it, feed on it, take it with them as Mary took the child she had conceived who was the substantial Word of God. Through her, Jesus sanctified those she met, and caused John the Baptist to leap in his mother’s womb. He wants to do the same through us.

There is even more to it than that. It is important that this Word that is listened to and kept, be “*put into practice*” (James 1: 25). Understand from this that we must be attentive throughout the day to his active presence in us and be opened to his suggestions and to his formative influence. It is God’s dynamism that will cause us to multiply our good deeds and to work, strive, live and die for the coming of the Kingdom of the Father.

If we are faithful, our joy will be great for Jesus said: “*My mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and put it into practice*” (Lk 8: 21)

Henri Caffarel

An idea for organizing a Vigil on Father Caffarel

We believe that Father Caffarel's thoughts and ideas are still meaningful today. They can help anchor many couples more firmly in their faith. Spiritual conjugality is indeed a way to holiness. We are working to support the Cause for Father Caffarel's Canonisation so that his belief that 'marriage as a way to holiness' can be revealed to the world, so that his thoughts and ideas can spread more widely. We notice even today that when there is talk about the family, the essential pillar of the family, the couple, is forgotten.

This is why we believe it would be interesting to share our experiences concerning the dissemination of Father Caffarel's thinking. As an example, we would like draw your attention to an idea for organizing a vigil, in French, for a retreat or for a prayer meeting. It can be downloaded by clicking on the following link:

http://www.henri-caffarel.org/pages_fr/autres.html

Please let us know and share with us what you have managed to organize yourselves, for these exchanges ought to enrich us mutually so that we become better witnesses.



The Editing Team of the "Bulletin of Friends"
Jacques & Marie-France Béjot-Dubief

IV - A Founder

Works full of life

- ***The Teams of Our Lady*** : founded in 1939, they now number more than 120 000 couples, spread over 70 countries,es (in 2010).
- ***Our Lady's Fraternities of the Resurrection*** : a movement for devoted widows founded in 1943, has 200 members.
- ***Hope and Life***: the spiritual movement for widows.
- ***The Intercessors***: who pray, fast and offer up their daily life.
- ***The Fraternities of Joseph and Marie***: a movement of spiritual deepening for couples.

Father Henri Caffarel also played a part in setting up, with the help of Father Pierre Joly and Father d'Heilly, ***the Centres of Preparation for Marriage***,

The House of Prayer at Troussures. This Centre was invaluable for those who wanted to learn to pray. **Its work is being continued** as a result of proposals made by the Teams of Our Lady to the ***House of the Couple, Massabielle*** (at Saint-Prix, Val d'Oise, FR), and also very particularly by the importance given to contemplative prayer in the Teams and in the schools of prayer.

It is worth noting ***how up to date are Father Caffarel's published works***: his writing in the reviews: "Offertory", "Notes on Contemplative Prayer"... , and his numerous books: "Being present to God", "*At the crossroads of love*"....., etc.

Lay Saints

“Daring to Live the Gospel”

Father Henri Caffarel

*(Some extracts from Father Caffarel's writings
about our role in evangelizing others)*

.../...

But it would be so very naïve to believe that this evangelisation of the temporal world will come about without obstacles and battles. The temporal world is still very much the domain of ‘the prince of this world’, who does not expect to let his prey go so easily! Do we really think that the working world will be led to Christ without an arduous effort, and the world of capitalism can easily be converted to the Gospel? And what about the world of politics? And what about the worlds of science, philosophy and art too? This reconquest of nature through grace means that holiness must be present everywhere throughout the modern world.

This is the crux of the problem. Will there be lay saints (meaning men who are totally given over to Christ, who are inhabited by his love, moved by his Spirit), workers, peasants, captains of industry who are saints, politicians who are also saints, artists who are saints? Saints and also missionaries, and maybe even martyrs...(*L'Anneau d'or (The Wedding Ring)*, n° 30),

Every century has its own type of holiness. In the early Church and for the first three hundred years, the martyrs and their bearing witness with the gift of their blood exemplified holiness. After the persecutions, the hermits and the thousands of Desert Fathers who soon began to gather together. And for centuries, the monasteries were the schools of holiness. It must be noted in passing that the new forms of holiness do not supplant the preceding ones. But, given their adaptation to the needs of their era, they overshadow them some times for a while. In the 13th century, in a Christianity that lived comfortably and where the churches and monasteries were honoured and richly

endowed, holiness, with the mendicant friars assumed the characteristics of poverty. During the Renaissance, it was apparent in the great missionary momentum that sent the religious men to the New World and to the four corners of the earth. Soon afterwards saw the emergence of the congregations dedicated to the helping of all kinds of physical and moral distress—the sick, orphans, aged, the schooling of children etc. In their turn, women went on mission to faraway countries in the 19th century.

Do you not think that perhaps the 20th century introduces the era of the holiness of married lay people?

It is not easy to be saints and be totally in the world, accepting responsibilities and being present everywhere in the lay world. For many years now, more and more Christians are doing it. But how many of them have lost their enthusiasm and the purity of the Christianity of their youth...because their heart was not incorruptible and solid enough. One cannot become involved in saving the world from catastrophe without being sure of possessing the means to resist the tempest!

Schools of Holiness

So where can these witnesses of Christ, these saints of modern times called to face such risks, be trained and formed? Most obviously in their parishes, in the various Christian movements, Action catholique, and through spiritual retreats. But just as the hermits of the past very quickly felt the need for the structure and fraternity of the monasteries, so too do married Christians need to find a spiritual training that is appropriate and specific to them so that they do not remain isolated for the difficult battle of holiness. I personally believe that groups of couples ought to be concerned with being, above all, schools of holiness, where the couples meet up regularly just like a Preacher in his convent, in order to recharge their batteries in a fraternal atmosphere, to draw new strength from prayer and spiritual mediation and to ensure that they are not alone in their undertakings.

Anneau d'or (The Wedding Ring), n° 30, November-December 1949

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