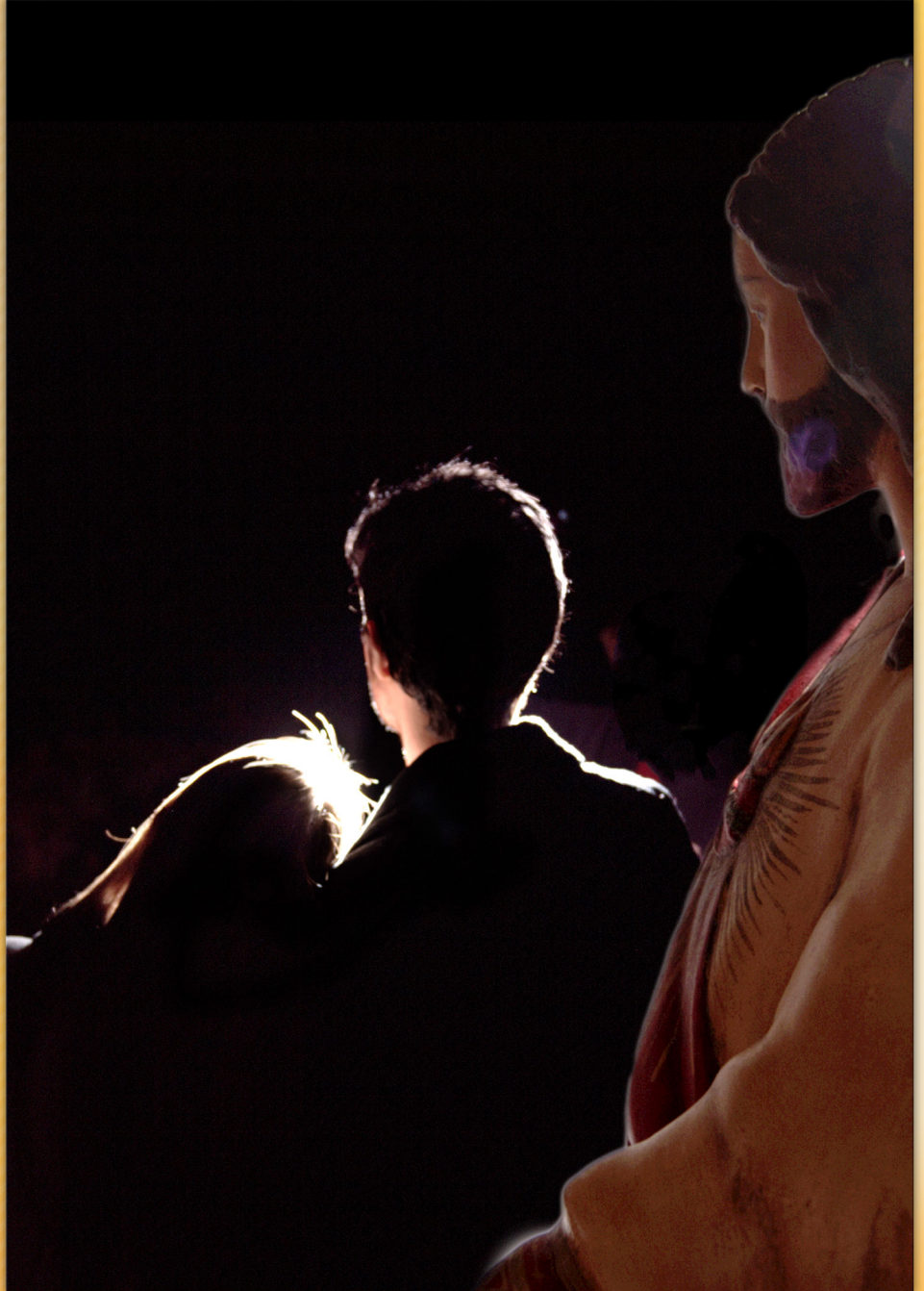


# THE SITDOWN



Team of Our Lady

# INDEX

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 3  |
| <b>I – Where does the idea of the sit down come from?</b>  | 4  |
| 1 – A wish of Fr Caffarel                                  | 4  |
| 2 – Biblical Roots   | 6  |
| 3 – The Sit down – very relevant in contemporary thought   | 7  |
| <b>II – Why have a Sit down ?</b>                          | 8  |
| 1 – Fr Caffarel's response to couples' difficulties        | 8  |
| 2 – The objectives for the sit down given by Fr Caffarel   | 9  |
| 3 – Because the sit down is good for both husband and wife | 10 |
| 4 – Why a duty?  | 10 |
| 5 – Why sit down?  | 10 |
| <b>III – How do we do the sit down</b>                     | 12 |
| 1 – Planning   | 12 |
| 2 – Preparing  | 12 |
| 3 – Sitting down   | 13 |
| 4 – Praying  | 14 |
| 5 – The Sharing  | 15 |
| 6 – Examples of questions to nurture the sit down          | 16 |
| 7 – Our Resolutions and Rule of Life                       | 17 |
| 8 – Finally giving thanks                                  | 18 |
| <b>IV – Difficulties</b>                                   | 19 |
| 1 – Lack of kindness                                       | 19 |
| 2 – External obstacles                                     | 19 |
| 3 – Most common mistakes                                   | 19 |
| 4 – Ways of overcoming difficulties                        | 20 |
| <b>V – The fruits</b>                                      | 21 |
| Conclusion   | 23 |



**Teams of Our Lady  
2015**

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SITDOWN

One of Father Caffarel's major initiatives for developing good communication between the couple is the Sit down. **The Sit down is the most specific proposal of the Teams of Our Lady.** It is an integral part of the Endeavours that are the basis of formation and education in the Teams. The Endeavours are a pastoral initiative of Fr Caffarel offering the opportunity for each individual and each couple to progress in their faith and their conjugal spirituality.

The aim of the sit down is to help the couple “**to make time each month for real dialogue in the presence of God**” (Father Caffarel). It allows a personal exchange in which the couple can raise issues for discussion and really see and listen to each other. It also helps them to pray and to love one another more deeply.

This particular Endeavour has been the means of making the Movement known to numerous Christians and has been the reason for a number of couples joining Teams.

**We hope that in reading this booklet everyone will be enabled to receive the graces of God given to us through our sit down.**

# I. Where does the idea of the sit down come from?

## 1 – Fr Caffarel's wish

In 1939 Fr Caffarel created **the first Team of Our Lady** in Paris with four couples who wanted to live their Christian marriage more fully. Six years later, in 1945, the idea of the Charter was born, which Fr Caffarel called the 'statute of obligations'. He was inspired by religious orders, which rely on a rule to support them on the road to sanctity, helping them avoid pitfalls, discouragement and giving up. He concluded that "we need a rule to avoid a collapse."

On the introduction of these obligations suggested by Fr Caffarel, a third of Teams couples gave up. At the time he found this discouraging. But during the following years, the Teams which hadn't undertaken these obligations folded, while the Teams which had accepted them remained firm. It was because of this that the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady was published in 1947 which contains the "Discipline of the Teams" and "the Obligation of each Couple"

*It is 1945. For some years Fr Caffarel has been inspiring groups of couples – who would become the Teams of Our Lady. He has observed the difficulty husbands and wives have in communicating, especially on a spiritual level. How could he facilitate this communication so vital to the couple? He had a flash of inspiration one day while reading St Luke and wrote this note "An unexpected duty."*

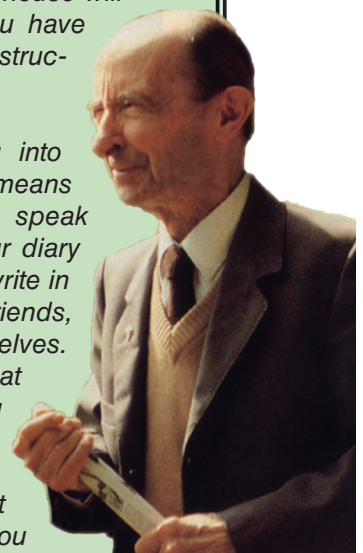
*In chapter 14 of St Luke's gospel, Christ invites his hearers to the practice of the sit down. Today in an age of dizzying speed it is even more necessary than ever to recommend this little known duty.*

*[...]Before you undertook to build a home together, you compared your visions, weighed up your resources, material and spiritual, and worked out a plan. But while working at your marriage, have you overlooked the need to sit down*

*together, to examine the work accomplished, to rediscover your ideals, and consult the "Master Builder".*

*I know the objections and difficulties, but I also know that the house will collapse one day if you have not kept an eye on its structure.*

*[...]To avoid getting into a rut, there is another means about which I want to speak to you further. Take your diary and just as you would write in a concert or a visit to friends, make a date with yourselves. Set aside 2 or 3 hours that are "taboo" to anything else - let us call it a "sacred time", to be more Christian. Then don't let any reason prevent you*





*from keeping that date unless it would also prevent you going to the concert or visiting your friends. You must not miss this date with yourselves.*

*How should you use this time? First of all decide not to hurry. Leave the shore; set out for the high seas for, above all, you need a change of scenery. Leave your preoccupations behind. Read together from a book that you keep for this privileged time.*

*Afterwards, unless you started this way, spend a little time in prayer. Each of you could try, if possible, to express a personal, spontaneous prayer out loud. This form of prayer, not to disparage other forms, brings hearts together in a marvelous way.*

*Then, entering into the peace of the Lord tell each other the thoughts, grievances and confidences that are not easy, nor always suitable, to share during busy and noisy days but which would nevertheless be dangerous if kept locked in your heart. As you may well know, such silences are the enemies of love. But don't stop with your-*

*selves or your current concerns; make a pilgrimage to the source of your love; reconsider the ideals that you envisaged when you set out with nimble step on the journey together. Renew your fervour. Then, returning to the present, compare your ideals with reality by making an examination of conscience as a couple. Make some practical resolutions and look for opportunities to heal, strengthen, rejuvenate and open yourselves up as a couple. Bring to this examination clarity and sincerity. Diagnose the causes of anything that is wrong. Then devote some moments to meditate upon each of your children, asking the Lord to put his "eye in your heart" as He promised, so that you can see them and love them as He does and guide them according to His designs. Finally, and above all, ask yourselves if God is the first to be served in your home. Have you nothing else to say to one another? Very well be silent together. A time of silence is by no means the least profitable moment. Remember this saying of Maeterlinck "We do not yet know each other for we have not yet dared to be silent together."*

**Fr. Caffarel , 1945"**

3rd May 1987, Fr Caffarel, addressing the Teams of Our Lady 40 years after their foundation, in his speech at Chantilly, recalls the founding charisms and adds a

concept which, until then, had been insufficiently understood; the importance of selflessness in the love between the couple.

*"Firstly, I was full of enthusiasm before these young couples filled with love and I thought that love would be the biggest factor in perfection and so I would need to say to them 'Be fruitful in love!' I was forgetting that Christ offers two ways to those who want to strive for perfection: love and self-sacrifice. God wants perfection for the Christian*

*and for the couple; he wants every human being to become perfect and that will only happen through being faithful to love and self-sacrifice; ie. In the gift of self and the forgetting of self. Love and self-sacrifice are two sides of the same coin; love without self-sacrifice or self-sacrifice without love is impossible to put into practice. On reflection I have*

*come to understand that the Lord invented marriage as the best means of developing love and promoting self-sacrifice. And I have understood that self-sacrifice cannot be lived out alongside love but that genuine self-sacrifice is precisely about taking it on yourself to persevere in loving to the end; to live always in a spirit of putting you first and not me. To walk on this earth the Lord has given me two legs; to walk the road of sanctity, the Lord has given us two means, love and self-sacrifice. So I came to see that I had*

*been asking couples to hop on one leg along the road and you don't get very far like that; you have to walk on both feet placing one in front of the other. And I am not sure that the Teams of Our Lady have fully taken in this idea.*

*Marriage: the best means of developing love and the best means of developing self-sacrifice precisely because self-sacrifice leads to love.*

**Fr Caffarel , 1987"**



## **2 - The Sit down has its Roots in Scripture**

*Practical suggestions: these texts may be read at the start of a sit down*

The clearest explanation of the sit down and of its essential character has

been given us by St Luke, whom Fr Caffarel himself quoted.

*"Which of you, if you wanted to build a tower would not first sit down and calculate its cost and see if you had the means to complete it, for fear of not being able to finish it after having laid the foundations and for fear that those watching would ridicule you saying 'this man has begun to build and he's not able to complete it? Or which king, on going to war with another king, would*

*not first work out if with 10,000 men he would march against his attacker who had 20,000 men. If he couldn't, then while the other king was still far away, would he not send a delegation to negotiate peace? So any one of you who does not renounce all he possesses cannot be my disciple*

**Luke 14, 28-33**

St Matthew explains the origins of the formation of the couple in quoting in his Gospel (19: 4-6) some verses from Genesis (2: 22-24)

Sitting and reflecting means that instead of building our lives pell-mell, we

can do so in a way that will last, founded on a rock as St Matthew tells us in Ch 7.

*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and beat on that house but it did not fall because it had been founded on a rock. And everyone who hears these words of*

*mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell – and great was its fall.*

*Mt 7: 24-27*

### 3 - The Sit down is very much alive in contemporary thought

Even if we don't have Fr Caffarel's intuition, we can be quite sure that certain couples are no longer progressing or perhaps even falling apart, because they are not entering into dialogue. In response to the question "Why did your marriage fail?" a large proportion of divorced couples would reply that it was because of a failure to communicate. If this is true, then communication is essential for today's couples and the absence of dialogue is without doubt one of the chief causes of the breakdown of marriage.

There are a number of other types of communication and exchange between married couples, but the presence of God, invited to be part of that conversation during the sit down renews the graces of the sacrament of marriage and transforms this dialogue in a unique way. In the sit down we are invited to make a conscious decision to commu-

nicate, which brings with it many other benefits.

1977, at the time of the **updating of the Charter**, 6 Endeavours, also called "Obligations", were clearly defined. Still today, some question whether the movement could be less demanding in the observation of the endeavours so as not to frighten off team members who might leave Teams because of this. But, as each of us can experience in our own teams or as we learn from the numerous testimonies, the practice of the endeavours and their demands (implemented gradually) are the most precious tools of conjugal spirituality. Formation happens by degrees; you take them on board as you go along, and gradually understand these demands more and more, discovering they are fundamental to the growth of the conjugal spirituality of couples who wish to invite the Lord to accompany them on the path of love.

## II. Why do we need a Sitdown ?

### 1 - Fr Caffarel's response to the difficulties couples experience.

These difficulties may be:

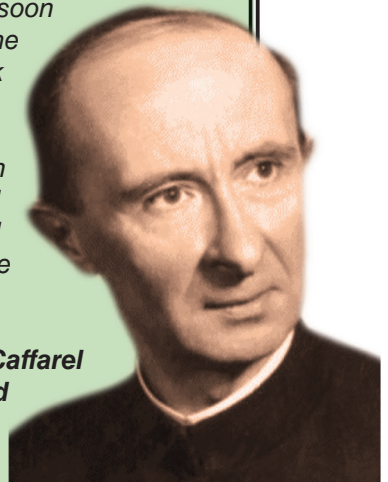
- misunderstandings, impatience, loving appropriately, selfishness, silences which keep cropping up throughout married life.
- difficulty in meeting together because of the demands of their jobs, their children, their commitments, their domestic responsibilities, different timetables, tiredness, and the temptation for each to retreat into parallel lives.
- omitting to express their love, which needs constant maintenance through words and deeds to keep it strong, so that its early enthusiasm is not extinguished.
- the uncertainty of work is now a very real factor and can be a source of insecurity which can harm the well-being of the family.



*"When a couple never takes time to stop and reflect on their life, very often a kind of material and moral disorderliness sets in and begins to grow insidiously. Family prayer, meals and all family rituals become mechanical routines. The reflexes of irritable parents take the place of real education. The union begins to crack. These deficiencies and many others are observed not only among couples who know nothing of child psychology or married spirituality but even among those who are supposed to be experts in marriage and family life. Not having taken the time to stand back and look at themselves,*

*the couple no longer sees what the visitor notices as soon as he crosses the threshold: this lack of care which their saddened friends do not dare to mention to those concerned fearing that they will not understand or be hurt."*

**Fr Caffarel**  
**"An unexpected duty." 1945**





## TESTIMONY.

*"I am not exaggerating when I say that the sit down is, for us, the only time this year that we have had the chance of a serious chat, in peace and quiet. In fact because of work, which takes up every spare moment, my husband's life is completely set apart from family life. I go to bed before him and he gets up before me; and so the need for a sit down is absolutely essential for us."*



Hence the need to make time for a meeting with each other in the presence of the Lord.

*"We don't see very well in walking, even less so in running, hence the need to sit..."*

**A Retreat Giver**

In fact, with many couples dialogue appears to happen, but in reality, it only covers day to day matters

## 2 - The Objectives of the sit down given by Fr Caffarel

*"While you have been working at your marriage have you neglected the need to sit down together to examine the finished task, to rediscover ideals, to consult the Master Builder?"*

**Fr Caffarel.  
The Sitdown 1945**

- To re-establish the original vision
- To discover Christ speaking to you as a couple
- To consult the Master builder (Lk 14: 28 – 30)
- To be enriched by your different spiritualities rather than let them clash
- To struggle against routine
- To make adjustments
- To stand back

### 3 - Because the sit down is good for both husband and wife

The practice of a sit down is not about merging of personalities. On the contrary,

the sit down requires recognition of the otherness of our spouse.

#### TESTIMONY:



*"The act of bringing out into the open our problems and difficulties in the presence of God, without getting angry with each other, leads us to cultivate understanding and respect for the other's point of view. When we tackle a subject during the sit down, in a spirit of true Christian charity, it is received with kindness and we don't put the blame for the problem on the other. We now have the secret of harmony in our life as a couple, in our prayer and in the word of God."*

In French the phrase for our English "sit down" is "devoir de s'asseoir" which means, literally, the "duty of sitting down."

### 4 - Why a Duty ?

The sit down demonstrates our wish to grow together in love. Love is not only a desire and an attraction, it is also a wanting to build up the relationship; it's for that reason that we talk about duty. There are

days when marriage is difficult, that's why we talk about duty. Understanding the need for a sit down demonstrates a desire to love our spouse more. There is no progress without demands

### 5 - Why sitting-down

**Because** certain topics may be put to one side, because they touch our deepest selves and nothing will make us tackle them. It is an opportunity to discuss difficult (or delicate) matters, such as our sexual relationship for example.

**Because** without constant renewal through dialogue, we fail to call into

question the image we have of our spouse.

**Because** unless we freely choose to deepen our relationship, we will never find other ways to dialogue and will keep on bumping up against the same difficulties.

**Because** we are committed before God, which signifies that He also is a part of our growth as a couple. He helps us to develop a deeper relationship in love and communication.

**Because** it is a way of nourishing our

love for each other, to be in harmony in the presence of God.

**Because** the sit down is an opportunity to listen seriously to each other. When we are really heard, then we feel truly appreciated

## TESTIMONY:

*“...and when we get angry we know there is a way to resolve the problem; call for a sit down. And when one speaks the other listens. And we finish with prayer. It is a continual reminder that marriage is a sacrament, it is a sort of privileged memorial to this sacrament, source of all grace.”*



**Because** it is time spent together, husband and wife, in the sight of God, to talk calmly and truthfully. This time, in which the spouses can express their feelings and thoughts, allows a better understanding and co-operation.

**Because** the sit down helps us to reveal ourselves bit by bit, to our spouse. It helps us to know each other better, to encourage each other and also, as we grow spiritually, for both of us to be more open to the word of God. It enables us to welcome the richness of the other, by discovering the marvels of God's love, which is revealed in the love of the couple.

**Because** not expressing particular difficulties can result in their becoming real problems.

**Because** it places us in communion with each other and, together with God, brings His presence into the whole of our lives: our plans and dreams, joys and sorrows, successes and difficulties.

**Because** it allows us to take stock of the past, to look carefully at our conjugal and family life, to make plans for the future and to share our vision.

### III. How to do the sit down ?

There is no ready formula or scheme to follow for this monthly meeting. Essentially each couple discovers their own way of doing it, whatever best suits them. It is necessary to have a regular sit down, each month, in order to deepen their love for God and for each other. Some couples encounter difficulties from the beginning, through shyness, insecurity or some other reason. No

doubt we have all experienced these difficulties or even misunderstandings. But a sit down is much more than a dialogue between husband and wife. It is among three persons, husband and wife and God. It can only happen in His presence. There are, however, some guidelines which can be followed, and are useful and make it possible to have a sincere and fruitful exchange.

#### 1- Planning

Make a date each month in your diary. Set aside a special time for the two of you; don't be in a hurry, give each other this time freely. The sit down is a reflec-

tion on the life of the couple, made in the presence of God and, as such, becomes a precious gift between the husband and wife.

#### TESTIMONY



*"We need to see the sit down, not as if we are sitting round the table for a work meeting, but rather as if we are betrothed, with all the mystery of future discoveries, but also with a store of the hidden wealth which the loved one has invited you to share."*

#### 2- Preparing

Sharing with one another is not as natural as it may seem, if we are to be constructive without hurting each

other. If we are to do it lovingly an excellent method is **to think ahead and:**

- Make a list of the points to be raised
- Put yourself in the other's shoes in considering how to raise the subject in a way that can be understood without their feeling hurt

Behave **lovingly, sincerely and openly**. In reality this is not always easy. Particularly when we are tired, frustrated or out

of sorts with one another. It may be necessary to postpone a difficult or sensitive topic. **Sometimes we need to adjourn a sit down that has been programmed.**

**It is important to want to meet together and to prepare for the sharing. That's why it is so vital to create the conditions for a "good" sit down.**



### 3- Getting settled

- Find a place that is conducive to peace and quiet. Maybe at home, going for a walk, on the train, by the sea, in a restaurant, in the country.
- Create the right ambience, light a candle, sit before an icon.
- Take the phone off the hook and switch off mobiles.



St Paul, more than anyone, in his letter to the Colossians, gives detailed instructions on the essential qualities needed to have a conjugal dialogue which is honest, calm, full of humility and tenderness and where each listens to the other.



*"As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience. Bear with one another and if*

*anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must do also.*

*Col 3, 12-15*

*"Brothers and sisters, if anyone is found to have transgressed, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take*

*care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ*

*Gal 6, 1-2*

With love and forgiveness, experienced and maintained, we will carry one another's burdens, as St Paul advises in his letter to the Galatians.

## 4- Praying



Prayer is fundamental to the sit down. Fr Caffarel insists on this essential point

*"Afterwards, unless you started this way, spend some time in prayer. Each of you could try if possible, to express a per-*

*sonal spontaneous, vocal prayer: this form of prayer, not to disparage other forms, brings hearts together in a marvellous way."*

Be silent in the presence of God who loves us. Invite Him into your meeting to lead us and open us to each other and create an atmosphere of love and humil-

ity. Ask to be showered with His graces. Ask Him to guide us in our reflections and discernment. Ask forgiveness humbly for the times we have wounded our spouse.

## TESTIMONY: :

*"I believe that above all we must prepare our hearts for the sit down in a spirit of joy and prayer, so that straight away we create an ambience which is both spiritual and relaxed."*



*"Thank you Lord for this loving sharing. For our desire to love you always.. For our joy today."*

## 5- The Sharing

In the study topic "The Mystery of the Endeavours" we read:

*"It is very important, during the sit down, that the couple recalls and emphasises positive aspects of their marriage, those of the family, personal achievements and other moments to celebrate. A marriage full of joy is a happy marriage!"*

## TESTIMONY:

*"We have a tendency to put more blame on each other than on ourselves; we have formed the habit of coming together in the sit down in a state of penitence rather than making demands; this is just one of the benefits of the sit down in God's presence. We see here one of the fruits of the grace of the sacrament of marriage."*

*"We have, like many couples we suspect, two very different types of spirituality. Through the sit down they make contact, intermingle and bring about a mutual enrichment rather than conflict."*



### **This sharing must take place:**

- in the hope that it will enable us to progress.
- in the joy of doing the will of God and in His joy at seeing His children really communicating

### **It is essential:**

- to listen to each other attentively.
- to not interrupt; never to start speaking before the other has finished.
- to use “I” (how I feel) and not “you” (accusatory)

- to be sincerely and willingly receptive.
- to be sensitive in our remarks, for when we share deeply we make ourselves vulnerable.
- Acknowledge our faults with humility and accept the faults of the other in a spirit of gentleness and forgiveness.
- Broach sensitive subjects with gentleness and with confidence in God’s love.
- Remember that often a couple will have different types of spirituality; it is a source of enrichment, not of conflict.

## **6- Examples of questions to enrich our sit downs**



### **How do I see myself?**

- What do I most like about myself?
- What am I afraid of?
- What is my best quality? What is my worst fault?

### **How do we see ourselves as a couple?**

- Do we like being together?
- On which subjects do we agree or disagree?
- As a couple, what are our strong points, our shortcomings and our limitations?
- How do we live our sexual relationship, and can we talk about it frankly?
- Does our spirituality embrace our sexuality?

- Do we share all our possessions? Our expenses? Household chores?

### **What is our relationship with God**

- What place does God have in our lives?
- How can we improve our knowledge of God?
- How is our spiritual life; are we looking to make it grow?
- Do we pray as a couple?

### **Ourselves and our children**

- Do we really know our children? Do we make time for them?
- What good things are we passing on to them?
- Do we respect their freedom in the way we educate them?
- Do they see us as a happy couple, a good role model?
- Do we prefer one child over another or the opposite?
- Do we communicate well with them?

- Does any one of them need special care and attention?

### **Ourselves and the extended family**

- Have we truly left our mother and father to enter into marriage?
- How are our relationships with our parents, parents in law, sons and daughters-in-law, grandchildren
- Do some members of our families not get on with each other?
- Do we give particular attention to the elderly?

### **Ourselves and those around us**

- Are we welcoming? Do we help those in need?
- Do we have problems with our neighbours?

### **Ourselves and the church**

- How much do we participate in the life of the church?
- How much responsibility are we prepared to take?
- Are we open to welcoming and supporting engaged couples?

### **Ourselves and our Team**

- How is our Team life?
- What is our relationship to the Movement?

The International Responsible Couple has perceived a need felt by numerous couples in the Movement to deepen their communication with each other and they want to propose some concrete ideas for couples.

One of the most important themes in the lives of couples is that of sexuality. This is a subject we may talk about naturally but we are aware that it is, very often, not an easy subject to broach. In order to help couples create the right atmosphere for dialogue on the subject, they have set up a Satellite Team called the “Theology of Sexuality” to prepare some leaflets for discussion between the couple. They consist of an introduction, a Gospel reading, a reflection on a current aspect of their sexuality and some questions to facilitate discussion.

## **7- Our Resolutions and the Rule of Life**

Many couples write notes after their sit down:

- to make improvements.
- to make a useful plan of action for the next sit down.
- to implement any necessary changes.

## TESTIMONY:



*“At the end of our sit down we choose a Rule of Life according to what we have shared in discussion; in different months we choose a Rule of Life for ourselves or for each other or for both of us together.”*

**The end of the sit down is a good time to choose a Rule of Life.**

This Rule of Life (it goes without saying that each has their own) is nothing other than a decision by each spouse to take on something which will help them to respond more fully to God’s will for them.

It is not intended to multiply the endeavours, but to clarify them, to reinforce our resolution so as to avoid drifting.

## 8- Finally to give thanks

- For the benefits of the sit down
- For us as a couple
- For our Team

**We finish by reciting the Magnificat**



## IV. DIFFICULTIES

### 1 – Lack of Kindness



- Defending and justifying yourself and **blaming** your spouse.
- Not accepting your spouse just **as they are**.
- **Assuming** you know what your spouse wants to tell you instead of listening to what they want to say.
- Having a **negative attitude** which makes dialogue difficult.
- **Generalising** in an accusatory way: “You always . . ./ You never . . .”
- **Judging** the other while they are speaking.

### 2 – External obstacles

- Lack of **organisation**
- Difficulty in making **time** for dialogue
- **Tiredness, a bad attitude**, physical or spiritual.
- Not valuing the **meeting**

### 3 - The most common mistakes

- **Forgetting to invite God** into our meeting.
- Rushing in and **speaking without thinking** about what we are going to say, which we may immediately regret.
- **Not listening**, retreating into our own point of view and disparaging our spouse’s attitude. (Pride)
- **Concealing our own feelings** about what our spouse has said.
- Making **insinuations**.
- Avoiding **particular subjects** because they are too delicate or sensitive.
- **Creating more problems rather than proposing solutions**.

## 4 - Ways of overcoming difficulties

- Give up having the last word
- Find a **good distance**: not too close, not too far.
- Dialogue with **humour**: it helps put problems into perspective.
- **Use “I” and not “you”** accusingly.
- **Trust** each other.
- Always dialogue in the conscious **presence of God**.
- Listen to God, ask His advice, don't speak for Him.

## V. THE FRUITS



*"And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight, to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blame-*

*less, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God."*

*Ph 1, 9-11*

- 1 – The sit down helps the **love of the couple to grow** because it promotes mutual acceptance and mutual giving. It facilitates the discovery of the truth, the goodness and the beauty of the other.
- 2 – It fosters **communication**, which is necessary for the very existence of married life.
- 3 – It increases our **fruitfulness**, and is also a great help on the road to sanctity.
- 4 – It is a source of **joy** in making us conscious of loving and being loved.
- 5 – It enables the growth of **friendship** between husband and wife and of their trust and intimacy.
- 6 - It fosters the practice of **mutual forgiveness**.
- 7 – It **enriches our spirituality** so that we appreciate our differences rather than see them as conflicting
- 8 – It makes us **aware of the weaknesses in our relationship and helps us to find ways of improving them**.
- 9 – It helps us **respond to each other's desires** so that we can offer each other what we need and not just what we think they need.

## TESTIMONY:



**BEFORE** – “At the beginning, the sit down was very difficult for us (...). Whenever my wife invited me to have a sit down I considered it was of no interest to me, that it was a complete waste of time”.

**NOW** – “Following our efforts to have sit downs, our life as a couple has completely changed. We have discovered in the course of time that neither we, nor a great many other young couples knew what “married life” was about, nor how to live as a couple. Now we are learning to develop together with God and the church. Our

conversations are no longer trivial and self-centred. Through the sit down we have learned to pray together and to make time for this and for talking together.

The parable of the last judgement in St Matthew (25: 35-36) tells us: “**For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and**

**you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing...** The most extraordinary thing about the story is the complete match between the need and the response to it.

## CONCLUSION

The experience of couples who have put into practice Fr Caffarel's insight reveals the **richness of being able to dialogue in depth and in truth in the presence of God.**

Since 1947, the sit down has been more and more evident in the lives of couples as they **progress along the road to holiness.** It promotes communication between the couple which is more and more helpful today when marriage and family life are under threat. The sit down is an important tool at the disposal of couples to help them grow in married love, in their love of God and of others and to live lives of forgiveness.

Everyone may experience difficulty with the sit down at one time or another but its benefits are beyond all expectation; **it improves listening and respect as well as an awareness of God.**

## KEY WORDS



Regularity,  
Progress,  
Listening,  
Stringency,  
Respect,  
Understanding,  
Prayer,  
Humility



Love,  
Kindness,  
Openness,  
Welcome,  
Acceptance,  
Trust,  
Forgiveness,  
Peace, Truth.



**International Responsible Team**