



Teams of Our Lady
International Leading Team



The team
Meeting

STUDY THEME

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PRESENTATION

Upon completion of the document “The Team Meeting” we felt that it was important to develop a Study Theme on the same subject. The objective is to bring the contents of this document to all Teams couples in a way that will revitalize the team meeting.

“The meeting is a privileged time to share with each other in an atmosphere of charity and fraternal love. This sharing assumes a climate of mutual confidence and discretion on the part of each of the members of the team.” (Guide of the Teams of Our Lady)

This study topic - The Team Meeting - is important in that it helps each team member to understand and to live more fully the deep meaning and essence of the team meeting as a “church community,” as an “assembly of those called,” which differs from other types of meetings. Embracing the meeting on a deep level will be a factor in the transformation and evangelization of the couples involved.

However, the proposal presented goes a little further. Each part of a team meeting is to be treated separately, in greater detail, which can help to deepen understanding and strengthen each part of the meeting. That is why it was decided to dedicate each chapter to one part of “The Team Meeting”. Thus each one can be experienced in a more conscientious and renewed way, so that the essence and deep sense of its parts can be better assimilated.

Other topics have also been included to complement each selection for the eight meetings of the year.

1. METHODOLOGY

We are aware that life’s challenges require effort, that in order to improve, determination and perseverance are required. They help the couples to grow, so that they can, little by little, see progress made: in the education of their children, in their work, in their relationship with God – as long as they are making an effort. Teams of Our Lady proposes concrete ways to direct the efforts of Teams couples, so that they can become better Christian couples.

It is intended that this study theme offer Teams couples the opportunity to advance even more. That is why we are proposing that we work in the following manner:

- **The Study Theme:** To be done shortly after the last meeting.
- **Life Experience:** Practical suggestions for “living” the theme during the month.
- **Endeavors:** To be worked on during the month, especially the orientations (aids) contained in the current chapter (for the sit-down, the rule of life, conjugal prayer...).
- **The Team Meeting:** After having worked throughout the month, as much on the study topic as on the endeavors, the couple will participate more fully in the team meeting.

It is important to attend the team meeting having strived throughout the month to do better as an individual and as a couple. By doing this, all the teams couples will come to the team meeting prepared, their minds and hearts ready to share their successes and difficulties, eager to move forward together on the road to sanctity.

As a result of the work undertaken as a couple during the whole month, the sharing within the team meeting will truly be a sharing of lives, instead of a mere rote report as is sometimes the case. The discussion of the study topic will be different from what one sees in teams where couples do not prepare, do not contribute, do not question. They simply hope to receive, and they miss the opportunity to give.

2. **GENERAL OUTLINE**

Basically, the study topic tries to fulfill the objective proposed for each meeting. It is accompanied by a practical suggestion (life experience) which can help the team incorporate into daily life the theme of the meeting. However, it is only a matter of a suggestion, which absolutely is not meant to prevent the creativity of the Responsible Couple and of the team, which must feel free to propose any practical undertaking that they want, in accord with the monthly study topic.

Furthermore, the Study Theme, through its eight chapters proposes to energize the Endeavors throughout the month by offering suggestions for carrying them out.

Each chapter is presented according to the following outline:

A. Objective

B. Work during the month

Life experience

Study theme with supporting texts

Questions to share as a couple and as a team

Orientations and aids:

- Hearing the Word of God, personal and conjugal prayer;
- The duty of the sit-down;
- The rule of life.

C. For the Team Meeting

Throughout the development of the five parts of the team meeting there are some specific suggestions; a prayer before the meal, a text from Scripture for meditation that is tied to the theme, questions based on the material for the discussion part of the meeting, as well as some practical suggestions. The meeting ends with the prayer of the Teams of Our Lady, "The Magnificat."

3. THEMES OF THE MEETINGS

Each meeting will center on a different theme, as described below:

1. The Mystique of the Team Meeting;
 2. Gathered in Christ's Name;
 3. We Eat Together;
 4. We Pray Together;
 5. We Share our Spiritual Life;
 6. We Share our Lives;
 7. Together we Deepen our Faith;
 8. Team Life;
- The Evaluation Meeting.

Appendix: A plan for the monthly meeting

It is hoped that this reflection encourages the couples to approach each chapter with renewed determination, helping them to be “**every-day**” **teams members**, opening them to the action of the Holy Spirit and leading them to daily live Faith, Hope and Charity in their homes.

FIRST MEETING

THE MYSTIQUE OF THE TEAM MEETING

“It can only be to God’s glory, then, for you to treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you.”

(Romans 15, 7)



A. Objective

To reflect on the Christian significance of a Team Meeting.

To discover the supernatural aspects and the mystery of the Team Meeting and to strive to experience the meeting within this mystique.

B. Our focus during the month

Life experience: to encounter Jesus Christ

A Team of Our Lady is a small Church when we come together in the name of Jesus Christ. It is there that we encounter the intense presence of the Resurrected Christ, alive, attentive to all, loving each one of us as we are.

As life experience for this month we are invited to live as fully as possible in the presence of the Resurrected Christ in our homes and in our team in the following way: to listen more carefully to Him whom we know to be present within us.

- He speaks to us in Scripture;
- He speaks to us through our brothers;
- He tells us to respond to the needs of others.

Throughout the month we should try to be more attentive to Christ’s speaking to us and to experiencing Him in our team and in our family.

Study Theme and Reflection

When we speak of the mystique of the Team Meeting, it is first necessary to understand the significance of the word “**mystique**”. In the Guide of the Teams of Our Lady we find: *“It is the Holy Spirit that gives meaning to particular ways of life, the intuition that ‘opens’ what is obscure to the human mind, and the direction that transforms life into a continual search for communion with God.”*

The word “**mystique**”, according to its etymology, is tied to mystery. Perhaps that is why it is difficult to understand, and to explain, what is meant by the mystique of Teams of Our Lady. The mystique is a force that inspires, motivates and gives strength to someone.



The mystique is the spirit that gives meaning to the Teams of Our Lady Movement.

It is the orientation that leads couples to be transformed in their search for communion with God, and which is based on the following aspects (ideas):

- ✓ **Gathered together in the name of Christ**, the team turns toward the Father in order to welcome his love and his will. *“For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.”* (Matthew 18, 20)
- ✓ United in Christ the team shares the love of God in **mutual support**: *“You should carry each other’s troubles and fulfill the law of Christ.”* (Galatians 6, 2)
- ✓ Motivated by the Spirit of Christ, the team sends forth its members into the world to be **witnesses** to this love: *“The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul.”* (Acts 4, 32)

Thus, the mystique of the Teams of Our Lady is the presence and the active power of Christ in the team community, expressed in its mutual support and its witness.

Father Caffarel in his “**Ecclesia**”, shows us how to obtain this meeting with God: to live the Team Meeting as a Christian Assembly, indicating certain conditions which transform a meeting of Christians into an “ecclesia” - Christian Assembly where Christ is present.

We meet together because Christ has called us, has brought us together. The Team Meeting is, thus, a starting point, but it is also a point of departure from all that separates us from God. At Sinai all of God’s people brought together by Moses were told by him that they had to turn their backs on Egypt and their former ways in order to begin their journey, which would be hard and difficult through the desert.

Therefore, there is no Christian meeting that does not signify a departure, a break with things that little by little distance us from God. We walk toward God, in order to know him better and draw closer to him, and in that way to purify ourselves.

Each one of the members of the team must go to the Team Meeting with an open and welcoming attitude in order for this cleansing to take place.

The small monthly gathering must be very welcoming. Christ, the one who comes with all his promises, is among us. He comes in order to communicate his love to us and he wants, through us, to express his love to all those He wishes to save through our intercession.

“Today salvation has come to this house...” (Luke, 19, 9)

As it states in the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady, *“The Teams of Our Lady feel that today, as before, non-believers will be won over for Christ if they can see Christians truly loving each other and helping one another to seek God and to serve their fellow men. Such brotherly loves goes beyond mutual help and bears witness to Christ.”*

Each Team of Our Lady is called to be a sign of Jesus to all those who live in darkness and despair. The team exists for the growth of its own members, but there is no doubt that it will never be a true community unless it also concerns itself with all God’s people.

Supporting Text

Catching One’s Breath

Father Caffarel expresses his thoughts on what a Team of Our Lady and a Team Meeting should be in his second-to-last editorial, a text almost as a last will and testament:

“-Would you like to speak to all our teams all together in one gathering?”

-On what subject? My interrogator reflects a moment, looks at me with a mischievous smile and responds: “Suppose that you were to die the day after our conversation together, what subject would you like to have discussed during that last contact with the couples and the teams?”

I am grateful to that person for her response. She has compelled me not only to meditate on death, but also to clarify my thoughts about the topics that I consider most important to convey to members of teams:

- ✓ *The Charter: a document which, twenty-five years ago, gave the Movement its orientation, its structures and its methods;*
- ✓ *The team, manifestation of love: the objective of so many teams; the psychology of small group; the conditions under which a group finds its cohesiveness and maintains its enthusiasm to reach its objective;*
- ✓ *Deepening of faith – in these times when it is so threatened*
- ✓ *The mission of the Teams of Our Lady in the Church today.*

It seemed to me that each one of these topics, in succession, was going to be equally important. I ended up by opting for another way. On the point of death, with little time remaining and unable to cover everything, a spiritual testament is necessary: words that touch directly on the essential. And I decided to speak of the Christian significance of a Team Meeting. I hasten to explain:

The monthly meeting of a team must not be defined only by its structure, its spirit, the friendship between its members, the desire that it be a step in the search for God. First of all it must recognize its supernatural substance and its mystery. In fact, it is, or it should be, a very different reality from a meeting on a simply human level. It must be understood in the light of these verses of Matthew: **“For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.” (Mt 18, 20)** I tell you again: **“If two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven.” (Mt 18, 19.)**

In the midst of these couples gathered in a home, the Risen Lord is intensely present, alive, attentive to all, and loving each one as is, with their good and their bad qualities, and anxious to help each one to grow to his potential? It is as on Easter, in the upper room in Jerusalem, when suddenly, the Risen Lord appeared to the other members of His team, the apostles. He breathed on them and said; **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”** And they became new men. Jesus Christ, among the couples, does not stop breathing his Spirit on them. And those who are open to His Breath, which is grasped little by little – become people of this Breath. And the meeting proceeds animated by the Spirit. To these men and women who, at the end of a work day, often arriving exhausted, preoccupied, this Spirit communicates the two-fold passion of Christ: his impatience for the glory of the Father and his burning and tender mercy towards the multitudes **“who are like sheep without a shepherd.”**

What I have just said, that’s not what happens every time, but it is what should happen, because a team meeting which does not include, primarily, an effort by all to encounter Christ is something very different from what a meeting of a Team of Our Lady should be.

To encounter Christ means, in the first place, to begin to listen to Him whom we know is present. He speaks to us in the Scriptures – that is why we love the Word of God. He speaks to us through the teachings of the Church, and, little by little, through meditation on the Bible. He speaks to us through the hearts of our brothers and sisters, but not always through words. He speaks to us in different ways during the meeting, but we must have **“a listening heart,”** according to the biblical



expression. He speaks to us to instill confidence in each one of us in order to reveal the Father and his plan for us. He speaks to us to invite us to conversion (we are never completely converted), He speaks to us inviting us to reach out in support of others... He speaks to us, and we recognize that all that is very difficult to put into practice. Moreover, He is not content to just speak to us, but to transform those of us who admit their powerlessness by giving them this Spirit of Power, that which changed simple villagers of Galilee into tireless witnesses of the Savior.

But the main question is this: are you going to understand what I have just said merely as compassionate and edifying phrases, or rather as the reality of a team meeting? **“That will be the measure of your fait,”**: Christ said to the people of Palestine, and that is what He says to each one of us at the beginning of each meeting.

There was a time in Teams of Our Lady, and it was a time of great vitality in the Movement, when there was much discussion about what was called the small **“ecclesia.”** This word **“ecclesia”** was very much appreciated because it emphasized the original character of a meeting of Christians in the name of Jesus Christ. Didn't Saint Paul speak of the **“ecclesia”** which met in the home of Aquila and Priscilla, a couple for whom he felt great affection?

And if someone asks me what allows me to use the same word **“ecclesia”** which refers to the whole Church of Jesus Christ, for a small meeting of faithful followers as well, I will answer briefly in order to bring my thoughts to a close: the small Christian group is truly a cell of the Church. Each cell lives in the life of the body: in every cell in my body, my soul is present and living. In the same way, in each cell of the Church, in each **“ecclesia,”** the soul of the whole Church is present, living, impatient to become sanctified.

What a great leap it would be for our teams if they fully grasped these insights concerning the monthly meeting! And if they were to live them!”

(Newsletter of Teams of Our Lady, March-April 1973)



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

- How do we understand the assertion that the Team Meeting should be a totally different reality from an ordinary meeting?
- How are we making an effort to encounter Jesus Christ in our Team Meeting?
- Let us devote some time to analyzing the words of Father Caffarel found in the text. He asks: “Are you going to interpret what I have just said as compassionate and edifying phrases or rather as the reality of a team meeting?”
- Do we feel in our team that we are truly an “ecclesia,” a small cell of the Church?



Orientations for:

- **Reading of the Word , personal and conjugal prayer**

“Now you too, in him, have heard the message of the truth and the good news of your salvation, and have believed it; and you too have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise.”

(Ephesians 1, 13)

- **For a sit-down**

During this month let us work on encountering Jesus Christ in our daily life by becoming more aware of Him who is always with us and also in the heart of this little cell of the Church which is our family.

This dialogue can be centered on the way that we live the presence of the Resurrected Lord in our home, in our children. How He speaks to us:

- ✓ In Holy Scripture;
- ✓ In the depths of the heart of our spouse and of our children;
- ✓ In order to reach out in support of others.

• **For the Rule of Life**

With the help of Jesus Christ let us try to improve the quality of our listening where we feel it is weak.

C. For the Team Meeting

The Responsible Couple, together with the couple in charge of each meeting (Animating/Discussion Couple), prepare the meeting in such a way as to make us clearly aware of the presence of Christ, as well as to enable us to truly live the ideals brought forth in each study theme.

Likewise we must emphasize listening to Jesus during the reunion so that we can more conscientiously live in his presence.



Prayer for the blessing of the meal

Jesus said to them: *“You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat.”*

(Mark 6, 31)

We give you thanks, Lord, for you give us the necessary time during our team meeting to share bread and our lives. Bless all our efforts in our search for a better world where you are present. Amen.



For reflection on the Word of God

Prayer for the meeting

Acts 2, 1 – 4

“When Pentecost day came round, they had all met in one room, when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”



Study theme and reflection - Questions to share

Let us share all the questions concerning the theme of the month, prepared as a couple.



Magnificat

The meeting ends with the prayer of Mary, in union with all the couples of Teams of Our Lady all over the world.

SECOND MEETING

GATHERED IN CHRIST'S NAME

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there with them.”

(Mt 18, 20)



A. Objective

To invite, welcome, recognize and experience the presence of Christ among us, between us, and within each one of us as we call upon Him to be present at our meeting.

B. Our focus during the month

Life experience

We are often so busy with our families, our work, our activities that we do not take time to connect with the members of our team except during team meetings.

Let us make a special effort during the coming month to spend time with all, or at least, some members of our team, and with our Spiritual Advisor, for a social or family-centered gathering.

In order to become more fully aware that we come together at meetings in the name of Christ, we suggest that you either organize a prayer meeting in the home of one Teams couple, or celebrate the Eucharist together, if possible with your Spiritual Advisor presiding. At this celebration you might offer your team and the lives of all the members to Our Lord.

The study theme and reflection

Who gathers us together?

We meet in the name of Christ. We are a truly Christian community when we meet in order to find Him, because we believe in His promise: “If two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them”.

(Mt 18, 19-20)

Christ can only act fully if we are first of all gathered together by Him, for He is the center of the meeting. We must therefore be aware of this before the meeting.

Father Caffarel explains this essential condition: we meet **“in the name of Christ.”**

“Christ does not say: ‘where two or three meet I am there among them,’ but more precisely ‘where two or three meet in my name’. That is very important. Summoned by Him, we answer to His call and we meet ‘in His name’”.

Therefore, attending the Team Meeting just in search of friendship or understanding is not to go **“in the name of Christ”**. Thus it is that teams formed by couples who had not met before are usually off to a good start. What else makes them come together if it is not the wish to meet Christ?

Why do we meet?

We meet because, like the first Christian communities, we wish to become a true community of faith, transformed by the Holy Spirit. We wish to let ourselves be guided by the action of the Holy Spirit in answer to the call of Jesus: **“Come and follow me.”** We can then state that the purpose of our monthly meeting is the search for and to follow Jesus Christ.

Meeting in the name of Christ, the small community welcomes us, accepts us as we are and helps us to grow as persons and as a couple. It prepares us for our mission and sends us out to live it. Meeting as a team demands in each of us a particular attitude, that we strive to live our daily life in harmony with our faith, being cognizant of our life style and open to any necessary changes.

If Christ brings us together, it is because He wants to accomplish something very important for Him and for us. He wants to reveal and to communicate the Love He receives from His Father and in which He brings all mankind together, so that in turn we may give witness of this Love and transmit it to the world.

The team is a means

Love is at the heart of the community. The new commandment Jesus proposes to us today cannot be lived out in an abstract way. In the end, living proof of the presence of Christ is given by the community of Christians who, in spite of the difficulties, endeavor to live out Jesus’ teaching. Nevertheless, the team is only a means; it is not an end.

Father Caffarel advises us against what he called **“the temptation of friendship”** in teams when, after years of life in Teams together, deepening ties of friendship push aside the original purpose of forming a team.

Supporting texts

“Meeting in my name”

Father Caffarel insisted on the necessity and importance for the couples of meeting in the name of Christ. He relates this incident:

“Last June 6th, Pentecost Sunday, after Father Feret’s talk, while returning to the hotel, I was chatting with one of you on a street in Lourdes. He, in Teams for a long time, was telling me how amazed he was by the depth of relationship established so quickly through conversations with other Teams pilgrims (heading for Lourdes) who, the previous evening, hadn’t even met. He was amazed, but did not realize the explanation. I told him what I am now telling you; it will perhaps help you to understand an essential aspect of your team life.

There are many kinds of human relationships: as parents, among friends, social relationships, etc. Each of these has its own characteristics, its own quality. There is, however, another type of



human relationship, one specifically Christian. What gives it an exceptional quality is the value of what is held in common: not only thoughts, interests, human feelings, but spiritual life as well. Christians immersed in the love of Christ have the extraordinary ability to share with each other this love in their intimacy, their joys, difficulties, the goals to which this love enables them to aspire. That is what is so impressive: to perceive in others the resonance of grace, the struggles and the acquiescence of a soul possessed by grace.

But there is more. The promise of Christ is realized: **‘Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.’** And it happens sometimes that this mysterious presence is manifested: peace, joy, the light of hearts opening can have no other explanation.

Wouldn't it be this quality of love which explains the enticement experienced by the first Christian communities? **‘See how they love one another!’** said those who approached them. Their radiance, after twenty centuries, still reaches us.

The goal of our Movement is to see this quality of human relationship infused in each team and in each couple.

To pray together, to participate, to share, to exchange ideas, all these are means available to you to make possible this meeting of souls, **‘in the name of Christ’**, in Christ. The temptation is great to be content to stay at the level of human friendship; you must react always: Christian friendship is a goal to be achieved.

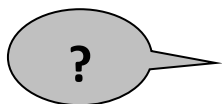
The duty of the ‘sit-down’, the preparation of the study topic, these are other means offered to couples, to help them, individually and as couples, to become more united to Christ. These resources are extremely useful since human respect, shyness, selfishness, the daily demands, weaknesses of the flesh are all obstacles to the spiritual union of couples. How many couples, even among the best, spend their entire life without experiencing this intimacy with Christ.”

(French Monthly Letter, December 1954)

In his book “Holy Spirit: Our Hope”, Cardinal Suenens stresses the importance small communities have today, animated by the Spirit of Christ.

“To human eyes it may seem paradoxical to make the future of the Church dependent on small Christian communities which, as fervent as they may be, only represent a drop of water in the ocean”.

That is true. But if we consider the spiritual energy that emanates from any group that acknowledges its dependence on the Spirit of Christ, all values are changed because we are drawn into the strength and power of God. It is, in fact, these minority groups which transform the world.



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

- What are the elements which must be present in a team meeting and which are not found in other meetings?
- Are we truly aware of God's presence among us?
- How does God's presence among us manifest itself in relationships outside of the team?



Orientations for:

- **Reading of the Word, personal and conjugal prayer**

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away – he withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.”

(Jo 15, 1-8)

- **For a sit-down**

“Be with us, Lord, as we consecrate this moment to be with you in conjugal prayer.”

Let us reflect together on these questions:

- How do we discover God’s presence in each other?
- How does this encourage us during good times and support us during difficult times?
- How do we transfer this presence of Christ that we experience at a team meeting to our daily lives with each other as a couple? Within our family? With others?
- Do we find time each day for conjugal prayer?

For the Rule of Life

Let us try to develop a greater awareness of God’s presence in our daily life as a couple, in order to escape from routine.

C. For the Team Meeting

Let us try during the month to meet more often as a christian community in order to celebrate Christ who brings us together. Then, invigorated, let us live this presence among us.



○ ○ ○ **Prayer for the blessing before the meal**

“Friends, the blessing cup which we bless, is it not a sharing with the blood of Christ and the loaf of bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? And as there is only one loaf, so we, though there are many of us, are one single body because we all share in this one loaf.”

(1 Cor. 10, 16-17)

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to receive from thy bounty through Christ Our Lord. Amen



For reflection on the Word of God

Prayer for the meeting

Jo 6, 35-40

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst. But, as I have told you, you can see me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me, I shall not turn him away; because I have come from heaven, not to do my own will, but to do the will of the one who sent me. Now the will of him who sent me is that I should lose nothing of all that he has given to me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes, it is my Father’s will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day.”



Study topic and reflection - Questions to share

Let us share the questions of the month as a team, after having prepared them as a couple.



The Magnificat

The meeting should finish with Mary’s prayer, The Magnificat, in union with all the couples of Teams of Our Lady all over the world.

THIRD MEETING

WE EAT TOGETHER

“They shared their food gladly and generously.”

(Acts 2, 46)



A. Objective

To understand that in a team, which gathers in the name of Christ, the meal is not only a sharing of food, it is also the time when couples in the team share their lives and their needs.

To make the meal a special time of sharing for members of the family.

B. Our focus during the month

Life experience:

Because of busy lives, family members often eat alone, or very quickly, depriving couples of the opportunity to have dinner together or with their children.

During this month make a special effort to bring the family together for meals whenever possible. The meal should start with a blessing and be an opportunity for the family to share their experiences of the day: successes and difficulties.

Study theme and reflection

The Welcome

The meeting begins with the arrival of the couples at the home of the host couple. Everyone should welcome the others naturally, showing an interest in each one, thus creating, from the beginning of the meeting an atmosphere of openness and friendship, making all the couples feel welcome.

The meal: its human aspect

Man has so far not invented a moment better than a meal for building strong links of friendship and community. Is it not around the table that the family comes together? Isn't the meal a privileged time of joy and of communication among the members of a family?

The meal is mainly a moment of expression of friendship. One of life's most pleasant moments is certainly the one when we invite friends to come and share a meal with us.



The meal marks and celebrates the important events of our life. It draws together family and friends and expresses caring and consolidation of community.

The meal at the team meeting

Its mystical aspect

We meet in the name of Christ. He is present in our midst during our meeting. This is why the meal of this small Christian community of couples must have the same meaning as the meals Jesus had with his apostles, when he gathered them around the table.

It was during a meal, around a table, in the company of his friends, the apostles, that Jesus instituted the Eucharist. This was done in order to gather his children in remembrance of the Last Supper.

Its simplicity

The meal should be centered on simplicity and fellowship.

The meal may be breakfast, lunch, dinner or even a snack. Each team will choose the best way for the celebration of the meal. The team meeting may constantly be re-adjusted. Creativity is always welcome. Whatever the chosen format, what is important is that it be simple and in the spirit of friendship.

When friends sit around the table, it is not the menu that is important, but the certainty that Christ is present in the midst of the community.

The first Christian communities shared everything in common and took their meals together. The meal was the result of the contribution and generosity of each one according to his means.

During the meal we share not only food, we share the life of the couples of the team. It allows us to maintain friendship through the exchange of our news. The meal is a time for each team member to share “highs” and “lows” of the month. Discipline must be in place so that each person is heard without interruptions and side conversations.

The topics touched upon during the meal should be simple. They concern daily life (children, family, friends, work, vacation, and so on). Deeper subjects should be handled at another part of the team meeting: deep pooling.

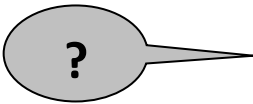
Supporting Text

The Christian Meal

“The Christian meal with all that it represents of family joy and togetherness should first of all be a religious act giving glory to God. Early generations of Christians celebrated “Agape.” However, later Christians have not known how to preserve the mystical aspect of this word (agape = love, caritas). It would be best to draw from the Gospel the religious value of all the meals where Christ was present: from the Marriage at Cana to the meal at the house of Simon.

If we wish to make meals sacred we must understand that we have to move forward, not limiting ourselves to the prayers before a meal. As beautiful and long as they may be, they will never be enough to transform the meal, with all its everyday reality, to a religious act as conceived in the Bible. That means that we must eat together, in the presence of God, with great joy for all that is good in his gifts for us.

(Father Doncoeur)



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

- Share with the team an experience of a family meal that occurred during the month.
- Reflect as a team on what changes each family might make in their own family to follow more fully the ideas proposed in the study theme.
- Sharing material goods with our brothers invites us to share our spiritual gifts with them also. What experiences have you had in this area?
- Welcoming must be a fundamental characteristic of our small community. How have we felt welcomed by the other couples in our team?



Orientations for:

- **Reading of the Word, Personal and Conjugal Prayer**

“I tell you most solemnly, you are not looking for me because you have seen the signs but because you had all the bread you wanted to eat. Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal.

Then they said to him, “What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?” Jesus gave them this answer: “This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent.”

(John 6, 26-29)

- **A sit-down**

The study theme tells us: *“It was during a meal, around a table, in the company of his friends, the apostles, that Christ instituted the Eucharist. This was done in order to gather his children in remembrance of the Last Supper.”*

The Christian Community saw in the Eucharist something more than a normal, friendly meal. It was the **“Lord’s Supper,”** during which they entered into communion with the body and blood of Christ, and renewed their hope in the return of the Savior.

In the Eucharist, Christ gives himself as *“living bread come down from heaven.”*

For the duty of the sit-down this month, we propose that you:

- Participate in the Eucharistic Meal as a couple, and after having received the Lord, have a sit-down.
- Share with each other what receiving Holy Communion (food *“descended from heaven”*) means to you as individuals and as a couple.
- Reflect on how the **“Lord’s Supper”** enriches our life and the lives of our children.

- **A rule of life**

We propose that during this month the blessing before meals be offered in a deeper more conscientious way than usual. We also need to remember that we are invited to have the same attitude during the meal that Jesus had with his disciples,

Be it in dialogue, in listening, in friendship and in giving advice.



C. For the Team Meeting

The Animating couple (discussion couple) and the Responsible Couple should prepare a meeting in which the meal will receive special significance for the team and which demonstrates the characteristics mentioned in the study theme.

There must be special concern that the meeting reflect the mystique, simplicity and friendship that are the message of this study theme.



Prayer for the blessing before the meal

*Lord our God,
Today, like every day,
You distribute your wonders among us.
We praise you
for giving us our food when we need it.
Introduce in our hearts concern
for those who are hungry
and who die without having known you,
Lord, we thank you for this meal
you are giving us out of love.
Make us available to listen to your message
and to transmit it to our brothers and sisters.
For man does not live only by bread
but by every word that leaves Your mouth.*

Haquin and R. Lejeune

Lord Jesus,
We want to eat today
Around this table of friends,
The food of new life.
Ame



For reflection on the Word of God

Luke 24, 29-31

“But they pressed him to stay with them. ‘It is nearly evening,’ they said, ‘and the day is almost over.’ So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; but he had vanished from their sight.”



• • • **Study Topic and reflection – Questions to share**

Share all the questions relating to the study theme that have been prepared as a couple.



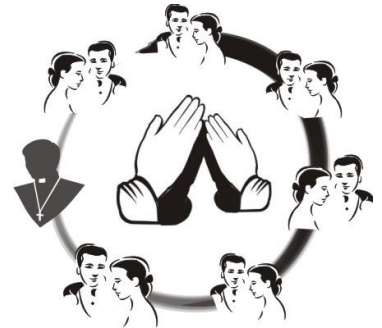
• • • **The Magnificat**

The meeting ends with the Magnificat, in union with all couples in Teams of Our Lady

FOURTH MEETING

WE PRAY TOGETHER

“They remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers”
(Acts 2, 42)



A. Objective

To understand that prayer in the team setting brings about a profound encounter in the team community, allowing each team member to try to give a personal response to the Word of God, a prayer of praise, of request, of thanks, affecting all aspects of his life.

To deepen the experience of prayer as shared in the team

B. Our focus during the month

Life Experience

Just like the early Church, our teams are called to be “faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2, 42). During this month let us emphasize prayer on behalf of the others in the team, as well as perseverance in prayer throughout the month. Let’s renew each day our prayer for the intentions presented during the last meeting. A few suggestions: why not write down the intentions of the couples and leave them in a visible place, so that they can be reviewed during conjugal prayer and/or when we say the “Magnificat.” Pray each day especially for the intentions of a specific couple or the spiritual counselor.

Study Theme and Reflection

Prayer during the Team Meeting

Prayer during the team meeting opens our hearts and prepares us for the acceptance and the action of grace. It is placed at the beginning of the meeting in order to establish from that moment on “communion “ on a truly spiritual level.

Prayer in the team has its rightful place in a small community of couples. Through prayer each person has the opportunity to come to know each other in depth, in their relationship with God. Prayer becomes the source of true and deep friendships. It is not limited to a specific moment. It is present always, from the beginning to the end of the meeting.

The sequence of prayer during a team meeting may unfold like this:

- **Reading of the Word of God**

This could start with a short prayer, a psalm or hymn asking God to open our ears, our mind and our heart. The reading of the chosen text is done slowly and out loud. Usually it is the Spiritual Counselor or the host couple who proclaim the Word of God.

The biblical text may be taken from the study topic proposed by the Movement. The team is free to choose another text during the preparation meeting. In this case, all couples should be notified in advance, so that they have time to read and meditate on the passage before the meeting.

- **Listening to the Word of God**

After the reading of the Word, there should be a few minutes of silence to allow understanding and meditation on the passage. Silence is also a form of prayer.

Before speaking to God in prayer we should listen to Him, as Mary did. Christ is with us; what is He saying to us? The Word of God brings us life and helps us listen with our whole heart. Like Solomon we must ask God to give us a “listening heart.”

- **Personal prayers**

God speaks and we listen to Him. Everyone’s personal prayer springs from reflection and internalization. We can then see variety among the prayer responses, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, but, at the same time the unity of heart that He creates within our small community.

The aim is not to comment about the text but to give a personal response to what the Lord is saying to us. This personal response binds us to Him and to our brothers and sisters. When we express our personal prayer aloud, we are in communion with each other. By revealing our inner self to each other we are offering each other mutual support. This prayer is intimately binding. The more honest and open the prayer, the deeper the bonds of communion in the team.

This prayer must be spontaneous: speak to Our Lord from the heart, revealing the fruit of our listening and of our meditation.

For various reasons some teams members may not feel at ease in expressing themselves aloud. The team should adopt a respectful attitude towards them. It should not hesitate to encourage them, reminding them that God speaks to us through our brothers and sisters, while emphasizing that this moment is essential for mutual spiritual support.

After hearing the Word and spontaneous prayer, a moment of silence should follow so that each one may continue his dialogue with God.

- **Intentions**

Following personal prayer each one briefly and simply expresses his or her intentions, which should have been prepared in advance. These intentions include not only for those we know and love, but also for the Movement, the Church and all of mankind.

These shared intentions are received by each team member and in an expression of love and support are prayed for during the following month.

- **Concluding prayer**

The Spiritual Counselor, “appointed to act on behalf of human beings in relationships with God” (Hebrews 5, 1), participates with his own personal prayer and his intentions. He gathers the prayers and intentions of all and presents them to Our Lord. He, the one who makes Christ present

as head of the small community that is the team, unites the prayer of the team to the prayer of the whole Church.

Prayer time may end with a Liturgical Prayer, as a way of uniting the prayer of the team to the great prayer of the universal church. The team may recite a psalm, a song, the Lord's Prayer or any other prayer they may have chosen during the Preparatory Meeting..

The Magnificat

Teams worldwide end their team meeting by reciting the Cantic of Mary, the Magnificat, in union with all the members of Teams of Our Lady.

Blessing by the Spiritual Counselor

With the blessing of the Spiritual Counselor at the end of the meeting we are sent forth to live out our mission.

Celebration of the Eucharist

The Eucharist is the celebration of the greater Church community. Even though it is not a part of the structure of the team meeting, we may celebrate the Eucharist on important dates, at a couple's home such as the feast of the Immaculate Conception or on the occasion of the election of a new Responsible Couple. However, in certain places it is not permitted; it depends on the orientation of the local church.

Supporting Text

Reacting to God

In psychology as well as in biology, there is an in-depth study of reactions, defined as the responses of a living being to stimuli. I wonder why, in the area of spirituality, so little attention is paid to this notion. And yet, in one sense, we must say that the spiritual life – and prayer in particular – is man's reaction to God.

All the fundamental religious attitudes of the human person at prayer (adoration, self-offering, praise, fear, thanksgiving and consecration) are understandable only from this point of view.

Let us suppose the thought of God's transcendence comes to your mind, either suddenly as the effect of a grace, or perhaps at the end of a laborious meditation. Are you not irresistibly impelled to prostrate yourself like a Bedouin at the hour of prayer? To lay down not only your body, but your mind, your heart and your whole life?

When you discover that everything comes from God, do you not experience the need to give your whole being back to God, in a surge of self-offering and submission?

When you see a reflection from God's splendor in creatures, does not admiration rise from your heart to your lips in a hymn of praise? Many of the Psalms were born of this contemplation!

When God allows you to glimpse his holiness, do you not experience a feeling of awe, a reverential fear, a quivering of your whole being, a keen awareness not only of your own smallness but also of your sinfulness? Isaiah, suddenly confronting the holiness of the Lord, cried out, "Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips." (Is 6: 5)

When you remember the many graces you have received during your life, does not thanksgiving (that turning of the grateful creature toward the Creator, that joyous leap of the child toward his Father) completely elate you?

And if one day, the infinite love with which you are loved reveals itself, do you not feel the need to consecrate yourself to God by offering him your whole being?

Now do you understand what I meant when I told you that prayer is the soul's reaction to God? Obviously all these interior attitudes are not necessarily explicit in each and every hour of mental prayer. One or another of them predominates. But the religious roots of our prayer consist of these great sentiments that persevering mental prayer accumulates little by little.

It would be just as absurd to claim that we can draw these wellsprings of prayer from within ourselves, without first meditating on the perfections of God, as for a mirror to claim that it makes light emanate from itself.

Some day God may take the initiative in letting you glimpse one or another of his perfections. But in the meantime, you must set out to discover them gropingly and continue to meditate without getting discouraged, sustained by a joyful hope.

Father Henri Caffarel



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

The study theme helped us better understand the stages of prayer shared during the team meeting. Let us now try to reflect on how we live this prayer.

- The prayer we share together leads us to a common spirit (soul); it truly leads to spiritual communion.” In what measure does this communion exist in our team? What helps us? What hinders us?
- During our team meetings, what value do we place on our time of praying together? Is our prayer time truly an important part of our meeting?
- How do we respond to the Scripture text for meditation? Are these prayers truly moments of hearing and responding in a personal way to the Word of God?



Orientations for

- **Hearing the Word of God, personal and conjugal prayer**

“Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus. Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good.”

(1Thessalonians 5, 16 – 21)

- **The Sit-Down**

The quality of our prayer in the team meeting is intimately tied to what we experience in our personal and conjugal prayer. Let's try then, in the sit-down this month, to understand a little better how we are living our daily prayer.

Imagine how rich our conjugal prayer would be if, in a certain way, we could truly involve ourselves in the various parts of prayer in the meeting: hearing, responding to the Word of God, the intentions and the prayer of the whole church. Does our conjugal prayer benefit from this experience? To what extent? Do we want to and can we improve gradually? What are the obstacles to making progress? What can we do to improve?

Do we prepare our prayers before the team meeting? Do we read and reflect on, in advance, the Word of God indicated for the team meeting? Do we prepare our intentions?

- **The Rule of Life**

Prayer requires continuous learning, one step at a time, which leads us to true encounter with God. As a rule of life for this month, each one is encouraged to undertake the challenge of taking a step forward in prayer. Let each person decide what is necessary and what is possible to achieve at this time so that their personal, conjugal, family, or community prayer will improve.

C. For the Team Meeting

During the entire month, let's try to deepen our understanding and our experience of shared prayer. In the meeting, reunited in the name of Christ, we will be experiencing communion of spirit which lets us welcome each other. Together we proclaim the Word of God, listen to and respond to God who is speaking to us.



○ ○ ○ **Prayer for the blessing before the meal**

Lord God, Our Father, together we wish to praise you and thank you for your goodness in making this meeting and the sharing of this meal possible. May we who are gathered around this table serve those who suffer from hunger of body and soul.



○ ○ ○ **For reflection on the Word of God**
Prayer for the meeting

Colossians 3, 16 -17

“Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”



○ ○ ○ **Study Theme and reflection – Questions to share**

Share all the questions related to the theme of the month, prepared by each couple.



○ ○ ○ **The Magnificat**

The meeting ends with the prayer of Mary, in union with all the couples in Teams of Our Lady worldwide.

FIFTH MEETING

WE SHARE OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

“Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works. Do not stay away from the meetings of the community, as some do, but encourage each other to go.”
(Hebrews 10, 24-25)



A. Objective

To participate in the sharing on the endeavors as an opportunity to improve the quality of our spiritual life and to promote change in our attitudes both as individuals and as a couple.

To deepen the experience of spiritual encouragement among the couples.

B. Our focus during the month

Life experience:

In our life as a team we are companions on the road toward sanctity. Each one follows his own path, but together we rejoice in our successes and we help each other in difficult moments.

During this month we propose that you experience what is called in some regions “guardian angel sit-downs.” Each couple will pay special attention to the spiritual path of another couple, drawing names during the preceding meeting, and will dedicate more time in personal and couple prayer to that couple, obviously not overlooking the others.

Study theme and reflection

What is sharing on the Endeavors?

Sharing on the endeavors is the heart of the Team meeting. It is the time when the couples, with an open heart and mind, share their spiritual journey in an atmosphere of prayer, of careful listening, and in an attitude of love which encourages perseverance and mutual support.

Sharing must include efforts made and progress achieved. The aim is not to reveal exactly what was or was not done, but to comment on progress made in our spiritual life, the manner in which the endeavors have been attempted, as well as the difficulties encountered.

Teams may have difficulty carrying out the sharing on the endeavors because they have not understood its deep meaning. It must be understood that in a journey toward change, progress is not always continuous and we must often start over and over again without losing courage. Quality sharing will not be achieved on the first try. It develops gradually as team life deepens and grows.

It is the Holy Spirit who guides the sharing. It should never be an accounting report nor to be carried out in a climate of humor, irony or apologies. Let's not look for excuses in order to hide our lack of courage in the face of reality or our lack of determination to "take one step forward."

At the end of the sharing we should always feel renewed, strengthened, determined to face life with a new spirit. We should be aware of our weaknesses, but, at the same time, be full of confidence because we are working for the building of the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, the sharing of the endeavors should be a collective effort of spiritual support and a path to conversion as a community. It is the place and the time where each person is responsible for the other in the most complete and deepest sense. We ask for the support of the couples of our team and we give them our support. Thus we assume responsibility for each other. The presence and the committed participation of the couples indicate that the team wants to be a living community in which each couple feels responsible for the sanctification of all the other members.

It should be remembered that in a team each team member is at a different stage of their spiritual life and progresses at his/her own pace. It is essential that these differences be fully accepted so that each person will feel trusted and comfortable to speak freely. The experiences, progress, difficulties shared by team members may help the others to continue their own journey in faith.

What should we share?

There can be no progress on one's spiritual path without commitment and effort. That is why Teams of Our Lady proposes for its members six Endeavors which are: hearing (listening to) the Word of God, personal prayer, conjugal prayer, the monthly sit-down, the rule of life and a yearly retreat. At the team meeting each one is invited to share how they "lived" the endeavors during the month..

The sharing on the endeavors must be so central to the meeting that everyone realizes that throughout the month the endeavors have helped us to develop changed behavior that have helped lead us to a more Christ-centered life.

Teams calls us to a way of life in which we embrace the following three attitudes:

- ✓ Grow to be more open to the will of God;
- ✓ Develop a greater capacity for truth about ourselves;
- ✓ Broaden our capacity for encounter and communion with one another and with God;

The endeavors are not arbitrary obligations imposed on us. They exist so that we might be led into a deeply Christian way of life. They are not meant to become a routine nor a sort of devotion; they should not be considered in a formalistic sort of way. On the contrary, they must awaken in us a desire to integrate the Gospel messages into our lives. We must be aware that it is the Holy Spirit who encourages our efforts in each endeavor, and we must recognize the interior change that the Holy Spirit accomplishes in us that we may model our lives in the image of Jesus.

How do we share?

This part of the meeting should be led by the Responsible Couple

This part must be led by the Responsible Couple.



There is no ideal routine for the sharing on the endeavors. It is up to each team to develop its own sharing experience, inventing and re-inventing it as necessary.

However there are two principles that we must never forget:

- Sharing occurs in the presence of the Lord, in a spirit of faith and charity in which everyone listens to the words of the others in complete humility.
- Sharing is not a time for discussion or for an exchange of points of view. It is a time of listening carefully to whoever is speaking, trying to express their thoughts.

Furthermore, to illustrate the point, there are a few questions and reflections which can help us to carry out the sharing on the endeavors, such as:

- How have the endeavors helped me on my path to conversion?
- How have I lived out my relationships, especially with Our Lord, this month?
- What have been my successes this month? What new riches have I discovered? What difficulties have I encountered?
- How have I lived the three attitudes in regard to the various endeavors?

And so on...

Supporting Texts

In referring to the “mystique” (mystical aspect) of the sharing on the endeavors, the authors acknowledge this two times: the time dedicated to examining more deeply the way in which each couple tries to live the attitudes encouraged by the Teams Movement, and the time when the small community (the team) works together, reviews and encourages the practice of the endeavors.

THE MYSTIQUE OF SHARING ON THE ENDEAVORS

“The Unceasing Search for God’s Will”

The habit of seeking God’s will, which each member and couple have had a chance to develop by striving to fulfill the endeavors, is reinforced during the sharing at the team meeting through the mutual seeking, exchange, discernment and brotherly demands of the whole team. The Team’s search for God’s will and any constructive criticism that ensues needs to flow out of love and be fully expressed with love. Love is not just a sentimental tenderness that readily excuses everything. An authentic love makes us desire the other’s good, as well as, our own. This kind of love is not vague. It is concerned with real, physical persons. It takes into account a person’s particular gifts and faults and tries to be infinitely respectful of his or her identity. What is good for one may not be good for another. No couple should pass judgment on another’s failure, since the demanding attitude towards others that love inspires in us must always be tempered by patience and selflessness. If we are demanding in a Christian way, we will be moved to bear with those things which we might be tempted to reject; we will say nothing irreparable; we will facilitate a return to sharing; and we will accept insecurity. However, we will also be moved to keep a situation from deteriorating or festering; we will answer truthfully; we will want to help others find their way through discernment; we will accept impatience and try to understand it. What we must not do is keep silent (an attitude we adopt all too frequently), or simply cease to react at all. A Christian must never adopt this attitude, nor should a team. A courageous love that is founded in Christ enables us to press on in hope.

The Search for Truth

Love requires knowledge, yet at the same time knowledge is a fruit of love. We love others more as we get to know them better. His knowledge must therefore continue to grow. The knowledge we are speaking of is not intellectual, but intimate, an encounter of heart and reason in which we ourselves are fully involved in the other's best interest.

Sharing on endeavors requires that those who meet together in Christ's name reveal the truth, in simplicity – without resorting repeatedly to defense mechanisms for protection, nor to hiding deeper truths behind a screen of superficial conversation. This sharing, however is not a confession. We simply comment on our failures as they relate to the attitudes the endeavors call us to assimilate. Sometimes it can be painful and difficult. It takes courage and humility.

Love impels us to a deeper knowledge of the beloved, seeking what is good and seeking to transform by love what is not good. This is true, both in relationship to ourselves and to others. It means knowing ourselves better and better, accepting ourselves with simplicity and good humor, letting others get to know us, and making a loving effort to come to know and understand the others. Truth is not mutual admiration or automatic excuses. Truth begins with self-knowledge.

A Life of Encounter and Communion

We have already said that the sharing on the endeavors is not an occasion for joking or irony. It should not leave us feeling guilty or condemned, nor should we feel that the others are indifferent when we speak. The first encounter we make in sharing is to savor the love of God. Since much of our human experience is centered on conditional love, it is difficult for us to know God's unconditional love for us. Yet, this is the love with which we are graced and which we, in turn, must strive to show our fellow team members.

*The team must also ensure that the necessary balance exists between acceptance and constructive criticism. **We cannot be harder on others than we are on ourselves.** Nevertheless, we must invite each team member to press on, not through harassment but through suggestions and encouragement. Our growth is generally slow; we experience springs and winters, pauses, pruning, and blossoming. To live in communion is to live in love.*

(Sharing on the Team Endeavors – Mercedes and Alvaro Gomes-Ferrer)

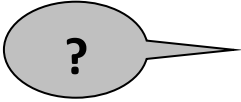
THE MASKED BALL

“To become true to ourselves should become our daily goal (obsession)...”

*You will be headed in the right direction if you follow the rules of Teams of Our Lady. If during the exchange of ideas each one speaks honestly and clearly, admits to what he/she does not know, asks for suggestions for a problem or dilemma, reflects with the others as to how to implement change, then that person or couple will be on the path to greater honesty, self-improvement. We will become more genuine if in our monthly meeting our prayer is from the heart, as if we were alone with God, a heartfelt outpouring. Teams cannot help but progress in their relationships if each person shares openly and honestly in the sharing on the endeavors (remembering the text from the Charter: **“Each couple reports honestly if during the month they have practiced the endeavors they have agreed to undertake”**). It should be natural for couples who have together agreed in the spirit of mutual support to follow a set of rules, to try consistently to live up to their agreement, sharing their efforts and difficulties. So, why do so many couples find it so difficult to report on their progress? Must they feel they have to keep up a pretense, maintain their reputation?*

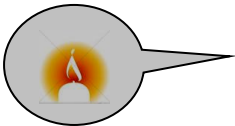
We insist on the importance of the sharing on the endeavors so that, among other things, you can put aside those masks, those “worldly appearances” you feel you must maintain.

When couples in a team move beyond the façade, try to act in total sincerity, then, as one of you has written to me: **“The communion of saints, among Christians who are open to each other, is not only a dogma to be believed, but an experience that is lived”.** (Father H. Caffarel)



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

- What attitudes and what behavior do we need in order to carry out the sharing of our spiritual life in the team meeting? What limits us in carrying out this part of the meeting with true sincerity?
- What attitudes and behavior are necessary so that each one can feel accepted by the others while sharing on progress in their spiritual life? How is our team doing in this aspect? What improvements need to be made in our team in this regard?



Orientations for:

- **Hearing the Word of God, personal and conjugal prayer**

“So give encouragement to each other, and keep strengthening one another as you do already. We appeal to you, my brothers, to be considerate to those who are working amongst you and are above you in the Lord as your teachers. Have the greatest respect and affection for them because of their work.”

(1 Thessalonians 5, 12 – 15)

- **The Sit-down**

The endeavors help us to develop attitudes that bring us closer to God and to each other. We suggest that the dialogue that takes place during the sit-down leads us to a daily process of conversion.

- ✓ Do I see God in you? At what times? How do you reveal God’s will to me?
- ✓ In our relationship with each other, and in our family, do we create an atmosphere of sincerity and honesty with each other?
- ✓ Are we building community in our daily lives? Are we drawing away from or growing closer to each other, our children, friends?

- **The Rule of Life**

When we are on the road, from time to time, we must stop, look around us, breathe deeply, and then afterwards, continue on our way with a renewed spirit. As a rule of life for this month we propose that each one take time to pause and reflect on his/her life.

At the end of the day, do a brief review of successes and failures; or, at the end of the week, take time to review what took place during the week, and reflect on your attitudes during that time.

C. For the Team Meeting

Having been more aware of our team during the month, now that we are together again, we can celebrate the path that each couple is on, our friendship and the sense of fellowship among us.



○ ○ ○ **Prayer for the blessing before the meal**

“Every day, as long as this ‘today’ lasts, keep encouraging one another so that none of you is hardened by the lure of sin, because we shall remain co-heirs with Christ only if we keep a grasp on our first confidence right to the end.”
 (Hebrews 3, 13 -14)



○ ○ ○ **For Reflection on the Word of God**

Prayer for the meeting

Colossians 3, 12 – 14

“You are God’s chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love.”



○ ○ ○ **Study topic and reflection - Questions to share**

Let us share all the questions relative to the theme of the month, prepared as a couple.



○ ○ ○ **The Magnificat**

The meeting ends with the Magnificat in union with all couples in Teams of Our Lady.

SIXTH MEETING

WE SHARE OUR LIVES

“Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow.”

(Romans 12, 15)



A. Objective

To get to know the others in the team and let them get to know you.

To practice brotherly love: “bear each other’s burdens.”

To become aware of what should be corrected, transformed, or included.

B. To do during the month

Life experience

In the life of a team it is important to know each other. Without that it is impossible to love one another with a genuine love and to truly help each other.

During this month we suggest that the team couples reach out in true friendship to the others by pairing off with another couple, picked randomly during the preceding meeting. These couples would get together in order to get to know each other better through sharing such things as difficulties, successes, what they enjoy doing – and thus be able to better understand and help each other on their path through life.

Study topic and reflection

Sharing Our Lives

In one sense the entire meeting is Sharing Our Lives. Even as we greet one another, when we share news about children, work, health, etc. we are beginning to share, referred to in Teams as Pooling.

This continues during the meal when we relate in a spontaneous manner (without previous preparation) events that have taken place, discoveries, insights; in short, what has been happening in our lives during the past month.

“At the monthly meetings, time must be reserved for the couples to share news of concerns and important events of their daily life,, whether it be in the family, professional, civic, church-related. They share their joys, their hopes and their worries.”

(Charter of Teams of Our Lady)

The Spirit of Pooling

As prayer leads to communion with God, sharing about our lives (henceforth referred to as “pooling”) should lead to communion with the members of the team community, meeting in the name of Christ. It is a time of mutual support and essential to the growth of the team. It is a privileged time for sharing not only our ideas and thoughts, but also and especially our personal, couple and family life.

It is a team dialogue. It is a time of freely opening ourselves to the others, of giving and receiving, of speaking and listening, of offering and asking. We entrust the team with our joys and sorrows, our difficulties, our hesitations. We ask advice and sometimes for help for certain aspects of our life. Mutual knowledge deepens and strengthens friendship. We reinforce our interest and concern for each other, our willingness to “carry each other’s burdens.” We welcome each other’s joys, sorrows, difficulties on a Christian, as well as a human, level.

Pooling implies great mutual trust, discretion and confidentiality. We know that what is revealed within the team will not leave it. Concerns of a too intimate nature, i.e. complaints about a spouse, confidences of a child, among others, should not be shared.

As a result, hesitancy in sharing openly will be overcome little by little. We will become less shy, more open, and as we accept each other’s differences, we will become less private, less fearful of sharing ourselves. During pooling the team should listen carefully, in a spirit of prayer, of love, and of solidarity, only offering suggestions or help when it is requested.

Pooling occurs naturally during the Team Meeting, especially during the meal, during the “whip-around.” In fact, many persons are more comfortable about sharing a problem in a relaxed setting, spontaneously, without waiting for a specific time set aside for that purpose. We must keep in mind that there are two forms of pooling: the “whip-around” during the meal and “deep pooling” for which there needs to be a special time during the meeting.

Structured or Deep Pooling

The expression Pooling is mainly used to designate the part of the meeting when, in a structured manner we share with others our personal, couple, family, professional lives, and our commitments in a way that reflects the Gospel.

An important aspect of pooling refers to our involvements. The Teams Movement asks us to help each other discern which apostolic commitments the Lord calls us to undertake, reflect on how best to put them into practice and how the team can best support us in our endeavors.

Pooling is also a special time in which the team helps us to evaluate our responsibilities as Christians in the world, to better understand and live them out according to the Christian concept of the couple’s and family’s life, in a true spirit of mission.

Brotherly correction

Many teams go further and practice what is called “brotherly correction.” Couples tell how they see and understand each other and what they do not like. This demands total honesty and total love.

This is what God said to Ezekiel and what he says to us during brotherly correction”. “I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead.” (Ezekiel 36, 26 – 27) If we do not feel the desire for this new heart, “brotherly correction” will not happen. Furthermore this brotherly request can only be sustained in a spirit of love and trust and a sincere desire for change.

How can we reconcile respect for the other and the help we want to offer to him? Only love can suggest how to intervene. Without demanding or imposing our will, but only by placing ourselves in the place of the other, acting with wisdom, humility, charity and truth can we hope to help another.

A word of advice: some people have frequent crises. The team must be careful with those who bring up the same problems over and over again, seemingly unaware of this or not wanting to deal with them. If a couple frequently needs deep pooling, the team, through a couple close to them or better prepared, should suggest a meeting of the four of them, if possible with the presence of the spiritual counselor. If, in spite of this the problems persist, the team should suggest professional help.

A couple with extreme needs can affect the life of the team, as well as its vitality. It is not the vocation of the team to be therapy for the couples.

Pooling: thermometer of the Christian community

A team only becomes a true Christian community when it reveals during pooling the love that exists among all its members. Let us look at how Christ says we should live this part of the meeting: “This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. Ninguém tem maior amor do que aquele que dá a sua vida por seus amigos” (John 15, 12-13)

Supporting Texts

“Proposing a toast is an invitation to affirm and celebrate life together. Raising our glasses in a toast and looking each other in the eye, we say: Let’s not be anxious and fearful.. Together let us raise our glasses and greet each other. Let us not be hesitant about recognizing the realities of our lives, and let us encourage each other to be thankful for the blessings that have been given to us.”

(...) A community is a union of persons who do not hide their joys, nor their disappointments, but, with hope, reveal them to all. Within the community we say: “Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, highs and lows –but we don’t have to shoulder them alone.”

(...) When we dare to raise our glass, and when we allow our friends to know what is inside, they too will feel encouraged to raise theirs and to share with us their secrets apprehensively hidden within.

(...) The important question is: “Do we have a circle of friends in whom we can confide, and in whom we feel secure enough to share our intimacy in order to grow in maturity?”

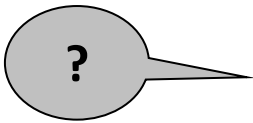
(“Can You Drink the Cup?” - Henri J. M. Nouwen)

“The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people, ‘Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did; I wonder if he is the Christ?’ This brought people out of the town and they started walking towards Him” (John 4, 28 – 31)

“The Samaritan woman spread the good news; Mary Magdalene and the disciples at Emmaus will do the same after the Resurrection. Jesus Christ does it during his whole life. How would we know about the Transfiguration and Our Lord’s suffering if he had not invited three of his disciples to accompany him? How would we know about the episode of the temptation in the desert, if he had not told us about it? That is exactly what the basis of Teams is all about: between Christians, between brothers, the riches as well as the needs are to be shared.

We must share our concerns, our lives, in mutual support of each other in order to discover God’s involvement with us and how we relate to him. Naturally, there will never be sincere and frank sharing in a team unless each one is convinced of the confidentiality of all the others.”

(Monthly Review of Brazil – March, 1962)



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

- What can be done so that the sharing during our team meeting can truly be a time of revealing our joys and disappointments with hope in our hearts?
- How can our team truly reveal its love? How can our team life truly reflect the love that Christ invites us to live?
- What is lacking in our team that prevents us from living intensely what the Apostle Paul encouraged the Thessalonians to do?

“And this is what we ask you to do, brothers: warn the idlers, give courage to those who are apprehensive, care for the weak, and be patient with everyone. Make sure that people do not try to take revenge; you must all think of what is best for each other and for the community.”

(1 Thessalonians 5, 14 -15)



Orientations for

- **Hearing the Word of God, personal and conjugal prayer**

“I give you a new commandment; love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples.”
(John 13, 34 – 35)

- **The Sit-Down**

“If we want to celebrate life with others, we must allow them to know us.”

(Henri J. M. Nouwen)

- ✓ Do we know how to ask for and accept a suggestion, advice, material or spiritual help?
- ✓ What do we think about the sentence above, written by Henri Nouwen? How should we incorporate this idea into our life as a couple? What do we need to do to improve?
- ✓ How do we make ourselves available to welcome and listen to everyone, starting with each other?

- **The Rule of Life**

Look for concrete ways of being more attentive and sensitive to the spiritual and material needs of those around us, whether it be in the family or in our community.

C. For the Team Meeting

During this meeting we will celebrate all that we have done during the month with regard to the suggestions to get to know others better, and to support them in their needs and difficulties, as well as to rejoice with them in their successes.



Prayer for the blessing of the meal

“Lord, may this food that we are about to eat, given to us through your goodness and through the work and effort of each of us, renew our strength and make us resemble ‘the multitude of believers who were of one heart and one soul.’”

(Acts 4, 3)



For reflection on the Word of God

Prayer for the meeting

Romans 12, 10 – 15

“Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.

Bless those who persecute you: never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow.”



Study Theme and reflection – Questions to share

Share all the questions related to the theme of the month, prepared as a couple.



The Magnificat

The meeting ends with Mary’s prayer, in union with all the couples in Teams of Our Lady worldwide.

SEVENTH MEETING

TOGETHER WE DEEPEN OUR FAITH

“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ The Lord replied, ‘Were your faith the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

(Luke 17, 5-6)



A. Objective

To draw closer to God and to each other in Teams of Our Lady through our study of God’s Word and related texts.

Promover o diálogo do casal em temas de ordem espiritual.

Ajudar a construir a equipe, reforçando os laços de amizade entre os casais da equipe pelo confronto de idéias e experiências sobre assuntos com interesse para a formação pessoal e de casal.

B. Our focus during the month

Life experience

Plan two-couple sit-downs to discuss the study material and your responses to the questions of this lesson, as well as to share ideas found in Father Caffarel’s comments in the Supporting Text .

Study theme and reflection

Why study material?

There is no Christian life without a living faith. There is no living and progressive faith without reflection. Reflection on the content of our faith is demanded by faith itself. Answering the questions that accompany the study topic enhances our understanding of our faith and helps to enrich our lives. As we recognize this, many obstacles are overcome, such as lack of time, lack of a reading or writing habit. Many Christian couples have only a vague and superficial idea of God’s message, His plan for us, as well as of the teaching of the Church regarding marriage, love, family, parenthood and education.

The couples in Teams of Our Lady want to grow because they know that it is fundamental for the Christian couple to want to reinforce and deepen their religious understanding, in order to evaluate and to focus their lives on the teachings of Jesus Christ. The monthly study of a topic will help us to move toward attaining this goal.

The answers to the questions of the topic should reflect the Christian experience of the couples. The study of the topic throws light upon the personal, married and Church life of the team members from the point of view of the Gospel and of the teaching of the Church. It stirs up in them changes of attitude and a ripening of their faith.

It should not be limited to a mere exchange of opinions, but it must transform the life of each couple and of the Spiritual Counselor. “The heart of the intelligent person acquires learning, the ears of the wise search for knowledge.” (Prov. 18, 15)

The choice of a study topic

Besides the study topics proposed by the Movement, each team may choose other documents related to the charisma of Teams. It is important to remember that any document, chosen for a year, should be helpful for increasing and deepening our faith. Whatever the subject, questions should focus our reflection on the issue of what does Christ say which is light and inspiration for our life?

Preparation by the couple

The exchange of ideas during the team meeting will only bear fruit if the topic has been prepared in advance. Each couple must study the material together and send their reflections in writing to the Animating Couple (Discussion Couple) as their contribution to the preparation meeting. The written answers of the couples supply the elements for the preparation of the discussion about the topic at the team meeting. They may reveal a lack of understanding in reading the text or they may indicate an issue that needs doctrinal clarification by the Spiritual Counselor.

During the preparation each spouse begins by reading the text, reflecting, then by responding in writing to the questions posed at the end of the text. The couple exchanges ideas, impressions and answers with each other. One of the aims of the preparation is to generate exchanges within the couple. Listening to each other is very important. Sharing each other’s responses to the questions gives even the “quiet” partner a chance to be heard.

The quality of the exchange within the team is a direct consequence of the quality of the exchange in the preparation by each couple.

The Discussion at the Meeting

At the team meeting the discussion on the study topic may be led by the Animating Couple (Discussion Couple). This couple should give a short introduction in accordance with what was decided at the preparation meeting. It is important that everyone has the opportunity to speak during this part of the meeting. The leading couple must guard against interruptions, side conversations and the tendency to get off the subject. The Spiritual Counselor answers questions about doctrine and clarifies any uncertainty regarding doctrinal issues. He may steer the conversation toward practical applications in the life of the couples. Finally he is encouraged to review the most important points of the discussion.

Supporting texts

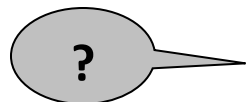
“Do you believe that you still have something to understand, or are you one of those Christians who, having acquired a few notions on the greatness of marriage, believe they know everything about this ‘great sacrament’? Do you hunger for light? Spiritual anorexia is a sickness which is too common among Christians. They are not hungry. Spiritual health can be recognized by the fact that one is hungry for knowledge of God, His thinking, His word. Do you study the monthly topic within this spirit of discovery? Do you know that your Spiritual Counselor is the dispenser not only of the sacraments of Christ, but also of the Word of God? Do you appeal to him sufficiently during the meeting? Think honestly. There is no Christian vitality without a living faith, constantly renewed by new discoveries.”

... “If Teams of Our Lady does not succeed in giving you a taste and the appetite for knowledge of God, if the study topic, after a few months or years does not give you the habit of religious study, it means that our teams have no reason for existence. Man was created to know, love and serve God. If he does not know Him with a living and constantly updated knowledge, he should have no illusions: He will neither love nor serve Him really...”

(Father Henri Caffarel)

“Conversations which do not take place in the presence of god risk falling into superficiality: minds play with ideas, hearts turn away from truths which call for transformation. In teams, we must strive for absolute loyalty: improvement whenever possible.”

(Charter of the Teams of our Lady)



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

- How do we deepen our faith through study, prayer and reflection? How important is scripture in our prayer life?
- How do we make God’s Word relevant to our daily life?
- How do we share this with our spouse, our family, our team?
- What effort do we make to find other texts/writings to use as study material that will aid us in deepening our faith?



Orientations for

• Reading of the Word, personal and conjugal prayer

“Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, ‘We have seen the Lord,’ he answered, ‘Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe. Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. ‘Peace be with you,’ he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.’ Thomas replied, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him: ‘You believe because you can see me. Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.’”

(John: 20, 24-29)

- **A sit-down**

Let us reflect together on these questions:

- ✓ How has our communication with each other improved through the practice of preparing the study topic for our team meeting? Or, what difficulties do we encounter as we prepare for this aspect of the team meeting? What can we do to overcome them?
- ✓ If we tend to put off or minimize the importance of the study topic, what practices can we adopt to help us do better? How can the team support our efforts?

- **A rule of life**

In the spirit of endeavoring to deepen our faith this month try to find an article from your church, from Teams, from a Catholic magazine that would be of interest to your team and bring it to your meeting to share with the others.

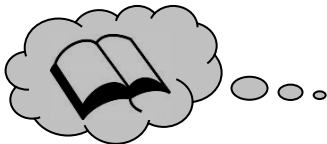
C. For the Team Meeting

In the charter of the Teams of our Lady it states: *“It is recommended that other gatherings be arranged, whether they be to share ideas, simply to deepen friendships”*. Let us share the experience gained during this month.”



Prayer for the blessing before the meal

“Dear God, our Father, we thank you for our many blessings. As we gather for this meal we ask that it provide us with the nourishment we need to deepen our faith and to live in your Word.”



For reflection on the Word of God

Prayer for the meeting

Luke 17, 11-19

“Now on the way to Jerusalem he traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered one of the villages, ten lepers came to meet him. They stood some way off and called to him, ‘Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.’ When he saw them he said, ‘Go and show yourselves to the priests.’ Now as they were going away they were cleansed. Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice and threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked him. The man was a Samaritan. This made Jesus say, ‘Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they? It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner. And he said to the man, ‘Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.’”



Study topic and reflection - Questions to share

Let us share the questions of the month as a team, after having prepared them as a couple.



The Magnificat

The meeting should finish with Mary’s prayer, The Magnificat, in union with all the couples of Teams of Our Lady all over the world.

EIGHTH MEETING

TEAM LIFE

“The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common. The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect.”

(Acts 4, 32-33)



A. Objective

To live lives full of prayer, sharing and support of each other and among the Teams couples, as opportunities of progress on the path to Our Lord and to give witness to Him through our lives.

B. Our focus during the month

Life Experience

As an example of the first Christian communities who were “united, heart and soul,” let’s look for opportunities to meet with our team to pray together, to socialize and just to be together.

Study theme and reflection

What good is a team meeting if our team life consists only of the time we are together for the meeting, but then is forgotten, if there is no transformation, no deeper coherence between faith and daily life. It is necessary for the spirit of the team meeting to be maintained throughout the month, so that each couple, and the team itself, may truly be a sign of love, an instrument to transform the world. If we live during the month with this missionary spirit, the team meeting becomes a true celebration.

The more frequently we meet, the more we become a true team community. A practical observation, the result of long experience: no team can truly survive unless there are frequent meetings among the couples of the team. It can be affirmed that team life (life as a team) is a means of growing together, a given that at each meeting and at each gathering we are invited to stop and to think about our being part of the Movement. These are opportunities which can redirect us or confirm our dedication to what Teams of Our Lady can offer us.

Likewise, it is very important to rely on the presence of the Spiritual Counselor who, assuming his function as a representative of Christ, serves the Church through this small Ecclesia. The couples of the teams should maintain a close relationship with their spiritual counselor, then the sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, lead to the salvation of all through service to each other. The Spiritual Counselors, when available, are invited to share in the life of the team, and the couples, who receive so much from them, are called to intensify their prayers for them and for their ministry for the glory of God and the good of the Church.



Every team must have a clear idea of its objective. Experience shows us that this must be reviewed frequently. We know of many organizations in which the original purpose is lost, only appearances remain. And this appearance is given ever greater importance.

We must be “united, heart and soul” as it says in the Acts of the Apostles. In order for that to happen we must accept each other and truly live in solidarity and brotherhood. Then our team will become a true community of Christian couples, witnesses of God’s love for mankind.

To make this happen, team life cannot be limited to the monthly meeting. There are many ways to keep alive the “flame” of the community, depending on the creativity and the initiative of each team: for example, praying in union with and for the intentions of the other members of the team, mutual help during the month and other possibilities. We can never forget that the team is made up of individuals with strengths and limitations, and the contacts between meetings help to create and strengthen the ties among the couples. In a less structured situation, conversation flows more freely; we get to know each other more naturally. These moments build community and then at the monthly meeting the sharing becomes more genuine.

It is the Responsible Couple, elected each year by the members of the team, whose responsibility it is to encourage active participation by all in this team life, so that support is effective and each person feels recognized, loved and truly welcomed by the team community. According to Madeleine Delbrel, this responsibility, it is true, pertains especially to the Responsible Couple. But no one can accomplish this if there isn’t already a sense of acceptance and brotherhood. The interdependence that ties the group together creates a mutual acceptance among them. Everyone should see the others as entrusted to him/her; everyone needs to accept this.

According to the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady: *“It is important that the couples of the team benefit from the deep friendship that characterizes a Team of Our Lady and that, even beyond the monthly team meeting, they feel connected to the team, as a part of a large family.”*

The practice of mutual support is one of the pillars on which the Teams of Our Lady is built. In the same way that the couples move forward little by little in sharing their spiritual lives, they should also feel encouraged to do the same as regards their material goods.

Monsignor Gustavo Martinez Froid, Bishop of Ipiales, Colombia, affirms that: *“Jesus-Christ wants his Church to live as one body where all the members are intimately united and where each one of them exercises the function proper to him): this will allow the Church to be for the world a true sign of communion. The Church-communion must also express itself as Church-solidarity: united, with faith in the mission, in the marvelous task of announcing Jesus Christ and transforming the world according to the message of the Gospel.”*

We are all responsible to maintain our own family. Since the Teams of Our Lady are such an important part of our lives, don’t we have the responsibility to support our Movement and to foresee its needs?

If we understand that we are part of the Teams of Our Lady, and that we participate actively in it, that they are our family, and that Teams has an important mission to fulfill, then we must assume that Teams needs our spiritual support, and equally important, our financial aid.

Supporting Texts

“You do not seem to me to be concerned with developing your team life,” commented the retreat master. And I listen to you: And whose fault is that? We were given a Charter, which put us on the right track, we were given study guides and themes for prayer: what else is there to do?” It is the whole life of the team which needs to be rethought continually, reinvented constantly if we want our team to be alive, have a personality, be a “real” team, if we want to make the Movement grow.”
(Henri Caffarel)

Nothing is easy or simple when it applies to community. A community is a union of persons who do not hide their joys or their sorrows, but, in hope, they reveal them to all. In community we say: "Life is full of successes and failures, of joys and sorrows, of highs and lows- but we must not live them alone. We want to drink our cup together and then we can celebrate the fact that the sorrows of our individual lives, which seem insurmountable when we bear them alone, become sources of solace when we bear them as part of a union of mutual concerns.

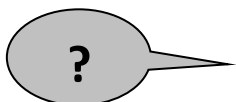
A community is like a large mosaic. Each small piece may seem insignificant. (...) We can do little with the individual stones except to compare them and judge their beauty and their value. However, when all these small stones are put together in a large mosaic reproducing the face of Christ, who would question the importance of each individual piece? If any one of them were missing, even if it had the least bit of expression, the face would be incomplete. Together in a mosaic, each little stone is indispensable and contributes a unique form for the glory of God. That is what community truly is, a union of tiny bits that together bring the face of God to the world.

(Can You Drink the Cup? Henri J. M. Nouwen)

The decline in the life of a team can result when the team does not want to accept the demands of reciprocal love (...). Together we must go to the heart of the laws of brotherly love and put them into practice, if we want it to be maintained and to develop in the team. I would like you to remember this: a Team of Our Lady is not only a group of couples where one practices brotherly love, but, above all, where they are initiated in brotherly love. And it is a very difficult initiation. We learn a lot about ourselves in dialoguing with others: and what we learn about ourselves is not always very flattering. (...) Gradually within the team, as we become initiated into the demands of fraternal charity, we will be capable of living it outside of the team, always growing toward perfection.

"... all the times and all the activities of the monthly reunion are oriented toward brotherly support... but, as you well know, this would not be limited solely to what we have discussed here. We need to be on the lookout for the needs of those in the team. We all know couples who have been saved by the material and moral support of the team."

(The Mission of the Christian Couple - Henri Caffarel)



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

- ✓ What helps us, or hinders us, from giving definite form to the concept of Team Life?
- ✓ Which is the greater challenge: support or giving witness? How can we improve this situation?
- ✓ In what way can the team help us, or perhaps has already helped us, in our interpersonal relationships outside of the team?
- ✓ Are we conscious of the material needs of our teammates, and of the necessity to support our Movement, not only spiritually, but also materially?



Orientations for:

- **Hearing the Word of God, Personal and Conjugal Prayer**

"I have given them the glory you gave to me, that they may be one as we are one. With me in them and you in me, may they be so completely one that the world will realize that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me."

(John 17, 22 – 2)

- **The Sit-Down**

The quality of our participation in the life of the team depends on the degree of our connection to the Movement of Teams of Our Lady, to its charism and its mystique. Where are we now in relation to the following statement:

“Because they are aware of their weaknesses and limitations, because they experience daily how difficult it is to live up to the Christian ideal in our modern world, because they have unflinching faith in the power of fellowship and mutual help, they have decided to form themselves into Teams.”

(The Charter of the Teams of Our Lady)

Are we being genuine, true to ourselves, committed to each other? How can we improve?

- **The Rule of Life**

From the sit-down suggested above, try throughout the month to reach goals mutually agreed upon.

C. For the Team Meeting

During the month we are trying to deepen our Team Life through meeting with the other couples: to pray, to socialize, to draw closer to each other. In the meeting let us try to express how this experience has contributed to our growth together, deepened friendships, so that our team can more closely resemble a true Christian community.



Prayer for the Blessing before the Meal

“Lord Jesus, together we thank you for this food which nourishes our body and for your love which has brought us together as a community in your name.”



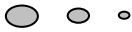
For Reflection on the Word of God

Prayer for the meeting

Psalm 132 (133)

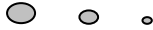
Brotherly love

*How good, how delightful it is
For all to live together like brothers:
Fine as oil on the head,
Running down the beard,
Running down Aaron’s beard
To the collar of his robes;
Copious as a Hermon dew
Falling on the heights of Zion,
Where Yahweh confers his blessing
Everlasting life.*



Study theme and reflection -- Questions to share

Let us share all the questions relating to the theme of the month, prepared as a couple.



The Magnificat

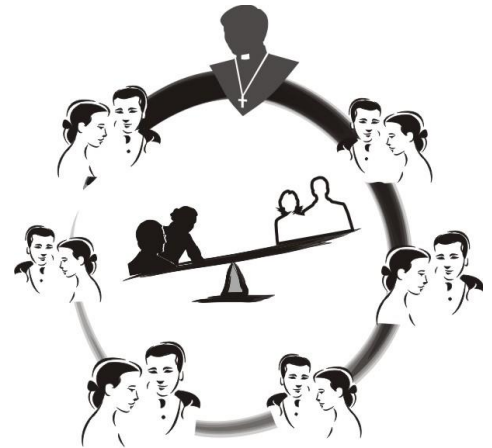
The meeting ends with the prayer of Mary, in union with all the Teams of Our Lady around the world.

EVALUATION MEETING

THE EVALUATION MEETING

“The last meeting of the team year is a review meeting. It gives the team the opportunity to reflect and review its life openly and in a Christian spirit. It looks back on its progress during the past year and prepares for the following year.”

(Guide of the Teams of Our Lady)



A. Objective

To undertake as a team a serious and calm review of the year just ended, considering the concrete suggestions offered and recommended by the Movement to all its members. As the name already reveals, it evaluates and projects various aspects in the life of each couple and especially in the life of the team which need to be strengthened, preserved or corrected, if that is the case.

B. Our focus during the month

Life experience

Long-term experience of any human activity tells us that in-depth evaluation is an indispensable element for advancement. Enterprises ruled by human action always set aside time for evaluation to allow for revisions. This is necessary in order to analyze the management of proposed objectives, goals which have been reached, methods used, strategies utilized, responsibilities assigned and undertaken, dates established. That which businesses undertake regularly, we propose for the Movement so that each team may learn to evaluate their progress and plan for the future.

The method used by each couple can be the classic “see – judge – act,” and what can be used for the meeting and the team’s life can be translated by “listen – discern – answer.”

During the month each couple will have the opportunity to undertake an honest review of their life in God and how they stand in relation to the proposals suggested by their belonging to Teams of Our Lady. In this way the couples will have enough material for their dialogue and, in the presence of Our Lord, and in the light of his Word, they will be able to look with faith and with hope at their lives, their commitments, and their responses. Such a review will certainly lead to more significant Rules of Life.

The first stage, “**seeing**”, means to know how to look carefully and honestly at our own life. It does not mean a superficial questioning, but an honest appraisal. That is why the “seeing” must be very sincere.



The second stage, the “**judging**”, demands a confrontation between life and the Gospel. It is not a question of looking for faults or mistakes, but that in the light of the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit we are able to perceive more clearly the contrast between the Christian proposal and our own reality.

The “**acting**”, relating to the third stage, is a natural reaction when we understand that in life there are things that must be improved. What we have seen and what has been clarified by God now inspire us to continue to move forward.

It is important that each couple be able to evaluate the various aspects of their team life and the commitments made in Teams of Our Lady. This evaluation will allow a serious dialogue several times during the month. The following questions can help the couple in their preparation:

Concerning the couple:

Have we truly looked for God’s will in our marriage?

Have we experienced a deepening of our faith in relation to:

- ✓ Our participation in the Eucharist
- ✓ Our effort to better understand the teachings of the Church
- ✓ Our participation in parish life or in the diocese
- ✓ Our witnessing Christian living at home (with the children)
- ✓ Our availability for the mission of the Church

How have we succeeded with the Endeavors?

- ✓ Listening to the Word of God
- ✓ Personal Prayer
- ✓ Conjugal Prayer
- ✓ The Sit-Down
- ✓ The Rule of Life
- ✓ The Retreat

How well do we prepare for the team meeting?

Do we prepare the study theme as a couple, and in a timely fashion?

Concerning the Team:

The Team meeting:

- ✓ Punctuality
- ✓ Participation in each part of the meeting
 - Prayer
 - Personal Sharing
 - Sharing on the Endeavors
 - Exchange of ideas on the study theme

Team Life

- ✓ Spiritual and material support
- ✓ Mission and commitment
- ✓ Various responsibilities
- ✓ Social gatherings
- ✓ Prayer for Teams worldwide

Concerning the Movement:

- ✓ Participation in sector or regional activities
- ✓ Keeping up to date on Teams matters through publications, newsletters, internet
- ✓ Availability to accept responsibilities of service in Teams of Our Lady
- ✓ Responsibility for the annual contribution
- ✓ Prayer for the Movement (Magnificat)

Supporting Texts

“(...) It is not my intention to suggest here an all-encompassing (in-depth) examination of conscience: in my home, my parish, my profession, in the country, in the Church, am I a parasite or a good servant? However, it serves no purpose to focus superficially on this task. More modestly, I invite each couple to ask themselves: Why did I join Teams? To receive, or to give?”

Next, addressing each team: Why have you stayed with the Movement? May it have been because of the study themes already available, to receive a publication, or to benefit from the experience of others? In that case, you are in the wrong place.

(...) But if they answered: ‘We want to participate in the mission undertaken by the Teams of Our Lady, we want to bring the Kingdom of God into our homes, to work so that holiness is rooted in today’s world, not just as a privilege of monks; we want to be good workers, vigorous apostles of Christ,’ then you are following the path of your spirituality, your team will be beneficial to all. (...) Being filled with the spirit of Teams, you will no longer find it difficult to accept its discipline. Your reaction will no longer be: ‘That rule bothers me; I protest!’ – but: since this obligation is for the good of the Movement, I accept it!’”

(Father Henri Caffarel - Love and Grace)

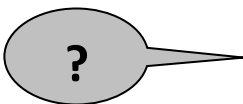
“We cannot face the Movement as a renter faces his owner or an employee faces his employer. We must feel like members of a “whole,” responsible to the “whole,” in solidarity with everyone. We can never set ourselves apart, independent of the growth or lessening of importance of the Movement.

A living Movement is a movement that is being built up every day, thanks to the action of each one of its members. Each one, in this work, takes on a responsibility proper to him, according to his particular outlook, resources, time and generosity...

A Movement declines when its members put aside the attitude of builders and assume a mentality of renters!

All of you, members of Teams of Our Lady, are you contributing to the building of the Movement? I invite you to put this question on the table.”

(Father Henri Caffarel – Builders or Renters)



Questions to share as a couple and as a team

During the meeting you will be able to share what each couple has discovered of special significance in its evaluation, and which will be able to aid in the deepening of the conjugal spirituality of the other couples and of the life of the team.

As the initial proposition was one of **“seeing – judging ‘ acting”** (the life experience realized during the month by each couple, the team listens to each other, discerns what is pertinent and responds, making the decisions necessary for improving the path of the team during the following year.



Orientations for:

- **Hearing the Word of God, Personal Prayer, Conjugal Prayer**

“There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another again the gift of healing, through this one Spirit; one, the power of miracles; another prophecy; another the gift of recognizing spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses.

Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ.

God has arranged the body so that more dignity is given to the parts which are without it, and so that there may not be disagreements inside the body, but that each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it. If one part is given special honor, all parts enjoy it.

Now you together are Christ’s body; but each of you is a different part of it.”

(1 Corinthians 12, 4 – 12, 24 – 27)

- **The Sit-Down**

Begin the sit-down with a listening to the Word of God, followed by prayer together.

After a brief silence, begin the dialogue with the following points of reference:

- ✓ On what occasions during the year have you felt progress, rebirth, positive change, conversion? On what occasions were these lacking?
- ✓ What are the most important changes you have sensed in your relationship with each other?

- **The Rule of Life**

After your sit-down set up some goals and objectives to work on during the coming year.

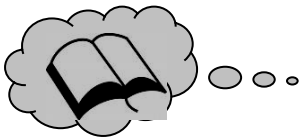
C. For the Team Meeting

Given the very specific character of this meeting and the possibility that it may go on longer than usual, it is important the team establish a system to follow. As a suggestion may we present an order for the meeting.



• • • **Prayer for the blessing of the meal**

“Lord God Our Father, you who provide everything we need for our spirit and for our body; we thank you for this food that we about to share with each other, as a sign of fraternity; we thank you for those who have prepared it for us. We pray, Lord, that you will grant us a fruitful meeting and that our lives will always be open to the service of others and to carry out your will.” Amen.



For reflection on the Word of God
Prayer for the meeting

2 Corinthians 8, 7 – 15

“You always have the most of everything – of faith, of eloquence, of understanding, or keenness for any cause, and the biggest share of our affection – so we expect you to put the most into this work of mercy too. It is not an order that I am giving you; I am just testing the genuineness of your love against the keenness of others. Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty. As I say, I am only making a suggestion; it is only fair to you, since you were the first, a year ago, not only in taking action but even in deciding to. So now finish the work and let the results be worthy, as far as you can afford it, of the decision you made so promptly. As long as the readiness is there, a man is acceptable with whatever he can afford; never mind what is beyond his means. This does not mean that to give relief to others you ought to make things difficult for yourselves: it is a question of balancing what happens to be your surplus now against their present need, and one day they may have something to spare that will supply your own need. That is how we strike a balance: as scripture says: ‘The man who gathered much had none too much, the man who gathered little did not go short.’”



• • • **Study theme and reflection – Questions to share**

Let us share all the questions concerning the theme of the month, prepared as a couple.

The choice of a Study Theme for the coming year

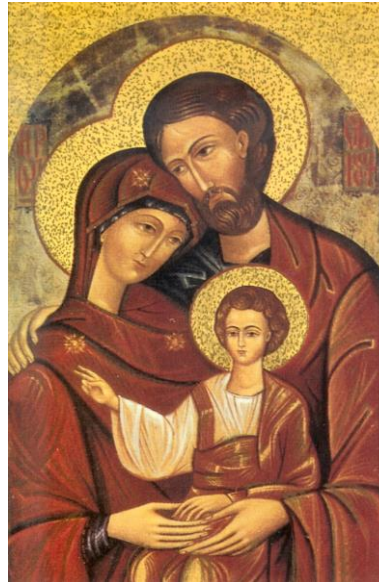
During this meeting, in accord with the orientations of the Movement, the team is to choose the text to be studied and reflected on during the following year.



• • • **The Magnificat**

The meeting ends with the prayer of Mary, in union with all the Teams of Our Lady worldwide.

APPENDIX



PLAN OF THE MONTHLY MEETING

1. THE MEAL

The meal is introduced with a simple prayer
It must have an environment of mutual support

2. THE PRAYER

- a. Initial prayer
- b. Reading and hearing the Word of God
- c. Personal prayers
- d. Intentions

3. SPIRITUAL SHARING

Exchange of experiences with the **Endeavors**, seeking everyone's progress

It would be good to add a reflection on **life in the team and in the Movement**

4. THE POOLING

We pool our life experiences.

We share with the other couples our personal, married, family and professional life, our engagements... in a spirit of mutual support and charity

5. THE STUDY TOPIC

Together, we go deeper into our faith.

The study topic has been prepared by the couples and their reflections sent to the couple in charge of the discussion that month.

6. MAGNIFICAT AND FINAL BLESSING

THE MYSTIQUE OF SHARING ON THE ENDEAVORS

THE ENDEAVORS

- Listening to the Word of God
- Personal meditation
- Conjugal prayer
- The rule of life
- Monthly sit-down
- Retreat

THE THREE ATTITUDES

- Assiduous search for the will of God
- Search for the truth about ourselves
- Experience of encounter and communion

INVOCATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and set them on fire with your love.

V. *Send us your Spirit and all will be created.*

R. *And you will renew the face of the Earth.*

Let us pray: *Lord our God, with the light of the Holy Spirit, you have formed the hearts of your faithful. Make us obedient to Your Spirit and we shall appreciate what is just; give us the grace of experiencing always His comforting presence.*

R. *Amen.*

MAGNIFICAT

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
and my spirit exults in God my savior!*

*because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.
Yes, from this day forward
all generations will call me blessed.*

*for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is His name,
and His mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear Him.*

*He has shown the power of His arm,
He has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones
and exalted the lowly.
The hungry He has filled with good things,
the rich He sent empty away.*

*He has come to the help of Israel His servant,
mindful of His mercy
according to the promise He made to our ancestors,
of His mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.*

*Glory to the Father, to the Son, to the Holy Spirit,
Amen!.*