

# BULLETIN



## OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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ASSOCIATION DES AMIS DU PÈRE CAFFAREL  
49 RUE DE LA GLACIÈRE  
F-75013 PARIS  
[www.henri-caffarel.org](http://www.henri-caffarel.org)

*To order the DVD about Father Caffarel (in French) contact:*

L' Association des Amis du père Caffarel

• 49, rue de la Glacière F-75013 PARIS

• [www.henri-caffarel.org](http://www.henri-caffarel.org)

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## EDITORIAL

**Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer & Alberto Pérez**  
*((Responsible Couple in the International  
Leading Team of Teams of Our Lady)*



Dear Friends of the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel,

This is the first letter that we are addressing to you as the new Responsible Couple for the Teams of Our Lady Movement, a service that we began in July at the Turin International Gathering. During these past few months, we have had the opportunity to participate in two meetings with the members of the Association's board and to see the immense affection with which they strive to make Father Caffarel better known every day. We want to join in all these initiatives, as well as collaborating with all the Super-Region and Region correspondents. For all of us, Father Caffarel has been and continues to be a constant source of inspiration and we really hope that he will be "someone at our side."

For three days, which ended with the great Eucharistic celebration on the Sunday of the Immaculate Conception, a feast so dear to all Teams' members, we were able to experience an intense and profound moment of interior private prayer in silence according to Father Caffarel's recommendations, in the retirement home of the Teresian Sisters in Los Negrals (Madrid). It was an experience which drew people from different parts of Spain and in which we as members of the formation team were involved. To be honest, we can tell you that we arrived at this retreat quite tired and a little anxious for many reasons related to our family life, work and our commitment to Teams. And of course, we felt that it was just not the right moment for such a retreat. However, this impulse of renewal in our encounter with the Lord through the teachings of Father Caffarel helped us to initiate a transformation of our hearts, which so often need such new impulses in order to leave our routine and comfort zones. Recalling and reliving the experience of the silent prayer week in Troussures that some of us experienced many years ago is a reason for hope. We had the opportunity to reread Father Caffarel's texts, listen to excerpts from his original conferences, experience times of personal and community prayer, share the celebration and Eucharistic adoration with those present. And all this reminded us that before

undertaking any activity or carrying out any kind of planning, however important it may be, we need to renew our encounter with the Lord and "place everything in his presence."

And this will be our message to all of you, members of the Association, that this year we take another look at the profound meaning of this encounter, as Father Caffarel suggested to us. We are invited to establish a 'Me-You' relationship with Christ through a conscious act in which we express our desire to want to meet Him. If you remember our Letter from Turin in which we indicated the Orientations that would serve as our guide in the Teams of Our Lady Movement, this generic orientation for the next 6 years: **Called to Live in Communion**, became clear this year in "a call to live in communion with Christ", in the spirit of strengthening in a more direct way our union with Christ who accompanies us in our daily life, and whom we would like to recognise, even if it is in a slow and hesitant way, as happened to the disciples of Emmaus.

This tangible orientation that we experience thanks to the study theme will not become a reality in our lives if we do not set aside time every day for a true encounter with the Lord. As members of the Teams Movement, we know that this is one of the Endeavours. We invite you to review the quality and time that we dedicate to entering into communion with a God, who loves us, who waits for us and who desires to meet each one of us.

In reality, for those of us who have many obligations, commitments, responsibilities and who sometimes feel overwhelmed by the whirlwind of circumstances that surround our lives, this time of presence before the Lord is not an option that is simply beneficial, it is a vital necessity. We would like that in this new year before us, it be essential for all of us to place ourselves before the Lord and express our desire to Him that He help us discover His will. And that every day we can renew our "I want or I would like to want what You want for me."

In communion with you,

Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer & Alberto Pérez,  
Valencia, December 20, 2024

## In Service

*News from the Association of the  
Friends of Father Caffarel  
The Cause for Canonisation of Father  
Henri Caffarel*

**Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.**  
*Roman Vice-Postulator*



*At the Turin International Gathering, the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel were given a time slot on Thursday, July 18, 2024 to present the members of the Association's committee and to promote the Association's activities and projects. Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits finished his presentation of the Cause for Canonisation with the following few words.*

### ***A Characterisation of Father Henri Caffarel's Holiness***

Fr. Caffarel's holiness is that of a priest, of a priest inhabited by the love of the Lord, and one who understood married couples whose own love is inhabited by the love of God. Priests and couples have received the vocation of love.



Let us recall the story, to which we must unceasingly return, the story that Fr. Caffarel told about his vocation in March 1923, *"At the age of 20, Jesus Christ, in an instant became Someone for me. Oh! Nothing spectacular. On that far-off day of March, I knew that I was loved and that I loved, and that henceforth between Him and me, it would be for life. Everything had been decided."*

And he commented on his vocation, which was also a mission, *“That left its mark on me, and since that day, I have had but one desire: to engage myself more intimately than before with Christ, and that other desire to bring others to the same intimacy, because it had been essential in my life, it had given me the joy of living, the grace to live and the urge to live. Moreover, I couldn’t NOT want for others this encounter with Christ, this discovery that God is love.”*

All of Fr. Caffarel’s life is there. Christ showed him that He loved him and Fr. Caffarel responded with all his being. His long hours of interior prayer, his teaching of couples, the Weeks of prayer that he led at Troussures where more than 25,000 people came to learn how to pray, to learn how to love, everything had but one goal, *“to enter more than before into the intimacy of Christ who gives the joy of life”*.

When the first couples, in 1939, came to him to ask for help in how to live out their love between each other and with God, Fr. Caffarel immediately thought, *“But, love, I am living it! The love of Christ inhabits me!”*

Magnificent vocation of Christian couples! Magnificent vocation of priests! Both illuminate the mystery of the Church. Fr. Caffarel did not invent any particular spirituality. He listened to couples—and later on, to widows—he watched, admiring, what the Lord was doing within them. What was He doing? As always: the love of God was embodied in human love, the love of Christ for His Church was bringing to life the bond between spouses. As a priest, he was seeking, finding, seeking again this presence of God in Christian spouses. Fr. Henri Caffarel used to say, *“Should all the other places of worship be shut down, disused, destroyed...the Christian family would remain the dwelling place of God amongst men.”*

We understand then Fr. Caffarel’s response to a Teams of Our Lady member in Brazil, this would have been in 1972, *“Let us suppose, Father, that you were to die the day after coming to us, what subject would you like to have addressed for the last time before leaving your Teams’ couples?”* Fr. Caffarel’s response was that of a testimonial, a response for us today as well. He reflected, he ruminated on important subjects, conjugal spirituality, the Charter, prayer...and at last Fr. Caffarel replied, *“[I would have decided] to talk about the Christian significance of a Teams of Our Lady meeting. [...] In the midst of couples gathered together in a room of a house, there is the intense presence of the Resurrected One, alive, attentive to each person, loving each*

*one as they are, with their bad and good sides, and in a hurry to help them become what He would want, a new being through the Holy Spirit.”*

Fr. Caffarel was speaking here as a priest, he was not speaking of himself, but of us, of we who were entrusted to him by the Lord. Fr. Caffarel puts his hope in us.

To conclude this evocation of Fr. Caffarel, allow me to tell you that when I read Fr. Caffarel, I am immediately before God. So, let us continue to listen to him. He tells us what a saint is for him and it is an appeal to us to follow the Lord. This definition fits him well, it is very simple. We will reach our goal, like him, with the grace of God—and with Fr. Caffarel’s intercession!

Let us listen to what he has to say, *“A saint is not first and foremost, as some people imagine, a sort of champion who accomplishes great feats of virtue, spiritual performances. A saint is first and foremost a person drawn to God. And someone gives their whole life over to God.”*

Among us here, are there not couples who live in this way, who have lived and experienced this holiness? May Fr. Henri Caffarel attract such Teams’ members! For us all, marriage is a path to sainthood.





## In Service

### News from the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel Turin 2024 – International Gathering of Teams of Our Lady “Let us go with a burning Heart!”

#### **Gérard & Marie-Christine de Roberty**

Former Responsible Couple in the International Leading Team (ERI)



The central theme of the Turin gathering, this past summer of 2024, “*Let us go with a burning heart,*” was based on the Gospel of the disciples of Emmaus (Luke 24:15-35) and it allowed us to approach the sacrament of the Eucharist using the five key words, that were chosen to ensure the content of the Gathering, all through the week: **fragility, illumination, offering, communion and send off.**

The theme of this meeting communicates to us “*the conviction that a couple who are 'seekers of God,' in our world which no longer believes in God, which no longer believes in love, is a 'theophany', a manifestation of God, as the bush in the desert which burned and was not consumed was for Moses.*” This is the very thing Father Caffarel asked of Teams of Our Lady couples: to be apostles of conjugal love and marriage.

Father Caffarel used to tell us, “***At the heart of the home, a 'cell of the Church,' the guest meets Christ, and this is why the exercise of hospitality is a true apostolate, one could even say that it is the specific apostolate of the Christian home and couple,***” which is founded on the themes chosen for this pilgrimage to Turin.

**Fragility** leads us to the two disciples of Emmaus who walk together sad and lost. They are overwhelmed by pain and feel lost. Our attention is fixed on Jesus who joins them as a stranger, questions them about their discussion and leads them to reconsider their understanding of everything that happened during these three days of Easter. This unexpected encounter brings them out of their despair, reawakening their faith in rebirth and in the power of the resurrection.

This passage from the Gospel of the disciples of Emmaus reaches out to our couples who know the fragility of love and marriage and experience

painful moments that bring them closer together. They then learn that fragility is inherent in every relationship, including the relationship with God, and that fidelity, prayer and mutual support are essential to overcome trials.

**Through the illumination of our life**, Jesus invites us to open our eyes, to wake up in trust. He invites us to open the windows of our mind. He illuminates the disciples that we are by recalling our life with Him. Jesus asks us to look at the Cross with a new gaze made up of freedom, fraternity and for couples, love and tenderness.

*" A saint is not first and foremost, as some people imagine, a sort of champion who accomplishes great feats of virtue, spiritual performances. A saint is first and foremost a person drawn to God. And someone gives their whole life over to God."* (Father Henri Caffarel). In this sense, we experience our Sit-Down as a true spiritual illumination, thus marking the presence of God in our couple and at the heart of our marriage, that is a path to holiness.

**Jesus' offering of himself** is not assertive. He awaits our invitation. For us, his disciples, it is a question of reciprocity. We have received and we have the desire to give of ourselves in return. Jesus needs this gift to reveal himself resurrected, just as he needed the breast and arms of Mary to come and dwell among his people. The Eucharistic offering means speaking of and experiencing Jesus' whole life.

The testimonies given by couples or priests during this Gathering of Teams of Our Lady in Turin show us the importance of offering in the hearts of our children. The path we build as a family builds the life of the Church, with the certainty, as Pope Francis tells us, that *"Faith is the most beautiful inheritance we can leave to our children."*

In **communion**, and having arrived at the end of the road to Emmaus, the eyes of the two disciples were opened and they recognised him in the breaking of the bread. In this story, the Gospel uses the narrative strategy of recognition, where we move from ignorance and suffering linked to the loss of Christ, to knowledge and communion.



In breaking the bread, Jesus reveals not only his presence but also the deeper meaning of his teachings and his mission: the shared bread is a gift of Himself that marks his communion with his Father and with humanity. In this sense, synodality, like the Sit-Down, are arts that are learned through experience: *“The journey is experienced by walking,”* Pope Francis tells us. Teams of Our Lady are a true path of synodality.

**The Sit-Down** is therefore like a mini conjugal synod that we practice regularly as a couple to review our path, our journey together and discern how we have advanced and progressed. This communion is nourished by various means to make it full and complete. Listening to the word of God, reading and sharing on the Bible as a couple, conjugal prayer and private prayer are the means that Christ gives us to react to the love of Jesus who gives himself to us.

Up to the foot of the Cross, *“the Virgin Mary’s whole life, committed to the YES of the Annunciation, was an ascension of love. Also, it is with her that Christian couples will learn to pronounce for the first time, and then for their whole life, the YES which is the soul of their love [...]. Not only will the Virgin teach spouses to live and experience this mystery of YES, of an ever more full YES, but she will reveal to them firstly that no one can say YES, truly, to another person if they have not first said YES to God.”* (Father Henri Caffarel)

At **the sending off**, at the end of the gathering, with hearts full of joy for everything the Teams’ members present in Turin experienced, we received the life orientations of the Movement for the next six years:

**“Called to Live in Communion.”**

Gérard & Marie-Christine de Roberty

*Former Responsible Couple in the International Leading Team (ERI)*

***The Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel*** was present at the Turin Gathering, thanks to an assigned stand that enabled Teams’ members to come and discover the Association and its work. The large attendance and the quality of the discussions around this stand made it possible to explain Father Caffarel’s prophetic mission to the priests and couples participating at the Gathering.



## In Service

*News from the Association of the  
Friends of Father Caffarel  
The Treasurer's Report for the Year  
2023*

### ***Treasurer's Report for the Year 2023***

#### **General Situation**

The year 2022 was marked by very decreased activity, as the procedure of the cause is now in the hands of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, in the Vatican. Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits and Marie-Christine Genillon continued their work in a more limited manner, and made a single trip to Rome to meet the Roman postulator. Several documents were purchased to be integrated into the headquarters' library, Rue de la Glacière in Paris.

We received contributions that had been withheld by Super-Regions for several years.

As for the expenses incurred, we paid the final tax to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints. The next taxes will be due only when we will need to communicate about miracles.

#### ***Balance sheet of ordinary activities***

There was no great activity in 2023 and we did not have any book sales either.

#### ***2023 Review***

<b><i>Revenue</i></b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023 Budget</b>	<b>2023 real</b>
Subscriptions	21 137,85	16 000	23 218,65
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>21 137,85</b>	<b>16 000</b>	<b>23 218,65</b>
<b><i>Expenses</i></b>			
Postulation	12 410,21	6 500	6219,96
Direct Costs for the Cause	14 550		8 000
Office & Documentation Expenses	294,83	200	755,13
Bank Charges	394,74	400	237,14
IT & Web Costs	6 377,32	600	527,04
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b>34 027,10</b>	<b>7 700</b>	<b>15 739,27</b>
<b><i>Result</i></b>	<b>-12 889,25</b>	<b>8 300</b>	<b>7 479,38</b>

### ***Origin of memberships: Membership income***

As is normal, Super-Regions paid the collected memberships by bank transfer, and also there were a large quantity of memberships paid by PayPal, for a total of 2279 euros (versus a receipt by PayPal of 2161 euros the previous year). Note that the South-Hispano-America Super Region paid its membership fees in cash when an Ecuadorian couple came to Paris.

<b><i>SR or RR</i></b>	<b><i>2019</i></b>	<b><i>2020</i></b>	<b><i>2021</i></b>	<b><i>2022</i></b>	<b><i>2023</i></b>
French-Speaking Africa	395	15	400	45	315
Belgium	125				500
Brazil	15	6 255	1 315		2 835
Canada	20	45		10	15
Colombia	15			3 645	2 300
Spain	10	30	12 075	15	4 015
France-Luxemburg-Switzerland	1 835	2 111	1 335	1 480	950
North Hispano-America	8 098	110	850	841	749
South Hispano-America				13 987	717
Mauritius	15				15
Italy	30	80	225	195	190
Lebanon	250				
Oceania	501	215	15		473
Poland		435	430		339,65
Portugal	40		2 000		4 000
Transatlantic		40	30	15	30
USA	195	1 290	1 160	905	775
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>11 544</i></b>	<b><i>10 626</i></b>	<b><i>19 835</i></b>	<b><i>21 138</i></b>	<b><i>23 218,65</i></b>

### **Forecast budget for the year 2024**

For the 2024 budget, changes are proposed in relation to the budget of the previous year. The following considerations are made in a prudent manner:

1. The amount memberships subscriptions is considered to be lower than that of the previous year.
2. Reasonable travel expenses were estimated for the International Gathering of Teams of Our Lady in July 2024.
3. Concerning the Postulation, the associated costs are reduced considerably.
4. For the assistance/secretarial work, small necessary expenses have been planned, and whatever is necessary for the purchasing campaign of copies of books and periodicals related to Father Caffarel has been added.
5. For IT and website costs, only the costs related to hosting the website have been left in.

#### **Budget 2024**

<b>Revenue</b>	Budget 2023	Real 2023	Budget 2024
Subscriptions	16 000	23 218,65	15 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 000</b>	<b>23 218,65</b>	<b>15 000</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Trips & Testimonials			1 500
Postulation	6 500	6219,96	6 500
Direct Costs for the Cause		8 000	4 000
Office & documentation Costs	200	755,13	600
Bank Charges	400	237,14	300
IT & Website Costs	600	527,04	600
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 700</b>	<b>15 739,27</b>	<b>13 500</b>
<b>Result</b>	<b>8 300</b>	<b>479.38 €</b>	<b>1 500</b>

Giovanni Cecchini Manara  
Treasurer

Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel



## FROM FATHER CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

*L'Anneau d'Or*, Number 109, January-February 1963 – pages 2-11

### ***The Lay Person, Bearer of the Word***

One day, Moses called together the seventy elders. They came and gathered in the "Tent of Meeting," where Moses was accustomed to meet God and converse with him. And the Lord came. He poured out his Spirit on the elders, who began to prophesy. (A prophet, in the biblical sense of the word, is not so much someone who makes predictions as a man who speaks of God, in the name of God, under the motion of the Spirit of God.) Now two of the elders, who had not been able to respond to the call, began to prophesy in the camp. And Joshua, indignant, complained to Moses, which drew this admirable response from him, "*Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!*" (Num 11:29)

I imagine John XXIII responding to a priest, also indignant at having heard lay people speak of God, "*Ah! I wish that all lay people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them.*"

At a time when the whole Church is gathering to seek how to present a purified and rejuvenated face to the world, I want to remind you of this responsibility too often forgotten by insipid Christian people, this mission, that concerns every baptised person, of announcing the Good News; bringing the Word of God to the world.

I would be very surprised if the Council Fathers did not alert you, lay people, very specifically on this subject. You must therefore prepare yourselves to receive their message.

## ***The Epic of the Word of God***

Before seeing what this (your) service of the Word of God consists of, let us ask our Bible what the Word of God is. It appears to us as a prodigious reality. It reveals the intimate life of God to humanity, makes known to them His designs and His will, in other words it puts humanity's thinking in communication with God's thinking, with His eternal Thought, His Word. Light which reveals, the Word is even more Power which operates: it is what makes the universe arise from nothingness, what leads the history of humanity, what determines the future. One word particularly expresses this double effect of the Word of God: it is creative.

It is by His Word that God created the universe. Listen to Psalm 33, *"By the Word of the Lord, the Heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth... Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded and it stood form."*

But God's ultimate goal is not to create a material universe, it is to form a people for Himself. Creator of the universe, His Word will be the creator of this people.



It is by His Word that He takes Abraham out of the pagan nation where he lived to make him the father of his people. It is by His Word that he gathers the Hebrews at Sinai, and this same Word, that creates, makes a people, His People, out of this collection of slaves. And throughout the centuries, His Word will shape the thinking of this people, will form its conscience and direct its activities.

Through His Word transmitted to the prophets, His representatives, God will never cease to recreate the soul of His people. When a prophet is tempted to recuse himself, seized with panic at the thought of carrying this terrifying reality that is the divine Word, God will reassure him, *"Alas, Sovereign Lord,"* cries Jeremiah, *"I do not know how to speak; I am too young."* But the Lord answers, *"Do not say, 'I am too young.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to protect you and will rescue you."* (Jer 1:6-8).

The oracles of the prophets prepared and announced the emergence among humanity of the eternal and subsisting Word: Jesus Christ. *"In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,"* writes the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, *"but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he also made the universe. This Son is the radiance of God's glory, and the exact representation*



*of his being sustaining all things by his powerful Word.*" If the words of the prophets and wise men, which were only an echo, already had such power, how much more effective will be the substantial Word of God.

In fact, Jesus Christ was a "*prophet powerful in word and deed before God and all the people,*" according to the admiring testimony of those who listened to him. (Lk 24:19) "*The people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God.*" (Lk 5:1) And his almighty Word drives out evil spirits with a word and heals bodies, just as the prophets did in the past, but on top of that it also purifies hearts. And all those who, through faith, open themselves to this Word, become "new creatures," are engulfed by divine life.

Thus, the Word of God incarnate does much more than found the universe, than constitute a people, it engenders sons of God because it is "spirit and life"; it creates a new people, the Church, by arousing faith, by opening hearts to the irruption of the Holy Spirit. A second creation infinitely more admirable than the first.

### ***The Church-Prophet***

Now that Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven, will the Word of God resound again? Will there be prophets again? How feeble their word would seem after His! So, the era of the prophets is closed.

Does this mean that the Word of God, recorded in the Scriptures, will no longer be transmitted except by the Book?

No. Jesus Christ, through his Church, will continue to speak, Himself, to men. Undoubtedly He will not make new revelations to them, but everything that He taught his apostles, He will make known to everyone.

And it is through each of the members of the Church, the priests and the faithful, that He intends to continue evangelising humanity, "*Go and make disciples of all nations.*" (Mt 28:19). This instruction is addressed to the apostles, to the priests, but also to the faithful, because with the coming of Jesus Christ the prophecy of Joel was verified, "*In the last days I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy...*" (Joel 2:28). Here we are, in the "last days", and you are all these sons and daughters who must prophesy. [...]

### ***The Lay Person, Bearer of the Word***

[...] Today I just want to talk to you about every baptised person's responsibility that is theirs, precisely because of their baptism.

The first question that arises is this: What should be the content of the message that the lay person will carry? Before answering it, I would like to present a little philosophy of speech to you. There are words and words. Depending on their content, they act more or less deeply on the one, in the one, to whom they are addressed. The officer who gives an order only triggers the action of their subordinate. The philosophy professor, for their part, exerts a much deeper influence: they infuses their knowledge into the student, whose intelligence they shapes. The young boy who declares to a young girl, "I love you", awakens her heart, makes love arise in her, provokes her to total giving. His word has a completely different resonance than the orders of the officer or the teachings of the professor. Similarly, the Word that the baptised carry will reach more or less intimately those to whom they address it. Through the person who tells another on God's behalf what they must do (who, for example, invites his friend not to divorce), it is Jesus Christ who influences a person's actions. Through the catechist who teaches what to believe, it is Jesus Christ who communicates his knowledge to an intelligence, and this goes much further. Through the lay person, who reveals to another the unfathomable riches of the heart of Christ, it is Jesus Christ himself who says to this person, "I love you" and, reaching them at a level infinitely deeper than that of action or that of intelligence, awakens their heart and arouses in them faith, hope and charity. Through this revelation, it is Jesus Christ who makes himself present to this person to the extent that the latter is welcoming; it is Jesus Christ, who opens himself to the presence of this person to the extent that the latter gives of themselves. You understand from this how serious it is for the apostle of Christ to speak only of what must be done, of what must be believed, and not to present the living Person of Jesus Christ, not to reveal, as Saint Paul did, "*how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge.*" (Eph. 3:18-19). Only love can awaken love; only the revelation of God's love can awaken the true Christian life in a heart, that life which is faith in God's love and a loving response to that love.

This "ministry" of the Word, whose scope can be so great, cannot be improvised. Let us look at what is required.

### ***Requirements***

We only pass on what we have. Whoever claims to pass on the Word of God must first possess it, and I use the word possess in its strongest sense. To know one's catechism perfectly, or even all of theology, and even the whole Bible is one thing. To possess the Word of God is another. To possess the Word of God is to have given up one's intelligence, one's heart, and even the last entrenchments of one's freedom to it. In truth, it means being possessed by it, devoured by it.

We need to spend time reading the Bible, especially the Gospel, with a humble, believing spirit. Claudel expressed it admirably, "*It is not enough to read through the Scriptures with our eyes, with our lips, we must attach ourselves to it, we must dwell in it, soak it up as the early Fathers did, not in a spirit of vain curiosity, but in one of devotion, we must inhabit it, we must store it up within us, we must sleep and wake up with it, we must persuade ourselves that, according to the words of Saint Paul, all divinely inspired Scriptures are useful, that it is indeed bread for us, that we hunger for it alone.*"

Then we ourselves become the Word of God, the living incarnation of the Word of God. Then not only the word of our lips, but all the acts of our life reveal God to our brothers.

The Word of God in us is an explosive force: the words we speak, coming from this source, are endowed with a supernatural power, they have the power to generate grace, to raise up the living. Saint Paul experienced this; recalling his preaching he said, it was "*a demonstration of the Spirit's power.*" (1 Cor 2:4) And this holds still true. The Word of God has lost none of its vigour. [...]

Spending time reading the Bible is a requirement for the lay person who aspires to carry the Word of God; spending time at Church is a requirement no less essential. By this I mean that the lay person will get all their strength and all their grace in the exercise of the apostolate from their vital attachment to the Church, from their scrupulous fidelity to the Church's thinking. It is the Church, and it alone, which has received the mission of evangelising all creatures. Every Christian can therefore claim to participate in this mission only to the extent that they act not in their own name, but in the name of the Church, where they bring to others not a personal message, but the Church's message. [...]

But to whom should you bring the Word?

### ***Who is my Neighbour?***

Every hungry person is the neighbour of the person who has bread.

Blessed are the spouses where each one is the Word of God for the other. I know only a few of them, but for them dialogue is a marvellous reality: the Word of God that goes from one to the other and is enriched by being exchanged. Such people would not spend a week without setting aside a long time to talk about God together. This is the summit of married life.

Ministers of the Word, parents, you must be ministers to your children. Every day you break their material bread; do you also break their spiritual bread? Since baptism, faith, hope, and charity dwell in them in an embryonic state; do you offer the Word of God, the only thing which can stimulate and nourish them to these

burgeoning virtues? This is a sacred function, an enduring ministry of the Church. The Eternal already made this clear through Moses to the fathers of Jewish families in poignant terms, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.*"

There are Christian parents who are concerned by this. [...] But for the few parents who are aware of this mission, how many others forget that it is in the home that children must receive the first proclamation of the Gospel. How few will nourish themselves with the Scriptures in order to be sure not to give their children a false version of God; how few fathers read and comment on the Gospel with their older sons. How many parents do not want to talk about God. If you are one of them, meditate, I beg you, on what one of my colleagues confided, "*I know that my inner life is on the decline, by this irrefutable sign: I no longer want to talk about God.*" [...]

Outside the home, throughout your life, you meet people who are poor in God, who ask for bread and find no one to share it with them. Are you ministers of the Word to them? "*That man in the street who asks you for a light,*" wrote G. Duhamel, "*Let him speak and in ten minutes he will ask you for God.*" I am afraid that very often you do not let him express his spiritual hunger, for fear of being very embarrassed if you have to speak to him about God.

How strange it is! We would reproach ourselves as if it were a crime if we were to meet a man dying of thirst in the desert and we did not show him that the source is nearby, but we have no remorse for passing by the spiritually thirsty without giving them "living water."

On the other hand, what joy in those who, having passed on the Word of God, see a heart awakened to faith. I often met them when I was their chaplain, these little workers, who cared about speaking of Jesus Christ to their comrades. I am also reminded of this man from the Teams movement who, during a break from a drill, sat next to a young lieutenant and spoke to him about the Lord, awakening his faith and shortly afterwards introduced him to me as someone who was going to ask to be baptised.

Having invited you to bring the Word to your neighbour, I must immediately recognise that this is a difficult apostolate, which requires not only the habitual meditation of the Word of God as I told you, but great discretion, humility, and also knowledge of those to whom one is speaking, of their needs and their difficulties.

It presupposes a persevering search for the effective way to transmit the truth. Because the Word of God must be astonishing to reach hearts, which presupposes firstly that you are amazed by the Truth. If you are amazed and astonished, you will know how to pass it on to others, who will be amazed in turn, will welcome it, will love it and will begin to live by it. A truth that does not amaze you is a truth that you have not yet understood, so do not rush to communicate it. So many Christians, sincere though they may be, perhaps even fervent, because they neglect this effort of a marvellous presentation of the Truth, are only mediocre apostles whose words do not carry. Why have they not reflected on the effort made by Christ to bring the highest truths within the reach of the humblest crowds of his country and his time?

I must tell you that a concern is growing in me as I speak to you: by explaining the importance and urgency of this apostolate of the Word to you, am I not going to encourage the multiplication of these type of fearsome people whom we hasten to flee when we come across them: the peddlers of God. We recognise them by the fact that they always have an edifying spiel to tell you or moral exhortations to deliver. The danger exists, I recognise it. So, I hasten to give you a golden rule: if you have acquired the conviction that you must break the bread of the Word with one of your brothers, do it seriously and, I would say, with the devotion of the priest who gives the Eucharistic bread.

### **Word and Action**

It is not impossible that, while listening to me, another objection comes to your mind and you may say, "*We know so many of these so-called apostles who talk a great deal and abstain from action. They do not want to understand that the activities of the Church require their help, and it seems as if they are afraid of getting their hands dirty by working on temporal tasks. So, is there not a danger in giving such importance to the apostolate of the word? Does not the testimony of those who devote themselves to building a better world, even if they abstain from speaking, have infinitely more impact than all the edifying speeches?*"

We find ourselves, in fact, in the presence of two opposing errors when it comes to the apostolate: words without action, action without words.

It is the Bible that will help us to see clearly. Throughout the Old Testament, God both speaks and acts. He speaks to make known his thoughts, his wishes, his love. He acts: he frees the Hebrews from Egypt, snatches them from the captivity of Babylon, helps them in many ways. And by his actions he reveals himself, no less than by his words. It is still necessary that by his Word he reveals the meaning of his interventions, otherwise the Jews would not understand their impact, they would interpret them as pure chance and not the love of their God.

Jesus Christ, likewise, speaks and acts. He speaks to reveal the Father's love and his will. He also speaks to comment on his own gestures and actions, otherwise his contemporaries, seeing the miracles, whether it be the multiplication of loaves, the healing of a leper, the resurrection of the dead, would discern only the power of a philanthropic miracle-worker and would miss their profound meaning. It would escape them that the multiplication of loaves is the announcement of another kind of bread; that the healing of the paralytic is the symbol of the healing of the spiritual paralysis that is sin; that the resurrection of the dead is the sign of deliverance from a death infinitely more fearsome than that of the body. His death itself, how would his disciples have understood the meaning of it if he had not explained it? They would have seen it as a catastrophe and not that he gave his life freely, through his obedience to his Father and through love for humanity. He had warned them a few days before, "*No one takes my life from me, I lay it down of my own accord*"; "*Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.*" (Jn 10:18; 15:13)

And so it must be for Christians. As a disciple of Christ, they must act and speak. It is imperative that they be the first to come to the aid of those who suffer, those who toil, the oppressed; that they devote themselves to great human tasks, that they eventually give themselves up to the point of sacrifice; but it is also necessary that by the word, wisely, they reveal the secret of their self-sacrifice and their gift to others: namely, the love and grace of this God in whom they believe. They must be prepared "*to give the reason for the hope that you have.*" (1 P 3:15)

People will agree to listen to them speak because first they will have prepared hearts by their devotion, by the radiance of their love.

Beware, however, of falling into a specious error which consists of thinking that it is hypocrisy to speak of God to those whom one has not yet succeeded in delivering from their painful condition: when the hungry are satisfied, when the proletarians have gained access to well-being, only then will one be able to announce the Good News to them without sanctimony. The example of Christ and that of a Saint Paul show us sufficiently what is incorrect there.

You probably also sometimes meet Christians for whom the entire apostolate of the laity is limited to Christianising the profession, the city, the institutions in which they live. Correcting abuses, establishing human relationships more in conformity with the doctrine of the Church, this is, according to them, the last word of the apostolate. A well-known Protestant pastor speaks on this subject of a "Catholic perversion." A perversion which consists in trying to Christianise institutions in order to save on evangelisation, which is a much more difficult task. Such a reproach is perhaps not always undeserved. Remember his catchphrase, "to

save on evangelisation" and ask yourself if you too are not sometimes tempted to dispense with speaking by giving yourself over to action wholeheartedly.

We would be preserved from these deviations if we considered the life of Christ, which, in words and deeds, is entirely divine Revelation. Following his example, through our words and deeds, we must proclaim God. Our whole life must be a theophany, a manifestation of the love of our God.

It is time to conclude.

The Teams of Our Lady Dame Movement is a school of Christian life, this we know and we repeat; Teams must therefore aim to make their members Bearers of the Word. Their methods lend themselves to this. Each person not only deepens Christian doctrine, but also learns, in the exchanges of views, to speak about religious subjects, so that they are freed from the fear of bringing them up with those they meet in everyday life.



May you all understand that to be silent is a betrayal: a betrayal of God who counts on you to pass on his creative Word. May you be even more convinced that to love God is to put oneself at the service of his love, which is impatient to reveal itself; it is to become a passage to the torrent of the Word; that to love humanity means not tolerating that they die of hunger while at home bread abounds.

How inconsistent we are: we accuse ourselves of greed, of lying... but we have no scruples about confiscating the Word of God, of holding it captive!

Saint Paul thought otherwise, when he cried out, *"For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"* (1 Cor 9, 16). [...]

Henri Caffarel

## Prayer for the Canonisation of the Servant of God, Henri Caffarel

God, our Father,  
You planted deep in the heart of your servant, Henri Caffarel,  
A fountain of love, which bound him totally to your Son  
And inspired him with a wonderful capacity to speak of Him.

A prophet for our time,  
He revealed the dignity and beauty of the vocation of every person  
In the words Jesus addresses to each of us: "Come follow me."

He made couples enthusiastic about the greatness of the sacrament of marriage,  
The sign of Christ's fruitful love for the Church and of His union with her.  
He showed that priests and couples  
Are called to live a vocation of love.  
He was a guide to widows: love is stronger than death.  
Prompted by the Holy Spirit,  
He accompanied many Christians on the path of prayer.  
Seized by a devouring fire, he was a dwelling place for you, Lord.

God, our Father,  
Through the intercession of Our Lady,  
We ask you to hasten the day  
When the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life,  
So that people everywhere will discover the joy of following your Son  
In accordance with their particular vocations in the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we invoke the intercession of Father Caffarel for.....  
(Indicate the particular favour being sought)

**Prayer approved by Monsignor Andre Vingt-Trois – Archbishop of Paris.**

**"Nihil obstat": 4th January 2006 – "Imprimatur": 5th January 2006.**

*In the case of a particular favour obtained through the intercession of Father*

*Caffarel, Contact: The Postulator,  
Association "Les Amis du Père Caffarel"  
49 rue de la Glacière – F 75013 PARIS*



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<sup>1</sup>ERI: International Leading Team of the Teams of Our Lady

**Postulator to the Cause (Rome):**

Father Zdzislaw Kijas, o.f.m. conv

**Editor of the Cause of the Canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel:**

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p

**Director of publication:**

Alberto Pérez

**Editorial Team:**

Loïc & Armelle Toussaint de Quièvecourt

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THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

Law 1901 Association for the promotion of the  
Cause of the canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel  
49, rue de la Glacière - (7<sup>th</sup>Floor) - F 75013 PARIS  
Tel: + 33 1 43 31 96 21 - Fax: + 33 1 45 35 47 12

Email: [association-amis@henri-caffarel.org](mailto:association-amis@henri-caffarel.org)

Web Site: [www.henri-caffarel.org](http://www.henri-caffarel.org)

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