

STUDY TOPIC 2023 - 2024



The Eucharist source of mission

TEAMS OF OUR LADY
International Leading Team

**Study Topic
Teams of Our Lady
2023-2024**

**THE EUCHARIST,
SOURCE OF
MISSION**

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Forward

Dear Teams of Our Lady family,

We, who faithfully live the goals of the Teams of Our Lady, understand, without hesitation, that life in Teams constitutes a daily, continual path of transformation seeking greater maturity and an ideal life based on Christ's invitation to fully participate in his banquet in much more than a ritualistic way.

It is only in this way, as Pope Francis said, that *"Thus, to sit at table with Jesus means to be transformed and saved by him. In the Christian community, the table of Jesus is twofold: there is the table of the Word and the table of the Eucharist. These are the medicines with which the Divine Physician heals and nourishes us"*.¹

At the risk of being repetitive, and this being the last study topic, this course completes a six-year cycle. It helps to contextualize its purpose. We must remember that the general orientations that have guided the path we have taken since the Fatima meeting is a route written in our mission: "Do not be afraid, let's go." This mission has been our focus each year.

The first focus of study was, "Let Us Go Out to Serve, Assuming Our Weaknesses. It is an invitation to put aside any hesitation to be missionaries. We must realise that mission is not something extraordinary in the life of a Christian, but is, rather, the logical consequence of our faithfulness to Christ.

During the second year, we were "Called to be Saints". This study in some way demystified the preconceptions and idealisations that we might have of the state of holiness. This study helped us to understand that a state of holiness can be part of the current context of our lives, despite its risks, challenges, and opportunities.

For the third year, "Marriage, Sacrament of Mission" was the topic of study. As a consequence of our being Christians, we are invited to understand better that the fruitfulness of married life has, not only a biological connotation, but also a relation to the very life it generates within the environment in which we live. It, thus, relates to the exhortation made to us by our founder, Father Henri Caffarel, when he said, "If the Teams of Our Lady are not a seedbed of men and women ready to assume with courage all their responsibilities in the Church and in society, they lose their purpose."

The fourth year's study, "The Christian Couple: Leaven for the Renewal of the Family and Society", coincided with the economic and social devastation of the world pandemic. We were invited to renew our discipleship, mind, heart,

¹ H.H. Francis, audience of April 13, 2016.

attitudes and behaviours. We were also invited to acquire a new spirit in the understanding, care, and co-responsibility, not only of those around us, but also of the common home we share with which we must feel truly immersed and committed.

In the fifth year, through the study of "Serving in Imitation of Mary", we undertook a missionary journey to become more aware through the example of the virtues of Our Mother, to identify where the wine is missing and, thus, with our service, to be instruments of service, as Mary was. We cannot be oblivious to the various realities that exist around us that need to be addressed. As the Pope said, *"In this wedding, a New Covenant is truly stipulated and the servants of the Lord, that is, the whole Church, are entrusted with the new mission: "Do whatever he tells you". To serve the Lord means to listen to and put into practice his Word. This is the simple but essential recommendation of the Mother of Jesus and it is the Christian's programme of life. For each of us, drawing from the jars is equivalent to trusting in the Word of God to experience its efficacy in life. Then, together with the master of the banquet who tasted the water that had become wine, we too can exclaim: "You, on the other hand, have kept the good wine until this moment" (v. 10). Yes, the Lord continues to reserve that good wine for our salvation, just as it continues to flow from the pierced side of the Lord"*².

For this sixth and final year of this journey in the orientation of mission, the focus is "The Eucharist, Source of Mission". We are grateful for the love, commitment and generosity of our friend Father Javier Grande and the team of SR Spain who collaborated in the writing of this study topic that we are sure will be a source of richness for the whole movement.

St. Paul in the letter to the Corinthians, at the end of that wonderful and touching passage that we know as the chapter on love, said in 1 Corinthians 13:11, *"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things..."* It is no coincidence that this year's theme that we propose to the movement is EUCHARIST, SOURCE OF MISSION.

We are adult Christians, who in our formation, are no longer children and are able to speak to others as adults. The goals that we have followed in the movement since we joined, as we said, have helped us to forge a mature faith through which we are able to understand that this missionary journey, that we have travelled in recent years, is a faithfulness to Christ as disciples who are willing to assume the mission that he has entrusted to us. Only with this awareness can we understand that the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life, for in it, as the Holy Father Benedict XVI said: *"The more the Eucharistic faith is alive in the People of God, the more profound is their participation in the life of the Church through their conscious adherence to the mission that Christ has entrusted to his disciples. The very history of the*

² Wednesday, 08-06-2016, Gaudium Press. Pope Francis. Commenting on the miracle of the transformation of water into wine at the Wedding at Cana during the meditation of the general audience.

Church bears witness to this. Every great reform is linked in some way to the rediscovery of faith in the Eucharistic presence of the Lord in the midst of his people".³

Pope Benedict XVI said in this same exhortation that "*the Christian faithful need a deeper understanding of the relationship between the Eucharist and daily life. Eucharistic spirituality is not only participation in Mass and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. It embraces the whole of life*", and this is precisely what we have experienced in this journey that began in Fatima and will conclude in the next international meeting in Turin. There is no room for a dichotomy between the life of faith and mission, between daily life and spirituality.

He went on to say, "*Christians must cultivate the desire that the Eucharist influences their daily lives ever more profoundly, making them visible witnesses in their own work environment and in society as a whole*". This "*Eucharistic coherence*" also demands public witness to the faith. "*For this reason, the Eucharist, as the source and summit of the Church's life and mission, must be translated into spirituality, into life 'according to the Spirit'.*"

May this book that we give to the movement today help us to become aware of the greatness and graces of this sacrament of the Eucharist that the Lord left us to participate in, as the sacrament of our salvation and source of mission, bringing to life what we celebrate in it.

So be it,

Clarita and Edgardo Bernal
International Responsible Couple
TEAMS OF OUR LADY

³ Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* of Pope Benedict XVI on the Eucharist, source and summit of the life and mission of the Church

Introduction

It is possible that some of you, upon seeing the study topic theme, may have thought: "With the number of important issues that we need to clarify, why are we looking at a "doctrinal" theme. Perhaps this way of thinking reflects something very widespread among many Christians of the 21st century. Jesus is always at our side and, therefore, we do not need to go to any specific place to remember him and to live with him in community. To speak of the Eucharist is not to distance oneself from real life, but to face it in all its radicalness and urgency. There is no human problem that the Eucharist does not force us to face and to try to solve. If anyone understands the Eucharist as a parenthesis in which all the joys, anxieties, worries, concerns, work, likes and dislikes that make up our real life are left out, it is because they have not understood anything. And, unfortunately, it seems that many Christians are in this situation.

On the path to holiness, which all believers walk, the Eucharist is our greatest source of nourishment. Participating in the Eucharist will give us the energy and motivation we need for other services to which we are called. For the truth of the Eucharistic celebration is demonstrated in what we do once we leave the temple.

This theme culminates the journey which begun in Fatima in 2018 that led us to live *Vocation and Mission* from various perspectives. And this course, which precedes the International Meeting in Turin, has as its objective: *The Eucharist as a Source for Living the Mission*. It is a theme that has been very present in the life of the Teams and to which Pope St. John Paul II already exhorted us when, on January 20, 2003, he addressed the regional leaders gathered in Rome: "*The commitment of spouses, the mystery of covenant and communion, invites them to draw their strength from the Eucharist, the very source of Christian marriage*" (*Familiaris Consortio*, 57) and model for their love. In fact, the different phases of the Eucharistic liturgy invite spouses to live their married and family life in a loving self-giving, after the example of Christ, who gave himself to men and women out of love. They should find in this sacrament the audacity necessary for acceptance, forgiveness, dialogue and communion of hearts. The Eucharist will also be a valuable help in facing the inevitable difficulties of all family life. May the members of the Teams be the first witnesses of the grace brought by regular participation in the sacramental life and in Sunday Mass (...)"

We are facing an immense mystery, an infinite dimension of faith, which touches all aspects of our life and which, like the disciples of Jesus, we will have to face with our own reason.

What light does the Eucharist give us? What does the Eucharist reveal to us? If we look at life with a Eucharistic gaze, what do we see? How does the Eucharist

encourage us in our mission? How do we live the Eucharist as a couple, as members of Teams of Our Lady?

To try to shed some light on these questions, we will take a journey through the Eucharist, starting from how we initially place ourselves before this sacrament, then taking as the main nucleus the four verbs of the institution of the Eucharist from the words of Luke's Gospel: **take, bless, broke and give**. And then, reflecting on Sunday, the Lord's Day, the parts of the Mass and the fact that Jesus asked us to "**Do this**" in his memory, which connects the whole Eucharist with our Christian life. Therefore, this Gospel will be the focus of much of our reflection:

"And when the hour had come, he sat down at the table, and the apostles with him¹⁵ and said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you, before I suffer,¹⁶ for I say to you that I shall eat it no more until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And, taking a cup, after pronouncing thanksgiving, he said, "Take this, divide it among yourselves;¹⁸ for I tell you that I will not drink from now on of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had said the thanksgiving, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰ And after supper he did the same with the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Lk 22:14-20).

Structure of each chapter

The chapters have several sections with the main content, which also includes the reflections of Pope Francis and Father Caffarel, inserted in the text itself. This is followed by the reading of the Word of God, with an introductory formative commentary on the biblical text. These will be the same readings that will be proposed in the team meeting of that month.

In addition, each chapter has proposals for the meeting, to work on the Endeavours and so that we are all in sync, on the road to the International Meeting in Turin.

This theme of study, like all those of the Teams of Our Lady, is intended to be experiential, so that it challenges us in our daily life and helps us in our life as a couple. We encourage you to make the Eucharist, particularly during this study, a source of union in your life as a couple and to live it with special attention and meaning. And do not miss the opportunity to share it as a family, whenever possible.

Let us prepare ourselves during this study time, on the road to Turin, to discover **the enormous power of the Eucharist as nourishment for living our Mission**. And let us face a sincere discernment to discover what this means for each one of us, for our team, for the Teams of Our Lady Movement and for the Church.

Sources and main authors

For the writing of this Study Theme, we have used some texts from the theme written during the 2004-05 academic year by the SR Spain, written by the then spiritual counsellor of the SR, **Miguel Payá**, entitled *El Banquete del Señor (The Lord's Banquet)*.

Texts of the catechesis on the Eucharist were delivered by **Pope Francis** during some of the Wednesday general audiences in the 2017-18 academic year and in various homilies in which he has placed special emphasis on the theme of the Eucharist. Included, are the following:

The Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini* (DD) of **St. John Paul II**.

Various catecheses of the Italian biblical scholar **Fabio Rosini**.

Texts by **Father Caffarel** from a monograph entitled *Marriage and Eucharist* published in the review *L'Anneau d'Or (Le Mariage, Route vers Dieu) Numéro Spécial 117-118 (Mai-Août 1964, pp. 242-265)* and others from the editorials written for Teams of Our Lady.

The experience of the *Workshop of the Word* held in the academic year 2020-21 in the parish of San Jaime de Moncada (Valencia, Spain) by Father **Javier Grande Ballesteros**.

Editorial Team

Structure and chapters

Chapter	Objectives	Bible references
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation of the subject 	
1. What are you looking for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To reflect on how we approach the Eucharist. ● To recognise in it the true nourishment, source of mission and service. 	Jn 6:24-34
2. He took the bread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To understand the Eucharist in the context of Easter and what the new banquet means. ● To allow Jesus to take our weaknesses. 	Jn 21:1-14
3. Blessed it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To deepen the meaning of the blessing. ● To recognise in the Eucharist a source of blessing for ourselves and our neighbour. 	Ez 1:3-10
4. He broke it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To recognise the profound meaning of the breaking of bread. ● To celebrate the Eucharist as a sacrament of unity. 	Jn 6:1-14
5. Gave it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To value the self-giving of Jesus in the Eucharist. ● To let ourselves be transformed in order to surrender our life. 	Jn 6:48-58
6. Keep holy the Sabbath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To have a conscious awareness of the joyful and festive meaning of Sunday. ● To make Sunday a special day in our lives, a day of fraternal encounter and solidarity. 	Mk 16:1-2, 9-16
7. Guests at the banquet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To reflect on our participation in the Mass. ● To become aware of its structure and the meaning of each of its parts. 	Lk 24:13-35
8. Do this in memory of me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To understand that the Eucharist helps us to transform and mature in our daily lives. ● To open ourselves to the commitment of Christian witness, mission and service. 	1 Cor 11:17-30
9. Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To review the entire route personally, in pairs and as a team. 	Lk 22:14-20
Appendices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The liturgical year. ● Liturgical postures and gestures. ● Liturgical vestments and insignia. 	

1. What are you looking for?

"You seek me not because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten bread to your fill." Jn 6:26

We wanted this verse to be the opening verse of this theme on the Eucharist that will accompany us during this year. We understand that, before approaching its full meaning, we must be able to stop and reflect on the way we approach the mystery of the Bread of Life, allowing ourselves to be questioned by the Master and asking ourselves about the profound meaning that the celebration of the Eucharist has for us.

In the same way, Pope Francis, as he began his talks on the Eucharist in 2017 and 2018, began by helping us to centre ourselves before we celebrate it, recalling the witness of so many Christians who died to defend it: "This is a witness that challenges us all and calls for an answer as to what it means for each of us to participate in the sacrifice of the Mass and to approach the table of the Lord. Are we looking for that fountain that "flows with living water" for eternal life, that makes of our life a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and makes of us one body with Christ?"⁴

Why do we celebrate the Eucharist?

In order to give an answer to this central question of our faith in this chapter, we will delve into a part of the discourse of the Bread of Life. Let us recall that it is composed of three main parts. The first (Jn 6:1-21) narrates two miracle stories: the multiplication of the loaves and fishes and Jesus walking on the water. The second contains the discourse on the bread of life before the crowd in the synagogue of Capernaum (Jn 6:22-59). The third exposes the dialogue that follows this great discourse and that confronts Jesus with his disciples (Jn 6, 60-71)⁵.

We focus on the second part when the Master, after performing the miracles, meets the crowd that goes in search of him on the other side of the lake and asks him: "*Master, when did you come here?*"

If we look closely, Jesus does not answer the question they asked him, but reveals the motive behind it: "*Truly, truly, I say to you, you do not seek me because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten bread to your fill*" (Jn 6:26). Jesus realises that the crowd has remained with the material sign he had performed earlier, that of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. They are satisfied with the satiated need and do not go beyond it. They do not understand the depth of the meaning that this sign holds.

⁴ Pope Francis, General Audience of Wednesday, November 8, 2017.

⁵ Jean Zumstein, *El evangelio según Juan*, Sígueme, Salamanca, 2016, p. 265.

This encounter between the teacher and the people who followed him reminds us of the conversations and debates that sometimes arise among the faithful about the precept, or about the "validity" of the Saturday Mass for Sunday or about how well or how badly the local priest is focusing upon it. Many people concentrate on the ancillary instead of looking for the essential, the deep meaning of the Eucharistic celebration. If we go to Mass just because we are commanded to do so by the first commandment of Holy Mother Church, we miss the depth of the gift that is meant to be given to us.

We go to Mass because we need this bread that gives us eternal life and is essential for us. Precisely for this reason, the Church insists on this as a rule, like a mother who cares for her children, because she loves them.

Human beings have needs

Among the vital needs of the human being are the most crucial: eating and drinking. That is why food is the first gift that God gave to man in the Genesis account as a paternal act: "*Behold, I give you all the plants that yield seed on the face of the earth, and all the fruit trees that yield seed: they shall be food for you*" (Gen 1:29). This gift becomes the response of a father, God, to the need of the human being, of his own son.

This need cannot be satisfied in any way. Everything edible is not advisable because everything edible is not digestible. That is why God in Genesis (2:16) says to Adam, "*You may eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you must die.*" God does not point out to us on a whim the foods that we cannot eat. He does so out of the love of one who knows what we cannot digest and warns us, in the same way as does the father who goes through the forest and says to his son, "Do not eat those fruits or those mushrooms, for they are poisonous."

Need to satisfy ourselves.

We are all willing to do whatever it takes to achieve our desires, to be satisfied. And like the crowd, we ask Jesus: What must we do?

Jesus denounces the illusion of the human being who attempts, by his own means, to reach the things that are necessary to satisfy his cravings. When we seek to satiate ourselves with everything without measure or discernment, voracity marks our way of relating to food in a toxic way. To this point, we often feel that we are only good when we feel pleased and are satisfied that we have gotten what we wanted. We call this "gluttony" and it becomes a form of idolatry that, like so many others, seeks what is not God, to satiate our life and fill it with meaning.

After the miracles, the discourse and the encounter, the crowd continues to ask for bread, which is not what Jesus is offering. The same happens with the Samaritan woman who asked for water that had nothing to do with the spring

of eternal life that Jesus was offering her, or with Nicodemus who was offered to be born again.

In the same way, we often ask for Eucharistic celebrations that have nothing to do with what Jesus is giving us. We have team meetings that are far removed from the gift we are being offered. We have a married life that is far removed from the vocation God has given us. We have a good family, which is not the domestic Church instituted on our wedding day.

We approach Jesus, asking him to respond to some needs, which are certainly legitimate, but which fall far short in comparison with the gifts he wants to offer us.

This reflection invites us to rethink our true needs--those that will really quench the hunger and thirst that our life, our marriage and our family have. We must rediscover Jesus' offer and trust in Him again.

Christ, the only food that satisfies!

It is at this moment that Jesus reveals to the multitude that the works that are expected to satisfy their lives do not consist in a "doing", but in a "believing", which orients the "doing" and empowers it. It is not a service to be fulfilled, but the acceptance of a gift. One must decide: To let oneself be loved?, to identify true nourishment?, to trust or not to trust one's father?, to eat or not to eat those mushrooms in the forest that seem "appetizing"?

And we do this as children who live in a process of maturation. The Father is always there, at our side, taking care of us, accompanying us, even pampering us. We are called to discover the love he has for us--to receive his Bread of Life. This is because He can speak to us like this, as the song says: "If for a second you saw how I look at you, you wouldn't want to see anything else (...) and I tremble to imagine when you get to heaven, it will be hard to breathe in the embrace we will give each other" ("One Second," Hakuna Group Music).

We are invited to believe that all the needs that make us seek and seek, crave and crave, are substitutes for one true need: the love of God manifested in his Son, Jesus. For this reason, Jesus will proclaim: *"I am the true bread of life"*.

Like the multitude, we have had precious experiences of being satiated by the Lord; but like the multitude, we continue to demand signs that satisfy our most basic needs and respond to our hunger. Is it worthwhile to continue in this endeavour? Sometimes we are very stubborn. To combat this, we suggest that you reflect on how or when Jesus has satisfied your deepest needs through the Eucharist, through your personal or conjugal prayer, or through your team.

Let us also try to approach the Eucharist from the point of view of the couple, so that we do not think only in an individual way. Let us also see how we can be nourished by it in our married life. Father Caffarel made the reflections that led to the text *Marriage and Eucharist*, of which we will refer in extracts in the

following chapters. When he was in Rome during the spring of 1959, he was giving communion, together with other priests, to the thousands of pilgrim homes of the Teams of Our Lady. He indicates that, at that moment, he had the intuition of the close link between the two sacraments, marriage and Eucharist. In his text he proposes a prayer that allows: "that the Eucharist "build" your home, "build" your unity (...) Why, when you have just received communion and you are side by side in the Church, do you not recite together? Lord, pour out your spirit of love on us; since you have just filled us with the paschal sacrament, may your love give us one heart".⁶

Word of God

We read the Word of God taking into account all that we have previously discussed in the chapter itself, which is, in short, an introduction to this biblical text.

John 6:24-34

When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Master, when did you come here?" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate bread to your fill. Work not for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give you; for him the Father, God, has sealed." They asked him, "And what must we do to perform the works of God?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this, that you believe in him whom he has sent." And they said to him, "And what sign do you do, that we may see and believe in you? What is your work? Our fathers ate manna in the wilderness, as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

Team Meeting

Welcome

During the meetings that we will have during this course of study, we will be invited to make some specific signs as a welcome. Given the diversity of our movement, we understand this as a proposal that each welcoming home can adapt to, according to the reality of their team.

⁶ Henri Caffarel, *Marriage and the Eucharist* published in the review, *L'Anneau d'Or* -Le mariage, route vers Dieu *Numéro spécial 117-118 - mai - août 1964* - (pp. 242-265). Henri Caffarel, *El matrimonio, aventura de Santidad*, Madrid: PPC, 2022, p. 258.

In this first meeting, we invite you to place an empty basket in the middle of the table around which you are gathered. With the following words (or others of your own choosing) you can, in a prayerful atmosphere, introduce this first sign.

This empty basket is a sign of the needs that each one of us, each marriage, each family and each team have. These are legitimate needs that we are called to meet, but we do not want to satisfy these needs in just any random way. We know our emptiness and longings. We suffer from them and we want them to be satisfied. This basket is a symbol that will be referred to throughout the course of study. We realise that the only thing that can truly fill it and ultimately satisfy us is: "The true food that endures to eternal life".

Sharing

At this time, in addition to commenting on the significant experiences we have had during the month, we are invited to share our experience of participation in the Eucharist. Have we prepared it in a special way? Has it had a deeper meaning for us?

Prayer

We proclaim John 6:24-34

After proclaiming the biblical text we offer you three prayerful moments to ask for forgiveness, to invite the Lord and to give thanks. At each moment, we invite one member of the welcoming couple to read the biblical fragment, and the other to read the proposed prayer, leaving a moment of silence for each one to pray what it means in his or her life and for those who wish to express it with a simple prayer aloud.

--Sorry

"Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me not because you have seen signs, but because you have eaten bread to your fill."

We ask your forgiveness, Lord, for seeking you only when we are in need of concrete signs that give an answer to difficult situations, for forgetting you when things are going well, and we believe that we do not need you....

We ask your forgiveness for... (Share intentions)

--Petition

They asked him, "And what must we do to accomplish the works of God?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Lord, we ask you to help us to act as Christians, to build the Kingdom on earth.
Lord, increase our faith.

Lord, we ask you... (Share intentions)

--Thanksgiving

"Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For it is the bread of God that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Lord, we thank you for being the true nourishment of our life.

Lord, we thank you... (Share intentions)

Sharing on the Endeavours

We may wish to share on specific endeavours that we are making. This month we may wish to focus on things that have helped us to live the Eucharist more consciously. Is there a point that has challenged us to have an attitude of greater truth, of greater awareness of God's will for our life, of a greater search for our union as a married couple through the Eucharist?

We propose a **sit-down** that helps us to talk honestly about whether we really realise what God wants to give us by giving himself for us. How or when has Jesus satisfied our deepest needs through the Eucharist, through our personal or conjugal prayer, or through our team? We reflect on what it means for our marriage that the Eucharist is the source of our love and unity. Does it really help us to be "of one heart", as Father Caffarel's prayer proposes. Could we make it concrete in our lives? We share these personal reflections in our marital dialogue.

To share at the team meeting

There are team members who are participating in this program of study that will not be able to attend the Eucharist next Sunday, either because there are no priests to celebrate it or because they live in places where they are not allowed to live their faith in freedom. Most of us will be able to choose the time, place, or priest; if it is not convenient for us, we can leave it for another Sunday. Are we aware of the greatness of being able to celebrate the Eucharist as easily as many of us are able to do so while others do not?

- What are the most important needs in our marriage and family?
- How do we try to satisfy these needs?
- Does the Eucharist satisfy our needs, or do we find it hard to understand that it has anything to do with our real life?

Towards Turin

Surely, in this first meeting, we have already made a decision about our participation in the International Meeting in Turin in July 2024. We may wish to share with our team our decision. What is our situation? What have we decided? What reasons motivated our decisions?

Magnificat

Prayer for the canonisation of Fr. Henri Caffarel

2. Took the bread

The Eucharistic Feast: Passover (Pesach)

The night in which he was going to be delivered, Jesus was celebrating the *Passover* with his disciples. This dinner is a family liturgy during which the sacrificed lamb is eaten. The saving action of God on his people is transmitted to the little ones. The liberation is actualized and the fullness that would come with Elijah is awaited. *Pesach* literally means "leap". The people of Israel, slaves in Egypt, were going to take a leap to freedom.

It all began with this question from the disciples: "*Where do you want us to go and prepare the Passover supper for you?*" And Jesus himself manifested his great desire to celebrate especially that Passover, the last of his life: "*How I longed to celebrate this Passover with you before I died*" (Lk 22:15). On the other hand, he ordered that a suitable, spacious and comfortable place be found.

Within the framework of this Jewish Passover, Jesus will institute a new Passover because by saying "*Do this in memory of me,*" he will change the liberating event to be celebrated in its three directions: as a past event, as a present event and as an anticipation of the definitive future. What is this new salvific event?

The four accounts we have of the institution of the Eucharist--in three Gospels (Mt 26:17-30; Mk 14:12-25; Lk 22:7-20), in the first Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor 11:17-34), and in the allusions to it in the Gospel of St. John (Jn 6:51-59)--offer us precious indications of the meaning that Jesus wanted to give to this banquet.

It is a new banquet instituted by Jesus, a meal with two elements--bread and wine--which had great importance in the Jewish tradition, to which he gives a new meaning. Bread was the fundamental food to satisfy hunger and was, therefore, a symbol of life. Wine was the festive drink, a symbol of joy, friendship and alliance. Jesus assumes these symbols but gives them a new meaning: they are his body given and his blood poured out; that is, they are *himself* who gives *himself* in favour of men. We find ourselves before an action that has no precedent in any religion. The fact that someone gives his body to eat and his blood to drink is a total innovation of Jesus Christ, who already caused scandal among his contemporaries. But the words of Jesus are clear and categorical. It is not a metaphorical food. What we receive under the appearances of bread and wine is the body and blood of the Lord, that is, *himself*, who has offered *himself* for us. And in receiving it, we enter into an intimate union with him that introduces us into the very life of the Trinity: "*As the living Father has sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats will live because of me*" (Jn 6:57).

In this Paschal context, the Jewish celebration is marked by the blessing of four cups. The first is the blessing for all that has been received; the second begins the Paschal Liturgy; the third is that of the Redemption; the fourth cup is that of the consummation of the promise, with which the Paschal Celebration ends.

It is important to understand that Jesus, according to Luke's account⁷, consecrates the bread between the second and third cup. From this moment on, the *Passover* is surprisingly open, since after the third cup, they sing the psalms; and without blessing the fourth cup⁸, they leave for the Mount of Olives. This, which must have astonished the Jews very much, has a very deep meaning. And it is only understandable after the crucifixion, since it can be understood that Jesus takes the fourth cup of the consummation on the Cross, when they bring him the sponge in vinegar and he proclaims, "*It is finished*" (Jn 19:30).

The bread of affliction

In addition to the cups of wine, a fundamental element in the Passover is the bread. Jesus "takes" from the table the matter that others have made. He has not made it himself but transforms a reality that has been presented to him before.

"The first gesture of Jesus: 'he took the bread and the chalice with the wine', corresponds, therefore, with the preparation of the gifts. This is the first part of the Eucharistic Liturgy. It is good that it is the faithful who present the bread and wine, because they represent the spiritual offering of the Church gathered there for the Eucharist. (...) Certainly, our offering is little, but Christ needs this small offering. The Lord asks so little of us, and He gives us so much. He asks of us, in ordinary life, good will; He asks of us an open heart; He asks of us the desire to be better in order to welcome Him who offers Himself to us in the Eucharist; He asks of us these symbolic offerings that will later become His body and blood."⁹

For this reason, every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we say: "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands", recognizing that it is a simple and apparently poor food, but that it requires the work of many (sowing, harvesting, grinding, kneading, baking...); it is community work, it is culture, it is meeting around a table, it is welcome, it is relationship,... and it is all this reality that the Lord Jesus takes in his hands to make it Paschal."

⁷ Lk 22:17-20¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, "Take this, divide it among yourselves..."¹⁹ And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰After supper, he did the same with the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

⁸ Mk 14:26 When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

⁹ Catechesis of Pope Francis, February 28, 2018.

Bread is something essential, hence the Hebrew word, *lejem*, (לחם) means *food, need*. On the other hand, it is significant that the word *war* (*lehilachem*), לחלחל maintains the same root, understanding that it is the defense of vital needs that usually provokes wars.

When Jesus takes bread, he is taking our needs and also our conflicts. From the beginning of creation, human beings have lived in the conviction that their needs had to be procured and defended by themselves, leaving providence and trust in God in the background. This lack of trust has meant for humanity a focus on having and getting, as a vital objective, that destroys our relationship with God, with others and with ourselves. And it ends up becoming the first curse: "*You shall eat bread by the sweat of your brow*" (Gen 3:19).

It is necessary to understand that the bread that Jesus takes is unleavened bread, which is not a soft, spongy, tasty bread... It is a bread "of people without resources" (unleavened); in fact, when it is blessed on the *Passover*, it is said: "This is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt". It is the bread eaten with sweat; it is the bread made by slaves anxious for freedom; it is the bread of affliction.

Let us take

Letting God take our bread of affliction allows us to live in blessing, to stop being on the defensive, to experience that God is a provident Father who provides us with food that can truly satiate us: "*My flesh is true food and my blood is true drink*" (Jn 6, 51).

"In the Mass, Christ is present in the priest. With the hands of the priest, it is he who takes, as in the Last Supper, the bread and the wine. And he gives thanks to his Father. But this bread and wine are the visible sign of an invisible reality; it is his body "given" to men, his blood "poured out" for them. Do not let this word "*sign*" pass without giving it its full meaning. A comparison that I take from your own life will help you. One day you offered your bride a wedding ring and she considered this gift, without a doubt, not for its market value, but for its value as a sign; in her eyes this ring was the sign of a heart and a life offered to her. In the same way bread and wine at Mass, as at the Last Supper, are to be appreciated for their symbolic value; they are the sign of a heart and a life, of the heart and life of Christ which are offered to the Father, with great fervour and love, for the salvation of all men (...) While wedding rings symbolise the heart and life of the bride and groom, even if they do not actually contain it, that bread and wine not only represent, but contain, the Body and Blood of Christ. Thus, it is understood why the Church teaches that in the Mass, Christ's

sacrifice is both symbolised and really present, present for us to offer and partake of".¹⁰

Word of God

Introduction to the biblical text

The last apparition of the Risen Christ that St. John tells us about, on the lake of Tiberias, offers us a marvelous vision of the presence of Jesus in the Church today. Seven disciples are fishing together. As the number seven is a symbol of totality, it is intended to underline that the task of "fishing" is for all and for all together. At first, the work is useless: "They were not able to catch anything". The disciples seek to satisfy their needs by themselves, without counting on grace and "returning to the usual". It seems that after the experience with the master, nothing has changed, nothing has been taken.

At dawn, as on the day of the Resurrection, Jesus appears, not in the boat, but on dry land, although close by. From a new situation, from the glory of the Father, he does not abandon his disciples. He follows them closely in their vagaries and difficulties, although he does not get directly involved in their work. The disciples do not recognise him because they are living in the darkness of faith. Jesus commands them to cast the net; he wants to provide for their real needs. He commands the Church to evangelise against all difficulties and pessimistic calculations. And the disciples, even though they did not recognise him, heeded him and cast the net. And, having seconded Jesus' initiative, they catch a splendid catch.

Jesus himself has prepared this meal for them. But he asks the disciples for a contribution: "Bring now some of the fish that you have caught". This contribution comes from the fruit of the "catch", "from the fruit of man's labour". "Jesus came and took the bread in his hands and distributed it to them; and he did the same with the fish." Jesus serves them the meal, as he had done so many times, and, most importantly, on the night before his death. The risen Jesus invites the apostles to enter into a new dynamic in which to experience a provident Father, who is allowed to take a disastrous night of unproductive fishing and who, with his Word of life, satisfies their needs and becomes a fraternal encounter, an invitation, a sign of the Kingdom that has already begun.

Text of John 21: 1-14

Jesus appeared again to the disciples by the lake of Tiberias. And he appeared in this manner: Now there were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, nicknamed

¹⁰ Henri Caffarel, *Marriage and the Eucharist* published in the review, *L'Anneau d'Or* -Le mariage, route vers Dieu *Numéro spécial 117-118 - mai - août 1964* - (pp. 242-265). Spanish edition, Henri Caffarel, *El matrimonio camino de santidad*, PPC, 2022, p. 243.

the Twin, and Nathanael of Cana of Galilee, and Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples of his. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you." So, they went out and set sail; and that night they caught nothing. Now it was already dawning, when Jesus appeared on the shore; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find something." And they cast it, and could not draw it out, because of the multitude of fish. And that disciple whom Jesus loved so much said to Peter, "It is the Lord." When Simon Peter, heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came along in the boat, for they were only about two hundred cubits from land, towing the net with the fish. When they jumped ashore, they saw some coals with fish on them and bread. Jesus said to them, "Bring the fish you have just caught." Simon Peter got into the boat and dragged to shore the net full of large fish: one hundred and fifty-three. Even though there were so many, the net did not break. Jesus said to them, "Come, have lunch." None of the disciples dared to ask him who it was, for they knew well that it was the Lord. Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and the fish. This was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he rose from the dead.

Team meeting

Welcome

We invite you to prepare an empty basket in the centre of the table.

Each team member is given a piece of bread, preferably unleavened bread (fajitas would be fine), to signify in some way that it is the bread of the poor.

We begin the meeting by taking the piece of bread in our hands, and everyone silently reflects on what this "bread of affliction" means for this period of their lives and what it means in this period of history for so many people.

After this moment, each person allows the presider, in the presence of Christ the priest, to take the bread and place it in the basket.

Sharing

We may share our reflections on the bread of affliction and how we have experienced the feeling of affliction during this month.

Prayer

We read the biblical text proposed in the chapter: John 21:1-14.

After proclaiming the biblical text, we offer three prayerful moments: to thank, to ask forgiveness and to make petitions of the Lord. At each prayerful moment, we invite one member of the welcoming couple to read the biblical quote, and the other member to read the proposed prayer, leaving a moment of silence for each one to pray what this means in his or her life. Those who wish to may express their feelings in a simple prayer.

Thanksgiving

There were together Simon Peter, Thomas, nicknamed the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two other disciples of his.

Lord Jesus, we thank you that you have granted us to live our faith in community. Thank you for our marriage, our family and our team. Grant us, in the midst of all difficulties, to be able to remain united.

(Share intentions)

Sorry

Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing". And they said to him, "We also will go with you." So they went out and embarked; and that night they caught nothing.

We ask your forgiveness, Lord, for the times we seek to satisfy our needs on our own, causing dark nights, tiredness, and useless frustrations.

(Share intentions)

Request

It was already dawning, when Jesus appeared on the shore; but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Have you caught anything to eat?" They answered, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find something."

We ask you, Lord, to maintain your constant presence in our life as a team. You have always been by our side, even though we did not realise it was you. Do not tire of being the one who finds us, and of satisfying our needs.

(Share intentions)

Sharing on the Endeavours

We share on the Endeavours. This month we may wish to share especially about the rule of life.

To order to do this, we suggest that team members look at the attitudes in their lives that may harm those who live with them. And, by recognizing these attitudes, they may start a path of improvement by letting themselves be helped.

As a suggestion for the **sit-down**, we propose a dialogue about the things in your lives that constitute "bread of affliction", your weaknesses. Through this dialogue, you can build a possible **rule of life, about** which we spoke previously. Determine how you can avoid hurting one other. How can you help your spouse to carry "that burden"?

To share at the team meeting

Jesus wants to take your life. It is essential that he can take your needs into his hands, with all his poverty. Have you ever realised that he needs to take your real poverty in order to carry out his plan of love? How do you live this reality? How do you live this, letting yourself be taken by Jesus?

Do you understand the Eucharist as a Passover, a "leap" from slavery to freedom? Do you think it is possible for this "leap" to take place in your life? Do you expect it? Do you believe that it is God who can make it possible? Have you had any experience of it?

Towards Turin

This month we ask you to reflect on solidarity for the Turin Meeting. Have we thought about helping others to go--from our team, from our sector, from our region, from our super region, from other super regions and regions? This help can take many forms: financial, personal, with the care and attention given to the families of team members during the days of the meeting, in prayer...

Magnificat.

Prayer for the canonisation of Fr. Henri Caffarel

3. "He blessed it..."

The blessing is one of the great traditions present throughout the history of the People of Israel. Already in its beginning, one of God's promises to Abraham was the blessing, "*I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (Gen. 12:3).

But it is undoubtedly in the Eucharist, the culmination of salvation history, that blessing acquires a new and absolute dimension, as the Gospel accounts and the letters of the New Testament point out.

The Church, in the ritual of the Eucharist, has maintained this essential prayer at various moments: In the presentation of the offerings: "Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation (...) the bread we offer you; fruit of the earth and work of human hands (...)" ; in the Eucharistic prayer: "He took the bread, blessed it..."; and in the final sending forth of the Mass, where we are all blessed by the priest before leaving. For all these reasons, it seems important to us to deepen its meaning.

If we look at the liturgical context of the *Pesach* or Passover, in which this blessing takes place, what Jesus does is not a personal prayer of thanksgiving. In a more accurate translation, instead of saying that Jesus blessed the bread, it is said that Jesus pronounced a blessing.

In reality, what Jesus does at that moment following the rite of the Passover, is to recite the prayer that the Jews proclaimed: "Blessed are You, our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." So Jesus is reciting a blessing, which is not the same as blessing the bread. Jesus is thanking God, blessing God for the bread.

And what does it mean to bless?

The word "bless" comes from the Latin *benedicere* and means to say good, *bene* (good), *dicere* (to say). Blessing supposes that the word contains a gift in itself that becomes a good. Therefore, it is a good that does not transform the reality of the object or the person, but modifies the meaning it has for us. It is important to understand that the blessing is not a magical act that changes the materiality of what is blessed but changes the deep meaning it has for us.

As Pope Francis said in his 2019 Corpus Christi Homily: "Why does blessing do good? Because it is the transformation of the Word into a gift. When you bless, you do not do something for yourself, but for others. To bless is not to say nice words, it is not to use words of circumstance: no; it is to use good words, to say with love. (...) How many times we too have been blessed in church or in our homes, how many times we have heard words that have done us good, or a sign

of the cross on our foreheads.... We have become blessed on the day of Baptism, and at the end of every Mass we are blessed." ¹¹

Jesus blesses, not the bread but God, proclaims the. בְּרָכָה *Beraka* (in Hebrew), the εὐχαριστία, eucharist (in Greek), the "thanksgiving", which as we are perceiving, is not just another term, but, is the centre of the experience of the people of Israel, of the early Christian community and of the whole Church.

In short, what do we do when we bless? We recognise the divine origin of everything and, thus, its goodness. From this recognition we make the ordinary have a transcendent and life-giving meaning.

When God created man and woman, he blessed them and gave them a beautiful, good and truthful life force (Gen 1:27-31). This, as a consequence, brought about an extraordinary relationship with God, with each other and with nature. This relationship was cut short by sin. Adam and Eve were tempted and, due to distrust and fear of being judged, they broke that relationship with God, entering into the dynamic of a curse. And everything that up to that moment had served as an encounter, union, life..., because of the harmful consequences of sin, becomes a curse (Gen 2:17-20). Adam hides from God, is ashamed of himself, confronts his wife... Everything is transformed and becomes cursed.

The Eucharist brings us back to paradise. Jesus refills that bread with his relationship and union with the Father and us. Through the Eucharist, we are called to re-enter the dynamic of blessing. "You must also offer yourselves, *one and the other together*, offer your union on the different planes of your life; one flesh, one heart, one soul. Offer your physical union, at once holy and sinful... offer your heart which is not safe from the old selfishness... offer also that union of your souls which God has realised at the deepest level of your being, in that centre where the divine life resides. This offering of your union at all these levels is not an additional gift from your home, but your participation in the sacrifice of Christ."¹² The greatness of the Eucharist is that which allows us to move from the dynamic of the curse to a dynamic of blessing capable of transforming our lives.

To be a Eucharistic couple means to welcome our life and our history, whatever happens, as Father Caffarel tells us: "For this sacrifice of Christ to become yours, it is not enough that you offer his body and blood. The gift of the ring does not replace the gift of heart and life; it presupposes it. In the same way, the offering of Christ's body and blood demands your own inner gift, the gift of each one of you, but also the gift of your small married community. This gift has multiple aspects: *you have to offer yourselves to God, one to the other, offer each other together, offer your children, and all that constitutes your*

¹¹ Pope Francis, Homily for Corpus Christi Day, 2019.

¹² Henri Caffarel, *Marriage and the Eucharist* published in the review, *L'Anneau d'Or* -Le mariage, route vers Dieu *Numéro spécial 117-118 - mai - août 1964* - (pp. 242-265). English edition, Henri Caffarel, *El matrimonio camino de santidad*, PPC, 2022, p. 247.

existence",¹³ being able to see the beauty that is in everything. Because God is there and, from this conviction, we are able to feel supported. But for this to occur, we have to get out of our ritual of curse that every day makes us suspicious of others, that does not accept reality, that flees from suffering, that remembers the evil and keeps it in our hearts... and every Sunday when we celebrate the Eucharist, enter with Jesus in the liturgy of blessing.

"The Eucharist is a school of blessing. God says good things about us, his beloved children, and thus encourages us to go forward. And we bless God in our assemblies (cf. *Ps 68:27*), recovering the taste of praise, which frees and heals the heart. We go to Mass with the certainty of being blessed by the Lord, and we go out to bless ourselves in turn, to be channels of good in the world".¹⁴

Word of God

Introduction to the Biblical text

The letter to the Ephesians addressed to the Christian communities of Asia Minor begins with a hymn of praise to God the Father because Christ has blessed us.

As we have seen in this chapter, Paul uses the Jewish formula of blessing, in an "ascending" sense, toward God. Paul blesses God because he has chosen us, because he has incorporated us into himself by making us his children. This is because that plan has been made through the redemption brought about by Christ and because that grace has been revealed.

Christ definitively breaks the history of negativity and shows us that we are all children of God. For this we bless and give thanks:

Text of Ephesians 1:3-10:

Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in heaven. He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him by love. He has destined us through Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of his will, to be his children, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he has so generously bestowed on us in the Beloved.

In him, through his blood, we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, according to the richness of the grace which in his wisdom and prudence he has lavished upon us, making known to us the mystery of his will:

the plan he had planned to carry out through Christ, in the fullness of time: to recapitulate in Christ all things in heaven and on earth.

¹³ Father Caffarel, *Idem*, p. 246.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, 2019 Corpus Christi Homily

Team meeting

Welcome

In the previous meeting, we understood that our bread of affliction was the bread that Jesus wanted to take. So we invite you to begin the meeting by blessing the bread we are about to share at the table.

Sharing

In this sharing we are invited to recognise the moments in which we have felt blessed during this month, in which we have said good to someone and in which we should have done so. However, for whatever reason, we dared not to do so, or we did not realise that we did so.

Prayer

We read the biblical text proposed in the chapter: "**Blessed be God the Father**" **Ephesians 1:3-10**.

There are so many thoughts of curses in our heart, so many points, so many things that are not blessings. Many times we are blocked by the memory of things that should be forgiven--for our mistakes, for things that poison us with bitterness. But we can ask without fear, for it is the Holy Spirit who saves, who illuminates the heart, who enters and takes us to the land of blessing.

We take a moment of silence and try to remember all that the Lord has done for us, all that he has given us, all the good received.

We let that prayer of blessing spring up within us, recognizing God as God, praising and thanking Him.

We invite you now to say a prayer in a moment of intimacy as a couple, a little apart from the others. Lay hands on the other, making a prayer of blessing to God the Father, concluding by making the sign of the cross on the forehead.

Sharing on the Endeavours

Share with the team the benefits we experience living with difficulties in our lives.

As a suggestion for this month, we propose a **sit-down** where "blessing" is the main theme of your dialogue:

- Bless God for his presence in our lives. Do we acknowledge it? Do we thank him?
- Bless our spouse. During this sit-down, there can be no room for reproaches. Share "the good characteristics of the other". Thank him/her for some attitude that helps you, that allows you to grow and improve.
- Bless your team. Recognise and express the good that comes from your team, from the couples that form it, and from the movement.
- Bless the Church, your parish, the community you are a part of, and the individuals with whom you work.

This month's participation should place special emphasis on the topic of "blessings".

To share at the team meeting

The prayer of blessing is perhaps the prayer most characteristic of the Christian, who recognises God as God and is able to praise and thank Him. What is your experience of prayers of blessing? How do prayers of blessing help you?

The experience of sin is not something abstract. We have all lived beautiful, profound, pleasant realities that have turned into "curses", often impossible to understand and accept. What has caused this? What has really changed? In any of these experiences, has the Eucharist helped you?

Have we been able to experience the Eucharist as a source of blessing?

Towards Turin

In order to love something, it is necessary to know it. If we do not consider it as our own, it is very difficult to feel part of the International Gathering. The assignment for this month is to be aware of all the information that we have at our disposal about Turin: letters, newsletters, web and social networks that tell us about the International Gathering. You can also look back to the Fatima Gathering 2018 in previous letters, etc. Read about the experiences of the participants and what it meant for them to be able to attend.

Magnificat

Prayer for the canonisation of Fr. Henri Caffarel

4. "He broke it..."

The breaking of bread

The Jews begin the Passover meal with the gesture of the breaking of bread by the father of the family. This is exactly the gesture that Jesus made at the Last Supper: "He took bread and broke it". This fact was so valuable that, in apostolic times, the entire Eucharistic celebration was called "The Breaking of the Bread".

As we may have begun to perceive, this simple rite not only has a practical purpose, that the food reaches all the partakers, but also that it has a very deep meaning, which we will try to share and propose in this chapter.

If we start by thinking about the practical gesture we make before each meal, we will soon discover that bread, in order to be edible, needs to be broken into smaller pieces. No one picks up a loaf of bread from the table and starts taking bites straight away. Even when we are handed a smaller piece of bread at a more sophisticated meal, we don't put it directly into our mouths. It is more comfortable and more polite for us to reduce its size and make a single loaf of bread into small portions that we can readily chew and digest. In this way, the bread must lose its unity and integrity in order to be useful and to perform correctly the purpose for which it was created.

It is striking that this gesture, which we can understand as practical and elementary, both in the institution of the Eucharist and on other occasions recounted in the Gospel, is solemnly performed by Christ himself. Let us recall that in the five Gospel accounts of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, as well as in the beautiful account of the Disciples of Emmaus, it is Jesus who always breaks the bread.

On the one hand, this gesture of Jesus is understood from his position in the community. He is the one who, like the father at the Passover meal, presides over the family. He is the one who has been called to take the initiative and to break the bread so that it reaches everyone and so that it can be digested and become food. But beyond this initial gesture, we can see how the breaking of the bread becomes the gesture of the Master's whole life and dedication, which is broken and shared, like the bread, to become the food of life for all.

When we recall the celebration of the Eucharist, there is a moment when the priest breaks the bread that has already been consecrated.

Unfortunately, we have become accustomed to this gesture, but let us think for a second, -that after proclaiming that this piece of bread is the true Body of Christ--his real and personal presence--the first thing we do is break it. That "crack" should hurt our sensibility more than if we were to tear into pieces a photograph of our spouse, our parents or our children. In the case of the

photograph, it would be a broken memory. However, in the consecrated form, there is a real presence--the presence of a whole God.

On the other hand, it should strike us that while the consecrated Bread is being broken, we are all saying:

Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.
 Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us.
 Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, grant us peace.

Why is this an apparent contradiction? It is because we are saying that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the true Passover lamb. As such, one of the characteristics of the Passover Lamb that we remember is: "you shall not break any bone in it" (Ex 12:46). Why do we recall this while we are breaking it? It is because in Jesus, in the love of God, there is the greatness of an apparent contradiction: I give myself so that you can take on my love, but I do not break. I give myself and die, but with that death, I give life.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is split, not broken. And this, which seems like an unimportant play on words, is tremendously significant. Only from love can we break a thing into a thousand pieces, without breaking.

Like bread, we are called to break in order to reach the other. We are asked to make ourselves small so that the other can take us on as life-giving nourishment; however, at the same time this breaking does not cause us to break. Only marriage, united by the love of God and consecrated by his Spirit, can be broken and made digestible for the other, without breaking internally.

In every Eucharist, Jesus, who is the Lamb of God, breaks, but does not break; and even more, in every Eucharist, we, the Mystical Body of Christ, are called to live the miracle of breaking our lives without breaking. Experience tells us that this is impossible without grace. In our own strength, without the Eucharist, our life breaks into a thousand pieces. It shatters.

The last apparent contradiction we experience in the breaking of the bread is to experience how breaking to pieces and giving of ourselves does not break our communal unity, but rather strengthens it. This reality also has a sacramental sign in the Eucharist that goes unnoticed, so much so that some of us may not be surprised if we have never noticed it.

After the Lamb of God, when the bread has apparently lost its unity, the priest drops a fragment of Bread into the Chalice, a simple and important gesture at the same time. It recalls for us how in the early years of Christianity, the Pope celebrated Mass and sent the priests to celebrate in the churches of the surrounding areas. To each of these he gave a particle of the Eucharist that he had consecrated, which received the name of *fermentum*. Each priest, during the celebration of his Mass, would introduce the *fermentum* into the chalice as a sign of communion with the Pope. In this way the Eucharist was manifested as the sacrament of unity.

On the other hand, as the General Ordination of the Roman Missal states: "The priest breaks the bread and places a particle of the host in the chalice to signify the unity of the Body and Blood of the Lord in the saving work, that is, the Body of the living and glorious Jesus Christ" (OGMR, 72).

As we come to recognise, at every moment there is an apparent division, which, when lived from the Eucharistic grace, makes unity in Love possible.

Sacrament of Marriage and Eucharist

This idea of unity starting from the sacrament of the Eucharist also finds a precious image in the sacrament of marriage. As Father Caffarel reminded us on numerous occasions, the power of union to the greater community that is the Church through the Eucharist, is also realised on a small scale, in the community that we form as husband and wife. It is nourished with the true nourishment, which is Christ himself. As in the Eucharist, being called to break ourselves for love can give the sensation of breaking up, of losing our identity, of disintegrating into a thousand things... but all this, lived in the Eucharist, allows us to live in true communion:

"I hope I have convinced you that the Eucharist, by the graces it brings to each of the spouses, contributes powerfully to the enrichment of your love as husband and wife and of your whole family life. But it does so even more directly by virtue of its unifying power, a power which designates it as *"the sacrament of unity"*. (...) The unitive power of the Eucharist achieves not only the unity of the whole Christian community, but also of the communities in between. One can be absolutely certain that the Eucharist has a primary role in strengthening the union of those whom God has united through the sacrament of marriage. Not only to sanctify each of the spouses, which also enriches their covenant, but also to consolidate and sanctify the bond that unites them. (...) In order to grow and live, they must be nourished. The sacrament of matrimony unites man and woman, but their union, deprived of the Body of Christ, will fade because it has no endurance, no vitality. On the contrary, if it has recourse to the Eucharist, it will find cohesion, renewal in love, dynamism of growth, it will become a community of love, a communion of life. (...)" ¹⁵

Letting go

And yet, despite all this reference to unity that we have been hearing in the chapter, we cannot forget what we started with, that this unity is achieved in the apparent contradiction of the breaking of the bread. The profound meaning of the fraction is to split ourselves in order to adapt our being so that the other, especially our spouse and children, can assume it, nourish it and give it life.

¹⁵ Henri Caffarel, *Marriage and the Eucharist* published in the review, *L'Anneau d'Or* -Le mariage, route vers Dieu *Numéro spécial 117-118 - mai - août 1964* - (pp. 242-265). Spanish edition, Henri Caffarel, *El matrimonio camino de santidad*, PPC, 2022, p. (p.252-254-255).

We have our ideas, our work and our projects, but to do God's will, we must let ourselves go; we have our aspirations, but to enter into love, we must let ourselves go; we have our habits, but to enter into the new life that Christ gives us, we must let ourselves go.

Whoever is not willing to let go, cannot give himself. He cannot give life, cannot accept the surprise, the change, the contradiction and the miracle of letting go, in order to live in unity.

People with fixed ideas who have their path in life inexorably mapped out, married couples who fail to be open to opposing views, teams that do not allow the slightest change... those who do not allow themselves to be broken, who do not make themselves small so that others can be welcomed, will hardly be open to discern new proposals that can lead them to Life.

Every time bread is shared, life is shared and God, who is Life-and Love, is made present. There is no other way to identify ourselves with God and to bring God closer to others. The Eucharist is the memory of this attitude of Jesus who broke and shared. By breaking and sharing himself, he made present God who is total gift.

Word of God

Introduction to the biblical text

Both in the accounts of the institution of the Eucharist and in the accounts of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, present in all the Gospels, it is Jesus who takes the bread, who pronounces the thanksgiving and who breaks it... because the miracle is not that the loaves are multiplied, for there were always five, but that by breaking and dividing those few loaves, that division becomes a miraculous multiplication that gives food to all.

It is not necessary to exclude anyone; it is not necessary for anyone to leave. Jesus takes what is there, the reality that exists, which perhaps is not the most abundant or the best, and turns it into food for many, transforming a logic of discarding into a logic of communion and community.

Only his hands can make that which is divided, multiply; that, for us to lose our life, makes us gain it and becomes a source of life for all. Jesus does not make new things, he does not give us a new life, a new spouse, new children... but he makes new everything that has been given to us.

Text of John 6, 1-14

After this, Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). Many people followed him, because they had seen the signs which he did for the sick. Then Jesus went up the mountain and sat there with his disciples. The Passover, the feast of the Jews, was near. Jesus then lifted up his eyes and, seeing that many people were coming, said to Philip, "Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?" He said this to test him, for he well knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii of bread are not enough for everyone to have a piece." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "'There is a boy here who has five barley loaves' and two fish; but what good are these for so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people recline." There was a great deal of grass in that place. So, the men reclined; about five thousand in number. Jesus took the loaves, said the thanksgiving, and distributed them to those who were reclining, and also as much of the fish as they wanted. When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing will be wasted." So, they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, "This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world."

Team meeting

Welcome

In the previous meetings, we understood that our bread of affliction was the bread that Jesus wanted to take, and that bread was subsequently blessed. At this meeting we invite you to begin with a full loaf of bread that will be broken and shared among all, as a sign of unity from the breaking of the bread.

Sharing

At this time, you may share if you have had any experience this month of sharing with your family, as a couple, with your community, with your fellow employees ... some gift that has been able to help someone. What "bread" in your life have you broken?

Prayer

We read the biblical text proposed in the chapter John 6: 1-14

Within this text is an understanding of the reality of the Eucharist. In Jesus there is a real concern for those who are hungry, for those in need, for those

who were looking for an answer to their ills. They all shared the little they had among the multitude that gathered, and they were satisfied.

In this prayer we may offer the thing we often find most difficult--letting God "break" into our life. We may work to stop defending our thoughts, thinking that if we allow God to touch us, it will break us.

In this prayer there is room for praise, thanksgiving, offering, petition... whatever one wishes to place in the Lord's hands.

Sharing on the Endeavours

We shared about the Endeavours and about how they are helping us to live fully this month. We also shared on how, thanks to them, we open ourselves to discovering God's will in our lives, developing the capacity to live according to God's truth.

This month we want to focus on **conjugal prayer**. Here are a few possible perspectives that can help us to share more with our spouse: What is the prayer that we can most easily pray together? Have we shared conjugal prayer regularly, no matter how short the time? Has there been any aspect of our lives that has been transformed by this prayer? Have we used conjugal prayer as a means of gaining greater understanding of God's truth in our lives?

As a suggestion for the **sit-down**, we propose a possible dialogue around the aspects in your life that constitute this "letting yourself be broken". What things do you recognise that "break" you? How could you go from understanding what breaks you to letting yourself "go"? What aspects of your life could be modified to enrich your life together as a couple? What aspects of your relationship could you focus on to improve the mission fields in which you are currently engaged?

To share at the team meeting

What experience have you personally had or have you had with other people in which you drew strength from Jesus when he was at his most vulnerable? When have you personally gained by giving up to the needs of others? When did you win by losing?

What is your experience of "letting yourself go" so that your parents, friends, spouse.... can feel loved? How have you experienced that, with your useless "five loaves", Jesus has brought out something important or has given you strength when there seemed to be nothing left?

Towards Turin

This month we ask you to keep in mind all the people who are participating in the different Teams groups who are preparing for the Gathering. Remember them in your prayers. We invite you to visit the website of the International Gathering in order to be able to put a face, name and real presence to the many people who are selflessly working so that everything develops correctly.

Magnificat

Prayer for the canonisation of Fr. Henri Caffarel

5. Gave it

Although there have been great changes in the perception of religion, much of what is religious in the world is marked by fear. There is a form of latent terror in man before the inexplicable and difficult things in life. Questions about God such as Who is God? How do you stand before God? frighten us because they place us before the headiness of transcendence. We fear that God will truly enter our lives because we think: What will he ask of me, what will he get, what will I have to give him, will I lose control of my life?

But in the mystery of the Eucharist, **we can clearly see that it is exactly the opposite: God does not have something to ask for; God has something to give.** We have to abandon the mentality of fear for the mentality of trust in order to enter into the filial mentality, which looks at God as Father and which looks at the Lord Jesus Christ as a servant who loves us, who gives himself to us, who is for us.

Life as a gift

All the gestures that Jesus makes at the Last Supper, and which we have been disseminating and sharing, have the ultimate goal of giving himself. A faith that only seeks to be taken into the hands of the Father is a self-referential faith that seeks itself. A faith that only seeks to hear words of blessing that fill life with meaning is a self-satisfied faith. A faith that only pretends that Jesus changes everything is a faith that seeks perfection.

Only when the one who allows himself to be taken and when the one who is blessed and transformed allows himself to be surrendered, do we understand the depth of God's proposal for his life.

Seen from this perspective, selfishness makes our life incomplete. It nullifies the deepest meaning of everything for which we have been created and renders existence useless, because our life was created to be given. What is friendship, life, work, fatherhood, priesthood, etc. if it is not a gift of self, a service to others? Everything is beautiful when it reaches this goal. What will we be able to say at the end of our life so that it will have had meaning? I have loved. I have given myself.

Jesus gives himself

What Jesus does at the Last Supper, what he does in this real gesture "and he gave it", is what he has been doing throughout his ministry. This simple and concrete gesture expresses and reflects all that his life has been, as we said with the gesture of the breaking of the bread. Jesus gives himself now in a

definitive way, anticipating in this paschal gesture, in this Eucharistic gesture, what is going to happen on the cross in the passion.

In some languages we have two different verbs to express this concept. In Spanish, for example, we have *dar* and *entregar*, which have different nuances. *Dar*, to give, is related to a gift, something foreign to us that is offered. *Entregar*, to deliver, has a deeper meaning of personal commitment, of giving of oneself. In Greek, which is the language in which the evangelists wrote, the verb is one and the same word, which is used to refer to the two actions: *dídomi* (*δίδωμι*). In the Greek, it is the same word referring “to give” as “to deliver”; that is, it is the same word referring to seeing Jesus putting bread into the hands of the disciples as it is giving his life in his last breath. And this supposes that Jesus does not know how to give himself in any other way than by giving himself totally.

Perhaps a comment made by Pope Francis, who differentiated between collaborating (giving) and committing (giving oneself), can help us to understand this:

"(...) An Argentine humorist, Landriscina, showed the difference between collaborating and committing oneself. Everyone has to collaborate, but Christians have to commit themselves and Landriscina said: the cow when she gives us milk collaborates for our food. Milk is given and cheese is made and then we make a sandwich. A cheese sandwich is a little bland, so then we have to add ham. Then we go to see the pig and to make the ham the pig does not collaborate. It commits itself and gives its life and gives us the ham. To commit oneself is to give one's life. It is to risk one's life, and life has meaning only if one is willing to risk it, to make it run for the good of others. I like to see so many young people who are willing to commit themselves. Remember the ham and cheese sandwich. Collaborate, yes, but commit. And this certainly, this fight to recover people's dignity, calls for commitment." ¹⁶

Communion that transforms

And this surrender reminds us that the Eucharist also helps us to surrender our lives little by little. It nourishes us so that this life that has been given to us does not remain something that begins and ends with us. It helps us to take strength to discover that life without surrender is meaningless—it becomes sterile and ends in ourselves. The Eucharist will help us to take strength to discern the mission to which each person, each couple, each team has been called, the mission that at this moment we must take on. As Pope Francis points out to us, the celebration of the Mass is aimed at Communion, at uniting us with Jesus, with his body and blood. Jesus, in giving himself to us, helps us to

¹⁶ Pope Francis, Youth Symposium against prostitution and human trafficking, November 15-16, 2014.

transform ourselves and to be ever closer to what he is, with what this means in terms of commitment for our lives:

"We celebrate the Eucharist to nourish ourselves with Christ, who gives himself to us, both in the Word and in the Sacrament of the altar, in order to conform us to him. The Lord himself says: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:56). In fact, Jesus' gesture of giving his disciples his Body and Blood at the Last Supper continues even today through the ministry of the priest and the deacon, ordinary ministers of the distribution to the brethren of the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation".

We go to the altar in procession to take communion. In reality it is Christ who comes to meet us to assimilate us to him. There is an encounter with Jesus! To be nourished by the Eucharist means to allow ourselves to change into what we receive (...) Each time we receive communion, we become more like Jesus. As the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of the Lord, so those who receive him in faith are transformed into the living Eucharist." ¹⁷

Father Caffarel, with his prophetic intuition on conjugal love in his text on Marriage and the Eucharist, elucidates the transformation of conjugal love produced by the Eucharist, and he helps us to understand that it is fundamental in the path of holiness to which we aspire:

"(...) Husband and wife, you who eat the flesh of Christ, who drink his blood, who live the life of Christ in your soul and in your body, who abide in him and he in you, how can you not love each other with a love completely different from that of other men, with a risen love? How can you look at each other, share your sorrows and joys, give each other with all your heart and body, help each other all the way through life, and not have the feeling that you are living a great mystery?

"The union between two persons is worth what they put in common. Therefore, you who receive from the Eucharist the very life of Christ, you must put that life of Christ in common. And that life is a joyful knowledge of the Father, a feeling of filial love. But it is also love for creatures, for all creatures; the admiration, the mercy, the tenderness of the Lord dwells in you. And since it is God's will that you love one another with a privileged love, your love is the first to be transformed by the grace of the Eucharist, which will bring purification, sensitivity and renewal. It will lead you to desire for the one you love infinitely more than the ambition of spouses who love each other, but who ignore the promise of Christ, that is, the love and joy of God, which is *holiness*. And not only that. Your human love will also be transformed in a substantial way under the action of the Eucharist." ¹⁸

¹⁷ Pope Francis, catechesis of March 21, 2018.

¹⁸ Henri Caffarel, *Marriage and the Eucharist* published in the review, *L'Anneau d'Or* -Le mariage, route vers Dieu *Numéro spécial 117-118 - mai - août 1964* - (pp. 242-265). Spanish edition, Henri Caffarel, *El matrimonio camino de santidad*, PPC, 2022, pp. 249-250.

Word of God

Introduction to the Biblical text

The Eucharist is the real presence of Jesus. In it we are not simply given a grace, but rather we are given the One in whom all grace has its origin. In saying "This is my flesh" (in the original Aramaic words), Jesus is saying, "This is me". It is a "true, real and substantial" presence: The bread and wine cease to be such, even if they continue to appear to be so. They become the body, soul and divinity of Jesus. But, at the same time, it is a serving and glorious presence: Jesus continues to be among us as the one who serves. He places his being as man and his death on the cross at our disposal; but his presence is already that of the glorified Lord, who wants to associate us with his glorification. This is why Jesus makes the Eucharist the promise and guarantee of our resurrection, which must help us to be transformed.

Text of John 6:48-58

"I am the bread of life. ⁴Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven, that man may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven; whoever eats of this bread will live forever. And the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." The Jews were disputing among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did, who ate it and died; he who eats this bread shall live forever.""

Team meeting

Welcome

In the previous meetings, we have had a basket with bread in it, bread that was subsequently blessed and in the previous meeting broken. On this occasion, the chaplain will distribute the bread, as a sign of the giving of the bread.

Sharing

At this point, in addition to commenting on the significant experiences that we have had during the month, we are invited to share an experience of self-giving. What kind of unreserved self-giving, without expecting anything in return, takes place in our lives on a more or less daily basis? In other words, what are you willing to do unreservedly if the occasion arises? When was the last time something like this happened to you?

Prayer

We proclaim the text of John 6:48-58

We propose a prayer in two parts. The first part expresses thanksgiving and praise; the second part expresses forgiveness and petition.

Thanksgiving and praise

First: We recognise how Jesus identifies himself with food, "I am the Bread of life", because food is the first gift of God to man. It is real food that sustains and nourishes us. It is food that helps to strengthen us and transform us to have attitudes that bring us closer to Jesus.

- We thank God for being nourishment and sustenance for our life.
- We praise God for his real presence in us, for giving himself through his Son who became man and gave himself as food.

Petition and forgiveness

Second: Of all the needs that the human being has, the most important is to LIVE. This is why we are afraid of death and everything that is death in us. Each humiliation, failure and transgression become small deaths that break us inside. Often, in order to avoid hurt, we seek remedies that silence that inner torment, and we pay whatever it costs. We do so to be someone, to be effective, to have goods that give us security, to seek comforts that make us feel good. We become hooked on pleasures that silence the agony, only to realise that these pleasures do not heal the wounds, but rather become substitutes that leave us even more empty. Jesus gives the answer, the Incarnation, the surrender on the cross, and the Eucharist, becomes the only answer to the human being's longing for LIFE.

- -We ask forgiveness for all that is dead in us, for our fears.
- -We ask that through the Eucharist we may find answers to those little deaths and fears of our life.
- -We ask for the strength to commit ourselves more deeply in our lives, wherever we are.

Sharing on the Endeavours

We may share on the Endeavours.

This month we may comment more specifically on how personal prayer and a true encounter with the Lord help us to discern what our attitude of service and commitment should be. Has prayer helped us to discover something more about God's will for our lives?

In our **sit-down**, we may talk about some aspect of our life, family, work, community in which we believe we can give more of ourselves. There is no true "commitment" if we do not lose control over what we have given,--given in a free surrender without expecting anything, without controlling anything, without demanding anything.

Are we committed to an attitude of generosity? What are we capable of sharing? Do we have a dedicated commitment to our parish, our team, our family? We may discuss the possibility of committing to a mission or service as a couple. If we already do so, how do we live that commitment? What particular witness are we giving as a couple?

Is the Eucharist a source that nourishes our service, our mission?

To share at the team meeting

As you prepare for this meeting, remember the people who have become a gift to you. Thank God for the gift that their lives have been and are. You may wish to identify a particular person who has played an important role in your life. Tell that individual why they are important to you. What aspect of that person's "giving" has helped you the most?

Are you aware of being God's gift to others? For whom do you find it more difficult to see this? Why?

You may wish to share about some of the services in which you are engaged that help others. How do you give yourselves to others?

Towards Turin

The Gathering will be held in Turin, and one of the places that will probably be visited will be the chapel that houses the Holy Shroud. You may wish to learn about the importance of this relic for Christians and to know a little more about its meaning. It is important to keep in mind, beyond the authenticity of this

cloth on which the church has not pronounced itself, that it is a symbol that unites us to the figure of Christ and his sacrifice for our salvation.

Magnificat

Prayer for the beatification of Fr. Henri Caffarel

6. Keep the Sabbath Holy

Sanctifying the holidays

Fabio Rosini, in his book *The Art of Restarting*, points out that on the fourth day of creation when God creates the sources of light, he does so, not to separate the light from the darkness, which he had already done on the first day, but "to serve as signs for the feasts, the days and the years" (Genesis 1:14).

It seems curious that when he lists the measures of time, he does not name the months, but rather mentions the holidays. After all, is life made up of months or feasts? According to Rossini, for the author of Genesis, it is clear that the primary unit of measurement is the feasts, moments in which we can celebrate God's action in our lives.

It is essential to come together to make-present the things that must be remembered and that help to establish us as individuals, families, communities, and people.

"The Lord spoke to Moses, "Say to the children of Israel, 'These are the feasts of the Lord, in which you shall call a liturgical assembly.'" (Leviticus 23:1-2).

The people of Israel used to say with force: Take care of the Sabbath and the Sabbath will take care of you. Because a person does not stop to recognise what has happened in their history, thanksgiving and blessing for so much that been received, their life becomes monotonous, jaded, incomprehensible and meaningless.

Thus, as we are introduced to the importance of the "Lord's Day", we already sense that we are not only speaking of the first commandment of Holy Mother Church, "to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days", but also of the third commandment of the Law of God, which as a prophetic Word, becomes a radical invitation to "Remember the Sabbath day - keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

As we can see in several references in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 20:7-12), in the Pauline letters (1 Corinthians 16:2) and even in the Apocalypse (Revelations 1:10), "The first day after the Sabbath" began to mark the very rhythm of the life of Christ's disciples. This distinguishes the Christians because their calendar did not coincide with that of the Greek or Roman cultures where they lived.

Creation Day

Although biblically the day on which God rested is the *Sabbath*, Christian reflection spontaneously linked the resurrection that occurred "on the first day of the week" with the first day of that cosmic week (cf. *Genesis* 1:1-2:4), to the Book of Genesis which refers to the day of the creation of light (cf. 1:3-5).

Sunday is the day on which the Christian community is called to relive "the awe that man experiences before the immensity of creation and the feeling of adoration that derives from it towards the One who brought all things out of nothing" (Dies domini 9).

In the image of God, Sunday is the day on which we are invited to contemplate the world and to enjoy it, without expecting anything else from God's gift, and, thus, to repeat the refrain that runs throughout Genesis chapter 1: "*God saw that it was good*" (Genesis 1:10).

Resurrection Day

The Eucharist can be and is celebrated every day. However, from the beginning, the Christian community is officially called to celebrate it on Sunday, the "Lord's Day," as we have called it since apostolic times. For Christians it is the "Lord's Day" because on it we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the fundamental core of the Christian faith and the central event of history.

As Pope Francis tells us: "We Christians go to Mass on Sunday to encounter the Risen Lord, or rather, to allow ourselves to be encountered by him, to listen to his word, to be nourished at his table and thus to become Church, that is, his living mystical Body in the world. (...) This was understood, from the first hour, by the disciples of Jesus, those who celebrated the Eucharistic encounter with the Lord on the day of the week that the Hebrews called "the first day of the week" and the Romans "the day of the sun"; because on that day Jesus had risen from the dead and had appeared to the disciples, speaking with them, eating with them and giving them the Holy Spirit. Also, the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost happens on Sunday, the fiftieth day after Jesus' resurrection. For these reasons, Sunday is a holy day for us, sanctified by the Eucharistic celebration, the living presence of the Lord among us and for us. It is the Mass, therefore, that makes Sunday Christian! Christian Sunday revolves around the Mass. What Sunday is it, for a Christian, on which he misses the encounter with the Lord?"¹⁹

Spirit Day

On Easter evening, Jesus breathed on the apostles and said to them: "*Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; whose sins you retain, they are retained*" (John 20:22-23).

Sunday was also the day of Pentecost, the first day of the eighth week after the Jewish Passover (Acts 2:1), when the apostles received the gift of the Spirit and when for the first time Peter proclaimed the *Kerygma*²⁰, bringing together in unity a people coming from many different places.

¹⁹ Pope Francis, Audience December 13, 2017.

²⁰ Greek word meaning announcement

Church Day

Only if we understand the profound meaning of Sunday as the "Lord's Day" will we understand the essential communitarian importance of the Sunday celebration. As we can deduce, it is no longer a matter of "attending Mass" as if it were an individual and pious act. The Sunday assembly is the privileged place of unity, where the majority of the people of God may be gathered together and the celebration may be celebrated with tranquility and the utmost dignity.

We must not forget that, "among the many activities that a parish carries out, none is as vital or formative for the community as the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Day and his Eucharist" (Dies domini 35), since the Eucharist not only links us to the living and Risen Christ, but also allows communion with our brothers and sisters, thus, creating a true *event of fraternity* that does not end in the church but continues in daily life.

How do you sanctify a feast?

Remembering and resting

The commandment, with which God imposes the observance of the Sabbath in the book of Exodus, is given in a certain way: "*Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day* " (Exodus 20:8). Before imposing something to *do*, the commandment points out something to *remember* (DD 16).

In this way, we are invited to rest in order to distance ourselves from the overwhelming rhythm of life in which we live and to remember that God is God and that we are only creatures. It is God who has accomplished a work of salvation, not only with his people in general, but with us in particular. Only this remembrance enables us to enter into the rest of our Lord. In this way Sunday truly becomes the Lord's Day because we let God be God.

As Pope Francis reminds us: "Sunday abstention from work did not exist in the first centuries: it is a specific contribution of Christianity. By biblical tradition, the Jews rested on Saturday, while in Roman society there was no provision for a weekly day of abstention from servile work. It was the Christian sense of living as sons and not as slaves, animated by the Eucharist, that made Sunday--almost universally--the day of rest. Without Christ, we are condemned to be dominated by the weariness of everyday life with its worries and fear of tomorrow. The Sunday encounter with the Lord gives us the strength to live today with confidence and courage, and to go forward with hope. Therefore, we Christians are going to meet the Lord on Sunday in the Eucharistic celebration. (...)"²¹

The celebration of the Eucharist

The celebration of Sunday is not a mere remembrance, but it is the fulfillment of the promise of the Risen Lord to his apostles: "*I am with you always, to the*

²¹ Pope Francis, Audience December 13, 2017.

close of the age" (Matthew 28:20). The Christian community understood from the beginning that salvation is not received in a personal capacity, but that the grace received makes us "People of God", which is why the experience of the *ekklesia*, the assembly gathered by the Risen Lord, is indispensable: "*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*" (Acts 2:42).

In the fraternal encounter

For a true Lord's Day it is essential for us to experience Sunday as a family and as a fraternal encounter with those whom God has given us as a gift and grace. Father Caffarel begins in his chapter entitled *Mass* by stressing the fact that *the essential part of a couple's life* is giving utmost importance to Sunday as a special day: "When at the beginning of the day, or on Sunday, after a week of work, of love, of joy, husband and wife leave the house--perhaps accompanied by their children--and go together towards the house of the Lord. What motive impels them? Is it simply to satisfy an obligation? I know well that it is not. The Mass is for you the high point of your life, the point towards which all your activities must converge, the source where your existence is nourished, the privileged hour of your home's encounter with God. You want to render praise to God, to offer him the filial worship that is due to him by individuals, but also by human communities, by each spouse, but also as a couple. And not just any worship, but that sacrifice, the unique, perfect sacrifice, offered once and for all".²²

Solidarity meeting

When we rest in the Lord in gratitude and fraternity, it is easy to feel the need to share all that we have received with those most in need. For this reason, Sunday is a privileged time to dedicate oneself to activities of mercy, charity and apostolate.

The first communities lived this way: "*Every first day of the week, let each of you set aside in his own house what he has been able to spare*" (1 Corinthians 16:2). In fact, the Sunday Mass collection is an expression of this fraternal sharing for the needs of the community. Beyond the coins that bother our pockets, we are called to a demanding *culture of sharing*.

The Eucharist is an event and a project of fraternity. From the Sunday Mass, a wave of charity is born that is destined to spread to the whole life of the faithful, beginning by animating the very way of living the rest of Sunday. If it is a day of joy, it is necessary for Christians to show by their specific attitudes that they cannot be happy "alone". It may happen that in your neighbourhood or in your circle of friends there are sick people, the elderly, children and immigrants who, precisely on Sunday, feel their loneliness, their needs and their condition of suffering more keenly. Certainly, attention to them cannot be limited to a sporadic Sunday initiative. But if we have a more global attitude of dedication, why not give the Lord's Day a greater atmosphere of sharing,

²² Henri Caffarel, *Marriage and the Eucharist* published in the review, *L'Anneau d'Or - Le mariage*, route vers Dieu Numéro spécial 117-118 - mai - août 1964 - (pp. 242-265). (English edition) *El matrimonio camino de santidad*, PPC, 2022, p. 245.

bringing into play all the creativity that Christian charity is capable of? Inviting a lonely person to have lunch with us, visiting the sick, providing food for a needy family, dedicating an hour or so to real initiatives of volunteer work and solidarity: These would certainly be ways of bringing to life the charity of Christ received at the Eucharistic table. (DD 72)

As Pope Francis tells us in conclusion: "Why go to Mass on Sunday? It is not enough to answer that it is a precept of the Church; this helps to preserve its value, but alone it is not enough. We Christians need to participate in Sunday Mass because only with the grace of Jesus, with his living presence in us and among us, can we put his commandment into practice and, thus, be his credible witnesses." ²³

Word of God

Introduction to the biblical text

According to the consistent message of the Gospels, the resurrection of Jesus took place "on the first day after the Sabbath" (cf. Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). On that same day, the Risen One appeared to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35) and appeared to the eleven apostles who were gathered together (cf. Luke 24:36; John 20:19). Eight days later, the disciples were again gathered together when Jesus appeared to them and made himself recognised by Thomas (cf. John 20:26). It was also Sunday, the day of Pentecost, the first day of the eighth week after the Jewish Passover, when, with the outpouring of the Spirit, the first preaching of Peter and the first baptisms, the epiphany or manifestation of the Church as the new people of God took place (cf. Acts 2:1-41).

On this basis, Sunday began to mark the rhythm of the life of the disciples as a day of gathering, of the "breaking of bread" (cf. Acts 20:7-2) and of sharing (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:2). The Book of Revelation testifies to the custom of calling this day the "day of the Lord" (Revelation 1:10; 6:17; 16:14).

Text of Mark 16: 1-2, 9-16

"After the Sabbath Mary Magdalene, Mary of James, and Salome bought spices to go and embalm Jesus. And very early on the first day of the week, at sunrise, they went to the tomb.

Resurrected at dawn on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She went to tell his companions who were mourning and weeping. When they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe her.

²³ Pope Francis, Audience December 13, 2017.

Then he appeared in the form of another to two of them who were walking in the field. They also went to tell the others, but they did not believe them. Finally, Jesus appeared to the Eleven while they were at table. He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen him risen. And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned."

For the team meeting

Welcome

With this topic, we have shared the importance of the celebration of the feasts, which is more than the Sunday obligation. For this reason, we invite you to decorate in a special way the place that you will gather. You might consider putting flowers on the table or decorating the room. Be creative in your decorations.

Sharing

Today we may share how we have experienced a Sunday that has been a little different since the last meeting. You may also tell of a Sunday that you remember in which you participated in the Eucharist that had a significant community experience. Perhaps you felt especially welcomed by the community or by Jesus who came to meet you.

Prayer

We read the biblical text Mark 16: 1-2, 9-16.

After proclaiming the biblical text, we offer you three prayerful moments to ask for forgiveness of the Lord and to give thanks. At intervals, we invite one member of the welcoming couple to read the biblical fragment and then the other to read the proposed prayer. After reading the passage, leave a moment of silence for each one to pray what the passage means in his or her life. Those who wish to, may express their feelings in a prayer that is shared aloud.

I am sorry:

Resurrected at dawn on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. ¹⁰ She went to tell his companions, who were mourning and weeping. ¹¹ When they heard her say that he was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe her.

In this encounter with the Lord, we ask forgiveness for our doubts, lack of faith and difficulties.

I have a request:

Then he appeared in the form of another to two of them who were walking in the field.

This text speaks to us of the encounter of the various people who meet the risen Lord. For each individual, this encounter would have been very difficult because of their confusion and doubts after the death of Jesus. This encounter was only possible because of their willingness to allow themselves to be encountered by Him.

We ask the Lord to let us meet Him... each according to what he needs.

Thanksgiving

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to all creation.

We thank the Lord for the encounter with Him because it encourages us in our life and helps us on our way.

Sharing on the Endeavours

During this meeting, we may share about the special way we listen to the Word of God. "Listening" is not just reading; it is something more. Consider how you have tasted and "contemplated" that Word. What kind of response has it provoked within you? Has it illuminated in some way your understanding of Sundays?

As a suggestion, we propose a **discussion** on the meaning of Sundays in your lives. Today's Christians need to rediscover the meaning of Sunday--its mystery and its value as a celebration--so as not to confuse it with a mere "weekend", a time only of rest or fun.

We may wish to consider the quality of our Sundays now and, perhaps, to propose to have a Sunday this month that is more "special". During our sit-down, we may wish to discuss how we can prepare to make our Sunday more "special".

We may also reflect upon whether or not the Mass is of great consequence in our lives as a couple, as Father Caffarel advocates.

To share at the team meeting

One of the most important challenges facing the family today is to create a new family culture. This is crucial because of the vast changes that have occurred within the configuration and nature of relationships within the family. Many of the characteristics once common in the traditional family no longer serve us. And we Christians, who also live in this new world, need to strive to create a new Christian family culture. Culture supposes a way of understanding family life which is expressed in gestures, symbols, celebrations, home organisation, etc. And, within all these, we need to discover a new way of celebrating Sunday, that day that has shaped Christianity throughout its history.

We may wish to share suggestions for a new structure of our family culture.

We may share with the rest of the team how we live Sunday. Is there something that we have discovered that can help our team to live it in a different, more effective manner?

Pope Francis and Father Caffarel invite us to ask ourselves: Why go to Mass on Sunday? What is our motive? Is it simply to fulfill an obligation? What is the answer in our case?

Towards Turin

Turin is famous for having been the scene of the work of some of the most notable saints of the 19th century--personalities with great charisma and with the virtue of Christian charity--who donated soul and body to combat the social plagues of the time and who are known generically as "social saints". In Turin, **St. John Bosco** gave life to his oratory and to the Salesian Congregation, founding the **Basilica of Maria Ausiliatrice**, where he was buried. **St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo** instituted the **Little House of Divine Providence**, a hospital institution that today has many branches throughout the world. Among countless others, these are some of the important saints attributed to Turin. We may wish to learn more about these extraordinary individuals from Turin who blessed us in innumerable ways.

Magnificat

Prayer for the canonisation of Father Caffarel

7. Banquet Guests

After the journey we have made during this course about the Eucharist, we believe it is important to stop briefly to review the elements that we celebrate and the meaning they have.

It is true that this means having to use words proper to the liturgy that cannot and should not be substituted, since they belong to a language of our own that we must know, love and preserve. To try to change it would be like forcing a poet to write in prose.

Opening rites

We begin the Eucharist, as the disciples of Emmaus did, thinking about what has happened during the week. Like them, we often feel saddened, outraged and disappointed.

As we saw in previous chapters, the whole week can lead us into a dynamic of feeling cursed. Judgment readily takes hold of us; we are overwhelmed by the feeling that we have not been treated as we deserved. We expected things to be different. Our expectations have been dashed, and we are left feeling that things are not right, that we deserve more, that everything is unfair....

The entrance, the greeting, the penitential act, the Lord have mercy, the Gloria and the Collect prayer, are called Initial Rites. They seek that those of us who have gathered together can welcome the God who in Jesus comes out to meet us and asks us: What is the matter with you? What are you thinking about? In this way, even if our eyes remain closed and we do not recognise Jesus, everything predisposes us to feel that we are not alone, that we form a true community and that Someone wants to meet with us.

Beginning with a song is not just a gesture of aesthetic beauty. The song opens the celebration, promotes the union of those who are gathered and introduces us to the liturgical season or particular celebration we are living. When the priest arrives at the sanctuary, kisses the altar, and approaches the seat, he greets us in the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit and makes us a promise: "the Lord be with you", with the assurance that, when two or more are gathered in his name, he is present, thus manifesting the mystery of the Church gathered together.

But in order to begin to open our eyes, we have to recognise what is happening to us, what we are talking about along the way (Luke 24:13-35). We do this by means of the formula of the general confession of the whole community, which concludes with a first confession of faith, crying out to the *Kyrie* (Lord) and imploring his mercy.

On feast days this acclamation is joined by the Gloria, an ancient and venerable hymn with which the Church, gathered in the Holy Spirit, glorifies God the Father and beseeches the Lamb.

Finally, the priest invites the people to pray, and we all, together with the priest, keep a moment of silence to make us aware that we are in the presence of God and that we can formulate our desires in his spirit. Then the priest says the prayer that is called "the Collect" and by which the prayer of all is collected and raised to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.

Liturgy of the Word

Faced with the real situation that we have already recognised and placed in the hands of the Father, we are given an answer through the Word of God. Through the readings, the table of the Word of God is prepared for us and the treasures of the Bible are opened to us. To emphasise the depth of this moment, we keep the arrangement of the readings, which clarifies the unity of the two Testaments²⁴. All are proclaimed from the ambo, the table of the Word. After each reading, the reader proposes an acclamation, to which the gathered people respond to honor the Word of God received in faith and with grateful spirit. As Father Caffarel reminds us: "The value and importance of the Gospels is not that they are a collection of gestures and sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, but that, in the words of St. Augustine: 'They are the very Word of Jesus Christ'. You are mistaken if you see in the Gospel ancient words, piously preserved, the words of the greatest man who ever lived on earth. The Gospel is the Voice, living and permanent, of a living man, of a great living man who is among us. It is a word that is addressed to the Church without a doubt, but it is also addressed to each one of us (...) Jesus Christ speaks to us and without a doubt teaches us what we must believe, and tells us what we must do; but above all, he says to me with overwhelming confidence: 'I love you, even to the point of sacrificing my life'. The faith with which I respond to his confession is far better than the simple adherence of my intelligence to his teaching, far better than obedience to his commandments, it is an impulse of my whole being by which I give myself to him without reserve."²⁵

The homily is part of the Liturgy and is highly important, since it nourishes the Christian life; however it is a pity that many times - because of the time it occupies, because of the novelty it offers, or because of the form, or qualities (or lack of them) of the preacher - it becomes the centre of the Celebration. To the point that the whole is valued for the part. "What a great Mass!" "What a great Eucharist!" This is often our focus; when in reality, it is a minor, interpretative and subjective part, which may or may not help us, but which should not become the most important part of the Eucharist.

²⁴ The first reading is closely related to the Gospel and the second follows a continuous reading of events or of the Letters.

²⁵ Br. Caffarel, Monthly Letter of the Teams of Our Lady, No. 4, January 1964, entitled "*The Mystery of the Gospel*".

The liturgy of the Word continues with the Profession of Faith, in which all the people, gathered together, respond to the Word of God proclaimed in the readings from Sacred Scripture and explained in the homily. In conclusion, in the prayers of the faithful we pray for the salvation of all, especially for the holy Church, for those who govern, for those who suffer various needs, for all people and for the salvation of the whole world. These prayers are read, and the people of God, , respond together.

Eucharistic Liturgy

In the context of the Passover, as we have seen in the previous chapters, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, in which the sacrifice of the cross is continually made present in the Church, when the priest, representing Christ the Lord, performs what the Lord did and commanded his disciples to do in memory of him.

This part of the Eucharist begins by bringing to the altar the gifts of bread and wine, which will become the Body and Blood of Christ--which it is appropriate for the faithful to present--and handing them to the priest who places them on the altar using the formula of blessing to God, as is done at the Paschal meal: "Blessed are you, Lord"... Subsequently, the priest washes his hands on one side of the altar, expressing the desire for interior purification. Once the gifts have been deposited and the accompanying rites are concluded, there is an invitation to pray together with the priest, the prayer over the gifts. The preparation of the gifts is concluded, and the Eucharistic Prayer is prepared.

At this moment, the centre and summit of the entire celebration begins, inviting the people to raise their hearts to the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving, introducing us to what is right and necessary: to give thanks, blessings and praise to God.

The main elements of the Eucharistic Prayer can be distinguished in this way:

1. **Thanksgiving:** This is expressed in the Preface, at the moment in which the priest, in the name of all, proclaims that it is right and necessary to thank God for the...
2. **Acclamation:** Thanksgiving elicits praise to God, joining the heavenly choirs, experiencing that we join the heavenly Church.
3. **Epiclesis (invocation to the Holy Spirit):** The church implores the power of the Holy Spirit so that the gifts offered may become the Body and Blood of Christ.
4. **Narration of the institution of the Eucharist and consecration:** Jesus, in instituting the Eucharist, left to the apostles and their successors the command, "Do this in remembrance of me". Therefore, the priests do what Jesus did, said and commanded to be repeated.
5. **Anamnesis (memorial action):** In fulfilling Jesus' command, the Passion, death and resurrection of Christ are actualised in the here and now. Like

the apostles, in every Eucharist we are witnesses and receivers of the paschal mystery.

6. **Oblation (offering):** The Church, which recognises the actualised participation in the passion of Christ, offers him to the Father as the only pleasing sacrifice, and together with him, offers herself.
7. **Intercessions:** We express the fact that the Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church, of both heaven and of earth. We pray for the pope, the bishops, for all living and deceased members, and we do so in communion with the saints, Mary, Joseph, the apostles, the martyrs, etc.
8. **Doxology (Praise):** It is the total surrender, the proclamation of God's might and glory. It is the most solemn Amen of the Eucharist, because *with Christ, through him and in him*, we offer each ourselves.

Communion Rite

The Eucharist is the paschal banquet, and, therefore, according to the Lord's command, his Body and Blood must be received as spiritual nourishment. For this, the Church prepares us with:

The Lord's Prayer, Our Father: It is the prayer proper to God's children, whom the Son, Christ, has taught us to address.

The sign of peace follows, with which the Church asks for peace and unity for herself and for the whole human family. In doing so the faithful express ecclesial communion and mutual charity, before receiving sacramental communion.

We have shared the gesture of the **breaking of the Bread** in all its grandeur in previous chapters, so it will be easy for us to experience it at a deeper level.

The participation in **communion**, for those who are prepared or in spiritual communion and for those who are not, is the high point of the whole celebration, so it is very important that we live it with the joy of those who receive the greatest possible gift. As Pope Francis reminds us: "To the priest who, distributing the Eucharist, says to you: 'The Body of Christ,' you respond: 'Amen,' that is, you recognise the grace and the commitment that comes with becoming the Body of Christ. Because when you receive the Eucharist, you become the Body of Christ. It is beautiful, this; it is very beautiful. While it unites us to Christ, tearing us away from our selfishness, communion opens us up and unites us to all those who are one in Him. This is the wonder of communion: we become what we receive!"²⁶

²⁶ Pope Francis, Catechesis of March 21, 2018.

To conclude the supplication of the people of God, and, also, to conclude the entire Communion rite, the priest says the prayer after Communion, in which the fruits of the celebrated mystery are prayed for.

Concluding rite

It is the moment of the "notices" similar to the family sharing around the table. The final greeting and blessing of the priest, which on some days and occasions is enriched, is the call for the Lord to be with us in our going out. It is God who gives the blessing (*bene-dice*) to our real life, making himself present in it.

Finally, the deacon or priest dismisses the assembly so that each one may return to his or her good works, praising and blessing God.

Word of God

Introduction to the biblical text

We prepared ourselves to read the scene on the road to Emmaus as a catechesis of the itinerary of our Eucharistic celebration, in its different parts. Two were walking together, although they did not understand each other very well. They were arguing: in the Eucharist we began by striving to form community. They were troubled by their obscurities and frustrations. The stranger who joined them forced them to recognise this situation: we also recognise our shortcomings in the penitential act. Jesus goes out to meet them and begins to walk with them, but they do not recognise him because Jesus can only be seen now with the eyes of faith. In order to awaken in them this faith, Jesus explains to them everything that referred to him in Scripture. And it is this explanation that sets their hearts on fire and prepares them to recognise him, as in the Liturgy of the Word. The two disciples welcome the teaching of Jesus and show their desire to continue with him: With our profession of faith, we welcome his word and prepare ourselves to meet him in person. Jesus sat at table, took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. And then they recognised him, even though he disappeared from their side. The four actions of Jesus are what we keep repeating in the Eucharistic Liturgy. And through them, the real, though mysterious, presence of Jesus among us is produced. After this, the two disciples ran back to Jerusalem to tell the others what had happened to them. At the end of the Eucharist, we are sent out to bear witness to the Risen One.

Text of Luke 24: 13-35

That same day, two of them were walking to a village called Emmaus, about sixty furlongs from Jerusalem; and they were conversing with each other about all that had happened. While they were conversing and discussing, Jesus himself came and walked with them. But their eyes were not able to recognise him. He said to them, "What conversation is this that you are carrying on while you are on your way?" They stopped with a saddened air. And one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in

Jerusalem who does not know what has happened there these days?" And he said to them, "What?" They answered him, "About Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word, before God and before all the people; how the chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be put to death and crucified him. We had hoped that he was going to deliver Israel, but, with all this, we are already on the third day since this happened. It is true that some women of our group have startled us, for having gone early in the morning to the tomb and not having found his body, they came saying that they had even seen an apparition of angel who say that he is alive. Some of our people also went to the tomb and found it as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "How foolish and dull you are to believe what the prophets said! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer this, and so enter into his glory?" And, beginning with Moses and continuing through all the prophets, he explained to them what was referred to him in all the Scriptures. They came near the village to which they were going, and he pretended that they were going to walk on; but they urged him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is evening and the day is falling." And he went in to stay with them. He sat down at table with them, took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened, and they recognised him. But he disappeared from their sight. And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the way and explained the scriptures to us?" And rising up at that moment, they returned to Jerusalem, where they found the Eleven gathered together with their companions, who were saying, "It was true, the Lord is risen and has appeared to Simon." And they told what had happened to them on the way, and how they had recognised him in the breaking of the bread.

Team Meeting

Welcome

We invite the couple hosting the meeting to find and share music or a song related to the Eucharist that has a special meaning for them.

Sharing

You may wish to share how, throughout this month, the Word of God has helped you to behave in some real way with more kindness, generosity and goodness. How has it helped you to have an attitude more in line with the Lord's will for your life?

Prayer

We pray based on the proposed reading for this month, Luke 24: 13-35.

As disciples, we are on a journey. Jesus accompanies us, though many times, we do not see Him, and we do not recognise Him. It is difficult for us to understand. He takes the initiative and helps us to open our eyes. We propose a prayer itinerary in three parts:

1. Prayer of forgiveness (We read verses 13-17)

That same day two of them were walking to a village called Emmaus, about sixty furlongs from Jerusalem; and they were conversing with each other about everything that had happened. While they were conversing and discussing, Jesus himself came and walked with them. But their eyes were not able to recognise him. He said to them, "What conversation is this that you are carrying on while you are on your way?" They stopped with a saddened air.

They were arguing. Their eyes were not able to recognise him. They were saddened, etc.

Forgive us for our arguments, anger, forgetfulness, sadness, for forgetting your presence with us.

Each individual may pray their own prayers of forgiveness.

2. Prayer of petition (We read verses 19-29)

Stay with us.

We ask the Lord to accompany us in those times in our lives when we need to be sustained and to be accompanied by Him.

Each individual may pray their own petitions according to the needs in his life.

3. Prayer of thanksgiving (we read verses 30-34)

Sitting at table with them, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognised him. But he disappeared from their sight. And they said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us on the way and explained the scriptures to us?" And rising up at that moment, they returned to Jerusalem, where they found the Eleven gathered together with their companions, who were saying, "It was true, the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

Their eyes were opened; their hearts were burning.

We thank God for his loving presence at this time in our lives:

that helps us to open our eyes to. . .

that makes our hearts o burn because it leads us to communicate, to tell. . .

Each individual may pray their own prayer of thanksgiving.

Sharing on the Endeavours

During this month, we will pay special attention to the call, if possible, to "place ourselves before the Lord every year in marriage for a retreat of at least 48 hours, to reflect and to plan our life in his presence". Perhaps we have already participated in a retreat or will do so in the near future. How has this helped us to discover God's will in our lives?

As a suggestion for the **sit-down**, we propose a dialogue about the International Meeting. Consider how you are preparing to participate in it. Have you already planned to participate in person? If not, how can you join the Gathering from a distance? We recommend that you reserve some time to pray for the success of the Gathering. Also, communicate with people from your team or from other teams about praying for the Gathering. In addition, consider how you can participate in making the Gathering a success. Ask yourselves if you feel called to be part of this larger community that makes up the people who belong to the Teams beyond your own base team who are planning the Gathering. Take some time for reflection about your participation in this momentous event.

To share at the team meeting

You may wish to share whether you identify with some of the feelings and comments expressed in the first part of the text. In which Eucharist do you usually participate? In your parish? Do you look for other places that seem better for you? What is your attitude when you go to Mass on Sundays? Do you feel part of a community or mere spectators? Do you prepare yourselves in some special way?

How does the Emmaus story help you to understand your experience of the Eucharist?

Towards Turin

The text of Emmaus will mark the meeting in Turin. You may be informed about the motto, the logo, the proposals for distance follow-up, the way to be united to the meeting--even if you cannot physically participate in it.

Magnificat

Prayer for the beatification of Fr. Henri Caffarel

8. Do this in memory of me

The Eucharist is not a mere remembrance of a past event; it is a "memorial" that is made present again in the celebration and projected into the future. When Jesus said to his disciples and says to us now, "*Do this in memory of me,*" "this" does not refer only to the ritual gesture but to what that gesture means. If for Christ such a gesture was the celebration of a life given, so it should be for us. As we have seen throughout the chapters, it is not a matter of repeating a gesture. It is a matter of letting ourselves be taken, blessed, broken and given, just as he did throughout his life and reiterated in that last Passover. It is about living as Christ lived and then celebrating our life given as He did. We are going to dedicate this last chapter to try to imagine what in reality this "*Do this in memory of me*" (Luke 22:19) that Jesus asked of us means in our lives .. We will discover the profound meaning of "*this*" which is an even more demanding call, and which connects the whole Eucharistic celebration with our Christian life.

Go in the peace of Christ

The "You may go in peace" is not an end in itself. If it is consistent with what we have experienced in the Eucharist, it is the beginning of a new time--of the sending out to continue our pilgrimage in faith.

The end of the celebration of the Eucharist invites us to recall the relationship between the Eucharist and Christian life, between the Eucharist and mission. Although this direct relationship between the Eucharist and the life of Christians is experienced throughout the celebration, it is at the end, at the sending forth, that it is most evident and explicitly recalled.

The "You may go in peace" is not a reassurance of conscience, a "go in peace, you have already fulfilled your duty". It is, on the contrary, a "go in the peace of God, because you are being sent to preach what you have experienced".

Indeed, before sending his disciples out to preach the Gospel and bear witness to the Resurrection throughout the world, Christ raised his hands and blessed them (cf. Luke 24:50). And that is what the priest does at the end of the celebration. The blessing is the link that unites the Eucharistic celebration with the rest of Christian life.

Throughout the Eucharist, we have been shown the places of God's presence. In each "The Lord be with you", which the priest says and to which we respond "and with your spirit", one of these presences is pointed out:

1. At the beginning of the Eucharist, indicating that the Lord is in the midst of the gathered community.

2. In the Word of God, where it is proclaimed that the Lord is present through his living and effective word.
3. In the "Lord be with you" of the Eucharistic prayer, where we are invited to recognise the presence of the Lord in the Bread of Life.
4. In the last "The Lord be with you", where we are sent, we are assured of God's presence in the midst of our reality. A God who precedes us, sends us and accompanies us in our mission.

At Mass we have met the risen Christ; now it is a matter of being witnesses of his resurrection in the world. We have heard his Word; now it is up to us to pass it on to others. We have received the Bread that gives life; now we are going to live the new life. We have come together as brothers; now we are dispersed to be brothers to all men. We have praised God with our prayers and with our songs; now we are going to turn our ordinary life into a continuous praise of God. We have associated ourselves with Christ's total surrender to the Father and to mankind; now we will verify this surrender with all our works.

The Eucharist transforms and engages us. It "*eucharises*" us. For this reason, the Eucharist, at the same time as it enables us to live the new life, demands that we strive to act according to the Gospel criteria. We cannot be people through whom the Mass simply passes--those people who fail to give an acceptable human and even less Christian stature.

The Eucharist was instituted to work in us the miracle of love and grace that transforms us. If it fails to do so, something is wrong. The truth of the Eucharistic celebration is demonstrated in what it accomplishes in our lives at the end of the celebration.

The commitment of Christian witness

Pope Francis also alludes to our consistent Christian commitment to a conscious participation in the Eucharist. He insists on the concept of being Eucharistic men and women in all facets of our lives; and he explains this by indicating that we are people who have been filled with Christ and who want to act like Him--aware of our weakness--but at the same time, firm in our desire to be true Christians: "(...) However, we know that while the Mass ends, the commitment of Christian witness opens up. Christians do not go to Mass to do a weekly task and then forget about it, no. Christians go to Mass to participate in it. Christians go to Mass to participate in the Passion and Resurrection of the Lord and then live more as Christians: the commitment of Christian witness opens up. We leave the church to "go in peace" and bring God's blessing to our daily activities, to our homes, to our work environments, between the occupations of the earthly city, "glorifying the Lord with our life". (...)

We must not forget that we celebrate the Eucharist in order to become Eucharistic men and women. What does this mean? It means to let Christ act in our works: to let his thoughts be our thoughts, his feelings our feelings, his choices our choices. And this is holiness: to do as Christ did is Christian holiness". (...)

The fruits of the Mass, therefore, are destined to mature in daily life. We can make the following analogy: the Mass is like the grain of wheat that continues to grow and to mature in good works and in attitudes that make us resemble Jesus. The fruits of the Mass, therefore, are destined to mature in daily life. Indeed, by increasing our union with Christ, the Eucharist makes real the grace that the Spirit has given us in Baptism and Confirmation, so that our Christian witness may be credible".²⁷

The Eucharist, source of mission

In a very evocative text by Father Caffarel, he invites us to think of the analogy with the people of Israel, a people on the way out--who after eating the Passover--are ready to set out in search of the Promised Land. And so, nourished and guided by God, they discover their mission as a people. This comparison reminds us that Christ does not leave us alone in fulfilling the commitments to which we have been called. First of all, he helps to awaken in us the desire to go out into the world, to meet our brothers and sisters, to share what we believe in, to set out on the road. But it also nourishes us so that we never forget that nothing of what we do is due to our own strength and abilities. Rather, it is He that is accompanying and nourishing us. If by participating in the Eucharist we become more united to Christ, it is to become more like Him. We attempt to make our life a reflection, although much weaker than we would like, of the attitudes and lifestyle we expect from a Christian. This serves us as individuals, but we can also do our own searching as married couples and try to see how we can commit ourselves, in a clearer way, to serve in building the Kingdom. Living the Eucharist as a couple will help us to go out together in mission, stronger and more united. Let us listen to the words of Father Caffarel, which help us to understand this missionary sense:

"(...) I would also like to mention another characteristic sign of those homes where the mystery of Christ's Passover is lived. They refuse to be "settled". According to St. Paul's formula, they are, on earth, "strangers and sojourners". How could it be otherwise? You know that the Hebrews had to eat the Passover lamb, sandals on their feet, waist girded, staff in hand, travellers gathering strength before embarking on the long journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. So it is with those who eat the Lord's Passover: they do not despise the land, on the contrary, but they are on their way to a better homeland. And the more they nourish themselves with the Eucharist, the more the nostalgia for this other homeland grows in them. "*You shall be my people, I will be your God,*" the Lord said to the Hebrews (Leviticus 26:12). To Christian spouses, Christ-- dead and risen--says the same thing. But for them, as for the Hebrews on the march in the desert, this "God with them" is a God who becomes *their guide* and, without ceasing, leads them forward if they follow him. My

²⁷ Pope Francis, General Audience of April 4, 2018.

conclusion will be brief, just one sentence: Marriage is the admirable invention of Christ so that the Eucharist can be lived by two." ²⁸

Word of God

Introduction to the biblical text

The Lord wanted to remain with us in the Eucharist, but announcing the Lord's death "until he comes" implies, for those who participate in the Eucharist, letting him transform our life, so that it becomes in a certain way "Eucharistic",and the commitment to transform the world according to the Gospel. The Eucharistic celebration is a privileged evangelising act because it is the best expression of our faith. At no other moment is our attitude as believers and the main content of what we believe more visible than in this encounter between Jesus and his disciples, in which he and we show the essence of what we are and live. Nor is the authentic nature of the community founded by Christ, the Church, better manifested as a creature and humble servant of the Gospel. The Eucharist, authentically lived, is a privileged means of evangelisation; but if it becomes a simple rite empty of life, it can also become the worst of anti-witnesses. There is no worse perversion than that which affects the signs of love. St. Paul's text is certainly harsh, but it should make us realise the commitment we are making by our participation in the banquet of the Eucharist.

Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-30

"In prescribing this to you, I cannot praise you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I have heard that when your assembly gathers together there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it; there really must be divisions among you so that it may be seen who stand the test. So when you come together in fellowship, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, for each one goes ahead to eat his own supper, and while one is hungry, the other is drunk. Have you no houses to eat and drink in? Or do you hold the church of God so lowly that you humiliate those who have none? What would you have me say to you, that I should praise you? In this I do not praise you. For I have received a tradition from the Lord, which I in turn have passed on to you: that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was about to be betrayed, took bread and, saying thanksgiving, broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this every time you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Therefore, whenever you eat of this bread and drink of the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again. Whoever therefore eats the bread, and

²⁸ Henri Caffarel, *Marriage and the Eucharist* published in the review, *L'Anneau d'Or* -Le mariage, route vers Dieu *Numéro spécial 117-118 - mai - août 1964* - (pp. 242-265). English edition, Henri Caffarel, *El matrimonio camino de santidad*, PPC, 2022, p. 263.

drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. Let every person therefore examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgement on himself."

Team meeting

Welcome

The welcoming couple may prepare some candles to be lit at the moment of prayer and then to be distributed to the team members to take home as a sign of being sent to be light in the world.

Sharing

At this time, team members may share about some significant event in their lives that is related to our mission as Christians in the building of the Kingdom. They may share about specific activities relating to the care of their families, their life commitments, their work environment, their work in their parish, their involvement in Teams, etc.

Prayer

We proclaim 1 Corinthians 11:17-30

After reading the biblical text, team members offer three prayerful moments to ask forgiveness, to thank, and to pray to the Lord. At the appropriate time, one member of the welcoming couple may read the biblical passage, and then the other member of the welcoming couple may read the proposed prayer. After this, a moment of silence. Team members may pray aloud what this means in their lives.

I am sorry

In the first place, I have heard that when your assembly meets, there are divisions among you; and in part I believe it; there really must be divisions among you so that it will be seen who will stand the test.

We ask your forgiveness, Lord, for the times when there is division in our marriage, in our family, in our team.

(Share Intentions)

I give thanks

For I have received a tradition from the Lord, which I in turn have passed on to you: that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was about to be betrayed, took bread and, saying thanksgiving, broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this every time you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Lord Jesus, we thank you because you have remained among us and you are nourishment in our lives.

We thank you...

We request

Therefore, every time you eat of this bread and drink of the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death, until he comes again.

Lord Jesus, we pray that we may be able to proclaim your Kingdom through our actions and lives. Help us to make our mission real as Christians to build the Kingdom here and now.

(Share Intentions)

Sharing on the Endeavours

We may concentrate on the things that we have identified as being important to us as a couple. This month we may focus on the issue of homelessness and the lack of housing for the under-privileged.

For the **sit-down**, we may first reflect on how homelessness and the lack of housing for the under-privileged affect us personally as individuals and as a couple. How can we best serve this part of the population?

Is the Eucharist a vital necessity for me? Do I bring to it all my experiences: personal, marital, family, professional? Do I try to keep in mind all the people for whom I have a special responsibility when I am celebrating it? Is it really a food that makes me grow as a Christian? Does it help me discern the mission to which I am called? Am I coherent with my life after Mass?

In **conjugal prayer**, we should reflect on all that we share in common as a couple. However, we should also think about how we can help each other to make the Eucharist more meaningful in our lives. Among other undertakings, perhaps it would be wise to go to the Eucharist together, in addition to Sundays. The Eucharist can be made a priority to be received together on dates that are significant for the family: anniversaries, birthdays, important events, important

needs. The Eucharist can be made a priority as a source of life for marriage and the family.

To share at the team meeting

We share with the team what "Do this in memory of me" means to us in the real elements of our lives.

Can I define what it means in the "here and now" of my present life to be a Eucharistic man or woman? What is God calling me to do? What is God calling us to do in life as a married couple, as a consecrated person, as a widow/widower?

We may want to share whether the Eucharist gives us strength and nourishes us in the mission to which we are being called at this moment of our lives. Has the experience of the theme, "The Eucharist", helped us to make this mission real?

What meaning does Father Caffarel's phrase have for us at this moment: "Marriage is the admirable invention of Christ so that the Eucharist may be lived in two"?

Towards Turin

We are again asked to recall that in July the International Gathering in Turin will take place. Consider how you can best keep in mind its importance. How can you best commit yourselves to be in communion with the Movement during this important time? How can you best support it? How can you continue to learn about it? Keep the International Gathering and all those working to make it a success in your prayers.

Magnificat

Prayer for the canonisation of Father Caffarel

9. Review

This chapter has a different structure from the rest of the team meetings we have presented during the course of this year, and its purpose is to review the personal, couple and team journey in light of what we have experienced. This “Review” meeting is proposed as a time of reflection, all together and under the gaze of God, on the past year. It is a kind of team sit-down, a time for sharing and helping each other in a climate of prayer, truth and communion.

The chapter starts with the reading of the Word, its commentary and a text of Pope Francis with which he concludes his catecheses on the Eucharist, carried out during some of the General Audiences of 2017-2018.

An outline of preparation for this meeting is also suggested. Each team can choose to focus on those parts that are most appropriate for their current situation. The important thing is to prepare this meeting as a couple. Together at the end of the year, we take stock of what we have experienced, we consider the strong and weak points on which we should focus during the next theme, and we prepare ourselves for the election of the new responsible couple. Another possible option is that this meeting be held in the framework of a final Eucharist lived as a team. In addition, the proposals may be adapted as the team sees fit.

Word of God

We read again this text on the institution of the Eucharist with which we opened the introduction to this theme, savouring the Easter of a Jesus who remains with us. We dwell on those verbs on which we have reflected throughout the course: to take, to bless, to share, to give.

“And when the hour had come, he sat down at the table, and the apostles with him¹ and said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you, before I suffer; for I say to you that I shall not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ And, taking a cup, after pronouncing thanksgiving, he said, ‘Take this, divide it among yourselves; for I say to you that I shall not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.’ And he took bread, and when he had said the thanksgiving, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ After supper, he did the same with the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:14-20).

The Eucharistic banquet

We read below the Catechesis of Pope Francis from the audience of April 4, 2018, in which he concludes that set of texts that constitutes great enlightenment about the Eucharist, taking into account the insistence on unity, on the call to mission, on the demand for attention from those who may need it most, and on an explanation about how the Eucharist helps and strengthens us, thus, nourishing our commitment:

"The habitual approach to the Eucharistic meal renews, strengthens and deepens our union with the Christian community to which we belong, according to the principle that the Eucharist makes the Church (cf. *ibid.*, 1396), and unites us all. Finally, participating in the Eucharist engages us in relationship with others, especially the poor, educating us to pass from the flesh of Christ to the flesh of our brothers and sisters, in whom he waits to be recognised by us, served, honoured and loved (cf. *ibid.*, 1397). Carrying the treasure of union with Christ in earthen vessels (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:7), we need continually to return to the holy altar until, in paradise, we fully enjoy the beatitude of the wedding feast of the Lamb (cf. Revelation 19:9). Let us thank the Lord for the journey of rediscovery of the Holy Mass that he has given us to make together, and to let us allow ourselves to be drawn with renewed faith to this real encounter with Jesus, who died and rose again for us, our contemporaries. And may our life always 'bloom' in this way, like Easter, with the flowers of hope, faith and good works. May we always find the strength for this in the Eucharist, in union with Jesus."

Team Meeting

Welcome

The welcoming couple prepares a basket with some blank papers in it on which the team will later write the names of the couple they propose as responsible couple for the next year. The basket or container will be present during the whole meeting until the moment the teams decide to make that choice.

Sharing: Being a team

"Precisely what is essential is to play the team game, the Christian team game, because this is what fights against our old individualism by eliminating it little by little. It is what leads us to a greater fraternal love, to a more perfect spiritual mutual help; This is true because this is what brings about that 'ecclesia', that 'assembly of God' in which Christ has promised his presence: 'when two or three are gathered in my name, I am in your midst'. I also think

that of all the obligations of the Charter, the most essential is that of building teams and playing their game honestly.” Father Caffarel, The Team Game, Teams of Our Lady monthly letter, No. 7, April-May 1957.

The following questions may help us to reflect on our sharing:

- How have we listened to, respected, supported, and encouraged each other throughout the year? Have we all been able to share, and have we all felt able to truly communicate?
- How have we experienced this year's study theme? Has it helped us to live the Eucharist in a different way?
- How have we experienced our relationship with the rest of the Movement? This includes participation in events in our sector or region, services we may have been asked to provide, reading the charter, and participation in web and social networks. Do we feel part of a broader Movement?

Of everything we have experienced this year:

- What should we continue to do the same?
- What should we change?

Prayer:

We proclaim Luke 22:14-20:

Let us try to share in a prayerful manner and atmosphere what this exploration of the Eucharist has meant for each one of us, for our marriage, family and team.

Prayer

- We praise and thank God ...
- We are remorseful for...
- We ask the Lord to grant us...

The choice of the next responsible couple should also take place in this prayerful atmosphere.

- The current responsible couple may wish to comment on how they have experienced their responsibility.
- The team may wish to comment on whether they expect any particular "animation" from the new responsible couple.

→ Choice of the new responsible couple.

It is recommended that the team pray together the following prayer:

"Lord, we are gathered together in your name. We are together with the person to whom we have been united by the sacrament of marriage. We are in union with the couples of our team, being attentive to them and carrying them to God in prayer. Lord, give us the grace to recognise what is essential for our life of faith and to open our hearts and minds so that our team may grow as a fraternal community in your service". Amen.

Sharing on the Endeavours

How have we experienced the Endeavours this year?

How was the participation of our team members?

Has it helped us to live the true meaning of the Eucharist? Has it helped us to participate with greater perseverance and care in the Eucharist? Have we benefited from reflecting on our attitudes about the Eucharist? What have we discovered thanks to a deeper reflection on specific elements of the Eucharist in our mission as individuals, as a couple, as a team?

For this last session of the year, we propose that you ask yourselves: Is there a basic attitude that we have discovered that helps us to live the Eucharist in a different way? Is there something that we as a couple can do to have a more conscious participation in the Eucharist?

Towards Turin

We pray for the people who are preparing for their trips to the International Gathering. We pray that this will be a time of greater stimulation and inspiration for the Teams of Our Lady.

Magnificat

Prayer for the canonisation of Father Caffarel

Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my Saviour;

because He has looked upon His
lowly handmaid.

Yes, from this day forward
All generations will call me blessed,

For the Almighty has done great things for me,
Holy is His name,

and His mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear Him.

He has shown the power of His arm,
He has routed the proud of heart.

He has pulled down princes from their thrones
and exalted the lowly.

The hungry He has filled with good things,
the rich 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.

Prayer for the Canonisation of Father Caffarel

God, our Father,

You planted deep in the heart of your servant, Henri Caffarel, a fountain of love which bound him totally to your Son and inspired him with a wonderful capacity to speak of Him.

A prophet for our time, - he revealed the dignity and beauty of the vocation of every person in the words Jesus addresses to each of us: "Come follow me".

He made couples enthusiastic about the greatness of the sacrament of marriage, the sign of Christ's fruitful love for the Church and of His union with her. He showed that priests and couples are called to live a vocation of love.

He was a guide to widows: love is stronger than death. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, he accompanied many Christians on the path of prayer. Seized by a devouring fire, he was a dwelling place for you, Lord.

God, our Father, through the intercession of Our Lady, we ask you to hasten the day when the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life, so that people everywhere will discover the joy of following your Son in accordance with their particular vocations in the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we invoke the intercession of Father Caffarel for...
(Specify the grace to be requested)

APPENDICIES

A. THE LITURGICAL YEAR

In addition to celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord every Sunday, the Church develops throughout the year the whole mystery of Christ, from the Incarnation to the day of Pentecost and the expectation of the coming of the Lord. The liturgical year has 52 weeks, the same as the civil year; but, unlike the civil year, it begins on the first Sunday of Advent. We will present its different parts in chronological order:

a) Advent Season

It is a time of preparation for Christmas, in which the first coming of the Son of God is commemorated and, at the same time, a time of expectation of the second coming of Christ at the end of time. It contains four Sundays and runs from the eve of the first Sunday to the eve of the feast of Christmas.

b) Christmas time

It commemorates the Birth of the Lord and his first manifestations. That is why it contains two central solemnities: Christmas (December 25) and Epiphany (January 6). Between the two is also the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God (January 1). This time of the year runs from Christmas Eve to the Sunday after Epiphany, when the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated.

c) Ordinary Time

This season does not celebrate any particular aspect of the mystery of Christ, but the whole mystery of Christ in its fullness in order to achieve its progressive assimilation by the faithful. To this end, it successively presents the main events of the public life of Jesus and the internal dynamics of the growth of the Kingdom of God in this world.

It is the longest time, being 33 or 34 weeks. But it is divided into two unequal parts. The first, shorter part, runs from the Monday after the Sunday of the Baptism of the Lord to the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The second part, the longer part, begins on the Monday after Pentecost Sunday and ends on the eve of the first Sunday of Advent.

d) Lenten Season

It is a preparation for the celebration of Easter. It is a preparation, first of all, for the catechumens, who receive the last rites and an intensive formation in view of the Sacraments of initiation that they will receive at Easter. And it is preparation also for all the faithful, who, by devoting themselves more fervently to listening to the word of God and to prayer, and through penance, prepare themselves to renew their baptismal promises.

This time goes from Ash Wednesday to Holy Thursday morning. Its last days, starting on Palm Sunday, are already part of Holy Week, which recalls and celebrates the Passion of Christ.

e) Easter Triduum

It is the climax of the whole liturgical year because it celebrates the Passion and Resurrection of Christ. The pre-eminence that Sunday has in the week is given to the solemnity of Easter in the liturgical year.

It begins with the evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, and has its centre at the Easter Vigil and ends on Easter Sunday evening.

f) Easter Time

The fifty days from Easter Sunday to Pentecost Sunday are joyfully celebrated as if they were one and the same feast day, indeed, as "one great Sunday". This time is the image and figure of the Church as the time of the presence of the Risen Lord. The first eight days constitute the octave of Easter and are celebrated as solemnities of the Lord. And forty days after Easter, the Ascension of the Lord is celebrated; from this day until Pentecost, the community prepares to receive the Holy Spirit.

g) Other solemnities

In addition to Sundays and the feasts that characterise the different liturgical seasons, the Church celebrates other feasts with the rank of "solemnity" throughout the year. These are the following: Immaculate Conception (December 8); Holy Mary, Mother of God (January 1); St. Joseph (March 19); Annunciation of the Lord (March 25); Most Holy Trinity (Sunday after Pentecost); Most Holy Body and Blood of the Lord (Sunday after Trinity); Sacred Heart of Jesus (Friday after Corpus Christi); Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24); Saints Peter and Paul (June 29); Assumption of the Virgin Mary (August 15); All Saints (November 1); Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (last Sunday in Ordinary Time). In addition, the feast of the main patron saint of the town or village, the titular saint of the church and the anniversary of the dedication of the church have the rank of solemnities.

B. LITURGICAL POSTURES AND GESTURES**a. The body in celebration**

We are composed of spirit and body, intimately united as two elements of one and the same being. Therefore, there is no authentic feeling that is not spontaneously translated through bodily attitude or gesture. In turn, attitude and gesture produce such a commitment of the whole person, that they express, intensify or even provoke the inner attitude.

And this also affects our relationship with God and our worship, for we relate to God on the basis of who we are. A purely spiritual worship would be inhuman and, moreover, impossible. Moreover, for us Christians, the body is destined for resurrection, has become a temple of the Holy Spirit through baptism and is nourished by the Eucharist. In other words, God adapts himself to our way of being and also acts in us by incarnating his action in visible signs. Jesus used gestures to work miracles that he could have done with a single word. And all the sacraments are performed on the body to sanctify the soul. Therefore, in the Eucharist, God offers himself to us through visible signs, the bread and wine, and our body participates in it through a series of postures, gestures and bodily actions that translate our inner attitudes and feelings.

But the body, besides serving to express ourselves, and precisely for this reason, is also the instrument of our communication with others. The Eucharist is essentially communal; that is, it needs the unanimity of hearts. But this spiritual unanimity cannot be achieved without common gestures, understandable to all, that is, without communication through the body.

b) Liturgical postures

1. **Standing:** This is the fundamental liturgical posture, because it has a very rich meaning:
 - a) First of all, and in its most natural sense, it is a **sign of respect: we stand** before a person we wish to honor. That is why we stand at the entrance and exit of the celebrant and during the proclamation of the gospel.
 - b) It is also the **normal posture of prayer**, both Jewish and Christian. That is why the president and the faithful stand during solemn prayers.
 - c) It is the **paschal posture** par excellence: since Christ has freed us from sin and death, we are no longer slaves, but children who approach God with great trust. This is why the ancient liturgy forbade kneeling on Sundays.
 - d) It is also **the posture of those who await eternal bliss**, because it is the attitude of thanksgiving of the elect in heaven: "*I looked and saw a great multitude that no one could number... they were standing before the throne and before the Lamb*" (Rev 7:9).
2. **Kneeling:** This is the other Christian posture for prayer, which also has two different meanings:
 - a) It is a posture of humility and repentance, to recognise that sin has brought us down to earth. That is why we use it for acts and moments of penance.
 - b) But it is also an attitude of recognition of God's greatness and of petition. The apostles used it in this sense: "Peter sent them all away, knelt down and prayed" (Acts 9:40). "When he (Paul) had finished speaking, he knelt down and prayed with them all" (Acts 20:36). This is why we Christians use it a great deal in individual prayer. In the Eucharist we only use it at the moment of consecration.
3. **Prostrate:** In our present liturgy it is rather an exceptional posture. But it has a profound meaning with a double aspect: as it is a **sign of total personal surrender to God**, it serves to emphasise the importance to be given to prayer, that is, it **indicates a solemn supplication**. Currently, in holy orders (of bishop, priest, and deacon), the candidates prostrate themselves while the litany of the saints is sung. And so does the priest at the beginning of the Good Friday Liturgy. However, this attitude is used more frequently in the prayerful customs of some monastic and religious congregations, and even in the private prayer of many Christians.
4. **Sitting:** It is, in the first place, the **posture of the one who teaches**. In the introduction of the Sermon on the Mount, the evangelist tells us: "*When Jesus saw the crowd, he went up on the mountain, sat down and... began*

to teach them with these words" (Mt 5:1-2); he wants to present Jesus as the supreme Teacher. The bishop presides and speaks from his seat (*cathedra*) as the authentic teacher of the Christian community.

But, at the same time, sitting is the **posture of the listener**, like Mary of Bethany who, seated at the Lord's feet, listens to his word (cf. Lk 10:39). For this reason, the faithful sit to listen to all the readings (except the Gospel), the meditative songs, and the preaching. They can also do so during the meditative silence after communion.

5. **To go in procession:** It is a solemn supplication that is expressed in a **festive march**, accompanied by songs, towards a place that constitutes the goal. Although it is a form of worship common to all religions, for Christians it is a sign and manifestation of the essentially pilgrimage character of the people of God.

In every Eucharistic celebration there are movements that are processional acts: the entrance procession of the celebrants and their ministers, the Gospel procession, the offertory procession, the procession of the faithful to receive communion. But, in addition, there are other extraordinary processions, linked to certain feasts: that of the candles on the feast of the Presentation of the Lord, that of Palm Sunday, the transfer of the Blessed Sacrament to the monument on Holy Thursday, that of the adoration of the Cross on Good Friday, that of Easter night behind the Paschal Candle, that of Corpus Christi, that of the rogations. And outside the liturgy, popular piety has created many others, in honor of the Lord, the Virgin and the Saints.

6. **Hands raised and outstretched:** this was the normal posture that expressed the **prayerful attitude** of the Jewish people: this is how Moses prayed (cf. Ex 17:9-14). We Christians have changed its meaning: for us it is a reminder that Jesus saved us by raising his hands on the cross. In the first centuries it was the attitude of prayer common to all Christians, as it appears in the prayerful ones of the Roman Catacombs. Nowadays it is only used by the priest in the presidential prayers and in the Eucharistic prayer. Although some Christians also use it in private prayer.
7. **Silence:** Vatican II, in enumerating the elements of the active participation of the faithful, adds: "In addition, a sacred silence should be observed at the proper time" (Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 30). Silence allows us to meditate on the word of God and is also an expression of admiration, adoration, and a sense of God's greatness, which we cannot express in words. Concretely, in the Eucharist, it has the important function of helping us to personalise community prayer. For this reason, it is prescribed for after the priest's invitation to prayer. It is also recommended after the homily and after receiving communion.

b. Liturgical gestures

1. **The sign of the cross:** At baptism we are marked with the sign of the cross on our foreheads as a **sign of our belonging to Christ**. Hence, every time

we repeat this gesture, we want to renew our Christian condition. Moreover, this meaning has been enriched by the addition of a Trinitarian confession: *In the name of the Father...*

In the Eucharist it serves as a gesture of beginning, to become aware of who we are and that we are in the presence of the Trinity. Then we repeat it three times, on the forehead, on the lips and on the heart, before listening to the Gospel, with the rich symbolism that the word of Jesus penetrates our intelligence and our heart, and that we are able to proclaim it with our lips. And finally, the celebrant uses it as a gesture of blessing.

2. **The beating of the breast:** This is a sign of repentance and humility, like that of the publican in the parable (Lk 18:3), or of the witnesses at the crucifixion (Lk 23:45). We can optionally use it when saying the words "for my fault" in the "I confess" of the penitential act.

3. **The bow: it is a sign of veneration.** There are two kinds of bowing: head bowing and body bowing, or deep bowing.
The priest bows his head whenever he names the three divine Persons, the name of Jesus, the Virgin Mary and the saint in whose honor the Eucharist is celebrated.
The bow of the body is made by the priest to greet the altar at the beginning and at the end of the celebration, if the Blessed Sacrament is not present there, for the consecration and while reciting some prayers that underline the humility of the prayer. And we should all bow deeply during the profession of faith, at the words: "And by the power of the Holy Spirit he was incarnate of Mary the Virgin and became man", and during the final blessing, when the solemn formula is used.

4. **Genuflection:** This is always a sign of adoration of Jesus Christ present in the Eucharist. Therefore, the celebrant makes this gesture after the elevation of the consecrated bread, after the elevation of the chalice and before communion. In addition, if the tabernacle is on the altar where the celebration takes place, he also genuflects at the beginning and end of the celebration, and whenever he passes in front of it. The faithful, for their part, are to genuflect upon entering the church and upon leaving, if the tabernacle is on the high altar or elsewhere in the presbytery.

5. **The kiss:** In the liturgy, the kiss is an important sign of reverence. Therefore, only those things that represent Christ in a special way are kissed. The priest kisses the altar at the beginning and at the end of the celebration and kisses the book after the reading of the Gospel. We also, all kiss the cross on Good Friday.

C. LITURGICAL VESTMENTS AND INSIGNIA

a) Meaning of liturgical vestments

Clothing has never had a purely utilitarian value to protect us from the cold or heat and to cover our nakedness. Since the most primitive cultures, clothing has also had a symbolic value:

- It has served to distinguish different ways of being (man or woman).
- It has supported different activities.
- Above all, clothing has been used to indicate function or social rank.

Christians have used the symbolism of clothing from the beginning. St. Paul says: "As many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27). He uses the symbolism of the garment to designate the new life, the new being that we have received. It is therefore not surprising that the symbolic imposition of the new garment, the sign of new life, entered very early into the liturgy of baptism. Even today we are told at baptism: "Receive this white garment. Keep it without stain until eternal life". The memory of this uniform of the Christian will be present in the Eucharistic liturgy in the alb, worn by all the ministers who take part in it; in the tunic or white veil that baptised adults will wear at the Eucharist of their initiation, and, optionally and according to custom, in the dress of the children in their First Communion and of the bride in the sacrament of Matrimony.

But the use of special vestments for the celebration has been concentrated above all with the ministers who take part in it. This especially applies to the ordained ministers, to remind the community and themselves that they have a special function to perform as representatives of Christ the Head, and qualified to act "*in persona Christi*". At first, these vestments were those common in civil life, though not the ordinary ones. The more dignified ones were worn by well-to-do citizens on feast days, to emphasise the importance of the liturgical function. But in the Middle Ages, from the 8th to the 12th century, the vestments were "sacred", that is, they became exclusive vestments for the liturgy. Since that time, liturgical vestments and insignia have remained almost unchanged. Although the reform of Vatican II has simplified them and introduced a criterion of austerity: "It is more decorous that the beauty and nobility of each vestment be sought not in the abundance of added ornaments, but in the material used and in its cut". (*General Ordination of the Roman Missal*, 305)

b) Current liturgical vestments

The General Ordination of the Roman Missal determines the following (cf. *General Ordination of the Roman Missal*, 298-306):

All ministers, of whatever degree, shall wear the *Alb*, with or without *cincture*.

- **The bishop**: Above the Alb, he will wear the stole around the neck and hanging over the breast, and the chasuble. He will also wear the insignia exclusive to his rank: the ring and, at certain moments of the celebration, the crozier and the miter.
- **The priest**, like the bishop, shall wear *Alb, stole and chasuble*. Celebrating priests may wear only the Alb and stole.
- **The deacon** will wear an *Alb, a stole crossed* over the chest from the left shoulder to the side of the trunk, and a *dalmatic*.

c) Liturgical colours

The Latin rite uses different colours in the liturgical vestments to "express more effectively, even outwardly, both the characteristics of the mysteries of the faith being celebrated and the progressive meaning of the Christian life throughout the liturgical year" (*General Ordination of the Roman Missal*, 307). Specifically, they are the following (cf. *General Ordination of the Roman Missal*, 308):

- **White:** Used during the Easter and Christmas Seasons, on the feasts of the Lord, other than His Passion, and on the feasts of the Virgin Mary and the non-martyred saints.
- **Red:** On Passion Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost Sunday, and the feasts of the Apostles, Evangelists, and martyred saints.
- **Green:** In Ordinary Time.
- **Purple:** In the Seasons of Advent and Lent. It can also be used in Masses for the dead.
- **Black:** It can be used for Masses for the deceased.
- **Pink:** May be used on the third Sunday of Advent and the fourth Sunday of Lent.
- **Blue:** By privilege of the Holy See, granted in 1864, it can be used in Spain on the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

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