

THE BULLETIN



OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

BULLETIN N°28

July 2021

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EDITORIAL

Edgardo & Clarita Bernal Fandiño

*(Responsible Couple in the International
Leading Team of Teams of Our Lady)*



THE *AMORIS LAETITIA* FAMILY YEAR

Dear family of the Association of Friends of Father Caffarel,

As international leaders of the Teams of Our Lady movement, on March 16, we were summoned by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life to participate in a meeting along with 15 other leaders of Catholic movements. The meeting had two fundamental objectives:

1. Father Alexandre Awi Mello, Secretary of the Dicastery, and Dr. Gabriela Gambino, Under-Secretary for Life and Family, explained the details of the celebration of the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year, and the strategies that the Dicastery wants to apply, gathered in a twelve-point itinerary. Further more they underlined the participation they expect from us as leaders of Church movements.
2. They wished to learn of the initiatives that Catholic movements and associations are working on in the field of the family, with the aim of strengthening ties and seeking synergies to work together.

We must admit that during this meeting, we were able to verify with great emotion the great synergy that exists between the orientations and the pedagogy of our movement in the roadmap established by our founder Father Henri Caffarel and our Holy Father's call with the specific orientations and strategies that he wants the Church to adopt, embody and live out.

The *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year was formally opened on Friday, March 19, 2021, on the feast of Saint Joseph, and it will be a year dedicated to the family until June 26, 2022. Five years after the publication of the apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (*The joy of love*), Pope Francis wants to deepen the implementation of a pastoral care of the family that accompanies

children, young people, the elderly and couples, whatever their degree of proximity to the Church and their family configuration.

The Dicastery told us that the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year, one of Pope Francis' initiatives, aims to reach all families in the world through various spiritual, pastoral and cultural proposals that will be implemented in parishes, dioceses, universities, ecclesial movements and family associations.

We retain the following lines from *Amoris Laetitia*. *"Marriage expresses 'a genuine and firm decision to join paths, come what may.' (AL 132) It is built up 'day by day,' with daily gestures in which one can experience the mystical presence of the Risen Lord, a presence to be cultivated through listening to the Word of God, the practice of reconciliation, attending the Eucharist and assiduous prayer. It is on this path, punctuated by small and large gestures of daily life that Lord awaits couples 'to lead them to the heights of mystical union' (AL 316)."*

Recently, Pope Francis, in a video message sent to the Dicastery to accompany one of the forums organised as part of initiatives to mark the year of celebration, said, *"Just as the warp and the weft of the masculine and the feminine, in their complementarity, combine to form the tapestry of the family, so too the sacraments of Holy Orders and marriage are both indispensable to building up the Church as a 'family of families.' In this way we will be able to have a pastoral care of families in which one breathes fully the spirit of ecclesial communion."*

In this editorial, we wanted to evoke the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year and some details of its celebration, because it is a call that challenges all Catholics around the world.

Once again we must reiterate, as we have done on other occasions, that Father Caffarel's ability to amaze us goes beyond our imagination. Our participation in the many ecclesial events to which we have been invited on the occasion of this celebration and our in-depth study of the orientations that we have received for carrying out the strategies outlined by the Dicastery, have led us to admire more and more Father Caffarel's prophetic intuition. He not only anticipated by more than 60 years the call that the

Church and the Pope address to us in this exhortation, but he clearly saw the strength of the union of the sacraments of Holy Orders and Marriage. It was a synergy, which began to be built from that first "Let us seek together" and which today is the leaven in the dough of Teams of Our Lady, of the Church and of the world and that Pope Francis wants to promote and encourage.

In this *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year, Pope Francis has pointed out, *"Some of these challenges are still struggling to be met and require a renewed pastoral impetus in some particular areas: I am thinking of marriage preparation, the accompaniment of young married couples, education, attention to the elderly, closeness to wounded families or to those who, in a new union, wish to live the Christian experience to the full."* These are paths that the Teams Movement, inspired by Father Caffarel's spiritual heritage and in the discernment that the Spirit arouses collegially, has already followed with enthusiasm and determination.

Without a doubt, Father Caffarel's prophetic thinking is today, on the eve of celebrating the 25th anniversary of his death, more current, alive, pertinent and the bearer of hope than ever.

Thank you.

Clarita & Edgardo BERNAL



In Service

*News from the Friends of
Father Caffarel
25th Anniversary of Father Caffarel's
Death*

A Novena of Prayer intended for Team Members all over the World

September 18, 2021, will be the 25th anniversary of the death of Father Henri Caffarel. Clarita and Edgardo Bernal, Responsible Couple and the International Responsible Team of the Teams of Our Lady asked the Friends of Father Caffarel to create, in order to mark this event, a novena of prayer intended for Teams of Our Lady all over the whole world, for the Intercessors, for the members of the *Fraternité Notre-Dame de la Résurrection*, for the members of the Friends of Father Caffarel.

**Father Caffarel, a companion on our way towards God
"But love is what I am made of!"**

This will be the title of this novena presented on the International Leading Team's website and scheduled for distribution in the five official languages: French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian.

Organisation of the Novena

An opening video of the Novena (September 9, 2021), broadcast the day before the first day of the novena.

Nine daily videos (September 10-18, 2021), accompanied by a proposal of prayer and intentions related to the theme of the day; each video will contain an audio or video extract of Father Caffarel, a clip on the theme of the day.

This Novena will allow each participant to hear Father Caffarel's voice, meditate on his words and share with others the impact that Father Caffarel has in their life. The Novena is part of the promotion of the cause for the canonisation of Father Caffarel.

In Service

*News from the Friends of
Father Caffarel
25th Anniversary of Father Caffarel's
Death
A Word from the Editor of the Cause*

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.
Editor of the Cause for Father Henri Caffarel

Why a Novena?

Dear Friends,

Father Henri Caffarel had only one goal in life. When he was twenty, in March 1923, he was seized by the love of Christ and after that moment, he had only one wish: to help others experience that God is love, that Christ is alive. One day Father Caffarel cried out, 'Love is what I am made of!'

On September 18th, 2021, we will celebrate the 25th anniversary of his death with this novena of prayers. This novena has no goal other than that everyone discovers the love God has for them, because life means being loved by God and responding to this love.

For the good of the Church and of all people of good will, we are asking for Father Caffarel's canonisation. We cannot keep such richness, the richness of his thinking, his writings, of what he is just for ourselves. We want couples to have the joy of living better because of God's love and for them to bear witness to it in the world, and we want all Christians discover the treasure of interior prayer.

This is the reason for this novena. Father Caffarel is alive. By listening to his voice and reading his writings that are extraordinarily luminous, we must find the joy to follow Christ, each person according to their vocation. Let us pray for the advancement of this cause and ask for Father Caffarel's intercession for the intentions that we bear in our hearts.

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.



In Service

News from the Friends of Father Caffarel 25th Anniversary of Father Caffarel's Death

What is a Novena?

A **novena** (from the Latin: “novem,” nine), as it is proposed by the Catholic Church, consists of **praying on nine successive days to God**, usually to entrust a specific intention or to ask for a particular grace. **This very popular traditional form of prayer** is highly encouraged by the Church.

Why Should You Pray a Novena? Why Pray for Nine Days?

Today, the nine days that make up a novena are generally associated with the nine days that separate the feast of Ascension from the feast of Pentecost. In the Bible, this period for the disciples and Jesus' mother was a period of waiting, lived in prayer where at the end they received the Holy Spirit. “They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.” (Acts 1:14). This shows that we too can use the time of a novena as a **period of waiting for a particular grace**.

Is a Novena the most Efficient Form of Prayer?

By nature a novena is not more efficient, as such, than any other form of prayer. What it does is that it gives us more “quality time” to pray. When you have a profound desire to open your heart completely to God and live in His divine presence, by abandoning yourself into His hands, it gives Him the opportunity to take action and make your desires compatible with His. Your prayer becomes “efficient” because you have become much closer to God and have discovered the true joy that can only come from Him.

Praying a novena is a privileged way of praying because it allows you to take your time in prayer. You take the time to let go of your troubles and lay them before Jesus' feet. **With devotion you entrust a particular intention**, and at the same time you prepare your heart to receive His grace and welcome the Holy Spirit to help you discern.

The novena may be accompanied by the daily participation at Mass.

Gérard & Marie-Christine de Roberty

In Service

*News from the Friends of Father
Caffarel
25th Anniversary of Father Caffarel's
Death*

***Cardinal Lustiger's Homely during the mass celebrated,
September 27th, 1996, in the Madeleine Church, Paris***

Dear Brothers and Sisters, My Dear Friends,

Henri Caffarel was ordained by one of my predecessors, Cardinal Verdier; and he never ceased to belong to the Parisian *presbyterium* (assembly of priests in a diocese), even though Divine Providence led him on a path of exceptional ministry.

But it is also out of personal gratitude that I speak to you about him this evening. I knew him from afar, and yet closely too, because I received and heard his teachings and preaching.

I am part of that generation which recognised in Father Caffarel one of the very great figures given by God to his Church during this century. There are a few of them (how can we list them without risking being unfair?) whose apostolic stature marks this period. Often ignored at first, even misunderstood, they have become so many living landmarks on the path that the Holy Spirit has made us travel along. It is not excessive, it seems to me, to discover through them how Christ, the unique Prophet of these new times, wanted his prophetic mission to be manifested in some of his servants.

Father Caffarel is one of the most prominent of them. It is therefore not only his personal gratitude that the Archbishop of Paris expresses, but the gratitude of many priests of my generation: in difficult times, he has

comforted, questioned, guided us with boldness, courage, originality. It is the Church's gratitude to one of her priests whose ministry has been so fruitful that I must express.

Let us not be fooled by the term "prophet:" only God designates them. And yet, I used it with regard to Father Caffarel. I do not want to retrace here his biography which you know and which, I hope, you will soon write up a detailed account, because it comprises the spiritual history of this whole century in our country. By following him, we understand what we are going through today, we better understand what happened before and what anticipated and prepared for what will happen tomorrow.

Instinctively, with penetrating perception, he discovered the essential anchor points in Christians' lives and in the life of the Church. Two concerns guided all of his actions in the diversity of their initiatives:

- on the one hand, the life of the couple, the family, human love;
- and, on the other hand, the love of God and prayer. The last decades of his life, the long and silent retirement to Troussures, brilliantly bear witness to this.

Not that the two elements here would balance and compensate for each other, but rather, it seems to me, a unique and strong intuition about our century and its spiritual situation.

So I dared to use the word "prophet," but it would be more modest and accurate to say that Father Caffarel anticipated what the couple, couples were going to become. And I had the opportunity, a few months ago, to discuss this topic in front of Teams of Our Lady.

Indeed, how great was our surprise, in the aftermath of the Second World War, to see him renewing Christian understanding of the marriage sacrament! He discovered its mission; he magnified the dignity of human love at a time when no one yet suspected how threatened it would be by the very evolution of customs and culture.

At the same time, he asked couples not only to engage in this demanding discovery of the spiritual and sacramental dimension of marriage, but also to respond to God who calls them to holiness.

This second side that I will call the "contemplative" one appears from the start, because the discovery of the splendour of humanity that Christ reveals to us is made in proportion to the discovery of the depth of divine life that Christ offers us. The path of love's dignity in all its dimensions cannot be separated from the path of new Life, of forgetting oneself, of the gift that God makes of himself to his servants.

As Christians' reflection churned around what was to become "the Apostolate of the Laity," Father Caffarel set the bar at the highest limit: he suggested that laity desire nothing less than holiness. And holiness in and through the sacrament of marriage, thanks to the constitution of these teams: adopting the then widespread form of a "movement," the ambition of community life appeared there with surprising innovative force. He set the bar so high that some criticised him for what they considered elitism, others for fleeing social and political responsibilities.

The oldest among you remember the difficulties you encountered and which Father Caffarel had to face. In all this, he anticipated the impetus of the Second Vatican Council on the vocation of the Laity: vocation to holiness. Precisely, the Christ's faithful, by the grace of the sacrament of baptism and marriage, fulfil their vocation as men and women "in the world of this time." Father Caffarel anticipated - and this seemed rather unpredictable - the need to give supernatural strength to the humanity of our life, so that it is able to face the crises to come: those of these current times.

You see for what fight, without knowing it, for what testimony, without suspecting it, sometimes for what martyrdom the Lord was preparing us in this way, so that this flame of love may live in the midst of contradictions and difficulties no doubt greater than in the old days. This spirit was simultaneously led in the apprenticeship of the love of God, in the deepening of the faith of the Church, the reading of the Gospel, in the fraternal life and the mutual exchange which make it possible not to wander according to one's illusions, desires, but to be constantly supported, verified in a certain

way, confronted with the friendship and the requirement of one's brothers in the faith.

The moment came when Father Caffarel chose to sink into prayer, interior prayer, meaning the Troussures years. I do not consider them as a retreat, even if for some it was experienced like that and even if he himself, perhaps, sometimes gave that impression.

Ahead of all of us, he thus showed us the heart of Christian existence, without which nothing stands. In view of the road previously travelled, we see how the road of the 1970s and then the 1980s is not without ecclesial significance in the situation we are experiencing in France. A man of this calibre is much more than a guide ... an initiator, even as he is silent and silently accepts to face this mystery of all grace.

Although a contemplative man, he never ceased to be a man of action. The rigour of his ministry and of his life at Troussures bears witness to this and is rich in meaning.

Father Caffarel wanted no one to talk about him anymore, up until his death. Monsignor Thomazeau had warned me of his last moments and of his desire to be buried, if not in secret, at least in the most complete humility, at the risk of avoiding the affection and recognition of all those who saw in him a guide, a father, a friend, a witness for our century. He sensed what the readings we heard and commented on so often remind us.

The first, this page from Revelation (3:14-22) is an introduction to prayer where everyone is led to discover what they are under God's gaze and therefore to be truthful instead of remaining in falsehoods, to be revealed before one's Lord, comforted because God wants to make his home in us.

As for this passage from the Gospel of Saint John (12:20-33), the apostle relates to us one of the crucial moments of Christ's ascent to Jerusalem. Here are the Greeks, prophetically—for they represent the

Gentiles of the world's nations—who want to see Jesus. This is why Christ replies that the hour has come for the Son to be glorified.

This time when the pagans want to see Jesus through the eyes of faith is the time we are now living and the glory of the Son is manifested in these men and women, who draw near to Christ in the illumination of baptism.

Jesus tells us the price for it with the parable of the grain of wheat that has fallen to the ground. The mystery of his Passion is the key to his love, to his whole life. As Jesus calls us to follow him, the evangelist gives us a sense of the confusion before which the Messiah finds himself, this anguish at his own death which he will express in Gethsemane. It is neither revolt or refusal, but upheaval and spiritual combat. Christ must say yes, with even greater depth; This is why he has come to this hour: "*Father, glorify your Name.*" In the Son's obedience, in the gift of his life, is accomplished the glorification of the Father who himself attests, "*I have glorified him and I will glorify him again.*" This voice which is heard from heaven is incomprehensible to the crowd, but is understood by those for whom the Father willed it.

It is not unreasonable to believe that Father Caffarel, when he meets his Lord, will experience something that this Gospel tells us of. Christ Jesus invites us to follow him to be with him, where he is, to know what he knows. I hope, I believe, that the Father in Heaven has comforted his servant and granted him, even in the perhaps heart-breaking offering of his existence, the consolation of an even greater love, finally satisfied by Him whom he loved it so much.

In this love, he joins the immense Church which escapes our eyes; Father Caffarel continues to participate in the work of salvation for which he received the sacrament of Holy Orders. Priest of Christ, he thus participates in the priestly service of Christ Jesus for his Body, which is the Church.

Cardinal Lustiger



FATHER'S CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

Christ is Calling Me

L'Anneau d'Or, Special Issue, "Christ and Couples," n. 27-28,
May-August 1948

Catholicism is a creed, a conception of mankind and the world, a moral law, a group, a cult, a history.

However, the main thing is not there. Christianity is above all someone: Christ. In him resides the power, the majesty, the holiness of God. But look at him: he is also a man firmly planted on earth, with the strong and callused hands of manual workers, who looks straight ahead, who speaks in a tender voice to those close to him, in a loud even violent voice to those who claim to be fair. Fully man, fully God. He deals with God as an equal: he knows each person, calls everyone by name.

The Christian is the person who, on hearing this call, presents himself to Christ. A decisive heart to heart. *"Only one thing is necessary, it is someone who asks you for everything, and to whom we are able to give everything."* (Paul Claudel). He found this someone. A pact is made. Indestructible. The Christian knows himself, wants to be linked. He bet, he staked his life. He knows his partner. He knows to whom he has given his faith, and that he is delivered from himself. It is now good for him to serve the cause of Another, and no longer his own interests.

Being a Christian means this above all: this conversation between people, this irrevocable alliance for a collaboration that must never end, this life for two where everything is shared.

Of course, it also means adhering to a doctrine, but this doctrine is Christ's thinking and this adherence is a communion with his thoughts. Of course, it means submitting to a morality, but this morality consists in living like Christ and through Christ. Of course, it means entering into society - even more, taking your place in a living organism which is the Body of Christ. And participating in a liturgy which is none other than the impetus of the entire mystical body returning to the Father, to the Father of infinite majesty, in adoration, praise and love.

So if Christianity is essentially a personal attachment to Christ, the major issue is to achieve this attachment, and to live and experience it. It will be a lot more than bleak fidelity: the most exciting adventure - all love is an adventure! It will be a matter of protecting this attachment from the erosion of time, of defending it against enemies from without, against those within, against itself. Defending it is not enough. If it does not grow, love declines. It will be necessary to win it back and enrich it every day.

There are those who do not accept that the whole of the Christian religion comes down to one love. It seems too sentimental to them - unless it seems too demanding! They want, they say, a virile religion. As if love were not virile! True love has nothing to do with this romantic pastime where a man takes a rest from his profession as a man!

Nothing is less sentimental than the love of Christ and the Christian! So let us reread Saint Paul: Conquered by Christ, Saul, a good sport, surrenders himself unconditionally. Now his life has only one pole: Christ. Only one love possesses him: Christ. This love launches him into the craziest enterprise, denies him any rest: "*The love of Christ is following me!*" he said. What is he looking for in his closeness to Christ? Consolation? No. Strength. The strength to live, the strength to die. Sentimental, romantic, Saint Paul... Come on!

Rather, I can understand that you fear that Christ's love will no longer leave space for other loves within you. With him, indeed, there is no compromise: he does not ask for "his part," but for everything. Jesus said it bluntly, "*Whoever does not give up all that they have, cannot be a disciple.*" (Tell me, don't you take some pride in serving a hard and tender leader, who speaks clearly and loudly, who does not apologise for commanding?) Yes,

one might fear for other loves, but when they are what they should be - I mean in the order of God's will- they can only gain in force and quality. God's love passes through a person's heart. Doña Prouhèze (*one of Paul Claudel's characters in his play 'The Satin Slipper'*) is right, "*The force by which I love you is no different from the force by which you exist.*" God's love does not destroy; it creates and transfigures everything. But it is jealous: "*Whoever loves his father or his mother (or his spouse) more than me is not worthy of me.*"

Having dismissed these two objections, there can be no question here of treating them thoroughly: one, reduced to love, religion is but a sentimental idyll; the other, more serious: is it possible to remain faithful to human love when we choose Christ? I invite you to ponder some of the essential laws of closeness and intimacy between Christ and the Christian.

To clarify these laws, I will start with what is familiar to you: your own conjugal love. In doing so, I am faithful to the oldest tradition. Yahweh, in order to make the Jewish people understand the covenant he made with him, resorted to the comparison with marriage. Saint John, to initiate us into the intimacy of the Son of God with humanity, speaks of the "*marriage feast of the Lamb.*" The saints, when they entrust to us something of this union with Jesus Christ which makes them tremble with happiness, also refer to conjugal love. It makes you wonder if marriage, this reality that most speaks to mankind, would not have been instituted, above all, to reveal to us what the *raison d'être* of all Creation is: the marriage of Christ with redeemed humanity.

Admiring in order to Love.

There is a close connection between love and admiration. "I'll never love someone whom I don't admire," this young man or girl told you. In fact, when they come back to you with their chosen traveling companion, in their eyes a light shines, which is both wonder and love.



But how fragile it is, this young love! Fragile like the admiration that gave birth to it. This is why we must protect this admiration, nurture it, stay

awake to the beauty of the one we love - I am not talking so much of their physical charms as of that quivering beauty which is, at the heart of every being, a reflection of God's beauty, a reflection that moves us so strongly when our gaze becomes penetrating enough to discover it.

Sometimes, but oh so rarely, this same light of admiration and tenderness is to be found on the faces of two old spouses. Life, however, did not spare them; struggles and pains are written in their features: but standing before each other, they are amazed, just as on the first day, even more than on the first day. In their presence, one is seized, as one was before a miracle of life. [...]

Saints go far in love because, firstly, they go far in knowledge. They have that passionate interest in Christ that lovers have for each other. They are curious about him: through his words - I was going to say his inflections of voice -, his gestures as the Gospel reports them to us, they sense his soul. They also seek him in prayer, at length, patiently. And in their whole life. No doubt they are only saints because they have been constantly listening.

Loving means taking charge.

Within every being there is, enclosed, a beautiful dream of God. But it is so vulnerable ... like young almond buds that a spring frost is enough to destroy. It is this beautiful dream, when we discover it, that awakens in us admiration and love, and also this irrepressible desire to protect it, to help it flourish.

Is it not to this desire that the fiancée's question, naive only in appearance, testifies: Am I capable of making him happy? Taking responsibility for the happiness of another person is the first step in genuine love. But it is no small matter. It is much more than bringing joy to their face, a light to their eyes. It is a question of helping them discover the possibilities within them—the human qualities of heart and mind, the seeds of graces—and of assisting them, both discreetly and devotedly, in the implementation of their skills and gifts.

Taking charge is also adopting the mission of the person I love: on mankind's worksite, in the Father's kingdom, a task assigned to them, for which I want to be responsible. Their failures will be my failures, their successes my successes.

Do we find this law of taking charge in the love of Christ and the Christian? Can we say unequivocally that a Christian must want to be responsible for Christ? Surely, they will seriously not have the insolence to think—like a wife in front of the person she loves,—"He needs me to be happy!" Well yes, they dare to believe it and it is not insolence, but an understanding of Christ's heart, who wanted to need mankind. Christ, in fact, asks us to espouse his cause. And certainly, he possesses infinite happiness and nothing is lacking from it. However, this happiness will not reach its perfect height, as Saint Paul says, until the day when the growth of his Mystical Body is completed. And that, in part, depends on me, on my love and my labour. There is therefore a fullness, a happiness, a glory of Christ entrusted to me, for which I am responsible, which is in my hands. The recklessness of God! - Yes. But rather say the confidence of God.

Responsible for Christ ... what an overwhelming thought if I was not assured that, on his side, he took care of me. He who praised the good servant for having made use of the talent entrusted to him, how could he not make my life fruitful, my life put in his hands on my baptism day? If I do not shy away from it, his tenacious, ingenious love will continue its task without fail. *"Grace is insidious, grace is twisted and it is unexpected ... When grace does not come straight, it is because it comes wrong. When it does not come to the right, it is because it comes to the left...; when it does not proceed like a gushing fountain, it can, if it wishes, proceed like water which seeps slyly from below a dyke of the Loire ..."* (Charles Péguy).

The beings who love us most often find themselves so helpless at critical times: with Christ, I am certain that omnipotence is at the service of love.

Does this mean that he will spare me all suffering? No, of course not. Like a good winegrower, he will prune his vineyard so that it bears abundant and tasty fruit. But then I will be convinced that his love cannot be faulted, that there is only suffering for greater fruitfulness.

Loving means giving.

Pretending that we have taken charge of the perfection and happiness of a being and not to give everything to promote this perfection and this happiness, what mockery! Stopping working on its "success" as soon as it

costs a little - or a lot! - of time, of heart, of blood, is to fail love. Because love is a gift. Not only of something, but of oneself. Not a gift for a day, but a life long gift.



"It's so easy to love," the young people croon... The phrase does not stand up to experience. Nothing is more difficult. The gift is never given once and for all, it must be renewed constantly; and we get tired of giving, and we would like a break. But in love, no respite. Between love and selfishness there is, indeed, a never-ending conflict - what one loses, the other wins.

The victory is mine, if I never tire of giving. A double victory, moreover: by relentlessly pursuing the development of the being I love, I am unfailingly advancing towards my own perfection.

The whole drama of Christ's love and the Christian's also lies in this dilemma: Shall I sacrifice myself to him? Will I sacrifice it to myself? In fact, this dilemma only slowly asserts its implacable rigour.

Nothing seems simpler than to give of oneself, the day one meets Jesus Christ for good. Until then, I knew him from hearing about him; but here he comes out of the haze of history, there he is in front of me: someone, a living person. Everything in me that is made for love and for giving is awakening and springing forward. Finally, that old dream of loving until worshiping becomes a reality. How well these words of Martha in *(Paul Claudel's play)* "The Exchange" apply to love for Christ,

*"And I was living at home and had no thoughts of getting married.
"And one day you came into our house like a bird
"A Stranger whom the wind has carried away.
"And I became your wife.
"And thus the passion to serve inhabited me."*

The same impatience to serve is found in someone who has just found Christ: everything in their soul is fervour springing forth. But Christian life is long, hard work, rather than continuous fervour. A long labour of love, a long

apprenticeship in total giving, day after day, task after task, renouncement after renouncement. The victory of love is not at the beginning, but at the end.

With Christ as in marriage, it is the gift of oneself that counts. "It's not your money, your services, it's you I want, you and not just something from you." It is no less true that the gift of small things, that our humble gestures of love are more than proof of the gift of oneself: the best way to maintain it, to rejuvenate it, to enlarge it.

To the Christian who gives themselves up, Christ gives himself up... completely and the Cross says it well enough. The Eucharist also says it, and in a way that we can easily grasp: to be the nourishment for the loved one, is that not a deep aspiration of the human heart? A Pearl Buck heroine just lost her husband, after many years together. He did not talk much. The question that this woman often asked herself became more agonising to her: Was I useful to him, necessary ...? And then she learns the deceased last words, that were reported without much attention by a brother-in-law, "She was my daily bread." Joy—more than a joy, a great river of peace—flows through her whole being: Now she knows ...

Being the daily bread for the one we love—not a rare and refined food, but everyday bread, this bread that we eat before the long journey, that we eat again in the evening on the way back...—bread, this most common and necessary thing..., this is what Jesus Christ wanted to be for me. Given to me, to the ultimate.

Loving means welcoming.

Loving is not just giving, it is also accepting the other's gift. Accepting: the word sounds bad, it has a sad tonality to it. Let's rather say, welcome. Welcome: a door that opens, arms outstretched, a face lit with joy. But a welcome can be treacherous: the door opens and closes immediately to imprison you. How many so-called loves are nothing else!

True welcoming, far from confiscating a freedom, far from stifling a personality, enables it to strengthen itself. This is how Christ loves us. Sometimes one would be tempted to say to him: Take me; don't give me back my freedom! But he could not answer this prayer. He is willing to heal

our wounds, rest our fatigue, "*Come to me, you who are overwhelmed, and I will rebuild your strength;*" he never binds us. Christ is too proud: he does not want to be served by a captive, but by a free person. [...]

Christ is respectful of our freedom in another sense. "*I stand at your door and knock. If you open, I'll come in and have supper with you.*" If you open ... he never breaks in. It is our turn to be welcoming.

Welcoming Christ, another essential law of Christian life. It means opening up to his life, the divine life, that he offers us in excess—to his joy, which he wants to perfect in us—to his peace, "*I leave you my peace, I give you my peace...*" "To open up" is still a shy and timid word; let's say: being hungry - being hungry for Christ. Isn't this the expression that best meets the desire of the one who wants to be our daily bread? "*First of all, it is about being hungry,*" said Saint Catherine of Siena. And if some find the term not very theological, let them use the word 'faith': it is the same thing. Doesn't the word hunger rightly translate the impatience, the torturing desire for Christ, for his thoughts, for his love, which inhabits the saints? "*To arrive quickly and surely at a high knowledge of God, and to obtain it from him, sovereign good, sovereign light, sovereign love, I know nothing better than a fervent, pure, continual, humble and violent request; a request which is not made with lip service, but which springs from the mind, from the heart, from all the bodily and spiritual faculties, a request which elicits grace with immense desire.*" (St. Angela of Foligno)

We are only poor because our hunger is too quickly satisfied, because our too narrow measurements limit the gift of Christ. If our faith were excessive, we would receive abundantly his excessive generosity. Because his love—like all love—is excessive, mad. Saint Paul understood this, he who dared to speak of the folly of the cross, of the "folly of God."



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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