

# BULLETIN



## OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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ASSOCIATION DES AMIS DU PÈRE CAFFAREL  
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## EDITORIAL

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



Dear Family of the Association of Friends of Father Caffarel,

We are writing to you a few days before our departure for the International College, which brings together all the Super-Region and Region leaders of Teams of Our Lady, as well as the Spiritual Counsellors, in the city of Lyon, France. This will be our first international college as International Leaders, and it has a very special meaning for us, because it is being held in the city where our founder was born. Visiting the Basilica of Saint-Martin d'Ainay, where he was baptised, walking the streets he walked, seeing the places where he went to school, brings us closer to him, to experiences that undoubtedly influenced the maturing of his faith and enabled him to have this encounter with the Lord, the beginning of a vocation for which we can only be grateful.

And we feel particularly grateful for the prophetic voice of hope he placed in marriage, which, in this Jubilee Year, resonates so powerfully. For us, this is of particular importance, and it is one of the reasons why we have chosen his original texts to constitute the next study topic that we, the International Leading Team, propose to all Team members around the world. We find ourselves faced with the immense opportunity to delve to the roots of the profound thought that revolutionised the concept and ideal of the Church marriage sacrament and which today remains more alive than ever. Teams members cannot be content with rereading a few sentences or paragraphs isolated from their context, which are based on excerpts that we highlight at our convenience. If we want to be faithful to our vocation as Christian couples, we must be well prepared and able to explain the richness of our sacrament. We may be mistaken and think that we have dealt with this theme many times in the history of Teams. But we assure you that working

with these texts for a whole year will bring us to the deepest roots of our marital vocation.

And this, in turn, will allow us to influence the direction of this second year: *Called to live in communion with our spouse*. A life of full marital communion strengthens us for our mission as a Christian couple in the world around us. We feel stronger as a couple to be a sign of God's presence in a world that needs us. And personally, we feel strengthened as leaders to serve this greater love for others to which we have been called.

We invite you to welcome with respect and total admiration these texts, which are suitable for everyone, from newlyweds to those already well into their married life. Likewise, this will help Spiritual Counsellors and spiritual guides penetrate the very heart of the couple. We must be aware of the language of Father Caffarel's time, which cannot be betrayed, and of his style, with its constant references to French literature, which may require additional effort in our reading. It is true that this will not allow for a quick last-minute look, but it is no less true that it would be a real waste not to carry out a level-headed study of the theme, to savour it, to ruminate on it, to hoard it. His texts, as well as all the proposals for this year's meetings, will make this theme a true time of review, enhancement and awareness of our reality as a Christian couple, which must lead us to strongly cement our mission, wherever each of us carry it out.

We ask you, the members of the Association, to encourage your fellow Team members to learn about this study topic, so that it may be an instrument that nourishes and strengthens us. Father Caffarel, "prophet of marriage," can truly help us, in this year 2025-2026, to renew our "yes," to better understand the resources of human love illuminated by our Lord Jesus Christ, while granting us new graces for our sacrament of marriage. In doing so, as Father Caffarel wrote, the study of this theme will also help us grow in our love of God.

In conclusion, please believe that our marriage sacrament is one of the forces that allows us to proclaim hope to couples and families. We thank the Teams of Our Lady movement for allowing us to experience our sacrament within this movement that supports and encourages us.

In communion with all of you,

Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer & Alberto Pérez  
International Responsible Couple of the Teams of Our Lady Movement,  
Valencia, July 3, 2025



The Basilica of Saint-Martin d'Ainay, Lyon (France),  
where Father Caffarel was baptised

## In Service

*News from the Friends of Father Caffarel  
A Word from the Roman Vice-Postulator  
of the Cause for Canonisation*

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



### **Father Caffarel and Contemplative Prayer**

In his book *Being Present to God: Letters on Prayer*,<sup>1</sup> Father Caffarel gives a very moving description of Saint Benoît Labre praying.

*"We see the saint praying, arms crossed, head slightly inclined, eyelids lowered. An impression of intense reverence emerges from it, we feel Benoît Labre completely foreign to the world around him, completely withdrawn into himself, the doors of his senses carefully closed. What is happening in this intimate sanctuary? This, of course, escapes our gaze. We can, however, sense its secret, from this indefinable halo of tenderness, of humility which envelops the saint's person, from his face as if lit from within. This man's heart, without a doubt, is experiencing something very important, very enviable. And we are led to kneel before Benoît praying, because we are certain that the God who lives in his soul is speaking words to him which make him blessed, words very sweet to hear."*

How can we not think of those who were struck by looking at Father Caffarel, kneeling before the tabernacle in the Troussures chapel: his eyes mostly closed, his hands wide open on his knees, perfectly motionless, we saw him from behind, but there was the weight of a presence there, God inhabited him. We have no illustration of it. But the photo of a bookmark of the prayer

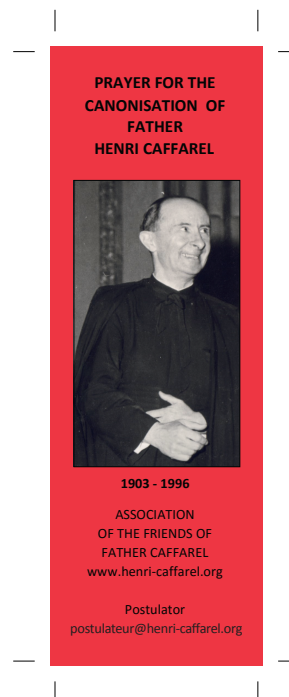
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<sup>1</sup> Henri Caffarel, *Being Present to God: Letters on Prayer*, Alba House, US, 1983.

for the canonisation shows him in the splendour of his black cassock: his face radiates joy, his eyes shine because he receives in the depths of his heart Pope John XXIII's words of blessing for the Teams of Our Lady movement. How can we not think of *"words which make him blessed, words very sweet to hear."* God speaks to his servant, who has never ceased to seek his presence.

We can also look at so many couples who radiate this light, we can also admire so many people who, like you and me, struggle on the path to holiness. We are very poor, but we seek the Lord who has won us over! A word from Father Caffarel can encourage us, *"A Christian is someone on the journey, a pilgrim. A Christian is worth what their enthusiasm is worth."*

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



## In Service

*News from the Association of The Friends  
Of Father Caffarel  
Testimonial of Graces received*

*With this testimony sent to us by our friends Rob and Sharla Walsh from the United States, we are inaugurating a new section in the newsletter. Please feel free to send us your testimonials of graces received through the intercession of Father Caffarel.*

Sharla and I would like to share when, we believe, Fr. Caffarel intervened in our lives. We need to celebrate and share events that we, as members, feel in our hearts are occurring due to the intercession of our Founder. Fr. Caffarel truly speaks to us today! He intercedes before the throne of God. The veil between Heaven and earth is very thin. We need to be in constant communication with our Saints and especially, Our Blessed Mother and our



Founder of this beautiful Movement. He is ready to help us continually. We only need to ask. **We ask you to contemplate the Canonization Prayer: “You planted deep in the heart of your servant, Henri Caffarel, a fountain of love.....and inspired him with a wonderful capacity to speak of Him.”**

Sharla and I began speaking to Fr. Caffarel daily in about 2003. We developed a deep friendship with him through his writings, especially, *Being Present To God: Letters On Prayer*. We bring our most serious problems to him. We have received miraculous answers to our prayers and want to encourage you to write to the Bulletin to share your stories about Fr. Caffarel. We feel these testimonies will encourage others.

For 9 years, two of our children would not communicate with one another. We prayed during those 9 years for Fr. Caffarel to resolve this relationship. On Fr. Caffarel’s birthday, July 30, 2024, our son and daughter miraculously resolved all differences!

Remember, like Christ, he said, “Come Follow Me”. In fact, these words were put on his grave marker: “VIENS ET SUIS-MOI”

We look forward to your stories of Fr. Caffarel’s intercession in your lives.



Your servants in Christ,  
Rob and Sharla Walsh  
Northwest Region,  
USA Super Region

## In Service

### *Schools of Contemplative Prayer and their development throughout the World*

*Patrice & Sylvie Mathé, Responsible Couple of  
the Pilot Team of the Schools of Contemplative  
Prayer in the Spirit of Father Caffarel,  
For the France-Luxembourg-Switzerland  
Responsible Team.*



Since 2020, the Teams of Our Lady movement has launched Schools of Contemplative Prayer in the spirit of Father Henri Caffarel in several countries, and these schools are gradually growing in the movement's various international regions.

With this short article, we would like to bear witness to the providential development of these schools.

### ***Some Essential Historical Steps***

The weeks of prayer led by Father Henri Caffarel and his team at Troussures aimed to bring a deeper understanding of contemplative prayer to all those who came to participate.

In the years from 1970 to 1990, Father Henri Caffarel invited those who attended the weeks of contemplative prayer in Troussures to lead the transmission of this kind of prayer in their towns through "schools of contemplative prayer."

He supported the ongoing work of these schools of contemplative prayer for many years. Given the number and variety of schools and unable to provide a common direction, he preferred to let each follow its own path.

In 2020, within the Teams of Our Lady movement, a call emerged in response to the international COVID crisis: a call to launch schools of contemplative prayer in the spirit of the founder, Father Henri Caffarel. This development began simultaneously in France and French-speaking Africa. From 2022, the development spread to Spain, Poland, Italy, Canada, Guadeloupe, and recently to Colombia.

### ***Our Reading of Events***

*"Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desires for us. Whether we realise it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we thirst for Him."* (cf. Saint Augustine, *Eighty-Three Different Questions*, Chapter 64).

These schools of contemplative prayer stem from the Lord's thirst to encounter us, a thirst that deeply inhabited Father Henri Caffarel. To couples who asked him how to live a path of holiness in their marital vocation, he replied, *"Let us seek together,"* and he immediately spoke to them about contemplative prayer.

The first schools of contemplative prayer in the 1970s to the 1990s, were inspired by Father Henri Caffarel's specific charism: that of teaching contemplative prayer to the laity. Since the 2020s, the schools launched by the Teams of Our Lady movement have continued to draw on the teachings of Father Henri Caffarel to teach people how to pray.

### ***What are the Fruits of these Schools?***

We are touched by the growing strength of the testimonials of those who have attended a school of contemplative prayer. These witnesses demonstrate in a touching way how much the Lord desires to have a lasting and profound relationship with them, with each person following a unique path adapted to their particular story.

It is a thirst for the experience of God that grows within the witnesses and is transmitted to those who listen to them. This thirst is often accompanied by the question, "Why didn't I learn this sooner?"

Indeed, in the best-case scenario, it takes a few years for a life of contemplative prayer to take root; it is better to start sooner than later.

One could also object that it is not for everyone. Here is what St. Francis de Sales said 400 years ago, *“Moreover, the world will say that I take it for granted that those I address have the gift of mental prayer, which nevertheless everyone does not possess, (...) Doubtless it is true that I have assume this, and it is also true that everyone has not the gift of mental prayer, but it is a gift which almost everyone can obtain, even the most ignorant, provided they are under a good director, and will take as much pains as the thing deserves to acquire it.”*

We willingly rank among the *“most ignorant”*; we had a good director in Father Henri Caffarel, and we have received this gift and hope to remain faithful to this work of the Lord in us, in our couples, our families, our work, our apostolate.

### ***The Mission of Transmitting Contemplative Prayer***

Fundamentally, as lay people, we are sensitive to brothers' and sisters' thirst, to those who have not received the gift of contemplative prayer. Why should we be the only ones to have received this invitation to experience God? Why should we keep this treasure to ourselves?

The Church's teaching on contemplative prayer is both very rich and very little known.

For 10 years, we have been delving into the teachings of Father Henri Caffarel and after 10 years, we are still discovering a mystery whose transmission is infinitely beyond us.

Modern people no longer know that they have a heart. They believe themselves to be thinking machines, and what is more, in competition with artificial intelligence. They have forgotten the deep source within themselves of true intelligence, will, and freedom.

The doctrine on contemplative prayer is beautiful, but it can only be transmitted by witnesses, faithful to their life of prayer and faithful to the living tradition of the Church. The Teams of Our Lady movement, enriched by the treasure left by Father Henri Caffarel, and also by the Teams' members who practice this essential Endeavour, is organising the development of schools of contemplative prayer, with two distinct levels of discovery and deepening, in order to offer anyone who so desires a Church path to encounter the Lord in contemplative prayer.

We give thanks to the Lord for this wonderful mission, and if you wish to contribute, you can register your interest by writing an email to [ecoraison@equipes-notre-dame.fr](mailto:ecoraison@equipes-notre-dame.fr)

### **A Testimonial**

To conclude, here is a testimonial from William, who attended a school in the form of a five-day retreat.

*"I arrived at this retreat with a heavy, very heavy heart. My life had become unbearable, I was going around in circles and didn't know how to get out of it. It's simple, everything in my life was dark. Besides, I didn't come because I was drawn to contemplative prayer, a word unknown to me then, but simply because I felt the urgent need to take a break.*

*I wanted to rest, but I must admit, I hadn't really come for a retreat...*

*As of the very first evening, we were invited to lay down our burdens with a symbolic gesture...*

*Hey, would Jesus be interested in my problems? But then why such a burden?*

*I was told that He was there, that He was knocking at the door of my heart, and that if I heard Him, if I opened it, He would stay with me... The next day, I heard that He loved me just as I am. And so, my heart began to open...a little... Then, during the guided contemplative prayers, I agreed to let Him in, to let myself be welcomed by His Love, because if I open the door, ultimately, it is He who welcomes me more than I welcome Him. If I inject a little bit of "goodwill," He does the rest.*

*And the miracle happened: He seized my heart, He allowed me to truly encounter Him for the first time in my life. My despair turned into Hope, my sadness turned into Joy! My problems were still there, but a new light shone in my darkness.*

*I discovered this inner prayer that is contemplative prayer, and as the days went by, I also understood that contemplative prayer is the way to maintain and develop this beautiful relationship I had begun with Him. Contemplative prayer is the path to Hope, because nothing is impossible for Him, even if the worries of this earth seem insurmountable.*

*Another miracle happened during the retreat, a very concrete one, no one can doubt it: my son, who had taken a path of perdition, whom I had neither seen nor heard from for 8 years, sent me a message asking if he could*

*come see me!!! My heart was deeply moved. Thank you, Jesus!!! Above all, stay with me, above all, hold my hand tightly so that I don't let go of You. Continue to warm my heart and give it Hope. My life is not a finality, because You are at the end of the road and, this road, You invite me to walk it with You!*

*I hadn't come for a retreat, but I know now that it was You who beckoned me there. In my distress, You came looking for me... I know that You were waiting for me, You simply wanted to tell me, in my despair, that You loved me and that, like Zacchaeus, I was important to You. From now on, I want to learn to let myself go, to let You be the guide in these precious moments that will be these times of contemplative prayer, these times of a true Encounter with You."*

Fraternally in Christ,  
*Patrice & Sylvie Mathé, Responsible Couple of  
the Pilot Team of the Schools of Prayer,  
In the Spirit of Father Caffarel,  
For the France-Luxembourg-Switzerland  
Responsible Team*

## **Testimonials about the Schools of Prayer In French-speaking Africa**

**Solange & Frédéric NGOUMBA-NZAMBA  
Gabon Region**



Although we have been Team members since 2009, we now recognise that an Endeavour we had long neglected is contemplative prayer. In reality, we did not really know how to practice it according to Father Caffarel's teachings.

Three years ago, we were called to become a Corresponding Couple for the Schools of Contemplative Prayer for the Gabon Region. On this occasion, our responsible couple put us in touch with Françoise & Luc DJOKA, Corresponding Couple for the Schools of Contemplative Prayer of the Super-

Region of French-speaking Africa (SRAF). Thanks to them, we were able to follow the "Discovering Prayer" programme, and since then, we have been experiencing it in our faith.

At first, we were a little intimidated: we thought that contemplative prayer was reserved for "more advanced" souls, religious people, or those with a special gift for prayer.

But this journey gradually opened us to another reality: that of a God who simply waits for us to come to Him, in the silence and truth of our hearts.

We learned to sit down, to "waste time" with God, to silence our inner turmoil.

It's not always easy: every morning, after our marital prayer, my wife and I do our contemplative prayer, even though our days are often very busy. But we've come to understand that the most important thing isn't to succeed in our prayer, but to be faithful to it.

Over time, this silent contemplative prayer has become a much-anticipated experience. It has changed our view of God, but also of our relationship as a couple.

In contemplative prayer, we discover a patient and gentle God, who teaches us to love ourselves mercifully, and therefore to love one another better.

Contemplative prayer has also brought us closer spiritually: each of us prays alone, which deeply nourishes our marital journey.

This "Discovery" journey has been a gateway to a richer inner life for us.

We warmly thank Martine Cousin and the guides who introduced us with simplicity and depth.

In turn, we have begun to share these teachings with our Team members in the Gabon Region, so that other couples can also discover this precious source of spiritual life.

Solange & Frédéric Ngoumba-Nzamba  
Gabon Region, Libreville B Sector, Libreville 27

**Juste & Léa KPOGBA**  
**Benin Region**



We were very surprised and curious when the Benin Regional Couple, Benita & Pedro SEKLOKA, called us to take charge of the School of Contemplative Prayer in the Region, since we had only just found out about contemplative prayer when we joined the Teams movement. Boosted by Benita and her husband's dynamism, we immediately came into contact with Françoise and Luc DJOKA, in charge of the School of Contemplative Prayer in the Super-Region of French-speaking Africa (SRAF). Very early on, a training retreat was agreed upon with the Regional couple under the direction of the DJOKA couple. This forty-eight-hour retreat actually took place from Friday, April 5 to Sunday, April 7, 2024, at the monastery of the Poor Claires. The topic was the School of Contemplative Prayer and five other couples and Father Chirac DODO, Spiritual Counsellor in charge of contemplative prayer in the region participated.

This retreat allowed us to immerse ourselves in Henri Caffarel's method, which was very interesting and accessible. Far from being purely theoretical, this Endeavour requires regular, daily practice to better equip us for the training of the Region sectors entrusted to us.

The practice of contemplative prayer has become a daily struggle for our couple so as not to miss this heart-to-heart with the Lord. We admit that it is not always easy to honour this appointment given our many daily commitments. Léa and I practice this spiritual exercise, each according to our daily schedules, and at least once a week as a couple. The results are enormous, both personally and as a couple. It can be said that it has further strengthened our intimacy, limited our quarrels, and always reminds us of our wedding day before the altar of the Lord. It leads us deeply into the knowledge of the Word of God (at the heart of contemplative prayer) and closeness to Him.



**Juste:** With the practice of contemplative prayer, I offer myself more openly to placing myself under God's gaze just as I am, with all my wounds and sins. Moreover, I am gradually learning to refrain from commenting on the faults and failings of others and to better control my anger.

**Léa:** Like Juste, amongst other things, contemplative prayer helps me place myself under the loving gaze of the Holy Trinity, and better live the Gospels, as well as having a particular devotion to the Holy Spirit, master of silence. It increasingly helps me to better cultivate silence, especially interior silence.

However, practicing this Endeavour is not without its challenges. They are many and varied:

- Difficulty observing the holy hour
- Irregularity in daily practice
- Distractions and disturbances that sometimes creep in during contemplative prayer

We bless the Lord who uses this Endeavour to remind us what is essential.

Juste & Léa Kpogba



## FROM FATHER CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

### ***Cahier sur l'oraison (Notebooks on Contemplative Prayer)*** ***n° 73***

**"He looked upon him and loved him..."**

The Gospels mention Christ's gaze several times. Andrew introduces his brother Simon to Jesus: Jesus "*looked at him*" (Jn 1:42). Peter has just denied his Master, and Jesus, "*turning around, fixed his gaze on Peter,*" and Peter wept bitterly (Lk 22:61). A virtuous man asks Christ for the way to eternal life and "*Jesus looked at him and loved him,*" remarks Mark (10:21), who has the gift of brief and evocative phrases.

Love and the gaze are linked. One must look to love, but also love to truly look, "One sees clearly only with the heart."

Nothing reveals love better than a gaze. The one who is thus gazed upon is not mistaken; their entire being—I am speaking of their innermost being, their secret self—awakens, quivers, marvels, soars, and lives, under the shock of this loving gaze. A new, unknown, ardent, intense life arises within them: the loving gaze generates love.

In someone's loving gaze upon us, the most marvellous thing is not only what, in this gaze, we discover of the soul and love of this other person, but what we learn about ourselves. This loving gaze is indeed a "mirror-in-which-we-see-ourselves," according to Lanza del Vasto's apt phrase.

While there are gazes in which we see ourselves as contemptible, a negligible quantity, in the gaze of love we discover ourselves lovable—in the strong sense of the word: capable of generating love in the heart of another

person. Such a mirror informs us about ourselves, not in the manner of an inanimate and impassive mirror, but through the joy, wonder, love, and impulse that have awakened in this being at the sight of our deepest self, and which its gaze reveals to us.

And it is very impressive to discover oneself worthy of being loved, capable of making love spring forth in a heart, like a spring from a rock. How can one not be reconciled with oneself? Love, esteem, self-respect, these feelings, if not unknown until then, at least barely hinted at—and very often distorted—now, surging within us, they suddenly make us aware of our dignity. And we now know that we have a reason for being, since we *exist* for someone else.

But there is something even more admirable. When this gaze of love is that of a Christian who, in the light of Christ, discerns, in our secret self, our soul as a child of God, our eternal name—the one that God has spoken since time immemorial, which gave birth to us in his divine thought before bringing us into existence—this gaze then has this infinitely moving quality that it is completely transparent to God's own gaze upon us, in it we discover the kind of love with which we are loved by God.

I am quite sure that God would want for every being to encounter such a gaze at least one day in their life.

But even those who love us most cannot always be in the "act of loving." Their loving gazes—and I speak especially of the soul's gaze—are privileged and intermittent moments. When it comes to God, we can be certain that He is always in the act of loving, and this act, this ardent attention, is a loving presence in our soul. Wonder, too. Yes, God delights in the soul of His child, as astonishing as this may seem, for in it, the soul, His gaze reaches its very essence: the eternal divine name that is the soul's. And this loving gaze of God, far more than any human gaze, is effective: it creates holiness and communicates divine life.

Yet, for it to produce its effects, the soul must welcome it by opening itself to Him in its depths through an act of faith, that is the faith of the person, who recognises the love of their God, an active love, love in action. And if this faith were ardent and not erratic, the loving gaze of God on the soul would not cease to make it grow in holiness, just as the sun makes the harvests ripen.

To pray is to become aware of God's loving gaze upon oneself, to open oneself through faith to His creative, regenerative, divinising, and beatifying action. Then God's love, charity, arises in the soul.

To pray well, one must believe in this loving gaze upon oneself.

"He looked upon him and loved him."

## ***Cahier sur l'oraison (Notebooks on Contemplative Prayer)*** **n° 200**

### **It is no longer I who pray...**

I understand very well the feeling that made you write to me, *"My daily prayer seems derisory to me. I cannot imagine that this stammering prayer of a tiny creature interests the perfect and infinite God."* You have a keen awareness of the creature's misery and of the Majesty of God: this is a precious and essential view of faith; grace is certainly not foreign to it. But there is another view of faith that I would like you to grasp, to give you a high idea of your daily contemplative prayer, however miserable it may seem to you.

Let us first take a step back, shall we? Before speaking of your contemplative prayer, let us speak of Christ's contemplative prayer. (Cardinal Pierre de) Bérulle, in a page that I love very much, celebrates the unique character of Jesus Christ's prayer, *"From all eternity, there was indeed an infinitely adorable God, but there was not yet an infinite adorer; there was indeed a God worthy of being infinitely loved and served, but there was no man, nor infinite servant capable of rendering infinite service and love. You are now, O Jesus! this adorer, this man, this servant infinite in power, in quality, in dignity to fully satisfy this duty and to render this divine homage. You are this loving man, adoring and serving the supreme majesty as it is worthy of being loved, served and honoured."*

This text reminds us of Jesus withdrawing into the solitude of the mountains at night to pray. And especially of Calvary, where the perfect adorer offered God perfect worship.

One might ask, Has not the perfect worship of the Son, this prayer of Jesus, rendered human prayer vain, supplanting it definitively?

One can already answer that Christ's prayer, far from dismissing human prayers—all those faltering prayers since the origins of humanity, all those sacrifices of all religions and all times—draws them to itself, incorporates them, and offers them to God, and makes them find in His prayer, and through it, admirable meaning and effectiveness.

But there is an even more marvelous answer. Christ wants His prayer to resound throughout the universe, from the Equatorial bush to the polar ice caps, from the Far East to the Far West. He wants the most humble Christian at prayer to have much more to offer than hesitant words and clumsy sentiments, to have at their disposal the very prayer of the Son of God. He wants all of humanity to be able to take hold of His prayer, make it their own, and present it to God.

There is even more to be said. Jesus Christ not only wants His prayer to be ours, like a possession in our hands, that we can dispose of; He wants it implanted, ingrained in the depths of ourselves, at the root of our being, the soul of our soul, and that we may repeat in all truth, after Saint Paul, *"I live, but it is no longer I..."* I pray, but it is no longer I who pray, it is Christ who prays in me. It is the Spirit of the Son, the Holy Spirit, who makes resound in me the cry of filial love: Abba, Father! Thus, Christ's prayer, far from supplanting humanity's prayer, admirably enhances it.

Just as on Easter night, in the dark church, the flame of the Paschal candle gradually spreads to the multitude of small candles in the hands of the faithful, so Christ, through baptism, wins over people from one place to another, throughout the world, and causes His filial prayer to arise in their souls, from their souls.

The Father recognises His Son in all baptised people; in their prayer, however seemingly insignificant, it is His Son's prayer that the Father hears.

## ***Cahier sur l'oraison (Notebooks on Contemplative Prayer)*** ***n° 16***

### **It is Christ who prays in me...**

At the very beginning of your contemplative prayer, make an act of faith in the mysterious presence of Christ in you, which Scripture assures us, "*You will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.*" (Jn 14:20); "*Christ dwells in your hearts by faith.*" (Eph 3:17).

If Christ is alive in you, He is praying within you. Because for Christ, to live is to pray. So join Him; grasp, make His prayer your own. Or rather—for the terms I have just used place too much emphasis on your own activity—let this prayer seize you, invade you, lift you up, and draw you towards the Father. I do not promise you that you will perceive it; I only ask you to believe in it and, during contemplative prayer, to give and to renew your full adherence to it. Give contemplative prayer room, all the room. May it take hold of every fibre of your being, as fire penetrates wood and makes it incandescent.

To pray is to grant the Christ's request to us, "*Lend me your intelligence, your heart, your whole being, everything in humanity that is capable of becoming a prayer, so that I may bring forth from you the great praise of the Father. Have I come for anything other than to kindle a fire on the earth and for it to spread from one to another, transforming all the trees in the forest into living torches? This fire is my prayer. Consent to the fire.*"

Christ is present in the baptised child as well as in the great mystic. But the life of Christ in the former and the latter is not at the same stage of development. If the prayer of Christ already vibrates in the soul of the newly baptised person, it is only in embryo, a germ of fire. It is throughout our existence, to the very extent of our cooperation, that it intensifies and little by little takes possession of our entire being.

Our Cooperation consists first of all in adhering with the deepest part of our will to Christ's prayer within us. But note the very strong meaning I give to this word "adhere": it does not designate a weak agreement, a half-hearted acquiescence, but a total gift, like a log that surrenders itself to the flame to become fire in turn. Our cooperation also consists in seeking with all our intelligence what Christ's prayer within us is made of, its major components: praise, thanksgiving, offering, intercession... in order to embrace them more perfectly. — You asked me for subjects for meditation, I know of no better.

This prayer of Christ within them, which their faith guarantees them, which their meditation makes them better acquainted with, is not perceived by people of contemplative prayer for a long time. A day comes, however—and it is not necessarily during contemplative prayer—when they discover it in their soul. They then fall silent, afraid of frightening it, as one fears frightening a bird that has come to rest on the windowsill... Then suddenly they realise that it has disappeared, they don't know how, perhaps during a moment of inattention. They are sad. It had been wonderful to find this prayer deep within themselves; they had hoped that they would find it there again, already present in the morning upon waking, and throughout the day when they will finish up their work. Let them not be upset: Christ's prayer is always there, even when we do not perceive it. We must return to it through faith and above all not worry, during contemplative prayer, about experiencing it again. It is a failure in the honour due to God to go to prayer for God's gifts and not for God Himself. The Lord, according to his promise (Jn 14:21), would manifest Himself to us much more often if we were not greedy for His gifts more than for Himself. Doubtless the grace of perceiving Christ's prayer will be renewed. Perhaps even, tamed, this prayer will no longer escape us—but not before we have given up trying to lay hands on the timid bird.

When the soul is perfectly stripped, dead to itself, then it will experience what a Saint Ignatius of Antioch expressed in unforgettable terms in his letter to the Romans, written in the evening of his long apostolic life, on the boat which was taking him to martyrdom, *"My love has been crucified, and there is no fire in me desiring to be fed; but there is within me a water that lives and speaks, saying to me inwardly, Come to the Father."*

## **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

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