

# THE BULLETIN



## OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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ASSOCIATION DES AMIS DU PÈRE CAFFAREL  
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## CONTENTS

- Editorial: “On Churches, the Domestic Church and Father Caffarel”  
Maria de Assis & Elizeu Calsing p. 4
- News from the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel p. 6
- News from the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel  
Publication of “Married Love, A Path to God,” p. 8
- Preface to the Italian Edition of the work  
By Father Federico Lombardi p. 10
- Father Caffarel’s Archives  
Excerpts from “Married Love, A Path to God” p. 13
- Prayer for the Canonisation of Father Caffarel p. 23
- Honorary Members of the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel p. 24
- Subscription Renewal Form p. 27

## EDITORIAL

Maria de Assis Calsing (Mariola), with Elizeu,  
(A member Couple of the International Leading  
Team of Teams of Our Lady)



### On Churches, the Domestic Church and Father Caffarel

Dear Brothers in Christ, members of the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel,

Moved by a great spirit of service, Elizeu & I have agreed to join to the International Leading Team (ERI) as the Coordinating Couple of the Satellite Teams. And in the same spirit, I have agreed to become the Vice-President of the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel.

Last April 15<sup>th</sup>, we were on our way back from an ERI meeting in Lebanon and as our plane approached Charles-de-Gaulle airport, Paris, we saw a huge cloud of smoke. It was about 7:30pm. Fire in Paris! Horror and consternation in the whole plane! As we disembarked, the television screens told us that the Cathedral of Notre-Dame was on fire.

Besides its priceless cultural and historical value, Notre-Dame, one of Paris' icons of architectural beauty, is also a symbol of the Catholic faith of the French nation. What a tragedy! Tears brought little comfort, but they were inevitable...

We also remember the numerous churches around the world that were destroyed for various reasons. More sadness!

As we waited for our connecting flight for Brasilia, we began to talk about the importance of churches, places where we go to pray in order to be closer to God, about his presence in the holy tabernacle or in the Eucharist. In other words, churches that are like the "house" of God.

It was therefore normal, for us who had been absent for a few days, to turn towards our family, our domestic church, that Father Caffarel ceaselessly exalted as the place *par excellence* for us Christian couples to put Jesus' Gospel into practice. He said that "*Houses are the sanctuaries where couples, consecrated by the marriage sacrament, celebrate with their children the family cult (...), where visitors find a climate and grace of the Church.*"<sup>1</sup>

He also stated that the house is a "miniature church" that must perform a mediation function between the world and the ecclesial community. Talking about

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<sup>1</sup> Father Henri CAFFAREL, « Le sacerdoce du foyer », (*The Priesthood of the Home*), *L'Anneau d'Or*, « Le Mariage, ce grand Sacrement », (*Marriage, that great Sacrament*), Special Issue 111-112, May-August 1963, p. 225-240.

hospitality as a great human reality, he said that the house introduces the visitor to the family's heart and that hospitality "*was therefore going to consist of enabling others to benefit from the house's resources: shelter, protection, food, rest*" and the radiance of love.<sup>2</sup>

These words have resonated vividly since then and forever with Teams of Our Lady couples and his teachings have spread throughout the whole world—in the 93 countries where the movement is to be found.

This is what we experienced in Beirut, when we were so warmly welcomed by the couples from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Domestic churches, that are as numerous as the homes of Team members throughout the world, are built and constructed in the tasks, gestures and simple things of daily life, in the gift of service, in the joy of welcoming, in constant prayer and in the brotherly coexistence of interreligious dialogue.

No matter the spoken language, local customs, culture of the country, the difficulties encountered, the political situation that is sometimes so cruel, nothing stops the Team members continuing to build their domestic churches, their family churches as Father Caffarel told us.

We are witnesses that Father Caffarel is a living presence, whose word continues to resonate in the hearts of Teams of Our Lady couples in numerous countries.

This is why, in our exchange, in that airport (the wait seemed so long to us), we came to realise the miracle that Father Caffarel did and continues to do for couples and for families throughout the whole world. It is a question of churches or domestic churches that are built and are being rebuilt on the foundations of his teachings, on the gift that he received and that he managed to fructify so well. A miracle for our times! Yes, a greater miracle is impossible, in this world that preaches individuality, immediacy, disposable, pleasure at any price.

Notre-Dame de Paris will be restored, we have no doubt of that. And every day, our families will continue to build, brick upon brick, domestic churches on the foundations laid down by Father Caffarel: married and family prayer, dialogue, hospitality, listening to the Word, service and joy.

Father Caffarel, you are in Heaven, intercede for us all !

Maria de Assis Calsing (Mariola)

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<sup>2</sup> Father Henri CAFFAREL, « Frappez et l'on vous ouvrira » (*Knock and the Door will be opened*) *L'Anneau d'Or*, « Le Mariage, ce grand Sacrement », (*Marriage, that Great Sacrament*) Special issue, 111-112, May-August 1963, p. 273-287.

## **News from the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel**

### ***Excerpt from the Report of the Treasurer of the Association of The Friends of Father Caffarel – for the Year 2018***

The year 2018, marked by the Fatima Gathering, was also marked by a temporary decrease in members' subscriptions because payments will be realised subsequently.

Some comments and clarifications on the financial statements:

- As promised before 2012, the ERI contributed 50 000 in the form of an initial donation for the cause.
- Sales correspond to the sales of the Acts of the Colloquium.
- Costs for the postulation have increased.
- Additional costs were involved for the Fatima Gathering..
- Bulletin n° 22, dedicated to the December 2017 Colloquium, was financed by the Association, as well as some related expenditures that were paid in 2018.

In the following table, for the year 2018, there are 2 columns, the full column and the filtered one, that does not have the exceptional elements.

## Balance 2018

Recettes	2017	2018	2018 dépuré
Adhésions	23'511.00	13'463.02	13'463.02
Dons	810.00	50'000.00	
Ventes	-	1'811.00	1'811.00
Produits financiers	680.00	587.09	587.09
Divers	-		
<b>Total</b>	<b>25'001.00</b>	<b>65'861.11</b>	<b>15'861.11</b>

Depenses	2017	2018	2018 dépuré
Voyages et Temoignages	781.00	420.66	420.66
Postulation	8'800.00	12'224.59	12'224.59
Frais Bureau et Documentation	3'554.00	3'149.48	3'149.48
Frais Bancaires	588.00	181.41	181.41
Assistance Secretariat	5'843.00	6'790.17	6'790.17
Hebergement	556.00		-
Divers	889.00	13'046.90	3'061.24
<b>Total</b>	<b>21'011.00</b>	<b>35'813.21</b>	<b>25'827.55</b>

<b>Resultat</b>	<b>3'990.00</b>	<b>30'047.90</b>	<b>-9'966.44</b>
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As part of the effort to make people aware of the Cause that, we hope, will help increase membership and increase the funds raised, this year we also need to plan for the fact that it will be necessary to use some of the reserves to cope with the expected negative result.

Paris, Friday, March 29, 2019

Giovanni Cecchini Manara,

Treasurer of the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel.

**News from the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel**  
**Publication of the work**  
**“Married Love, A Path to God”**

The work “L’amour conjugal, chemin vers Dieu selon la pensée du père Henri Caffarel”, (*Married Love, A Path to God*) was published in French on March 15th, 2019 by Editions du Cerf.

How should we understand the Church’s message about the marriage sacrament, about sexuality and fecundity, about the pastoral action for couples, about morality as a requirement of love? And what are the fundamental contributions of Father Caffarel, founder of Teams of Our Lady, on these subjects? Starting with the reality of marriage as it is experienced today, an international team within Teams of Our Lady, and in conjunction with “The Friends of Father Caffarel,” called *The Marriage Workshop*, was put together to observe, research and reflect.

Their conclusions are presented in this work and show how much Father Caffarel renewed the Church’s thinking on couples and marriage.

The following people contributed to the work: Constanza & Alberto Alvarado, Marie & Louis d’Amonville, Elaine & John Cogavin, Cidinha & Igar Fehr, Mgr François Fleischmann, Mercedes & Alvaro Gomez-Ferrer, Marie-Christine & Gérard de Roberty, Maria Carla & Carlo Volpini.

\* \* \*

Here is a brief overview of each chapter, an extract from the foreword, in order to present a unified vision of the book.

**1. The Crisis of Marriage and Faith Today (A Sociological Approach)**

It is not only a question of classifying the characteristics of the current sociocultural and religious context and of examining the secularised reality of our days, but also of analysing marriage in this context and its consequence on faith. Married love



cannot be an obstacle to the discovery of faith, but on the contrary shows the path to God, who is the source of all love if the couple cultivates its capacity to give.

## **2. The Anthropology of the Couple (An Analysis of a Couple's Love and the Stages of Love)**

Father Caffarel consistently relied on his knowledge of the lives of couples and on his own experience of God's love. Revealing the traps that today threaten the foundation of conjugal love seems necessary. By admitting that love is a living reality, it is important also to identify its different stages in order to be able to face the crises that accompany them and to know the pedagogy that enables them to be overcome.

## **3. Sexuality and Fecundity (A Gift from God for Man)**

Sexuality has been present in God's project since creation and reveals itself to be a unique and precious gift to humanity. It occurs in an interpersonal context and becomes a place of encounter and also mystery. Fecundity, the openness of the couple's love for life, ought to be understood not only in the biological sense of creating new lives, but also in a larger manner: we educate children so that they become sons of God, we nourish the couple's love, we open ourselves to others and we enrich life.

## **4. The Marriage Sacrament (Teams of Our Lady's Reflection on the Marriage Sacrament)**

A synthetic overview of Father Caffarel's teaching on the marriage sacrament is given and can be summed up in these words, Christ is present in couples. A brief assessment of the contribution of Teams of Our Lady to the marriage sacrament is given, pointing out in the orientations given by the Movement at every stage, the constant presence of reference to the fundamental sacrament of couples; the link between marriage and the Eucharist is highlighted amongst other features, whereby the couple becomes "the sacrament of God's love in the world."

## **5. Morality and Ethics in Conjugal, Family and Social life (The Laws of Marriage)**

God's love for humanity is the fundamental ethical value from which all human actions take their meaning. For married life, the moral law calls us to duration, fidelity and indissolubility and finds support in the unity of the married bond. As

for the transmission of life, the Church's calls for generosity, responsible paternity, temperance and chastity, and all these are supported by the formation of couples and by their vocation to holiness.

## **6. The Place and Role of Couples in the life of the Team, in the Family, in Society and in the Church (Pastoral Programme)**

A few decades before Vatican II that re-emphasised marriage as a path to holiness, Father Caffarel's prophetic intuitions on the marriage sacrament, married spirituality and its pedagogy were welcomed with joy by many couples in the world. They tried to live them out and share them as a Team. The question facing our Movement, every Team and all of its members today is, how can we transmit and pass on to all Christian couples the gifts we have received?

### ***Preface to the Italian Edition of the work by Father FEDERICO LOMBARDI***

Over the 70-80 years or so of their existence, Teams of Our Lady developed and spread across the world, but they never became a mass movement. Apart from the international encounters that constitute important moments over the years, we do not see them parading with banners and singing songs, drawing attention to themselves during great ecclesiastical gatherings. We should not regret that. The leaven in the dough produces good effects in a discreet and gradual fashion.

*Married Love, A Path to God* helps us greatly by giving us a text that simultaneously enables us to read a story and to understand more deeply the spirit and mission of Teams today.

When Father Henri Caffarel and the four first French couples met on the eve of the Second World War, the world was different and the Church was different, yet we can say that at that time, *"In a certain manner, the Holy Spirit had a hand in it;"* it seems therefore justified to talk about a *"founding charisma,"* that still today continues to bear fruit. I wondered whether Father Henri Caffarel's 1987 Chantilly speech, which rounds off this volume, ought rather to be placed at the beginning. But it is fine where it is: the spirit and the convincing words of this document permeate the whole volume, thanks to the numerous and abundant citations; thus rereading at the end of the book the spiritual will and testament for "his" movement is moving and encourages us to return to the path of the mission and move forward.

This work deals with numerous subjects that today we could consider to be taken for granted in the Church. The way in which Vatican II talked to us about marriage, the way Pope John Paul II talked to us about the theology of the body, the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio* and other fundamental texts right up to the recent encyclical *Amoris laetitia* by Pope Francis, offer a vision and knowledge of human love, sexuality and its sanctification thanks to the marriage sacrament that resonates like “good news,” the Gospel for the youth, for men and women today and their love. But this is the result of a long journey to which Father Caffarel and Teams contributed in an important way with the experience of couples in the faith. The journey truly was long: for example, Father Henri Caffarel mentioned the survey carried out amongst Team members concerning their experience of training or formation in relation to sexuality in married life and he recounted how he had asked Pope Paul VI to treat and talk about the topic of the human and Christian sense of sexuality. But the reply was, “*The times are not yet ready...*”

In reading these pages, I asked myself: now that we have *Amoris laetitia*, with such beautiful chapters on every day love and the different forms of love throughout life, did we also need this text? Has it not become superfluous? I do not think so. Pope Francis’ encyclical is a text from the Magisterium, rich and precious, but throughout the pages of *Married Love, A Path to God*, we feel the practical experience of life as lived by couples. And that too is very precious. The constant references to the spirit and words of Father Henri Caffarel enable us to understand that the “founding charisma” is precisely the synthesis between the grace experienced in marriage and in the spiritual ministry of the priest. This is what Father Henri Caffarel explains when he tells how he discovered Christian marriage by meeting and talking with the first four couples in their home rather than in the confession box. This is the experience every Spiritual Counsellor continues to have when following Father Henri Caffarel’s steps during the long years of journeying with Teams.

The Biblical verse, “*The beauty of man is to rest in woman,*” offers a profound reading of the sexual relationship: rest is the completion of creation and its prolongation in new life... Father Henri Caffarel’s words are strong, realistic and brave, they tell us that in order to grow together in marriage, we need both love and self-denial, “*meaning self-sacrifice and selflessness. Love and self-denial are the two sides of a same medal. There is no love without self-denial and an self-denial that is not an self-denial of love is a self-denial that is impossible to put into practice.*”

We have before us deep, magnificent pages, great spiritual intuitions. They also offer consolation to today's world. How many Team members who have experienced and lived out their Christian faith with a lot of sincerity and profundity in an ecclesial context suffer today, often in silence, as they see their children follow a different path. Yet it is possible to invite them to experience an oblation of love and we can then hope that "faith will follow" and that the encounter with Jesus is always to be found in front of, before us.

In our secular world, to which our faith adapts not without some impoverishment, Father Henri Caffarel's passionate attachment to the sacramental value of marriage touches and provokes. The fact that love is an integral part of Jesus Christ's love bears deep meaning and its sublime character is scary, however, it is exactly the same very practical love that is translated also physically in the gift of life, the transmission of human life. Flesh and grace together: a great challenge for an incarnate spirituality, for a call to holiness within the life conditions of couples, with all its beauty, but also with its daily heartaches.

This is the humble greatness of this book. It is largely written by couples who know what daily life in marriage was for them and for numerous couples in the Movement and who were helped to live this life of faith as a gift and grace. It is also therefore a mission: sharing with others this gift that is so great. Man and woman together, in their concrete practical love, such as it is, are the image of God. They transmit life and love, they continue creation. And the path of Teams of Our Lady must also continue. There is a great need for them.

Federico Lombardi S.I.



## FATHER CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

### EXCERPTS FROM “MARRIED LOVE, A PATH TO GOD”

#### **Conclusion of Chapter 2: *Anthropology of the Couple***

##### **Living in Communion**

##### **A Long Way to be the “sacrament” of God’s Love in the World**

##### **A long Way, a long Fight**

As a countryman who had lost his wife was saying to his large family, especially to the youngest couples, gathered around the table after her funeral, *“You think you know what married love is. You need to be more than fifty years married like myself to know what it is.”* It is possible that in even the later years of life there is a sort of miracle of rejuvenation and we feel once more the love of our beginnings, purified and freed from shackles. It is the communion that has been built up gradually between the two. Love has matured and has been mysteriously enriched throughout this common journey.

*“It is no longer labours of love. It is the victory of love. Yes, but there is no victory without labour or battles. The path of love is long...”* [...] This long battle towards communion *“is only fully true for couples who recognise themselves to be sinners, who remember Christ’s words, ‘without me, you can do nothing’ and they expect from him the grace of loving, of loving each other.”*<sup>3</sup>

*“Love is a relentless and persistent labour, a daily conquest. You have to parry to the right, you have to parry to the left, you have to go forward.*

*When a spouse runs the risk of sinking into the abyss of silence, it is a question of jumping into the water to pull them out. When they think that avoiding problems of substance is a way of solving them, they should be set straight. We must be careful not to give in to the temptation to believe that to love is only to give: admitting*

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<sup>3</sup> Father CAFFAREL, *Amour qui es-tu ? (Love, Who are You?)*, Paris, Éd. du Feu Nouveau, 1971, p. 107-108.

*inadequacy and calling for help, is another way of making love grow. And knowing how to forgive is probably more than knowing how to give and knowing how to ask. [...] These efforts are necessary depending on the circumstances. There is one thing that must happen each day, throughout a conjugal existence: that of pursuing a mutual knowledge of each other which is ever more genuine. Love, through struggles and toil, is moving towards a new stage. And at the end of its journey, it will be able to know the peace of the evening.”*<sup>4</sup>

### **Being the Sacrament of God’s Love**

Finally, we have been able to recognise that this desire for the absolute, which inhabited the love of one for the other and which was never totally satisfied, was a call made to both to seek God together. We also discover that this intimate and profound communion does not distance the couple from others, but opens it to the world, that this gift of communion is not only an alliance of the two of them with Christ, but that it pushes them towards all those around them and who expect a visible sign from them, that is the sacrament of another Love, which they could not otherwise recognise.

*“Those who have not known the true experience of love, often see in it the worst danger: the couple will be a prison for the lovers who, now indifferent to their fellow men, will be lost for the great human tasks. In fact, true love, by awakening numb hearts, makes them intensely able to share the pains and joys of the whole world.”*<sup>5</sup>

*“The taste of the absolute is not absent from any human being [...] in some and in others it is mixed with the very substance of their souls. That is what makes man distinct from animals, and infinitely superior. And nothing amongst the goods of the earth, can, by definition, satiate this taste for the absolute. [...]*

*What advice to give [to these men and women who burn at this fire]? Let them believe rather in the existence of this absolute and in the possibility of reaching it. But let them give up hope of expecting it from a human being.*

*Is it not therefore an invitation for them to neglect everything that is not God, and in particular love, to see in the latter only a misleading promise? No, it is not misleading, but the promise he makes, that his deepest raison d’être is to do, it is not he who can accomplish it, but rather God, for whom he is the messenger. More than the messenger in fact, the “sacrament” in the Christian sense of the word: in*

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

*Christian marriage, conjugal love, put in a state of grace, not only speaks in the name of the Lord, but also contains and gives the love of God.”<sup>6</sup>*

### **Excerpt from Chapter 4: The Sacrament of Marriage**

#### **1. THE CONTRIBUTION OF FATHER CAFFAREL TO THE REFLECTION ON THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE**

In 1981, when he was no longer the Spiritual Counsellor to the Movement of Equipes Notre-Dame, Father Caffarel declared:

*"I have been struggling over the years trying to have a better understanding of what the Sacrament of Marriage is. I have said, and I repeat again, more than ever, that it is the Covenant between Christ and the couple. And to further clarify, I would add: Christ is present with the couple.”<sup>7</sup>*

The following extracts are from essays written by Father Caffarel after 1946, in two special issues of the *L'Anneau d'Or* magazine, published in 1963 and 1964, and entirely written by Father Caffarel, and from an 1981 interview.

#### **A. The “Mystery of the Couple,” the Union of Christ and the Church**

Chapter 5 of St Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians is a fundamental reference. Paul draws the analogy between the husband and the wife’s relationship and the relationship between Christ and the Church. Marriage is an image through which God wants to show the union of Christ with the Church. But the union of marriage, a sacred reality is not only the image of the mystery of Christ and of the Church, it is of itself “a mystery,” since it is part of the union of Christ and the Church and is enlivened by the it. This mystery—the union of Christ and his Church—is not in an extrinsic connection, since Christ and the Church are organically linked. *"[Marriage] shares the nature, the life, and the character of this mystery. [Marriage] is supported, understood, nurtured, and transfigured by this great union of Christ and the Church.”<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128-129

<sup>7</sup> *L'Esprit Saint âme du couple*, interview of Father CAFFAREL by Jean ALLEMAND, in the supplement of the Teams Letter n. 40, 2nd Trimester 1981.

<sup>8</sup> « Ce mystère est grand par rapport au Christ à l'Église », (*"This mystery is great in relation to Christ and the Church,"*) *L'Anneau d'Or*, special issue, « Le mariage, ce grand Sacrement », (*"Marriage, that Great Sacrament"*), n° 111-112, May-August 1963 (text already published in 1962, in *L'Anneau d'Or*, n° 107).

The expression “*Church cell*” (a cell of the Church) reflects the couple’s place in the Body of Christ: a basic, ordinary cell, “*germinative, generative, the smallest, but the most fundamental of the ecclesial body*”. Each cell contains all the specific characteristics of the entire church body. The mystery of the conjugal life is expressed in the *sacrament*. This term refers both to the act that inaugurates or *consecrates* the state of life, – and the state of life itself.

### **The Grace of the Sacrament**

The sacrament is an act of Christ who marries the spouses, and they serve him as ministers.

*“The Lord himself takes care of this human union, this fragile love. In their everyday combat, against all the forces that will threaten their intimacy, the spouses will be supported by another force, the very one that supports worlds in space, because it is also the creative force of their will and of their love.”*<sup>9</sup>

This sacramental grace can be broken down into:

\* the *grace of healing* and cleansing of wounded love and carnal lust, leading to the abandonment of selfishness...

\* the *grace of transfiguration*: a renunciation of oneself, making sacrifices for each other; until death and resurrection, which is the rule of Christian love.

*“The couple that accepts the charity of Christ will, day by day, die to greed and to sin in order to come back to a new life that, step by step, will reach all parts of their existence.”*<sup>10</sup>

\* the *grace of fertility*: the meaning of procreation goes beyond normal instinct; it gives to the “one flesh” of marriage the new value of “*giving children to God*.” *“The grace of Marriage ‘gives them the heart of God, the hands of God to fashion this masterpiece day by day: a child, like his Child.’”*<sup>11</sup> *“Marriage is above all a sacrament of unity. All the graces God gives, work together uniting the couple forming a ‘togetherness’—where father, mother and children, are united in love.”*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> « Le sacrement de mariage », *L’Anneau d’Or*, n° 27-28, May-August 1949.

<sup>10</sup> « Image et mystère », (*“Image and Mystery”*), *L’Anneau d’Or*, special issue « Le mariage, ce grand Sacrement », n° 111-112, May-August 1963.

<sup>11</sup> « Le sacrement de mariage », (*“The Sacrament of Marriage”*), *L’Anneau d’Or*, n° 27-28, May-August 1949.

<sup>12</sup> « Place du mariage dans le plan de Dieu », (*“The Place of Marriage in God’s Plan”*), a typewritten text, Archives Équipes Notre-Dame, undated.



## Offering to Christ :

In response to Christ's approach, marriage is also the active response from the couple, in offering their unity as a gift to Christ.

It is in working together by the strength of that same love: giving oneself to one's spouse, both physically and spiritually, and to one's children as they grow.

It is a commitment for life, *"Even though we are sinners."*

It is a consecrated life, constantly turning to God in praise or seeking forgiveness.

The "consecrated" home is a place of Divine worship. The human part in this worship is the couple's *continuous desire to look back on their joys, sorrows, works, loves, - love. The faith of those spouses who ask God to unite them must go so far.*"<sup>13</sup>

## Understanding the Mystery — the Depths of Human Love

*The Mystery of Intimacy.* It is a matter of achieving unity at all levels, in the intellect, in the heart and in our daily activities. *"It is not only the sexual intimacy, so human and worldly as it appears, which brings about this union of our bodies with the body of Christ."*<sup>14</sup>

*The Mystery of shared suffering,* or that which is suffered by one or the other. Through *"Humble acceptance, love and pain, love and sacrifice, love and redemption are linked."*<sup>15</sup>

*The Mystery of Glory.* The joys of love are images of the deep joy that links Christ and the Church.

In 1963, Father Caffarel analysed the Sacrament of Marriage from the angle of symbolism:

*"The husband is the image of Christ and the bride is seen as the Church: the father gives a glimpse of the Divine fatherhood and the mother the fertile motherhood of the Church. The children, the family community, the home, the meals are all symbols, revealing the many aspects and various elements of the union of Christ with the Church."*<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> « Le sacrement de mariage », *L'Anneau d'Or*, n° 27-28, May-August 1949.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> « Symbolisme du mariage », (*"The Symbolism of Marriage"*), *L'Anneau d'Or*, Special Issue « Le mariage, ce grand Sacrement », n° 111-112, May-August 1963.

Let us consider some aspects of this context. Conjugal love is a 'symbol', in that the encounter reveals to one and to the other its incompleteness; with each of them missing the presence of God and His infinite love.

*"Conjugal love, when it is genuine and reached through faith, is more than a reflection of Divine love: it is an initiation to such love."*<sup>17</sup>

*"The laws of Christian marriage: unity, indissolubility, fertility, hierarchy within the couple, mirror precisely the union of Christ and the Church, and give the Church a strong argument to define and explain them."*<sup>18</sup>

A theme dear to Father Caffarel is the "hierarchy" within the couple. More than half a century later, we are a little surprised by his insistence on the authority of man in his role as head of the family. If today it may seem out of date, we cannot ignore the reflection of our Founder on this subject. Father Caffarel developed this theme on several occasions, he wrote notably on the subject:

*"The husband is the chief and the wife must submit to him. Saint Paul is formal (1 Cor 11 ; Ep 5). [...] If the man understands that he is, in the home, the image of Christ, spouse of the Church and following Christ's example, then his supremacy, far from flattering his vanity or authorising his will for power, makes him understand that he must take great care of his wife and must not hesitate before the making any sacrifice for her." The wife's submission is "the will to cooperate for the good of the home and to open up like the Church, of which she is the image, to the life-giving influence of Christ coming to her through this living sacrament that is her husband."*<sup>19</sup>

Other elements of the symbolism are conjugal dialogue, forgiveness, when sin is at work in the couple, fertility, the child with the father and the mother's hearts as parents; in the end, a *community of love* (a concept found in in Vatican II's *Gaudium et spes*), an image of the Church.

It will be a question of living the mystery by seeing in faith what these symbols represent at the very heart of the life of the couple. This in a back-and-forth movement: the human father turns to the Divine Father and Divine paternity instructs human paternity. And we must always go beyond the symbolic dimension by discovering the reality of the gift of God in the intimacy of the union: each

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> « Ce mystère est grand par rapport au Christ à l'Église », (*"This mystery is great in relation to Christ and the Church,"*) *L'Anneau d'Or*, special issue, « Le mariage, ce grand Sacrement », (*"Marriage, that Great Sacrament"*), n° 111-112, May-August 1963 (text already published in 1962, in *L'Anneau d'Or*, n° 107).

<sup>19</sup> « Symbolisme du mariage », (*"The Symbolism of Marriage"*), *L'Anneau d'Or*, Special Issue « Le mariage, ce grand Sacrement », n° 111-112, May-August 1963.

member of the couple then gains the quality of living the *Sacrament* of the presence of God.

### **Excerpt from Chapter 5: *Morality and Ethics in Conjugal, Family and Social Life***

The main idea of Father Caffarel and Teams of Our Lady is to reposition couples between the two axes of formation or training that is necessary to understand the phenomena that impact couples and that generate Christian initiation; and the perfection that places the couple on the path to holiness by relying on the spiritual approach that is essential to nourish the couple on their moral journey. In his 1987 Chantilly speech, Father Caffarel expanded his reflection on the Teams of Our Lady's mission, on where they were successful, what they had achieved and where they were less so.

Father Caffarel retraced the reflection on the Movement by situating its action between the two axes of formation and perfection. This last notion is better understood today when we say that marriage for couples is a path of "holiness." This perfection is then brought back to its true value with its dose of sins. It is not the path for the few, who would like to call themselves "perfect."

*"And then there was an explosion, an unexpected expansion to the four corners of the globe. And then there were our great Gatherings, particularly in Lourdes and Rome. And I remember that in 1959 the following question arose for consideration. 'The Teams of Our Lady, are they a movement of initiation to the spirituality of the couple and the family? But, if a movement of initiation, one leaves it when one has been initiated, a child does not spend the rest of it's life in the nursery.' And, in effect, we were conscious of the danger of the Teams of Our Lady being a crèche for adults. Or, on the other hand, is our movement seeking perfection, and the response which came out of the Gathering in Rome was that the Teams should be both a movement of initiation and a movement of seeking perfection. It is simpler; a movement of initiation, and a movement seeking perfection, this means finding rules which permit the members to advance along the road. That's how it is. So let us make a resume of the elements of the founding charism as they emerged in the course of these years? To my mind there are seven:*

*Firstly, marriage is a work of God, and is God's masterpiece.*

*Secondly, marriage has a soul and it is love, and to neglect love is to condemn marriage,*

*Thirdly, men and women cannot be faithful to love without help from Christ, this is why he invented the sacrament of marriage; we must delve deeply into it.*

*Fourthly, married Christians, like other people, like monks are called to be holy, which was quite an original idea. The Vatican Council had not yet taken place, and it was at the Council that great insistence was put on the vocation to holiness of the laity.*

*Fifthly, conjugal life has very great riches but can also be very demanding.*

*Sixthly, it is necessary, in fact indispensable, to develop a spirituality of the couple, which cannot be the spirituality of a celibate or of a monk.*

*Seventhly, this spirituality can only be lived with the help of a movement to give direction to the couples thinking and a framework for their lives.*

*This is what has been perceived regarding the founding charism; I will tell you now what has been less well perceived:*

*Firstly, having been made very enthusiastic by these young couples so filled with love, I thought love would be the great factor in their achieving perfection, and that I should say to them "Be faithful to love." I forgot that Christ proposes two means to those who wish to seek perfection: love and self-sacrifice. God wishes the Christian to be perfect, the couple to be perfect, he wishes every human being to become perfect, they will only become so by being faithful to love and self-sacrifice, that is to say, by giving themselves and forgetting themselves. Love and self-sacrifice are the two sides of the coin, no love without self-sacrifice, and a self-sacrifice which is not a self-sacrifice made out of love is a self-sacrifice which is impossible in practice. And in reflecting on this I understood that the Lord had invented marriage as the great means of developing love and as the great means of making self-sacrifice possible. And I understood that self-sacrifice cannot be merely a side line, that true self-sacrifice takes over, it never ceases to love, to love permanently with the attitude "for you" and never with the attitude "for me". To walk on the roads of the earth, the Lord gave us two legs, to walk on the roads to holiness, the Lord gave us two means, love and self-sacrifice. For I realised that I had invited couples to hop on one foot to reach their destination, and one does not get very far along the road hopping on one foot, one must advance on two feet, putting one foot after the other. And I am not so sure that this penetrated fully into the consciousness of the Teams of Our Lady. Marriage, a great means of love, and a great means of self-sacrifice precisely in order to make it possible for there to be love..."<sup>20</sup>*

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<sup>20</sup> Henri CAFFAREL, Conference given to the European Regional Responsible Couples, Chantilly, May 3, 1987, Archives Équipes Notre-Dame.

## A. The Christian Couple on Mission in the Church and in the World

What then is this source that comes from Father Caffarel, or rather that passed through him, and gave Teams of Our Lady their specific character and charisma? It is the intimate link between spirituality and mission, interior inspiration and effective commitment and involvement in the Church and in society.

These two elements that constitute the common vocation of the movement. Deep down, there is this primordial conviction: spiritual life is not a domain reserved for a Christian elite who would like to make it their privilege and speciality. It is open to all through the Holy Spirit received in baptism: and for all, married men and women, it also has its source in the sacrament of marriage. We must seek methods or ways of sanctification elsewhere: the 'yes' of the conjugal commitment is the source of a holy life, of a life as a disciple of Jesus Christ, because this 'yes' has been seized forever in God's holy Alliance through the sacrament of marriage so that the couple's mission in the Church and in society is rooted in an existence of men and women who live and experience this holy Alliance. No need to multiply the commitments: the primordial commitment is the conjugal relationship, it is the life of the couple and the family, it is that path marked by moments of happiness and joy and also by hardships and difficulties.

But we must go even further: from the simple Christian existence to the existence that is a sign, that makes visible, both in the Church and in society, what God, what Christ, what the Holy Spirit does with us when we allow ourselves to be worked upon and transformed by their presence in us. This is what constitutes the mission of the committed Christian couple, and this mission can be called prophetic because it attests, through the existence of married men and women, to the victory of Christ's love over everything that resists this love *"that believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."* (1 Co 13:7-8). Father Caffarel evokes this question by speaking of the apostolate of couples and of marriage:

*"The union of man and woman is, through the sacrament of marriage, incorporated into the Mystical Body where it becomes a living and active organ. Its goal is the same as that of the whole Body: the intensive and extensive growth of the latter. But the couple have their very own way of cooperating with this growth, that constitutes its specific, irreplaceable apostolic mission. Due to favourable circumstances (sociological, psychological, religious) today, numerous Christian*

*couples reach a stage of human and spiritual maturity that has never before been reached.*

*If the Church made a large-scale effort to help the approximately 120 million Christian couples throughout the world to understand their apostolic mission, to prepare them for it and to help them fulfil it, we would see an unprecedented fact in the history of the apostolate: an impressive contribution of couples giving the Church powerful human and supernatural energies of conjugal love and of the marriage sacrament, and all this with extraordinary enthusiasm, because they have discovered that they are not only receptive subjects, beneficiaries of the Church's apostolate, but are also acting, dynamic subjects.*

*At a time when the global population is growing at a dizzying rate, where the clergy in almost all parts of the world are seriously inadequate in number, where in numerous countries priests' actions are hindered by persecution, this massive rising up of Christian families, cells of the Church, both "houses of prayer" and homes of apostolate, allows us to hope for a prodigious penetration of evangelical influence in a world where materialism threatens to overwhelm it.*

*This call made by the Church to couples would be in keeping with the logic of the great calls of the most recent popes to the apostolate of the laity; it would be like their extension, their logical outcome and their coronation."<sup>21</sup>*

This aspect that aims at the Christian couple in the Church and in the world could constitute a document in and of itself, which is why we are only alluding to it here, because it seems important that this element of "the mission" that constitutes a moral commitment inherent in marriage not be hidden. It is furthermore evoked in other chapters of our work.

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<sup>21</sup> Henri CAFFAREL, Conference given September 8, 1965, typewritten notes, Archives Équipes Notre-Dame.

## 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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