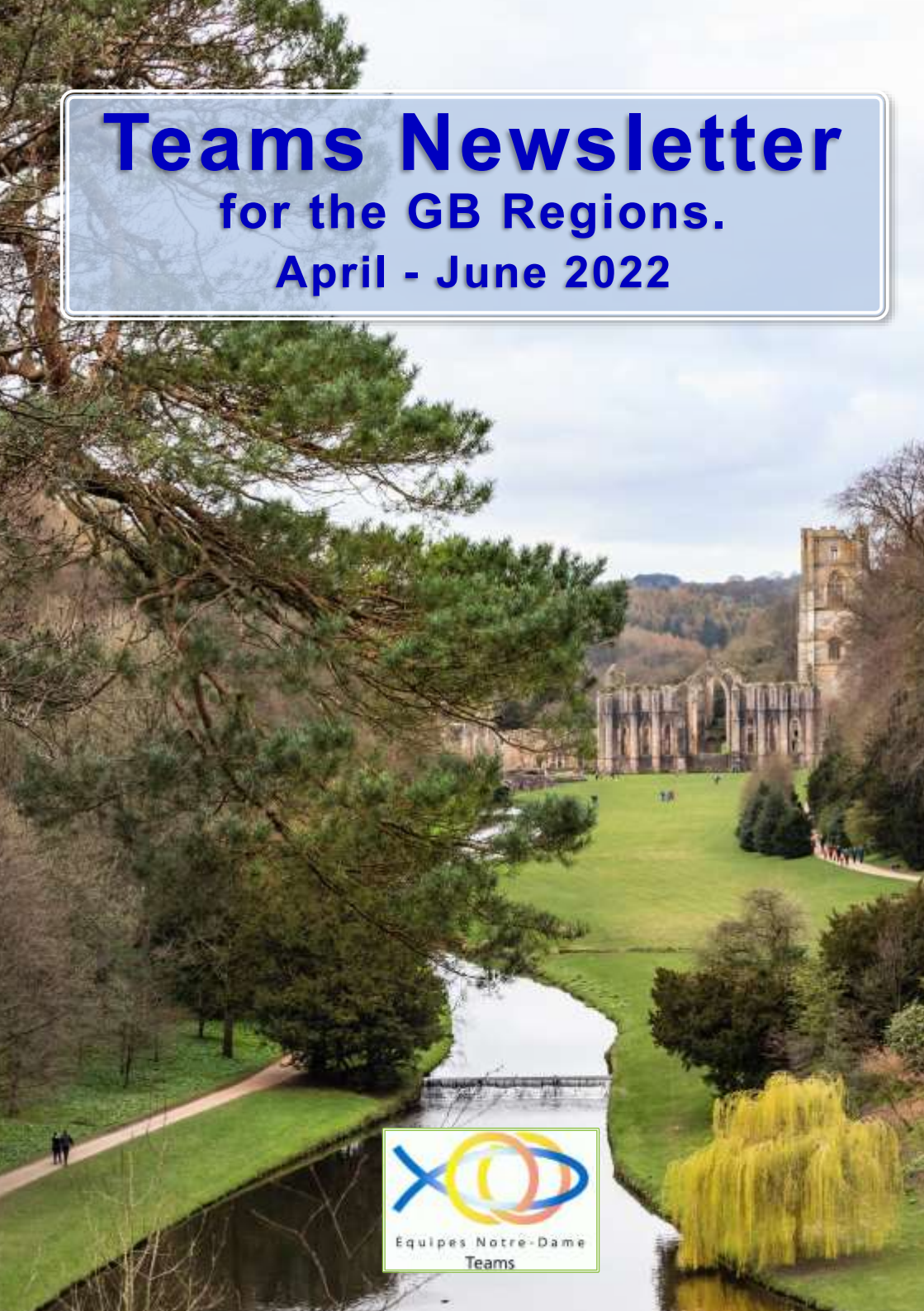


Teams Newsletter

for the GB Regions.

April - June 2022



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Note from Editors

Tell us about your team

Send us a profile of your team, any news photos or reflections for the July-September 2022 edition to us by **27th May** to:

Need more Newsletters?

For extra copies of this newsletter, contact Dympna & Mark at Contact your regional couple for any ongoing change in the number of newsletters you need or any address changes.

Study topic: Please tell us if your team has used the Teams study topic printed in the newsletters over the past months and whether you would like us to print future study topics in the newsletter.

Front cover: Fountains Abbey, North Yorkshire.

As we edit the newsletter at this time, we remember the situation and people in Ukraine and join you all in praying for a just and peaceful outcome.

Regional Couple Letter

Dear friends in Teams,

As we write this in the last week of February, the world has become a darker and more threatening place. The invasion of Ukraine is truly shocking. We are aware that there are Teams of Our Lady in Ukraine and we urge you to pray for them and for peace and the cessation of hostilities.

Other anxieties continue to swirl and surround us every day. We worry about the inevitable increases in the cost of living that will make it difficult for families to cope; whether the pandemic is really on the wane or can we expect a further upsurge with another variant of the covid virus; and there is the ongoing concern about climate change.



Amidst all this gloom can we allow ourselves to hope? Spring has almost arrived and with it something else has crept in, a stirring of the spirit, a vague feeling of optimism. Signs of renewal are everywhere. The days are longer, and our local park has a colourful blanket of crocuses. After two years of restrictions of varying severity covid restrictions are being eased; communities are returning to Sunday worship in Church, meetings are increasingly being held in-person, in the parishes preparation for the Sacraments is well underway. It is time to think about the future.

By the time you receive this letter Ash Wednesday will have come and gone, we will be in the Lenten period of prayer and reflection in preparation for Easter - that glorious celebration of the Resurrection and of hope.

In TOL GB, the Province Team are beginning to plan for a “GB-wide Gathering” in Spring 2023, if all goes well we hope that this will be an in-person event and provide an opportunity to “relaunch” Teams following the pandemic. We are very pleased that many teams have managed to keep meeting on Zoom throughout this period and some have been able to go on retreat and organise Masses or reflections. Several are now meeting in person, although we recognise that this has been challenging for others.

We remember that just six months ago at regional gatherings in autumn 2021 we launched the study topic for this year entitled *"The Christian Couple: Leaven of Renewal for the Family and Society"*. Drawing on the Papal encyclical *"Laudato Si; on care for our common home"*, this challenges us to renew our relationship with the whole of creation. "Pope Francis outlined the need for the protection of nature, for the care of our common home, for an awareness of a common origin, of a mutual belonging and of a future shared by all. Only this sense of responsibility, shared by all, can lead us to build a sustainable future for the next generations." (Clarity and Edgardo Bernal Fandino, International Responsible Couple). This now becomes particularly important as we seek to rebuild post pandemic.

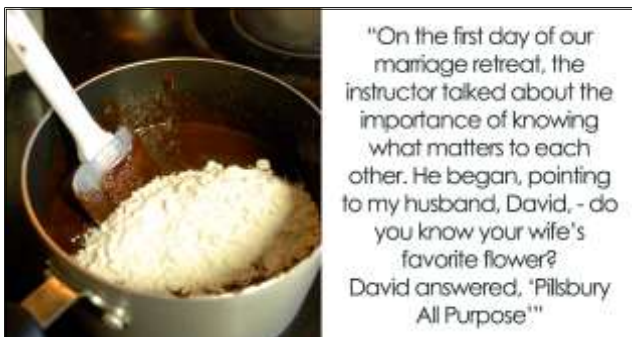
The round of consultation discussions on a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission is nearing conclusion. We are very grateful to all those in Teams who engaged in the dialogue. We were glad to have had the opportunity to participate in discussions in our Team, in our parish and in the cross-regional meetings. Our hope is that we will learn a lot from the process and that it will add to change and renewal within the Church, and that Teams can continue to contribute to the ongoing process.

The World Meeting of Families will be held in Rome in June 2022. This event is held every three years. On this occasion there is an expectation that this will also be celebrated in dioceses and parishes, with reflections and events organised locally to coincide with the celebrations in Rome.

Finally, we can do no better than conclude with the words of St. Paul in Romans 15: "May the God of hope bring you such joy and peace in your faith, that the power of the Holy Spirit will remove all bounds to hope."

We have much to be thankful for.

Peter & Yvonne Newman,
Southern Regional Couple



Friends of Fr Caffarel:-
Update available on the Teams Transatlantic website.

<https://teams-transatlantic.org/friends-of-father-caffarel/>

Profile of Ampleforth 3 Team

Q1. Who are your Team members?

Kevin and Clare Lally, Jo and Matthew Torrens-Burton, Jennie and Greg Black, Marj and Joe Coughlan. We are currently without a Team chaplain.

Q2. When and how did your Team start?

In 2007 some of the wives attended an 'Introduction to Teams of Our Lady' event at Dominic and Maaïke Carter's house, following which we spoke to others at the school gates while waiting to pick up our children. The wives spoke to their husbands who tentatively agreed that it sounded like a good idea!

Q3. How would you describe your Team in three words.

Supportive, fun, friends!

Q4. How has it changed over the years?

It has developed into a relaxed rhythm. Our chaplain has changed three times (through no one's fault!). We have all gone through some major life events and we have got to know each other well. We have been able to witness each others' highs and lows and the life journeys of our children. It's amazing looking back to see the changes. Some of us have become more relaxed about talking about personal issues. (Others were relaxed anyway!)

Tell us two things that you have learned.

We have learned a lot about our faith by reading about it, discussing it and by listening to and meditating on the Scripture readings each month. We have learned to be able to open up to others knowing that we will be heard and supported.

Q5. Describe any highlights or funny moments in your Team. What is the silliest/funniest thing your Team has done?

Highlights: seeing the humanity of our chaplains, all of whom we have greatly valued. Praying the Stations of the Cross while walking up the hill to the Lady Chapel at Osmotherley with Father William Massie on Good Friday. Funniest (and maybe the silliest) thing : paddling on Scarborough beach on New Year's Day (as part of our Team retreat) and finding that one puddle was particularly deep!

Q6. What does your Team do well?

We are good at meeting every month, even through the pandemic (on Skype). We listen well and are supportive of each other.

Q7. What is the best thing about marriage?

Loving acceptance.

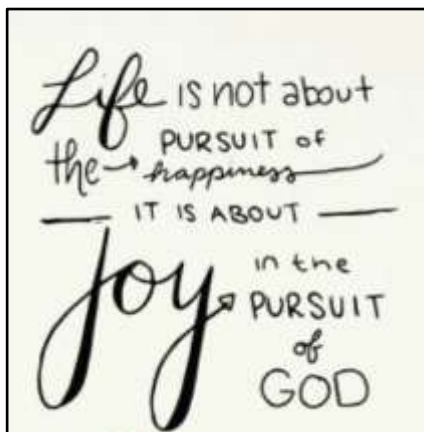
Reflection for Easter

With an annual reminder of the resurrection of Jesus coming round like a ticking clock, the event can become understated - and underrated. At the side of Christmas for example, Easter would come a poor second to many people, Christian and otherwise. It is a challenge to us to refresh our memory of the momentous nature of what happened; that, if time means nothing to God, Easter happens in 'God-time', as we pray - that is, now!

By the beam of a small light in the darkness, quietly in the dead of night, we are redeemed. The tiny light that can be seen for miles, but needs to be received by us, spread by us, carrying the light to the world; working as the body of Christ on earth. The brightness builds, the saved rejoice and the new day dawns. Not any old day - is there such a thing? The first day of redemption for us. The guarantee of eternity.



This day is for joy, ecstatic joy. Imagine the greatest moments of joy you have experienced, when you fell in love, when you married, when you had a baby, when your first argument was patched up and all was well - phew! When the love you had in your heart swelled to a divine level and for a brief moment, you sensed God. Well, that is the joy I am talking about, not for a milli-second but as a constant, so overwhelming, it is too much.



From the pit of the crucifixion and the dark days of hopelessness that followed, we are lifted from helpless despair to inexpressible joy at Easter and our challenge is - to express it! Alleluia!

Deacon Nick Johnson

Poole 2 Team

Reflection for Pentecost

'They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign languages as the Spirit gave them the gift of speech' Acts 2:4

A well-known book was published some years ago called 'Men are from Mars, women are from Venus'. The book's title was a metaphorical statement used to explore the differences between men and women and to attempt to bridge those differences through better mutual understanding. The problem would seem to be that men speak Martian and women, Venutian! So how could they possibly understand each other? How could the Church then teach about the beauty and indissolubility of Marriage in which the man and woman 'become one'? In our religious tradition, we learn of both the original unity and difference between men and women intended by God. Using the generic term *Adam*, meaning 'Man' for the whole race of humankind, we are told: '... in the image of God, he created him (*Adam*); male and female created he them.' (Gen 1:27)

"A woman's heart should be so close to God that a man should have to chase Him to find her."

— C.S. LEWIS

Both man and woman come from God, who is love, and both bear his image. In fact, we could infer from this revelation, that a more complete image of God is seen when man and woman are united in love, such as in marriage and family life. However, we also learn from Genesis that through the entrance of evil into God's creation, the unity between men and women was attacked. This is the origin of all the suffering caused by division and lack of understanding in relationships. To heal this wound, God gave the world his only begotten Son, Jesus, who restores unity through his life, death and Resurrection.

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the world to bring this Resurrection grace that unites us again and makes loving God and loving one another possible once more. The Apostles were able to 'speak in foreign languages' and were given 'the gift of speech'. This same grace and same Holy Spirit is given in a beautiful and particular way to men and women in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Now if men and women learn to speak in this new language of love they can begin to be united and understand each other again. In this vision, marriage and family life become a very necessary vocation through which God calls people to bring unity into the world. The ultimate aim of this is to prepare us to share in the everlasting unity and communion with God and each other in heaven.

In the Church and in the world, marriage and family life are a tremendous gift from God to help heal the confusion caused by division; in homes, in communities, in societies and between nations. Come Holy Spirit!

Fr Martin Plunkett

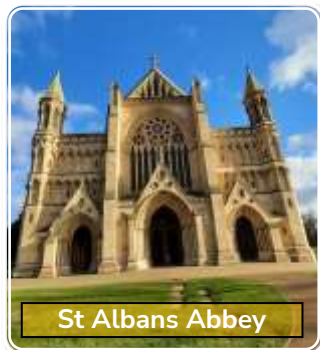
St Thomas More Church, Pinner



The God who speaks – Scripture Festival

After more than a year's delay from lockdown and social distancing restrictions, the Diocese of Westminster finally staged the second of its Scripture Road Show events for the Year of the Word at St. Albans Cathedral Abbey from 3 through 5 February. The Scripture Road Show was inaugurated at Westminster Cathedral in the pre-pandemic era almost exactly two years previously in 2020.

Taking the Westminster Cathedral festival as its template, six "Tents of Encounter" were erected in the nave of St.



Albans where various organisations offered resources and activities to promote engagement and understanding of Sacred Scripture. Additionally, a timetable of worship, prayer, performance, and workshops at stations within the Cathedral and its adjoining rooms invited spiritual reflection and encounter upon and through the Word.

Teams of Our Lady was invited to run a workshop based on The Magnificat, and to have a promotional presence at the event across its three days. I joined Annette and Paul O'Beirne to participate for these purposes.

St. Albans Cathedral's ambience of antiquity and heritage of martyrdom attract local pilgrims and visitors further afield who engaged us in several fascinating, improbable conversations about their search for spiritual answers. The Cathedral community are also champions of ecumenism; a midday Catholic Mass each Friday is but one example of how the Cathedral invites and hosts worship for a range of Christian denominations. Indeed, the Friday midday Mass was one of the highlights of the festival.



Other highlights included the "Little Bits of God" icon commissioned by the Bible Society for "The God Who Speaks" Year of the Word, and a mime presentation by Steve Murray-Hanson.

Throughout, we sowed what hopeful seeds we could about the Teams of Our Lady, but even more than this, tried to offer visitors a welcome to the festival as a whole and its various points of attraction.

Paul DeBoo, Northampton St. Thomas Team

Christian Art reflections

What is Christian Art?

Our mission is simple: Art and Christianity no longer resonate as an inherent, magnificent pairing. Actually it is a feeling that goes both ways: most Christians no longer see Art as being important or even as a relevant way of promoting the faith; and non believers don't value Christianity as having been at the forefront of the arts throughout the centuries, responsible for creating some of the most magnificent artworks out there. Our offering is simple: one newsletter a day where we simply send you the Gospel reading of the day, alongside a work of art that we believe is poignant, reflective and appropriate to that reading. We offer a short reflection on the artwork and the reading. We simply give you the tools for you to meditate on the daily Gospel alongside a work of art. We are an apostolate within the Roman Catholic Church, based in London. To subscribe visit www.christian.art.

Example of Christian Art reflection from 28 Feb 2022

Go and sell everything you own and give the money to the poor



Christ and the Rich Young Man, Painted by Heinrich Hofmann (1824 - 1911), Oil on canvas, Painted in 1889 © Purchased by John D Rockefeller Jr, now at Riverside Church, New York

Reflection on the Painting

Today's reading has all to do with eternal life and our entry into the Kingdom of God. First Jesus tells the rich young man to obey the commandments. In our painting we see the man in lavish dress responding that he already observes the commandments. He asks what else he can do. Jesus' response is challenging: *'If you wish to be perfect, go and sell what you own and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me'*. All we know is that the young man went away sad. We don't know what happened to him after. We don't know if he followed Jesus' advice or not...

Jesus of course did not want to trick this good young man or be

after his riches. No: He was simply calling him to a life of perfection. For the rich man it was by way of separation of his attachment to his many worldly goods. I think all of us can identify with the young man, as we all have some level of possessions, even if we don't call ourselves rich. So this calling to a life of perfection is there for all of us to aim for.

I am just imagining the long walk home the rich young man had having heard these words from Jesus. He must have reflected on what to do. He went away restless. At least he wasn't hypocritical. He did not pretend he could give everything up, when he could not. He knew exactly what Christ meant and what was asked of him: Christ's high demands and his own desires were maybe incompatible for him at that moment in time.

Our painting by Heinrich Hofmann conveys a slight sadness in the rich man. He is looking away from Christ towards the ground, towards earth. Maybe he chose to keep the earthly possessions? A poor couple is watching on the left. Jesus is gently pointing towards them...

Suggested by Annette O Beirne

Remembering Don Gallagher

Don, a member with Sheila of Barnet 2 since 1969 and more recently Barnet 5, died on the 14th December at the age of 90. He and Sheila took on the responsibility of Regional Couple in 1980 at a time when there was only the one region (including Ireland) in the country. During their time they introduced Teams in both the Caribbean and India and developed the movement in the south of England. They also introduced memorable Team Holiday Weeks at Hengrave Hall in Essex, High Leigh in Hertfordshire and Worth Abbey in West Sussex. They coordinated the British group on the Teams Pilgrimage to Rome, Don leading the prayers at Mass in St Peter's. They developed a long lasting friendship with the couples leading the movement in France and, personally, we feel very blessed that we first got to know Don in 1980 when he and Sheila asked us (you know – “Could you spare five minutes?”) which led us being sector couple for a while, and then, more deeply, when we became part of Barnet 5.



Don, an architect by profession was always at the heart of anything creative and we all remember his fine voice leading the singing on Teams occasions. A quiet man he always brought a glow, a sense of joyful presence to the Teams events he attended, engaging each of us as a personal friend. Active as a team member until the very end he will be fondly remembered by all of us who knew him.

A lovely man. May he rest in peace.

Elsie & Paddy Lyons, Barnet 5 Team

Tribute to Paul and Clare Callaghan

For many years Paul Callaghan and Clare his wife were familiar figures at the annual Regional Conference. Friendly and cheery, Paul was always a good contributor in discussion groups. It didn't take long to establish a good relationship with them.

Paul and Claire became sector couple for the South Midlands sector. They lived in, what Paul called: The Holy City of Aston-le-Walls. A very small village, with a good number of team couples. Knowing the need of suitable venues for GB regional meetings, Paul and Claire suggested using the Convent at Badby, which was only a few miles from their home. They negotiated with the nuns, for the use of the Convent and their chapel for Mass and times of prayer. With the help of team friends, they ensured that all the preparations necessary the various weekend meetings were in place and that the usual Team hospitality would be provided by their local couples. It became a great meeting place, for sector couples, expansion couples and



Remembering Paul Callaghan

treasurers. For a change, whether they were Teams members from Scotland or from the South coast, no one would have to travel the length of the country to get there.

It was at the end of that first weekend meeting at Badby, that we were asked by George and Teresa Smith to serve as GB regional couple. It was, to say the least, a very, unexpected request. Thank God we were staying with Paul and Claire, who read our feelings that evening and allowed us some time for reflection.



As a regional couple, we greatly appreciated the continued no-fuss organisation of Paul and Clare for those meetings at the convent, which involved a lot of unseen work. And forever grateful for the times, when along with Fr. Roger Burns, the regional chaplain, we could enjoy the relaxing and happy atmosphere in Paul and Clare's home at the end of a busy and often tiring day.

May he rest in peace. **Tom and Maureen Hoban, Durham 1 Team**

Excerpts from memoirs of Clare Callaghan

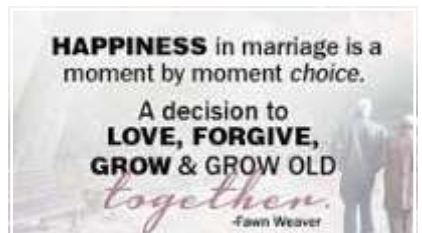
Our Team went from strength to strength, though not always succeeding at our endeavours which were part of the "rules". Praying together as a couple proved very difficult at first, but not for Paul and me because we had prayed together from the first night of our honeymoon (at Paul's suggestion). Daily Bible reading was new to us as Catholics, but became part of our routine.



Eventually we became more and more involved in the movement, becoming Expansion Couple, which meant hosting and going to many meetings, "piloting" new Teams and in fact getting to know lots of delightful people. We attended annual conferences and were helpers at our own sector conference in Northampton, which was a great experience.

We accepted gladly but with trepidation when asked to become Sector Couple, i.e. in charge of all the Teams in the South Midlands. This obviously meant lots of organisation and more meetings; we organised retreats and gave pulpit talks at various churches, but felt we got as much out of it as we put in. We went to Lourdes; other members of our Team were also involved a lot, especially Mary Timlin who was much in demand for her music. We gained a tremendous lot spiritually from our membership, only wishing that we had known about it earlier in our marriage.

Clare Callaghan



April Study topic

A society based on love

Objectives - Challenges and Attitudes

Overcome indifference and **be sensitive** to the problems of the world and society.

Take care of those excluded from society, **accompanying** and **helping them integrate** into society.

Dare to go out and meet those in material or spiritual need and **be for them an instrument of the Mercy** of Christ and of the Church.

Welcome, Care for and **Accompany** couples and families, especially those who are going through difficult times or in situations of greater need.

Develop a strong sense of responsibility in your family for your role in society, now and for future generations.

Introduction

Renewing society implies rediscovering the capacity to live together and in communion with each other. Jesus reminds us that God is our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters. Now "when our hearts are authentically open to a universal communion, this sense of fraternity excludes no one" [LS, 92]. It is necessary to feel once again that we all need each other and that we all have a responsibility towards each other and towards the world. Nothing and no one can be indifferent to us.

"Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world... In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a "culture of care" which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realise that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us. " [LS, 231].

Prayer and Meditation of the Word

During the month we suggest that couples read the biblical text, following the four steps of Prayerful Reading of the Word (Lectio Divina) - Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation.

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. [Jn 15:9-11].

Supporting Texts

A society founded on love implies going to the very depths of our own self and of our own existence. It reminds us that we were created in the heart of God and therefore "each one of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is necessary." Three fundamental ideas emerge from this reflection. The first is that we all have our origin in God's Love and for this reason the dignity of every human person is infinite. The second idea is that each one of us is the result of a unique creative act of God which makes us unique in the universe, each one with different talents but all of us necessary. The third idea is that having been created out of love our fundamental vocation is to reflect God's Love in our relationships and in our life in general.

Rooted in love this common origin requires an attitude of attentive openness to others, to the world and to God. It is contrary to any selfish ideal which is centred and closed in on itself, to the exclusion of others. Generally speaking, we find in today's society many individualistic lifestyles characterised by a globalisation of

indifference to the world and to others. "Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us." [EG, 54].

Let us think, for example of the social phenomenon of people who are excluded and marginalised, of those without work, without prospects and without a future, which is an unprecedented global reality. "Those who are excluded are not 'exploited', but waste, 'leftovers'." [EG, 53]. This inequality, which makes the world balance unsustainable, is not new. St. John Paul II previously stated that "if we look at the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity has disappointed God's expectations." [LS, 61].

A renewed society based on love implies a personal change of heart which is able to overcome indifference, neglect and, so often, inconsistency between what one says and how one actually lives. It is an integral internal conversion created by an ecological conversion which leads us to live our vocation as guardians of God's work, and of a social conversion which leads to the development of a sensitivity and a truly human solidarity with others who are our neighbours.

This path of caring love is made up of very simple daily gestures, which sow peace and friendship and break the logic of violence, exploitation and selfishness. It can be simply persevering in personal prayer, performing real acts of fraternal charity, being close to those in need or simply not missing the opportunity for a kind word or a smile.

It also presupposes a change of heart in the community towards the development of a true culture of care for others. It makes sense to think of policies that promote family life, community and other levels of organisation of society, which are more oriented towards a true social ecology. "This conversion calls for a number of attitudes which together foster a spirit of generous care, full of tenderness. First, it entails gratitude and gratuitousness, a recognition that the world is God's loving gift, and that we are called quietly to

imitate his generosity in self-sacrifice and good works: "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing... and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Mt 6:3-4). It also entails a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but joined in a splendid universal communion. As believers, we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings." [LS, 220].

Sometimes
I want to ask God why
*He allows poverty,
famine, and injustice in
the world when He could
do something about it.*
**But I'm afraid He will
ask me the same
question.**

In this context, it is worth recalling that because we are all unique this means that society is plural in itself and that this diversity must be understood as a great richness. Whether it is in terms of race, age, gender, religion, academic background, cultural origin, aptitudes or any other factor reflecting diversity, this brings into society vision, skills, structures of priorities,

beliefs and even ways of communicating which are very varied among themselves. A new society is a society better prepared to deal with new contexts and challenges that call for innovative solutions, different from the usual ones. What is at stake is social inclusion, that is, the concrete experience of a unity that respects and safeguards differences. That is why it is necessary to ensure that people, and communities in general, are able to access essentials, such as education, decent work, health care, etc., and thus achieve the minimum level of stability to make integral human development possible.

Religions themselves have been identified as the source and cause of misunderstandings and wars. Yet, "at times fundamentalist violence is unleashed in some groups, of whatever religion, by the rashness of their leaders. Yet, the commandment of peace is inscribed in the depths of the religious traditions that we represent... As religious leaders, we are called to be true 'people of dialogue', to cooperate in building peace not as intermediaries but as authentic mediators... Each one of us is called to be a peacemaker, by uniting and not dividing, by extinguishing hatred and not holding on to it, by opening paths of dialogue and not by putting up barriers". [FT, 283, 2020].

Teams Couples are also called to commit themselves creatively to the renewal of society,

being especially suited to welcoming, forming and accompanying couples and families, especially in times of greatest need: from courtship to commitment; the first years of life as a couple; stages of crisis and difficulties; moments of pain and of suffering; complex situations caused by breakdown, abandonment, failed marriages, broken families.

Pope Francis said to the Teams of Our Lady in 2015, "... a happy and balanced family, inhabited by the presence of God, speaks in and of itself of God's love for all men. I also invite you to commit yourselves, if possible, in an ever more concrete way and with ever renewed creativity, ... to continue to be close to wounded families, who are so numerous today, due to unemployment, poverty, health problems, mourning, worry over a child, the imbalance caused by an estrangement or absence, a climate of violence. We must have the courage to come into contact with these families, in a discreet but generous way, materially, humanly or spiritually, in those circumstances where they are most vulnerable." [Pope Francis' letter to Teams of Our Lady, 2015].

Father Caffarel also encouraged couples to be bold in their readiness to serve. He said: "True children of God not only respond to the call when they hear it, but also, inspired by a love impatient to serve, live in an attitude of readiness - not to be confused with a taste for grand gestures nor with restlessness and instability... *O that today you would listen to his voice! Do not harden your hearts, [Ps 95:7-8; Heb 3:7].* Avoid the ruses of the spirit and of the heart. Be true children of God, doing him the honour of believing that he does not ask unreasonable things. Always be ready to let yourselves be called on and to proceed, without exercising rights, without putting off and without delay. Blessed are those whom the divine calls, throughout their earthly journey, and are found ready to answer". [Fr Henri Caffarel in *Aux carrefours de l'amour*, pp. 115 and 118].

Text of Pope Francis

"None of us can live without love. And a bad form of slavery to which we can all fall victim is that of thinking that love must be earned. Perhaps a good part of contemporary man's anguish comes from this: believing that, if we are not strong, attractive, and beautiful, no one will take care of us. Many people nowadays seek visibility only to fill an

interior void, as though we were always in need of approval. However, can you imagine a world in which everyone is looking for ways to attract the attention of others, and in which no one is instead willing to *freely give love to another person*? Imagine a world like this: a world without freely given love! It appears to be a human world but in reality, it is hellish....and what can make us feel *happy* if not the experience of giving and receiving love? The life of human beings is an exchange of *glances*: someone who, by looking at us, steals a first *smile*. Thus, we who smile freely at those who are locked up in sadness, open a way out for them: an exchange of glances, looking people in the eye will open the doors of hearts.

The *first step* that God takes towards us is that of a love that anticipates and is unconditional. God is the first to love. God does not love because there is something in us that engenders love. God loves us because he himself *is love*, and, by its very nature, love tends to spread and give itself. God does not even condition his benevolence on our conversion. If anything, this is a consequence of God's love....

What medicine is needed in order to change the heart of an unhappy person? What medicine can change the heart of a person who is not happy? [they reply: "love!"] Louder! [they shout: "love!"] Good! Very good, well done everyone! And how do we make the person feel that we love them? We must first embrace them. Make them feel wanted, which is important, and they will stop being sad. *Love calls for love* in a stronger way than hatred calls for death. Jesus did not die and rise for himself, but for us, so that our sins might be forgiven. It is therefore the time of resurrection of all: time to raise the poor once again from their discouragement, in particular those who have been lying in the sepulchre for much longer than three days. A wind of liberation blows here on our faces. Here, the gift of hope is sprouting up. And the hope is that of God the Father who loves us as we are: he loves us all and always."

[Pope Francis, General Audience, 14.06.2017]

Testimonials

We are a family of 7. Our 5 children (3 girls and 2 boys) are between 19 and 12 years old. Our youngest son was adopted 9 years ago and is profoundly disabled. With a 99.5% disability, he cannot see, can't talk and can't walk alone.

The decision to adopt was based on our desire to have more children and the medical recommendation not to have more biological children. During the process we understood that we could welcome a child with health difficulties, but in view of the situation we had to think about it for quite a long time - to adopt a 3-year-old child with a disability is to assume that when we reach the age of 80, we will have a 40-year-old handicapped child in our care. After a long process and many doubts, we heard a phrase that made our decision: Do not underestimate the power of love! And during these last 9 years we have experienced this saying very clearly and in many ways.

From the very start we accepted his difference in the intensity of the experience that Bernardo has generated not only in our nuclear family, but also in our extended family, in our friends; then in the love that Bernardo awakens in everyone he meets - it is astounding to see what his fragility provokes, the love he generates, ... It awakens the best in each person. Finally in all the energy that he stimulates with so many initiatives that have emerged from this experience of ours - in school, in church, in the community. And that is how the ICF (Inclusive Community Forum in the Nova School of Business and Economics in Portugal) was born. The work has been developed in the Patriarchate of Lisbon and with close collaboration with the school where Bernardo studies.

Bernardo has added so much value where he has been - despite his 99.5% disability. Or maybe because of his 99.5%. It is really amazing to witness Bernardo's added value. Or rather, the added value of love.

[Carmo and Rui]

The family is a community of life and love. It is the main cell of a society founded on love. We have a vocation of marriage as we have been married twice. We were both widowed and we think that our meeting was God-led. We keep the memory of our first spouses in our hearts. We have each felt close to them and shared some years of our lives.

We have created our own story, a love where we have already shared 35 years, along with the three children from our previous marriages. With much love, we have taught them and have brought them together. This has been a difficult journey where we have had to make compromises. We shared everything and selfishness was often overcome.

Among the five of us there has been understanding, trust and respect and above all much love.

God is our friend and has given us the gift of faith. The Beatitudes are our motto of life. Pope Francis invites us to live as a family, to bear witness to the life of a Christian couple with faith. Our children have already married, have formed their own families, but we remain ready and willing to help (with grandchildren), respecting each other.

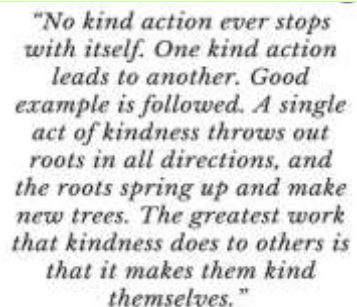
"God, thinking of all, chooses some." (Lk 6:2). We cannot remain in a closed Christianity, we must be open to the needs of others, to the Parish Community, following the example of Christ, and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

In the parish, Cecilia has been a catechist for 40 years, leading catechists to meet Christ, respecting their identity and freedom, and listening to them attentively. For 16 years she has been a volunteer at the Parish Centre, both as a member of the leadership team and as a Prayer leader with the faithful. She is part of the Liturgy team and is a reader. José has been secretary of the Parish Finance Council and has been a Eucharistic minister and reader for several years.

Indeed "when the heart is truly open to a universal communion, nothing and no one is excluded from this fraternity" (LS. 92). We were aware of welcoming, forming and accompanying couples who were preparing for marriage. For some years, we have been part of the Catholic Parish Ministry Team, where our witness as a Christian couple has been shared, with much joy and tenderness.

We thank God and the Church for caring for our vocation and especially for the Teams of Our Lady.

[Cecilia and Jose]



"No kind action ever stops with itself. One kind action leads to another. Good example is followed. A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees. The greatest work that kindness does to others is that it makes them kind themselves."

AMELIA EARHART

April Team Meeting

The leading/facilitating couple will start the meeting.

The leading couple calls upon the presence of the Holy Spirit for the meeting and recalls its objectives.

Welcome and Meal

After the Grace (blessing of the food), it is important to remember that the fraternal dialogue during the meal must take place in the context of a meeting in the name of Christ which began when the animating couple invoked the presence of the Holy Spirit. During the meal it is suggested that there be an exchange of views on matters related to the life of the family as the centre of learning about mutual love and commitment.

Sharing/Pooling

Comment as a team on the experiences lived during the month. Those that were significant for the life of each individual and the couple, giving themselves, opening their hearts and expressing their feelings.

Reading of the Word of God and Meditation [Jn 15:9-11]

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Liturgical Prayer [Psalm 111 (112), 2-9]

Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in his commandments.

*Their descendants will be mighty in the land, the generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever.*

*They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.
It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice.*

*For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever.
They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the LORD.*

*Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.
They have distributed freely; they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honour.*

Sharing on Endeavours

Sharing on our experience of the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual support during the team meeting. It is a time to check out our progress on the path of conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting the emphasis will be on the **Rule of Life**.

Questions for the Team meeting

(Exchange of views on the Study Topic)

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic from the following questions:

1. What do we actually do to ensure that love is present in our family and in the environment in which we live?
2. What care do we take of all the members of our family? Young couples? Other family members in situations of need?
3. A Christian cannot be content only with words when it comes to loving his neighbour. What examples do I know, locally, nationally or worldwide, of new attitudes, initiatives, practices that constitute real steps towards a new social ecology?

Final Prayer

At this moment, the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. To begin the final prayer of this meeting we invite the words of Pope Francis.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendour of true love, to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic Churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division: may all who have been hurt or scandalised find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may you awaken an awareness in all of the sacredness and inviolability of the family, and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.

[Pope Francis Angelus, 29 December 2013-adapted]

Prayer for the beatification of Fr. Caffarel

Magnificat

Suggestions for the following month

Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption.... It is the conviction that "less is more". [LS, 222].

Read the first part of chapter 6 of the Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' - "Ecological Education and Spirituality" [LS, 202 to 237].

Create the habit of family prayer, before and after the main meal, during which parents (or grandparents) say grace and give thanks for the food they are going to eat and the work of those who have provided it, in solidarity with the most needy.

Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the following meeting [2 Pet 1:2-7]

May Study Topic

Meeting 8 - Education for a New Lifestyle

Objectives - Challenges and Attitudes

Live as a family with joy and sobriety and **act** responsibly towards the environment.

Contribute with real acts of kindness and service to a happy family life

Pray as a family, recognising the presence of God, the Father and Creator of life, and **participate** in Sunday Mass and the life of the Church, developing over time and within the community our relationship with God.

Educate for a new attitude and a new way of living in our "Common Home."

Introduction

"Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal." [LS, 202].

Taking care of our "Common home" as well as of Mankind is, nowadays, a good educational project. But for us Christians, the ecological sense has a deeper origin. When we contemplate Creation and its beauty, above all we acknowledge God's work, which simultaneously encourages us to respond personally to the vocation of being children of God. Thus, adopting a more sober, generous and grateful lifestyle, embracing a "*less is more*" attitude [LS, 222] is a requirement for living out our vocation as guardians of God's work, attentive to God, to the world and to others.

Prayer and Meditation of the Word

We suggest that during the month, each couple uses the biblical text and follows the four steps of Prayerful Reading of the Word (Lectio Divina) - Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation.

"May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Thus, he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants of the

divine nature. For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love." [2 Pet 1:2-7].

Supporting Texts

Many people, especially young people, have developed a new ecological sensitivity and a critical, creative and generous spirit to act. However, many of them have grown up in a context of high consumption and well-being that makes it difficult to acquire new habits. And yet there are others, who have not grown up in these conditions, and value them as the measure of success in life. For all these reasons, we are faced with an educational challenge. "*As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning (...). Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.*" (Earth Charter, The Hague, 29 June 2000) [LS, 207].

A good start would be to believe that "*we are always capable of going out of ourselves towards the other.* Unless we do this, other creatures will not be recognised for their true worth; we are unconcerned about caring for things for the sake of others; we fail to set limits on ourselves in order to avoid the suffering of others or the deterioration of our surroundings. Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment. These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our

every action and personal decision on the world around us." [LS, 208] And in going out of ourselves, we quickly realise that we all need everyone else, and God needs every one of us.

The question arises: So, what methods should be adopted to achieve an efficient ecological pedagogy? Let us look at Father Caffarel's answer: "Consider divine pedagogy. He who all beings need and who does not need any of them, wanted to need human beings, because He loves them. God needs human beings. He knows us. He knows very well that his needing us is the great means to enable us to give the best of ourselves, to lead us to the highest summits. He wanted to need a mother and see how this vocation raised Mary to the summit of holiness. He wanted to need the apostles and see to what perfection the mission entrusted to Paul raised his human and spiritual personality! The great perfection of love lies in knowing how to need Him to whom we give everything." [Henri Caffarel, *Aux Carrefours de l'Amour*, p. 83]. "God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline?" (Heb 12:7) "As a parent disciplines a child, so the Lord your God disciplines you." (Deut. 8:5). This educational process must begin with a dialogue with God, and in interior prayer. Once this interior door has been opened, Christians must go out of themselves and assume the mission which the Father entrusts to them. To this end, in the same way that Jesus did, we are invited to "use all the resources of interpersonal communication, such as word, silence, metaphor, image, example, and many diverse signs, as was the case with the biblical prophets. Inviting his disciples to follow him unreservedly and without regret, Christ passed on to them his pedagogy of faith as a full sharing in his actions and in his destiny."

Ecological education can take place in a variety of settings, but "the great importance of the family must be emphasised, because it is the place in which life — the gift of God — can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth. In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life." [CA, 39]. "In the family we first learn how to show love and respect for life; we are taught the proper use of things, order and cleanliness, respect for the local ecosystem and care for all creatures. In the family we receive an integral education, which enables us to grow harmoniously in personal maturity. In the family we learn to ask without demanding, to say "thank you" as an expression of genuine gratitude for what we have

been given, to control our aggressivity and greed, and to ask forgiveness when we have caused harm. These simple gestures of heartfelt courtesy help to create a culture of shared life and respect for our surroundings." [LS, 213]

"Christian spirituality proposes an alternative understanding of the quality of life, and encourages a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption. ... It is the conviction that "less is more". A constant flood of new consumer goods can baffle the heart and prevent us from cherishing each thing and each moment... Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack." [LS, 222]. The family is the natural place to learn to experience responsible sobriety, to contemplate the world with gratitude and to care with attention and tenderness for those who need it most, and for the environment.

For example, "There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions, and it is wonderful how education can bring about real changes in lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which



directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. All of these reflect a generous and worthy creativity which brings out the best in human beings. Reusing something instead of immediately discarding it, when

done for the right reasons, can be an act of love which expresses our own dignity." [LS, 211].

But it is not enough to care for the environment. We must go further. "We have to dare to speak of the integrity of human life, of the need to promote and unify all the great values. Once we lose our humility and become enthralled with the possibility of limitless mastery over everything, we inevitably end up harming society and the environment. It is not easy to promote this kind of healthy humility or happy sobriety when we consider ourselves autonomous, when we exclude God from our lives or replace him with our own ego, and think that our subjective feelings can define what is right and what is wrong." [LS, 224].

A simple and daily expression of this attitude is when we stop and give thanks to God before and after meals. A brief and profound gesture which "reminds us of our dependence on God for life; it strengthens our feeling of gratitude for the gifts of creation; it acknowledges those who by their labours provide us with these goods; and it reaffirms our solidarity with those in greatest need." [LS, 227]

"The Sacraments are a privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. Through our worship of God, we are invited to embrace the world on a different plane. Water, oil, fire and colours are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise." [LS, 235] The Eucharist reminds us, in a special way, of the whole significance of creation itself. Through transubstantiation, that is, through the changing of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, "the Eucharist joins heaven and earth; it embraces and penetrates all creation." [LS, 236]

Participation in the Eucharist is particularly important on Sundays. The Lord's Day is meant to be a day which heals our relationships with God, with ourselves, with others and with the world. But the values of contemplative rest and of celebration, two essential components of human life, also make up Sundays.

Finally, it is worth remembering that what the Gospel teaches us has consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. In terms of education, it becomes a concrete journey that every child is invited to make: learning to be, to know, to live together, and to do. As parents, rather than proposing ideas, above all, it is

more a question of giving reasons to nurture a passion for the care of our Common Home." "A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, with a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without 'an interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity.'" [LS, 216].

And Pope Francis continues, "Every change calls for an educational process that involves everyone. There is thus a need to create an 'educational village', in which all people, according to their respective roles, share the task of forming a network of open, human relationships. According to an African proverb, 'it takes a whole village to educate a child'. We have to create such a village before we can educate." But this village must be built as a prerequisite for education. "To reach these global objectives, our shared journey as an 'educating village' must take important steps forward".



Another step is to find the courage to capitalize on our best energies, creatively and responsibly. (...) This will result in people who are open, responsible, prepared to listen, dialogue and reflect with others, and capable of weaving relationships with families, between generations, and with civil society, and thus to create a new humanity.

A further step is the courage to train individuals who are ready to offer themselves in service to the community. Service is a pillar of the culture of encounter. (...) In serving others, we experience that there is more joy in giving than in receiving (cf. Acts 20:35). In this regard, all institutions must be open to examining the aims and methods that determine how they carry out their educational mission."

Text by Fr. Carlo De Marchi

"Jesus chooses his disciples, in particular those whom he wants to count on as pastors, according to criteria that are not easy to understand. After the great miracle of the multiplication of the loaves, the Lord remains ashore, alone, while the twelve begin a difficult crossing of the sea of Galilee. *"But by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them."* (Matthew 14:24). The disciples felt alone and abandoned and began to forget the great things they had seen: they felt only the threat of the waves and the distance from Jesus.

Storms will always be there, the peace promised by Jesus is not the flat calm of a life without unforeseen

events. "You will not succeed," Jesus seems to say, "in mastering the setbacks, persecutions, the many tsunamis which you will have to face personally as well as all together." But at the end of the night, He went to meet them walking on the sea. I do not teach you to calm the storm, but to sail, despite the fear: even if you do not have the situation under control, know that you will never be alone. Seeing Jesus walking on the waves, the disciples shout out: it is a ghost! And the Master reassures them: Courage, it is I, do not be afraid! And Peter, overcoming his fear, jumps over the edge of the boat and puts one foot after the other on the surface of the sea, realising to his great surprise that he is able to walk on the waves. His faith, however, is imperfect, so much so that after a few steps he begins to doubt and sink.

But the first amongst the Apostles was not chosen because he was solid and imperturbable, nor because his trust in the Master was perfect, although it was authentic and generous. These few words from G. K. Chesterton may help us, "When Christ at a symbolic moment was establishing His great society, He chose for its cornerstone neither the brilliant Paul nor the mystic John, but a shuffler, a snob, a coward – in a word, a man." It can also be enlightening to think of our parents, chosen by the Lord to govern, within the limits of what is possible, the domestic Church made up by each family.

Do not be afraid, says Jesus to every mother and father, if you cannot control the situation: your father-in-law's health, your daughter's school results, dialogue with that particular branch of the family where there is great tension... And do not be afraid if your children are aware of your imperfections and weaknesses; Peter also had them, and God chose him, just like you, and He entrusted his sheep, those very creatures you have at home, to you. I only ask you not to doubt my love for you, and that as a family, you advance, make progress, even when everything seems uncertain and unreliable, even when I ask you to walk on the waters...

"Upon this rock I will build my Church." Not on a perfect monolith without fissures, but precisely on you, as you are and as I have called you: I want to build my domestic Church on your married love, which is renewed on a daily basis. 'More than anywhere else,' teaches Pope Francis, 'the family is where we daily experience our own limits and those of others, the problems great and small entailed in living peacefully with others. A perfect family does not exist. We should not be fearful of imperfections, weakness or even conflict...' There is no need to be afraid to walk on the waters of daily family life." [Carlo De Marchi, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 5/08/2020]

Testimonials

Education is recognised as one of the noblest missions of humanity, but also one of the most challenging ones. Nowadays, monitoring and using new social media tools, dialogue and parents' witness within the family are obligatory in order to ensure an adequate level of education for a new attitude and a new lifestyle in our "Common Home." We have three children: Luis 14, Julissa 10, and Julio Luis 4.

Spiritual Background: It is our daily habit of praying at mealtimes and before going to bed, usually in our small prayer corner at home, and Sunday Mass with all in the family.

Educational Context: At the moment, our challenge is Luis, because he is the most "relaxed/laid back", but with our help in organising his daily diary, and thanks to his dedication, he has been improving and evolving well.

Domestic context: During the lockdown due to COVID-19, we worked out a family rota where everyone had tasks, so that the cleaning, dishes and meals are always done, and everyone participates.

[Louisa and Julio]

So far, we have not really been tested. Our children are aged 5 and 11, but we see that in our consumerist society educating children, who respect each other and know how to think for themselves, without stepping on anything or anyone, is a challenge.

We have assumed from the beginning that our children are not ours, they have been given to us by God to raise; and if this is true, then we have to do so with Christian love, with His rules and values, even if it is a difficult task. We believe that Christ does not abandon us and that there are other families on the same path.

The secret is to live and pray as a family. Scouts and catechism are a great support. Knowing how to hug when necessary, not being afraid to rebuke when necessary, and above all to talk, explain, set an example, show the good side of things even if they seem bad. We insist on attending Sunday Eucharist. And when they tell us, "We don't want to go! It is stupid! We do nothing there," we reply that if we visit our grandparents, we also visit Jesus, our friend, and they accept this with a smile in their eyes. In a few years' time they may not want to go any more or they may want to go more enthusiastically than we do. Only God knows! What we cannot do is to settle for less, just because it is easier.

[Ana and Edgar]

May Team Meeting

The leading/ facilitating couple will start the meeting.

The Leading couple in charge of running the meeting calls upon the Holy Spirit with a prayer and recalls the meeting's objectives.

Welcome and Meal

After Grace (the blessing of the food), it is important to remember that the fraternal exchange during the meal ought to take place in the context of a meeting in Christ's name, a meeting which began when the Leading couple called on the presence of the Holy Spirit. During the meal, it is suggested that you exchange your views on current affairs... current affairs related both to family life and to learning how to be in the world without being of the world.

Sharing / Pooling

As a team, exchange on what happened during the month: those experiences that were significant for both of you, as individuals and as a couple. The idea is to be as true to yourself as possible, opening up your heart and expressing your feelings.

Reading the Word of God and Meditation [2 Pet 1:2-7]

Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

Liturgical Prayer [Psalm 14 (15), 2-5]

O Lord, who may abide in your tent?

Who may dwell on your holy hill?

Those who walk blamelessly, and do what is right,
and speak the truth from their heart,
who do not slander with their tongue,
and do no evil to their friends,
nor take up a reproach against their neighbours,
in whose eyes the wicked are despised,
but who honour those who fear the LORD;
who stand by their oath even to their hurt,
who do not lend money at interest,
and do not take a bribe against the innocent.
Those who do these things shall never be moved.

Sharing on Endeavours

Sharing on how you experienced the Endeavours is a special time of spiritual mutual help in the team meeting. Here we evaluate the steps taken on the path to conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting, **Conjugal and Family Prayer** will be highlighted.

QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM MEETING

(Exchange of views on the Study Topic)

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic using the following questions:

1. In our daily life what testimony do we give in caring for our Common Home?
2. As a couple and as a family, do we truly care for and cherish our close relationship with God? How is this relationship obvious in our family habits and traditions? Give examples.
3. Am I aware that being pleasant and kind in my married and family relationships contributes to building harmony? How do I achieve this in reality?
4. In the environments we frequent, do we try to be an example of the sobriety that true Christians should have?

Final Prayer

This is when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. For the meeting's final prayer, we use the words of Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça.

What I ask of You, Lord, is the Grace of Being

I am not asking you for shoes, I am asking you for paths.

The taste of the paths resumed, with their surprises and their changes.

I am not asking you for things to support,
but let my empty hands be enthusiastic in building life.

I am not asking you to stop time on my favourite image,
but that You teach my eyes to see every moment as a new opportunity.

Drive away from me the words that serve only to evoke tiredness, discouragement, distance.

That I do not think I already know everything about myself and others.

Even when I am not able or when I have nothing,

I know I can simply be.

That is what I ask of you, Lord:

Once more, the grace of being.

[Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça]

Prayer for the Beatification of Fr. Caffarel

Magnificat

Suggestions for the Following Month

We can ask her (Mary, Mother and Queen of all Creation) to enable us to look at this world with eyes of wisdom. [LS, 241]

- Finish reading Chapter 6 of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* [LS, 238 to 240].
- As each couple reads the Word of God, they should listen to it with the idea of contemplating in their hearts how God calls them on a daily basis to a generous self-giving; how God has given them light and strength to find new paths; how their faith is founded on the anticipation of eternal life.
- Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the next meeting [Rev 1:8, 17].

June Study Topic

Meeting 9 Beyond the Sun ... the Infinite Beauty of God

Aims - Challenges and Attitudes

Contemplate the universe, **give** thanks and **praise** to God for everything and for everyone.

Root our faith in the Risen Jesus and find the grace and strength for life in Him.

Spread Christian hope through our welcome, our smile and our loving ways.

Surrender ourselves, as a couple to God, guided by the example of Our Lady.

Introduction

"At the end, we will find ourselves face to face with the infinite beauty of God (cf. 1 Cor 13:12) and be able to read with admiration and happiness the mystery of the universe, which with us will share in unending plenitude. (...) Eternal life will be a shared experience of awe, in which each creature, resplendently transfigured, will take its rightful place and have something to give those poor men and women who will have been liberated once and for all." [LS, 243].

We are made for heaven, for eternal life, to live forever. But if this earthly passage contains a sense of learning and of transmitting values, it is fundamental that mankind should be concerned with the duty of leaving the following generations a home as good as or better than the one they inherited from their parents. Everyone is responsible for the future. We are called to launch ourselves boldly into the great mission of renewing society. And with the grace and strength of the Risen Jesus, as we walk here on earth, there will be moments when we anticipate the supreme encounter of the day when we will see God and our happiness will be complete.

Prayer and Meditation of the Word

We suggest that during the month, each couple uses the biblical text and follows the four steps of Prayerful Reading of the Word (Lectio Divina) - Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation. *" 'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, who was and who is to come.' ... 'Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one.' "* [Rev 1:8,17].

Supporting Texts

"For Christians, believing in the one God who is Trinitarian communion suggests that the Trinity has left its mark on all creation." [LS, 239] And "also to discover a key to our own fulfilment. The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures." [LS, 240].

We find all the beauty of God's love for the world, his creation, in the Most Holy Trinity. We are "fascinated by the beauty of God, beauty, goodness and inexhaustible truth. But also, beauty, goodness, and humble and close truth, which became flesh in order to enter our life, our history, my history, the history of each one of us, so that every man and woman may encounter it and have eternal life. And this is faith: to welcome God-Love; to welcome this God-Love who gives himself in Christ, who moves us in the Holy Spirit; to let ourselves be encountered by him and to trust in him. This is Christian life. To love, to encounter God, to seek God; and He seeks us first; He encounters us first." [Pope Francis, Angelus, 7 June 2020].

The Lord finds and calls each one of us to participate in his creative work, contributing to the common good, based on our capabilities. This missionary vocation is always achieved in service to others. In fact, our life on earth reaches its fullness when it is transformed into a total and entrusted gift. And we are certain that we will always be surprised. "God surprises us

whenever he calls and asks us to put out into the sea of history not only with our nets, but with our very selves. To look at our lives and those of others as he does (...)" [Pope Francis, Homily, Knyaz Alexandar I Square (Sofia), Sunday, 5 May 2019].

We will find God's loving gaze in eternity, recalls Father Caffarel, but with his grace we can already see it on earth. [Henri Caffarel, *Aux Carrefours de l'Amour*, p. 66/67]. " 'I seek your face', sang the Psalmist. He knew very well that his God is a person, and not an anonymous sun which shines its light indifferently on all things. 'I seek your face' - a face, that one person turns towards another person in a dialogue of love. Personally, I prefer to say, 'I seek your gaze,' because our God is a gaze. He is a lingering gaze. (...) But what makes a man noble is the fact that already here on earth, in moments of grace, he can perceive the luminous and ardent intensity of the divine gaze, and that one day, when the great door is opened, he will know perfect happiness in the sight of that Gaze."

Although He calls each one personally, He intends us to walk together within the Church. "If we journey together, young and old, we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future. To revisit the past in order to learn from history and heal old wounds that at times still trouble us. To look to the future in order to nourish our enthusiasm, cause dreams to emerge, awaken prophecies and enable hope to blossom. Together, we can learn from one another, warm hearts, inspire minds with the light of the Gospel, and lend new strength to our hands." [CV Christus Vivit, 199].

It is the same when a couple commit themselves to grow together in and through marriage. A growth that overflows in a fruitful and responsible way for everyone and everything around them. "When couples exercise their

fraternal love, little by little their hearts expand. And, step by step, their love conquers the home, the locality, the country." [Henri Caffarel, *L'Anneau d'or*, May 1956].

And so, it is also in Teams of Our Lady: couples, widows and widowers, counsellors and spiritual companions, together, in a team, walking towards holiness. Many generations of team members, coming from many different regions, are present in the Movement, and they are eager to move forward within the demands of true love. But they are also ready to dream, bear witness and propose a model of a renewed family, which will change society itself and contribute to a better future.

This is an immense and often difficult task, especially in times of crisis, because in family life not all moments are peaceful ones. We have all had and will have moments of crisis: family crisis, marriage crisis, social crisis, labour crisis, many crises Even the pandemic itself of 2020 was also a time of crisis. The moments of crisis are moments of choice when faced with decisions to be taken, but they are, *par excellence*, moments of fidelity: fidelity to God, fidelity to people and to the commitments that we have made before.



Moments of peace and moments of crisis, moments of light and shadow, moments of pain and joy, moments of mourning and life, moments of persecution and celebration. As Christians, we must learn to always face up to our family mission. "With faith in the Risen Jesus, (we) can confront (these challenges) with creativity and hope, ever ready to be of service, like the servants at the wedding feast, who unknowingly cooperated in Jesus' first miracle. They did nothing more than follow the order of his Mother: 'Do whatever he tells you' (Jn 2:5). Mercy, creativity and hope make life grow." [CV Christus Vivit, 173].

The Risen Lord is the basis of our faith. He is the contagion of hope: "This is no magic formula that makes problems vanish. No, the resurrection of Christ is not that. Instead, it is the victory of love over the root of evil, a victory that does not "bypass" suffering and death, but passes through them, opening a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good: this is the unique hallmark of the power of God." [Message Urbi et Orbi, Pope Francis, Easter 2020]. Therefore, following the way of Jesus Christ is always a source of joy, true happiness and great reward in Heaven.

"In the heart of the Church, Mary shines forth. She is the supreme model for a youthful Church that seeks to follow Christ with enthusiasm and docility. (...) We are always struck by the strength of the young Mary's 'yes', the strength in those words, 'be it done', that she spoke to the angel. (...) Hers was the 'yes' of someone prepared to be committed, someone willing to take a risk, ready to stake everything she had, with no more security than the certainty of knowing that she was the bearer of a promise. [CV, 43-44]. Her "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1:38) is the most beautiful example of what happens when mankind freely surrenders themselves into the hands of God. May this example enchant and guide you! "Mary is the Mother who watches over us, her children, on our journey through life, often weary and in need, anxious that the light of hope not fail. For that is our desire: that the light of hope never fails. Mary our Mother looks to this pilgrim people: a youthful people whom she loves, and who seek her in the silence of their hearts amid all the noise, the chatter and the distractions of the journey." [CV, 48].

Text by Fr. Henri Caffarel

The solemn declaration to be vigorously defended, despite anything we may hear around us, is "GOD GOVERNS THE UNIVERSE HE CREATED. Nothing escapes His attention; nothing

escapes His care." It seems that this is what we learnt when we were children. And we would have to be among the very "clever" people not to know what to think of a truth that is so obvious, from the moment you believe in God, of course! Moreover, if there is a place where this truth is expressed and re-expressed, it is indeed in the Bible. Even if we are only a little familiar with the Bible, then we will recognise that this truth is expressed within it in an absolutely unquestionable way.

It is just that sometimes, we only believe things theoretically, so when these situations arise in our lives that disconcert us, we are tempted to think that it is bad luck, that it is really difficult (as our ancestors used to say - and why should we not say it like them) to see the "hand of God" behind every event.

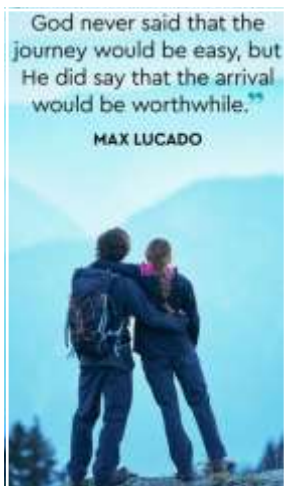
It is here we see a certain weakness of our faith. It should be noted, however, that there are Christians who see the "hand of God" behind great events. But in the face of the thousand and one disappointing circumstances of life, they dare much less to see this "hand" of the Lord. Job wrote, *"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."*

This is a phrase of profound faith in the truth that the Lord is present in his universe, and that he is actively present - he is not simply an observer. Moreover, Christ said it in a very explicit way when he said that *"even the hairs of your head are all counted,"* and when he said that *"the little birds of heaven will not fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father."* Really, it could not be clearer.

Christians who understand this fundamental truth belong to two favourable environments, and these environments sometimes coincide:

- There is no doubt that in certain family environments, where the sense of

Providence is very profound, all education takes place in this context: parents often turn their children's eyes to this God who guides everything, to this God who loves his own and who misses nothing.



●other favourable places to make this truth of faith flourish and grow are the circles where the Bible is honoured.

And sometimes the two coincide. Often in families where the Bible has a place of prominence, a sense of God's providence is also present.

Perhaps there are those among us who have not had the grace to grow up in any of these environments: neither in a family where there was a sense of divine providence, nor in an environment where the Bible was the centre of attention, where the Bible was read frequently. Moreover, this notion of God's providence is not acquired intellectually; it is truly by learning from events that God instils this truth in us.

Therefore, "no small or important event occurs in my life that is not an expression and intervention of God's Love" and, consequently, that is not for my good... Obviously, since we do not always have the same idea as Him as to what our true good is, and our true happiness, we can have the feeling that our good and our happiness are more or less compromised by these events, but there is where it is important to have the vision of faith proposed here.

Beware! It is not just a matter of believing, 'God wants my eternal happiness'! No! He wants me, in the very details of my life, to be this being who accesses this fullness that he has destined for me and that perhaps I misunderstand. [Henri Caffarel, *The Virtue of Abandonment*, undated]

Testimonials

During our courtship we started building our relationship, certain that God wanted us to be together and to be happy. This certainty made it clear to us that marriage would only be meaningful if the horizon was eternity, and it is this dimension of eternity that has guided our married life for the past 34 years. When we were preparing our wedding Mass, the priest suggested that we explain our story. This challenge made us examine in depth the marvellous experience of love that the Lord, our God, had placed in our hands. Since we believe that it is in details that we can always show God's way of looking at things, our love story permeated our invitations, wedding rings as well

as the souvenirs for the guests. On the invitation, we included the words from the Entrance song, "Simple and true is the story that was born between us one day"; on our wedding rings, we had "Until eternity" inscribed; and on the souvenirs, we put "We believe in Love." And today, after so many years of joy, sorrow, and surprises, these remain the key points of our love and we feel that God continues to work wonders in us.

[Margarita and José Alberto]

The relationship with mortality and immortality is probably the most important issue in anyone's life. It is for me too. Is life a small breath, the result of chance or, on the contrary, the consequence of a will?

The grace of having been born into the bosom of the Catholic Church gives me the answer, appeases my heart. I am God's plan, his son, loved by him. The more I pray and meditate, the more signs I receive of his love. What joy! Thank you, my God. Thank you, Father.

This certainty in my heart motivates and gives meaning to my life, especially in those moments when the "logic" of the Father's love is not obvious. Nathalie, the woman of my life, left for the Father a year and a half ago. Our three children, João Maria, Magdalena Vitoria and Maia Ana, are suffering. We miss her very deeply. They miss their mother. I miss my wife.

I'm sure that one day, not here, but "up there," I will understand the reason why Nathalie left so early. Until then, the Eucharist, the Bible, Father Paulino Mulamba, my Team's Spiritual Counsellor and my Team, look after and accompany us and give us much hope.

[João Pedro]



June Team Meeting

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE TEAM MEETING

The Leading couple in charge of running the meeting calls on the presence of the Holy Spirit with a prayer or a song and recalls the meeting's objectives.

Welcome and Meal

After Grace (the blessing of the food), it is important to remember that the fraternal exchange during the meal ought to take place in the context of a meeting in Christ's name, a meeting which began when the Leading couple invoked the presence of the Holy Spirit. During the meal it is suggested that there is an exchange of views on current affairs... current affairs related both to family life and to different ways of experiencing suffering.

Sharing/ Pooling

As a team, exchange on what happened during the month: those experiences that were significant for both of you as individuals and as a couple. The idea is to be as true to yourself as possible, opening your heart and expressing your feelings.

Reading the Word of God and Meditation [Rev 1:8,17]

I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: 'Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

Liturgical Prayer [Psalm 144 (145), 8-10 and 15,17-18]

The Lord is good to all.

*The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The LORD is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made.*

*All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.*

*The LORD is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

Sharing on Endeavours

Sharing on how you experienced the Endeavours is a special time of mutual spiritual help in the team meeting. Here we evaluate the steps taken on the path to conjugal and individual holiness. In this meeting, **Listening** to the **Word of God** is highlighted.



QUESTIONS FOR THE TEAM MEETING

Exchange of views on the Study Topic

Based on the challenges and attitudes proposed at the beginning of this meeting, it is suggested that the couple prepare the study topic using the following questions:

1. Do we try to express ourselves through prayers of praise and thanksgiving for the gifts God gives us?
2. Through our attitudes as a couple, do others understand the indissolubility and eternity of the Sacrament of Marriage?
3. Do we ever consider preparing our souls for future times of suffering and death? For example, by the prayerful reading of the Word of God which reasserts the certainty of eternity?

Final Prayer

This is when the team members pray for their intentions and for everything that has come into their hearts during the meeting. For the meeting's final prayer, we use the words of Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça.

"In God everything is God", A simple blade of grass is not less than infinity.

It is You, who is waiting for us on city corners, and who raises warning lamplights as soon as the day dips into shade.

Yours is the name we say if the wind wounds us with fear, and our gaze oscillates in the loneliness of the abysses.

For You we sow the seeds and await the fruit of the fields, which extend over the hills.

For You our face becomes joyful, and our eyes seem made of smiles.

It is true that You collect our days when autumn arrives
but Your word is the silver thread that guides the leaves through the wind.

[Cardinal José Tolentino Mendonça]

Prayer for the Beatification of Fr. Caffarel

Magnificat

Suggestions for the Following Month

"(May) we Christians ask for inspiration to take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus." [LS, 246]

- ⇒ Read the last point and the prayers at the end of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* [LS, 246 and Prayers]
- ⇒ Each Team member composes their own Personal Prayer, using the two prayers at the end of the Encyclical Letter as a basis and evaluating whether: on a personal level, as a couple and as a family, they have been able to assume new attitudes, create new habits, throughout the year? How have they helped each other as a team to live in greater harmony with creation and in greater solidarity with those closest to them?
- ⇒ Prayerful Reading (Lectio Divina) of the biblical text for the following meeting [Deut 6, 4, 6-9]

Last notes...

The Magnificat (Lk 1: 46-56)

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 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 forever.

Our Lady of the Home, pray for us.



*Lord, please give me
The serenity to accept those I cannot
change,
The courage to change the one I can,
And the wisdom to know it's me.*



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