



Equipes Notre-Dame

## Newsletter Teams of Our Lady – Irish Region

### From the Regional Couple



Issue 116

Spring 2019

---

Dear friends in Teams,



*Lent is a journey of returning to the essentials, during which the Lord asks us to follow three steps almsgiving, prayer and fasting.* One of Pope Francis Tweets for Lent .

As we continue on our Lenten journey through the ups and downs of life may we be always thankful for the love of God in our lives. We are Easter people who are redeemed and have heaven as our prize. The only way we can begin to repay him is to do what we are asked, to love God and love others. The sacrifice Jesus made on the cross freed us so that we too could enter heaven.

We recently attended a Formation Weekend in Wimbledon UK, together with Brendan and Rosemarie Gavin (Dublin Sector Couple) and John and Bernie Healy (Dublin Sector Team).

It was a wonderful weekend of training and sharing of experiences and insights into the movement both in Ireland and the UK. It seems we share the same difficulties but remain committed however to expansion, vocation and vision.

Many thanks to all who celebrated the 80th anniversary of the first team meeting and a very special thanks to our Team Chaplain Fr. Monks, Camillian for his hospitality as he welcomed the Mullingar Sector to a special evening of prayer and sharing at his home in Killucan which was a truly inspiring get-together. Some of us have lost dear ones and we remember them in our prayers at this time and ask the Lord to have mercy on them.

---

### Inside

**Regional Chaplain**  
**Frank Rowley —**  
**tribute**

**Call to Holiness**

**Fr. Caffarel -**  
**Master of Prayer**

**Prayer Intentions**

**Interview**

**30 Years a —**  
**growing**

**Dublin Sector**  
**Retreat**

**Around the Region**

We especially remember our fellow Team member Michael McGovern, recently deceased, and send our sincere condolences on behalf of our Team and ourselves to his wife Betty and the family at this difficult time. Michael was a dedicated member of Mullingar Team 3 for over 30 years and joined us for our 80<sup>th</sup> celebrations in Killucan recently.

We would like to take this opportunity of wishing you and your families a happy and blessed Eastertime.

God Bless

Jim and Elaine Keogh

### **80th Anniversary of first Team Meeting (25th February,1939)**



The Mullingar Sector celebrated the 80th anniversary of the first team meeting. Included in the photo is Michael McGovern, who died on 26th March. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

---



## From the Regional Chaplain, Fr. Peter Sexton SJ

### An tSeachtain Mor – Holy Week

Symbols have a central place in our lives. And in Christian life, Christian spirituality, one symbol dominates over all others : it is of course the Cross – the simplest and most profound of symbols –it is not for nothing that the Cross crowns our churches; the cross has a special place in our homes; we begin and end so much of our praying with the sign of the Cross : as St Paul says : ‘ I am crucified with Christ, but I live – yet not I but Christ lives in me.’

So what was the supreme symbol of shame and humiliation in arguably the greatest empire of the world – the Roman Empire – became the supreme symbol of the triumph of Christ's love for the world – and so for us is the symbol we bear with pride.

A genuine adult spiritual life begins so often with an immersion in darkness and pain – so different from the expectation of it happening in peak experiences; and as a distinguished Filipino theologian said : ‘time and again life takes us to the edge of the valley of the shadow, and we must learn to find the light there – in our darkness we discover we are not powerful enough or clever enough to deal with the darkness – we need a greater power – your sorrow will be turned into joy.’

‘Neither facts nor feelings define the reality – beyond my life of feelings (of numbness or despair) may be a life of love – not a life we lead but a life that leads us; not a life we create, but if we open to it a life that creates us – I live now not I but Christ in me.’ Mary Craig in her astonishing book called Blessings, witnesses wonderfully to this life.

So the Cross is the central symbol for us Christians because it is the way the Father chose to show us in Christ the meaning and extent of His love for us – the meaning of a love willing to pay the price until the end – ‘What shall I say ? Father save me from this hour?’

And so the words of Christ in the Gospel – ‘unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains a single grain’. – meaning that letting go of all that diminishes and destroys us : grudges, prejudices, greed, pettiness, hatred is dying – so that Life can flourish

The call of Christ is into intimate relationship : ‘if a man serves me he must follow me too, wherever I am my servant will be there too’ – and the extraordinary words ‘Father glorify my name’ – in John this means the Crucifixion, leading to the Resurrection – being lifted up -the Passion is revealed not as a catastrophe but the revelation of God's glory.

Time and again in the daily news of human malice and folly we are reminded of the need of dying to all that is self-serving and self-centred in our personal and communal way of life – the world in John's gospel means the milieu where God's love and values are absent – it is dangerously easy to be self-righteous when the evil of corruption & deceit are exposed, either in individuals or in institutions – but the call is loud and clear to Christians to witness to the values and integrity that are needed more than ever : as St Paul says to his contemporaries and to ours : ‘you will shine in the world like bright stars, because you are offering it the word of life.’

‘Now sentence is passed on this world – now the prince of this world is to be overthrown’ – and the practice of a Christian life is one lived in the faith and hope that this victory has already been accomplished – that we are engaged in Rueckzugsgefaechte – skirmishes at the end of the line – hope is trusting in the God you do not yet see.

So we move towards Holy Week with a surge of confidence in the Living and Loving God, eager to celebrate what defines our entire lives – the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ our Lord in a way that is consonant with our personality, our reality

As Hopkins says : ‘ the just man justice’s; Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces; Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is – Christ – for Christ plays in 10.000 places, Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his To the Father through the features of men's faces.’

---

**Suggested Readings:**

April Easter accounts in the 4 gospels

May Pentecost and Galatians 5, 22-26

June 1 Corinthians and Ephesians 3, 14-21



**Frank Rowley – Dublin Team 19 – R.I.P.**

On 6 December last, Dublin Team 19 lost Frank Rowley, a founder member and an inspiration of our team for over thirty-five years. He died after a long illness, helped by his Faith, and by the immense support of Gemma and his extended family.

He was a devoted husband to Gemma, a dedicated father to Maggie, Tom, Ellen, Dominic and Johnny and he was dearly loved by his twelve grandchildren who all live in Dublin. When our team was new, Johnny was our only – and last – ‘team baby’, and we watched him and the other Rowley children with eager interest as they grew up to adulthood and had their own families.

In our team we constantly admired Frank’s inspiring contributions, and in particular his extra-ordinary sense of humour, which could turn a report of a mundane event into a hilarious description. One would always feel better after being in his company.

Over the years, from time to time, Frank and Gemma played the leading role of responsible couple to our team, which was much appreciated, and they also served the Teams at a higher level, as treasurer couple on the Regional Team.

Following Frank’s death, the huge crowd who paid their respects at his house and at the funeral Mass is an indication of the high regard in which he was widely held. And the Teams movement generally was very well represented.

At his Requiem Mass, Monsignor John Dolan represented Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, and Bishop James Moriarty, former Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, Monsignor Dan O’Connor, and Father Peter Murphy, Executive Secretary to the Council for Marriage and the Family, of the Irish Episcopal Conference, were also present. Father Kieran McDermott of Dundrum parish, who gave the homily, spoke very highly of Frank and Gemma as a couple and their hospitality to him over the years. Frank’s son Tom, in his eulogy, spoke of the importance of the Team Movement to him. And the symbols of Frank’s life presented at the beginning of Mass visually reminded all, of his persona: his wedding photograph, his racing binoculars, a copy of Strumpet City, his Scouting Ireland medal, a brochure for St Vincent de Paul, an Irish Film Institute programme, and his tweed hat.

Over the years all our Team members benefitted a lot from his membership and friendship. He is sadly missed by us all. May God give Gemma the strength to cope with her great loss. May Frank rest in peace.

---

## CALL TO HOLINESS

Many of us might generally have seen holiness as applying to clergy and religious e.g. His Holiness the Pope. We might also have been averse to being called 'holy' as it might attract cynical remarks such as – a 'Holy Joe' or 'Holy Jane'! The Church's attitude to holiness, however, has changed without many of us fully noticing it. The Second Vatican Council introduced the notion of the 'Universal Call to Holiness'. No longer is this call limited to clergy and religious, if it ever was, but the call is made by God to all lay people as well. But the old attitudes to holiness still persist. This has been acknowledged even by Pope Francis who recently stated that a key challenge currently facing the Church is "giving holiness a good name!".

Our thoughts on holiness were sparked by the presentation given by Pat and Carmel Cunneen at the Responsible Couples' Weekend in Knock. They dealt with holiness in the context of the Endeavours. This was followed by stimulating discussions afterwards in discussion groups. Concern was expressed in our group with the impact on Teams of a focus on holiness. Would this focus be off-putting for some Team members, and/or in attracting new members? However, could Teams instead have a particular contribution to make, in line with the desire of Pope Francis, to give holiness a good name?

What is holiness? Fr James Martin SJ in his book *My Life with Saints* (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition) has described the universal call to holiness "as an invitation to be ourselves. It is also an invitation to remember the sacramentality of everyday life and to realise the great goal that God has set for us: sanctity. ...The call to sanctity is an invitation to friendship with God. It is a call that transformed the lives of the saints into gifts of the One who loved them into being. The invitation to holiness is a lifelong call to draw closer to God, who wants nothing more than to encounter us as the people we are and the saints we are meant to be."

Our founder, Fr Henri Caffarel, stated in 1948, well before the Vatican Council, that Conjugal Spirituality is the "path to holiness" for married couples. He went on to say "And that is what changes someone's life: the day they discover that God loves them. ....They need to discover that they are loved, that they are loved with a love that can never be discouraged".

We are privileged to discover that love continually in Teams through the practice of our endeavours. The 'sit down' is, of course, the endeavour that is special to married couples, but it can be the most difficult to practice. This may be due to the fact that it requires the two of us. We may have difficulty in finding a suitable time, in both of us being in the right mood, not being too tired and so on. But we must try to remember that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them".

Fr Caffarel acknowledged that "I realised that talking about God is so difficult! We must do more, we must do it better, we must invite people to experience God." Many of us in Teams may also, like Fr Caffarel, find it difficult to talk about God. However, we are fortunate that Pope Francis has recently issued an Apostolic Exhortation – *GAUDETE ET EXULTATE (GEE)– Rejoice and be Glad – on the call to holiness in today's world* that may greatly ease that difficulty. Pope Francis says in Para. 2 of GEE that "My modest goal is to re-propose the call to holiness in a practical way for our own time, with all its risks, challenges and opportunities." The following are a few quotations from GEE that we have found particularly helpful.

### Practical Holiness

Our image of holiness can be of a monastic kind involving long periods of solitary prayer which is not practical for lay people in their everyday lives. Pope Francis, however, explains how we can respond to the call to holiness in our everyday lives, including in our married lives. "We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves..... Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. (Para 14). ...In many holy marriages too, each spouse becomes a means used by Christ for the sanctification of the other.

---

Living or working alongside others is surely a path of spiritual growth. St John of the Cross told one of his followers: You are living with others in order to be fashioned and tried.” (Para 141)

### **Moderation**

Pope Francis also emphasises the need for moderation to avoid our faith becoming burdensome and, perhaps, devoid of joy. “St Thomas Aquinas reminded us that the precepts added to the Gospel by the Church should be imposed with moderation ‘lest the conduct of the faithful become burdensome’, for then our religion would become a form of servitude.” (Para 59).

### **Countering consumerist individualism**

If over zealotry in our practice of religion may lack joy, this can also result from its opposite, consumerism. Pope Francis reminds us that “Consumerism only bloats the heart. It can offer occasional and passing pleasures, but not joy. When we “focus primarily on our own needs, we condemn ourselves to a joyless existence” (Para 128). He goes on to say that “Contrary to the growing consumerist individualism that tends to isolate us in a quest for well being apart from others, our path to holiness can only make us identify all the more with Jesus’ prayer ‘that all may be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you. (Jn 17:21).’” (Para.146).

### **Discernment**

Our greatest means for discernment in Teams are the endeavours – sit-down, prayer, listening to the word of God, rule of life, annual retreat, and support from our Team. For Pope Francis, “discernment is not about discovering what more we can get out of this life, but about recognising how we can better accomplish the mission entrusted to us at our baptism.”.

*GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE (GEE)– Rejoice and be Glad – on the call to holiness in today’s world* is a great aid to discernment and to finding the path to holiness in today’s world. We would urge you as a couple or Team to study it. A brief guide to it has also been recently published – “Happy to be Holy” by Fr. Alan Hilliard.

### **Gerry and Grace Mangan**



Team 32, Dublin celebrated the 80th Anniversary of First Team Meeting on 26th February in the afternoon with mass as a prayer on the theme of marriage and thanksgiving for teams. Photo taken in the garden after lunch.

---

## Father Caffarel – A Master of Prayer and Spiritual Counsellor

For Father Caffarel, prayer had the first place in his life because Christ had that place too. Prayer was a vital necessity for him. In 1978, on a Radioscope broadcast he confided: *“If my priesthood had some efficiency, I know that I owe it to the practice of prayer.”*

From the beginning of his apostolate with couples in 1939, until the end of his life, this man of faith prayed for long hours every day. A witness describes how he gave himself to prayer: *“Sitting on his little prayer bench, his body and head straight, his eyes most often closed, hands widely open on his knees, perfectly immobile, ... fully present to God present in his most innermost self. Nothing mattered anymore..... standing before his Lord and God, like a sheet unfolded in the sun, an image he was fond of using about prayer.....a peace, a stability, a force emanated from him.”* He thus entered into the intimacy of Christ, and he wanted to share with others, this encounter which gave him the joy of living.

In 1973, Father Caffarel when speaking to Sector Couples said: *“I cannot not wish for others this encounter with the living Christ, this discovery that God is love.”* He was surprised that this was ignored by so many Christians and couples, all called to holiness. He defined prayer as: *“A deep orientation of the soul, an exchange beyond words.....an attention, a presence or openness ?? to God of everything, the being, the body and the soul, all our faculties awakened.”*

He pointed to five characteristics necessary to prayer:

***“Awareness of God’s presence, an Encounter with Christ, a Relationship of Love, an Experience of the Heart and an Ecclesial Act.”***

### **Let us listen to Father Caffarel’s words on these characteristics.**

**Awareness of God’s presence:** A living being, the Great Living Being, is there waiting there for you. This is where we expose ourselves to God’s gaze by talking to him in silence, allowing us to be purified and transformed by his love. There is always something going on when we pray, even if we feel nothing. He found the expression “to pray” ambiguous. He suggested it was more accurate to say that **we give ourselves to prayer**, since we are going to God for God, as we are. We do almost nothing, just be there, offering ourselves to the mercy of God, wanting to be attentive to his presence, despite distractions and drought.

**A personal encounter with Christ who** alone makes us free and can fill our thirst for the Absolute. Recollection, prayer and silence are the only means to reach the finality of all prayer that is union with God, the encounter with Christ. At prayer, as in any meeting, each of the two people is active. Christ mysteriously introduces us to his thoughts, feelings and will and transforms us. We on the other hand, must strive to listen, understand and respond. Every Christian who loves Christ should therefore give himself/herself to prayer every day.

**A Love Relationship with God:** For Father Caffarel, prayer was a personal relationship with God with the attention of heart, not a search for interiority at all costs. He invites us to throw a simple look of love to Christ who loves us. It is not complicated and difficult...but like any relationship of love from person to person, prayer is a simple and complex reality. We sit in silence, we speak to Christ, we love Him, we invoke the Spirit, and so let Him live and act always more in us.

**An Experience of the Heart:** Through prayer, we return to the heart and we recognise the source of love that makes it beat....The more we reach into the depth of our heart, the closer God is to our conscience....Prayer is not an individualistic act that cuts us off from the world....it is not just contemplating the face of Christ, but leads to commitment and closeness to those who suffer. *“I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”* (Mt: 25,40). Prayer changes our gaze by giving us the opportunity to see the world and the Church with the eyes of Christ.

---

**An Ecclesial Act:** Prayer is not a solitary act, but an ecclesial act.... In prayer, we join the huge crowd of our brothers and sisters who are in heaven, on earth, in purgatory, and who constitute the Church in her beautiful mystery of the Communion of Saints.

**John and Elaine Cogavin**

### **Prayer Intentions**

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

**Garret Cooney**, brother of Gemma Rowley, Dublin

**Pat Howard**, brother of John, Navan

**Máiread McGuire**, sister of John Cogavin, Dublin

**Jacqueline McMahon**, widow of Heber, members of first Team of Our Lady in Ireland

**Tony Clayton**, brother of Joe, Dublin

**Michael McGovern**, husband of Betty, Mullingar

**Maureen Fitzgerald**, sister of Gerry Mangan, Dublin

**Kevin Crowley**, husband of Aoife, Dublin

**Brian Baragh**, England, brother-in-law to Ann and Billy Hyland, Galway

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

**Eddie Lloyd**, Galway

---



## Interviews – Teams Couples

The Dublin Sector Team would like to present a series of interviews with couples belonging to Teams worldwide, as a means of outreach, exhortation and enrichment.

We trust that hearing these stories will enhance our feeling of belonging to a Movement that really has an international scope!

For this issue we have interviewed Pablo and Maria Cantero Guisandez.

Questions for Pablo and Maria.

### **How did you meet Teams?**

Maria and I knew each other for 14 months when we got married so we asked our parish priest for support to help us cope with the new responsibilities and grow our love and commitment to one another. At the same time we were looking forward to having a group of other couples where we could share and learn from them. Teams seems to really do the trick for us with a mix of theory (study topic) and life principles (endeavours).

### **How long have you been in Teams?**

10 years

### **How did you find a team after moving from Ireland to Slovakia?**

When we decided to move from Ireland to Slovakia with two children and a third on the way we had it clear that things would be hard enough with all the logistics, so we clearly needed to put enough focus on the couple. This proved to be the right move, as challenging time came and the very survival of our marriage was at stake. Well in advance of moving we contacted the responsible couple for Slovakia and they informed us that there was no Equipe around our area, so we decided to set up our own equipe, which meant we had to pilot them... things went pretty well and after 5 years there are 4 Teams in our town and the interest seems to be growing among young married couples in their 20s and 30s.

### **How is a meeting structured? How do you choose your study topic?**

We start with a long prayer with reading of the scripture, a few reflections from the priest on the same and then each couple share their thoughts on the scripture, thanksgiving prayer and followed by an intercessional prayer. Then we go for the pooling of the endeavours and our month with regards to God and finally we discuss the study topic and agree a place for our next meeting. We always end our meeting with the Magnificat.

Our meetings take 3 hours. For us arriving exactly on time is crucial and ending on time too since we all have babysitting arrangements. Among our 5 couples we have 16 children. 4 couples have a baby less than a year old and the fifth couple has a one year old so all in all hectic times but great support to one another.

After arriving to Slovakia we stopped deciding the study topic, now it is the international one chosen by Teams. This is good in that it helps us be in communion with couples in other countries knowing we are all looking at the same theme.

### **Can you tell us about your experience in Teams? What do you think is unique in Teams? What are your struggles? Is Teams helping your faith journey as individuals and couples? How has being part of Teams changed your married life?**

Teams has been a great support through the easy and the hard times in our marriage. We received every month a boost of energy from other couples who are struggling too but want God to be a central part in their lives.... They really are an inspiration to us and I have to believe that at points we can be an inspiration to them too. Equipes is challenging, but you get what you put in, so the more you invest into your marriage, the better chances that things go well.

---

At the same time for couple with children investing in their marriage is a great testimony for our children so they understand how the right order of values should be God, spouse, children and work... this seems basic but really has changed our lives.

We struggle with running a busy life (we are expecting our 4th baby for mid-March) while coping with work, serious health issues and our children so the struggle is to make sure that God is not an extra commitment but the way that we get on with the other commitments.

Teams has really shaken our faith and spiritual lives. At times it is challenging and often we don't feel like having a sit down, reading the study topic or even going to the monthly meeting, but nearly every time once we get into it we realise how valuable and helpful it is.

Being part of Teams when we had a 1 year old baby and were expecting the second one meant starting to look at our marriage at a time where the focus was to keep our heads out of the water. At that time even considering the babysitting arrangement of three hours without our baby daughter seemed too much... we soon realised that our baby was well taken care of, the moneys were well-invested and our marriage was doing better. Teams has helped us understand that neither children nor work should be first in our lives but rather God and then our spouse... and we now see how our children are jealous about this but at the same time they couldn't be happier when they see that we prioritise our spouse ahead of them.

### **How does being part of Teams have an impact on your monthly lives? What do you do between meetings?**

We live relatively closely with the other couples within our team (4 couples within walking distance and the other under 10 minutes by car) so we try to meet every other month for a social gathering (men on day and women another day) plus we do our Annual retreat all together with other teams in Slovakia and we take all 5 families on an extended weekend to a country house so the children play together and we have some quality time getting to know better each other. Other than that, we have for the last few years an arrangement within the teams where we pair two couples. This means that they would babysit our children this Thursday while we babysit theirs next Thursday, which means every couple gets to have a date every other week. It is not only free but also creates a great bond between the other couples and our children. There is a strong sense of belonging and caring for each other. Not having any of our families close, Teams have become our family here in Trnava.

### **How does your base team connect to the sector/regional team?**

Once a year sector couple gets to attend one of our meetings. The regional team is part of our team; we get connection with other teams at the annual retreat, on December 8th, whenever . At the same time for couple with children investing in their marriage is a great testimony for our children so they understand how the right order of values should be God, spouse, children and work... this seems basic but really has changed our lives.

We struggle with running a busy life (we are expecting our 4th baby for mid-March) while coping with work, serious health issues and our children so the struggle is to make sure that God is not an extra commitment but the way that we get on with the other commitments.

Teams has really shaken our faith and spiritual lives. At times it is challenging and often we don't feel like having a sit down, reading the study topic or even going to the monthly meeting, but nearly every time once we get into it we realise how valuable and helpful it is.

Being part of Teams when we had a 1 year old baby and were expecting the second one meant starting to look at our marriage at a time where the focus was to keep our heads out of the water. At that time even considering the babysitting arrangement of three hours without our baby daughter seemed too much... we soon realised that our baby was well taken care of, the moneys were well-invested and our marriage was doing better. Teams has helped us understand that neither children nor work should be first in our lives but rather God and then our spouse... and we now see how our children are jealous about this but at the same time they couldn't be happier when they see that we prioritise our spouse ahead of them.

---

**How does being part of Teams have an impact on your monthly lives? What do you do between meetings?**

We live relatively closely with the other couples within our team (4 couples within walking distance and the other under 10 minutes by car) so we try to meet every other month for a social gathering (men on day and women another day) plus we do our Annual retreat all together with other teams in Slovakia and we take all 5 families on an extended weekend to a country house so the children play together and we have some quality time getting to know better each other. Other than that, we have for the last few years an arrangement within the teams where we pair two couples. This means that they would babysit our children this Thursday while we babysit theirs next Thursday, which means every couple gets to have a date every other week. It is not only free but also creates a great bond between the other couples and our children. There is a strong sense of belonging and caring for each other. Not having any of our families close, Teams have become our family here in Trnava.

**How does your base team connect to the sector/regional team?**

Once a year sector couple gets to attend one of our meetings. The regional team is part of our team; we get connection with other teams at the annual retreat, on December 8th, whenever there is a new Team and they sign the Chart we all try to make that day, plus we have a picnic day for all teams in the summer.

**Which kind of activities are organized at sector level during the year? Any interesting idea to share?**

The retreat is for all teams together so we have babysitting included with a full program for the children; other than that we take care of the mass at our local parish also once a year and get involved in some other activities like for example cleaning of our church a few times a year and so on. We have a whatsapp group for men and another for women so we are connected and ask for help from each other, as well as go out a few times a year to have a chat. There is also a common whatsapp for everyone including the priest which is great to share about various admin things and keep in touch.

**How is Teams in Slovakia? How are families with children supported to participate in Teams?**

Teams over here is made up mainly by couples in their 20's and 30's who want to have some structure and help cope through early stages of marriage. The whole movement is only a few years old. This means that Teams is very much caring for young families with children providing babysitting opportunities, retreat topics around those lines and focus on the couple during those hectic times where children tend to take all the attention.

**How are new teams formed in Slovakia?**

Normally it happens through word of mouth and support from local priests, where they gather interest from couples in getting involved in some sort of program. Also, the sign of the Chart is something that is done publicly during a regular mass, which means that all parishioners get to have a testimony from Teams and understand a bit about it.

**What is the main difference with your Irish experience?**

Teams in Ireland was very diverse, with a wide range of ages and nationalities, a strong sense of welcoming to people from other places and newcomers and a large movement with many teams and experience.

Teams in Slovakia has a strong support for young families and our experience is that people are more challenging in that they push each other to go further in terms of faith (most couples go to mass with their children several times each week) Christian festivals, camps during the summer, spiritual retreats, we can see the hunger for more and people investing in their couples and families to a point where we couldn't see before. It seemed like in Ireland people were more content with their current situation.

.....  
Pablo and Maria's fourth child, Teresa, was born on 24th March.

**Ilaria and Pierpaulo Dondio**

---

## Thirty Years a – Growing: Team 25

We devoted some time at our last meeting to reflect on 30 years in Teams.

We started out with 5 couples, 3 have remained and we have welcomed and enjoyed the company and richness of two other couples who joined us along the way.

Why did we join? Promptings of the Holy Spirit, some void in our life, a chance to do something together as a couple, are probably valid reasons. We quickly settled into the piloting, the meal schedule, the Endeavours, the format of the meeting. We learnt to accept others as they are, and in that journey also accepted ourselves.

### Early Days

Sure in the early days the endeavours were routinely tick–boxed. We were typical of many couples in their early team stages. Conjugal prayer and the ‘sit down’ presented challenges as we gradually shook off our ‘married singles’ way of life. Reading Scripture was new and built a framework for sharing our spiritual journey. For many of us this was a new experience. We were faithful to lighting our Team candle reminding us that Christ was the centre of our meeting and our lives. We shared the role of responsible couple. Our chaplains were very conscious that this was a movement for married couples and that the R.C. led the meeting. We recognised the beauty and mystery of the two sacraments, priesthood and marriage, sharing their respective faith journey. The study topics were *de rigueur* produced by the movement, Équipes Notre Dame. They were straightforward annual books covering topics ranging from spirituality to sexuality. The format of attached questions required group sharing and discussion which built shared values, respect and community. In 30 years we have split our reading/study topics to embrace encyclicals and other marriage related books.

### Community

It took many years for us to realise that we were part of a large community expanding fast around the world. Our community built on sector, region, super-region was moulded by the Charter and pedagogy developed by our founder Fr. Caffarel. We met our other couples from our sector and region at our 8<sup>th</sup> December Mass, annual retreat or Responsible Couples’ Weekend. We were nourished also by the newsletter. Over the years we began to understand and marvel at the mystique of the endeavours. We knew Fr. Caffarel had an encounter in 1939 with some young married couples seeking to develop their spirituality. His response, in listening to their pleas was ‘Let us journey together’. That influence of the Holy Spirit of journeying led to the charism of Teams being honed and led to the Charter in 1947. Today our members exceed 150,000 in c 90 countries worldwide. Many of us in the Team 25 have met with delegates from all over the world at the ‘Gatherings’ held every six years.

### Fruits

We are always ready to share the fruits of our spirituality, our journey in Teams. At an information evening recruiting new members or chatting to friends and colleagues. Apostolic work is a clear fruit of Teams spirituality. We have seen these fruits in many ways over the years. We have seen the spirit of openness, trust, hospitality, brother/sisterhood to name but a few flourish. Our patience and love for one another has endured. Our families/children have seen and learnt from our fidelity to one another. We are grateful and give thanks for those 30 years.

The members of Team 25

---

## Dublin Sector Retreat

The Retreat for the Dublin Sector was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March at The Avila Centre, Donnybrook. The weather was slightly overcast but we were able to take some walks in the beautiful surroundings.

The retreat giver was Fr. Declan Hurley, Administrator in Navan. He is currently Chaplain to Team 38.

The theme of the retreat was from the prophet Isaiah 'Do not be afraid'. The words "why are we afraid" and "what are we afraid of" were teased out and they can be intertwined with worries about illness, loss of partner, the future etc. Pope John Paul II wrote in 1978 'We can be afraid to articulate our faith in the present culture'. Many worries upset us about our children who no longer practise and some have developed secular ideas of selfishness. 'What can we get from other people to ensure our happiness?'

A retreat is a time to step back and relate to God. He recommended periods of silence so as to dip into our inner selves. At one of the talks he read a passage from the Book of Kings 19:3-5 about the prophet Elijah who was afraid and depressed until an angel touched him and said 'Get up and eat'. At the command of God he went up a mountain and sheltered in a cave. Fr. Declan spoke of the spirituality of the Teams and how we can come to a meeting weighed down and in that confidential place – safe place – a cave, maybe some member will say something that helps and they can be an angel for us.

He concluded by saying we should acknowledge fear. Don't allow it to overwhelm and find nourishment in the Lord and each other.

An aside: the Avila Centre is run by the Carmelites who regard Elijah as their founder many years ago on Mount Carmel.

Patricia O'Connell, Team 25



Members of the new Dublin Sector Team being introduced after December mass at Avila centre

---

## **Around the Region**

### **Dublin**

Our Teams mass for the Feast of The Immaculate Conception was celebrated on Friday 7th December at Avila, Donnybrook. A large number attended (approximately 72) and mass was celebrated by Fr. Peter Sexton. At the beginning of mass David Orr spoke in a lovely tribute to the late John Blayney. Bernadette and some family members were present. Prayers of the faithful and a Communion reflection were well received. Music was provided by Pat and Maureen Seery and everybody joined in the singing. After mass refreshments were served in the dining hall, thanks to all who brought the lovely food. Members of the new Sector Team were present and introduced themselves to the gathering. There was a lovely atmosphere of companionship between older and newer team members. The evening concluded at about 10.30.

The Dublin Sector annual retreat was held in Avila Centre on 2nd March. 54 people attended, representing 13 of 18 teams in the sector. A number of people who were not Team members, attended. The retreat was directed by Fr. Declan Hurley and the theme was “Be not afraid”. We were invited to reflect on what a Retreat is, to step back and reflect on relationships, to be quiet and listen. We were also invited to reflect on our own fears and to hand them over to the Lord. In the afternoon we had time for an hour of Eucharistic Adoration in the chapel and also the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We finished up with a beautiful mass concelebrated by Fr. Declan and Fr. Richard Sheehy, our sector chaplain. Jacinta provided the music and everybody joined in the singing.

### **Brian and Una Moore**

### **Mixed Teams Meeting - May 2019**

Dear Friends,

One of the goals for our term of service as a Sector Team, is to “strengthen the links between individual Teams and the wider Movement.” Some years ago now, there was a practice in the Sector, of having a “Mixed Teams Meeting” during the month of May where Teams exchange members for one meeting. We feel now is a particularly appropriate time to revive this practice, in the light of our theme for the year (from the Orientation document) **“Do not be afraid, let’s go”**.

In this exchange, Team members can get together with others whom they don’t often meet; it’s an opportunity to share our riches and to build unity. It will also be an opportunity to offer hospitality to those who join our table or to receive hospitality from those who invite us to theirs. It may even require courage and definitely a bit of juggling!

We hope to give everyone the opportunity to either invite or be invited. Shortly, we will pair off all the Teams in the Sector. We will let your RC know your pairing and hope you can make your own arrangements after that! We suggest you cross over for the May meeting. As we are new to this event, we are sure we will have lots to learn and look forward to your feedback in due course!

Once again, do not be afraid, lets go!

### **Rosemarie and Brendan Gavin**

#### **Teams summer outing, preliminary notice**

Date: Sunday 1st September

Place: Ardgillan Castle

Time: around 12.30

Website: [www.ardgillan castle.ie](http://www.ardgillan castle.ie)

**Ilaria Furlan** [ilariafurlan74@gmail.com](mailto:ilariafurlan74@gmail.com)

---

## **Belfast**

We had a very enjoyable evening at our December 8th Mass celebration which actually took place on the evening of December 7th in St Gerard's Parochial House, Belfast. Some members from all three Teams were present. Fr Brendan McConvery CSsR (current editor of the Redemptorist magazine: Reality) celebrated the Mass, which was very meaningful for all of us as we sat around the wooden table. Afterwards we had plenty to eat and drink, since everyone had brought something along. We were able to chat with members of other Teams whom we had not seen since our last get together. Some members of Teams are having problems with their health but are soldiering on.

We are very conscious of the value and loyalty of our three Teams Chaplains: Fr Ephrem Blake C.P., Fr. Brendan Beagon and Fr Gerry Cassidy CSsR.

We ask your prayers for Michael Clenaghan's brother Dominic, who died recently.

On a personal note we would like to say a big thank you to all the people in Teams who prayed for the recovery of our son Diarmuid, who is now well and back to work. Last year he was unable to attend his own wedding reception - this year he and his wife Nickie were able to celebrate their first wedding anniversary with about 80 guests!

Last of all we thank Deirdre and Declan Kennedy for all the work they have done for Teams for the last couple of years.

We wish you all a very happy and holy Easter.

## **Moyra and Brendan Bunting**

## **Mullingar**

Our sympathy to Betty McGovern and family on the death of Michael. Michael and Betty have been dedicated members of Team 3 and served on the Regional Team as Newsletter Editors for many years. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam uasal.

The Mullingar Sector Annual Retreat will take place in the La Verna Centre, Ballinderry Mullingar on Sunday the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019, and will be facilitated by Fr Thaddeus Doyle; further details will be available on the website and in the next Newsletter.

We remember in our prayers Team members who are ill and recovering from illness.

We include in those prayers all those we have loved and lost.

## **Team 6**

---

## Galway

The annual Teams retreat took place in Croí Nua, Galway on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April. This was organized by Team B. Father Ciary Quirke SJ very generously came from Dublin to act as facilitator. Ciary had been a Team priest for Galway some time ago and has happily kept up his connection with us since leaving Galway. On our retreat under the guidance of Ciary the Team couples shared on the good moments in their marriages, when we were close to each other and shared on how we felt at these times. Then in the afternoon the Teams shared on the challenging times in our marriages when difficulties arose and how we dealt with these. We really appreciate Ciary's sensitivity and wisdom in the way he helped us be aware of the healing graces of our sacrament of marriage.

Galway has been chosen as the venue for the Responsible Couples' Weekend on **5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019**. The planning of this event is underway at present. We would ask Team couples to note the date.

Congratulations to Peter and Anne Costello on the birth of their grandchild Cian to their daughter Jean and Rob. Also to Anne and Jack Hutchinson on the birth of their grandchild Peter to their daughter Ruth and Dan. Prayers are asked for Brian Baragh, Chesterfield, England who died on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019. He was the brother in law of Ann and Billy Hyland. May he Rest in Peace.

Prayers are requested for our popular Team member Eddie Lloyd who is ill in hospital.

### **Anne and Jack Hutchinson**

We remember with affection, Michael McGovern who died recently. Our paths crossed while he and Betty were producing the Newsletter. We enjoyed their company and hospitality on many occasions. May he rest in peace.

Paddy and Jacinta Quigley



Group taken at Formation Weekend, Wimbledon

Newsletter editors:

Paddy and Jacinta Quigley

[jacintapaddy@eircom.net](mailto:jacintapaddy@eircom.net)

---