



## Newsletter for the GB Regions

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September 2006, October 2006, November 2006

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## Newsletter Editors

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If you require further copies of the Newsletter, or have changed your address, please contact your local Regional Couple - see addresses on the inside back cover.

# From Michael & Kay Vadon

Dear Friends

When you receive this letter we will be thinking of the Teams Gatherings which are imminent.

Those of you who are able to attend the International Gathering in Lourdes from 16 to 21 September will be making their preparations for this inspiring event, joined by members from the other regions which make up our new Super Region – Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, Malawi and South Africa. There we will



meet and share with Teams couples from the four corners of the Earth. We continue to be amazed at how we meet Teams couples who are strangers to us and within minutes we are sharing deeply in complete confidence and trust: experiencing the true spirit of Teams.

Thanks to some generous contributions from our three G.B. Regions and Ireland, we have been able to assist some couples who might not otherwise have been able to attend.

We know that many teams have been using the study topics in preparation for Lourdes, which have been published in this newsletter since Dec 2005. We hope that you have found them useful.

Our own three regional gatherings are to be held on Saturday 14 October: The Northern Britain one near Darlington, the Central Britain one in Ealing and the Southern Britain one in Southampton. The common theme this year is **"I Have Called You By Your Name"** which should help us to consider our own vocations as married couples. This is a chance to meet other Teams couples and spend a day sharing ideas and enjoying again the wonderful spirit of Teams. Each gathering will have mass or prayers, a guest speaker, workshops, a chance for a sit-down and a mixed team meeting. You will all have had more detailed information about your own gathering from your own regional couple whom you can contact if you have any queries (addresses and phone numbers are at the back of this newsletter).

Traditionally the Responsible Couple of each Team attends, but other couples are most welcome. If you have not yet returned your booking form, please send it off quickly, or e-mail your details. Time is getting short for the organisers.

**Michael & Kay Vadon**

Regional Couple

Regional of Central Britain

# From Father Harry Curtis

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Jesus Christ,

Time is a very odd thing. I know that's not a new thought, but it is something that struck me afresh when I sat down to write this letter. Because of the needs of editors and printers I am writing this in June, but you will not be reading it until September at the earliest. That means that although we are all living "now", your "now" is not the same as mine. Our time is different. We share an awful lot of past – for example, last Christmas is past for all of us. Hopefully, we also share a future – next Christmas is in the future for all of us. But what about those months between my "now" and yours? Will England win the football world cup? Will the weather be good for my holiday in July? Will pigs fly in August? Based on experience I have to say that it seems unlikely, but the point is that I don't know because now, for me, that is all in the future. But you know, because in your "now" that is all in the past. And yet you and I are all living NOW!



By this stage I expect you are thinking that this is a desperate man with too much time on his hands, and you would be half right, but bear with me – hopefully this is going somewhere.

We have reached the stage of saying that the present moment is always changing, and yet it is always "now". Your "now" and my "now" are separated by a couple of months; what links them are these words that I am writing. I am writing them now, and you are reading them now. They are as present to me as they are to you. As long as paper and ink survive, the written word is eternal and is ever-now.

**Through the words on this page  
we are brought together in time**

So let's apply this thought to something more important than this letter: the Bible. The Bible is full of written words, almost all of them written between two and three thousand years ago. But when we read them we are reading them now. Each writer wrote in his "now" and we read them in our "now". Through the words on the page we are brought together in time. St. Paul wrote his Letter to the Romans nearly two thousand years ago, but his words are present to us when we read them. Isaiah wrote his prophecies about the Suffering Servant of the Lord over two and a half thousand years ago, but when we read them on Good Friday they are present to us.

# From Father Harry Curtis

At the start of His Public Ministry, Jesus went to the synagogue in Nazareth and they handed Him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He opened it and read, "*The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for He has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.*" Then He told them, "*This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen*" (see Luke 4:16-22). As we read those words today, they are as present to us as they were to the people in the synagogue that day.

One of the endeavours that we try to complete in the Teams of Our Lady is to read a piece of the Bible each day. I know that this is not always an easy thing to do faithfully, mainly because a working day does not seem to have a convenient time to pick up a Bible and read it, but it is often a matter of priorities. How much do we really want to read the Bible? Is there that much point in reading something written so long ago? Well, yes there is. When we read those words, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and all the others reach out to us across the centuries and millennia, and most important of all, Jesus Himself reaches out to us and He speaks to us now. It is perhaps put rather well in this hymn to the apostles, and I find it helps me to come to the Bible with a fresh heart:

O fathers of our ancient faith,  
With all the heavens we sing your fame  
Whose sound went forth in all the earth  
To tell of Christ, and bless His name.

You took the gospel to the poor,  
The word of God alight in you,  
Which in our day is told again:  
That timeless word, for ever new.

You told of God who died for us  
And out of death triumphant rose,  
Who gave the truth that made us free,  
And changeless through the ages goes.

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost  
Whose gift is faith that never dies:  
A light in darkness now, until  
The day-star in our hearts arise.

Fr. Harry Curtis

# News From North Shields

Dear Friends

Life in the Teams covers the whole gamut of human experience, but rarely goes from the highs to lows with the speed experienced recently by North Shields 1.

On Sunday May 28th, Ted and Mabel Duffy (N.Shields 1) celebrated their Golden Wedding with Mass in St Gregory's Church, South Shields, with the Team's Icon proudly at the foot of the altar. In the Mass they and other married couples renewed their vows using the format printed in the study theme for June 2006.

Within five years of being married, Ted and Mabel were with others, original members of the first fully English speaking team in the country and the first in the North East. North Shields 1 and 2 were piloted by Harry and Clothilde Meigh, who travelled all the way from Cheltenham each month.

In a speech at their celebration dinner, attended by over a hundred family, guests and team members, Ted paid tribute to the Teams and the formative effect it had on their whole married life and upbringing of their family. "The fairy tales end with --and they all lived happily ever after.--" he said "the Teams of Our Lady make that true, by prayer, study and discussion together."

Five days later, they again rejoiced in the celebration of Una Humble's 70th Birthday. A great night of Irish music and dance with family and friends.

Almost the next day we were all saddened by the death of Sean Browne (Newcastle 1) on 4th June. Sean and Marie Browne had previously been a sector couple and in the last few years our liaison couple.

The next day we heard that our long time friend and Team member, Morrie Callan, had died at the age of 88 in York. It was at the invitation of Tony and Morrie Callan that Harry and Clothilde came up to the North East and started the Teams here, making those regular monthly trips from Gloucestershire to Tyneside all those years ago.

Like our friends in Cullercoats 1 (Newsletter, June 2006, p.6), North Shields 1 is considerably reduced by age and infirmity, but three couples continue to meet and pray together monthly. The Team Endeavours being, they say, wound into the essential fabric of their lives

**North Shields 1.**

**Ted & Mabel Duffy, Ernie & Una Humble, David & Mary Clyde.**

# Teams Diary

We list below future events throughout our Regions – some organised by Sectors, some by the Regions. We hope that, by advertising all events in this newsletter, if there is an event in a neighbouring area that you would like to attend, then you will feel free to do so.

Sep	1-3	<b>North East</b> Retreat, Minsteracres	David & Eileen Hopper Tel: 01207 590 726
Sep	2	<b>North West</b> Teams Walk in the Lake District	Julie & Eddie English Tel: 01925 726654
Sep	3	<b>London South East - Picnic,</b> Knowle House, Sevenoaks	Rosemary & Michael Cox Tel: 0208 466 0573
Sep	3	<b>South Midlands - Picnic</b> Thornton Convent	Paul & Clare Callaghan Tel: 01295 660 652
Sep	16-21	<b>International Gathering</b> Lourdes, France	Tom & Maureen Hoban Tel: 0191 386 7033

## Regional Gatherings

### “I Have Called You By Your Name”

Oct	14	<b>Central Britain Gathering</b> St Stephen's, London, W13 8HD	Mike & Kay Vadon Tel: 0208 840 2592
Oct	14	<b>Northern Britain Gathering</b> Eaglescliffe, nr Darlington	Peter & Di Wordsworth Tel: 01642 827 993
Oct	14	<b>Southern Britain Gathering</b> St Mary's College, Southampton	Chris & Frankie Lane Tel: 01329 310 785
Nov	25	<b>Surrey &amp; Sussex - B'day Party</b> St John's Church, Farncombe	Graham & Zoff Stott Tel: 01483 576 944
Dec	tba	<b>London South East</b> Meal	Rosemary & Michael Cox Tel: 0208 466 0573
Dec	4-7	<b>West - Advent Retreat</b> Belmont Abbey, Hereford	<a href="http://www.belmontabbey.org.uk">www.belmontabbey.org.uk</a>

## 2007

Mar	25-27	<b>Lenten Retreat</b> St Peter's Grange, Prinknash Abbey	Harry & Clotilde Meigh Tel: 01242 514 146
June July	29 to 1	<b>Super-Regional Gathering</b> Weekend Gathering at Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick	
July	15-20	<b>International College</b> Ushaw	

# Ideas For Simple Meals

## How do we do it?

### Shared?

### Or Left To The Host?

**W**hen we first joined teams, many years ago, the responsible couple in our new team were of different faiths. Not only were they of different denominations but they were also of different nationalities. Tony was the Catholic from Australia and Cecile an Anglican from America. We have good memories of those early days in teams. We didn't think a great deal about the food at the time. However, we were elated, as a young married couple, to have discovered something in teams that we needed without really knowing it beforehand. One thing that we still remember vividly was our meeting on Thanksgiving Day when Cecile served up Pumpkin Pie! We are not suggesting that this would be an ingredient for a simple meal but something special for a special occasion is really acceptable.

Tony and Cecile have long since returned to Australia. Since those early days we have experienced a wide variety of shared meals, not only in our own team but also whilst attending team shuffles and meetings at Team Gatherings. One thing that we firmly believe is that although the meal is a very important part of the team meeting it should not eclipse the rest of the meeting. It is around the table that we share our news. The meal is a vehicle for that sharing. Not only do we share our news but we also share the food. This too is an important part of our team life.

One of the inherent risks that a team takes is to leave it to the host couple to prepare the meal. If this is the case great care must be taken that the next meal is not better (or worse) than the last. It also places the team under great stress in that we are not all Delia Smiths. We believe that each couple should share in the preparation of the meal. This means that each couple should bring something to the table. Our own team has a food rota so that the host couple provide soup and bread and each of the other couples bring such items as cheese, cheese biscuits, cold cooked meats and grapes and bananas. At one meeting a couple would bring cheese biscuits and to the next, cold meats and so on. This may not sound too exciting but it places no one under stress and we all look forward to what meats may turn up! Of course we drink water and have coffee or tea at some stage. Now some teams may find that they cope quite well with sandwiches and this is perfectly acceptable, the emphasis being on a simple meal.

# Ideas For Simple Meals

Some team couples may find it difficult to seat everyone around a table. This again should not present a problem as the meal can be shared quite happily on our laps, again a challenge for the simple meal.

**O**ur daughter recently gave a birthday party for our three grandchildren. There were 29 children in all but the food was prepared in advance and each child had an identical plate of goodies. They all thoroughly enjoyed themselves, coping with mini Pringles, chocolate fingers and a variety of finger foods all seated on the floor.

On reflection, this is what a team meeting should be, not something to worry about but an enjoyable occasion. There are times when something special is called for, perhaps a special wedding anniversary or birthday. This is the time when we are allowed to go over the top, but again we emphasise that it will be a whole team activity and not left up to the host couple. Each team will find its own solution to the meal. Finally, there are teams in other countries who will not find it quite so easy to prepare even the simple meal that we have advocated so try to bear this in mind when you begin to share the team meal and include them in your Grace.

**Anna & Peter**  
Fareham 1

## Sean Browne RIP

We have learnt that Sean Browne died recently. Sean and Marie were Sector Couple for the North East a few years ago, and were a great encouragement to us in our time as South Midlands Sector Couple. An obituary will appear in the next issue.

Antony & Janet

## Home's A Holy Place

### **In the complex fabric of family life, Christ is to be found.**

And even where there is suspicion and deceit, married life must remain an epiphany of mystery.

My brother Joseph had Down's syndrome. Every so often, in my dreams, he still comes storming back to deeply disturb my life. My mother adored him. And during those most difficult times, especially when Joseph's severe diabetes demanded unrelenting attention, she was sustained by the certainty that in caring for Joseph she was entertaining angels unaware. If I had my mother back now I would tell her that it was even more than that. It was the Lord himself who was there.

The same is true for every member of every family. Even today, when the notion of “family” is undergoing radical change, it is still true. The mystics believed that God is born anew in every child. “Here comes God again”, they would say, “in deep disguise. The seed of God becomes God. Just as the pear seed becomes the pear tree, and the hazel seed becomes the hazel, so too, God's seed in us becomes God.”

And all of this happens in the living rooms and kitchens of every family. The home is, indeed, a holy place.

It is the nursery of divinity. And, as with our Joseph, and all those who are different, it can be a long nursery with no graduation day. As midwives of mystery, the work of many parents is unrelenting. Their whole lives are spent in persuading and coaxing, with the mother-tongue, God's incarnate, unfamiliar beauty from within reluctant shadows into the light of day.

When parents are gathered on Judgement Day, the Lord will gently say: “I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink, naked and you clothed me, homeless and you sheltered me, imprisoned and you visited me. Come; enter the kingdom I have prepared for you.” And the parents will be bewildered and ask: “Are you sure, Lord? When did we see you hungry and feed you?”

The Lord will reply, “Do you really not know? Do you not remember the way you carefully fed me when I was a baby; the way you loved me into my first steps across the kitchen into your arms, and later, my bigger steps into the waiting world. All the time, that was me you were nourishing. Yes, of course it was your child. But it was me, your God, as well.”

**The seed of God  
becomes God**

# From “The Tablet”

“When were you thirsty, Lord?” they asked. “I needed your love and comfort. You held me to your breast and I could hear your heart. As tenderly as the sun opens the daisies in the morning, your gentle voice and loving eyes opened my soul to the mystery of my true identity. I, your God, became your vulnerable child so as to experience your tenderness to me.”

“But naked, Lord? And Homeless?” The Lord replied, “I was born naked and homeless and you sheltered me, first in your womb and then in your arms. In my rebellious years I left home, blinded by the lesser lights and loves. You did not judge me; your great heart never doubted me; you forgave me, you believed in me, you drew me into a higher way of life-making, light-making and love-making. No matter what, on my return home, your face at the door was always a smiling sacrament of welcome.”

“But imprisoned, Lord? Surely not!” The lord paused. “There are many kinds of prison. When I was imprisoned in my fears I cried out in the night; and you came and lifted me from behind the bars of my cot and folded me in your arms. Years later you lifted me from behind the bars of bigger fears - fears of my own inadequacy, of my own intense emotions, of the terror and beauty of the unknown life ahead.”

Perhaps nowhere more than in the heartfelt dynamic of married life, where the human spirit stretches itself, in its trusting and letting go, to the limits of its potential, is this expression of incarnate love more clearly sacramentalised. We discover that every ordinary human home is the unexpected place where God dwells. Even where there is suspicion and deceit, married life must remain an epiphany of mystery; a participation in God’s own challenging essence. Anytime we say “I’m trying to forgive you” or “I still believe in you” to each other, that is also the ever-present expression of God’s incarnate covenant within us, constantly healing and completing all that is imperfect.

Holy Week teaches us that we can only experience the Risen Christ when we have undergone some kind of loss or disillusionment. Most of these “little deaths”, and the more awful ones, too, are found within the world of the home. Because of its potential for creating joy, family life can also be a den of destruction. Where is the divine heart in the way we crush the life out of each other behind closed doors? And yet, is not the very hopelessness of our lives the only place for hope to happen? Where else, if not in this loveless noise, and against all the odds, can the faint music of Easter be recognised within us?

There is an urgent energy within our domestic world waiting to be released into the Church. The home is a cauldron of emotions, all now charged with redemptive presence; for that reason it is also a powerhouse of renewal within the Church. The passions and prayers, the storms and whispers, the blame and the blessing - are all part of that graced energy. Everything that happens in the unbelievably complex fabric of family life, the light and

# From “The Tablet”

the dark of it, has God's life-giving heartbeat within it. And we go to Mass to remember and to celebrate together the extraordinary revelation that no moment is “merely” human or worldly, but rather a place of grace; every threshold a door to heaven.

With this vital “secret” in mind, we insisted on designing a welcoming living room into the foyer of the lovely new church we built a few years ago. In this hearth, people sit round the open fire, tell stories, read poetry, or chat. And each day, too, the same sacramental space is used for celebrating the Eucharist; nature and grace again embrace on the one small kitchen table of life. We placed these words on the mantelpiece so as to always remember: “Smiling broadly with great delight, Jesus, our only true host, sets a place for absolutely everyone at this table. He embraces every family, each with its own stories to tell him - the hurting and the healing, the sinning and the gracing. He then sits down and explains to us, amazed, how those ordinary moments of raw human life are his life too. His eyes are twinkling as we struggle to understand what he is telling us. Comforted, we eat and drink his words with the bread and wine of joy. He kisses each one of us before we leave. Our hearts are burning within us as we recall his parting words of comfort - our kitchens, too, are little Bethlehems, our breakfast tables are small altars, our whole lives, with their calvaries and resurrections, are one long consecration and communion. But now we are so slow to leave him. ‘Don't be sad,’ he says, ‘I'll be waiting for you at home.’”

Daniel O'Leary is a priest of the Leeds diocese, based at Our Lady of Graces presbytery, Tonbridge Crescent, Kinsley, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF9 5HA.

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# From Our Super Region

Dear Friends in Teams

**You may have been wondering** what has been happening since the Transatlantic Super Region was launched last autumn. In January, just a couple of weeks after the formal start, we travelled to Paris to spend the weekend with Marin & Colette Voisin, the French Super Regional Couple. It was total immersion in French, but we survived, mainly because amongst their few words of English were the magic “cup of tea”, which was administered copiously whenever they saw our eyes beginning to glaze over. We



met the staff in the office in Rue de la Glacière (shared by the French SR and the ERI) and it was fascinating to see the way France has developed and the way they manage more than 2,700 teams. The Voisins have a long-term Pastoral Plan, but they are also great believers in “petit pas” – little steps. We are very grateful to them for their hospitality and taking the time to help us beginners get started. We left tired, but with lots of ideas.

Back home, we set ourselves a number of priorities, but very rapidly discovered that we were in the thick of preparations for Lourdes and were cast in the role of international travel agents! As we write, travel plans are almost in place for 12 Trinidadians, one couple from Malawi, and one couple from South Africa to go to the Gathering in Lourdes. This has only been possible with the help of all the solidarity money raised in Great Britain and Ireland and an equivalent amount given by the international movement, for which we are very grateful.

Our first priority has been to get to know the constituent parts of the new Super Region, and to understand the diverse cultural situations that Teams couples live in around the world. We have moved on from “Where is Malawi?” to a better understanding of life for the team in Zomba. In this we have been helped by the Montfort Missionaries who have been operating in Malawi for almost 100 years. The Bishop of Zomba and Fr Callisto Baluwa, the team chaplain, are both Montfort Missionaries. Lucy & Prosperous will find life in Lourdes very different from their own country. (For instance, one of the team, a secondary school teacher, earns the equivalent of approx. £30 a month, half of which goes on maize for his wife and young family.) We are really looking forward to meeting them; though after exchanging lots of emails we feel we are already beginning to know them.

In May we were able to attend the regional gathering in Trinidad. They had chosen the topic Conflict Resolution and we were really impressed by the depth of sharing and the willingness to come to terms with what can be very difficult problems, both for a couple that

# From Our Super Region

is struggling, and for their team who can often feel helpless and uncertain what to do. And of course doing nothing does not improve the situation! Worse, the tensions can lead other couples to leave the team.

We stayed with five different couples and were privileged to become part of their family life, with its daily challenges of school runs, early starts and long commutes into work – in many ways very similar to the stresses and strains of life in GB and Ireland – but having to do it in temperatures that exceeded 30 degrees centigrade and high humidity. In all we met and ate with teams couples/families on 10 of the 13 days and received true Teams hospitality.

We also met Edward Gilbert, Archbishop of the Antilles, and had a most constructive and informative discussion about the role of the various Catholic groups in his plans for the archdiocese and in particular what Teams could do within the Marriage and Family Life Commission. Archbishop Edward is a master communicator doing a weekly live radio programme and writing a half page article every week for Catholic News on his plans for the future. His main themes at the moment are adult formation, introduction of the diaconate and getting the various groups all working together in the interest of the archdiocese.

The first weekend, we attended Mass and more than 100 teenage confirmation candidates were introduced to the congregation. This was a joyous occasion, greatly helped by the presence of a steel band – very different from a church organ! The next weekend, in Tobago, we happened upon confirmation itself, with Archbishop Edward. Again, this was a most inspiring occasion. We were all asked to stand, extend our right hand out over the candidates and pray that the Holy Spirit would come down on them and transform their lives. In his homily, Archbishop Edward made it very clear that, far from being the Sacrament of exit (certainly often the experience in GB), confirmation was the beginning of adult formation. These young people were about to embark upon 'post-confirmation classes' and the whole congregation was challenged to involve all these young people in the life of the parish.

Trinidad & Tobago may be a nation undergoing significant social change, but we left with the feeling that with Church leadership like that and the spirit of national pride embodied by their football team, the SOCA Warriors, they would do all right. Teams in Trinidad & Tobago see considerable benefits in being part of our super region and are keen to make their contribution to its development.

We are in regular email contact with Austria and South Africa, something that has transformed the way we can operate. Keeping good communication channels open is essential if the new super region is to develop and we continue to be amazed at how much the early pioneers of the Movement managed to achieve with round-robin letters, sometimes taking over three months just to hold one team 'meeting'. We are hoping to link up with teams on Skype (an internet-based video phone), but our experience in Trinidad emphasises just how important face to face contact is as well as having time to listen. Please do feel you can invite us to

# From Our Super Region

team meetings, or ring us up, we don't operate entirely on the internet.

At the end of April we had our first super regional team meeting. Apart from team building, this was the start of an ongoing process that will lead to the development of a pastoral plan for our super region. We want to hand on to our successors a vibrant super region that is playing an active and recognised role in the wider Church. Whilst our monthly team meetings are the core of the Movement, they need to be a springboard to how we live our daily lives. Thanks to lots of work by others over the years, the Movement's profile is increasing and the Church is now recognising the importance of "the domestic church" and married spirituality. There is much to build on.

By the time you read this, we will be packing our bags to go to our first meeting of the International College, which takes place in the five days running up to the Lourdes Gathering. The main theme is the Eucharist. No doubt we will have lots more to report once we have come back. This does mean though that we will already be in Lourdes to welcome everyone from Transatlantic to the Gathering.

**Paul and Helena**

# Father Caffarel Speaks To Us



## INVENTIVENESS

March 1949 Editorial

**A**t the end of a retreat for priests, one of the participants asked the retreat giver: "You have spoken to each one of us. You know us well now. In your opinion, what is our most common and worst sin?" His reply was unexpected: "You lack inventiveness". I will not wait for you to ask me the same question to give you the same answer. "It isn't a very grave sin," you would say; "there is no commandment of God that requires inventiveness!" – Not so! God asks us to love. And love, all new love, all living love, is inventive. Let me remind you of your personal experience. If your love today is no longer inventive, would it be that you have allowed ageing to get a hold on you? Do you remember the time of your engagement, or the early years of your marriage? Was not your imagination fully awake, your inventiveness always on

# Father Caffarel Speaks To Us

the look out for what might please ‘the other’, for more frequent occasions to be together?

Let me come to the subject of this editorial: you do not appear to me to be sufficiently concerned to INVENT your team life. “It’s our Responsible Couple’s job”, you think – Of course. But are you not all responsible with your Responsible Couple?

I can hear you saying: “Whose fault is it? You have given us a Charter that set us on the rails; you give us study topics and texts for meditation; what is there left to invent?”

A comparison will make clear what I have in mind. The gothic style had its rules. The architects of our great cathedrals respected them. Yet each of them managed to “invent” an original masterpiece. Far from frustrating their inventiveness, and precisely because of the constraints the rules imposed on them, these rules acted as a challenge and forced the architects to surpass themselves and make something more beautiful. On the other hand, some of the architects of the gothic revival in the 19th century who slavishly followed the rules, without trying to invent, have produced a rigid gothic: churches without a soul.

The monthly study topic is for everybody. Hence it addresses itself to no one in particular. It is up to each team to re-invent it – I stress to ‘re-invent’: to adapt it in such a way that it answers the questions and meets the needs of the couples in the team.

The same applies to the text for meditation.

Friendship, mutual help... there too, make an effort of imagination and seek, with no less fervour than the young engaged couples I referred to above, whatever will promote a renewal of closeness, progress in real fraternal charity... etc, etc...

It is the whole of team life that needs to be constantly rethought, constantly re-invented if you want your team to be alive, to have its own personality, to be an original team (not mock gothic), if you want our whole Movement to progress. Two centuries of relentless effort have led the gothic style from its early tentative steps to its famous masterpieces. It may require perhaps two centuries for the Teams of Our Lady to find their perfect form. Be that as it may, I assure you that the Leading Team is constantly concerned with re-inventing the Movement so that it meets ever better God’s expectation and the needs of so many couples. But, on our own, we will not succeed. Help us!

**Henri Caffarel**

# Prayers For September

*from the Mass for the 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time*

## **Meditation** James 2: 14-18

Take the case, my brothers, of someone who has never done a single good act but claims he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, “I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty”, without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.

This is the way to talk to people of that kind: “You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds – now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show.”

## **Responsorial Psalm** Psalm 114

**I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.**

**1.**

Alleluia!

I love the Lord for he has heard  
the cry of my appeal;  
for he turned his ear to me  
in the day when I called him.

**2.**

They surrounded me, the snares of death,  
with the anguish of the tomb;  
they caught me, sorrow and distress.  
I called on the Lord's name  
O Lord my God, deliver me!

**3.**

How gracious is the Lord, and just;  
our God has compassion.  
The Lord protects the simple hearts;  
I was helpless so he saved me.

**4.**

He has kept my soul from death,  
my eyes from tears  
and my feet from stumbling.  
I will walk in the presence of the Lord  
in the land of the living.

## **Concluding Prayer**

Dear God, strengthen our faith so that we can walk in your presence in the land of the living. Keep us alert to the needs of others, so that what we do and how we act is an outward sign of our inward commitment to you. **Amen.**

A Commentary by Father Gerard Flynn on the text for meditation can be found  
on the Teams of Our Lady Website – <http://www.teamsofourlady.org.uk>

# Meditation For September

**S**eptember is a busy and important month for Teams of Our Lady with many Teams Couples from all around the world meeting in Lourdes for the International Gathering from 16th to 21st.

We offer the following reading and prayer

*... and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, Between the circumcised and uncircumcised, or between Barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. There is only Christ: he is everything, and he is in everything. As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond. Colossians 3: 11-14.*

**Loving Father in Heaven, we are so glad to be members of your worldwide family. Help us to express our unity and harmony. There are so many barriers erected between the different nations and people in this world: money divides rich from poor, the 'haves' from the 'have-nots'; colour divides people who are called to live in one nation; pride, greed, snobbery, cause painful rifts. Heal us from prejudice and pride, help us to be peacemakers through the love and understanding which Jesus gives to us, and strengthen us to serve you in a divided world. We ask these things in the name of Jesus who is the Prince of peace: Lord, through Jesus, hear our prayer. Amen**

**B**ut there is more than just the International Gathering happening. Individual Teams are meeting for the first time with their new Responsible Couples.

The International College, consisting of the ERI and Super-Regional Couples meet at Lourdes before the Gathering, from 12th to 16th, and representative couples from around the world stay on at Lourdes afterwards for a Formation Meeting, from 22nd to 24th.

We offer this prayer, which is the Transatlantic Super Regional prayer, and which will be handed out to all at Lourdes, for couples to use throughout the month in order to pray for the success of all Teams initiatives. We pray that the Holy Spirit will actively inspire couples to build a springboard and move Teams of Our Lady forward.

## **A Pilgrim's Prayer**

**O God, we thank you that you have brought us from different parts of our world to journey together and to grow in our loving relationships of marriage. We pray that we may always, wherever we are, be a living and loving sign to all of the joy and the unity, the sharing and the selflessness to be found in Christian marriage under the inspiration of Mary, Our Mother. Amen.**

# Prayers For October

*from the Mass for the 28th Sunday of Ordinary Time*

## **Meditation** Wisdom 7: 7-11

I prayed, and understanding was given to me;  
I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me.  
I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones;  
Compared with her, I held riches as nothing.  
I reckoned no priceless stone to be her peer,  
For compared with her, all gold is a pinch of sand,  
And beside her silver ranks as mud.  
I loved her more than health or beauty,  
Preferred her to the light,  
Since her radiance never sleeps.  
In her company all good things came to me,  
At her hands riches not to be numbered.

## **Responsorial Psalm** Psalm 89

**Fill us with your love that we may rejoice.**

1. Make us know the shortness of our life  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.  
Lord relent ! Is your anger for ever ?  
Show pity to your servants.
2. In the morning, fill us with your love;  
we shall exult and rejoice all our days.  
Give us joy to balance our affliction  
for the years when we knew misfortune.
3. Show forth your work to your servants;  
let your glory shine on their children.  
Let the favour of the Lord be upon us:  
give success to the work of our hands.

## **Concluding Prayer**

Lord, our help and guide, make your love the foundation of our lives. May our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others. **Amen.**

A Commentary by Father Gerard Flynn on the text for meditation can be found  
on the Teams of Our Lady Website – <http://www.teamsofourlady.org.uk>

# Prayers For November

*from the 1st Section of the Post-Lourdes Study Topic*

## **Meditation** 1st Corinthians 13: 4 - 13

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice in wrong doing, but finds its joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes. Love never comes to an end. But if there are prophecies, they will be done away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know only imperfectly, and we prophesy imperfectly; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will be done away with. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, and think like a child; but now I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways. Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.

As it is, these remain; faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love.

## **Responsorial Psalm** Psalm 102

**The love of the Lord is everlasting upon those who hold him in fear.**

**1.**

My soul give thanks to the Lord,  
all my being, bless his holy name.  
My soul, gives thanks to the Lord  
and never forget all his blessings.

**2.**

It is he who forgives all your guilt,  
who heals every one of your ills,  
who redeems your life from the grave,  
who crowns you with love and compassion.

**3.**

The Lord does deeds of justice,  
gives judgement for all who are oppressed.  
He made known his ways to Moses  
and his deeds to Israel's sons.

**4.**

The Lord is compassion and love,  
slow to anger and rich in mercy.  
He does not treat us according to our sins  
nor repay us according to our faults.

## **Concluding Prayer**

Lord, we rejoice in the gifts of love we have received from the heart of Jesus your Son.  
Open our hearts to share his life and continue to bless us with his love. **Amen.**

A Commentary by Father Gerard Flynn on the text for meditation can be found  
on the Teams of Our Lady Website – <http://www.teamsofourlady.org.uk>

# Married Spirituality

## Conjugal Spirituality & The Tenets of Teams of Our Lady



A series of study topics to follow the Lourdes International Gathering

*"The Teams of Our Lady, a movement of married spirituality, is considered as a gift of God to the Church and to the world."*

Guide of the Teams of Our Lady

The term 'conjugal spirituality' has been used from the very early times in our Movement, but do we fully understand it and its relevance in today's world?

This series of study topics over the next 8 months will first consider the vocation of conjugal spirituality and the purpose of Teams of Our Lady. The sacrament of marriage is explored, followed by how we should live out the sacrament in the world. These ideas, and the methods of Teams of Our Lady are then developed to consider how we orient our lives in the love of God.

The final topic takes Jesus as our model and opens up some new thinking on our path to holiness, both as individuals and as a couple.

While developing greater understanding of couple spirituality, we propose this study so that the new Orientation of our Movement can become a reality in our lives.

The format will follow the same pattern as the recent study series. Couples are asked to read the topic before the meeting, and consider the suggested questions at a sit-down, before discussing the topic with the rest of the team at the team meeting.

For those who wish to study the topics in more depth, the full study document will be available on the web-site, and there will also be a book, containing papers presented at Colleges and other meetings of Teams between 2001 – 2003, available. The talks at these meetings were written specifically for Teams of Our Lady and carry a wealth of experience and knowledge about married spirituality.

# Married Spirituality

## Study Topic For November 2006

### The Vocation of Conjugal Spirituality & the Purpose of Teams of Our Lady

Teams of Our Lady was started when some couples approached Father Caffarel over 60 years ago and asked him to assist them to develop their spiritual lives within their marriages. The purpose of the Teams Movement has not changed since - it remains the same.

What does married spirituality mean? How aware are we of spirituality within our marriage? How do the different expressions and practices of our individual spirituality enrich both spouses within the marriage?

As individuals we give expression to our spirituality in different ways. Do we find the Word of God calling us to respond to Him with our different gifts? Can we discuss what God is calling us to do? It is important that as a couple we share on our individual spirituality and on our spirituality as couple. This will lead us to develop our vision of how we want to live out our lives together as couples, as family and as Domestic Church.

#### **Through sharing together we grow as Father Caffarel described in Rome in 1970:**

"Your home will bear witness to God in a still more explicit fashion if it is the 'union of two searchers', where intellect and heart are thirsting to know and to meet God, to become united with Him because they have understood that God is the Great Reality, and because God interests them more than anything else."

#### **In the Second Wind (one of the Teams Study Topic Booklets) we read:**

"Married Christians are called to sanctity. They do not answer this call as individuals – although each retains his or her individuality – but rather they walk the road to sanctity as a couple. The great revelation of the spirituality of marriage is this: conjugal love and the love of God are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they go hand in hand. Husband and wife can follow in the demanding footsteps of Christ, as a couple."

### An Understanding of Love

Responding to such demands, we must learn to suffer, to accept our weaknesses, to forgive each other and through our giving, heal each other.

"When we love truly, we also suffer at times and this suffering makes us vulnerable and insecure. Each of us must certainly have experienced this in his/her life.... We learn to serve each other, to listen and to give, to understand shameful silences, to understand that the other can be saying 'yes' even when the words are saying 'no'.

# Married Spirituality

We discover that, when the other was generously forgiving us, he/she was healing our wounds. Forgiving is not always easy, but always necessary because to forgive also implies accepting our imperfections. In the course of the years....we have patiently trained each other and found the one who loves best and most is the one who can teach us to forgive. Let us never forget that the Lord has entrusted us to each other and has given us an inexhaustible gift on our wedding day which is with us throughout our life."

( To and Moura Soares – Dickenson College – July 2001.)

Many of us, who have been married for some years will have had such experiences.

Father Caffarel understood this when he said: for couples seeking to develop their spirituality, it was not a question of:

"running away from the world, but to learn, following Christ's example, how to serve God in the whole of their life and in the thick of the world."

He advises us that we must discover that spirituality does not consist only of certain Christian observance such as praying or retreats, but entails that service of God where we live, in our family, at work and in society.

## A Practical Approach

"Both romantic love and deliberate/choice/committed love are important. It is vitally important that the couple reverences their humanity by being romantic, by saying 'I Love you' in all sorts of ways – words, cuddles, kisses, hugs, special dinners, red roses etc. But it is more important that they recognise that their deliberate love is patient, kind, forgiving, not puffed up, ready to excuse, trusting and so forth, no matter how one feels, whether one is having a 'bear-with-a-sore-head' (difficult) day or a ' cloud nine' (happy) day.

They must see themselves and the other as contributing partners to the marriage. Each of them gives and receives precious gifts. Each must see themselves and the other as God's providential gift, someone to be honoured and treasured. They must each recognise that while they may not be able to change the other and must accept the other as he/she is, they can, out of love for the other, probably do a good deal to change themselves to be a better gift for the other."

(Pat and Marguerita Goggins from Oceania – Talk at Dickenson College 2001.)

Through all of this we must be aware of sin and of God's forgiveness, for married spirituality not to be 'idealised'. At times of difficulty and incompatibility that cause us division, we must discover that we are sinners. Failures in love make us aware that love itself needs to be saved. Father Caffarel wrote:

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“If admitting this painful discovery (of being sinners), their conjugal community at last becomes a penitent community with the larger penitent community of the Church, and have recourse to their Lord of whose presence and concern they may have doubt, then, opening themselves to forgiveness, they will find fresh hope.”

(Marriage this Great Sacrament. p. 332-333. Fr. Henri Caffarel.)

## What the Church Says Today

Fr. Fleischmann, speaking about the Second Vatican Council, in Dickenson 2001 said: “At the heart of the Council’s perspective are its very clear statements on the quality of human love consecrated by a special sacrament. It is an eminently human love that involves the good of the whole person and which manifests itself in a variety of ways according to cultures. This unflinching love guarantees the dignity of the physical and emotional expressions which are distinctive of married friendship. Going beyond the erotic inclinations, the feelings and the gestures of tenderness promote that mutual self-giving by which the spouses enrich each other with a joyful and thankful will.”

(The Couple in the People of God. Father F. Fleischmann – Dickenson College - 2001.)

## Supporting Each Other on the Journey

“We need to help each other to be aware of the balance needed between the physical, the emotional, the social, the mental and the spiritual. It is in this balance that we grow as a person spiritually and together as a couple in conjugal spirituality. We realise that we must be pro-active people to live as Christians in today’s world. In helping each other to grow in spirituality, it is important to realise that to achieve any progress we must be guided by Jesus Himself, and His Holy Spirit.”

(The Spirituality of the Couple – Fr. M.P. Gallagher S.J. with John and Elaine Cogavin – Rome 2003.)

# Married Spirituality

## **Questions for study and reflection throughout the month & for deeper discussion at the Team Meeting**

"Spiritual growth takes time and is a 'gradual echoing of God.' This echoing requires time in reflection and silence, to listen to the Spirit guiding us."

How do we as a couple support each other to have time to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

### **Questions for Our Sit-down**

"Married spirituality must be based on individuals growing in their own spirituality, with their own unique methods, while journeying together as a couple with Jesus on their conjugal path."

How do we develop together such a vision for our married relationship?

What are the first steps to take?

How can we promote mutual self-giving by which we enrich one another?

What changes could we make in our relationship to bring our love for each other nearer to the love Christ has for His Church?

### **Questions for the Team Meeting**

Share with the Team some of your thoughts at your sit-down.

If we agree with St. Paul that "love is always patient and kind" how in the past have we experienced that patience and kindness and has it helped us to deepen our relationship?

### **After the Team Meeting**

Soon after the Team Meeting reflect on the discussion individually, then share intimately as a couple and practice these values with increased awareness throughout the month.