

## The spirituality of married love

### Conjugal Love: A Path to God

edited by The Friends of Father Caffarel (€14.00; available from Married Spirituality, 66 Mount Albany, Blackrock, Co Dublin A94 AC81 at [www.marriedspirituality.com](http://www.marriedspirituality.com) )

#### J. Anthony Gaughan

Any discussion on this book must begin with Fr Henri Caffarel. He was born in Lyon, France, on July 30, 1903. From his earliest years he exhibited an inclination to be a priest. Eventually he was ordained for the archdiocese of Lyon on April 19, 1930.

Fr Caffarel met and befriended a young married woman, Madeleine d'Heilly, in Paris in 1938. She and her husband Gerard had decided to live out their Catholic Faith in their marriage in a meaningful way. They requested Fr Caffarel to assist them to that end. He suggested that they invite three other couples to join them

for that purpose. This they did and he became the spiritual director of the group. Thus in 1939 began the movement which became known as Equipes Notre-Dame/ Teams of Our Lady.

From the outset, the movement was grounded on the Catholic teaching on the Sacraments in general and marriage in particular.

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It emphasised the two essential qualities of Christian marriage – unity and indissolubility. Members of the Teams of Our Lady are clear that unity means that Christian marriage is a union between one man and one woman and that indissolubility

signifies that Christian marriage is a life-time commitment. They also place a premium on the obligation of parents to provide a Christian education for their children.

#### Structure

Teams of Our Lady were soon established throughout France and Belgium and then the movement spread elsewhere in the world. In conjunction with the leadership, Fr Caffarel provided a structure for the movement. This consisted mainly in couples making provision for periods of prayerful reflection, dialogue, and spiritual reading.

Fr Caffarel prepared and promulgated the movement's charter in 1947. The international outreach of the movement was manifest in large gatherings in Lourdes in 1954, Rome in 1959 and London in 1965.

In the meantime, Fr Caffarel was a member of the Pontifical Commission which prepared

for the Second Vatican Council. He was a consultant on the 'Apostolate to the Laity' and presented to the Council Fathers his thoughts, experience and suggestions arising from his 25 years of ministry with couples.

The excellence of his ministry and that of the Teams of Our Lady was universally recognised. In 1965 the Pope St Paul VI described the Teams of Our Lady as “the smiling face of the Church”. Pope St John Paul II in 2003 commended the Teams of Our Lady for highlighting the call to holiness linked to married life and family life.

Fr Caffarel stepped down from his leadership role in the movement in 1973 and spent the rest of his life conducting a house of prayer in Troussures, near Paris. He died on September 1, 1996. The cause for his beatification was opened in 2006.

This book was prepared by an international team at the heart

of the Teams of Our Lady. They researched it across multiple cultures and languages, taking into account the challenges faced by couples, endeavouring to live the gospel message in their lives in today's world.

It provides the reader with deep insights into the wonder and greatness of Christian marriage, its sacramentality and spirituality. It takes the reader through the journey couples make in Christian marriage, through all its stages, its highs and lows, its joys and crises.

One could not give young couples setting out on their married lives a more appropriate or inspiring gift than this distillation of the wisdom and experience of the world-wide Teams of Our Lady.

It will leave them secure in the conviction that Christian marriage enhances their love of God by sanctifying their own mutual love.



Fr Henri Caffarel.