



THE SPIRIT OF LIAISON AND THE ROLE THE LIAISON COUPLE

When the Movement began more than seventy years ago, there were only a small number of teams and the arrangements were that Fr Caffarel met with the responsible couples each month. These monthly meetings ensured an effective link between the individual teams and the Teams Movement. As the Movement expanded both in numbers and geographically, new methods of communication and support for the individual or base teams became necessary. Teams today are grouped into sectors, regions and super regions and are spread across some seventy countries. Effective links and good methods of communication between the base teams and the Sector Couple and between the Sector Couple and the leaders of the Movement are essential for the continued spiritual wellbeing and spread of the Movement.

The Charter tells us that although very useful, the Monthly Letter is not sufficient in itself to ensure that the ties between the leaders of the Movement and the base teams is as close and as fruitful as possible. Liaison in Teams is a mutually beneficial service that provides an essential link between the base teams, the Sector Couple and the leaders of the Movement. Where it is impractical for the Sector Couple to maintain a close link with each team, a Liaison Couple is appointed and given responsibility for a number of teams in the sector. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the Liaison Couple is not overburdened by the number of teams transferred to their care.

Listening, supporting and communicating under the guidance of the Holy Spirit are the responsibility and focus of the Liaison Couple in carrying out their work. Great care must be exercised by the Liaison Couple to fastidiously safeguard the sanctity and privacy of each team in its care.

Liaison in Teams' is not a means to 'inspect' or to provide 'feedback' to the leaders of the Movement, it is about providing encouragement, sharing our charisms, providing pastoral support, good communication and above all, safeguarding and protecting the very personal and spiritual relationship between the members of each team in their care. Liaison encourages acceptance, openness and hospitality among teams. It is a spiritual and caring role carried out throughout the Movement under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Liaison Couples speak of the great benefit to their spiritual development as they



share their faith with the team. There is a joy of acceptance. The Liaison Couple affirm the many varieties of team meeting formats which realise the diversity of charisms and the work of the Holy Spirit. The teams are encouraged always to have Christ at the centre of their meeting and to try as best they can to be faithful to the Endeavours of Teams.

The following is taken from the Liaison Couples Manual published by the Australian Super-Regional Team:

‘A two- way listening encouragement and friendship are the means by which a special relationship may be built between the Liaison Couple and the Team; a relationship which will enable all to progress within the guiding principles of the Teams Charter and the spirit of its life. It is a commitment to 'sharing experiences', to offering support and guidance to the teams for the benefit of the whole movement. Experience over the years has shown that isolated teams have difficulty in surviving and flourishing without some mainstream contact, ideally through a Liaison Couple.

Couples who provide this link between particular teams and the Sector Couple, and thus to the movement as a whole do so, not in a controlling way - one that imposes decisions - but rather in a supportive way - guiding rather than directing; suggesting rather than ordering; seeking a truly two-way exchange. They help to create unity and communion throughout the Movement, recreating the community that was apparent in the early days of the Church. "See those Christians, how they love one another"¹

The Dublin Sector is the largest sector within the Irish Region and has sixteen teams. In 2006, the then Dublin Sector Couple and now the Regional Couple, Pat & Carmel Cunneen, had begun the task of reviving Liaison in the Sector. Great progress was made by them and Liaison is now working very successfully throughout the Sector. When we took over the role of Sector Couple in 2009, one of our greatest concerns was in relation to Liaison; how would we manage it, where would we start, would all of the good work already done be lost. However, we left it in the hands of the Holy Spirit and got down to setting up a new Sector Team. We were in safe hands in that two of the couples (Áine & Joe Clayton and Kevin & Martha Wade) who agreed to join the Sector Team had

¹ Excerpt from the Liaison Couples Manual published by the Australian Super-Regional Team in February 1999



considerable previous experience as Liaison Couples and we are indebted to them for their help and guidance.

Liaison was on the agenda for our first sector meeting and each of the Sector Team Couples was allocated responsibility for 3 to 4 teams, selected from the Sector Register as they appeared in it. Each Liaison Couple contacted the respective Responsible Couple for the teams' allocated to them and informed them they would be their Liaison Couple for the coming year. The Liaison Couples invited the respective Responsible Couples to contact them at any time on any matter of concern to them or their team. They asked if they could attend at a team meeting at a time that would be convenient for the team and subsequently received an invitation from all but one of the teams in the Sector.

The Liaison Couples gained tremendously from their experience and felt very privileged and blessed to be present at and to share in the teams meetings. For us, it was our first involvement in Liaison and it was a wonderful and very spiritually rewarding experience. We felt at ease and an integral part of each meeting. We got to know each of the Responsible Couples and most of the team members as well. A strong mutual trust developed, which greatly helped us, both in our role as a Liaison Couple and as Sector Couple.

We experienced no difficulty liaising with the team that did not invite us to attend a team meeting and we developed an excellent relationship with all of the team members without exception. While being invited to attend at a team meeting as a Liaison Couple is a great privilege, it is not, in our view, essential. The priority must always be to fully respect the wishes of the team and to ensure good communication with the Responsible Couple and so far as practicable, with all of the team members.

As it happened, the years (2010 to 2012) during our term as Dublin Sector Couple were good years for the development of Teams in Ireland. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the stewardship of the Regional Couple, four new teams have been formed, one in North Dublin, one each in Navan and Dunshaughlin in Co Meath and one in County Sligo. There was no Teams representation previously in either in Meath or Sligo. The new team in North Dublin was piloted by the very experienced couple, Vincent and Margaret Ryan from team 3. The Sligo team was piloted by the Regional Couple and the



new teams in Meath were piloted by two couples from the Dublin Sector Team, Áine & Joe Clayton and Kevin & Martha Wade. For the Piloting Couples, this required a lot of travelling and significant time and input. For the Regional Couple, it involved travelling to Sligo to attend each meeting, a journey on each occasion of more than 100 kilometres in each direction. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the commitment and input by the Piloting Couples was rewarded and all four teams are now full members of the Movement. Each Piloting Couple continued as Liaison Couple for their respective team's first year following completion of the piloting Programme.

Two further new teams have now been formed, one in Dublin/North Kildare and the other in Navan, County Meath. The new Navan team is being piloted by Hugo and Mary Gallagher from team 32 and we are piloting the new Dublin/North Kildare team. It is a new and wonderful experience for us and we feel blessed and very privileged to have the opportunity of guiding and assisting this new team of Our Lady in its formation.

The responsibility of the Liaison Couple is in the first instance a spiritual and pastoral one. The Liaison Couple is not responsible for the running of a team in their care. They are impartial and strictly respect the confidentiality of the teams in their care. The Liaison Couple helps and guides the team on its spiritual journey and encourages its members to be sensitive to each other's needs and to be faithful to the Teams Movement and its Charter. Teams unite and support each other through communication, shared prayer, and especially through the Team prayer "The Magnificat".

Breda & Tony Preston
Dublin Sector