

THE LETTER



OF FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL
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EDITORIAL

Father Caffarel has left us some treasures.

Maria-Carla and Carlo Volpini



Dear friends,

As Father Angelo Epis was telling us recently: “The more I read the writings of Father Caffarel, the more I discover the riches of all he has brought us”.

Yes, Father Caffarel has left us some treasures. His thoughts are clear, understandable and especially prophetic. At the time of Father Caffarel’s death, Mgr Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, said in his homily: “This is a prophet”. Father Caffarel saw things clearly: he saw the difficulties couples had. He saw the urgency of offering a theology on the sacrament of marriage. He saw the importance of helping couples to live out fully this sacrament. He also saw to what extent couples could be the “yeast in the dough” and the “salt of the earth”.

Father Caffarel left us the witness of a man deeply united to the Lord and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Such, at any rate, is our conviction.

The founding charism, which is often recalled in official documents and especially in the “Second Wind”, obliges us to remain faithful but also to forge ahead. We must live out the challenge of married spirituality based on the awareness that marriage can be a way to salvation for today’s couple and can remain a prophetic way.

The beatification of Father Caffarel would be a tremendous impulse to make his initiative better known to the World and to the Church. as well as his way and the current relevance of his thoughts.

This is why we are happy that there are members of the Association of Friends of Father Caffarel. It is an indispensable help, not only financially, but especially to manifest our commitment to his message, our motivation and our will to bring to completion “the Cause of Father Caffarel”.

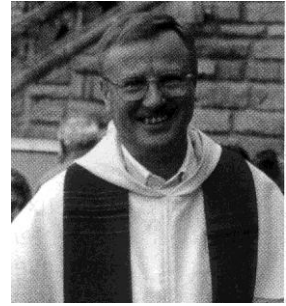
We thank you therefore for your support to the association and do not hesitate to make it known. Know that remarkable work is being done by the Postulator, the Vice-Postulator and by all who are involved in the association. May they also be thanked.

We want to carry on serving our Movement, walking along the way of Father Caffarel and feel collaborators in the building of the Kingdom of God. May Father Caffarel guide our work and may the Lord bless it.

Procedure : reputation for holiness

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits , o.p.

Postulator



Before having a quick look at the progress of the procedure for the canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel, it is important to note that a Cause of canonisation is always supported by the Christian people. The authorities of the Church initiate a procedure of canonisation because a servant of God has “a reputation for holiness”. Taking a universal example, everybody said “Mother Teresa is a saint!”. The Church then makes a decision and the title “saint” or “blessed” becomes an official title. Mother Teresa is the “Blessed Mother Teresa”.

As regards the cause of canonisation of Father Caffarel, it all began in South America and especially in Brazil which he visited three times. Because the International Leaders of Equipe Notre-Dame became aware of a “presence” of their founder in Brazil, they decided to ask for the opening of the cause. The Brazilians have opened the way. In France where he lived, those who knew Father Caffarel rejoiced at this initiative. The interest of French people for this cause is becoming greater and greater at present. Father Caffarel is being rediscovered. “A prophet for our time”, said Cardinal Lustiger, he will become so more and more “in his country”. The same applies to many other countries where Teams are established.

The spiritual interest of Christians who expect from Father Caffarel light and encouragement on their way to God, bears out his “reputation for holiness”.

The Archbishop of Paris, Mgr Vingt-Trois, has appointed a diocesan commission to invite witnesses of the life of Father Caffarel to testify to his “heroic virtues”. The expression “heroic virtues” means that someone has shown signs in his/her life of exceptional faith, hope, charity etc. Mgr Maurice Fréchal, archbishop emeritus of Auch, is president of the commission; he is assisted by Father Henri Moreau, “Promoteur de Justice”

and by Madame Brigitte Jezequel, solicitor. Auditions of witnesses have already begun.

The Archbishop of Paris has also appointed two historians to make an accurate presentation of the life of Father Caffarel and to verify all the sources of documentation concerning him. These historians have started their work. They are Madame Agnès Walch, known for her book *“Married spirituality in French Catholicism, 16th to 20th century”* (Le Cerf, Paris, 2002), and Monsieur Olivier Landron, professor at the Catholic University of Angers.

Two theologians are currently reading the works of Father Caffarel. They are to give a theological assessment of his thoughts. They are Father Alain Matteeuws, s.j who is known for his fundamental presentation of the sacrament of marriage: *“To love one another so as to give oneself”*. (Editions Lessius, Bruxelles, 2004) and Xavier Lacroix, director for many years of Lyon’s Institute of family sciences; he is very well known for his numerous books on marriage and the family.

Present state of the Association: **membership, finance**

Philippe Deney
Treasurer



The number of members recorded by the association in Paris at the end of December 2007 was approximately 350 couples or individuals. A third are benefactors and two third ordinary members. 70% are French, 14% Brazilians. Countries like Brazil and Spain have organised their own register of members and collected funds that are then forwarded to the association. There are no doubt approximately 300 to 400 extra members from these countries that are not yet included in the register of members in Paris. Even 800 members seem rather few in comparison with the 50 000 couples in Equipes Notre-Dame throughout the world. A significant effort of recruiting needs to be done since the cause will have all the more chances of succeeding if the association can demonstrate it has a large number of members. It was with this end in mind that the Super-Regional Couples, attending the meeting of the International College in Durham, decided to nominate a correspondent of the Friends of Father Caffarel in each country of their Super-Region. We hope to be soon able to provide a list in this Letter and on our Web Site.

As regards finance, the situation is healthy but misleading. Expenditure is still low; it relates principally to the Postulator's fee and travelling expenses to meet witnesses. These should increase during 2008 in view of the recruitment of a part-time secretary and of the start of activities of the Diocesan commission of enquiry whose members (historians, theologians, solicitor, secretary etc.) will need to be remunerated. As regards income, we benefit from two favourable elements:

- a substantial gift from the Super-Region of France, Luxembourg and Switzerland which sent the DVD on Father Caffarel to all its members and which contributed two Euros per DVD distributed,
- and the decision of the International Leading Team to subsidize the association for six years.

Without this help, the all too small number of members would not be sufficient to finance the activity. We must therefore mobilise our friends and relatives and find new members. It is important.

State of progress of the Postulator's work

Marie-Christine Genillon,
Vice-Postulator



The Postulator's work, interrupted during the school holidays, was resumed in October. The Vice-Postulator's task of searching through the archives of Equipes Notre-Dame is very efficiently assisted by Bernadette Chovelon, a member of Teams. The recent discovery she made, among Father Caffarel's papers, of a number of conferences he gave is a good reason for pursuing this research as exhaustively as possible.

Sister Anicette, a religious sister from Bénin, has undertaken the collation of all Father Caffarel's articles and editorials, both original and republished in international newsletters of Teams. This work makes it possible to assess his "reputation for holiness" that Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits speaks of.

The interviews with witnesses of all origins is continuing. Some have known Father Caffarel through having worked with him in Teams, or on one of his publications or at his retreat house in Troussures. Others have met him personally at one or other moment in his life. Others have come forward spontaneously after his cause had been opened. Further interviews are planned in the months to come, one testimony leading to another and complementing the many aspects of a life very full of human relationships. The variety of these testimonies reveal a "lively" personality.

Mgr François Fleischmann has completed the transcription of all Father Caffarel's editorials and articles that have appeared in the "Anneau d'Or", the "Booklets on Prayer" and "The Upper Room". This was an enormous task and a very great service rendered to the cause.

Finally, we await receipt of testimonies from various Super-Regions which can be translated in France.

Archives

An Editorial by Father Caffarel



We have just celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Charter. We offer you on this occasion a slightly “disturbing” editorial written by Father Caffarel for the December 1948 issue of the Monthly Letter of the Equipes Notre-Dame.

A CHAIR ATTENDANT’S SPIRITUALITY (*)

A few months of life together... then: disappointment. It surprises only those directly involved: they had entered into marriage to TAKE and not to GIVE.

After a few years of enthusiasm, a member of Catholic Action leaves his group: “I no longer get anything out of it”. That’s another one who is more concerned with taking than giving.

A young couple leaves for South America. Their parting words: “It is no longer possible to see big in France”.

The government introduces a new tax, a recovery package, spending cuts... Complaints arise on all sides. People don’t ask themselves whether the country’s interest requires it. “It does not suit me, therefore I moan”.

The list is endless.

Even with God, we come to take and not to give: “What’s the point of going on receiving communion and going to confession? I get nothing out of it”.

The wife loses interest in her home, the Church activist in his movement, the parishioner in his parish, the citizen in his country, man in his Creator.

Race of profiteers! Their loyalty is governed by self-interest. They don’t even have the honesty to acknowledge it; they criticise and blame others.

I do not intend to suggest at this point a wide-ranging examination of conscience. In my marriage, my parish, my country, the Church: am I a parasite or a good worker? Such an important problem cannot be dealt with in a short article. I will expand on it another time in the “Anneau d’Or”.

In a more limited field, I want to invite each couple to ask themselves: why did we join the Teams? To take or to give?

Then to each team I would ask: why have you joined the Movement? Was it only to find ready-made study topics? to receive a newsletter? to gain from the experience of others? If so, you are not where you belong. Meditate on these words of Saint-Exupéry in ‘Pilote de Guerre’ (War Pilot):

“I no longer dwelt as an architect in this human community. I benefited from its peace, its tolerance, its well-being. I knew nothing about it, except that I dwelt there as a sacristan or chair attendant; therefore as a parasite; therefore as one vanquished.

Likewise the ship’s passengers make use of the ship and give nothing to it. In the comfort of its lounges, which they consider unassailable, they play games. They know nothing of the work of the master cylinders under the eternal pressure of the sea. What right would they have to complain if the tempest breaks up their ship?”

But if you say to me: “We want to participate in the great task undertaken by the Teams of Our Lady, we want to establish the Kingdom of Christ in the homes, we want holiness to take root in the modern world and not to remain the exclusive preserve of monks, we want to train good workers in society, robust apostles of Christ” – then I will say that you have the right idea; your team will be a help to all teams.

Your team will receive from all teams; for we must always return to this primary truth: whoever comes to take, goes away empty-handed; whoever comes to give, finds.

Having thus grasped the spirit of Teams, you will have no difficulty in agreeing to their discipline. Your reaction will not be: such and such a rule troubles us, therefore we revolt against it. But you will say: this obligation is useful for the good functioning of the Movement, therefore we'll play the game.

And so now, dear friends, you will understand why we cannot accept that teams should do exactly as they like with the Charter. It is not that such or such a breach of the rule (not to attend a retreat, not to prepare a written answer to the study topic, neglect to adopt a rule of life, forget to pay your annual contribution...) is a catastrophe; but it is a symptom: the team has entered into the game, not to give but to receive. And this is serious. And it is for this reason that we consider that this team is not where it belongs.

We can't, after all, have too many chair attendants!"

Henri Caffarel

(*) Chair attendants: Ladies who, at one time, used to hire chairs in churches.

The meaning of Father Henri Caffarel's canonisation

Father Geraldo Grendene, sdb

Spiritual Counsellor of the West-Central Province, Brazil

The proceedings of Father Henri Caffarel's canonisation, of which beatification is the first stage, was officially initiated on the 25th of April 2006 in the Archdiocese of Paris. From then on, he received the title of "Servant of God". The first stage of this rigorous process includes the recognition of the exemplary nature of his Christian virtues and of the orthodoxy of his teachings. Having achieved this recognition, the servant of God will receive the title of "Venerable" and could thus be venerated by the faithful. The successive stages of beatification and of canonisation will depend on the authentication of a miracle at each stage.

The reading, on the 18th of September 2006, of the Decree of initiation of the proceedings was welcomed with much enthusiasm and emotion by thousands of team members gathered in Lourdes for the International Gathering. Nevertheless, it has also given rise to some concern on the appropriateness and meaning of beatification. Will the glory of beatification add anything to Father Caffarel's already well known reputation for holiness? Would he approve of this initiative? Is it consistent with his great simplicity and profound modesty in always avoiding any type of honour and of self promotion? Might the process of beatification hide a kind of vanity on the part of Teams, desirous of promoting the Movement by comparison with other movements? How is one to meet the inevitable cost?

We can always reply to these questions that any beatification is both a gift from God and an acknowledgement by the Church of this gift. In fact, the Church has the essential mission of being the Mistress of Holiness for all Christians. Jesus' invitation "Be perfect as you heavenly Father is perfect" is addressed to all baptised persons. When a member of the Church attains this objective, it shows that holiness is still possible today and that the Church continues to be the Church of Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life. She is the source of glory and of hope for all Christians who, once again, can ask themselves: "If this or that person has succeeded, why could I not?"

Moreover, the beatification of Father Caffarel would be a special gift from God to all Christian couples and, in particular, to the Teams Movement that he founded. Indeed, he has worked hard to reclaim and present afresh, in the eyes of the Church, the greatness of married life as the sacrament of the love of Christ. He did this at a time when married life was considered a second-class way to holiness by comparison with the way of perfection represented by the religious or “consecrated” life. His beatification will make it possible to confirm and support this theological position. The rigorous analysis by the Church of the life and thoughts of the Servant of God will give total assurance to those who are inspired by his work. The Church’s approval would be like a seal of quality on the recommended orientation to married holiness and, more specifically, on the Teams Movement.

Furthermore, the beatification of Father Caffarel would be an acknowledgement of the gift that God gave him. Every *blessed* person is a witness of divine greatness and holiness. Being raised to the altar would in no way detract from Father Caffarel’s simplicity and profound modesty. On the contrary, it will represent the exaltation of God’s power. Notwithstanding the humility and “uselessness” (“*We are useless servant*”, Lk 17: 10) of the Servant of God, the power of God was able to make him an efficacious collaborator in His saving work.

Beatification will thereby be for Father Caffarel a hymn of gratitude to God. Like Mary, the *servant* of the Lord, he will be able to say: “*The Almighty has done marvels for me, Holy is his Name*”. It is for this reason that the Church will call him blessed from generations to generations.

We all anticipate that the beatification of Father Caffarel will be for Christians:

- a cause of pride and trust in the Church, Mistress of Holiness,
- an encouragement to all Christian couples to believe in married holiness and to pursue it,
- a sign of Father Caffarel’s consistency in advocating holiness to couples,
- and a testimony to the goodness and greatness of God, showing that those who are modest and humble servants are able to do “great things”.

60 years of the Charter of Equipes Notre-Dame.
Gathering on the 7th, 8th and 9th December 2007

Hervé and Geneviève de Corn



On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Charter of Equipes Notre-Dame, Carlo and Maria-Carla Volpini had organised an exceptional gathering at Massabielle, near Paris. They brought together all the former leaders and members of the International Leading Team. The aim was to retrace the journey done by Teams so as to build the future all the better.

Each participant had previously responded to a questionnaire on the evolution of marriage in society, the Church and Teams since the beginning of Equipes Notre-Dame

We had several conferences, including one by Michel Rouche, a well known historian and member of Teams and one by Father Olivier on “Evangelising Sexuality”. But we would like, in this Letter, to dwell on the testimonies of two couples who had worked closely with Father Caffarel:

- Marie and Louis d’Amonville who were leaders of the Movement prior to and at the time of Father Caffarel’s retirement from Teams.
- Annick and Jean Allemand: Jean was Father Caffarel’s secretary for many years.

We will now stress a few points that struck us as a result of these testimonies: points that help us to grasp better Father Caffarel’s personality.

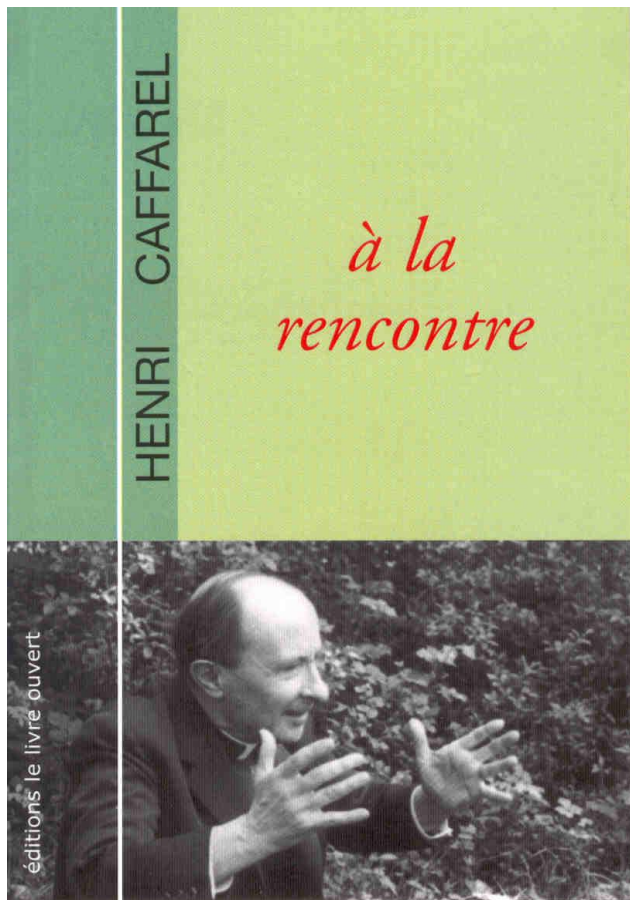
- He was a mysterious man. He said little about himself. His health was frail. There was something fascinating about him: his penetrating eyes... It all drew people to him.
- He was no ordinary man. He was very intuitive. He had extraordinary ideas and people accepted him, sensing that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

- There is no doubt that he drew a lot from prayer, which explained why he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. On the subject of contemplative prayer, he used to say: “*We need this daily encounter with Christ; otherwise, faith cannot hold on nor resist the onslaught of the devil*”.
- He was very private, determined and bossy. He consulted a lot but it was he who decided!
- He was also very demanding from all those who worked with him. A perfectionist: he made people start over and over again for as long as he was not fully satisfied.
- He was always concerned that the Movement should be a movement both of initiation and of striving after perfection.
- He was convinced that “being demanding” was the necessary condition for the spiritual progress of couples of the Movement. He feared that the movement might drift into a friendly club of ‘right thinking’ people.
- He would say to leaders of the Movement: “Your work is, first and foremost, a spiritual one”. He would also say to them: “Be ambitious for the couples who put their trust in Teams and never forget that the objective is hard to reach”.
- The objective for Father Caffarel was to climb the mountain. The higher one climbs, the purer the air becomes but the harder one has to fight against the elements. This calls for efforts.

We would like, in conclusion, to quote these words he spoke to Louis and Marie at a time when the doctor ordered him to stop working for four months: “Be saints. The Lord wants me to stop. It is therefore to you that he will give the necessary graces”.

A book on Father Caffarel

by
Gérard and Marie Christine de ROBERTY



The few pages of this book is an invitation to discover someone who believed that the “Encounter” with the Lord was a determining factor for himself and for many of those he came across. Today, he accompanies more and more individuals and couples along the path of prayer.

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Relaunching the cause of the beatification :

A Sector gets down to work

Jacques and Marie-France Béjot-Dubief
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October 2007: Liaison and Responsible Couples' mass following the return from holidays.

After mass, Father Fleischmann, Sector Spiritual Counsellor, reminded all present of the cause of beatification that is in progress. He strongly advised us all to join in large numbers the Association for the promotion of the cause of beatification of Father Caffarel. He stressed that “To bring such a cause to successful conclusion, it is important that the Association should make Father Caffarel known, notably his determination to help couples discover married spirituality and prayer. It is also important that the Association should have the financial means to cover the cost of producing the documentation. This is why a large number of teams should get down to work”.

An exchange of views followed during our buffet supper: how can we get team members involved again? How can we remind them of the “Caffarel Day” in Lourdes 2006?

We then suggested sending to our Sector Couple a small leaflet for them to print and circulate to all team members, including an application form to be cut off and sent.

We can, if you wish, send you this leaflet for your teams. Is it not time for each of us, team members, to respond to this pressing invitation to join the Association so as bring this cause to its successful end?

Association of Friends of Father Caffarel

Members of honour

Cardinal Jean-Marie LUSTIGER, former Archbishop of Paris †

René RÉMOND, member of the “Académie française” †

Madame Nancy MONCAU †

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Caffarel

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