



Who Do People Say I Am? Starting the Study Topic



Newsletter for the GB Regions

December 2005, January 2006, February 2006

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Newsletter Editors

Please send all contributions for the March 2006 - May 2006 edition by January 1st, **preferably by e-mail, to**

Antony & Janet Denman

From Our Home Regions

The GB Regions Are Launched

This issue marks the transition of the three GB Pre-Regions into fully fledged Regions in their own right. Each Region was launched by Peter and Mary Hayes at the respective gatherings.

Dear Friends

This is our last letter as Regional Couple. We would like to thank all of you for your help and the support you give to Teams in this country.

We took on the job with some trepidation but have enjoyed the opportunity to get to know you. We hope that if you are asked to help in some way you will be able to say yes, since you will surely find the rewards will repay the efforts.

As promised, you will find in this newsletter the first three study topics in preparation for Lourdes. We hope many of you will be able to go to Lourdes. We have set up a Regional fund to help couples or chaplains who might not otherwise be able to go to Lourdes, particularly from countries such as Trinidad and Malawi. Could you consider organising a fund-raising event? If so do get in touch with Tom and Maureen Hoban, and send any money raised to our treasurers (see the advert for the solidarity fund on page 17).

We send you all our best wishes for Christmas and the coming year.

Peter & Mary



The creation of three GB Regions brings to an end Peter and Mary's term as GB Regional Couple. Coming into office as the Pre-Regions were established, their dual role was to support GB Teams, and facilitate the development of the new Regions. Working with the ERI and our pre-regional couples, Peter and Mary showed calm assurance, clear guidance and great hospitality.

Thank you, Peter and Mary, for all your hard work in support of Teams.

A Reflection . . .

on the Marriage at Cana

Modified from the homily by Father John Udris, Chaplain to Northampton St Thomas Team, at the wedding of Jo and Dominic Black, Northampton Cathedral, September 2005

At a Jewish wedding like the one the Lord attended in Cana that day the key person was the best man - called the *shoshebin*. The responsibilities of being a best man at a modern wedding is not as onerous as those of the *shoshebin*. Because it was down to him to do the wedding arrangements. He sent out the invitations. He presided at the wedding feast and acted as their bodyguard over the course of the celebrations. Even after the wedding day his duties didn't end. He acted as an advocate for the couple. He was called in as counsellor if there were differences to be sorted out and as a conciliation service if they fell out with each other. Therefore the *shoshebin* was always the friend of both bride and groom. He was like best man, chief bridesmaid, and parents all rolled into one. In other words he was the key person – he was someone you couldn't do without.

And in some stories about Adam & Eve from the Jewish tradition God himself is described as their *shoshebin*, their best man – isn't that a beautiful thought? And it's one that leads me to make a suggestion about this wedding - that the real best man at these proceedings is the Lord himself.

For in the first place he is clearly the friend of both bridegroom and bride. He is the common ground between you two. And from the perspective of faith he is the one who is ultimately responsible for arranging all the most important things that are happening here today. He is the key person who behind the scenes is to blame for bringing you together. And certainly he is the One who although unseen is presiding proudly at your wedding feast. And when the celebrations are all over he, like the *shoshebin*, won't be bowing out or take a back seat. He will be your advocate always, the resource person in your relationship. Christ will keep guard over your relationship. He will continue to be there for you to serve as that Wonder-Counsellor he said he would be.

After the wedding service the authorised person will come looking for you to give the best man a copy of the marriage certificate to keep safe for the happy couple. Here again the role of the *shoshebin* was similar but here again you'll be relieved to hear your responsibility isn't half so heavy. Because in the Jewish tradition the best man kept the marriage contract for the duration. He kept in his possession the proof of that sacred

A Reflection . . .

undertaking of that binding agreement before God. Jesus himself will keep safe the mystical contract you sign today.

Moreover, just as the witnesses will put their signatures alongside yours as a sign of their witnessing of this wonderful moment and a sign of their desire to support you in all the circumstances of your marriage, so your joint Best Man Jesus Christ does the same today. He places his signature next to yours to say that he will be alongside you as your advocate all the days of your married life.

There is one final thing about the *shoshebin* which I hope helps us see the gospel you chose for your wedding in a new light. That is, that it was his job to keep the party going, to keep the celebrations lively. At Cana he would have been the one everyone looked to when the wine ran out. And so he would have been the one to have had a word with Mary who in turn turned to her Son. At that wedding Jesus from that moment stepped in to play the role of the best man to keep everything going by turning the water into wine.

Keep Jesus Christ as the key person in your partnership and he will keep your love going

even when the patience and the understanding

seem to have run out, he will make your marriage all the better for the worse times, all the richer for the poor times. Keep him as your joint best man and he will keep you making the world of difference to your wedded love as he did that other wonderful day.

And in that way will your marriage be the place where he will continue to reveal his glory – to each other first of all, to your children when please God they come along, but to us all who come within the orbit of your shared life. Yes, may your marriage be the place where Christ will continue to let his glory show as he did that day at Cana long ago.

News From Central Britain



We are Michael and Kay Vadon and took over from Paul and Helena McCloskey as Regional Couple for Central Britain on 1st October 2005. We have been members of Ealing 3 for 21 years. We have been married 38 years and have two children, both married, who have given us five lovely grandchildren. We have held various posts of responsibility, being sector couple for North Thames and later regional treasurers for the British Region.

We love travelling and over the years, we have been privileged to attend various International Teams events including a session at Lourdes, three summer sessions in Trinidad and Tobago, a session in Kerala in India, the international gathering in Santiago de Compostela, an Irish annual gathering in Galway not forgetting a Team meeting in Hungarian we attended in Budapest. The immediate trust and fellowship we have experienced with teams couples from many continents that we have never met before continues to increase our enthusiasm for the wonderful movement of which we are part.

Malawi Update

Please pray for us (ZOMBA 1) and the entire Malawi nation on the current situation which has just started and is going to last for some months. Malawi is currently greatly hit by a food crisis due to lack of adequate rains during last growing season and also due to the price hikes which left people unable to buy enough fertilisers and other chemicals. It was on the 13th of this month that the president stood and openly declared Malawi as a food disaster country in each and every district. The president has therefore appealed to local as well as international individuals, governmental as well as nongovernmental organisations for urgent relief and assistance in forms of cash or in kind. It is this support that may let Malawians survive till the next harvesting season (May to June 2006). By the time the president was making his declaration, statistics records were stating that some have already lost their relatives due to lack of food for a good period of time. We, therefore would like to appeal to you for your special prayers so that we can bring up our children during such a crucial period of time.

Mavuto & Christina

News From The West Sector

BRISTOL 1

On Thursday 14th July we were delighted to welcome Anna and Wallid Cotta, our Sector Couple, to Bristol for our monthly meeting. This was one of the hottest days of the year, but Anna and Wallid made the journey from Cheltenham in the heat of the day, for which we were especially grateful. In addition they were due to attend another meeting in the evening; how fortunate we are to have such a dedicated Sector Couple. Deo Gratias.



Taken outside Wesley College:
Front Row L.- R. Sr Josie, Anna Cotta, Rina Kerby, Brian Stevens.
Back Row L- R.: Wallid Cotta, Chippie Ralls, Maurice Kerby.

Over the years Bristol 1 has undergone many setbacks, including the lack of a priest and, at one time, no spiritual counsellor either, and the deaths of three members. Nevertheless we struggled on. When we had all retired we decided to change our meetings to begin at midday, then later on when dietary needs became difficult we each brought our own lunch box; this has worked well.

In recent years we have been dogged by ill health, making it difficult to meet other teams, to make Residential Retreats, or to be sure that the hostess of any planned meeting has not been suddenly whisked into hospital or was not well enough to receive the Team.

By the grace of God we have managed to overcome the last two difficulties by replacing a 48 hour Residential Retreat with two separate Days of Recollection, and at each monthly meeting having lunch out. We meet at a different cafe each month for a meal and sharing, and then adjourn to the nearest home of a member for our meeting. This makes a very special occasion for all of us, since none of us are in the same parish and we rarely meet between meetings.

However we have been unable to overcome the difficulty of meeting with other Teams, not even for a picnic, so the visit of Anna and Wallid was like a breath of fresh air we really were overjoyed.

We shared a good meal together at Wesley College (unfortunately Angela Stevens was unable to come) accompanied by some lively conversation. We next proceeded to the home of Chippie Ralls for our meeting. The shared prayers were thoughtful and enriching for everyone. The "homework" topic proved to be very thought provoking; this was a chapter from the book "We Believe" by Monsignor Gilbey.

After tea we joined round the table for a celebration of Maurice Kerby's birthday- with birthday cake and snacks provided by Chippie.

This was indeed a happy occasion for us all. Thank you everyone.

Maurice and Rina Kerby.

News From Northern Britain

Dear Friends in Teams

Three people have delighted us recently by saying YES. They were asked to take on responsibility in Teams and without hesitation accepted. We are pleased to announce that we have a new chaplain for the Northern region, Fr John McLean. He is a White Father Priest, living in Glasgow. The new Sector Couple for the North West are John and Rosemary Turner who live in Formby (near Liverpool). A huge big thank you must go to Fr Michael Corbett for his time as pre-regional chaplain. He has now moved to a parish in Newcastle and also takes on the busy role of hospital chaplain, but still continues to be chaplain to his own Team. Secondly many thanks to Phil and Theresa Finnegan, who were an excellent Sector Couple for the North West, and great fun to work with.

In the last few months, we have travelled many miles on Teams business. We experienced a truly wonderful welcome and hospitality when we visited the teams up in Aberdeen. Having put names to faces and got to know some of the Scottish couples, it now makes keeping in touch with them by phone and email, so much easier. Journeys like this, we feel, are essential and more than justify the cost in terms of time, effort and money, in keeping real contact with Teams people (and in Scotland's case, supporting isolated Teams). Thank you to

all those we met in Scotland for giving up your day for us.

At the time of writing, our Pre-Regional Gathering has yet to take place. So you will have to wait until the next edition to hear more of how the day went. Meanwhile we are slowly beginning to adapt to living as a family of 3 rather than 4, as Patrick, our eldest, has been at York University since October. A time of sadness that our first born has flown the nest but also great joy that he was more than ready to go, and that all the early years and hard work of parenting, seem to have born fruit.

We end by wishing you a joyful Advent season and a very happy Christmas.

Yours in Teams

Peter and Di Wordsworth

Regional Couple



Di & Peter Wordsworth
Regional Couple

News From Southern Britain

Dear Friends,

As we write, the October 'Gatherings' and launch of the Regions & 'Super-region' is still two weeks off and the animating team are in the final stages of planning. As you read it, the event will probably be starting to fade from your memories! However, it is important to realise that the 'launch' was only the start of a new section of our journey in Teams. There is still much to be done and much to understand, about the way in which God would have our movement develop in our new 'Trans-Atlantic Super-Region'. Please continue to pray for those in positions of responsibility for a spirit of discernment.

As we mentioned in our last letter, the major part of our summer was the wedding of our daughter. We are delighted to tell you that the whole event was wonderful - a true family gathering. The service was conducted by our own team chaplain (of 25years!). Our

daughter, Becci, attended our first ever team meeting in her carry-cot when she was only three months old. The invitation, from Fr. Michael, for all married couples to renew their own vows as Becci & Jon made theirs, was particularly uplifting for many of those present.

Since we last wrote, the new RC for your team will have taken up their role. We hope that many of you, especially those for whom it is the first experience of responsibility in Teams, will have been able to meet with other RCs in your sector. Another opportunity to share in the fellowship of the wider Teams movement is just about upon us as we celebrate the 'Teams' birthday in December. We hope to be able to meet with some of you as we visit some of the sector events in the region.

As we do move into the season of Advent and Christmas it is very easy to get overwhelmed by



News From Southern Britain

the busyness and bustle. Not just the commercial world but our responsibilities within our church communities can take their toll. Perhaps this could be the ideal time to book a 'sit-down' with each other to ensure that we make time for one another.

Wishing you and your families a happy, holy and restful Advent, Christmas and New Year.



Chris & Frankie

Teams Diary

2005

Dec	4	London South East Party Holy Rosary, Hayes, Bromley	Rosemary & Mike Cox
Dec	8	London South West Advent Reflection & Teams Birthday	John & Hilary Stoddart
Dec	9	North East & North Tyne Birthday Celebration, Ponteland	Angela & Steve Helm
Dec	9	Solent Advent Meditation TBA - provisional	Paul & Annette O'Beirne

2006

Mar	30 to	Lent Silent Retreat	Harry & Clotilde Meigh
Apr	2	St Peter's Grange, Prinknash	
Sept	16-21	International Gathering Lourdes, France	Are you planning & saving?

2007

June	29 to	1st Super-Regional Gathering	
July	1	Weekend Gathering at Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick	

Supporting Couples

In Austria

Rod and Anne-Marie Isaacs were the Responsible Couple for the Little Chalfont team until last year, when they left for Austria where Rod began a two-year course, at the International Theological Institute (ITI) for studies on marriage and the family at Gaming in Austria. This Institute caters for about 60 students from a number of different countries, all of whom follow courses in English.

After their first year there Rod and Anne-Marie invited me to help them start up a Team. They arranged an “information evening” to which ten mostly young couples came and in addition to which there were several apologies. Shortly before the meeting Anne-Marie went into labour with her third child who was born that evening — a little girl, Grace. I was therefore left to “give birth” to what would seem to be three possible teams. They would be of mixed nationality but all English speaking and including two married priests of the Eastern Uniate rite.

There was considerable enthusiasm amongst those who came to the meeting and although it may not be the ideal way of starting a team, bearing also in mind the somewhat transitory character of some of the participants, important seeds were nevertheless sown, and with encouragement, will grow and spread. The point was clearly made that whilst the courses at ITI were centred on marriage and the family, there was a great need for the families involved to grow together in their spiritual lives, and this is exactly the vacuum that Teams could fill.

I would hope to be able to give further news of this in a subsequent newsletter.

Father Ken Payne

Listening 2004

The difficulty with announcing that you are listening is that people expect you both to take notice and to act on what has been heard.

Well, the Bishops of England & Wales have now reflected on everything that was said about the state of marriage and family life during the listening phase of Listening 2004 and they have produced a report of the findings: “**Not Easy But Full of Meaning: Catholic Family Life in 2004**”. In essence they have identified three key areas of activity that will be addressed over the coming 3 years:

- **2006 Welcoming Parishes**

“The challenge is to build highly loving supportive communities within our parishes for all of us, including our families.”

- **2007 Married Spirituality**

“A broader understanding of marital and family spirituality among both clergy and laity will be fundamental to the success of any future work by the church in support of family life.”

- **2008 Passing the Faith down the generations**

“Parents expressed a need for more help in raising their children in the Faith, both in terms of deepening their own understanding and being able to integrate it into the life of the home.”

The major breakthrough is the recognition of the importance of married spirituality and the need for both the clergy and laity to know more about it. Even more significant for us all is the recognition of the vital role the Teams Movement can have in helping the church understand married spirituality. The emphasis on family prayer and having team meetings in each others' houses is something the Church is very keen to build on.

Clearly these three initiatives are linked and in each of the coming three years, there will be opportunities for all Teams couples to involve themselves in local initiatives that will result from this report.

Teams is represented on the national body chaired by Bishop John Hine (who leads for the Bishops Conference on Marriage & Family Life), so we have considerable influence. This is recognition of the hard work, over many years, of couples witnessing to their faith and raising Teams' profile. Please keep your ear to the ground locally as there could be splendid expansion possibilities as more people become aware of Teams' mission as a Movement for Married Spirituality.

Paul & Helena McCloskey

The Gatherings

At the Gatherings, the new Trans-Atlantic Super-Region was unveiled. This will cover the GB Regions, the Irish and Trinidad and Tobago Regions, as well as the isolated sector in South Africa, and the fledgling Team in Malawi. The Super-Region will formally come into being on 1st January 2006. Paul and Helena McCloskey have accepted the role of Super-Regional Couple.

A Human Being, not a Human Doing

The three Regional Gatherings held in October used the same theme, a theme that touched on the busyness of our lives, and the need for time to reflect and seek God. Each Gathering chose their own keynote speaker, who brought their own perspective.

At the **Central Gathering** in Cheltenham on 1st October, Father Bede covered a wide canvas from Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel up to Gloria Gaynor's song "I am what I am". In the old testament, the concepts of individual and family responsibility, and social interactions were developed. By the 1970s, this view had changed to individual rights and needs. A rule of life centred on God, called for **being** first and then **doing**, while a self-centred approach was to do what one wanted first, with the action defining our being. The danger of action first is that we become the author – and leave God out.



The Gatherings

Chris and Frankie Lane welcomed 5 new Teams at the **Southern Gathering** at St John's Seminary Woneresh on 15th October, amid the joyous sounds of young children enjoying the crèche. The Gathering concentrated on making time for God, and Father Jonathan How, from the Seminary, spoke of conspiring to find a time and



Chris & Frankie welcome the new Wimbledon Sacred Heart Team

a place for God. He spoke of his special places where he found time to meditate. He spoke of holidays as providing such time, and noted how the founder of the seminary insisted that one rule was that all students and staff had such breaks from the seminary.

At the **Northern Gathering** in Eaglescliffe on 29th October, Michael and Hilda Hedley echoed

Father Bede in recalling that the apostles received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, which spurred them to act.

They noted that Christ used the meal and food as a time of prayer and reflection; and gave several practical illustrations of finding “time to be” which could also include meditation. They left us with the words of a Hindu they once met, “How are you, and how is your prayer life ?”



International Leading Team

The International Secretariat

What does the international secretariat do ?

One of the first tasks of the International Secretariat is to organise the meetings of the International Leading Team that take place three times a year. Two of these meetings take place in Paris at 49 rue de la Glacière : the headquarters of the Teams of Our Lady since it became an international movement in 1988. The third meeting is that of the International College, this brings together the leading couples of the whole movement. They number approximately 50 participants who meet every year in a different country where they are welcomed by that country's team members.

A number of working documents and conferences are drawn up during these meetings and in preparation for them. Translations in the four official languages of the movement: (French, English, Spanish and Portuguese) have to be made. If you have translating skills, please volunteer to help, as there are only a few translators at present.

Computerisation of the Secretariat has changed the pattern of work. Many communications are now done exclusively by e-mails. A lot of time is saved and contacts made easier and more frequent, thanks to the speed of transmission, even to the other side of the world! For example, we have translators in England, Brazil, Columbia, Australia, Argentina, USA, etc... with whom we communicate by e-mail. So you don't have to live in Paris to help us.

The secretariat is responsible for the statutory requirements (Board Meetings and Annual General Meetings), keeping the register of members and statistics of membership up to date and recording changes and appointments of leaders.

The secretariat also monitors the contributions and finances to ensure that the movement covers its costs and helps poorer countries to develop their teams as well as to take part in international meetings. In addition, there is the updating of our Web-Site and keeping records of all the documentation and publications of all countries.

We also welcome any visits especially visiting team members from abroad who are staying in Paris and who come to visit us.

Ours is a 6-year mandate. We are supported by one part-time paid employee, Astrid, who has just left us to go to New Caledonia with her husband. We await her replacement.

Brigitte and Philippe DENEY-DELACROIX



In Memory of John Paul II

The death of Pope John Paul II and the election of Benedict XVI have had a great impact on us. Numerous comments have been made. The Teams' Newsletters have noted in particular the messages that our late Pope addressed to us. May I be allowed, a few months on, to recall just a few aspects of his memory – using this word in the strongest sense in which it applies to our life in the Church. My familiarity with the writings and words of John Paul II lead me to start with a few passages of Scripture that he has often quoted.

“God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them” (Gn 1: 27). We have been struck by the Pope's insistence on the dignity of man, based rightly on this likeness with the Creator, with God the Trinity. The ability of a man and a woman to give themselves to each other in an exchange of love is an echo of God's life of infinite love. It is also the source of the demands of morality: that man and woman may be worthy of their condition of being created in the image of God.

John Paul II often referred to Jesus' encounter with the man - or young man – *“who was a man of great wealth”* and who kept all the commandments. *“Jesus looked steadily at him and he was filled with love for him* (Mk 10: 21). But the man was not generous enough to follow Jesus and give up his wealth. But what about us? Do we stay away, *“overcome with sadness”*? (cf. Lk 18: 18-23).

There was another Gospel story he frequently commented upon: the Good Samaritan. Jesus offers us this parable in order to cast light on our relationship with our neighbour. The Good Samaritan, who is helpful and merciful, is an image of Jesus: a model to persuade us to ***love our neighbour as ourselves*** (Lk 9: 25-37). How often John Paul II invited us to be *Good Samaritans*?

From Father Fleischmann

“God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (Jn 3: 16).

The salvation of humanity, the whole life of the Church flows from this fundamental gift of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ is at the centre, *“united in some fashion with every man”* (cf. Vatican II, Gaudium et Spes 22.2). May we welcome ever better his presence at the heart of our marriages.

“When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth” (Jn 16: 13). The Pope constantly invited us to recognise the *truth* of God, of man... Would we not benefit from meditating from time to time on the way we welcome the truth when it comes from God, when it is transmitted to us by the Church?

In the Upper Room, where the Apostles had gathered pending the coming of the Holy Spirit, they *“joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus...”* (Ac 1: 14). Let us call to mind, at this point, John Paul the man for whom prayer was vital - prayer in union with Mary whom Jesus, on the Cross, invested with universal motherhood. As Teams of Our Lady, let us keep in mind this Pope totally dedicated to Mary who leads her children to Christ the Saviour.

Above I quoted a sentence from the Second Vatican Council that often appears in John Paul II's writings. This is the time to recall his faithfulness to the teaching of the Council. He even called us to repentance for insufficiently welcoming the Council. This task is ongoing.

The enthusiasm of the faithful has led to the process of canonisation of John Paul II being initiated. We join this movement in the desire to be faithful to his fundamental intuitions of which I have only sketched out a few aspects. Furthermore, we know that Pope Benedict XVI is henceforth guiding us along the same path. We will listen to him with the same trust.

François Fleischmann

International Leading Team

Our Time

IN THE INTERNATIONAL LEADING TEAM

We have just completed 6 years as as members of the International Responsible Team (ERI). It all started with a “call for help” from the international responsible couple. A big surprise! Why us ? Many couples around the world are much more capable than us !



After a lot of prayer and a few sleepless nights, we felt the call of the Holy Spirit: “It is not you who have chosen me, it is I who have chosen you.”

The ERI meet three times a year for four days. The first few meetings were very difficult : the difficulty of the language was a hard obstacle to overcome. Peoples, cultures, countries, very different work methods, good and bad experiences ! But then, we grew in trust and developed a deep friendship. The ERI became a community of faith.

What made this possible ? Prayer and sharing.

The ERI responsible couple insisted on their importance : a prayer to start the day, another one to finish it and also the Eucharist ; this has assured the presence of the Spirit. Together with quite a long time to share, this produced a deep mutual understanding.

And the work... ? The remainder of each day was filled with lengthy work sessions - tiring but very productive.

The International College which meets once a year; this has been another remarkable experience in many aspects: on the spiritual, religious, cultural, intellectual level, and the knowledge we have acquired simultaneously in history, geography, folklore and shall we say it, gastronomy ! We have met important people in the different countries but also remarkable people because of their humility and sense of duty.

International Leading Team

We also acted as liaison couple for the Euroafrican Zone. This was the opportunity to experience the strength of the Spirit.

Every visit to a Super-Region or to a Region attached to the ERI has made us really feel led by the hand of God. The Lord has done marvels !

We expressed ourselves in many languages we have not mastered. We were enriched by the diversity of the cultures but at the same time, we are amazed by the unity which prevails among all the team members of the different countries in the Zone : Portugal, Spain, Italy, Syria and many countries of French speaking Africa.

The Equipes Notre Dame are a true miracle ! The love, friendship, hospitality of the responsible couples, of the team members and of the spiritual counsellors throughout the Zone are a living testimony of the spirit of Christ. We will never be able to forget all these friends who welcomed us in the different countries. They are all in our hearts and in our prayers. A big thank you to all !

Constanza & Alberto ALVARADO

Members of the ERI, Responsible Couple for the Euroafrican Zone.

The Solidarity Fund

A Solidarity Fund to help Team Couples to attend the Lourdes International Gathering in September 2006 was launched at the Gatherings. This now stands at £900. If you or your Team would like to support this fund-raising venture please send donations to Nick & Veronique Furse, the GB Treasurers (address on the inside back cover), with cheques made out to "Teams of Our Lady".



How about a fund-raising event in your parish which would also raise the local profile of Teams ?

Father Caffarel Speaks To Us



PHASE 3: FACING A CRISIS: NEED OF A RULE

From “Vocation and Itinerary of Teams” (Part 5)
1959 Rome Pilgrimage

THE CRISIS

The Second World War ended; prisoners returned; many couples came together in teams. Did couples join because they were anxious to deepen their Christian life? It was not obvious. In some cases, it seemed that it was out of curiosity, or the attraction of human friendship, or out of snobbishness. In addition, long-standing members were side-tracked by the euphoria of the return of peace and by comfortable old friendships. Had the enthusiasm of the first groups been exhausted? So much hope had been placed in the formation of groups of couples; should the idea be abandoned? What did we need to do? What might the will of God be?

THE CHARTER OF THE TEAMS

It was the history of the Church, the study of religious life that gave me a solution. What could explain the holiness that blossomed in religious orders, despite internal and external crises - one essential factor was their rule. Why should we not offer a rule to married Christians?

I said to the small leading team: “Let us run the risk of losing three quarters of our numbers if faithfulness to the vocation of Teams demands it”.

Should the rule be more spiritual, putting the accent on the Gospel ideal, or more binding, setting out obligations? These two points of view needed to be reconciled. This is why your rule, the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady, sets out, in its first part, the objectives we must strive after and, in its second part, the means of working towards these objectives: the methods and obligations.

Understanding the ideal of Christian marriage

The first objective of the Charter was to present the ideal of Christian marriage and to identify the means that will allow couples to acquire a better understanding of it. In the preceding years, I had understood that, to awaken a generous spiritual life in married Christians, one had, first of all, to help them to discover the greatness of their vocation.

Father Caffarel Speaks To Us

How does the Charter help this discovery?

- by means of a *monthly study topic* on a subject of married and family spirituality. Your obligation to study this topic during the month, as husband and wife together, and then to send your reflections in writing to the couple that will lead the discussion at the monthly team meeting, offers several great advantages. In the first place, it leads you to study the subject in depth, to clarify your thoughts, to make a regular practice of helping one another, as husband and wife to study your faith and finally, during the monthly meeting, to have an exchange of views all the more fruitful as it has been well prepared by the discussion leaders, thanks to your replies.
- *The residential retreat*, at least every other year [later amended to yearly], is another favourable way of deepening your understanding of the Christian life.

Providing the means to live out the ideal

But the aim of the Charter is not only to help couples to discover the greatness of the Christian faith. It must also provide the means for couples to live it out. The Charter therefore mentions a series of obligations whose purpose is to help couples to progress in the Christian life by inviting them to turn to God, to a priest, to fraternal mutual help, to the support of a framework.

Seeking the help of God

I will first outline the many obligations that lead couples to seek the help of God:

- ***Conjugal and family prayer:*** Christ, present in the couple through the sacrament of marriage, expects in the first place that those with whom he lives should unite with him in praising the Father.
- ***Prayer at the monthly meeting:*** placed immediately after the meal and before the exchange of views on the study topic, this extended prayer is the highlight of the meeting; it is the time you value most.
- ***The antiphon to Our Lady*** [now the Magnificat] that all members of Teams say every evening, brings invisibly together all couples of the Movement in Europe, Africa, America... to ask Mary to help them to serve God ever more perfectly.
- It goes without saying that the *retreats*, presented above as a means of deepening religious knowledge, are also and above all a very special time of prayer.
- (Note - ***Daily quiet prayer and reading the Word of God regularly*** were not introduced as 'obligations' until 1970. Prior to that, members were encouraged to include such practices in their Rule of Life.)

Father Caffarel Speaks To Us

Seeking the help of a priest

Teams also offers couples the help of *the priest*. The role of team chaplain is of capital importance in our Movement. To priests who come and ask me questions about this role, I take pleasure in showing them that our Movement is an instrument placed in the priest's hands to help them to better fulfil their mission as spiritual educators of couples.

Mutual help

Another great help offered by Teams is mutual help: the spirit of mutual help, the obligations of mutual help between husband and wife, between couples, between teams. Mutual help is another word for charity. "*Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ*", wrote St Paul to the Galatians (Ga 6: 2).

- ***Mutual help between husband and wife***, said Pius XI in "Casti Connubii", is one of the essential ends of marriage. It should be a daily practice. The obligation of a monthly dialogue between spouses that we call the "*Sit-down*" can be considered as spiritual mutual help. Husband and wife together, placing themselves in the presence of God, seek to discern his mind and will for their marriage so as to accomplish them better. Who knows the number of couples that owe their human and spiritual balance to the practice of the Sit-down? *Conjugal and family prayer, studying the study topic together* are also means of mutual help between the spouses.
- ***Mutual help between couples*** is, in a way, the very reason for the existence of Teams. Every moment and activity of the monthly meeting is orientated towards this fraternal mutual help:
 - a) The *meal* and the '*pooling*' during which we share our news, our joys, our sorrows, our failures and successes and during which we seek each other's help and advice;
 - b) The "*sharing*", this painful and beneficial time during which we each report on how we have observed the obligations of the Charter.
 - c) The times of *prayer* and of *discussion* are also to be considered in the perspective of mutual help between couples.

But, as you know, mutual help is not limited to this. Couples help each other whenever needed.

- Finally, ***Mutual help between teams***. Our Movement is a team of Teams. Thus, longer established teams help those that start at the other end of the world, by letting them benefit from their experience. The

Father Caffarel Speaks To Us

whole Movement gains from the example of every team; for example, the apostolic dynamism of Brazilian teams, the brotherly love that made team members in Mauritius triumph over racial prejudices.

Strong framework and strict discipline

Our contemporaries - who are inclined to be individualistic and independent-minded - see nothing but restrictions, shackles and imprisonment in any form of framework. Far from making apologies for these, Teams offer their *strong framework* and *strict discipline* as a highly valued help.

Following the will of God

At the end of this long list of the help the Charter offers, you are asked to pause periodically and submit your life to the bright light of God's will, in order to check loyally and generously how faithful you are to it and to make resolutions that will help you to respond better to it.

- At the level of the individual, this method finds its application in the obligation of the *Rule of Life*. The *rule of life* specifies the obligations you feel you should impose on yourselves in order to conform better to what the Lord expects from them.
- At the level of the couple, it is the *Sit-down*.
- At the level of the team, it is the *Annual Review Meeting*, at which we ask ourselves, in all frankness and good will, what reforms we need to adopt, what step forward we need to consider for our team life to progress in prayer, study and brotherly love.

Consequences of introducing the Charter

When I proposed the Charter in 1947 I had my apprehensions. Would it be understood and accepted? Would it provide a necessary solution to the crisis? In fact, a few groups, who found the idea of a rule repugnant, left us – not without sadness, however, for they were very attached to the spirit of the Movement. Nevertheless, many accepted it, not so much out of any enthusiasm for it than out of trust. Since then, many couples have joined Teams, precisely because they offer a rule in which they find strength and security.

Part 6: “**Expansion and looking to the future**” - to follow

Note :- due to pressure for space, the editors needed to précis the original text. The full text is available from the editors on request.

Fatima 1994

Recollections of the International Gathering, Fatima, September 1994.

The opening ceremony took place on the huge plaza in front of the basilica. Each nationality lined up behind their country's flag and processed into the square. It was a tremendous sight, as thousands of team members made their way down to the altar that had been built in front of the basilica.

The heat was fierce even at mid-morning but everyone was dressed appropriately. The flag bearers made their way to the steps and flanked either side of the altar. They were in the shade but everyone else was in the bright sunshine.

It did not take long for the flag bearers to realise that in that shade, it was very chilly indeed. Short-sleeved shirts and flimsy blouses afforded no protection from what felt like subzero temperatures. Each couple clung together in what appeared to be an exemplary fashion, sending out a very real message about 'oneness'. Ready smiles were replaced by tense expressions. The rare but lucky ones, who had a cardigan or sweater loaned it in turn to others in an attempt to warm them up. Short sleeves were tugged in an effort to create warmth and it became increasingly difficult to concentrate on the wonderful opening liturgy. The end of the ceremony brought a huge sigh of relief from the flag bearers as they hurried to their friends in the sun.

The contingent from the UK had with them a special guest. As regional couple we had been asked to find a bishop to celebrate Mass at the Gathering, because each day is allotted to a different language-speaking group. The diaries of bishops do get pretty full and, with only a few months to go, we were not sure if that request could be fulfilled. We knew team members who were involved in diocesan work and well placed to check the availability of their bishop, so an urgent call went out to them. It was Joe and Teresa Hunter, sector couple for Scotland at the time, who solved the problem. Their Archbishop (now Cardinal), Keith Patrick O'Brien, an old school friend of Joe, graciously accepted the invitation.

The Archbishop made it clear that he wanted to be present for the five days of the Gathering and to participate fully. He rejected the dining place reserved for him with other members of the clergy so that he could eat with team couples in their

Fatima 1994

hotels. Each meal-time he was met and 'escorted' to join another group of English-speakers, bearing in mind that these were mostly from countries other than G.B. He certainly didn't want it, but a round of applause greeted him at each hotel. His easy and pleasant manner endeared him to everyone he met, even those who didn't speak English.

In Fatima there was a constant happy 'buzz' as thousands of our people chattered, found 'old' friends, or tried to communicate with other nationalities. And yet, the request to pause for a minute of silence, during a prayerful procession to Our Lady's shrine, resulted in an amazing quietness and stillness that enabled us to hear only birdsong.

Apart from those occasions of coming together for special liturgies and talks, there were exceptional times with our mixed team. Wonderful people! We met as a group in the hotel and encouraged by the organisers made a 'pilgrimage', to the tiny hamlet where the visionaries had lived and to see for ourselves the kind of land where they tended their sheep. In the course of that pilgrimage our team sought places to stop for prayerful reflection and discussion. There were few places to hide from the sun but the chance to rest was appreciated by the couples and our priest.

We could go on recalling many memories of that Gathering. But our final one must be - watching several hundred of our priests, deacons and religious process to the altar. An impressive sight, and a very visible reminder of the cherished contribution they make to our Movement.

We cannot stress too much the unique atmosphere at International Gatherings. It brings home vividly that we are an International movement, embracing different cultures and many languages all with a single bond to develop our married spirituality by using the ways and methods of the movement which have now stood the test of time for more than 60 years.

Why not join us at Lourdes on 16 to 21 September 2006 - the booking form is on the website, or from Tom and Maureen Hoban,

Tom and Maureen Hoban

Prayers For December

from the Lourdes Study Topic 1

Meditation John 4: 5-15

On the way he came to the Samaritan town called Sychar near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give me something to drink." His disciples had gone into town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew, how is it you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?" - Jews, of course, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied to her, "If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, 'give me something to drink,' you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you life-giving water." "You have no bucket, Sir," she answered, "and the well is deep: how do you get this life-giving water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?" Jesus replied, "Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life." "Sir," said the woman, "Give me some of that water, so I may never be thirsty again, or come here again to draw water."

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 36: 7-11

**In you is the source of life,
by your light we see the light**

1. How precious, God, is your faithful love.
So the children of Adam
Take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
2. They feast on the bounty of your house,
you let them drink from your delicious streams;
in you is the source of life,
by your light we see the light.
3. Maintain your faithful love to those who acknowledge you,
and your saving justice to the honest of heart.
Do not let the foot of the arrogant overtake me
or wicked hands drive me away.

Concluding Prayer

God our Father, may we recognise you when we are thirsty, and accept your offer of life-giving water. **Amen**

Man in search of meaning to his life

Throughout history, mankind has sought the meaning of life. Different cultures have come up with different answers. But the truest answer is the one each person must find within himself or herself – the fruit of a profound search which leads to his Creator.

Search for meaning

Every human being searches for meaning. What is the purpose of life? We all ask ourselves this question sooner or later. It is a question present at every turning point in our life, inescapable and challenging.

We are all searching for happiness and peace. In a world riddled with contradictions, conflicts, injustice and disorder, we try to find a little peace. But often we race from one experience to another, from one “mentor” to another, without ever finding certainty.

Every life has its meaning and each individual must look inside himself and reflect on what is going on in his life, to find his answer. The meaning of a life does not depend on how successful we are or how prestigious our careers, but in our attitudes and sense of purpose. The daily care of a mother for her children is no less important than the work of a head of state in the service of his country.

Seeking Answers

Everyone looks for an answer to the question : “What is the purpose of life?” because “... *unlike animals, whose future lies in their past, since it has been determined by nature, man, a being of free-will and therefore master of his destiny, is not determined by his past ; he is able to project himself into his future ; and, above all, he is able to draw up a plan of what he hopes and intends to become. This has been the same throughout history. Different civilisations – Greek, Roman, medieval Christian and modern civilisation – ... have all drawn up a ‘blueprint for mankind’.* But now there is a difference : *whereas civilisations of the past, were largely homogeneous, and proposed a single agenda, modern civilisation is culturally and ideologically pluralistic and offers numerous and differing propositions, from which stem different and contradicting plans for the future. Of these, the three most significant are the following: the technological, the consumerist and the libertarian agendas*”.

a) **The Technological Agenda**

“In this vision, man and the world are regulated by scientific rationality, where nothing is left to chance, where imagination and feeling play no part, and instead everything

Study Topic - December 2005

is organised by computer, in order to do away with error and waste, social disorders and suffering [...]. This agenda relies entirely on science – which can, it is believed, solve all the problems of industrial growth – and which relies, above all, on human reason”.

b) The Consumerist Agenda

“In this agenda, man is seen as a being who has ever increasing ‘needs’, which are to be satisfied by producing material goods of ever better quality to be consumed in ever greater quantities. It seeks to bring about a society of material well-being, a society of possessions, in which each person must have the means to answer all his needs, both natural and artificially created”.

c) The Libertarian Agenda

“In this agenda, man is seen as a being of ‘desires’, which are repressed by society and its laws, by morality and its ‘taboos’ and by religion and its commands. It is therefore proposed to free man from any ‘oppressing law’ and from any ‘repressive morality’, in order to enable him to enjoy his right to freedom. It is hoped to build a society of freedom, a society in which everyone is free to satisfy his ‘needs’ in the way he finds best”.

(Raffaele Sacco, in *L'Observatore Romano*, May 2003)

We are all influenced by these three visions to a greater or lesser extent. But we find them unsatisfying, leaving us still anxiously searching for meaning or despairing of ever finding an answer. The true path is not to be found in any of these agendas (technological, consumerist or libertarian), but rather in understanding the meaning of what it is to be truly human.

Questions for our Sit Down

From a purely human point of view, without making reference to our faith (which can sometimes mask our misgivings and fears) try to give an honest answer to the following questions:



- Q** *What is our own answer to the question of what life is all about? Who or what has helped us to come to these answers ?*
- Q** *Who and what is important to me in my daily life? How do I give proof of my choice of values? Who am I really ? What do I expect of myself ?*
- Q** *What set of values have we chosen to live by together as a couple and what do we do to prove it ?*

Study Topic - December 2005

Questions for the Team meeting



Share some of the thoughts from your sit-down and consider some of the following:

- Q *How easily are we influenced by the three visions in the study topic ?*
- Q *Do we share our own answers to the meaning of life with our spouse and family ?*
- Q *What are the obstacles in this ?*

Notes

Additional Study Material - extracts from writers on the month's topic
- can be found on the Teams of Our Lady Website

Prayers For January

from the Lourdes Study Topic 2

Meditation John 14: 21, 23b-29

“Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me; and whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and reveal myself to him.” “Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home with him. Anyone who does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not my own: it is the word of the Father who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away and shall return. If you loved me you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now, before it all happens, so that when it does happen, you may believe.”

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 85: 7-14

Show us, Lord, your faithful love, grant us your saving help.

1. I am listening. What is God's message ?
Yahweh's message is peace
For his people, for his faithful,
if only they renounce their folly
2. His saving help is near for those who fear him,
his glory will dwell in our land.
Faithful Love and Loyalty join together,
Saving Justice and Peace embrace
3. Loyalty will spring up from the earth,
and Justice will lean down from heaven.
Yahweh will himself give prosperity,
and our soil will yield its harvest.
4. Justice will walk before him,
treading out a path.

Concluding Prayer

Lord, we thank you for your words “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you...do not be afraid.” Centre our lives on you, Lord. Fill us with your love and peace. **Amen**

Study Topic - January 2006

Peace & Justice ?

We are all seeking peace, but too often we are not living in peace. Are we are mistaken about peace ? Jesus, our master, gave us his peace: a true peace which does not ignore justice or forgiveness.

Peace

“ Pursue peace, look for it.” (Ps 34, 15). *Shalom*, the word of the original hebrew text, describes a peace which has richness, well-being, prosperity, and integrity, which implies nature as human, not disfigured, not violent, not oppressed, but completely reconciled. This peace does not happen by itself; one must look for it, discover it, learn it, pursue it. And pursuing it, does not mean grabbing it, but striving to reach it. The search for peace must be constant. And yet peace will never be permanent: every step forward and every success is only a small seed, a simple brick, a sign. History, personal or general, moves forward only at the cost of continual shatterings and reconstructions; it is not static, but dynamic that is why peace which is obtained one day can never be stable or permanent.

Despite this, we often associate the word peace with something static. We rest in peace, we can sit down in peace. We consider peace as the absence of conflict. However for us Christians, peace is a gift from the Spirit and should be a continual challenge. Jesus leaves us his peace. The coming of Christ on earth is a message for the people of good will. The resurrection of Christ brings peace to the frightened apostles and gives them, together with peace, the strength needed to proclaim the Good News.

There is nothing more pleasant for people to hear than talk of peace. To close the gap between war and peace we only need a little good will. But it is more complicated than this – as Isaiah said “Peace is the fruit of justice.” (Is 32, 15-20).

Justice

Recently, with the campaigns to end world poverty, we have become more aware that there is no peace without justice -

- as long as the goods of the earth are so unjustly distributed
- as long as there is war
- as long as there are violent political & economic systems; even if suffered in resigned silence
- while the rich get richer and the poor get poorer

Study Topic - January 2006

- while there are demarcations between East and West, North and South, between the rich countries and the third world sinking in debt and on the brink of ruin.

Faced with the thousands of acts of public and private violence happening every day, each one of us feels like an accomplice to war and injustice.

“If we do not have the courage to say that if arms must not be sold they should also not be produced, that the politics of the blocs are unfair, that erasing the Third World's debt is only a discount on what we owe to two thirds of the world, that the logic behind unilateral disarmament is similar to that of the Gospel, that active non-violence is a criteria of Christian practice, that certain aspects of conscientious objection are signs of a greater love for the earthly city ... if we do not have the courage to say all that, we will remain smoking candle-ends instead of being Pascal candles.” (Dom. Tonino Bello, bishop).

Justice goes together with peace in a constant and dynamic relationship. When justice is injured, peace is damaged; when peace is shattered, there is no justice. So we call for law and order, and truth. As John-Paul II said, “There is no peace without justice and there is no justice without forgiveness.”

Peace is a gift we receive when we gain forgiveness, but do we build on this by seeking justice for all ? As Christian couples and families, we have a duty to raise our children in an atmosphere of justice and peace and to encourage Christian values and attitudes in them so as to contribute to the future peace and justice of the world.

Peace & Justice In Unity

“Love and faithfulness will meet, righteousness and peace will embrace” : verse 10 from Psalm 85 links two important concepts of marriage - love and faithfulness - with peace and justice. Justice is an integral part of the search for peace. In every human situation, lack of justice damages relationships - mistrust settles in, abuse and discord, conflict and war become inevitable. We cannot say, “Peace be with you” to another human being if he or she lacks the basic necessities of life.

John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris* starts with the words “Peace on earth, a deep longing of human beings of all times...”. Many of us long for peace and justice, but we must start with ourselves -

*“If you want peace in the world, you need to make peace in your country,
if you want peace in your country, you need to make peace in the towns,
if you want peace in the towns, you need to make peace in the families,
if you want peace in the families, you need to make peace within yourself.”*

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Questions for our Sit Down

- Q What does “ making peace” mean for us ?
- Q What are the movers of forgiveness for us ?
- Q How do we understand justice in our marriage ? When are the times when we experience a feeling of injustice in our relationship ?



Questions for the Team meeting

Taking your thoughts from the sit-down to the Team meeting:

- Q How do we manage our conflicts and our disagreements as a couple and as a team ?
- Q Are we able to ask for forgiveness and to accept the forgiveness which comes to us from the other ?
- Q How do we educate ourselves and our children in the values of justice and peace ?
- Q How do we, in our daily lives, respond to the imbalance of wealth in the world around us ?



Notes

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- can be found on the Teams of Our Lady Website

Prayers For February

from the Lourdes Study Topic 3

Meditation John 17: 6-11

“I have revealed your name to those whom you took from the world to give me. They were yours and you give them to me, and they have kept your word. Now at last they have recognised that all you have given me comes from you for I have given them the teaching you gave to me, and they have indeed accepted it and know for certain that I came from you, and have believed that it was you who sent me. It is for them that I pray. I am not praying for the world but for those you have given me, because they belong to you. All I have is yours and all you have is mine, and in them I am glorified. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us.”

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 121

My help comes from Yahweh who made heaven and earth

1. I lift my eyes up to the mountains,
where is my help to come from ?
My help comes from Yahweh
who made heaven and earth.
2. May he save your foot from stumbling;
may he, your guardian, not fall asleep !
You see – he neither sleeps nor slumbers,
The guardian of Israel.
3. Yahweh is your guardian, your shade,
Yahweh, at your right hand.
By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.
4. Yahweh guards you from all harm
Yahweh guards your life
Yahweh guards your comings and goings,
henceforth and for ever.

Concluding Prayer

Loving Lord, you call us to follow you in the adventure of the kingdom. Help us when we are fearful at the challenge and cost of it all. Father, enable us to follow the way of Jesus in our lives. **Amen**

The Universal Scope of Faith

Our faith is founded on Love, and Love is only true if it embraces people of all cultures and all religions. Sometimes our zeal as believers leads us to restrict our love to our brothers and sisters in the faith. This is wrong. The

Lord was clear: he came to save all human beings.

We must therefore live our faith in an open and universal spirit. We must be able to broaden our horizons and to recognise the value of “otherness” and so see the face of Christ in everyone.

The Value of Otherness, the Basis of Ecumenism

In the 20th Century we became aware of otherness, of the stranger in our society, and the need for dialogue. After hundreds of years during which people had a negative attitude to the “different”, recent decades have taught us that we must not merely tolerate diversity, but that we must positively accept the mystery of the other. We must get used to seeing this as an opportunity for communion and not as an excuse for exclusion.

Are we really true to Christ if we have contempt for people who are different? The New Testament teaches us that we must promote truth in charity. This means beginning with a friendly acceptance of the ways of others.

Unity of faith as opposed to division of faiths

Christians have begun to find the divisions that have marked their history, intolerable divisions that have led to hatred, schisms and wars, contrary to the call of Jesus to be “one”. Among Christians who are convinced that everything must be done to restore a unity of faith, many accept that there is a diversity of ways of believing in the one Lord. Unity need not mean uniformity but a recognition by the Churches of each other as real sisters at the service of one another.

For Christians to seek communion with each other is not a ploy to exert power over non-Christians. Christ’s message to follow him is to practise the commandment of mutual love, to serve others - especially the poorest and weakest; to forgive time and again and to seek reconciliation. Our towns have become increasingly multi-cultural. The ethnic, cultural and religious mix sometimes challenges our identity and security. To *“have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have”* (1 Phil. 3:15) has become an almost daily requirement, to which we must respond with a genuine readiness to listen and welcome those of different religions.

Study Topic - February 2006

Do we encourage divisions?

We must be careful. It is not just theologians, churches and religions which foster division. We ourselves may secretly harbour divisive feelings : in the name of our faith, we may run the risk of encouraging divisions through insensitivity and lack of understanding. We are called to live in our times, confident that God will not abandon us. Since time immemorial, God has chosen to appear to us in the person of the stranger – whatever his religion – in a way we may not immediately understand.

God calls us in Jesus and invites us to be witnesses of reconciliation every day so as to heal the great rifts in the world. In our daily life, we constantly come across the divisions that separate us, - men from women, one ethnic group from another, separate communities and families, one Christian denomination from another, Christians from Jews, Jews from Muslims, etc... There are divisions in our homes and our workplaces. We are called to heal them through a love that does not emphasise differences, but accepts and values them. Peace is none other than “friendliness in difference”. In a time of cultural and religious diversity, we must try, as Christians, to listen genuinely, to welcome kindly and to help freely and unselfishly. Like the early Christians, this will be our distinguishing mark and our way to proclaim Christ.

Questions for our Sit Down



Coming into contact with ‘difference’ is a daily experience. Let us ask ourselves:

- Q** *Differences in religious faith remain a serious problem for the world. Christians and Muslim, Catholics and Orthodox. Much progress is needed to achieve a true religious dialogue and a genuine ecumenical initiative. What are we doing to move in the right direction ?*
- Q** *Where we live, we often meet people who do not believe in Christ. What is our attitude towards them? Arrogance and superiority, or respect and dialogue ?*
- Q** *As Christians, we assume we are welcoming to others. The reality is sometimes quite different. Have we experienced direct contact with ‘difference’, for example with an immigrant of another culture, and how did we react to it ?*
- Q** *Marriage is a state where there is a deep encounter with another, with someone different from ourselves. What useful resources from our married life have we learned to call upon to deal with our differences ?*

Study Topic - February 2006

Questions for the Team meeting



Share the answers from your sit-down and then consider the following:

- Q** *What obstacles in us and around us make this journey more difficult ?*
-

Notes

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- can be found on the Teams of Our Lady Website

notice board

Lent 2006 Silent Retreat

Come and relax in a peaceful and prayerful atmosphere and let the presence of God "work" on you.

**Friday 30th March
to
Sunday 2nd April 2006
St Peter's Grange,
Prinknash Abbey**

"Only the experience of silence and of prayer offers the appropriate setting in which the truest, the most faithful and the most coherent knowledge of the mystery of Christ can mature and develop"

Pope John Paul II

The retreat will be given by a monk from the abbey

For further information & application phone:

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Announcement

**Next Swanwick Conference
June 29 to July 1 2007**

Teams International Gathering



16th - 21st September 2006

Have you returned your booking form yet?

Team Prayer The Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my saviour;
because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,
for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is His name, and His mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear Him.
He has shown the power of His arm,
He has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry He has filled with good things, the rich He sent empty away.
He has come to the help of Israel His servant, mindful of His mercy
- according to the promise He made to our ancestors,
of His mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.

Our Lady of the Home, pray for us.

final thought . . . or two
there is more to life . . .
than increasing its speed