

# BULLETIN



## OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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## EDITORIAL

Maria Berta et José Moura Soares  
(*Responsible Couple, International Leading Team*)



### "Be That Hope"

Pope Francis in his message for the celebration of the XLIX World Day of Peace Day, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, told us what to do: **"Overcome Indifference and Win Peace."**

If we are saved by Hope, as Pope Benedict XVI said, then without a doubt, we can believe that we will succeed in vanquishing indifference and thereby make peace possible.

Pope Francis tells us that with today's "globalisation of indifference," only a language and gestures that transmit mercy will succeed in conquering the lack of love.

Today for the first time, society is global. Everything affects us and the indifference when faced with our neighbour's difficult situation is global. Television in our houses, showing us images of wars and injustice, ought to increase our desire for change.

With the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis hopes that this initiative may be the Church's contribution to awakening in today's men and women the recognition of dignity and our responsibility for making society more just.

If God is not indifferent to man's love, then men themselves cannot be so to God's love.

Man who does not recognise God is the only Lord over himself, establishing for himself the extent of his rights, duties and responsibilities that, afterwards, lead him to refuse to feel guilty about his neighbour's suffering.

We can therefore ask: What are the causes and kinds of indifference?

**Indifference to our neighbour**

**Indifference to the great events in the world**

**Indifference to the planet on which we live**

The Jubilee of Mercy is a prophetic sign addressed to all people, believers and non-believers. It is a proposition that shows us how love can be put in practice with compassion and thus become a rule of life that thwarts indifference thanks to mercy.

Tó & Zé

**3<sup>rd</sup> International Gathering  
Of Regional Responsible Couples  
Of the Teams of Our Lady  
In Rome**

*The Regional Responsible Couples met in Rome from September 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and Isaiah's message was the central theme:*

*"Here I am Lord, Send me!" (Is 6:8)*

*During this International Gathering, Pope Francis paid homage to the Teams of Our Lady during an audience at the Vatican on September 10<sup>th</sup>. He encouraged them to continue their mission alongside couples in difficulty and to share their experiences.*

*Recalling the upcoming Synod on the family (October 2015), the Pope invited the Team members to pray for the Synod Fathers and for what they must reflect upon in the assembly on the "vital cell of our societies ... in the difficult current cultural context", and declared that such "a movement of conjugal spirituality such as yours fully expresses the attention that the Church wants to have for families, and it does so both by promoting the maturation of the couples who work with your Teams, through the fraternal support given to other couples to whom they are sent."*

"Indeed, I would like to insist on this missionary role of the Teams of Our Lady. Every committed couple certainly receives a great deal from its Team experience, and its conjugal life is deepened by refining itself through the spirituality of the Movement. However, after receiving from Christ and from the Church, a Christian is irresistibly sent out to witness to and pass on what he has received. "The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 120). Christian couples and families are often the best placed to proclaim Jesus Christ to other families, to support, fortify and encourage them. What you live as couples and as families — accompanied by the very charisma of your Movement — the profound and irreplaceable joy that the Lord enables you to feel in domestic intimacy in joy and sorrow, in the happiness of your spouse's presence, in the growth of your children, in the human and spiritual fruitfulness that He grants you, all this is to be witnessed to, proclaimed and communicated outside so that others, in turn, may set out on this path.

In the first place, then, I encourage all couples to put into practice, and to live in depth, with constancy and perseverance, the spirituality the Teams of Our Lady follow. I think that the proposed “concrete points of commitment” are truly effective aides, which enable couples to progress with confidence in conjugal life on the way of the Gospel. I am thinking, in particular, of the a prayer of couples and prayer in the family, a beautiful and necessary tradition that has always supported the faith and hope of Christians, unfortunately abandoned in so many regions of the world. I am also thinking of the time for monthly dialogue proposed to the spouses — the famous and demanding “duty to sit down”, which runs so counter to the habits of the frenetic and agitated world pervaded by individualism — a moment of exchange lived in truth under the Lord’s gaze. It is a precious time of thanksgiving, of forgiveness, of mutual respect and attention to the other. I am thinking, lastly, of faithful participation in Team life, which brings to each one the richness of learning and of sharing, as well as the help and comfort of friendship. In this regard, I emphasize the mutual fruitfulness of this encounter experienced with a priest who supports you. I thank you, dear couples of the Teams of Our Lady, for being a support and encouragement to the ministry of your priests, who always find priestly joy, fraternal presence, emotional balance and spiritual paternity in their contact with your Teams and your families.

Secondly, I invite the couples, fortified by Team meetings in the missionary commitment. This mission which is entrusted to them, is all the more important inasmuch as the image of the family — as God wills it, composed of one man and one woman in view of the good of the spouses and also of the procreation and upbringing of children — is deformed through powerful adverse projects supported by ideological trends. You are certainly already missionaries by the radiation of your family life to the spheres of your friendships and relationships, and also other areas. In fact, a happy and balanced family, inhabited by the presence of God, speaks in and of itself of God’s love for all men. I also invite you to commit yourselves, if possible, in an ever more concrete way and with ever renewed creativity, to the activities that can be organized to welcome, form and support in the faith young couples in particular, before and after marriage.

I also exhort you to continue to be close to wounded families, who are so numerous today, due to unemployment, poverty, health problems, mourning, worry over a child, the imbalance caused by an estrangement or absence, a climate of violence.

We must have the courage to come into contact with these families, in a discreet but generous way, materially, humanly or spiritually, in those circumstances where they are most vulnerable.

I cannot but encourage the couples of the *Équipes Notre-Dame* to be instruments of the mercy of Christ and of the Church towards people whose marriage has failed. Never forget that your conjugal fidelity is a gift of God, and that mercy has been exercised on behalf of each one of us. A united and happy couple can understand better than anyone else, as from within, the wound and the suffering caused by abandonment, betrayal, failure of love. Therefore, it is necessary that you be able to bring your testimony and your experience to help Christian communities to discern the real situations of these people, and to accept them with their wounds, and help them to walk in faith and in truth, under the gaze of Christ the Good Shepherd, to play an appropriate role in the life of the Church. Nor should you forget the unspeakable suffering of youngsters who experience these painful family situations: you can give them much.

Dear Teams of Our Lady, I renew my confidence in you and my encouragement. From the moment that the Cause of Beatification of your Founder, Fr Henri Caffarel, was introduced in Rome, I have prayed that the Holy Spirit may enlighten the Church in the judgment that she will have to pronounce in due time in this regard. I entrust your couples to the protection of the Virgin Mary and of St Joseph, and I impart to you my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing."





**3<sup>rd</sup> National Gathering of  
The Teams of Our Lady  
In BRAZIL**

**FATHER CAFFAREL'S thinking**

**Vicelia & Luiz Carlos MAGALHÃES**

The 3rd National Gathering of the Teams of Our Lady in Brazil took place in the town of Aparecida, in the State of Sao Paulo, from June 30<sup>th</sup> to July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015. Dom Raimundo Damasceno Assis (Aparecida) and Dom Odilo Scherer (Sao Paulo), cardinal archbishops, 5 bishops, 250 priests and nuns and almost 6500 Team members from all the provinces of the Brazil Super-Region were present.



This joyful and chatty flood of couples and priests reminded us of the "human river" that Father Caffarel spoke of at the first Team meeting on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1939 and he concluded "*Looking after and purifying the river's source* (a couple's love, according to Father Caffarel). *That is what we are here for.*"

We were over there, in the house of our Holy Mother, hoping to meet our fellow travellers, to pray together, to listen and meditate on the Word of God, to share our experiences, to listen to what the Movement would have to say to us, the advice that it would give us to look after our couple and purify it.

Thanks to the subject topic *"Christian Marriage: a feast of joy and married love"* and with the help of the SEE-JUDGE-ACT method, we deepened our reflection on an episode in John's Gospel, the Marriage Feast at Cana. A little-known text of Father Caffarel's came to mind in which he lets five village priests speak and the last one believes that the best pastoral orientation would be to work on the conversion of couples. The parallel with John's text convinced Fr Caffarel, *"This presence of Christ at this wedding—with his mother and his apostles—this interest that he has not only in the spiritual wellbeing of the spouses, but also in their party, that he wants to be perfect. This water that he transforms into wine so that the joy does not evaporate, and this wine of the miracle, so much better than the wine from the vineyards in Galilee, all that just proves convincingly Christ's interest, not only in love, not only in the couple, but also in everything that is one with him, in the 'fire!'"*<sup>1</sup>

On the first day (SEE), we were guided by Mary's remark, *"They have no more wine,"* which led us to think about the attention, care and concern which Mary and Christ himself showed, just as the fifth priest said in Father Caffarel's text. And having listened to the testimonials of older and young couples and that of a Spiritual Counsellor, the day was over and night fell. We recited a luminous Rosary and it was a strong moment that manifested our faith and moved us all tremendously.

The second day (JUDGE) was based on Jesus' Mother's order, *"Do everything that He tells you"* and it intensified the central theme of the Gathering, the feast of married love, and led us to reflect on the "new alliance and the wine of love." The afternoon was strongly marked by Monsignor João Marchiori Oneres, bishop emeritus of the Lajes diocese (Santa Caterina state), who evoked the memory of Father Caffarel and spoke with great enthusiasm of his teaching and how he had influenced his life as a priest and bishop.

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<sup>1</sup> The Golden Ring, Marriage, that great Sacrament. Special Edition 111-112, May-August 1963, p 305-321, "Priests are wondering."

The fire = a couple's home; Fr Caffarel refers to the priest's words, meaning the homes in his village, which once night falls, are lit up by the "fires" in their hearths.

*"Fill the jars with water"* was the verse that provided guidance for the reflections of the Gathering's final day (ACT) and invited us to put our talents at the service of Jesus' love and to go out into the world by putting ourselves in the service of the Church.

The Eucharistic celebrations in the Church, the moments dedicated to prayer, the talks, the moving testimonials, the orientations, the friendliness with other couples, all that meant that we will remember this 3<sup>rd</sup> National Gathering forever.

We will force ourselves to continue throughout our life sharing the good wine that Jesus wants to give us everyday, living and experiencing the feast of our marriage and showing the world our joy at being at Christian couple. This is what Father Caffarel wanted so much for us and of us, *"Be happy! The Lord awaits this praise and those who are around you await this testimonial!"*<sup>2</sup>

Vicélia et Luiz Carlos MAGALHÃES



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<sup>2</sup> *Monthly Letter*, December 25<sup>th</sup>, 1945, p 1.

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**A WORD FROM THE EDITOR  
OF THE CAUSE**

*Decree of Validity  
of the Diocesan Inquiry*

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.  
*In Charge of Writing the "Positio"  
Of the Cause of Canonisation  
Of Father Caffarel*



**Décret de validité**

The diocesan inquiry into Father Caffarel was deposited in Rome at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. What has happened since then? Well, the 6000 pages of the diocesan inquiry were compiled into 16 white volumes, called the *Copia publica*, or public copy that anyone outside the Congregation can consult. Then a member of the Congregation verified that everything had been done according to the rules of the Church: an inspection of the procedure and also of the testimonials. Finally, a report of this inspection was submitted to the Ordinary Assembly of those responsible in the Congregation, who declared that the Paris inquiry was valid. The Prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Angelo Amato, then signed **the Decree of Validity** of the diocesan inquiry on Father Henri Caffarel on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

The Decree of validity is important. In effect, it closes the first stage towards the Beatification. Of course, the Decree does not rule on the content; it does not say that Father Caffarel is "holy," but it says that nothing opposes the work's continuation and the presentation of Father Caffarel's virtues.

The Decree of validity opens the second stage of the work, the writing up of the Cause, the *Positio*. On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2015, the Congregation named a **Reporter**, who as a member of the Congregation, is in charge of leading this writing up. The *Positio* is the presentation of Father Caffarel's virtues and holiness, based on documents from the Parisian inquiry. Father Zdzislas Kijas, a Polish Franciscan Conventual and Theology professor is the Reporter. He was in charge of the cause of the Romanian blessed martyr, Monsignor Vladimir Ghika, who played a major role in Father Caffarel's life, especially in his training to be a priest. Father Kijas will look after the writing up itself of the Cause that is being done by an **External Collaborator**, Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p., former Parisian postulator.

Since June 2015, Father Angelo Paleri is the **Roman Postulator** and he will introduce himself further on in this Bulletin. During the final months that preceded the closing of the diocesan inquiry in Paris, he was extremely helpful concerning the presentation of the dossier, since he is the general postulator of his Order, the Conventual Franciscans.

Let us confide all this to God's benevolence. We are working for the glory of God, so that the holiness of Father Caffarel may be recognised and also for the good of all Christians and all men. May Father Caffarel and his teachings be known! Marriage and private prayer are realities that can bring so much happiness!

Father Paul-Dominique Marovits, o.p.

**A WORD FROM THE POSTULATOR  
OF THE CAUSE**

**Brother Angelo Paleri, OFM. Conv  
Postulator in Rome  
for the Cause of the Servant of God,  
Henri Caffarel**

*Hello Father, you have been named Postulator in Rome for the Cause of God's Servant, Henri Caffarel. Can you tell us a bit about yourself?*

My name is Angelo Paleri and I belong to the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (OFMConv) also known as *Greyfriars* in English from the colour of our clothes. I was born in 1951 in Ancona, the Marches, Italy, I joined the order in 1967 and I was ordained a priest in 1975.

During a short period of study in London in order to prepare me for the missionary life, I got my diploma in Mission Studies at the *Missionary Institute of London* (1977). In 1978, I went to Zambia and stayed there as a missionary until 2005.



I have had numerous work experiences over the years: parish priest or curate, Episcopal Vicar from 2001-2005; training and teaching (in charge of young Zambians at different stages in their training(; teaching in the Franciscan tradition in the Order's various houses, once I obtained a Bachelors in Biblical Theology from the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* in Jerusalem; teaching Holy Scripture and ancient languages from 1991 to 2004 at the Inter-Franciscan Seminary at Lusaka, Zambia; administrative duties (Secretary for the Zambia Province, 1984-1987 and 1996-2004; Provincial Treasurer, 1997-2004; Advisor to the Bishop of Ndola, Zambia and member of the Presbyteral Council, 2001-2005).

*And your mission as Postulator?*

Since 1996, I have been involved in the work of postulation for the Causes of Saints, as vice-postulator for the Cause for beatification and canonisation of Monsignor Francesco Mazzieri (founder of our mission in Zambia and first bishop of Ndola) and also as ad hoc notary for the diocesan inquiry for a miracle attributed to Blessed Don Alfonso Fusco (Founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint-John-the-Baptist).

In 2005, I was named General Postulator of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual and thus over these past eleven years, I have researched and given talks on the various causes that were entrusted to me. I worked in particular on the canonisations of Saint Angela of Foligno (2013), Saint Amato Ronconi (2014), both members of the Third Order of St Francis, as well as for the beatifications of Blessed Francesco Zirano (2014) and Blessed Michal Tomaszek and Blessed Zbigniew Strzalkowski (all three are Franciscan martyrs) and Alessandro Dordi, a diocesan *fidei donum* priest (2015).

I have been a Spiritual Counsellor to a Team of Our Lady in Rome since 2006 and more recently to a second one in Rome Sector B. The Friends of Father Caffarel asked me to take charge of Father Henri Caffarel's Cause and I hope to be able to contribute as best as is possible to his beatification.

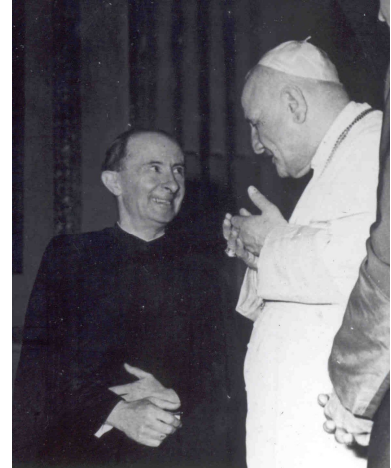
Brother Angelo Paleri, OFM Conv

## A Year of Mercy Father Caffarel's Archives

### THE GOLDEN RING

NUMBER 137, SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 1967,  
PAGES 331 TO 342

*Extracts from a speech given by Father CAFFAREL at Pentecost 1967, at Lourdes, before an audience of 4500 widows. In this text, Father CAFFAREL ponders the Christian meaning of suffering.*



### LOVE, STRONGER THAN SUFFERING

How easy it is for intellectuals around a table to speechify on about suffering. How much harder it is to talk about it when right in front of you are people who suffer in their hearts and bodies and when before you are spirits disconcerted by the enigma of suffering! We are afraid to scratch an open wound. A priest, (...), wrote very fittingly, "Suffering is not primarily a subject topic for speeches; it is always someone's suffering."

My apprehension is made more harrowing at the thought that perhaps there are rebellious souls amongst you. It is impossible not to ask the question: will my words succeed in reconciling them with God or will they distance them further? When facing such a risk, I ask Mary to pray for all of you as well as for me.

Beware of listening to me only with your intellectual reason, ever ready to discuss, retort and object. Suffering is a mystery. It can only bewilder prideful reason given over to its own resources. Above all, do not give into the temptation to stand up as God's accuser, demanding that he justifies himself, but rather, humbly, just like a young child with his father, ask him to help you understand. (...)



## **Not God's Daughter**

The great mistake is to believe that suffering is God's work, God's daughter. If it were, the daughter's cruelty can in no case be less than a reflection of the father's cruelty. But this is absolutely not the case. There is no link between suffering and God. Imagine earthly paradise and the completely new world that emerged from God's hands where man and woman appeared, amazed before the creation that was given to them as a privilege. Suffering was unknown there, and it continued to be unknown until the day of the first sin. This is the Church's teaching.

And then think about that other Paradise, where for eternity, the heavenly Father assembles all his children. There will be no more pain. Is this not what we read in the Book of Revelation, "*Those people will never be hungry again, and they will never be thirsty again. The sun will not hurt them, and no heat will burn them, (...) And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*" (7:16-17) Suffering is excluded from a world where God reigns and where his will encounters no opposition.

## **Sin's Daughter**

Suffering is in fact not God's daughter, but sin's. The sinners, Adam and Eve, tragically understood this when they saw their son Abel's body that his brother Cain's jealousy had killed. Thus, the first sin of our first parents is the source of this river of suffering that submerged the earth and that is magnified with new sufferings, brought about by all the sins of the world. Think about those children, men and women who are victims of bombings, victims of that terrible sin that is called war—a hideous spectacle that television offers us practically every day.

## **God is Suffering's Enemy**

God abhors suffering because it is sin's daughter. It would also be illogical to attribute it to the Lord, as it would be to the artist the knife cuts that slashed his canvas. Suffering is absurd and a scandal for God's intelligence...and even more so for his heart. How can the heart of such a father not be revolted before the pain of one of his children, whether that child be his Son or one of us? (...)

## **Suffering cannot be attributed to man...**

It is very possible that an objection arises in your spirits and that one or other of you would like to say to me, "You talk about the innumerable people, who endure suffering, whose cause is sin. War victims, victimised children,

abandoned spouses, families in grieving because of a driving accident...but there are other sufferings that cannot be attributed to man. I know this objection very well. It was thrown at me in circumstances that I will never forget. In Paris, in the metro at rush hour, a drunk approached me, showed me a title in huge letters on his crumpled newspaper relating the disasters caused by a cyclone in some part of the earth, I no longer remember where. And he shouted out to me, "Do you think, Father, that there would be things like that if God existed?" I confess to you, without pride, that I suddenly found a very important reason to get out at the next stop, since I did not want to make a speech about the Christian meaning of suffering before the curious travellers, who had witnessed this dialogue between a drunk and a young priest. I admit that the objection is embarrassing. And I do not undertake to tell you what God would have done to remove cataclysms from sinless humanity. I am however not far from reacting like the drunk who, according to his honest man's logic, reasoned like this: when I am not too drunk, I do not hit my wife or kids. If God exists it would surely be better than me, and he would not hit mankind. But, while the drunk concludes, since suffering exists, it means that God doesn't exist, I think: since my God is all love and all-powerful love, he would find no difficulty in driving away suffering from a sinless humanity. I therefore hold firm in the certainty obtained from the Bible that it is in the wake of sin that suffering appeared in the world.

### **Christ before Man's Suffering**

Christ's reaction to man's suffering strengthens my conviction even more.

Remember, "*And everywhere he went—into towns, cities, or countryside—the people brought the sick (...) and all who touched him were healed*" (Mk 6:56) Remember also this scene that I am certain is especially dear to you. At the entrance to a small town, the flute players and mourners can be heard and Jesus and his apostles run into a funeral procession. Jesus looks and sees a single woman following the bier, where a young boy is laid out. She had already lost her husband and now her only son had died. The Master had compassion on her, the Gospel tells us. He raises the dead boy and "gave him to his mother." Think also of the unforgettable episode when faced with Martha and Mary's pain, Jesus bursts into tears and raises their brother. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ presented himself on earth as the enemy of suffering. He delivered thousands of people from pain's clutch. His love not only led him to sympathise with and to share his suffering brothers' sorrow, but also to deliver them from it. Who so ever does not react like him

is not his disciple. And if suffering does not shock a Christian, then that Christian shocks me.

So then, why do pious people keep repeating, when we are suffering, that we must accept God's will? This way of speaking, I do agree, leads to confusion and I never use it myself. Let us get back to Christ. For all that, you are not going to say that the persecutors accomplished the Father's will when they crucified Jesus: they committed the most horrendous of crimes. God's will was not that his Son be tortured, but that, tortured, he consented to the suffering that sin inflicted on him and thus proved his invincible love for men.

### **Christ and the Cross**

"If God is against suffering, if Christ fought against it, why are we invited to love it?" This is the other question that the young professor, whom I already spoke about, asked me with a certain amount of vehemence.

I can still see his gesture indicating the crucifix hung on the wall of my office. "When I think", he said, "that you feel the need to hang it on all your walls, put it up at crossroads, hoist it right up to the mountain tops in order to pressurise us into loving suffering..."

To which I replied, "You are making the crucifix say the opposite of what it means. Far from preaching the goodness, kindness, intelligibility of suffering, the cross proclaims throughout the world the definitive victory of Christ over suffering and death."

We need to stop and think about this statement that apparently is contrary to daily evidence. We have arrived at the heart of the Christian mystery. Let us see how Christ behaves no longer before others' sufferings, but before the suffering that attacks him. It is presented in the form of the cross, the two outstretched arms of which seem to say, you can't get by! He could easily have escaped it, turned away. But no, he did not let himself be diverted, he moved forward towards the cross. Could it be that he found suffering good, that he liked it? Certainly not! He could not stand it, this daughter of sin. He trembled with horror before her. But then, why did he hurry towards Calvary, why was he in such a rush for his "hour" to come? Think about a fiancé who throws himself in to the flames to save the woman he loves. You would not say that he loves the flames; it is his fiancée that he loves. Christ does not love the cross and suffering, but it is the Father who calls him and it is humanity that he wishes to save, that he is impatient to make his spouse. Yes, his sacrifice is indeed the victory of love over

suffering and over sin, which is at the source of it all. That is what the crucifixes in our churches, houses and countrysides proclaim.

I speak about the victory of love, but it would be even more appropriate to talk about love's revenge over suffering. What revenge indeed, than to make suffering—sin's daughter, the refusal of love—the occasion for a greater love! Because it is very true that in suffering love goes beyond itself. In that sense, one can say that suffering becomes good, intelligible and productive, but in reality, it is the love that it provokes and stimulates that is good, intelligible and productive.

### **Fickle Crucifixes, True Crucifixes**

I recognise that there are crucifixes that can be misleading. Have you noticed that there are two kinds of crucifixes: those that we can 'realistic' and those that are 'mystic'. The realistic crucifixes, alas the more numerous, show Christ undressed, his body covered with wounds, twisted in pain and crowned with thorns. These crucifixes aim essentially at moving us and evoking our compassion. They seem to express the triumph of suffering. Fortunately, there are the other kinds, which announce the victory of love. These 'mystical' crucifixes are to be found mainly with the Orientals. Christ wears a tunic, an imperial crown on his head; his eyes are open wide and his arms too. Sometimes the face is emotionless, often a mysterious joy is perceptible, the joy of someone who said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Ac 20:35) (...)

### **Believe in God's Compassionate Love**

How can a Christian widow react to her terrible ordeal? That is the subject I now wish to speak about, in light of what I have already said to you about the Christian meaning of suffering.

You know that your God is not an emotionless God, but one who is infinitely compassionate. He is the one who was overwhelmed before the suffering of the bodies and hearts, who had pity on the crowds, who used to repeat, "*Come to me, all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest.*" (Mt 11:28) Already this changes everything, doesn't it? When God is no longer the person we imagined, when he is no longer the one spying on us to catch us in the act, but instead is the one who is compassionate, who, dare I say it, apologises for having let suffering touch us. Bernanos expressed it in moving terms. He spoke about a mother beside her dead small boy—but these words can also be applied to the wife whose husband has just breathed his last breath. And I cite from memory, "A mother hides her face one last

time in the small chest that no longer beats. Suddenly she sits up. The divine Voice, the Voice, which has thrown suns into the distance in the same way as a hand throws seed, the Voice whispers to her softly, "Forgive me. One day you will know, you will understand, you will thank me. But now, what I expect of you is your forgiveness. Forgive."

### **Suffering, Love's Gift**

If you let Christ instruct you, he will invite you, slowly and patiently, to also go beyond the stage of suffering that is accepted and experienced under his compassionate gaze. He will offer you a way of being that is closer to his during his Passion. He will help you to make your suffering an opportunity for a great love. I am speaking firstly, of course, of the cruelty of separation, but also of those thousands of sufferings that are the consequences of it and that I do not need to enumerate, because you know them only too well. Yes, day in and day out, love can grow in your heart and worries, sorrow and difficulties can be the opportunity given by love as an offering, as a victory of your love towards God.

Perhaps you will say to me, as much as it was easy to accept and bear suffering when there was the two of us, it seems so much more difficult now that I am alone. You are right. "It is not good to be alone," says the first page of the Bible. You are right, but in fact you are not alone. Christ, it is true, will not resurrect the one who left you, but he invites you to continue to discover his mysterious presence at your side. This has not been the least of my astonishments, over twenty-six years of ministry to widows, to observe the strength and joy that Christ's love brings them.

It is not that Christ's presence is a pure and simple substitute for their husbands. Many will tell you that they first went to Christ to find their husband and then gradually (sometimes from one day to the next) love of the Lord appeared to them as a great reality, the great reality. Christ became their friend. But far from eliminating their husband, he made their married love stronger than death and the person that had been their travelling companion became their companion for eternity.

And of course sensitivity henceforth has been deprived of the sweetness of human tenderness. It remains cruel not to be able to find refuge in the arms of a man that you love. But in the depths of your heart resides a very pure joy, because in the depths of your heart are two inseparable and intensely alive loves, Christ's and your husband's.

I have shown you successively Christ who understands, is compassionate and close to the widow who has lost her loved one, helping her

to bear her suffering. Then I showed you how he discretely offers himself as a friend, the travelling companion, inviting the widow to turn her suffering into a victory of love. His ambition or rather his love desires even more.

### **Christ Suffers in Me**

Listen to him saying to her as a friend, I am not just satisfied with journeying by your side; I want to live in you, suffer in you, love in and through you. I want to win the victory of my love over suffering once more, but this time in and through you. Such an enormous refusal of love towards the heavenly Father exists in the world today that in and through you, I have to give a surfeit and overabundance of love. Will you allow me to continue, in and through you, my great task of redemption? One day you will be able to say in truth just like my apostle Paul, "*It is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me.*" (Gal 2:20) I suffer and love, but it is no longer I who suffers, it is no longer I who loves, it is Christ who in me suffers and loves. (...)

Henri Caffarel

HENRI CAFFAREL

**Prayer for the Canonisation  
of the Servant of Dieu,  
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> E.R.I : Équipe Responsable Internationale des Équipes Notre Dame



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