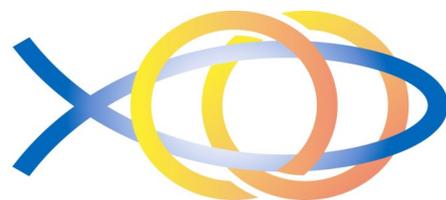




# Newsletter

## Teams of Our Lady

### Irish Region



Equipes Notre-Dame

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### From the Regional Couple

Dear Friends in Teams,

“Will Covid-19 ever leave us?” How many mornings have we woken up and think maybe today is the day it is over? For many of us the reality is we have a “New Normal”. For some unfortunately, that “New Normal” is without a job or even a loved one.

We often talk about how we need to change, to adapt to new things, but change like this can be unsettling. Our one constant is Jesus. As it says in Hebrews. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is the same with constant love, constant forgiveness, constant hope and constant assurance.

It is easy to get caught up in the facts and figures that are thrown at us every day in the news, which can cause us to lose sight of God. We need to remind ourselves that God has not changed, and we can put our hope and trust in Him.

#### Marriage Masterclass

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to our Expansion Team Ingrid and Pádraig and David and Filipa and to all who contributed to the recent Masterclass for Teams of Our Lady. We realise that a lot of hard work, enthusiasm, dedication and love was generated to make it a success, the fruits of which we may never know, but seeds have definitely been planted. Well done to you all and thank you for this excellent showcase of Teams of Our Lady. We hope to be able to build on this in the future.

#### Responsible Couples’ Day

Due to Covid restrictions our RC Weekend will take place this year on Saturday 3rd October online using Zoom and will be open to all couples in Teams. Many of us are familiar with this application and for those who feel that they need some support, we will be happy to help in any way we can. Responsible couples are asked to ensure that they pass on the information to all their Team members and if someone is not familiar with Zoom that they might see how everyone is included please.

## Autumn 2020

Issue 122

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**Newsletter Editors: Please note new email address**  
**paddyandjacinta@gmail.com**

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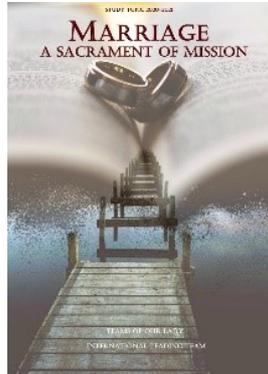
The Team Meeting on Saturday evening will also happen on Zoom. A host couple will be chosen and will contact the 5/6 couples involved. The couples will then be given a link to the meeting and proceed from there. Again, if there is any difficulty we can be contacted and we will endeavour to assist in any way we can. We are hoping that this new approach will not put anyone off joining us on the Day.

Prior registration will be required and if you wish to attend please forward your name, mobile number, Team and email address to Pauline and Richard Sheridan. (Details in this Newsletter). We would ask that you contact them to register before 23<sup>rd</sup> September to enable them to have an idea of numbers for the Zoom Mixed Team Meeting, which we are hoping to organise for the evening. There will be no charge for registration as the event will be FREE.

We look forward to a successful – if different - event and we hope that we will all be inspired and energised by our participation in the “New Look” RC Weekend.

### Study Topic

The Study Topic for 2020 – 2021 is “Marriage A Sacrament of Mission”. This work is in line with the Life Orientations of the Movement, which now continue for the third year after the Fatima meeting. The study topic contains a wealth of documentation covering the work of our Founder and how he looked at the reality of Christian sacramental marriage. He saw Christian marriage as a sacrament. It has both a missionary perspective and a path of holiness and we are called to both in the Church and in the movement today. There is a copy on our website [www.equipes-notre-dame.ie](http://www.equipes-notre-dame.ie) but booklets can be obtained from the Literature couple Liam and Eileen McKinney Email: [mckinneyteamslit@aol.com](mailto:mckinneyteamslit@aol.com). They will need to know the number of copies to order, so please contact them directly if your Team is interested and they will send them on to you.



Life goes on, and life in the movement leads us to a new beginning of the year in September especially for all new Responsible Couples and ends in June of the following year. We wish to take this opportunity of thanking all our outgoing RCs and our new RCs for taking on this responsibility. Please don't forget to inform Joe and Áine Clayton; email: [fanadclayton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:fanadclayton@yahoo.co.uk), of the new RCs in order that they may update the register.

We turn to the Lord and Our Blessed Mother Mary, intercessor, to guide and protect us all on our own journeys.

God Bless

Jim and Elaine Keogh

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## From the Regional Chaplain      Fr. Peter Sexton SJ

### Witness

As you well know, Fr Henri Caffarel in the 1940s saw the absence and the need for a specific spirituality for married couples, and his vision that led to the formation of the Equipes Notre-Dame anticipated the insights and teaching for the laity in Vatican 2. I have always been convinced, despite the number of canonised saints being priests or religious, that the overwhelming majority of saints are married people, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers – and the fact that only a tiny number are formally canonised doesn't reflect the larger reality, and doesn't worry God very much, I suspect! And given the challenges married life face in our own time I think the witness today is more crucial than ever. So it might be worth reflecting a little on the witness of us Christians in general and some challenges to this in our own time.

There is a story told that after the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Jesus ascended into Heaven, and was greeted by an angel: 'Lord, have you completed your work on earth?' asked the angel. 'No', replied Jesus. 'But what plans have you to complete it?' asked the angel. 'I have left behind eleven men', Jesus replied. The angel was perplexed. 'What if they fail,' he queried? The Lord replied: 'I have no other plan.'

Christ has no other plan but the plan of the Gospel, with us to carry it out, and I think that the Teams of Our Lady have a vital role to witness to the central role of married living in a healthy life of the Church.

My father had an expression he often used to challenge us with: 'Two men looked out through prison bars; one saw mud, the other saw stars!' So while we frequently cannot choose the circumstances of our lives – as these days of the Covid 19 pandemic – we can choose our response.

Dom Helder Camara, the celebrated former bishop of Recife in Brazil, was approached by a large group of outraged parishioners reporting that their church had been desecrated and vandalised by a group of bandits – the tabernacle was smashed open, the consecrated hosts were thrown and trampled in the mud – and they asked Dom Helder to re-consecrate the church. He was happy to do so, he said, and later he was reflecting that the poor are trampled in the mud every day, and not many were coming to protest about that – and he said, it is the same Christ.

What is a Christian? I heard a powerful definition once that a Christian is someone who is captivated or shattered by Jesus Christ! Our real life, as St Paul said, is hidden with Christ in God – I live now, not I, but Christ in me. The indwelling of the Trinity given us in our Baptism, God's own Spirit in us, is the real meaning of our dignity and destiny, and that Spirit enables our true selves to emerge, to grow and to develop. We are the kingdom of God in the world – no one else can be that for us. If we do not witness to His presence in our world in integrity and justice, in challenging greed and selfishness in the political and social and personal arena – if we do not do it, who will? As St Augustine said: 'Right is right even if no one is doing it – wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it.'

'The only sadness, Bernanos wrote, is not to be a saint' – and that in a Church, the people of God, that is sinful and fragile and that has been marked by scandals at every level since the beginning of Christianity. And yet without the Church for all its failings, most notably in the abusive exercise of authority, we would have lost the Gospels, the Sacraments, the Eucharist, the sense of Community, the plan of Christ. As Mother Teresa used to say: 'Unless we recognise Him in the breaking of the bread, we will not recognise Him in the distressing disguise of the poor.'

Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by our weakness or our helplessness – and the Word of God calls us again and again to live not out of our own darkness, but rather out of the vision of Christ and our relationship with Him – in the words of St Augustine again in his Confessions,

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that the Taize Community have put beautifully to music : ‘Ne laisse pas mes tenebres me parler – donne-moi d’accueillir ton amour.’ (*Don’t let my darkness speak to me – allow me to welcome your love*)

So the challenge to us in the Teams, specifically in the context of married and family life, is the challenge of being a disciple of Christ, of growing in that relationship, which is the challenge to every Christian to become increasingly what we already are – saints. Our dull ears need a lifetime to attune those ears to this profound reality, and a lifetime to become a saint – not the calling of a few but of us all.

Saints are not some kind of weird people different from the rest of us – they are men and women older and younger, who are in touch with reality, with what is really real; who see things as they are, not just on the surface – who are attractive people, good to be with because they are generous, unselfish, not preoccupied with themselves, good listeners, inclusive, with a sense of humour and a capacity not to take themselves too seriously. In their company we feel better about ourselves – we have a sense of what is important and what is not. We have all met more people of this calibre than we care to admit, and indeed when we look in the mirror each morning we see the real potential for this.

### **Prayer Intentions**

#### **For those who have died:**

**Alison Elizabeth Orr**, daughter of David and Mary, Team 24

**John Carberry**, brother of Maureen Seery, Team 38

**Juliet O’Donoghue**, wife of Donal, Team 19

**Helen Bargh**, sister of Billy Hyland, Galway

#### **For those who are ill:**

**Eddie Lloyd**, Galway

**Vanessa McGovern**, daughter-in-law of Betty, Mullingar

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## **From Ireland with Love: An International Marriage Masterclass with Teams of Our Lady**

**Ingrid and Pádraig Lewis**

Teams of Our Lady have existed in Ireland for more than half a century, since 1964. Despite its long existence and the enthusiasm of its members, Teams in Ireland may be reaching a ‘tipping point’ in relation to their continued existence on the island. Teams in Cork, Limerick and Sligo no longer exist. Currently, the highest concentration of Teams is in Dublin South, but these are ageing. Faced with this concerning reality, in September 2019, the Regional Couple Jim and Elaine Keogh established an Expansion Committee operating at a national level. The Expansion Committee aims to enable Teams to continue the wonderful mission of bearing witness to Christian marriage in Ireland and in the world. It wishes to strengthen the movement in Ireland, by sharing the gift of Teams, by promoting the value of marriage in our society and by helping other married couples to discover the joy of living together in Christ.

One of the key expansion projects that we organised together with our friends and fellow committee members, Filipa and David, was an online event entitled *Marriage Masterclass with Teams of Our Lady: A Catholic Proposal*. However, this masterclass was about much more than regional expansion. It aimed to promote the spirituality of Teams, sharing the beauty and richness that this movement brings to the lives of many people throughout the world. It built bridges and brought together people of faith across six continents, while sharing a pool of experiences about how Teams enriched the lives of many and strengthened their vocations to married life and priesthood. A unique initiative from Ireland sent with love to the whole world, during such difficult times of global pandemic.

This international event, held on Facebook between 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of August 2020, consisted of 37 video-testimonies from couples, priests and bishops from 8 countries: Ireland, England, the United States of America, Canada, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Among these testimonies, there was also a collective video made by the members of Youth Teams of Our Lady in South Africa. With their amazing diversity, these videos represented a snapshot of what Teams of Our Lady has to offer, especially considering that this movement is present in 90 countries throughout the world. Furthermore, these video-testimonies highlighted the enormous gift TOL represents not only for families, but also for young people trying to live their faith,

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for priests, bishops and for the whole Catholic Church.

Given that Our Lady is the patron of Teams, it was our desire for this marriage masterclass to take place during the Feast of the Assumption. We entrusted this masterclass to our heavenly Mother, praying that it would touch the hearts of many, bringing renewal of faith, hope and love into parishes, families and homes around the globe.

The event was very well attended, by people in Teams, but also non-Teams members from over 20 countries from all corners of the world. Representing the wonderful diversity of Teams, our guests were from Brazil, the United States, Canada, Ireland, England, Romania, Italy, Bosnia, Portugal, Germany, Philippines, India, Nicaragua, Malawi, Syria, South Africa, Australia and many others. One of the many messages received from our participants said: “Thank you for your 'Yes' to the Holy Spirit. Great initiative.” Indeed, this is how the event felt to us: as a fantastic journey with God, inspired by the Holy Spirit whose presence and guidance was incredibly powerful throughout the organisation process and during the event. The Holy Spirit knows no boundaries of countries or languages.

“Lovely inspirational sharing from Teams of Our Lady couples and chaplains. Well done to all the contributors and to you for this wonderful initiative.”

Elaine and Jim (Ireland)

“Well done for your inspirational work”

Piotr and Dzidzia (England)

“Congratulations for such a great and innovative idea! We are members of END in Brazil!”

“Brilliant and beautiful”

Pat Seery (Ireland)

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EQUIPES NOTRE – DAME (IRELAND)  
CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT FOR MARRIED  
COUPLES

What: Responsible Couples' Day by Zoom

When: Saturday 3rd October 2020

Who: All Responsible Couples are invited and **ALL** Team members are warmly welcome to attend.

Where: Your own home!

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**This year the Responsible Couples' Gathering comes to a computer/laptop/phone near you! No travelling, no B&B, no expense!**

**How will it all happen?**

Soon you will receive an email, with all the details, inviting you to register for the RC Day. Registration is free!

To allow the organising Team to process your registration, **please reply to the email at your earliest opportunity.**

The closing date for receipt of applications is 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020.

Yes, we all know it will be different this year, as is everything else! We will miss the chance to get away for the weekend, to be together side by side, to catch up on our news, to meet new people. For some of us, using Zoom will be more challenging than driving 100 km to a venue. We know that the technology is challenging and new for many of us, but there is time, you don't have to miss out, there is help at hand. **However we can only help each other, if we know help is needed.** If you have any queries please get in touch **today**, with a Team Member (or a family member) or with Pauline at the address below.

The programme will include time for prayer, the usual encouraging presentations, Mass from Mullingar Cathedral by webcam and the mixed Teams meetings in the evening.

**If you have any queries or need any assistance, please contact**

Pauline & Richard Sheridan  
8 Hillside Drive  
Mullingar  
Co Westmeath  
Phone: 0449343368  
Mobile: 0857539293  
Email: paulinerichardsheridan@hotmail.com

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## Teams Meetings in These Covid Times

Joe and Áine Clayton

We want to share with you about a most enlightening evening last night in three lengthy conversations with members from Belfast, Mullingar and Dublin when contacting them re updates. All chat focussed on their Team meetings, or lack of. It brought into sharp focus the reality of 'Covid Times' for them.

Points of concern: these relate largely to the *older folk* in our teams, though not all.

- Some members have not been outside the gate in 6 months, resulting in loss of confidence re activities that were no bother last March.
- Some teams have not had a meeting in reality or Zoom since February/March.
- Total lack of IT skills for Zoom, Skype, or such like. *'We just can't go there....'*
- OR very limited *'know how'*, and not trusting themselves.
- Feeling isolated in spite of exchanging phone calls with members of their team during this period.
- A nervousness about the uncertainty of it all.
- Occasional meeting for coffee for women in one group.
- Meeting in gardens on two occasions for one team – (not everyone present)
- Got an impression of maybe 'losing it' because of cocooning.
- The idea of preparing a meal, if/when things approach normality, seems daunting. Discussed options adopted by our own team since retirement....
- Virtually all teams in the country are from more than 3 households, so traditional meetings are OUT for some time....
- *"I suppose there will be no R.C Weekend?"*, said one person on the wrong side of 85: a dedicated Teams man, God bless him.

There was a huge benefit in speaking to members directly and getting a feel for how things are in reality for them - now.

Reflecting on this, we wonder if there should be at least one presentation relating directly to how we, as an organisation can support each other, and particularly older Teams? The first eight teams listed in the Dublin Register all have quite senior members. (One celebrated a 94<sup>th</sup> birthday in early summer)

What could be put in place?

What creative ideas can be offered to facilitate their participation with their life-long friends?

Would *'techy'* members volunteer to help set up Zoom for others?

When Government Guidelines permit, give practical advice to set up a house meeting. It all depends on the team and its members...

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We do not apologise for making simple, obvious suggestions:

- Meet earlier in day
- Reduce length of meeting
- Shortening all parts/stages?
- Arrangement of room
- Facilitate the serving of tea and sandwich, with social distancing in mind...
- Visors instead of masks to help with lip-reading
- ?

## **Around the Region**

**Dublin** See input from Joe and Áine Clayton above.

### **Belfast**

A change in COVID restrictions has meant that our teams can now meet in each other's houses if they wish to do so, though health considerations have been to the fore. No more Skype or Zoom meetings. The latter now seems like a poor substitute for meeting face to face, or indeed other more standard forms of contact. The latest problem comes in terms of keeping some social distancing at our meeting. At our last meeting we formed a circle with our arms around one another while praying the Magnificat. Only after we had separated from one another did we realise that a little social distancing might have been a good idea! Old habits die hard, but nevertheless we have got used to the new habits – at least most of the time. Seldom now do we forget our face coverings or hand gel. Though one has a wry smile when it is realised that the priest, at morning mass, has just requested that it might be best if not everyone turned up on the following morning because a funeral would be taking place, and he might need to turn some of us away!

A great part of the team meeting is the opportunity to pray for intentions. That intimate relationship between God and his people is one of the secret joys in life, though there are the faithful such as St. Teresa of Calcutta, who maintained that relationship in much darker circumstances. Please keep all the members of teams in your prayers.

Moyra and Brendan Bunting

### **Mullingar**

Well done to everyone who took part in the Marriage Masterclass videos and especially to Fr Frank Monks our Team Chaplain.

Please pray for Vanessa McGovern (Betty McGovern's daughter-in-law), who is ill.

Pauline and Richard Sheridan

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## Galway

The News from Galway is that Fr. Colin Garvey OFM has retired after 27 years as a Chaplain in Galway Teams B. He has gone back to his native Cork. It was the Bishop of Galway at the time, who recognised the value of Teams of our Lady and asked Fr. Colin to take on its chaplaincy in 1990 approx. He has been a treasure to our Team B. Fr. Colin is a Franciscan Friar. He came to Galway in the sixties and lectured in Philosophy in NUI Galway. From his academic background he brought a wealth of thought, knowledge and insight to Teams B. Colin has an amazing memory. He has a great interest in Poetry and often fascinated us with his recall of poems. Among his favourites was the 'Four Quarters'. On reaching retirement from the university in Galway Fr. Colin took his lecturing skills to Africa. He temporarily left Team B and lectured in philosophy and theology in a university seminary in Lusaka, Zambia. We are quite sure he could write a book on his many experiences there. He soon had a vital role in the university in Lusaka. On his return to Galway he once again took up his role as Chaplain to Team B. Fr Colin is a man of a rich inner life of prayer, compassion and patience which he will take to Cork. He has a lovely sense of fun and humour. Team B wish him well in his new life and we will always remember the image of his face as it breaks into laughter!

We have heard good reports from Team A about their recent Team meetings. Due to Covid 19 the Team meetings are held on Zoom (a lovely new word which is so current recently). The meetings are going well. Members commented that it is not the same as being actually present where body language and the nuance are important. But the Team do feel a connection and that keeps the Team spirit alive.

Our sympathy to Billy and Ann Hyland on the death of Billy's sister.

Continued prayers are requested for Eddie Lloyd who is in a Nursing home. It is not easy for patients in residential nursing homes under the present essential Covid 19 restrictions.

Jack and Anne Hutchinson

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Fr. Ken Payne, who is known to many teams members in Ireland, recently celebrated the 60th Anniversary of his Ordination. To mark the occasion, he has published a new book "Encounters", in which he tries to show how God has acted in his life in all sorts of different ways, through events, books and people.

The book is published by UPFRONT PUBLISHING, Peterborough, England.

Fr. Ken was the first Chaplain of the Transatlantic Super-Region and is parish priest of St. Aidan's, Little Chalfont, England.

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## Great News of a new Publication

### *“Conjugal Love: A Path to God”*

#### *Reflecting the thoughts of Father Henri Caffarel*

(Spiritual counsellor to the first Team of Teams of Our Lady in Paris in 1939 and whose Cause for Canonisation was commenced in 2006)

We are happy to bring you this internationally researched book based largely on Father Caffarel’s insights and teaching on the beauty and greatness of the vocation of marriage; its sacramentality and spirituality and the challenges of the lived experience in today’s busy world.

In **“The Joy of Love”** Pope Francis says: *‘Conjugal love embraces the good of the whole person; it can enrich the sentiments of the spirit and their physical expression with a unique dignity’*. More than 70 years ago Father Caffarel said of the Teams Movement: *“Equipes Notre-Dame has as its essential aim to help couples to strive after holiness – no more, no less”*.

In 1970 Pope Paul VI quoting Father Caffarel said:

***“Marriage is the only community based on a Sacrament.”***

Father Caffarel advised us that: *“The laity must clearly define the means and methods that would constitute the spirituality of a married Christian.”* This book provides great new understanding of the message of the Church on the Sacrament of Marriage, on sexuality and fruitfulness, on the pastoral activity of the couple and on the moral life as a requirement of love.

An International Team, at the heart of Equipes Notre-Dame and linked to *“The Friends of Father Caffarel”* were invited to form the **Atelier Mariage**, to carry out a work of observation, research and of reflection. Their conclusions are presented in this book and show how much Father Caffarel renewed the thinking of the Church on the couple and on marriage.

The co-authors of this work were: Constanza and Alberto Alvarado (Colombia), Marie and Louis d’Amonville (France and friends of Father Caffarel), Elaine and John Cogavin (Ireland), Cidinha and Igar Fehr (Brazil), Mons. Francois Fleischmann (France), Mercedes and Alvaro Gomez-Ferrer (Spain), Marie-Christine and Gerard de Roberty (France) and Maria Carla and Carlo Volpini (Italy).

Anyone taking on the reading and study of this book will find within it many gems from the treasure trove that is Father Caffarel’s writings. He has left us a legacy for future generations who wish to deepen their understanding of marriage as their vocation and calling in life.

The book already published in French and Italian is available in English from 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Contact [www.marriedspirituality.com](http://www.marriedspirituality.com) or call or text 087 236 0622. Cost €10 + €4 P&P.

Newsletter Editors: Paddy and Jacinta Quigley

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We would like to receive contributions for the Winter Newsletter by 29th November

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