

**TEAMS OF OUR LADY  
INTERNATIONAL LEADING TEAM (ERI)**

*May 1993*

LETTER TO COUPLES WHO ASSUME  
RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MOVEMENT

**DOCUMENT**

***“POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY  
IN THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY”***

Dear Friends,

You have been called to be responsables in the Movement. This service is different from other civilian or professional commitments. It is a call that is addressed to the couple, a responsibility on the spiritual level, and a commitment in the Church.

This document which we are sending you is a guide and a help for reflection, and to understand better all the dimensions of your service.

It is the fruit of reflection by the ERI and the ERI/SR College. It was written with the objective of constructing indispensable unity so that our Movement can assume its mission to couples and teams as a universal community of the Church.

We recommend it to you very strongly. Take time to read it very carefully, to absorb it, to work on it with the team that accompanies you. It is also an excellent tool for your meetings and formation sessions.

**This document is for couples with responsibility in the movement, starting with the sector couple (*regional couple, super-region etc.*). It is one of the basic documents of the movement and it is important that all couples who accept responsibility know it well and keep it close at hand.**

We thank you for the attention that you will give to it. We hope that it will help you to discover the spirit and the richness of the service to which you have been called and which is a gift of the Lord, to you, the couple.

We are united with you in this journey of service which we each experience in our own way.

**The International Leading Team**

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## PREAMBLE

WE LIVE IN A CENTURY which is characterised by political crises, by cultural and ideological upsets, and by changes which overturn the status-quo, and whose consequences cannot always be foreseen. While we are becoming aware of problems on a world-wide scale, we are also developing more and more individualistic attitudes.

Facing so much uncertainty, many of our contemporaries feel the need to be reassured, to be comforted, to be taken in hand. The State must do everything answer all our needs. The family and the school must train us in certain behaviours, instead of developing our personal maturity. The Church must above all proclaim truth, rather than having a care for the formation of our consciences . . .

In such a context, what can a movement such as the Teams of Our Lady contribute? It offers these qualities

It is a **movement of spirituality**. Its objective is to help its members to deepen their married spirituality. It wishes to enable them to find their own path towards holiness, and offers them a path of conversion within a small community of the Church.

It is a **movement of formation**. It wants us to be open to research and sharing, paying attention to being united on the fundamental values of the Gospels. These values can lead us to different options, when experienced in different cultures.

It is an **international movement**. With an interest in common purpose, it proposes common lines of direction and reflection to experience the methods and spirits of the Charter, to deepen the charism of the Movement in a dynamic and faithful manner, and to discover its specific contribution to the construction of the Kingdom of God in the world today.

To fulfil this triple mission and taking into account that a movement such as ours cannot quantify the results in the way that a movement concerned with action could, how can the positions of responsibility in the Teams of Our Lady be understood?

This document tries to bring an answer to this question by successively developing:

#### 1. The spirit of responsibility

Very often in the world, a position of responsibility is synonymous with strength or power. For us as Christians, Christ, when He washed the feet of His disciples, showed us another way of exercising our positions of responsibility — that of **being at the service of our brothers and sisters**. It is this kind of

responsibility that we are concerned with in Teams — one that calls us to love more deeply. In the Teams of Our Lady, all positions of responsibility are ones of service.

## 2. The levels of responsibility within the Movement

These levels correspond with geographical area, varying from the sector to the whole world. At each of these levels there are three principle missions: mission towards the teams, towards the Movement, and towards the Church and the world.

We hope that this document will help you in your mission when you hold positions of responsibility in Teams of Our Lady. Do not hesitate to read it, re-read it, study it and meditate on it.



## Chapter One

### THE SPIRIT OF RESPONSIBILITY

#### 1.1 A CALL

*“For the Kingdom of heaven is like a householder who went out early in the morning to hire labourers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the labourers for a denarius a day he sent them into his vineyard.”*

*(Mt 20, 1-2) The gospel parable sets before our eyes the Lord’s vast vineyard and the multitude of persons, both women and men, who are called and sent forth by him to labour in it. The vineyard is the whole world (Mt 13,38) which is to be transformed according to the plan of God in view of the final coming of the Kingdom of God.”*

(Christifideles laici, 1)

##### (a) A call from the Lord

It is not in their own name that those in positions of responsibility in the Movement call us to serve others. We are called by the Lord, through them. It is not because we deserve it, but because the Lord wishes it so.

When one calls someone, one uses his or her name, and turns one’s eyes towards them. This call to take a position of responsibility is, above all things, a loving look from God upon us as a couple, in spite of our weaknesses, our limits and even our sins. The contemplative look, this look of love, is followed by a personal question that the Lord asks us calling us by name. If we feel this experience within the depths of our hearts when we are asked to assume a position of responsibility, the quality of our acceptance is transformed.

Just as the call is personal, and not addressed to a group, so the responsibility of the couple is total and personal, before the Lord, and before the sections of the Movement which have made the choice of this couple.

##### (b) A call to a greater love

We can be called to many things: to obey, to serve, to follow . . . All this is included in the call, but what is most important is the call to love “more.” We are called to have greater love for the Lord, for the brethren, for the Church. The Lord asked Peter three times: “Peter, do you love me? Do you love me more than the others do?” To Peter’s affirmative, the only condition was: “Guide my sheep.” The first question that the Lord asks us, before giving us responsibility, is a question on love.

##### (c) A call to conversion

The responsibility that the Lord asks of us must be the opportunity for us to renew ourselves in the Spirit. It is in praising and in thanksgiving, but also in asking and forgiving, that the Spirit renews us. He invites us to know ourselves honestly, to develop and strengthen the capacities which enable us to go towards one another, to listen to others and to learn from them, to question ourselves in His Word, to start anew and to allow the source which is within us to well up without fear.

#### 1.2 AN ANSWER

*“to act in fidelity to God’s will requires a capability for acting and the developing of that capability. We can rest assured that this is possible through the free and responsible collaboration of each of us with the grace of the Lord which is never lacking. St. Leo the Great says: ‘The one who confers the dignity will give the strength.’”*

(Christifideles laici 58)

##### (a) A grateful answer

It is said that we can only share with others what we have experienced personally. The conviction of the messenger comes from the certainty of his personal meeting with the sender. This certitude is the basis of all enthusiasm, of all courage, of all prophetic attitudes.

Gratitude for this unmerited love, and the joy of having tasted the goodness of God, gives unfailing strength to the couple who accept positions of responsibility, because they are supported by the love of God, who we are sure will never let us down.

**(b) Answering with abandon**

We are not masters of the position of responsibility which has been given to us, because in that case it would depend entirely on our own good will.

It is with the attitude of Mary that we must abandon ourselves to the movement of the Spirit, and let ourselves be led by Him. It is with a spirit of poverty that we must welcome responsibility, in an act of faith and confidence in the Word of Jesus: "Go, I am with you."

We are never ready for a position of responsibility and the service which is the outcome of it. However, we must believe that through our persevering work the Lord, **looking on us with love** as he calls us, will awaken and increase in us the "gifts" which he has given us to share. It is necessary to believe that these "gifts" — **each couple has their own** — will be those that are necessary for the moment and the level of responsibility which is ours.

**(c) Answering with selflessness**

The act of accepting the service already involves a spirit of renouncement, but we need to go further than that. "The slave is not greater than the Master" and our Master gave his life for us.

Being ready to "die a little for others", to give them our life, means not only giving our work, and our 'talents', and our time, but also means giving ourselves freely and joyfully, sharing with no reservations.

**1.3 THE TWO MAIN OBJECTIVES OF POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY****(a) Animation (to lead and encourage)**

To animate we must be perceptive and loving. We must recognise, identify and call upon what is best in each person, in each couple, in each team, sector, region or Super-region.

Our vocation as couples is to bear fruit. Fruitfulness is not only a biological capacity. We will be fruitful if we accept others, if we do not make definite judgements, if we understand, if we excuse, if we show appreciation, if we admire — in short, if we "give life".

To animate (lead) we must seek in prayer the Will of God for the Movement. We must try to discern the changes of the spiritual needs of the couples, so that we may join the internal thrust of the Movement to renew itself, having a prophetic vision of the future of the Movement.

To animate (lead) we must have concern for formation of couples and Teams at the level for which we have responsibility, especially the formation of future leaders of the Movement.

To animate (lead) we must be attentive to the spread of the Movement, and the spread of the values which we have discovered through the movement and which "give us life."

**(b) Unity**

The first objective of 'giving life' is inseparable from the second, which is "unity of all". Our Movement is now present on the five continents. While it is desirable that there are various ways of expression in different areas, we need to maintain a unity in faithfulness to the Charter and the founding charism of the Movement.

Turned towards the Lord in prayer (because it is the Lord, not us, who creates the unity among us) we ask for cohesiveness. We also ask for discernment which will help us to have a view of the whole of the sector, region, Super-region, Movement, so that we do not get lost in the details, or focus too much on difficulties, but on the contrary, centre ourselves on the signs of the Spirit which trace out our path.

**1.4 THE DEEP ATTITUDES OF RESPONSIBILITY**

*"The ministries which exist and are at work at this time in the Church are all — even in their variety of forms — a participation in Jesus Christ's own ministry as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11), the humble servant who gives himself without reserve for the salvation of all (Mk 10:45)*

(Christifideles laici 21)

**(a) It is a service that is fulfilled with detachment**

We are not the owners of our Teams. The Lord is the only pastor, the only owner, the only guide. Neither have we to guard jealously "our" Teams. We are co-responsible and we are pleased with all the good that others can bring them.

A position of responsibility is a temporary service. We are not irreplaceable, nor are we the only guardians of orthodoxy, the only interpreters of the charism. On the contrary, other couples who share other talents will continue the work and contribute to the enrichment of the Teams of Our Lady. Once our service is finished, we will place the Teams in the hands of the Lord and new "servants".

**(b) It is a service that is asked of the couple**

It is the sacrament of our marriage which is the source of our fruitfulness in service, and it is above all as a couple that we are a sign for others. In this service we share together our talents and our complementary approaches, in conjugal dialogue, in reflection together, and in all aspects of our relationships as a couple.

Conjugal prayer is the special place where the Lord unites the couple and enlightens them on the decisions to be taken within family life and in professional life which have an effect on their position of responsibility within the Movement.

**(c) It is a service that is exercised in a Team**

In the Teams, responsibility is not exercised in a personal and authoritative manner. The couple in a position of responsibility must have a real team to help them, not only to share the work but above all to discern together, with the help of the Spirit, the true spiritual needs of the Teams for which they are responsible, to seek together the good of the couples and the Will of God for the Movement (this method of working which is called "collegiality", will be developed in paragraph 1.5.).

It is necessary for the couple in the position of responsibility to animate this team with conviction and enthusiasm, developing unity of purpose, stimulating the gifts and talents of each one, and encouraging sharing among all.

**(d) It is a service within the Movement**

Although the service is exercised in the team, it is the couple in the position of responsibility who assume direct responsibility in the eyes of the Movement. At their level, the couple is the guarantee of the identity of the Movement.

This assumes that they are open to the needs of the couples and Team for which they take responsibility, and that they act in communion with the whole of the Movement, faithful to its charisms and orientations.

**(e) It is a service within the Church**

Our service is distinctive, principally because we are lay couples. It is based on our priest-hood as faithful, and our sacrament of marriage. While the service being exercised is complementary to that of the priest-spiritual adviser, the full personal responsibility remains ours.

Open to all the dimensions of the Universal Church, and in union with her, we work to make the Church, People of God. Our responsibility is a service to these People.

**(f) It is a service that is rooted in the Word of God and the Eucharist**

We can do nothing without going to the source, without listening to our only Master: "Give us Lord, a heart that listens." In his Word and in the consecrated bread, Jesus gives himself to us. The Word of God is powerful. It is necessary to make an act of faith in the mystery of the Word, waiting patiently for it to fashion our hearts, awakening them, enabling them to hear and understand. The Word and the Eucharist leaven not only the heart, but the whole being of those who participate in them. This action of the Word and the Bread of Life resounds and overflows into the community.

To "Keep in the heart" is an attitude of Mary. We may not completely understand the Word of God in the words which are addressed to us, or in the events which challenge us, but like Mary, we should take them to our hearts. It is while ruminating on all this within ourselves that things become clearer, and that we can discern the will of the Lord.

**1.5 THE WAY OF EXERCISING THIS RESPONSIBILITY: COLLEGIALLY**

*"The meaning of the Church is a communion of saints. Communion speaks of a double, life-giving participation: the incorporation of Christians into the life of Christ, and the communication of that life of charity to the entire body of the Faithful, in this world and in the next. Union with Christ and in Christ, and union among Christians in the church."*

(Christifideles laici, 19)

**(a) Opening ourselves to collegiality**

Collegiality can be defined as the pooling together of various and complementary 'gifts' that the Spirit has given to each of us so that we may seek together the truth and a deeper union between ourselves. It is in this way that we can collaborate in the construction of the Kingdom of God, by the deepening and the development of the charism with which the Spirit of the Lord inspired the Teams Movement at its formation.

This collegiality is founded on the equality of membership and mission of all the members of the team. It pre-supposes participative and not authoritarian attitudes, and demands discipline and work-methods to make it possible.

Collegiality does not diminish the role of the couple in a position of responsibility. At each level of the organisation, they remain the visible sign of the unity of the Team.

Collegiality goes beyond our own possibilities: it can only be the fruit or gift of the Spirit. We ask humbly for it throughout our service: "Without me, you can do nothing."

### **(b) Experiencing collegiality**

#### Praise and hospitality

We work without comparing ourselves with others. We can only ask others to use these gifts that they have received and we are thankful for these gifts which build the spiritual construction of our Movement. Each of us must only judge ourselves by the call we have received from the Lord. This demands that each member of the Team is respected for his own personality and is drawn to do his best, fulfilling his potential and placing it at the service of the Movement. It is necessary that all members feel that they are loved and welcomed by the others, that all feel that their ideas are respected and their contribution appreciated.

#### Reconciliation

Misunderstandings, errors, conflicts, susceptibilities, are inevitable in all human activities and we must ask forgiveness: forgiveness not only to heal but also to renew the love between persons. Forgiveness sows the seed of redemption. It is necessary to perceive the cases where conflicts can be faced and openly resolved, and others where it is necessary to forget them generously, because they come from deep personal wounds. Let us learn not to judge people once and for all, on a single criteria, because of a single mistake. Let us not judge intentions, and not judge words too quickly. Let us learn to forgive and have a flexible and understanding attitude. We have learned that the Lord treats us in this way. Why should we be harder on our brethren?

### **(c) Working in collegiality**

#### Loyal and open communication

Working in collegiality supposes communication and open sharing, not only of the information that one receives, but also of the things which one undertakes, of personal discernments, and even of reflections on our deeper life. It also requires a great attentiveness to the quality of our listening (In a movement such as ours, which has so many languages, an extra effort is necessary). Our team friends will say things to us, but above all 'they reveal themselves' to us.

#### Collegial research and evaluation

Finding a style of working which allows us to reach collegial position is difficult and demands a lot of time, listening, openness and tolerance. It is necessary to recognise that we need others and that others need us. It is necessary to accept ourselves with our capacities and limitations, and to accept others as an enrichment of ourselves and for the common good. It is necessary to let ourselves be questioned. All this increases co-responsibility and competence and promotes better analysis of situations, so that the best solutions for each case can be found.

#### Reaching collegial decisions

Starting from different approaches and even from different convictions, we must work together to find a consensus which unites us, one that we accept because we feel that we have been involved in its development. This is particularly important for subjects which concern the deeper vocation and objectives of the Movement. What we seek in all cases is to agree with the Will of God.

Certainly it is obvious that we cannot have everything decided by all in every case and it is obvious also that we are all capable of making mistakes in good faith. It is necessary to have a good dose of common sense and realism, to be perfectly loyal to the others, and to count on the confidence and the loyalty of the others.

Finally, it is also true that working collegially does not release the responsible couple from their own responsibility to take a final decision when the collegial procedure cannot reach a consensus.

## **1.6 THE FRUITS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

### **(a) Love and communion**

The first priority of all responsible couples is that "See how they love each other" can be said of their team. There can be big meetings, and long documents edited on beautiful theories, but if there is tension, criticisms and jealousy, instead of truth, encounter and understanding, nothing can bear fruit.

Responsibility having taught us to live in communion within the Movement, we can, therefore, be promoters of communion within the Church: progressing with her, we will be able to "build bridge-heads", of dialogue, listening and reconciliation.

**(b) Missionary spirit**

To have a missionary spirit is to always want to “go further forward”, seeking new paths which draw us closer to other couples, other classes, other countries. It is feeling compassionate for those who need us — the young, the old, those wounded in love, those who despair, those who feel weak, those who, in order to believe in God’s love, need to see a couple who love each other, and who love without seeking personal reward.

**(c) The building of the Kingdom of God**

Our responsibility within the Movement is a service which contributes to the building of the Kingdom of God, in so far as we exercise it within the Church and in communion with the Church, with the support of the charisms and the specific methods of our Movement.

**Chapter Two****THE LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY  
WITHIN THE MOVEMENT**

In this second chapter, we present the different levels of responsibility within the actual structures of the Movement.

We must say immediately that the Sector is considered to be the first level of responsibility. This is the reason why the services of a Team’s responsible couple, a liaison couple, an information couple or a piloting couple are not treated within this document: these are described in other documents.

The structures of the Movement today were not rigidly fixed at the beginning of its existence; they have grown up in answer to needs which were perceived in the life of the teams, such as the needs for animation, liaison and growth of the Movement, consistency with the community nature and supra-national nature of our lay movement.

Some of these structures are changing. If needs demand them, after careful trial and with the agreement of those holding responsibility, others can be developed and integrated into the organisation of the Movement. The organisation chart shows the links which exist between the different levels.

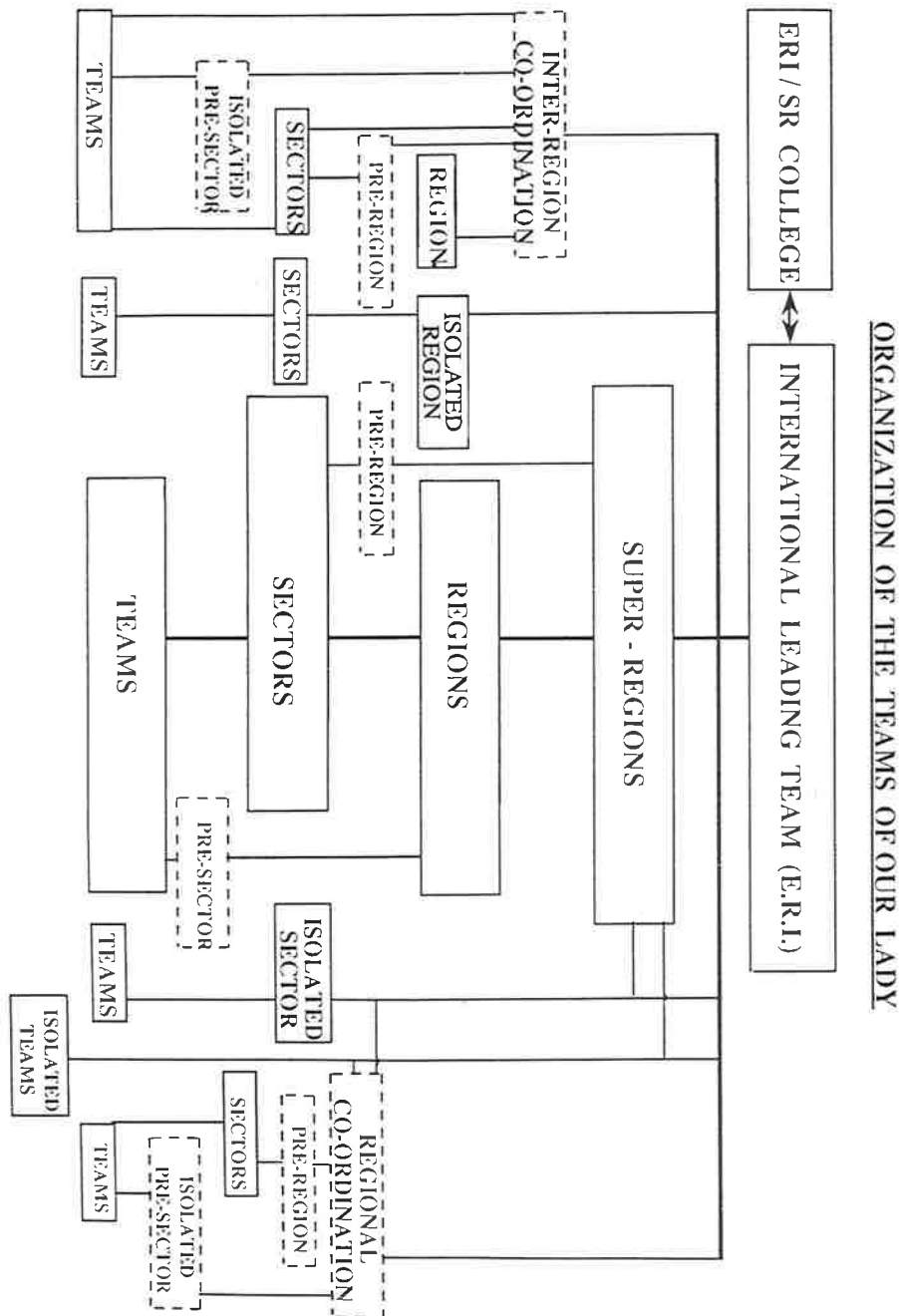
As well as the objectives which are specific to their level of responsibility, the responsible couples must work on the following common objectives:

- reflection on the daily operation of the basic Teams — their expectations, needs, difficulties . . .
- animation of the couples of the basic Teams, to promote communion and encourage missionary activities.
- efforts to maintain unity through listening, communication, liaison and personal meetings within the Movement and within the Church.
- deepening of the charism of the Team of Our Lady by discernment at all levels, done faithfully and with creativity.

At each level, responsibility is given by the Movement to a couple. This couple must be helped by a team with a priest-spiritual counsellor, to help the couple, share, and work together collegially.

Each responsible couple, whatever their level of responsibility, remains a member of their ‘base Team.’

All services are limited in time. The length of service varies according to the different levels of responsibility. A certain flexibility can be necessary, but, except in exceptional cases, any extensions must not be for more than a year.



## 2.1 THE SECTOR

### 2.1.1 DEFINITION

The sector is a community of teams wishing to progress together and help each other along this path. They form a geographical unit of approximately 5 to 20 teams, small enough to enable them to know each other and to communicate directly between persons, yet having enough couples to ensure vitality. It is the most essential community for the life of the Teams.

### 2.1.2 THE RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibility for a sector is entrusted by the Movement to a couple, called "Sector Couple". Their period of responsibility is normally three years. They are chosen in ways decided by each Super-region in a spirit of communion and service. Their nomination is approved by the couple responsible for the Region.

The Sector Couple calls on other couples and a priest-spiritual counsellor to accompany them as they live out the common objectives of reflection, discernment, unity and leadership with respect to the Teams of their Sector, and to help them in the tasks to be accomplished. Together they make up the "Sector Team", called to work collegially and to live in true communion.

The sector couple and their team need to be formed, hence the necessity of time for reflection and study in the Sector Team.

The priest-spiritual counsellor of the Sector is approached by the Sector Couple and commits himself personally. He is the spiritual counsellor of the Sector Team; in particular he helps them to maintain the Teams openness to the Church and in communion with Her. He is at the disposition of the priests and spiritual accompanists of the teams to help them to better understand our Movement, in its specific methods, and the place and role of the priest in the team. He has a special role towards those Teams progressing without a priest.

### 2.1.3 THE MISSION

#### (a) Mission towards the teams in the sector

The Sector Couple assumes the fundamental mission of knowing, animating (encouraging) liaising, and forming the basic Teams, and making known and developing the Movement in their Sector. The role of the Sector Couple and the Sector Team is essentially pastoral.



Animation (leadership and encouragement)

- to help the couples to fulfil their sacrament of marriage and to be dynamic Christians.
- to help the teams to be true Christian communities.
- to create and maintain the unity and the cohesion of the Sector, the mutual acquaintance of the teams and their links with the Movement.
- to pass on and deepen the orientations of the Movement in such a manner that they help the spiritual life of the couples.
- to encourage the couples of the Teams of Our Lady to make a commitment within the Movement and outside the Movement.

Liaison

- liaison is indispensable for building community spirit in the Movement, for getting the feeling of the Movement, and for the Movement to be a living "Team of Teams".
- liaison ensures the transmission of life in the vertical direction (between teams and Movement) and in the horizontal direction (between teams).
- liaison is not only an experience in communication, but also a true announcing of the Good News. It has an evangelising dimension.
- liaison must be personal and visual. Personal contact and communication are life-giving and encouraging.
- the form and model of liaison must be adapted to the situation and the possibilities of each Sector. A uniform structure prevents life.
- the Sector Team can carry out the liaison itself, or call on couples to help them.

Formation

## The Sector Couple and Sector Team

- help the couples in the basic Teams to experience fully their faith and their sacrament of marriage, help them to discern and form their consciences, and help them to understand the spirit of the methods and orientations of the Movement.
- watch over the formation of couples who have a specific animation (leadership) responsibility — the Team Responsible Couple, Liaison Couple, information and pilot couple (in most of the Super-regions there are documents about the different services at Sector level).
- form couples in the Sector and prepare them to make a commitment of responsibility within the Movement and outside the Movement.

Organisation of Sector activities

A great diversity of activities can be considered in the fulfilment of the three missions described previously: specific animation of the couples responsible for Teams and of couples responsible for liaison or piloting, mixed team meetings, Sector days and Sector Masses, prayer meetings, social evenings or days, retreats, conferences, Sector newsletters, study and reflection days, etc.

It is important that the Sector Couple meets once a year, where possible, with all the spiritual advisers of their Sector, so that they can deepen together their role and place within the Team, through an exchange of experiences.

Spread of the Movement

It is important that Sector Couples and their Team should

- have a plan for growth of the Movement within the Sector.
- make couples aware of their mission to spread the good news about Christian marriage.
- encourage Team-members to take an active part in the expansion of the Movement.

**(b) Mission towards the Movement**

The Sector Couple should

- be the 'guarantee' of the identity of the Movement in the sector;
- feel co-responsible for the life of the whole Movement;
- take part in the meetings of the Movement;
- be in communication and communion with the Region and the neighbouring Sectors;
- study and gain a deeper understanding of the documents and the texts of the Movement;
- follow the orientations and welcome the requests of the Movement.

**(c) Mission towards the Church and the World**

The Sector Couple should

- spread married spirituality: help the younger generations to experience the marvellous plan of God for human love, showing the value of the sacrament of marriage as a place of love, a path towards happiness, and a means of holiness;
- make the Movement and its riches known to couples, priests, and the hierarchy of the Church;

- participate in the deliberations of organisations concerned with family pastoral care, and maintain relationships with the other movements and communities of spirituality that serve the couple and the family;
- develop in the couples in Teams the consciousness of their personal mission in the Church and in the world.



## 2.2 THE REGION

### 2.2.1 DEFINITION

The Region groups together several neighbouring Sectors with the objective of mutually helping each other. It is the link for communication and communion between the Sector Couples, the members of the Sector Teams and other couples accepting positions of responsibility.

### 2.2.2 THE RESPONSIBILITY

The responsibility for a Region is given by the Movement to a couple called 'Regional Couple'. Their period of responsibility is normally four years. They are chosen in ways decided by each region/super region in a spirit of communion and service. They are nominated by the couple responsible for the region/super region.

The Regional Couple calls on other couples and a priest-spiritual counsellor to accompany them as they live out the common objectives of reflection, discernment, unity and animation with respect to the Teams of their Region, and to help them in the tasks to be accomplished. Together they make up the "Regional Team", called to work collegially and to live in a true communion.

The priest-spiritual counsellor of the Region is chosen by the Regional Couple and commits himself personally. He is the spiritual adviser of the Regional Team; he especially helps them to keep the Teams open-minded towards the Church and in communion with her.

It is preferable, where this is possible, for the Regional Team to be made up of the Sector Couples: this enables direct liaising and communication to take place.

### 2.2.3 THE MISSION

#### (a) Mission towards the Sectors in the Region

##### Animation

The Regional Couple meets regularly with the Sector Couples to:

- help them to fully know and understand the orientations of the Movement.
- to share their joys and sorrows to give them advice and to ask them to take initiatives.
- to reflect with them on the needs of their Sectors.
- to build unity by praying together.

They should be aware of the 'spiritual strength' of the Sector Couples.

The Regional Couple is responsible for the approval of the Sector Couples. Consequently they must encourage the Sector Couples to think ahead to the choice of their own successors and help them in this discernment.

##### Liaison

The principles about liaison in a Sector which are given in Section 2.1 are also applicable in the Region.

The Regional Couple must know what is happening within the Sectors. Close relationships of friendship and confidence must be established between the Regional Couple and the Sector Couples. This needs frequent contact and follow-ups — personal meetings, telephone calls, etc. In this way the Regional Couple ensures the unity of the Movement in its diversity.

As far as it is possible, they take part in the activities of the Sectors on the invitation of the Sectors — meetings with the Sector Team, Sector days, etc. These are opportunities for them to get to know what is happening in the Teams and their couples, and to make known the Movement and its orientations.

They promote the exchange of experience and co-ordinate the efforts of the Sectors to allow concrete mutual help, good communication and true communion.

For the Sectors they are an outside resource, loving and praying for the Sector.

##### Formation

The Regional Couple is responsible for the formation of all the couples in the Region and particularly responsible for the formation of the Sector Couples, the Liaison, Information and Pilot couples.

For this, they organise, with the Sector Couples and eventually with neighbouring regions, days and sessions for formation and retreats.

Spread of the Movement

The Regional Couple is particularly anxious for the spread of the Movement in the Region, especially in the areas where it is not established.

**(b) Mission within the Movement**

The Regional Couple is called

- to be for the Sectors and the Teams the guarantee of the identity of the Movement in the region;
- to be in communication and communion with the Super-regional Couple;
- to be the level for the synthesis of what is experienced in the base Teams; to transmit to the Super-regional Couple the realisations, the needs, or the aspirations of these Teams;
- to participate in the reflection on the evolution of the Movement during meetings with other Regional Couples;
- to bring their own contribution to the progress of the Movement through the reports or investigations which are asked of them.

**(c) Mission towards the Church and the world**

At their level of responsibility, the Regional Couple participates in the general mission of the Teams of Our Lady for the spread of conjugal married spirituality in the Church and the world (see section 2.1.3 (c), on page 17).

**2.3 THE SUPER REGION****2.3.1 DEFINITION**

The Super-region groups together, either the regions of a country, or the regions of neighbouring countries in the same continent. Experience shows that at least 200 teams makes a good basis for the functioning of a Super-region.

**2.3.2 THE RESPONSIBILITY**

The responsibility for a Super-region is entrusted by the Movement to a couple called "Super-regional Couple". Their term of office is normally for five years. They are chosen according to norms fixed in each Super-region in a spirit of communion and service. They are nominated by the E.R.I.

The Super-regional Couple are members of the ERI/SR College.

The Super-regional Couple calls on other couples and a priest-spiritual adviser, to accompany them in their reflections, discernment and animation. Together they make up the "Super-regional Team", according to principles of collegiality, co-responsibility and communion.

It is preferable, where this is possible, for the Super-regional Team to be made up of the Regional Couples.

**2.3.3 THE MISSION**

The Super-regional Couple have a role of animation, formation, reflection on and discernment of the needs of the teams in their Super-region.

The Super-regional Couple participates directly and collegially with the other Super-regional Couples and the members of the ERI in the animation of the whole of the Movement and of its spread beyond their own territory.

**(a) Mission towards the Regions of the Super-region**

Faithful to the founding charism, the vocation and mission of the Movement, the Super-regional Couple has the responsibility of transmitting to the Teams the major orientations of the Movement, their presentation and their special emphases. They must adapt them to the particular situation of their Super-region.

They are responsible for unity and communion in the Super-region experiencing collegiality within the Super-regional team.

Specifically, they animate and initiate

- the adaptation, printing and distribution of study topics, with the help of specialised working teams.
- the formation of the leaders and the team-members (sessions, meetings on a Super-regional level).
- the printing of the Newsletter of the Teams of Our Lady of the Super-region for which they are responsible.

The Super-regional Couple is responsible for the choice and replacement of the Regional Couples.

They manage the finances of the Super-region.

**(b) The mission within the Movement**

The Super-regional couple are asked to

- put at the disposal of the international Movement, and especially the ERI/SR College, their time, energy, talents, experience and prayer, organising themselves to have time for studying and sharing working together on the major questions of the Movement, collegially with the other Super-regional Couples and the ERI.
- have a warm and regular contact with the ERI and above all with the couple who liaises with the Super-region.
- send to the ERI the reports of meetings and gatherings which take place on a Super-regional level.
- send to the ERI the annual (or periodical) programme of the Super-region — dates of the major meetings, the sessions, etc.
- be present at the annual meeting of the ERI/SR College for which they arrive well-prepared and informed collegially with the Super-regional team.
- be concerned for the unity of the Movement and communion between the Super-region and the whole of the Movement.

**(c) Mission towards the Church and the World**

At their level of responsibility, the Super-regional Couple takes part in the general mission of the Teams of Our Lady for the spread of married spirituality in the Church and the world (see section 2.1.3 (c), on page 17).



## 2.4 THE INTERNATIONAL LEADING TEAM (E.R.I.)

**2.4.1 DEFINITION AND COMPOSITION**

The International Leading Team (Equipe Responsable Internationale — E.R.I.) takes the overall responsibility for the Movement.

It is made up of 5 or 6 couples helped by a priest-spiritual counsellor. These couples and the spiritual counsellor are chosen by the ERI itself, after various investigations, mainly among the Super-Regional Couples. The choice of the members of the ERI is inspired as far as possible by the international character of the Movement. The members of the ERI commit themselves to, and act within, the ERI, personally, and not as representatives of their native country.

The members of the ERI are generally nominated for a period of 6 years.

The ERI chooses a Leading Couple from its members, and one of their main missions is to ensure communion within the ERI and within the ERI/SR College. They are the official representatives of the Movement. Their mandate is generally for 6 years.

The priest-spiritual adviser of the ERI is not only the adviser of this team — he is also available for the Teams in the Movement across the world, and for work of theological and pastoral reflection which develops the specific charism of the Movement.

**2.4.2 THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND MISSION**

The ERI assumes collegially the general responsibility for the whole of the Movement, which they exercise in close unity with the Super-regional Couples. It is the ERI which takes the final decisions that concern the whole of the Movement, and which represents the Movement to the hierarchy of the Church and any other instance.

The ERI has the mission to maintain the Movement's close ties with the universal Church.

Animation of the whole of the Movement

The ERI is responsible for the global and fundamental animation of the Movement, paying attention to the team-members of the five continents, to their life-experience, and to their aspirations, through reports, correspondence, meetings and gatherings, and visits to the various countries.

Ensuring faithfulness to the founding intuitions of the Movement

The ERI has the responsibility of creating fidelity to the founding charisms of the Movement, notably married and family spirituality.

Exercising long-term discernment

Anxious to develop this initial inheritance, and open to the signs of the times, the ERI tries to perceive any changes in deep spiritual needs of couples, based on a knowledge of everyday life and on its reflection on ways to deepen the founding charism of the Teams of Our Lady. In this task of discernment, they are helped by appropriate advisers, study groups, and experts.

Ensuring the unity of the Movement

The ERI has the task of ensuring the unity of the Movement in its diversity. They are anxious to avoid deviations or a federalism which is harmful to unity. It is attentive to the choice and formation of its members.

Developing the Movement

The ERI oversees the establishment of the Movement in countries where it is not yet present and which are outside the areas of responsibility of the Super-regions.

**2.4.3 TO FULFIL THESE MISSIONS THE ERI**

- meets at least four times a year to exchange, reflect, pray, decide and organise.
- communicates regularly with all the couples in the Movement through the "Editorial" and the "Letter from the ERI", printed in the local Newsletter.
- calls together the annual meeting of the ERI/SR College during which the most important decisions for the future of the Movement are reflected on and debated.
- organises approximately every six years an international gathering which is the high point of the life of the Movement.
- proposes to all the teams in the world study topics or documents which are the result of the discernment of the College.
- manages the finances of the Movement.

The couples in the ERI assume direct liaison with the Super-regions and Isolated Regions (and, if necessary, with particular structures).

The ERI has its own international secretariat for which responsibility is taken by one of the couples in the ERI. The international secretariat is at the service of the whole of the Movement across the world.

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**2.5 THE ERI/SR COLLEGE****2.5.1 DEFINITION AND COMPOSITION**

The College is a place of reflection and exchange of ideas, to promote at the international level the collegial exercise of the general responsibility of the Movement.

The college is made up of the members of ERI and the Super-regional Couples.

It meets once a year for a working session of several days. On some occasions, the couples responsible for Isolated Regions and for Regional Co-ordinations are invited, so that they can also participate in the reflection of the College (the following diagram illustrates the participation of the ERI/SR College).

**2.5.2 MISSION**Sharing

The College shares the realities of Team life that are experienced in Teams across the world, to enable the ERI and the SR to assume their responsibilities collegially.

General reflection about the Movement

The College deepens the founding charism, discerns the deep spiritual needs of couples and Teams, and takes part in renewal of the formation practices of the Movement and definition of the future orientations of the Movement

Unity and communication within the Movement

The College takes care to preserve the unity of the Movement and its deep communion, always with creative faithfulness to the charisms that are specific to the Movement.

Management and administration of the Movement

The College decides the general principles of the management of the international finances, and of the statutory aspects and the operation of the Movement.

**2.6 SPECIAL CASES**

**2.6.1 THE ISOLATED SECTOR**

A sector which cannot be integrated into or take part in the life of a Region because of geographical distance is called an Isolated Sector.

The responsibility for such a Sector is defined and exercised in the same way as that of a Sector that is part of a Region.

However, the statute of the Isolated Sector is different in the following ways:

- it is liaised by a member of a Super-regional team, or a Co-ordinating Team, or a member of the ERI,
- the Sector Couple is nominated by the Responsible Couple of the team that ensures the liaison.

**2.6.2 THE ISOLATED REGION**

A region which is now integrated into a Super-region and which does not have a sufficient number of teams to have the organisation of a Super-region is called an Isolated Region.

The responsibility on the level of the Isolated Region is defined and exercised in the same way as that of a region that is part of a Super-region.

However, the tasks and the statutes of an Isolated Region are different on the following points:

- the tasks of animation are closer to those of the Super-region.
- it is liaised by a member of the ERI.
- the Regional Couple is nominated by the ERI, receives the same information and documents as the Super-regional Couples and occasionally takes part, when invited by the ERI, in the meetings of the ERI/SR College.

**2.6.3 TEMPORARY INTERMEDIATE STRUCTURES**

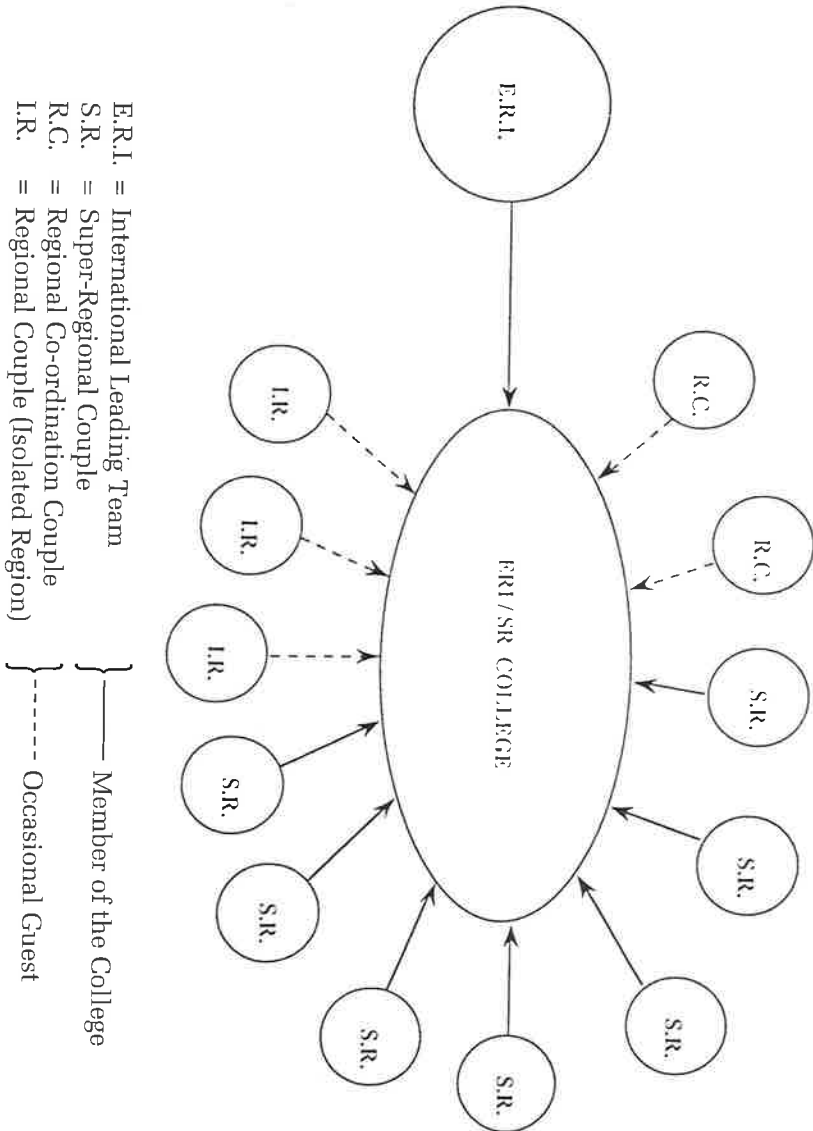
In some circumstances, mostly geographical, and mainly for reasons of great distances, intermediate and temporary structures can be set up to promote the life and the expansion of the Movement.

**(a) The pre-sector and the pre-region**

The pre-sector

This is the name given to a group of teams that are close enough for common animation, but:

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IN THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY**



- are either too few in numbers to form a Sector and too far from the existing Sectors to be attached to them, or
- do not yet have enough formed leaders.

#### The pre-region

This is the name given to a group of Sectors which are too few to form a Region, too far from the nearest Region to be attached to it, and who need a light animating structure which facilitates communication with the level of responsibility to which they are attached.

#### Responsibility at these intermediate levels

The couples who are animators of these intermediate levels have a responsibility which is similar to that of the Sector or Regional Couple. They are nominated by the Responsible Couple of the level to which their structure is attached. They use means of animation which are adapted to their specific situation.

#### **(b) Regional or Inter-regional co-ordination**

This is the name given to an intermediate and temporary structure that groups together a variety of heterogeneous wholes in a determined geographical zone (regions, pre-regions, sectors, pre-sectors, isolated sectors, isolated teams) and that does not have enough teams to have the organisation of an Isolated Region or a Super-region.

The responsibility of the Regional or Inter-regional co-ordination is given by the Movement to a couple called the 'Co-ordinating Couple'. Their mandate is normally for 4 or 5 years. They are nominated by the ERI.

The Regional or Inter-regional co-ordination is liaised by the ERI.

The Co-ordinating Couple receives the same information and documents as the couples responsible for isolated teams, and the Super-regional Couples, and takes part occasionally, on invitation from the ERI, in the meetings of the ERI/SR College.

The Co-ordinating Couple is the guarantee of the identity of the Movement in their geographical zone.

The Regional or Inter-regional Co-ordination determines its own ways of organising animation and liaison according to the specific needs of the zone and the Teams under its responsibility. The couple can be helped by an animating team. According to the size and the number of teams, the Co-ordination assumes the same tasks as those of an Isolated Region or a Super-region.

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