Study Topic 2015-6

Equipes Notre-Dame
Teams

LIVING OUR MISSION JOYFULLY

Equipes notre-Dame Study Topic for 2015-16 prepared by a Team from the Hispano-American Super-Region; in Eight Sessions, and final Evaluation

Photo –Teams Couples in Lingoni Parish, Malawi, 2013 © Antony Denman

Trans Atlantic

Study topic: LIVING OUR MISSION JOYFULLY

PRESENTATION

Dear couples and Spiritual Counsellors in Teams of Our Lady:

After having completed the first stage of the 'journey' that we mapped out for ourselves from Brasilia to Rome, where we shall be celebrating the 3rd International Meeting of Regional Responsible Couples, the International Responsible Team, with much hope and joy, presents you with the study topic for 2015-2016 under the title: *"Living our Mission Joyfully".*

This study topic was prepared by a Team from the Hispano-American Super-Region in complete harmony with the current Orientations of the Movement, responding to the invitation that Pope Francis addresses to the entire Church.

Our discussions in Rome will further develop this theme, taking as our starting point the response that Isaiah made to the Lord: "*Here I am Lord, send me",* in the conviction that He always prepares us well, so that we may give a response that is anchored in fidelity and prayer.

We know that it is always God who takes the initiative of speaking to his people… So it was with Abraham, Moses, Samuel and several others.

It is not easy to respond as Samuel always did: *"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening"*. Grasping God's call means renewing our life in terms of the Gospel, not as a model of perfection, but with a sense of total commitment in order to go out to meet the salvation that transforms our life.

It is not enough to know the Gospel. It is necessary that the Gospel knows us; that it takes our life and makes us do what it takes in order to emerge from the pages of the Bible and go into the world. This is where, amidst daily preoccupations, we want to and can meet our salvation.

In doing so, we begin to consider what is important in life, because this is what leaves its mark on our decisions.

Saint Augustine said *"Today what makes me vibrant and shapes my personality are the decisions I make in my life"*

If our decisions are what shape our personalities, then it is important to understand that we are called, not only by the Movement, but also by the Church, to transform ourselves joyfully into witnesses and disciples of Jesus who continually offers us forgiveness through his mercy.

May the joy of the Good News, that we have had the opportunity to know and to proclaim, make us share in the hope and certainty of salvation, making us living witnesses of what we announce, because: "*Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.*" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41)

May the Lord manifest himself in us as a "sonorous thread of silence", as he did with Moses; and may Our Lady, the model disciple and witness, take us by the hand with joy; intercede for us with Her Son; and teach us to be obedient to His Word.

To and José Moura Soares
On behalf of the International Responsible Team

SUMMARY

First meeting: **Happily living the sacrament of marriage**
We are married couples in a world that does not believe in marriage.

Second meeting: **The conviction of the Faith we bear witness to**
How can we undertake our mission joyfully, in a Godless world?

Third meeting: **Fearless in the face of moral obligation**
Conjugal Spirituality - a challenge and an opportunity

Fourth meeting: **Christ, yes, but with the Church**
Yes to Christ, but no to the Church

Fifth meeting: **Teams of Our Lady, a treasure of the Church**
The delight of knowing that we are not alone

Sixth meeting: **Church members bearing witness to Jesus-Christ**
Witness: an important mission for couples in Teams of Our Lady

Seventh meeting: **Go out and be of service to others**
The best service: passing on the joy of the Good News

Eighth meeting: **Undertaking our mission joyfully**
How we live, is what we proclaim ourselves to be

Evaluation Meeting:

TEAMS OF OUR LADY

STUDY TOPIC: LIVING OUR MISSION JOYFULLY

INTRODUCTION

General Objective

As couples in Teams of Our Lady, this study topic makes us conscious of the treasure that we enjoy in living the Gospel and conjugal spirituality, which encourages us to joyfully proclaim the Good News so that all of us draw close to God and fully live His Love.

Below we provide a brief explanation of the underpinnings of this study topic:

1. Doctrinal framework

This is based on the Church's Doctrine made manifest in particular in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, as well as Teams of Our Lady's own founding documents and a range of texts that are part of the supporting documents for meetings.

2. Lived reality framework

We began with a faith-based vision of the reality of the world today, because it is to mankind today that the Lord and the Church send our Teams' couples as missionaries for marriage. We chose this framework as a result of:

a) our personal experience, including our feeling of being part of the Church
b) reading the Apostolic Exhortation; *Evangelii Gaudium*.

3. Pedagogic Framework.

The way we approach the study topic that we want to put into practice, corresponds to what the Church asks of us: that we evangelise, with new methods and fresh ardour, a world which is living through an epoch-making change (Cf. Document d'Aparecida no 44).

We asked ourselves why it sometimes seems that the study topics remain theoretical and have relatively little impact on our lives. This led us to the conclusion that:

a) The study topic should touch our lives so that it is something more than just a "topic for analysis". It should enable us to proceed to action in a determined and joyful manner.
b) We need to take into account the different ecclesial realities throughout the world. We therefore need to use a language that is direct and simple, so that each team has several ways available of addressing the topic and engaging with it.
c) In order to integrate the themes of this study topic into our lives, each topic should include a task to be undertaken as a couple during the month leading up to each Team meeting.

What we understand in a lived way is more readily put into practice when we meet the person where they are and engage with them in that reality. So, we are not passing on content, but tools with which to grasp reality and know how to respond to the challenges each of us faces.

So:

- Starting from reality is not only a method, but a change in paradigm. We are not interested in passing on a theory, but on providing a tool to help us to move from intention to action.
- The "life experiences" generate feelings, evoke memories, and make realities present. Thinking in terms of life's reality does raise questions, but we also need to move on and reflect on finding some answers. Our reflection will be discussed first as a couple during the month, then shared during the Team meeting.
- The Gospel text and the other texts are welcome, because they shed light on life's problems and situations.
- The questions for discussion as a couple and as a Team, help in this process and guide us to seek answers, feelings and attitudes firstly as a couple, and then as a Team.
- During the Team meeting, life experiences will be shared, as well as feelings and reflections raised by the question and answers. We do all this in the best way possible, as missionary disciples.

4. The eight meetings, their connections, and their justification.

When we look at the world we are called upon to evangelise, we acknowledge three observations that have a particular impact on couples:

a) We are evangelising a postmodern, disillusioned world that does not believe in God and marriage. This is the world we live in, that we are part of. This reality touches us and is part of us.
b) We are sent to joyfully evangelise a world where individualism and loneliness cause pain, and make it difficult to announce love and life in community. This reality touches us all the more because we are affected by it, making marriage and family life more difficult.
c) We are sent to evangelise a relativist world, with values different to the Gospel. However, without knowing, it is crying out for a reason that gives meaning to existence.

We are called to confront this reality with the joyous message of the Gospel, which for us, in Teams of our Lady, is not just theory, but a lived experience. Reflecting on the personal experience of couples and teams, the following responses shed light on our journey of conjugal spirituality:
a) The encounter with Christ and his Gospel is a joy for us: a life-affirming answer that is full of joy and hope for us individually and for our life as a couple.
b) Belonging to the Church in Teams, is a life experience that is worth communicating to others.
c) Our experience compels us to be joyful witnesses to the faith we live. We often share this witness timidly. We want to do so in a more decisive way as a couple and as a community of missionary disciples.

The combination of these reflections points to three guidelines that explain the eight chapters and how they are linked together:

1. The joy of Christian hope in a disillusioned world
2. Christian life lived in community as compared to loneliness and individualism
3. The conviction of a faith that gives witness in the face of relativism

May the joy of the Good News, that we have had the opportunity to know and profess, encourage us to make a generous gift of our lives, following the example of our Lord Jesus-Christ!

Let us now turn towards the Virgin Mary. *"*Mary let herself be guided by the Holy Spirit on a journey of faith towards a destiny of service and fruitfulness. Today we look to her and ask her to help us proclaim the message of salvation to all, and to enable new disciples to become evangelizers in turn.*"* (EG 287)

With Mary we go forward confidently and we say:

Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world. (EG 288)

First meeting

Happily living the sacrament of marriage

We are married couples in a world that does not believe in marriage.

Introduction:

In the face of the incredulity of many, we, couples in Teams, find the strength to live our sacramental commitment joyfully, and to be witnesses in the world to the strength of the love that rules our lives.

I- To work on during the month

A. The Word of God. Matt. 5:13-16

> You are salt for the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled under people's feet. You are light for the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

B. Life experiences:

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.

Dear Inés,

I am a little sad, rather pensive and a little pessimistic. Others will not be able to understand me as you do. Living the experience of Teams of Our Lady, as you do with José, we speak the same language.
I feel tired. One of my students at the college sabotaged the class in which I was giving them the opportunity to speak about marriage. This was not the first time and it should not have surprised me. You know that these days, people laugh at us married couples, and look at us as an endangered species. But this time it hurt me more because Frank and I had something of a disagreement. Is the effort we make month after month, thanks to the Endeavours, worth it? And as for the difficult conjugal dialogue, will we succeed in our mission as witnesses, when occasionally, we ourselves cannot manage this? How can we keep up a joyous witness, when each smile is the result of an enormous effort? I believe in marriage. I am happy in my marriage and with my children. That is what I was saying yesterday to my students, as I frequently do. But aren't they right, too? The way we live, we married people, isn't it day by day more rare, more difficult, and going more and more against the tide? Why do we need assistance like we find in Teams, to keep us going?

…..Teresa,

Dear Teresa,

Jose and I have often felt the same way: we do not end up truly discouraged, but perhaps profoundly saddened. You know that here in our country the situation is different. Where you are, you still get married a lot. But as you have correctly pointed out, in Teams, and more particularly in its pedagogy, we find what strengthens us so that we can be happy couples on the road to sanctity. That is certainly worth the trouble of making an effort that sometimes seems enormous. As you know, it is not always like that. Most of the time it is an unconscious effort, because it comes from generous and joyous love, where we commonly find a gratifying reward. I understand you perfectly. Sometimes tiredness comes not only from conjugal and family problems, but from the outside world which seems not to understand us. How we would wish our witness to be more contagious! But José reminded me that the Lord has told us to be on our guard, after having sent us like lambs among wolves: it will not be easy. What happens results from the fact that we should like to achieve a rapid result but when we do not see it eventuating, we become discouraged. But God is the one who does the work! He will say when the seed will germinate. We will be fulfilled because we have sowed with perseverance and joy.

Did you not consider that your students were testing you? Were they not questioning you so that you would reaffirm for them, as doubtless you did, what they want to believe with all their being? What they need, in order for their love to have a true meaning, is to believe. It will be precisely your joyous witness that will make them question their own way of thinking. You took advantage of an opportunity that you could not let go by, even though they laughed at you; even though underneath it all you did not think yourself worthy of bearing witness in this way, since your marriage is not perfect. But you did it, because although you are not a perfect couple, for them, as for all your children, you are the best possible example of a couple that we seek and find in daily struggle. God gives you his blessing and the Holy Spirit strengthens you. Thank you for writing to me. Just as you invited us to share, you can do the same with your Team companions at the next meeting. You will definitely find faith in them and you will give them the opportunity to reflect on their relationship as couples, and their actions in the Church and in the world. We shall also do so in our Team.

Greetings to Frank. We love you.
Inès and José.

C. Our experience: Questions for reflection

As a couple and as a team

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflection and your experience.

- Have you experienced similar situations, feelings or reflections? Which ones?
- Share what we have learned from couples we know.
- In our experience within Teams of Our Lady, do we find wisdom to respond to those who do not believe in marriage? What is it?
- Does being married and living a life of conjugal spirituality permeate our way of acting within the Church and in society?
- In our life, in what tangible ways do we reflect our joy of being a couple, united in the sacrament?

D. Background texts

- **What Pope Francis tells us**

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelli Gaudium,* this is how Pope Francis illuminates our way of being Christians: "*I never tire of repeating those words of Benedict XVI which take us to the very heart of the Gospel: Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction".* (EG 7)

Moreover, see how he defines the treasures we find when we give ourselves to others, and after we have taken on our mission: "*Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others*".[4] *When the Church summons Christians to take up the task of evangelization, she is simply pointing to the source of authentic personal fulfilment. […] life is attained and matures in the measure that it is offered up in order to give life to others. This is certainly what mission means".* (EG 10)

Though it is true that this mission demands great generosity on our part, it would be wrong to see it as a heroic individual undertaking. It is first and foremost the Lord's work, surpassing anything which we can see and understand. Jesus is "the first and greatest evangelizer". […] The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that "he has loved us first" (*1 John* 4:19) and that he alone "gives the growth" (*1 Cor* 3:7). This conviction enables us to maintain a spirit of joy in the midst of a task so demanding and challenging, that it engages our entire life. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us. (EG 12)

- **What others tell us**

What happens if I say "Yes" to God?

If you say yes to God, it means that His love has taken possession of you and that makes you go beyond the emotional and cultural ties that keep you in your narrow world.

On the journey preparing for the life of a missionary, each of us knows his or her limits, weaknesses and sins. On the missionary journey you will realise that God's mercy is so great that even in the difficult moments of your life and in the selfish thoughts hidden in your heart, you can touch the lives of people you meet. You will be surprised by the unexpected paths that your presence opens up for several people to follow and improve their human and spiritual condition.

You will feel the 'good news' (Gospel) for many, not because you are a very intelligent and capable person, nor because you are good and holy, but because God wanted to enter into your heart. From there, He changes you, and expresses himself from the spaces that you leave open to him. From these pools of goodness, the Lord lifts those who have fallen where you pass by. Then you will understand Saint Paul, when he reveals that his weakness and fragility are God's strength. As missionaries, we are not saints; we are simply people who place our human frailty in God's hands and He makes it fertile.

You will also realise that people live immersed in an ocean of difficulties. Poverty and desertion have left a lot of wounds that are slow to heal. You will often feel like the Samaritan who gets down from his donkey to kneel before the person who was left by the roadside, in order to cleanse his wounds and

help him to get back on his feet, and care for the hardships caused by poverty (both material and human), discrimination, marginalisation, and abuse by some individuals.

You will be like a light that shines in the darkness of the village; in your heart you will feel people's pain, their dreams, their aspirations, their anguish … You will feel that their cause, is your cause too, and for this reason you will not rest, you will devote hours and hours … You will make Jesus' desire, that his disciples be the salt of the earth, a reality. Your life will illuminate and provide flavour to the lives of others.

They will see you smiling and joyful, enthusiastic, lively … they will ask you where this strength, which enables you not to be discouraged in the face of life's difficulties, comes from. The poor, despite being in an unfavourable situation, will throw a party, smile and sing … you will see them happy and lively, not because of who you are, but because through your presence they have found the Way, the Truth and the Life: God. Because they understand that HE is Emmanuel (God with us).

By your presence, perhaps you have only given them to God, but the point is that God is everything. And that will make you happy. You will find a happiness that no one can take away from you, because you have chosen the better part: being with the Lord on the roads of the world. You will be the Lord's brother or sister and friend. What more could you ask? Encourage yourself to say 'yes'!

Brother Joel Cruz, Mccj

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

While looking at how the Endeavours have been lived by couples this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done and how he or she could improve within the framework of the mission that the Lord proposes for us.
During the month, we should grow in all the Endeavours.

We offer you help with some of them:

• For the Rule of Life and couple dialogue

- Were you aware of the multiple occasions that were made available to you to be a missionary?
- Could you give yourself a specific task for this month?

• For reading the Word, personal and couple prayer

Let us conduct our reading and prayer guided by what Pope Francis suggests:

In the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: "Lord, what does this text say *to me*? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this?

Or perhaps: What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?" (EG 153)

II- For the Team meeting:

A. Meditation text:

Use the same Gospel text as that suggested in Part A: "To be worked on during the month": Matt 5:13-16.

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read the 'Life experiences" you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from

- the life experiences,
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing:

This is a special moment to share our life with the team. "It is a time during which couples share the preoccupations of their daily life, of their apostolic commitments, their joys and their hopes". (Guide for Teams of Our Lady)

One can also conduct the sharing along the following lines:

We invite you to share about the following extracts from the letter from Brasília, and ask yourselves: how are we living this out?

- The Teams of Our Lady movement, in reminding us that it must continue to be a movement to promote spirituality, must not only deepen conjugal spirituality within, but also radiate it outwards.

- Teams of Our Lady must be a movement of communities on a journey, providing reasons for hope to new generations.

- Marriage is a grace and a mission.

D. Participation in the Endeavours:

Under the heading "to be worked on during the month", some directions were suggested to you to assist you in practicing the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts.

E. Liturgical prayer

Canticle of Zachary

Ant: *You are light for the world. […] your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.*

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people

And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,

As he spoke by the mouth
of his holy prophets of old,

That we should be saved from our enemies,
and from the hand of all who hate us;

To show mercy to our fathers,
and to remember his holy covenant,

The oath which he swore
to our father Abraham,
to grant us that we,
being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
in holiness and righteousness
before him all the days of our life.

And you, child, will be called
the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord
to prepare his ways,

to give knowledge of salvation to his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
through the tender mercy of our God,
when the day shall dawn upon us from on high

to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet
into the way of peace.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen.

Ant: *You are the light of the world*

Recommendation:
Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the whole of the coming month.
This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives.

Second meeting

The conviction of the faith we bear witness to

How can we undertake our mission joyfully, in a Godless world?

Introduction:

We are named Teams of Our Lady in honour of the mother who gave us the most sublime example of faith and confidence in Jesus-Christ. If she takes us in hand, this will give our life a new meaning that will bring light to others.

I- To work on during the month

A. Word of God *James 2:14-17*

How does it help, my brothers, when someone who has never done a single good act claims to have faith? Will that faith bring salvation? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, 'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,' without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? In the same way faith without good works is quite dead.

B. Life experiences:

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.

Hello, dear friend:

Just a short note to tell you that I am distraught for Natalia. You asked me about them as a couple around six months ago. What worries me now and saddens me, is that my little girl, my baby, has had a crisis of faith. This is precisely what I talked to you about, and what we discussed as a Team: "What about your parents' witness"? I asked her. She didn't know what to say, poor thing. I see her as confused and I see that it will pass. But what if it did not pass? It is the influence of the University, of her class friends, of the world. I take consolation from having talked about it a lot, but I do not know whether the marriage will be a Catholic marriage or a civil ceremony. She says that she wants it to be Catholic, but if she does not believe in God what sense does that make? She prays a lot for herself and for us. My husband is vexed: "Whoever gets married in the Church, will end up coming back to the Faith!" he said one day, but I know that he doesn't believe this himself. Heavens above, my friend, we struggled all our lives to be good Christians! What a difficult mission you send us on, Lord!

Inés.

Very dear friend:

How saddened I am by what you told me about Natalia! But remember that I work with young people and that you yourself used to say to me that nothing that is sown in them is lost. On several occasions, in the midst of their questioning, they asked us to reaffirm what we have always taught them, but life inclined them to doubt. It is more difficult for them to be believers than for us in the world they live in.

No, it is not really more difficult, but there are more temptations. So that requires a stronger conviction. I know Natalia and I have confidence in what you sowed in her, because I know the quality of the seed (the Gospel), and the quality of the soil that is your little girl. She is a pearl! This will be a passing crisis that she will come out of strengthened. I shall pray for her. Give her a big hug from me. It is harder when they don't ask themselves about the existence of God or when they live as if He did not exist. But still, after seeing my atheist students, I notice a thirst for meaning, a search for the infinite, and an absence of true Love. I turn this to advantage to carefully and discretely sow the love and the joy that God has placed in my heart. The Lord and the entire Church support me. There are many saintly couples in Teams and I never tire of saying so.
When dealing with someone who is not thirsty, there is no other solution than to have them meet someone who is, so that they can drink alongside the other. Perhaps in this way the former will be convinced.

Your friend and companion on the journey towards the Lord.

C. Our experience: Questions for reflection:

As a couple and as a team

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflections and your experience.

- Have we experienced similar situations, feelings or reflections? What are they?
- What difference does it make, when, instead of rejecting those who do not believe, we try to understand them and, although we do not agree, we make the effort to listen to them carefully before speaking?
- How is our faith developed and nourished in Teams of Our Lady?
- Does a hidden fear of losing the Faith lurk behind our attitude (irritation, confusion misunderstanding) when faced with situations like that described in the letter? Or do we choose to deal with it seriously?
- Could it be that I participate in Teams of Our Lady and the Church, and at the same time live out my marriage and some situations in my life, as if God did not exist?
- Have we sown and do we continue to sow joyfully, a witness of faith for our children? (Avoid talking about the results of this action).

D. Background Texts

• What Pope Francis tells us

Let us listen to Pope Francis in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelli Gaudium*:

The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus (EG 1). The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart; the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures; and a blunted conscience (EG 2).

I invite all Christians everywhere at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them. I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each

day. […] The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk. Whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realise that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms (EG 3).

There are Christians whose lives seem like Lent without Easter. I realise of course, that joy is not expressed the same way at all times in life, especially in moments of great difficulty. Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures, even as a flicker of light born of our personal certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved. I understand the grief of people who have to endure great suffering, yet slowly but surely we all have to let the joy of faith slowly revive as a quiet yet firm trust, even amid the greatest distress (EG 6).

- **What Teams of Our Lady tell us:**

What Father Caffarel tells us: Seduced by God

A saint is not, as many imagine, a kind of champion who accomplishes feats of virtue, or spiritual performances. A saint is, above all, someone seduced by God, who hands their whole life over to Him. So it was for the saints of the Old Testament. One of them, Jeremiah, took us into his confidence in unmatched terms:

You have seduced me, Lord and I have let myself be seduced. You have overpowered me; you were the stronger. I am a laughing-stock all day long. They all make fun of me. For whenever I speak, I have to howl and proclaim, 'Violence and ruin!' […] I would say to myself, 'I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name any more,' but then there seemed to be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not do it. (Jer 20, 7-9).

Just as this was true of the prophets, it was all the more so for the apostles. Let us look at John and James (Matt 4: 21-22). On a fine spring day, on the infinitely pleasant shores of Lake Tiberias, the two young men are repairing their nets in the company of their father, Zebedee. They could have been singing. Perhaps they were singing love songs … A man is passing by. He is still young. He draws near. And his voice must possess an extraordinarily seductive quality because it requires only one appeal for James and John to immediately leave their father and their nets, and they follow him with the alert and supple step of joyful adolescents. They are scarcely aware of the adventure they are about to embark on. In fact, their destiny has just been decided. They have gambled their whole lives on a few words from Christ. They too were seduced; they too handed themselves over.

A few years later, it will be Paul's turn. From each page of his letters, there emerges his passionate love for the one who conquered him in a hard fought struggle. One day Christ appeared to him (1 Co 15, 8). Paul saw him (1 Co 9, 1). From that moment his life is radically transformed. *"But what were once my assets, I now, through Christ Jesus, count as losses. [...] Not that I have secured [perfection] already, nor yet reached my goal, but I am still pursuing it in the attempt to take hold of the prize for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." (*Ph 3, 7-12). The world's esteem, too, matters not a whit to him: *"Am I trying to please human beings? If I were still doing that, I should not be a servant of Christ."* (Gal 1:10). Love for his God spurs him on (2 Co 5, 14) and he is certain that nothing could separate him from God: *Can anything cut us off from the love of Christ -- can hardships or distress, or persecution, or lack of food and clothing, or threats or violence? [...] No; we come through all these things triumphantly victorious* (Rm 8:35, 37). He does not even worry about his own weakness. Nor does it threaten to detach him from his Master*: "And so willingly shall I glory in my weaknesses, so that the virtue of Christ may live within me. [...] For when I am weak, then I am strong."* (2 Cor 12:9-10). His union with Jesus Christ goes as far as identification: "*For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ"* (Gal 2:19). Even so, he

is impatient to fully possess his God: "*I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and to be with Christ, and this is by far the stronger desire. And yet for your sake, to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need."* (Phil. 1:23-24). *Although I am the least of all the saints, I have been given this grace: to evangelize among the Gentiles the infinite riches of Christ* (Eph. 3:8). And when he reaches the evening of his life which has all been expended for his Lord, there is one last confidence to Timothy, his beloved disciple. It is overpowering in its simplicity, and lets us see into the depths of his heart: «*I know in whom I have put my trust*» (2 Tim. 1:12).[1]

There are not two sorts of people: those called to give themselves unreservedly to God like John or Paul, and the others to love in moderation.

There are no two sanctities where only one will receive the complete gift. Marriage would be a trap to be avoided, if it is not a way of reaching perfection of the love of God.

You are called to sanctity. And it is within and for marriage that you must approach it.

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

While looking at how the Endeavours have been lived by couples this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done and what he or she could improve within the framework of the mission that the Lord proposes for us.
During the month, we should grow in all the Endeavours.

We offer you help with some of them:

- **For the Rule of Life and couple dialogue**

  - Do you let your faith and confidence in the Lord show through in your conversations?
  - Are you conscious of the witness to faith that you give through your actions?
  - How could you make progress in these areas?

- **For reading the Word of God, personal and couple prayer**

Let us conduct our reading and prayer, under the guidance of what Pope Francis suggests to us:

In the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: "Lord, what does this text say to me? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this?"
Or perhaps: "What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?" (EG 153)

[1] Henri Caffarel – L'Anneau d'Or – THIS GREAT SACRAMENT: MARRIAGE.
Numéro spécial 111-112 – May – August 1963 (pages 289 to 303)

II- For the Team meeting

A. Meditation text:

Use the same text as that suggested in PART A, "To be worked on during the month":
James 1:2-8.

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read the 'life experiences' you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from

- the life experiences,
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing: some suggestions

This is a key opportunity to share our life with the Team. "It is a time during which couples share their worries in daily life, their apostolic commitments, their joys and their hopes" (Teams of Our Lady Guide)

You can also share using the following suggestions:

When rereading Father Caffarel's article, we think: When have we thought of ourselves as being "seduced by God"? In order for this to happen, what circumstances helped it to occur?

Do we have the feeling that we are living our faith joyfully?

D. Participation in the Endeavours

Under the heading "to be worked on during the month", some directions were suggested to you to assist you in practicing the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts.

E. Liturgical prayer

Seeking the ways and the forgiveness of God. Psalm 25

Lord, I lift my soul to you.

But in my trust in you, do not put me to shame,
Let not my enemies gloat over me.
Calling to you, none shall ever be put to shame!
But shame is theirs who groundlessly break faith.
Direct me in your ways, Lord,
And teach me your paths.
Encourage me to walk in your truth

And teach me, since you are the God who saves me.
For my hope is in you all day long -- such is your generosity, O Lord.
Goodness and faithful love have been yours for ever, Lord, do not forget them.
Hold not my youthful sins against me,
But remember me as your faithful love dictates

Recommendation:
Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the whole of the coming month.
This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives.

Third meeting

Fearless in the face of moral obligation

Conjugal Spirituality, a challenge and an opportunity

Introduction:

These days we are for ever being urged to think of our own well-being, to avoid suffering or ignore it at all costs; the SELF and its desires are imposed. Let us dare to be different, and ask the Lord what he wants of us; then dare to respond to his demanding love.

I. To work on during the month:

A. Word of God: Luke 9:23-26

Then he said to everyone: “If anyone is willing to come after me: let him deny himself, and take up his cross every day, and follow me. For whoever will have saved his life, will lose it. Yet whoever will have lost his life for my sake, will save it. For how does it benefit a man, if he were to gain the whole world, yet lose himself, or cause himself harm? For whoever will be ashamed of me and of my words: of him the Son of man will be ashamed, when he will have arrived in his majesty and that of his Father and of the holy Angels”.

B. Life experiences:

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.
We are going to listen to the graduation speech by our secondary school graduates

Dear student administrators, parents, teachers, fellow students,

We are here to celebrate! This is the last time that we shall be together, like a great educational family that we have formed during these past twelve years that we have spent together. We have shared the same interests, the same values, the same ideals. Now we take advantage of the opportunity to sum up what we have lived, what permitted us to reach this happy day.

An initial decision taken by our parents – and not by us – brought us here when we were only about four years old. It was a fortunate decision that opened the doors of so many experiences for us. It allowed us to meet people who were an example for us and our source of inspiration for what will be our future personal and professional lives. They taught us about rigour in order to find the truth; discipline in order to attain mastery; the value of unceasing work if we want to reach our objective; as well as fortitude in order to attain virtue. We learned from them of the God-given peace that enjoyment of beauty and of nature leaves in our hearts. In the scholarly domain, we also discover friendship. It is not trite to say that school helps us to learn and to make friends.

Another lesson that has marked us for life, was sharing with our companion, Julián Gómez, his terrible accident. We learned through pain and suffering that wise counsel and warnings are precautionary signals on our life's journey. How we wish that there had been no alcohol that evening; that speed was not so tempting for us; and to understand that we must say NO in good time! Julian, from you we came to understand that disability is a call to get together and to share our qualities and gifts with someone who needs them. But still more, we learned that serving others brings us more opportunities to be better each day. Thank you for wanting to end this year with us and teach us the value of humility and discipline, as much as we can manage!

To our parents, I want to say thank you, for setting expectations, for showing us that - although they used to reprimand us – living without high expectations does not bring fulfilment; that it is more important to give sincere praise than to send a text; that living while struggling on and working conscientiously is what makes us grow.

Today we are going to leave the security of this group and begin our own journey; but we take with us the tools that you, parents and teachers, have given us. Seeing you starting work enthusiastically each day and persevering in life's struggles, has shown us an example and encouraged us.

Lastly, I very much want to draw attention to the fact that being the graduation year which has received the highest marks for the last five years, means that you expect a lot of us, that you will have high expectations because you know what we are capable of. Let us accept this challenge, let us go out and offer the best of ourselves to our families, our community, our society. They need us and we need them. With God's help, we will succeed! Many thanks.

C. Our experience. Questions for reflection

As a couple and as a team

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflection and your experience.

- What parts of the discussion above seem to you to bear similarities with Christian life?
- Have we experienced similar situations where we felt that we were being too demanding? Which situations? How did we react?
- Are we afraid of being demanding towards ourselves, our children, our employees, colleagues or friends? Why?
- How can we overcome the demands of situations that enrich us?
- Do the demands of Teams seem excessive to us? Which ones and why?
- Are we conscious of the influence we have on those around us?

D. Background Texts

• What Pope Francis tells us

It is obvious that the demands of living the Christian life effectively are not based on pessimism, but are animated by a particular joy that only Christ can give. Look at what Pope Francis tells us about this in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* – the Joy of the Gospel.

The joy of the Gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anyone or anything (cf. Jn 16:22). The evils of our world – and those of the Church – must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervour. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow. With the eyes of faith, we can see the light which the Holy Spirit always radiates in the midst of darkness, never forgetting that "where sin increased, grace has abounded all the more" (*Rom* 5:20).(EG 84)

[…] Nobody can go off to battle unless he is fully convinced of victory beforehand. If we start without confidence, we have already lost half the battle and we bury our talents. While painfully aware of our own frailties, we have to march on without giving in, keeping in mind what the Lord said to Saint Paul: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 *Cor* 12:9). Christian triumph is always a cross, yet a cross which is at the same time a victorious banner borne with aggressive tenderness against the assaults of evil. …. (EG 85)

[…] For just as some people want a purely spiritual Christ, without flesh and without the cross, they also want their interpersonal relationships provided by sophisticated equipment, by screens and systems which can be turned on and off on command. Meanwhile, the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. […] (EG 88)

[...] We need to help others to realize that the only way is to learn how to encounter others with the right attitude, which is to accept and esteem them as companions along the way, without interior resistance. Better yet, it means learning to find Jesus in the faces of others, in their voices, in their pleas. And learning to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity (EG 91)

• What others tell us

Joy, a Christian requirement

Author: Father Tomás Rodríguez

Joy is inherent in our condition as Christians, because it emanates from the foundations of our faith, Christ resurrected, so that no one can take it from you. Jn. 16:22.

As our joy is healthy, you cannot stumble when something accidental and transitory affects our lives. Pain, poverty, illness, cannot replace true joy, so it should manifest itself when life is bitter and difficult as it did for the Apostles: Acts 5:41: "*And so they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name*."

If true joy is a requirement that flows from the roots of our faith, it must be a characteristic of our condition as Christians, such that Paul insists: *Always be joyful, then, in the Lord; I repeat, be joyful*. (Phil. 4:4); How far from this way of thinking are those who believe that to be good, we must be serious and austere!

A Christian who is not joyful has not yet discovered the foundation of his Christianity and the requirements it brings with it. The joy of Christians is of such a dimension that only those who live their Christianity authentically can draw on it.
(Cf www.autorescatólicos.org.ar)

• What Teams of Our Lady tells us

Father Caffarel, in his text entitled "No life is undemanding"[2] applies the topic, the Christian condition, to the specific situation of our Team meeting. His reflection is certainly a great help in understanding what is expected of Team members.

[2] » «Pas de vie sans exigence

"…A team meeting that is not first of all an effort to encounter Jesus Christ, is something entirely different from a Teams of Our Lady meeting." [3] Being demanding, with the demands of love, is not so much a matter of making every effort to correct the faults of someone else (as every educator knows), as it is to stir in someone's heart, a growing generosity towards God and one's neighbour, as one would fan the flames of a fire.
… SO let your love be patient with the patience of a farmer who trusts the seasons. Then your demanding love will bear fruit.

"If your love makes no demands on me, it diminishes me; if your demands are without love, they outrage me. If you are impatient in your demands on me, you discourage me; if your love is demanding it promotes my growth"[4] "... When couples practise mutual help and fraternal love, little by little their hearts expand. Then stage-by-stage, their love spreads to the home, to the neighbourhood, to the country … until it reaches the most distant shores …"

A fraternal community is a message from God to humanity. It is His most important message as it reveals the intimate life of God - his Trinitarian life. There can be no more eloquent and persuasive discourse on God, than the spectacle of Christians who "are one" as the Father and the Son are One.

Nothing glorifies God more than these united Christians. It is the great masterpiece of divine grace with which God is well pleased, as it is a reflection of his life in the Trinity. "The heavens sing of the glory of God", fraternal love sings of eternal Love.

So let this be your obsession: Make your Team *a success in charity.* [5]

L'Anneau d'Or – May-August 1956
Chapter VI, Texts by Father Caffarel, Prophet of Marriage

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

In looking at how the Endeavours have been lived out by couples in the course of this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done, and what he or she could improve within the framework of the mission which the Lord proposes for us.
In the course of the month we should grow in all the Endeavours.

So we propose some ways of helping you with some of them:

- **For the Rule of Life and couple dialogue**
    - When examining my rule of life, could I be more demanding in its accomplishment?
    - When it comes to couple dialogue, do I demand more of my partner than of myself?

- **For Reading the Word, personal and couple prayer**
    - Let us be conscious that reading the Word of God and prayer are the best ways of meeting all challenges, even when this can seem extremely difficult?

[3] Extract from Selected Texts (SIXTH SESSION: «Building the team") RETOUR à respirer publication Je résume les (LA SIXIÈME RÉUNION : "CONSTRUIRE L'ÉQUIPE) REPRENDRE SOUFFLE Publication SR FLS
[4] L'Anneau d'Or – Henri Caffarel : Propos sur l'Amour et la Grâce, PAS DE COMPLICITÉ p. 202
[5] L'Anneau d'Or – Henri Caffarel : Propos sur l'Amour et la Grâce p 355

II. For the Team meeting

A. Text for meditation

Use the same text as suggested in Part A, “To be worked on during the month”: **Luke. 9:23-26**

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read the ‘Life experiences’ you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from

- the life experiences
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing

This is a special moment for sharing our life with the Team. "This is a time during which couples share the concerns of their daily life, their apostolic commitments, their joys and their hopes." (Guide for Teams of Our Lady)

The sharing can also be conducted with the help of the following leads:

After having read Father Caffarel’s recommendations about the Team meeting, share the aspects that we can implement to improve the life of our Team.

D. Participation in the Endeavours:

Under the heading "to be worked on during the month", some directions were suggested to you to assist you in practicing the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts.

E. Liturgical Prayer

Psalm 1

Blessed is the man who has not followed the counsel of the impious,
Nor gone the way of sinners, [...]
Rather, the law of the Lord is his joy;
And he will meditate on the law, day and night.
And he will be like a tree that has been planted beside running waters,
Which will provide its fruit in season,
And its leaves will not fall away,
And whatever he does will prosper.

Recommendation: Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the whole of the coming month. This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives.

Fourth Meeting

Christ, yes, but with the Church

Yes to Christ, but no to the Church

Introduction:

In our times it is very common in the secular, materialist and individualist world in which we live, to separate Christ from the Church and pretend that we can follow Christ without recognising the Church or belonging to it. Part of our mission as Catholic couples is to witness to commitments that we have as members of the Church and the indissoluble links that exist between the Church and Christ.

I- To work on during the month

A. Word of God: Col 1:23-29

So then, persevere in the faith: firmly grounded, steadfast and not shifting from the hope of the Gospel that you have heard, which has been preached throughout all creation under heaven. It is of this Gospel that I, Paul, have become a minister. For now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the Church. For I have become a minister of the Church, in accordance with God's stewardship given to me to bring to completion for you the Word of God, the mystery which had remained hidden to past ages and generations. But now it has been manifested to his saints. To them, God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory. It is he whom we proclaim, admonishing everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ Jesus. For this I labour and struggle, in accord with the exercise of his power working within me.

B. Life experiences

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.
.
The following conversation takes place between a father and his son, on Mother's Day.

Father: Let's go to Mass today, son. Besides being Sunday, it's also Mother's Day and we should thank God for Mum and pray for her. I know that you don't like going to Mass and for a long time you have not been going, but what is one hour consecrated to thanking God when you live so many hours a week that are often wasted. ? Let's go. Do it for me, and above all for her. You know she would be happy for you to go to Mass with me. It is certainly the best present you could give her, after being distant from the Church for so long. In addition you will hear the Word of God and be able to reflect for a moment on what it has to say to you. If you listen carefully, you will discover that the Word of God is still relevant and applies perfectly to our lives today, in the 21st century. Christianity is best lived in community and the Eucharist brings family and community together. Get dressed and let's go together.

Son: No, Dad, I don't want to go. Don't expect me to. You know I believe in God and in Jesus, but my relationship with God is personal and does not need any intermediaries or temples, and still less being with a whole lot of people I don't know. God is everywhere and to give thanks or pray, there is no need to go to church to listen to everyone repeating empty phrases mechanically, like parrots. I pray and thank God when and where I want, but not by going to church out of some obligation. The important thing for me is spirituality, not religiosity. Besides, the priest's sermon is boring and outdated, and seems to have become stuck in another age, several centuries ago. In fact, I find nothing attractive about Mass. It does not bring me anything new. It's like confession. I find it unnecessary to go and confess my "sins" to a person who is probably more guilty than me and does not practice what he preaches. Putting it plainly, I am 'allergic' to priests and to the Church. I have no confidence in them. In fact, every day there is a new scandal featuring a priest, with the result that I no longer respect the Church as an institution. Not believing in the Church does not mean that one has stopped believing in God.
Moreover, I see a lot of inconsistency in some people who go to Mass every day, but when they leave the church they give no Christian witness in their daily lives. Rather in their various roles, they act in ways that are contrary to what Christ wants.
I definitely could not hold out for a whole Mass and my conclusion can be summed up like this: Christ yes, but not the Church. I try to live my life without hurting anyone and that is enough for me before God.

C. Our experience: Questions for reflection

As a couple and as a Team

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflections and your experience.

- Have we experienced similar situations, feelings or thoughts? If so, what were they?
- If we were in the position of the father in the situation described, how would we reply to our son's views?
- In our experience within Teams, do we find insights that enable us to reply to those who claim that they can separate Christ from the Church? If so, what are they?
- What is our position, personally and as a couple, as regards the Church?
- Are we conscious of the commitments and responsibilities that we have as members of the Church? How do we take these on in our daily lives?
- Is it the Church that should renew itself, or men and women who need to renew themselves in the Church? What will we do?

D. Background Texts

- **What Pope Francis tells us:**

The catechesis of Pope Francis on 25 June 2014
[https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140625_udienza-generale.html]

Today […] we will speak about belonging to the Church.

1. We are not isolated and we are not Christians on an individual basis, each one on his or her own. No, *our Christian identity is to belong*! We are Christians because we belong to the Church. It is like a last name: if the first name is "I am Christian", the last name is "I belong to the Church". It is so beautiful to observe how this belonging is also expressed in the name God gives to himself. In answer to Moses in that wonderful episode of the "burning bush", he defines himself as *the God*

of the fathers (cf. Ex. 3:15). He doesn't say: I am the Omnipotent One..., no: *I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob*. In this way He reveals himself as the God who made an alliance with our fathers and remains ever faithful to his pact, and calls us to enter into this relationship which precedes us. God's relationship with his people precedes us all, it comes from that time.

2. In this sense, one's thought goes in the first place, with gratitude, to *those who went before us* and who welcomed us into the Church. No one becomes Christian on his or her own! Is that clear? No one becomes Christian by him- or herself. Christians are not made in a laboratory. A Christian is part of a people who comes from afar. The Christian belongs to a people called the Church and this Church is what makes him or her Christian, on the day of Baptism, and then in the course of catechesis, and so on.

But no one, no one becomes Christian on his or her own. If we believe, if we know how to pray, if we acknowledge the Lord and can listen to his Word, if we feel him close to us and recognize him in our brothers and sisters, it is because others before us, lived the faith and then transmitted it to us. We have *received* the faith from our fathers, from our ancestors, and they have instructed us in it. If we think about it carefully, who knows how many beloved faces pass before our eyes at this moment: it could be the face of our parents who requested our Baptism; that of our grandparents or of some family member who taught us how to make the sign of the Cross and to recite our first prayers.

I always remember the face of the nun who taught me the Catechism — she is in Heaven for sure, because she was a holy woman. I always remember her and give thanks to God for this sister. Or it could be the face of the parish priest, of another priest or a sister or a catechist, who transmitted the faith to us and helped us to grow as Christians.... So, this is the Church: one great family, where we are welcomed and learn to live as believers and disciples of the Lord Jesus.

3. We are able to live this journey not only *because of* others, but *together with* others. In the Church there is no "do it yourself", there are no "free agents". How many times did Pope Benedict describe the Church as an ecclesial "we"! At times one hears someone say: "I believe in God, I believe in Jesus, but I don't care about the Church...". How many times have we heard this? And this is not good. There are those who believe they can maintain a personal, direct and immediate relationship with Jesus Christ outside the communion and the mediation of the Church. These are dangerous and harmful temptations. These are, as the great Paul VI said, "absurd dichotomies".

It is true that walking together is challenging, and at times can be tiring: it can happen that some brother or sister creates difficulties, or shocks us.... But the Lord has entrusted his message of salvation to humanity, to us all, to witnesses; and it is in our brothers and our sisters, with their gifts and limitations, that he comes to meet us and make himself known. And this is what it means to belong to the Church. Remember this well: to be Christian means belonging to the Church. The first name is "Christian", the last name is "belonging to the Church".

Dear friends, let us ask the Lord, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, for the grace never to fall into the temptation of thinking that we can do without others; that we can do without the Church; that we can save ourselves on our own; and be Christians 'in a laboratory'. On the contrary, we cannot love God without loving our brothers; we cannot love God outside the Church. We cannot be in communion with God without being in communion with the Church, and we cannot be good Christians unless it is with all those who seek to follow the Lord Jesus, as a single people, a single body, and that is the Church.

- **What Teams of Our Lady tell us**

SMALL-MINDED SPIRITUALITY
Teams of Our Lady Monthly Letter - December 1948

Father Henri Caffarel

A few months of life together…then: disappointment. It surprises only those directly involved: they had entered into marriage to TAKE and not to GIVE.

After some years of enthusiasm, a member of *Catholic Action* leaves his group: "*I no longer get anything out of it".* Another one who is more concerned with taking than giving.

Even with God, we come to take and not to give: "*What's the point of continuing to go to communion and to confession? I get nothing out of it".*

The couple loses interest in each other, the Church activist in their movement, the parishioner in their parish, the citizen in their country, mankind in their Creator.

In a more limited field, I want to invite each couple to ask: 'Why did we join Teams? To take or to give?

Then to each Team I would ask: Why have you joined the Movement? Was it solely to find ready-made study topics? To receive a newsletter, to gain from the experiences of others? If so, you are not where you belong.

But if you reply: "*We want to participate in the great task undertaken by Teams of Our Lady; we want to bring Christ into the home; we want holiness to take root in the modern world and not to remain the exclusive preserve of monks; we want to form good workers in society, robust apostles of Christ", then you are on track. Your Team will be a help to all teams.*

Your team will receive from all teams, because we must always come back to this primary truth: whoever comes to take, goes away empty handed; whoever comes to give, finds.

Once you have grasped the Spirt of Teams, you will have no problem accepting its discipline. Your reaction will not be: such and such a rule bothers us, let's do away with it. No indeed! This rule is useful for the good functioning of the Movement, so we'll play the game.

And now, friends, do you understand why we cannot allow Teams to play fast and loose with the Charter? It is not so much that in itself, this or that lapse (not responding in writing to the topic, failing to take on a rule of life, or forgetting to pay the subscription…) is a catastrophe. But it is symptomatic: the Team joined the game, not to give, but to take. And that is serious. And that is why we judge that such a Team is not doing its job."

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

While looking at how the Endeavours have been lived out by couples this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done and what he or she could improve within the framework of the mission that the Lord proposes for us.
During the month, we should grow in all the Endeavours.

So we propose some ways of helping you with some of them.

- **For the rule of life and couple dialogue**

    - Through the Rule of Life, we could try to get much closer to believers in our parish, or to our fellow team members ...
    - In our couple dialogue we could review the quality of our relationships with others.

- **For reading the Word, personal and couple prayer**

  The Church is the community of believers in Jesus-Christ, our Lord and Saviour. While meditating on the Word and saying our prayers, during this month in particular, let us keep in mind members of the Church community, and pray in a heartfelt way for those who do not know Jesus.

II- For the Team meeting

A. Meditation text

Use the same text as that suggested in Part A “To be worked on during the month”: Col 1:23-29

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read about the ‘Life experiences” you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from:

- the life experiences
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing

This is a special moment for sharing our life with the Team. "This is a time during which couples share the concerns of their daily life, their apostolic commitments, their joys and their hopes" (Guide for Teams of Our Lady)

The sharing can also be conducted with the help of the following leads:

In his article “The Spirituality of the Stakeholder”, Father Caffarel invites us to reflect on our attitude to the life of the couple, the Team, etc. and whether it consists of receiving or giving. This could be a suitable time to share about this.

D. Participation in the Endeavours:

Under the heading "to be worked on during the month", some directions were suggested to assist you in practising the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts.

E. Liturgical Prayer

Psalm 67

May God show kindness and bless us,
And make his face shine on us.
Then the earth will acknowledge your ways,
And all nations your power to save.
Let the nations praise you, God,
Let all the nations praise you.
Let the nations rejoice and sing for joy,
For you judge the world with justice,
You judge the peoples with fairness,
You guide the nations on earth.
Let the nations praise you, God,
Let all the nations praise you.
The earth has yielded its harvest;
God, our God, has blessed us.
May God continue to bless us:
And be revered to the ends of the earth.

Recommendation:
Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the whole of the coming month.
This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives.

Fifth meeting

Teams of Our Lady, a treasure of the Church

The delight of knowing that we are not alone

Introduction:

We, members of Teams of Our Lady, live in community in our Movement by practising mutual help. In this way we confirm in our lives that we cannot save ourselves on our own, we journey together with the assistance of a community of couples and priests.

We are invited to witness to the happiness of having chosen this state of life.

I – To work on during the month

A. Word of God. Rom. 12:3-18

And through the grace given to me, I say this to every one of you: never pride yourself on being better than you really are, but think modestly, each according to the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has various parts in one body, and the parts do not all have the same function, in the same way all of us, though many, make up one body in Christ. And as different parts we are all joined to one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to each of us, let us use them: if it is a gift of prophecy, we should prophesy as much as our faith tells us; if it is a gift of practical service, let us devote ourselves to serving; if it is teaching, to teaching; if it is encouraging, to encouraging. When you give, you should give generously from the heart; if you are put in charge, you must be conscientious; if you do works of mercy, let it be because you enjoy doing them.

Let love be without any pretence. Avoid what is evil; hold on to what is good. Love one another with mutual affection and regard others as more important than yourself. In the service of the Lord, work not half-heartedly but with conscientiousness and an eager spirit. Be joyful in hope, persevere in hardship; keep praying regularly; share with any of God's holy people who are in need; look for opportunities to be hospitable. Bless your persecutors; never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with others when they rejoice, and be sad with those in sorrow. Give the same consideration to all others alike. Pay no regard to social standing, but meet humble people on their own terms. Do not congratulate yourself on your own wisdom. Never pay back evil with evil, but bear in mind the ideals that all regard with respect. As much as possible, and to the utmost of your ability, be at peace with everyone.

B. Life experiences

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.

Very dear Father Caffarel,

Our team's Responsible Couple has had the brilliant idea of giving us a task for the coming meeting: to write out the questions that we would put to you at an imaginary get together. All of us accepted the challenge enthusiastically and, being their Spiritual Counsellor, I decided to take this on, too. However,

I allowed myself to work, not just on an interview, but on a letter containing questions and also some statements.

What a lot of time has gone by since the founding of Teams of Our Lady and the promulgation of the Charter! We are living in a time of great solitude in a 'hyper-communicative' society; we have a crisis in the sense of community and extreme individualism. The privacy of individuals, distance and sometimes respect, are values that are little practiced today; while, at the same time, treating people in a more fraternal and egalitarian fashion is valued. I take pleasure in observing that, from the very start of Teams, life as a community has been a founding pillar. When thinking about the couples in the first team, I should like to ask you: **When teams were first created did there exist a need, which the majority of couples felt, to live a Christian life in community or was there individualism as there is today?**

Today, when we invite a couple to join Teams, we commonly find in them a fear of sharing their life experiences with others. We have the feeling that they prefer to solve their problems on their own. Then again, some join Teams to solve their problems and have no intention of sharing their journey with the other couples by practising mutual assistance. You, Father, have given the Church a great treasure with your simple but fundamental intuition: we do not find our salvation on our own, we journey as a community of couples. That is why we ask you: **Did you imagine that the Holy Spirit would make such a marvellous instrument out of that first team?**

Today some do not perceive the richness of a specific spirituality which has shown the possibility of a path to holiness *in* and *through* marriage, as it had never been shown before. Many discouragements come from our little problems as a couple and as a Team that prevent us from seeing the "powerful" lifebelt that has been thrown to us. It is not enough to know that we form part of a great Movement. We have to understand that in this little group, there is to be found a richness and an experience of life that enable us to discover holiness, together and progressively, thanks to mutual assistance.

I should like more households and priests to discover what we have discovered: the joy of making the journey together. But how can we achieve this? This is not a question for you, Father; it is our responsibility to announce the good news joyfully and to proclaim it through our life's witness.

I thank God for you and Teams of Our Lady, for having allowed me to be part of it and for the journey that we are in the process of travelling together. And now that we have the joy of hearing that the cause for your beatification has begun, we pray to you to intercede for us. Thank you, Father!

Hernando Javier Moreno Carreño, Spiritual Counsellor

C. Our experience: Questions for reflection

As a couple and as a team.

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflection and your experience

- As regards what you know of Teams, what seems to you to be the most innovative contribution to the Church?
- We do not find our salvation on our own, we journey as a community of couples. What was the process that gave you the confidence to share your life experiences with the team members? Do you find difficulty in opening yourself up even more? How can you explain this?
- In what areas do you believe that your team lacks community spirit?
- What can we do so that others understand that we cannot find our salvation on our own?

D. Background Texts

- **What Pope Francis tells us (EG 113 and 114)**

The salvation which God has wrought, and the Church joyfully proclaims, is for everyone.[82] God has found a way to unite himself to every human being in every age. He has chosen to call them together as a people and not as isolated individuals.[83] No one is saved by himself or herself, individually, or by his or her own efforts. […] (EG 113)

Being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel. (EG 114)

- **What Teams tell us**

Teams of Our Lady in the service of the New Commandment

Henri Caffarel to the Lourdes pilgrims on 7 June 1965[6]

*"*Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God*"* (1John 4:7), and also the great way of opening their heart to others. In fact, how could anyone who has truly discovered this marvellous reality that is fraternal love, not be impatient to see it established everywhere: amongst their extended family, in their parish, in the groups they belong to? And on the purely human level, how could they not be anxious to encourage dialogue and the life of the Team? We must emphasise strongly that all progress in deepening love necessarily involves progress in broadening love. When two or three people love each other with fraternal love, they experience the love God has for the whole of His creation.

So now I am able to answer the question raised at the beginning of my talk: What is the vocation of our Movement in the Church? I gladly define it in this way: Teams of Our Lady are known and want to be at the service of the New Commandment. They intend to work with all their energy to establish fraternal love between spouses, parents and children, households and further still, in all Christendom.

Our world has a tremendous need of Christians who love one another. And if our Movement applies itself without faltering to promoting this brotherly charity, believe me, it will be responding to one of the most pressing needs of our time.

... In our twentieth century, when marriage, the institution on which the solidity of the Church and of civilisations is based, becomes dislocated and corrupted, God in his mercy raises groups to remedy the disaster. I am profoundly convinced that this is the *raison d'être* of our Teams, without in any way claiming a monopoly. But let us be quite clear about the way to help marriage, as it finds itself under threat. The resources of psychology and biology alone, the norms of natural morality alone are notoriously inadequate. We have to dare to tell married couples that *there is no salvation for love or for the family unit except in the love of Christ.* And also, that they can receive this love abundantly, love which finds its source in the heart of God, through the channel of their sacrament, if they desire it and ask for it with a faith that perseveres.

[6] Henri Caffarel. *L'Anneau d'Or*. September –October 1965, pp.588 and 589

Be quite confident, dear friends, that marriage will not be alone in profiting from our efforts. The whole Church has an interest in this, because a renewal of marriage cannot but contribute very effectively to a renewal of the Church that the whole world aspires to, and for which all Christians should be working.

FATHER HENRI CAFFAREL

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

While looking at how the Endeavours have been lived by couples this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done and what he or she could improve within the framework of the mission that the Lord proposes for us.
During the month, we should grow in all the Endeavours.

So we propose some ways of helping you with some of them:

- **For the Rule of Life and couple dialogue**
  - Do you feel the temptation to want to solve your problems all on your own?
  - In what way can I allow myself to be helped a little more by my spouse and by members of my Team? Establish an appropriate rule of life.

- **For listening to the Word, personal and couple prayer:**
  - Do we call on the Holy Spirit when we read the Word and pray, as Pope John Paul II taught us?

    Inspire in me what I should think.
    How should I say, what I have to say?
    How should I do, what I have to do?
    What must I do for the glory of God,
    the good of souls and my own sanctification.

II- For the Team meeting:

A. Meditation text

Use the same text as that suggested in Part A: “To be worked on during the month”:
Rom 12:3-18

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read the ‘Life experiences’ you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from:

- the life experiences
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing:

This is a special moment to share our life with the team. "It is a time during which couples share the preoccupations of their daily life, of their apostolic commitments, their joys and their hope." (Guide for Teams of Our Lady)

D. Participation in the Endeavours

Under the heading "to be worked on during the month", some directions were suggested to assist you in practicing the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts.

E. Liturgical Prayer

Psalm 138

I thank you, Lord, with all my heart,
for you have listened to the cry I uttered.
In the presence of angels I sing to you,
I bow down before your holy Temple.
I praise your name for your faithful love;
your promises surpass even your fame.
You heard me on the day when I called,
and you gave new strength to my heart.

All the kings of the earth give thanks to you, Lord,
when they hear the promises you make;
they will sing of the ways of the Lord:
'How great is the glory of God!'

Sublime as he is, the Lord looks on the humble,
the proud he picks out from afar.
Though I live surrounded by trouble,
you guard my life when my enemies rage.
You stretch out your right hand and save me,

The Lord will do all things for me.
Lord, your faithful love endures forever.
Do not abandon the work of your hands.

Recommendation:
Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the whole of the coming month.
This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives.

Sixth meeting

Church members bearing witness to Jesus-Christ

Witness: an important mission for couples in Teams of Our Lady

Introduction:

We are under an obligation to make the good news of the Gospel come alive, while allowing it to be transformed, through the action of the Holy Spirit, into love of God and our brothers and sisters. This grace is the driving force of evangelisation; it is the spring that pushes us to share with others the joy and peace that we ourselves experience in Christ.

I- To work on during the month

A. Word of God: 1 Cor. 9:15-17

However, I have never availed myself of any rights of this kind; and I have not written this to secure such treatment for myself; I would rather die than that. No one shall take from me my boast. In fact, preaching the gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it. If I did it on my own initiative I would deserve a reward; but if I do it as a matter of duty, I am simply accepting a task entrusted to me.

B. Life experiences

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.

A Team member's testimony

My husband and I, coming from Catholic families, were aware of Teams of Our Lady through one of our parents. Without being familiar with what it involved, we were attracted by the witness of couples in the team during the friendship meetings to which we were invited when we were engaged, together with children of the other members of the Team. They lived in an authentic way and with a lot of joy!

A little after our marriage, we decided to join Teams of Our Lady. We were all young married couples and we identified with the fundamental desire to become better. Of course, we did not know how to proceed because we did not know the true depth of the sacrament of marriage. Nonetheless, we began our work joyfully, but it took us many years in order to get there. It is a slow process that occurs step by step. On the other hand, the friendship and fraternity between us grew rapidly.

Our Team's Spiritual Counsellor, a wise and saintly man, was somewhat advanced in years, and contracted lung cancer. He died shortly afterwards. However, we spent 10 years with him and he did not miss a single meeting, even when he was ill. He taught us a lot. His great love of God and of the Virgin Mary, his sincere and selfless dedication, were testimonies that motivated us and deeply marked our lives. It is hard to express the very great pain we experienced with the loss of our Priest-

Spiritual Counsellor. Nevertheless, we are sure that he is now in the glory of the Lord. Shortly afterwards, we had the joy of having another Spiritual Counsellor who has become our friend and companion on our journey.

It is a pity that we took so long before we participated in the life of the Movement outside our Team. Many discoveries awaited us: our team was not alone, and there was a whole Movement we could rely on! So we began to participate in different types of meetings and formation. That is how we grew in the faith. We met many couples whose life witness transformed us; we understood better God's plan for us; and finally, we also understood the value of service. We appreciated the way couples live these values at all the levels of responsibility in Teams of Our Lady. I would like to mention here all the couples and priests that come to mind and remain in my heart. All of them have left their mark. Words definitely are convincing, but witness drags one in!

Today, after many years, I never tire of giving thanks to God for having allowed me to know Him through Teams of Our Lady. Our life has been marked in an indelible way. Problems will always exist, as well as our weaknesses and shortcomings, but with God's help, we have worked to build our house on solid rock.

From those who has received much, much is demanded! We pray to Our Lady who gave us the best witness of love for God, and who always accompanies us, that we may not falter and always be witnesses of Love.

C. Our experience: Questions for reflection

As a couple and as a team

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflection and your experience.

- How has the witness of others influenced our life personally and as a couple?
- Does our own witness influence our life as a couple, the life of our children and that of those around us?
- Do your friends, your work colleagues and the people you know, recognise that you are Christian people and that you live according to your faith?

D. Background texts

- **What Pope Francis tells us**

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium,* Pope Francis shows us how to be witnesses for others: "All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord […] In your heart you know that it is not the same to live without him. What you have come to realize, what has helped you to live and given you hope, is what you also need to communicate to others. […] (EG 121) And he adds: "Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all, by a life transfigured by God's presence..." (EG 259).

- **What others tell us**

In the statement from the 5th General Conference of the Latin-American and Caribbean Episcopate in Aparecida, we find the following invitation:

*Knowing Jesus-Christ through faith is our joy; following him is a grace; and transmitting this treasure to others is a duty that the Lord, by calling and choosing us, has committed to us. (*No 18)

We expect a truly credible witness of holiness and commitment of those who live in Christ. When we desire and achieve this holiness, we do not live any the less, but better, because when God asks more, it is because he offers more: "Be not afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away and he gives everything." (No 352)

- **What Teams of Our Lady tell us**

Here is an extract from a speech by Father Caffarel, delivered in Rome on 5 May 1970:

Teams of Our Lady confront atheism.

"… Let's take a closer look at your mission as God's witnesses. The first way you can do this, is to live your love ever more perfectly and to ensure that it develops all its potentialities, so that it shows itself faithful, happy and fruitful. It is true that it is beyond your capacity on your own. The man and the woman quickly observe that evil is at work within their home. It is absolutely necessary to resort to the grace of Christ, Saviour of the couple. As a result, your union bears witness not only to God the Creator, but also to God our saviour.

You will bear witness to God as a couple even more explicitly, if you are a union of two 'seekers of God', to use the admirable expression of the psalm: two seekers whose minds and hearts are eager to know and meet God; passionate seekers of God impatient to be united with him; seekers for whom God is the great reality in their lives; seekers who are more interested in God than in anything else. In such a couple, everything is seen and conceived in relation to God. I am not speaking theoretically. Numerous are those I know among you who are true seekers of God. In them a secret cord vibrates whenever God's name is mentioned in their presence.

[…] And those who come to seek your hospitality, whether they are conscious of it or not, will find God there. *Ubi caritas et amor Deus ibi est.* Where there is charity and love, God is present there.

[…] There is no danger that such a home will become a kind of ghetto where one shuts oneself away from the troubles of the world. It is more of a place that one goes out from to take on every human task. God, the friend of mankind, sends out his servants when they have regained their strength through mutual assistance, prayer and rest. So it is not surprising that in the midst of mankind, Christian spouses are witnesses to the living God.

By way of proof, I offer this reflection by a woman, who was a scientist and an atheist, to her Catholic friend: "For you, God is alive just like your husband and your children. My arguments against God become ridiculous when confronted by you. It is as if I tried to prove to you that your husband does not exist".

You may say to me that this portrayal of the Christian couple assumes that the problem has been solved, namely, that we are all saints. Not at all! I was not talking about sanctity, but about seeking God, giving honour to God, of turning to Christ the Saviour to overcome daily temptations and obstacles in conjugal and family life.

[…] I would like to pass on to you my conviction that a couple who are 'seekers of God' in our world, that no longer believes in God and no longer believes in love, is a 'theophany'. It is a manifestation of God, just as the desert bush was for Moses when it burned but was not consumed.

I am saying that if your life as a couple and your love bears witness to the God of love, then and only then, you must and can bear witness to the Word, as it will be backed up by your life.

[…] Hear the call of God, of the Church, and of its visible head, and in your turn, be living witnesses to God in this 20th century, where the witness of the couple has suddenly taken on an unexpected and considerable importance"[7].

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

While looking at how the Endeavours have been lived by couples this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done and what he or she could improve within the framework of the mission that the Lord proposes for us.
During the month, we should grow in all the Endeavours.

So we propose some ways of helping you with some of them:

• For the Rule of Life and couple dialogue

- For the rule of life :
  - Let us remind ourselves that we are called to bear witness to our faith in Christ, through our life, our words, our actions and our deeds.
  - Jesus invites all his disciples to a way of living, thinking and speaking, in other words, a lifestyle, that is visible to all those around them. In short, the best way of promoting the Gospel is through one's own life, one's own person. Make Christ be visible through your life.

- For the couple dialogue
  - Let us see whether in our life there is something that prevents us from bearing witness to our Christian life, particularly where our children are concerned.
  - It is possible that our example of how to live is hidden by the environment in which our children are growing up. What can we do to prevent this?

- **For reading the Word, personal and conjugal prayer**

Let us ask Christ throughout this month for the grace to help us to make an abundant harvest of conversions among the people we know, through the mere witness of the love we have for Him.

II- For the Team meeting:

A. Meditation text:

Use the same text as that suggested in Part A: "To be worked on during the month":1 Cor 9, 15-17

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read the 'Life experiences' you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from:

[7] Henri Caffarel. "Teams of Our Lady confronted by atheism" (*Les Équipes Notre-Dame face à l'athéisme)* Rome, 15 May 1970.

- the life experiences
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing:

This is a special moment for sharing our life with the Team. "This is a time during which couples share the concerns of their daily life, their apostolic commitments, their joys, their hopes and their worries." (Guide for Teams of Our Lady)

This time the sharing can be undertaken by sharing our lives with reference to one of the following paragraphs from Fr. Caffarel's talk: *"Teams of Our Lady confronted by atheism":*

- I would like to pass on to you my conviction that a couple who are 'seekers of God' in our world, that no longer believes in God and no longer believes in love, is a 'theophany'. It is a manifestation of God, just as the desert bush was for Moses when it burned but was not consumed.
- I am saying that if your life as a couple and your love bears witness to the God of love, then and only then, you must and can bear witness to the Word, as it will be backed up by your life.
- In your turn, be living witnesses to God in this 20th century, where the witness of the couple has suddenly taken on an unexpected and considerable importance.

D. Participation in the Endeavours:

Under the heading "to be worked on during the month", some directions were suggested to assist you in practicing the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts.

E. Liturgical Prayer

Psalm 40

I waited, I waited for the Lord,
then he stooped to me and heard my cry for help.

He pulled me up from the seething chasm,
from the mud of the mire.
He set my feet on rock,
and made my footsteps firm.

He put a new song in my mouth,
A song praise to our God.
Many will be in awe at the sight,
and will put their trust in the Lord.

How blessed are those who put their trust in the Lord,
who have not sided with rebels and those who have gone astray in falsehood.

Recommendation:
Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the whole of the coming month.
This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives.

Seventh Meeting

Go out and be of service to others

The best service: passing on the joy of the Good News

Introduction:

The individualism of today's world results in our approaching others only when we expect some advantage for ourselves; failing this, the presence of others means little.

Approaching others with our hands outstretched and with a smile, giving them a sympathetic hug that conveys the merciful love of God, transforms us into 'the good news'.

I- To be worked on during the month

A. Word of God: Acts 3:1-11

Once, when Peter and John were going up to the temple for the prayers at the ninth hour, it happened that there was a man being carried along. He was a cripple from birth; and they used to put him down every day near the temple entrance called the Beautiful Gate, so that he could beg from the people going in. When this man saw Peter and John on their way into the temple he begged from them. Peter, and John too, looked straight at him and said, 'Look at us.' He turned to them expectantly, hoping to get something from them.

But Peter said, 'I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ, the Nazarene, walk!' Then he took him by the right hand and helped him to stand up. Instantly his feet and ankles became firm. He jumped up, stood, and began to walk, and he went with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and praising God. Everyone could see him walking and praising God, and they recognised him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. They were all astonished and perplexed at what had happened to him. Everyone came running towards them in great excitement, to the Portico of Solomon, as it is called, where the man was still clinging to Peter and John.

B. Life experiences

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.

Alexander, a young paraplegic university student, leaves the comfort of his home and the protection of his family in order to accept the challenge of spending a semester with the very poor inhabitants of a remote coastal community in Colombia, South America. Here are some extracts from his diary:

24 August 2014. These are God's plans. In Zuela, a very small village in the region, there lives a young man who had a motorcycle accident six years ago. He broke three vertebrae. Basically, his life had consisted of working during the week and "drinking" the profits of his work on Saturday and Sunday. The accident was six years ago and he was left paraplegic. He has progressively regained the use of his legs and now he gets around on crutches, but he has fallen into a deep depression. For six years he has been lying on his bed, watching TV. One day, his mother, seeing me in my wheelchair, asked me to talk to him, so as to motivate him to regain a zest for life. I spoke with him and it seems that he is beginning to motivate himself to do something. I shared my experience with him and he was happy to find someone who understood him. He likes to draw, so I am going to draw with him. We shall see if that can motivate him.

…As far as catechesis is concerned, we, as catechists, conducted a spiritual retreat for the entire northern region (5 counties) that belongs to the San Pierre Claver Mission, a project of the Jesuit priests dedicated exclusively to these communities, but which came to a halt because of the lack of priests. The retreat went very well and the young people left very motivated. However, I noticed that they were greatly lacking in knowledge of Catholic doctrine. Nonetheless, we must find some way of remedying this, so that they can start up projects, such as prayer groups and other meetings, on their own. That said, the greatest problem here is that the priests are overwhelmed… So it is time for us, the laity, to help train the community, so that they can find new ways of living their religion without depending on others.

29 September 2014. Today it is two months since I arrived, and I still have two months to go. Elkin, my disabled friend, has already learnt how to draw using Indian ink; now he wants to learn how to do tattoos. This is something he would like to do and is able to do. Moreover, it will enable him to earn a little money. He is very motivated and he has begun to leave the house.

… Tomorrow I will begin catechesis for the Confirmation at Arroyo de Piedra which is another village that the priest visits once a month. I will be working with the teacher, chosen by the parish priest to accompany me, so that she can observe the way I work and then herself prepare the candidates who are to receive this sacrament.

C. Our experience: Questions for reflection

As a couple and as a team

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflection and your experience.

- We invite you to share your experiences when you approached someone who needed you to serve them.
  Could this be a new rule of life?

- Have we received help at times when we needed it? If so, what did we learn from this experience?

- Based on our experience in Teams of Our Lady, have we found insights that guide us in how best to serve those who need us and become the "Good News" that Christ expects of us? What were these?

- Why is witnessing to the Good News the greatest of services?

D. Background Texts

- **What Pope Francis tells us**

In order to fully recognise the qualities that we should have as messengers of the "Good News" and how to put ourselves at the service of others, it is important to listen to what Pope Francis tells us in his Apostolic Exhortation "*Evangelli Gaudium*":

The Church which "goes forth" is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn* 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father's infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. […] An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. […] An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time. Faithful to the Lord's gift, it also bears fruit. An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful. It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds. […] He or she finds a way to let the Word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear. […] Finally, an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. **(**EG 24)

Spirit-filled evangelizers means evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit. […] The Holy Spirit also grants the courage to proclaim the newness of the Gospel with boldness (*parrhesía*) in every time and place, even when it meets with opposition. (EG 259)

Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work. […] What is needed is the ability to cultivate an interior space which can give a Christian meaning to commitment and activity.[205] Without prolonged moments of adoration, of prayerful encounter with the word, of sincere conversation with the Lord, our work easily becomes meaningless; we lose energy as a result of weariness and difficulties, and our fervour dies out. (EG 262)

- **What Teams of Our Lady tell us:**

"…My aim today is to get you to ask yourselves this question: "Does my inner sight lead me to see God present, active and sanctifying everywhere? Does it know how to discern the divine dimension of those around me and of events as they occur?" Let me explain what I mean with a few examples: When you are in the bus or in the train, do you see these people around you, with their worries and burdens, with the eyes of Christ? Do you experience Christ's loving concern for them? In the appeals of this invalid, this poor person, this woman who has been abandoned and is waiting for your help, do you hear the unmistakable sound of Christ's voice?"

Henri Caffarel, Monthly Teams of Our Lady Letter: Are you believers? December 1956.

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

While looking at how the Endeavours have been lived by couples this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done and what he or she could improve within the framework of the mission that the Lord proposes for us.
During the month, we should grow in all the Endeavours.

So we propose some ways of helping you with some of them.

- **For the rule of life and the couple dialogue**
  - Peter and John go out to meet the paralytic man and cure him in Jesus' name. He immediately begins to praise God because of the change that has occurred in his life. Can our life change as a result of our reflection on this topic? Let us try to draw some conclusions as to how this change can be achieved.
  - Let us conduct our Sit Down by asking ourselves how we can share the 'Good News' with others.

- **For reading the Word, personal and couple prayer**
  - When we pray, let us seek the necessary strength to place ourselves at the service of others by listening to the Word and through our personal and couple prayer.
  - Let us continue our reading of the Word and our prayer life guided by the words of the Pope: "The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart" (EG 264).

II- For the Team meeting:

A. Meditation text:

Use the same text as that suggested in PART A, "To be worked on during the month": Acts 3:1-11

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read the 'life experiences' you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from:

- the life experiences
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing:

This is a special moment to share our life with the team. "It is a time during which couples share the preoccupations of their daily life, of their apostolic commitments, their joys and their hopes." (Guide for Teams of Our Lady)

One can also conduct the sharing along the following lines:

- As a team, are we prepared to take the initiative of going out to meet those who need us?
    - What examples of this have we experienced in our Team?
    - What new suggestions can we come up with?

D. Participation in the Endeavours:

Under the heading "to be worked on during the month", some directions were suggested to assist you in practicing the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts

E. Liturgical Prayer

Hymn (Translated from Spanish)

Lord, you call me
To be an instrument of your grace,
To announce the good news,
To heal souls.

Instrument of peace and justice,
Mouthpiece of all your words,
Water to quench the burning thirst,
Hand that blesses and loves.

Lord, you call me
To heal the wounded hearts,
To shout from the rooftops
That love is alive.
To wake those who sleep,
And free the captive.

I am soft wax between your fingers,
Do what you want with me.

Lord, you call me
To save a weary world,
To love all people
As brothers and sisters.
Lord, you want me to abolish war,
And alleviate poverty and sin,
Shake the stones,
And drive away the wolves from the flock.
Amen.

Recommendation:
Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the coming month.
This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives

Eighth Meeting

Undertaking our mission joyfully

How we live, is what we proclaim ourselves to be

Introduction:

There exists in us a natural tendency to get used to our habits and to refuse new responsibilities, aside from those imposed by work, family and friends. However, we must fight against this passivity, if we want to accomplish the mission that God has entrusted to us: giving witness to Him every day in the way Christ did.

I- To be worked on during the month

A. Word of God: Matthew 25:31-40

Judgement of the nations

When the Son of man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All nations will be assembled before him and he will separate people one from another, as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the upright will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you? When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the king will answer, "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me…."

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

Facing up to concrete realities.
It is not a question of resolving situations, merely of commenting, giving rise to reflection and action.

A Team's witness

God always shows us the way; he shows us what he expects of us and allocates us a mission. However, he never does this directly, but through people. In our case it was the Spiritual Counsellor who showed us the way.

In the first few years of our belonging to Teams we were happy and very conscious of belonging to the Movement. However, all the members of our Team progressed at their own pace and that of the

Team without ever thinking of sharing the treasure they received with others. During a team meeting one day, our Spiritual Counsellor challenged us strongly about our indifference and our egoism. He warned us that he would leave us straight away if we did not change and did not turn towards others. His assessment was that our team was not benefiting the parish or him. Its contribution, as a result, only benefited seven couples.

So the Team decided to respond to the challenge of the Spiritual Counsellor in the conviction that in doing so, they were responding to God. We started our response as a Team by giving a few talks for the engaged couples in the parish. This was enough for us to experience the richness of GIVING, and to become more aware of the need to do something for others. We started out timidly but decisively: so all the members of the Team began to work by accepting, very enthusiastically, a commitment to various responsibilities and programs of the Movement, and also in Non-Government Organisations that work for the poor, the disabled or those who are experiencing difficulties in their lives.

Fear of leaving our comfort zone, which in our case was overcome by the challenge given by our Spiritual Counsellor; excuses that we did not have enough time; that we did not feel ready or able, that we did not know exactly what God wanted of us: all these self-imposed barriers were overcome by a very simple truth. When we try to give something with joy, when we finally decide to take on our mission, it is then that we start to receive. We always come out of these types of experiences satisfied and happy, united in love and a little nearer to God.

We offered all we had: our limitations, our time, our weaknesses and our strengths. As in the Gospel, we give our five loaves of bread and our two fish, and out of that small contribution the Lord works miracles. He multiplies and transforms all that in an extraordinary way, generating blessings for all.

From that moment on, the members of our Team, despite their numerous personal and professional occupations, took on responsibilities in the Movement and in the Church, and made generous contributions. We were all enriched as soon as we accepted our Spiritual Counsellor's challenge. Moreover, we realised that even if we gave our time to others, we still had enough left for the two of us, for our children and family, for friends, etc.

Since God does not speak directly to us, we decided to see Him in each person who seeks us out to ask for a little of our time: we strive to always say YES to Him.

C. Our experience: Questions for reflection

As a couple and as a team

We must be very aware of the great number of opportunities that exist to be of service in and outside Teams. In fact the Church needs our support and our commitment to proclaim the Gospel in a society that can be hedonistic and materialistic.

Choose the questions which seem best suited to your reflection and your experience.

- In the course of living out our mission, have we realised that we have received much more than we have given? Describe some specific experiences.
- Joy is contagious. Let us review and share as a Team the times we have felt touched by others' joy.
- Let us ask ourselves: why do we accept, all too often, the superficial joy that is sold by today's world?

- We have heard it said: “there is more joy in giving than in receiving”. In what way do we live this out with our partner, our children and others?

D. Background Texts

- **What Pope Francis tells us**

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelli Gaudium,* Pope Francis, shows us the joy that should accompany our lives as Christians and the witness that we should convey to others:

“[…] In this Exhortation I wish to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy […] (EG1)… […]This is the joy which we experience daily, amid the little things of life […] (EG4) ‘technological society has succeeded in multiplying occasions of pleasure, yet has found it very difficult to engender joy’ ”. (EG 7)

“[…] the new evangelization is a summons addressed to all (EG14) […] Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet.” (EG15)

“[…] It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial security, or to a desire for power or human glory at all cost, rather than giving their lives to others in mission. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm! (EG 80)

“And so the biggest threat of all gradually takes shape: “the grey pragmatism of the daily life of the Church […]. Faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness”. A tomb psychology thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum. […] Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization! (EG 83)

“[…] we are called to be living sources of water from which others can drink. At times, this becomes a heavy cross, but it was from the cross, from his pierced side, that our Lord gave himself to us as a source of living water. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope! ” (EG 86)

“[…] Today, as the Church seeks to experience a profound missionary renewal, there is a kind of preaching which falls to each of us as a daily responsibility. It has to do with bringing the Gospel to the people we meet, whether they be our neighbours or complete strangers. […]” (EG 127)

- **What others tell us**

I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.

Rabindranath Tagore.

From an etymological viewpoint, the word mission means: to be sent for something. However, the deeper meaning of mission in this life poses the following fundamental questions:

- What meaning do we give to our existence?
- Why have we been sent into this life?
- What is it that makes us feel truly alive?

Every mission is action, task, effort and even sacrifice to help others to grow and also to be, through our action, a source of blessing. We too, shall be beneficiaries of our efforts. This is how we can give a transcendent meaning to our daily lives".

C.L. Magda Villarreal, Club de Leones de El Carmen, Nuevo León, México

"If we keep our heart, eyes and ears open, all of us will discover the fragility of many of our brothers and sisters who meander through our villages, live in our towns, are marginalised and forgotten on the outskirts of cities, and do not count in decision-making; but we also discover this same fragility in ourselves, our families and in Christian communities. This is where we are invited to live the joy of the Gospel and to pass it on through our daily witness".

Sister Flor María Garrido Lara, Diocèse Saint Philipe – Chili.

- **What Teams of Our Lady tell us**

"God says: … Human couple, my beloved creature, my chosen witness, do you understand why you are dear to me above all creatures? Do you understand the immense hope I place in you? You carry my reputation, my glory, you are the great reason for hope in the world, because you are love"

Father Henri Caffarel "Confronting atheism[8]" Rome, May 1970, p.4.

"…Teams of Our Lady will remain strong in unity and fidelity to their charism, but they will also be open to the world and to the signs of the times, with fresh ardour, fresh vigour, and a second wind.

May Couples in Teams be signs of hope and a leaven in the Church and today's world to new generations who believe in Life, while bearing witness that the Sacrament of Marriage is a path of Love, Happiness and Holiness.

Let us entrust ourselves to Mary, our Mother, who will guide us to go and do just as He did."

Letter for Brasilia. International Responsible Team, Teams of Our Lady, September 2012.

E. Direction in order to grow in the Endeavours:

While looking at how the Endeavours have been lived by couples this month, it is important to reflect on what each team member has done and what he or she could improve within the framework of the mission that the Lord proposes for us.
During the month, we should grow in all the Endeavours.

So we propose some ways of helping you with some of them.

- **• For the Rule of life and couple dialogue**
    - The Lord rewards us in so far as we give of ourselves lovingly to our brothers and sisters who are in need. During our dialogue, let us recall the feelings we experienced when we did this.
    - This study topic gave us the opportunity to reflect on the way we take on our mission. We invite you to share your reflections during the Sit Down.
    - Let us try to identify the obstacles that impede our commitment to our mission. Let us choose a rule of life that helps us to overcome these obstacles.

[8] *Face à l'athéisme*

- **For reading the Word of God, personal prayer and prayer as a couple**

This month, reading the Word and prayer will be undertaken while seeking humility, generosity and mercy so as to help others joyfully, and in the firm conviction we are serving God.

II. For the Team Meeting

A. Meditation text

Use the same text as that suggested in PART A, “To be worked on during the month” Matt. 25:31-40

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection:

This is the time to read the ‘life experiences’ you have been working on for the previous month as a team, and to discuss the reflections and actions that have been raised from:

- the life experiences
- the background texts and
- the questions posed.

C. Sharing

This is a special moment for sharing our life with the Team. "This is a time during which couples share the concerns of their daily life, their apostolic commitments, their joys and their hopes" (Guide for Teams of Our Lady)

D. Participation in the Endeavours:

Under the heading "to work on during the month", some directions were suggested to you to assist you in practicing the Endeavours. At this stage in the meeting, share with the team the results of your efforts.

E. Liturgical Prayer

Psalm 100

A Hymn of Praise

Shout joyfully to the Lord,
all the earth,
serve the Lord with gladness,
come into his presence with songs of joy!

Know that the Lord is God,
He made us, we belong to him,
his people, the flock of his sheepfold.

Come within his gates giving thanks,

to his courts singing praise,
give thanks to him and bless his name!

For the Lord is good,
his faithful love is everlasting,
his constancy from age to age.

Recommendation:
Let us work at the following chapter as couples during the coming month.
This is very important to ensure that the topic permeates our lives.

Evaluation Meeting

Introduction:

In the course of this year we were able to see our lives and the way we live out our mission. In so doing, we experienced the joy of living the Good News of the Gospel with a Christian maturity that allows us to express our love to others. Now it is time to consider the results and to formulate proposals for the future, both as a couple and as a Team.

This meeting should be conducted as a Sit Down. It is with the help of the Holy Spirit that we sum up our Team by reflecting objectively on the state of our Team today, the journey undertaken, the amount of progress and the difficulties encountered in the course of the year just gone.

In this way the Evaluation Meeting will be a time that allows us to give thanks for the effort we have undertaken together in order to meet Christ. We shall praise the wonders the Lord has achieved and anticipate with much enthusiasm and hope, the path to be followed by couples and by the team.

I- To be worked on during the month

A. Word of God:

Do not model your behaviour on the contemporary world, but let the renewing of your minds transform you, so that you may discern for yourselves what is the will of God -- what is good and pleasing and perfect. Rom 12:2

So, my dear brothers, keep firm and steadfast, always abounding in energy for the Lord's work, being sure that in the Lord your labours will not be in vain. 1Cor 15:58

B. Life experiences

In order to review the work undertaken we propose that you use the **see-judge-act** methodology**.**

The life experiences this month will consist of an in-depth **Sit-Down**. Each couple will have the opportunity to undertake a real review of their life before the Lord throughout the month. Couples will have much food for thought and input for couple dialogue. This will allow them to **take a look at their lives, their commitments and their capacity to respond.** This review will definitely end up with specific rules of life.

The first stage consists of looking objectively at the way we live our lives. It is not a matter of some external questioning but of an internal review of our lives, which is why our attitude must be profoundly sincere.

The second stage, **judging**, requires us to compare our lives with the Gospel. It is not a question of looking for our sins, errors or faults; nor of finding fault with each other. In the light of the Word of God, we can perceive more clearly the contrast between the Christian objective and our reality.

The third stage, **action,** conveys the natural reaction when we understand that in life there are things that warrant improvement. What we have noticed or what the Lord has revealed, now demands that we work in order to make progress.

It is important that each couple be able to work on the different aspects of the review of their life and commitments. This evaluation should be made in the course of an in-depth Sit-down. This will most likely require that it be done several times in the course of the month.

C. Sit Down

It is recommended that the Sit Down begin by reading the Word of God and reflecting on the texts suggested for meditation below, followed by couple prayer.

After a short silence, the dialogue can begin, with the following questions as reference points:

SEEING: For the past year we have been analysing our lives from the viewpoint of the joy of living out our mission. This enabled us to SEE several aspects. So:

- What were the aspects that most challenged us?
- How do we see our experience of our mission so far?
- In what areas are we stronger and more engaged?
- In what areas do we need to develop further?

JUDGING: Let us compare our life (as a couple, as a family, as a team and in the Church) with the Gospel:

- Did we feel that we were “messengers” of the Lord, spreading his message and living by it?
- Analyse the various areas where we acted as “messengers”.
  - ✓ With our spouse
  - ✓ With our children
  - ✓ With those around us
  - ✓ With the Church
- How were we united to Christ in the various aspects of our mission?
- Review the areas in which we took action as our personal apostolate and as a couple:
  - ✓ Which areas are we satisfied with?
  - ✓ How do we need to change?

ACTION: After having SEEN and JUDGED, we have only to ACT in the light of what we have discerned**.**

So:

- ✓ This is the time to consider, in the Lord’s presence, what specific actions will enable us to make progress in our mission.
- ✓ Let us try to be as specific as possible in describing the areas and the actions we choose.

D. Texts that enlighten

- **What Pope Francis tells us**

The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him "to go forth". Abraham received the call to set out for a new land (cf. *Gen* 12:1-3). Moses heard God's call: "Go, I send you" (*Ex* 3:10) and led the people towards the promised land (cf. *Ex* 3:17). To Jeremiah God says: "To all whom I send you, you shall go" (*Jer* 1:7). In our day Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church's mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary "going forth". […] (EG20)

The joy of the Gospel is for all people: no one can be excluded. (EG 23)

I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. "Mere administration" can no longer be enough.[2\1] Throughout the world, let us be "permanently in a state of mission". (EG 25)

[…] If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. [..]. while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (*Mk* 6:37). (EG 49)

- **What Teams of Our Lady tell us**

"I do not intend to suggest at this point that you undertake a wide-ranging examination of conscience. In my marriage, my parish, my profession, my country, and the Church: am I a parasite or a good worker? Such an important problem cannot be dealt with in a short article. In a more limited field, I want to invite each couple to ask themselves: Why did we join Teams? To take, or to give?

But if your answer is: 'We want to participate in the great task undertaken by Teams of Our Lady; we want to establish Christ's kingdom in homes; we want holiness to take root in the midst of the modern world and not to remain the exclusive preserve of monks; we want to train good workers in society, robust apostles of Christ" - then I will say you are on the right track. Your team will be a help to all teams. (…)

Once you have grasped the Spirt of Teams, you will have no problem accepting its discipline. Your reaction will not be: such and such a rule bothers us, let's do away with it. No indeed! This rule is useful for the good functioning of the Movement; so we'll play the game."

Father Henri Caffarel

Editorial from the Letter of December 1948- Small-minded Spirituality

II- For the Team Meeting

Since this is an evaluation, this meeting will be special: we suggest that you transform it into a great sharing of the topics dealt with during the in-depth sit down that each of you undertook during the month. They will be of great assistance in undertaking the evaluation.

A. Meditation text:

Use the same text as that suggested in Part A “To be worked on during the month”: Rom 12:2 and 1Cor 15:58.

B. Life experiences and questions for reflection and sharing with the team:

- During this part of the meeting, each couple will be able to share what they found most significant in their life experience during the in-depth sit down that was suggested to you.
- Analyse the points presented by each team and identify those points to which it would be appropriate to give priority during the following year.
- It is suggested that each couple keeps in mind the evaluation that was undertaken in order to evaluate the evolution of the points identified as priorities and compare them to those of future years.

C. Liturgical Prayer

PSALM 139

Lord, you examine me and know me:
you know when I sit, when I stand,
you understand my thoughts from afar.
You watch when I walk or lie down,
you know every detail of my conduct.
A word is not yet on my tongue
before you, Lord, know all about it.
You are all around me on every side,
you have laid your hand upon me.

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