

Dear friends of SR Oceania:

Today our friends, Faye and Kevin, become our voices to address these words to you with our thoughts, our love and our prayers at this virtual Gathering of the Oceania Super Region, which brings together couples and spiritual counsellors from Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines.

In our hearts, we hope one day to visit your counties and meet you in person. We are thankful for the friendship of Chris and John, Jan and Peter, Vee and Rene, Faye and Kevin who we have come to know and love, as representatives of Oceania. Today, plans for the future are very uncertain, but as long as there is a desire, then opportunities will be created by the hand of the Lord and Our Mother Mary. So, it is not utopian to think that our dreams may come true, hopefully in the near future.

The theme your Super Region has chosen, "Teams supporting couples - connect, communicate, commit", has particular relevance in the current circumstances. If this premise was pertinent to our service before the pandemic, then during the pandemic, it has become the oxygen that has enabled us to cope with the unimaginable forced isolation that we have had to endure.

We are all tired of talking about the pandemic, and yet, without having fully considered how much it has affected our lives, we would like once and for all to turn the page and start a new chapter, which shows us a more hopeful and less unpredictable future.

In the many periods of reflection that the experience of this last year and a half has given rise to, we have come to the conclusion that in the world and, of course, in our beloved movement of the Teams of Our Lady, it was essential to strip away those things that were unnecessary, in order to fully appreciate the treasure that we have in our hands, and of which we are custodians.

Through the virtual world which has now become indispensable, the Teams of Our Lady, has been able to maintain and reinforce its sense of community. This is even in a time when much of humanity has been left isolated, helpless, and struggling to survive physically and emotionally.

Thanks to the creativity of the global Teams community and its leadership at all levels, our movement has been able to bring to life the very theme of this Oceania Gathering. By connecting, communicating, and committing, the global movement has rallied to support the spiritual health and well-being of more than 150 000 team members around the world. In turn, Teams members have also been sowers of hope in their own families and extended families.

Now, as never before, have we been able to appreciate and value in its full dimension, how privileged we are to be able to walk together as a movement, accompanied by the orientations which, like leaven, act in a silent and subtle way to transform and make the dough of our existence rise.

The life of faith is not a road free of obstacles. There are deserts, fears, fatigue and at times conflicts and despair that make us stronger and gradually draw us closer to God every day. The very life of the apostles demonstrates this. First, inspired by the message of the teacher, they experienced the "springtime of Galilee", full of joy and hope. Then the dark clouds began to appear on the horizon. Conflicts with the Pharisees and the barriers to their faith, were the first trials they were subjected to. The total stripping

away of their security and the great test of their faith came on Good Friday, when everything collapsed, and their idea of the establishment of the kingdom collapsed.

Before the young Church was born, the apostles remained in the Upper Room in an attitude of prayer, stripped of everything. The theology of the interior life says that during the second night, the hardest night, Mary appeared and enlightened them with her presence. This is what happened in the Upper Room. The Apostles were not alone. Mary was with them. She never let herself be overcome by despair, and her faith never wavered. She was with them as a model of faith, of perseverance in prayer and of waiting for the Holy Spirit. The Apostles, utterly poor, deprived of everything, without any visible sign of Christ's human presence, waited with Mary. It is then that the Holy Spirit descended upon them, filling their emptiness with his power. Thus strengthened, they were sent out to win the world for Christ.

Looking back over the history of the apostles, we might think that Jesus could have sent His Spirit before He left, to spare the apostles their anxiety after His death. However, this was not the case, as it was necessary for them to be deprived, in order to be able to receive him. Emulating this story of the apostles with our own life, we dare to say that in the last year and a half we have lived a similar experience of dispossession, in the world and in our movement. This allows us now to live the future with optimism, valuing even more the treasure that we have. We thank God and Our Lady for all the lessons that this stripping away has taught us, and above all for the grace of being able to count on this movement that has accompanied us at all times.

Today, we also commemorate the 25th anniversary of the death of our founder, Father Henri Caffarel. We hope, dear friends, it will be time of thanksgiving for the life and legacy of this wonderful man, and for all the graces we have received during these troubled times. Even in these most difficult circumstances, we have always been able to recognise the face of God and rely on the intercession of Our Heavenly Mother. She is always present in our lives, interceding for us so that we may not lack anything.

May you have a wonderful and fruitful Gathering, knowing we accompany you with our spiritual presence, our love and our prayers.

Yours in Christ,



Clarita & Edgardo BERNAL

Couple Responsable International