

# BULLETIN



## OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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## EDITORIAL

**Clarita & Edgardo Bernal**

*(Responsible Couple in the International  
Leading Team of Teams of Our Lady)*



### THE TIMELESSNESS OF A PROPHET

Dear Family of the Association of Friends of Father Caffarel,

We are writing this editorial for the Bulletin of the association upon our return from Europe to our native Colombia, after having participated in the 10th World Meeting of Families in Rome. The guiding theme of this World Meeting was "Family Love: a Vocation and a Path to Holiness,» and due to post-pandemic conditions, it was organised, by directive of the Holy Father, in two ways:

- On site, in the Paul VI Hall, Rome, with the participation of approximately 2,000 delegates from dioceses and lay movements
- Virtually, with parallel events in the different dioceses of the world.

The meeting took place from June 22 to 26, 2022 and included 5 main conferences or topics developed in 10 thematic panels, which were enriched by roughly 28 testimonies and by work done by the participants during meetings in various Roman parishes.

The topics of the 5 conferences were:

- 1/ The Domestic Church and Synodality
- 2/ Accompanying the Early Years of Marriage
- 3/ Identity and Mission of Christian Families
- 4/ Marriage Catechumenate
- 5/ Family as a path of holiness

The testimonies that enriched the presentations covered various aspects of Christian life and highlighted:

- The richness of the union of both sacraments, marriage & orders on the path to holiness
- Young and old on the synodal journey
- Family love: wonderful and fragile
- Accepting nascent life, always

- The means of transmitting faith in a world that is being transformed
- Attention to existential peripheries
- The importance of Christian training
- A look at living, actual and embodied paths to holiness.

The last panel 5/Paths to holiness contained a remarkably strong testimony entitled 'Forgiveness as the Way of Holiness' that touched very deeply all those who heard it.

This very general and concise look at the World Meeting of Families enables us to appreciate the central axis of the call which the Church addresses today to lay people and priests and, particularly, to married couples, the nucleus of Christian families. Such is the context of our editorial reflection here, which we have entitled 'The Timelessness of a Prophet.' It is based on a conference given by Father Caffarel on September 8, 1965, *The Apostolic Mission of Couples and Families*, where Father Caffarel surprises us once again with his vision of the future and the validity of his thinking, 57 years after it was written.

Before referring to the text of this conference, we must point out that during the World Meeting of Families we had the opportunity to speak with various representatives of lay movements, speakers at the meeting, religious authorities from the dicastery and institutes of theological formation close to the Dicastery for Laity, the Family and Life, as well as with priests and bishops who, when they heard that we were participating as representatives of the Teams of Our Lady, could not hide their admiration for Father Caffarel, as a source of inspiration for the different apostolates and the pastoral care they carried out. All this reaffirms the importance of Father Henri Caffarel for the Church and for the world, and the importance of the process of canonisation which underpins to the genesis of this association, because we are certain that the recognition of his virtues and his declaration of holiness will be a source of illumination and a sure example for those of us who seek, based on our frailties, to reach the perfection of "Christian life."

Let us return now to the text of *The Apostolic Mission of Couples and Families*, where Father Caffarel writes, "If the Church made a large-scale effort to make the Christian couples throughout the world (approximately 120 million) understand their apostolic mission, to prepare them for it and help

*them to fulfil it, we would see an unprecedented event in the history of the apostolate: the impressive cooperation of couples placing the powerful human and supernatural energies of conjugal love and the sacrament of marriage at the Church's disposal, and all this with extraordinary enthusiasm, because they would have discovered that they are not only the receivers, beneficiaries, of the Church's apostolate, but are also active subjects."*

Father Caffarel then referred to the ten aspects which highlight the apostolic function of the couple in the Church in 1965. We are not going to refer to each of them here, since we would prefer that you read the whole text further on in this Bulletin. We only wish to highlight that Father Caffarel's exhortation--the need for Christian couples to be, by their testimony, a reflection of the union between Christ and the Church, by radiating in a concrete way its sanctifying influence, and to be not only a ministers of grace for their own spouses, but also to be agents of evangelisation in their own family, in the transmission of the faith, within their ordinary life and in the existential peripheries--is the hallmark of his thinking and his spiritual heritage. And as such, it is the engine that gives life to the different movements, such as the Teams of Our Lady, in which he continues to be a beacon that illuminates our path.

With great humility, but without hiding our deep admiration for Father Caffarel, we received confirmation at this World Meeting of Families that his prophetic character, typical of men close to God, enabled him to be ahead of his time, and that what the Church asks of us today is already incorporated into the DNA of the movements he founded and which, with his intercession and the illumination of the Spirit, we have been able to preserve, nourish and multiply.

We just need to tell ourselves that we are the custodians of a treasure that it is our duty to make known, and we can only do this if we manage to make it come alive on our way forward.

For this, we adhere to Pope Francis' missionary dynamic, letting ourselves be guided by those who, like Father Caffarel, have preceded us on the path, offering us, with their prophetic character, all the tools to achieve the ideal of holiness that he always envisaged with conviction for couples.

*"Dear Families,*

*I invite you to continue your journey by listening to the Father who calls you: become missionaries in the ways of the world! Do not walk alone! You, young families, be guided by those who know the way, you who are further along, be companions on the journey for others. You who are lost because of difficulties, do not be overcome by sadness, trust the Love God has placed in you, plead daily with the Spirit to revive it.*

*Announce with joy the beauty of being family!*

*Announce to children and young people the grace of Christian marriage.*

*Give hope to those who have none.*

*Act as if everything depends on you, knowing that everything must be entrusted to God.*

*Be the one who "sews" the fabric of society and of a synodal Church, creating relationships, multiplying love and life.*

*Be a sign of the living Christ, do not be afraid of what the Lord asks of you, nor be generous with Him.*

*Open yourselves to Christ, listen to Him in the silence of prayer.*

*Accompany those who are most fragile, take charge of those who are alone, refugees, abandoned.*

*Be the seed of a more fraternal world! Be families with big hearts! Be the welcoming face of the Church! And please pray, always pray!*

*May Mary, our Mother, come to your aid when there is no more wine, be a companion in the time of silence and trial, help you to walk together with her Risen Son.*

*Franciscus*

So be it,

Clarita & Edgardo Bernal Fandiño



## FROM FATHER CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

### THE APOSTOLIC MISSION OF COUPLES AND THE FAMILY

September 8, 1965

*On August 29, 1960, Father Henri Caffarel was appointed Consultor of the Pontifical Council for the Laity ahead of the preparation of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. On May 25, 1961, he presented a note on the sacrament of marriage and the specific apostolic mission of Christian couples organised in ten proposals. He reverted to this note for Teams of Our Lady on September 8, 1965.*

The following ten “proposals” are intended to highlight the various aspects of the apostolic function of couples and the family in the Church, according to traditional teaching.

Through the sacrament of marriage, the union of man and woman is incorporated into the Mystical Body and it becomes a living and active organ within it. Its purpose is that of the whole Body itself: the intensive and extensive growth of the latter. But the couple has its own way of cooperating in this growth, which constitutes its specific, irreplaceable apostolic mission. Today, many Christian couples, due to favourable circumstances – sociological, psychological, religious – are reaching a stage of human and spiritual maturity that has never before been reached.

If the Church made a large-scale effort to make the Christian couples throughout the world (approximately 120 million) understand their apostolic mission, to prepare them for it and help them to fulfil it, we would see an



unprecedented event in the history of the apostolate: the impressive cooperation of couples placing the powerful human and supernatural energies of conjugal love and the sacrament of marriage at the Church's disposal, and all this with extraordinary enthusiasm, because they would have discovered that they are not only the receivers, beneficiaries, of the Church's apostolate, but are also active subjects.

At a time when the global population is increasing at a dizzying rate, when the clergy in almost all parts of the world is seriously insufficient in number, when in many countries priests' actions are hampered by persecution, this mass uprising of Christian families, Church cells, both "houses of prayer" and centres of the apostolate, should enable us to hope for a prodigious penetration of the evangelical influence in a world that materialism threatens to submerge.

This appeal launched by the Church to couples should find its place within the logic of the great appeals by previous popes to the apostolate of the laity; it would be like their extension, their logical culmination and their crowning achievement.

## ***Proposals***

### ***1. The Sacrament of Marriage, the foundation of Couples' Apostolic Mission***

Marriage, which from the beginning God instituted and associated himself with for the realisation of his Design, was elevated by Christ to the level of a sacrament of the New Covenant. Henceforth, incorporated as such into the Mystical Body, the conjugal union of two baptised people cooperates in its own way, as an organ of this Body, in the vital activities by which the latter provides for its extensive and intensive growth.

It must therefore be affirmed that the sacrament of marriage, in its own right, confers on the Christian couple a specific apostolic mission which, while involving and absorbing them, is not reduced to the apostolic responsibilities which the spouses contract individually through their baptism and confirmation. Moreover, marriage obtains for them the sacramental graces which allow them not only to sanctify themselves in and through their state, but also to fulfil their function in the Church perfectly.

**2. 1<sup>st</sup> Aspect of this Mission: to Manifest and Radiate the Holiness of the Union of Christ and the Church**

Christian couples are not only the image but, even more, they are the effective sign, the sacrament of the union of Christ and the Church, a union that envelops, penetrates, sanctifies them and makes them holy – *“For as long as the married parties are alive, so long is their union a sacrament of Christ and of the Church.”* (Casti Connubii, 110) – Thus, the first aspect of the couple’s mission is both to manifest this union of Christ and the Church and to radiate its sanctifying influence.

To present the spectacle of a happy and holy married life is to proclaim, in the most eloquent way, the salvation that Christ offers to the world, the reconciliation between the flesh and the spirit as well as the union of hearts that he enables there where one is open to his law of charity and to the influence of his grace.

**3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Aspect: Spouses, Ministers of Grace for Each Other**

The Sacrament of Matrimony confers on each spouse the power – and makes it a duty – to be the minister of grace as well as the witness and the co-operator of Christ’s charity for their spouse. *“This mutual moulding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other”* (Casti Connubii, 24) is achieved by the spouses when they help each other in all areas and in particular in the accomplishment of their own functions within family.

In a home where only one of the spouses observes the law of the Lord, they render Christ the Saviour’s influence present to their unbelieving or sinful spouse through the testimony of their faith, through their patient and faithful love. And thereby confirm Saint Paul’s words, *“For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified by her believing husband.”* (1 Cor 7:14; cf. 1 Pet 3:1)

**4. 3<sup>rd</sup> Aspect: Procreation and Education**

The principal and irreplaceable function of the Christian couple is to contribute to the growth of the Mystical Body through procreation, presenting for baptism and education.

By virtue of the Sacrament of Matrimony, the father and mother have a real ministerial power enabling them, together and each according to their function, to take on at the supernatural level, by the transmission of faith, the

primary office of the transmission of life. In a first phase, the religious education of the young child, like their human education, belongs exclusively to the parents: as the child grows older, while it is eminently desirable that there be a priestly influence, the parents' role still remains the primary one to help them achieve an adult faith and to respond to the call that God has in store for them.

The conjugal and family community, as a cell of the Church, offers the most favourable "nurturing environment" for the enrichment and development of the child's faith, as well as the privileged field where priestly and religious vocations can flourish.

#### **5. *4<sup>th</sup> Aspect: Apostolate in the Couple***

A true Christian couple – a cell of the Church in which the life and mystery of the whole Body are signified and accomplished in an elementary way – is like a relay on the path of conversion and reception of the sacraments. With them, non-believers and sinners make initial contact with the Church, with its motherhood and holiness. With them, a community of faith and charity, the fragile and isolated beings (catechumens, neophytes, etc.) sent to them by the clergy, find protection and nourishment for their Christian life that is just beginning or is rather shaky.

Thus the Christian couple appears to exercise, through its welcoming apostolate, a function of mediation, of great importance, between the world and the hierarchical Church.

#### **6. *5<sup>th</sup> Aspect: Apostolate outside the Couple***

The apostolic mission of the married and family community extends beyond the confines of the home. The charity which irrigates this community, the communion in Christ which it achieves among its members, are elements it seeks to encourage. Indeed, it does so already, by its mere presence – just like leaven – wherever it exists.

In the local environment (apartment block, district, etc.) as well as in the social and professional environment, this married and family community cooperates, alone or in association with others – in liaison with the clergy at parish level or within Catholic Action movements – with the advancement of Christ's reign, directly through its apostolic activities, and also through its temporal activities.

The Christian couple proves to be particularly suitable for certain apostolic activities of the Church, such as preparation for marriage of engaged couples, assistance to other couples, to couples in difficulty...

Together with this apostolic action of the married and family community as such, each member wants to bear witness to Christ, everywhere. Despite the fact that for children this individual activity is only exercised with their baptism and confirmation, it is nonetheless true that it receives stimulation and grace from the family community. The Christian family is a school and a apostolate centre.

### ***7. Cooperation with the Hierarchical Apostolate and the Missionary Apostolate***

Some couples' vocation is to collaborate very directly with the hierarchical apostolate by spending all their time in the service of a Church task (teaching, catechumenate...) or in a Catholic Action movement.

In countries that have been recently evangelised, Other couples are irreplaceable witnesses of what takes to be a Christian family, without giving up their profession and by being in close contact with the clergy, be they native or foreign. These couples teach and illustrate with their life and lifestyle what the priests teach orally, namely the laws and grandeur of Christian marriage.

### ***8. Couples' Movements***

The apostolate of organized couples exists alongside the apostolate of individual or isolated couples. Couples gather within large national or transnational movements, in order to cooperate with the educative and apostolic mission of the Church (notably, with a view to the sanctification of families) or to prepare it through their actions over time. In these movements, the couples find the spiritual formation they need and the strength that joining forces creates when faced with a larger task.

### ***9. The Sanctity of Spouses and Family Worship, Sources of the Couples' Apostolate***

Spouses understand their apostolic responsibilities all the better and fulfil them all the more generously the stronger their conviction, on the one hand, of being called to Christian perfection like any child of God and of having to strive for it in and through their marriage, and on the other hand to be

earmarked by their sacrament to cooperate not only in the apostolic function of the Church but also in its cult or worship function. A home of the apostolate, the family is in fact, primarily, a “house of prayer,” where worship is celebrated, which at the same time precedes, prepares and prolongs the Eucharistic worship. Reading and meditation of the Scriptures, prayer of the couple and prayer of the family are the privileged moments of this worship of the hearth. But it is also the family’s entire life that must display this character of worship.

Personal holiness and the couples’ worship are the sources of the household apostolate.

#### **10. *Couples facing the Evangelisation of the Modern World***

The extension of Christ’s reign, in our contemporary world which is overwhelmed by materialism, demands that Christian couples – and families – not only be the beneficiaries of the apostolic action of the Church but become aware that they too must be “active subjects” of the apostolate, instruments of redemption, in line with their specific mission, with their own means and grace. No doubt they have never been more ready than today to hear this call. Let them respond in very large numbers, let them come and put the human and divine energies of conjugal love and the sacrament of marriage at the service of the Church, and we will see the latter acquire a power of persuasion, a force of penetration and expansion unknown until now.

As for countries where persecution hinders the clergy’s action and suppresses ecclesiastical institutions, Christian couples are the last entrenchments of the Mystical Body in these places. Even when the other sacraments can no longer be conferred, parents, in spiritual connection with the Church and its Tradition, offer their children the essential means of salvation: baptism, a sacrament of faith, and the teaching of this faith. And through the Sacrament of Matrimony, new Christian homes are founded, ensuring the perpetuation of the Church. Thus, in these families – catacombs - the Church lives a life, an elementary one no doubt, but capable of the most beautiful fruits of holiness. And in them Christ prepares a new springtime of grace.

Henri Caffarel

## In Service

*News from the Friends of Father Caffarel*

*Update on the State of the Cause*

**Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.**  
*Editor of the Cause of Father Henri Caffarel*  
**Marie-Christine Genillon**



### **Father Caffarel's cause has just reached a new stage**

On June 24, feast day of the Sacred Heart of Jesus this year, the Roman Postulator of the Cause, Father Angelo Paleri, handed over a USB key containing the entire contents of the *Positio* to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. I was the diocesan postulator, with Marie-Christine Genillon as vice-postulator, and once the dossier of Father Caffarel's cause was brought to Rome, I wrote up a 790 page text, as ever with the help of Marie-Christine Genillon. Throughout the whole time of writing, Father Szczepan Praskiewicz, the Relator, the person who accompanies the cause within the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, received the texts of this *Positio*. He regularly gave his advice so that the writing and presentation would be done according to the Congregation's norms.

This *Positio* comprises a general introduction to briefly present the importance of this canonisation for the Church and society, particularly for the sacrament of matrimony, the spirituality of widowhood and the importance of inner private prayer. The aim of this cause is indeed to see Father Caffarel be declared blessed and then a saint, but—as with every cause—the aim is also the good of all those who seek to live out their marriage in a Christian manner and who seek to do inner private prayer (*oraison*).

1/ *Informatio*. This is the presentation of Father Caffarel's virtues according to the template given by the Congregation. The aim is therefore to show how Father Caffarel lived out and experienced each of the theological, cardinal and other virtues, like obedience. Each time, we need to show how,

for example, Father Caffarel was righteous towards God and towards mankind, and precise examples taken most often from witnesses' depositions have to be given. Progressively a clearer image of Father Caffarel appears and it becomes apparent that everything is coherent. Father Caffarel experienced all the virtues. Why did such a coherence exist? His spiritual life and his work all start with his meeting with the Lord in March 1923. *"At the age of twenty, Jesus Christ in an instant became someone for me. Oh! Nothing spectacular. On that faraway day in March, I knew that I was loved and that I loved, and that from then on, between him and I, it would be for life. There was no turning back."* This encounter tells us everything about him. We are struck of course by the similarity with the idea of love at first sight between a man and woman or again with the love that God's declares to his people in the Bible.

2/ *Summarium Testium*. This second part contains the presentation of the testimonials collected together by the Diocesan Enquiry Commission, presided over by Mgr. Maurice Fréchal, as the representative of the Archbishop of Paris. These testimonials form the basis for the previous part, the *Informatio*.

Numerous, diverse and sensitive testimonials were received. Indeed, God called Father Caffarel to serve him with couples, widows and with people who sought to do inner private prayer (*oraison*): God gave him the means, he gave him his love. Beyond Father Caffarel's discretion about himself, it is obvious that as a priest he wanted only one thing: to show God's love and he wanted others too to "experience God." As one witness put it, "What do you expect, he gave us God!" What a lovely tribute for a priest!

3/ *Biographia ex documentis*. Each point of Father Caffarel's life deserved to be expanded and developed in order to understand who he was. The essentials have been presented, nothing has been forgotten. We see that Father Caffarel was faithful to his vocation of March 1923. Due to personal exigency, he only wanted to serve God in the mission which was his.

4/ *Summarium Documentorum*. The file deposited in Rome included nearly three thousand pages of Father Caffarel's writings: conferences, editorials and articles from the journals he founded, etc. Everything had been digitalised by Msgr. François Fleischmann, former international spiritual advisor to Teams of Our Lady. However, in order for the *Positio* to contain a

reasonable number of pages, it was necessary to make cuts! The *Informatio*, like the *Biographia*, already provided essential quotations for a knowledge of Father Caffarel. Nonetheless, some texts of conferences, articles, editorials are presented in full in this part. These texts echo beautifully the spiritual depth of Father Caffarel.

This *Positio* ends with the historians' and theologians' reports. And there is also an index of names and places, and some photos of Father Caffarel.

What happens now? After the examination of the *Positio* by two commissions of theologians and then cardinals, the Pope will be able to declare Father Caffarel "Venerable," which means that he will have practiced the virtues in a heroic way. During this period of about three years, we will pray for a miracle to occur, a sign that God wants Father Caffarel to be recognised as an apostle of marriage and a master of prayer, that he be beatified and, following a second miracle, that he be canonised.

Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.  
Marie-Christine Genillon

***The Friends of Father Caffarel*** put together a presentation video of Father Caffarel: Henri Caffarel, Prophète pour notre temps, Apôtre du mariage et Maître de prière

You can hear Father Caffarel himself proclaiming some of his important texts in this video, which is now available in French, English, Spanish and Portuguese. It will soon be available in Italian.

If you wish to promote the work and thinking of Father Caffarel, you can request this video from the Association: [association-amis@henri-caffarel.org](mailto:association-amis@henri-caffarel.org)



## In Service

### *News from the Friends of Father Caffarel*

*A group of Unitary Scouts of France  
Under the patronage of Father Henri Caffarel*

In September 2021, a group of *Scouts Unitaires de France* ((SUF) Unitary Scouts of France) placed themselves under the patronage of Father Henri Caffarel, in Lyon, the town where he was born.

Camille & Antoine Renaud, leaders of this SUF group, called “Lyon XIV Père Henri Caffarel”, together with Xavier & Marie-Armande de Thieulloy, correspondents of the Friends of Father Caffarel for the France-Luxemburg-Switzerland Super Region, ran a Father Caffarel workshop at the national gathering of Teams of Our Lady in Lourdes, in November 2021.

They also participated with their group at the gathering organised to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Scouts Unitaires de France movement, at Chambord, over the Pentecost weekend in June 2022.

Contact: SUF LYON XIV : [lyonperehenricaffarel@scouts-unitaires.org](mailto:lyonperehenricaffarel@scouts-unitaires.org)



Naval company  
Notre-Dame de la Clarté



Ronde  
Sainte Catherine  
Labouré



Saint Jean-Marie Vianney  
troop, at Chambord



Blessed Pauline  
Jaricot



Saint Jose Luis  
Sanchez del Rio  
Pack



During the Teams of Our Lady Gathering in Lourdes, November 2021, Camille & Antoine Renaud, SUF Group Leaders of the “Lyon XIV Père Henri Caffarel” troop.

## In Service

*News from the Friends of Father  
Caffarel  
Prolonging the 25th Anniversary  
Of Father Caffarel's Death*

***The Caffarel Team from the Spain Super Region*** proposes 3 conferences (in Spanish, but subtitles available) on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Father Henri Caffarel's death:

- Vida y obra del Padre Caffarel (The Life and Work of Father Caffarel), by Jose Antonio Marcén & Amaya Echandi,

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G\\_khIAOsOik](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_khIAOsOik)

- El carisma fundacional de los ENS (The foundational charisma of Teams of Our Lady), by Father Juan José Hernández, Spiritual Counsellor,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBBdb7vDbcM>

- La oración en el Padre Caffarel (Prayer and Father Caffarel) by Álvaro Gómez-Ferrer & Mercedes Lozano,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc3CKbB7LLY&t=69s>

To be listened to, meditated upon and shared!



## FROM FATHER CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

### **MARRIAGE AND THE EUCHARIST**

*L'Anneau d'Or*, Special Issue "Marriage, A Path towards God,"  
N° 111-112, May-August 1963, Excerpts

#### **[...] The Couple offer up the Eucharist**

We must beware of two errors: either seeing only each spouse's individual participation in the sacrifice of Christ, as if this cell of the Church, the couple, did not have to intervene, as such, at mass ; or seeing only the couple's participation, ignoring the part that each spouse, by virtue of their baptism, must take. Today I will limit myself to the offering of sacrifice by the couple, since the relationship of both marriage and the Eucharist is at stake.

When, at the beginning of a day or on Sunday after a week of labour and struggles, of love and joy, husband and wife leave the house - perhaps accompanied by your children - and walk together towards the Lord's home,<sup>1</sup> what motivates you? Would it be simply to fulfil an obligation? No, of course not. You see the Mass as the highlight of your life, the pole towards which all your activities must converge, the source where your whole existence must be nourished, the privileged hour of the encounter between your couple and God. You intend to pay homage to God, to offer him the filial worship that individuals, but also human communities owe him, as a spouse but also as a couple. And not just any worship but this sacrifice, the unique, perfect sacrifice, offered once and for all, by Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> The most important thing is to be morally rather than physically together.

The Bread and wine are there on the altar. It is not up to you to transform them into the body and blood of Christ, it is up to the priest, or more exactly to Christ through his minister. But the offering of "the host, pure, holy, spotless, of the sacred bread of eternal life, of the chalice of eternal salvation," is indeed yours, members of this great priestly people that is the Church, to present them to God in union with the priest. Listen to Christ tell to you, addressing the entire assembly, but also both of you, "You want to celebrate God's holiness by offering him a sacrifice as all religious men have done since the world has existed; see, I place my sacrifice at your disposal, take it. It is mine, may it become yours, may it become the sacrifice of your little community founded on the sacrament of marriage and sanctified by it. Offer it, husband and wife together, in recognition of the sovereign majesty of the Father and to express to him the submission of your household, to praise his infinite perfections and obtain from his sweet pity the forgiveness of your faults, to thank him for his marvellous gifts and respond with love to his love."

But understand this. For this sacrifice of Christ to become yours, it is not enough that you offer his body and his blood. The gift of the ring does not take the place of the gift of the heart and the life, it implies it. Likewise, the offering of the body and blood of Christ requires your own inner gift. The gift of each of you, no doubt, but also the gift of your little married community. This gift has multiple aspects which we are going to think about: you have to offer one another to God, to offer each one of you, together, to offer your children, and more broadly all that makes up your existence.

I just said that you have to offer *one another*. By virtue of your marriage, in a very real and strong sense, you belong to your spouse, just as they belong to you. So, ask them, "Offer me to God, I want to be a host in your hands, just as I offer you to him, you, another myself, my better self." It is, believe me, a great thing this offering of one by the other at mass. It is the affirmation by each of their desire that the other enter ever further into the intimacy of the Lord. Such a couple is sheltered from the idolatry that is sometimes makes up conjugal love: God is the first loved and first served. And if one day, the Lord called one of the spouses back to him, the survivor, through their pain, would know how to remain serene, remembering that this gift of the spouse to God, they have already offered it many times, during all those masses they attended together.

You still have to offer both of you, together, offer your union, and the different planes on which it takes place: a single flesh, a single heart, a single soul. Offer your carnal union both holy and sinful, sanctified by the Christ of your marriage, but often still inhabited by an all too human fever. Offer your own unique heart, this heart which is certainly not immune to old selfishness, but which you

aspire for it to belong to God's time. Also offer this union of your souls, established by God at the deepest level of your being, in this centre where divine life exists. This offering of your union, at all these levels, is not a supererogatory gift of your couple, but its participation in the sacrifice of Christ. Also, there is no question of going to mass without having prepared your offering, I mean: verified, purified, renewed your union. Remember the Lord's precept, "*When therefore you go to present your gift at the altar, if you remember a grievance that your brother has against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first reconcile yourself with your brother; then come back and present your offering.*" (Mt 5:23-24) How I fully understand this friendly couple, who would never go to Mass, together or individually, without each spouse having given each other the kiss of peace, "*Pax tecum!*"

But marriage is made to bear fruit. These fruits, the children, are, in the hands of the spouses, their characteristic offering, the one that the couple alone can present to the sacrifice of Christ. (For married Christians, their decision to have a child ought to be primarily in order to have an offering to present to the Lord.) You may say to me: is it not rather at baptism that we offer our child to Christ? Yes, in a sense. But baptism, do not forget, is completely oriented towards the Eucharist. Presenting your child at baptism, taking them to mass for the first time, leading them to the Holy Table, is one and the same offering. And after the gift of yourselves, that is what you have best to offer at Mass. Just as the bread and wine become the Eucharistic body of Christ in the hands of the priest, so in your hands the fruit of your love becomes the mystical body of Christ, a member of the mystical body.

### ***The Eucharist, a Source of Love***

The Father responds with the outpouring of his love to Christ, who gives himself on the cross. This is repeated in our favour at every mass. After we have offered him the sacrifice of his Son, the Father gives us the body and blood of this same risen Son as food, so that divine life may grow in us. Let us read, if you will, and as if it were for the first time, with a heart ready to marvel, Christ's admirable words about the Eucharist, considered to be a sacrament, which Saint John relates. They cannot fail to arouse astonishment, admiration, joyful faith and gratitude in us. "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me and I live by the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.*" (John 6:56-57)

When one reads this extraordinary page, how can one not sense the exceptional grandeur of the marriage of two Christians? Husband and wife, you

who eat the flesh of Christ, who drink his blood, who experience the life of Christ in your soul and in your body, who abide in him, and he in you, how could you not love each other with a love completely different to that of other people, a resuscitated love? Can you look at each other, share your sorrows and your joys, give yourselves to each other with all your heart and body, help each other along the way, without having the feeling that you are thereby experiencing a very great mystery?

The union between two beings, as you well know, is worth what they share together. Now you who obtain the very life of Christ from the Eucharist, well, it is this, this life of Christ, which you must first share together. And this life in you is the joyful knowledge of the Father, an outpouring of filial love. But it is also a love of creatures, of all creatures: the Lord's admiration, pity and tenderness are within you. And since it is God's will that you love each other with a privileged love, your love for your spouse is the first to be transformed by the grace of the Eucharist, which brings purification, refinement, a newness of life. It leads you to desire for the loved one infinitely more than any other spouses who are tremendously in love can want for each other but are ignorant of Christ's promise, and here I mean the love and joy of God, holiness.

It is not enough to talk about it. Even more radical is the transformation of your love by the action of the Eucharist. For you, God realises what he had promised through Ezekiel, *"I will give you a new heart. I will take away your heart of stone from your breasts, and I will give you a heart of flesh."* (Ez 36:26), the heart of flesh of Christ which is *"meek and humble"* as he told us himself (Mt 11:29).

Are you fearful for the human components of your marital love? Would this new love risk eliminating human attractions and feelings? Rest assured, it does not replace what, apart from sin, it finds in you; it uses it and make it divine. It uses all the resources of human love to express itself and communicate itself. Isn't this what we see in Christ's own life? How human his divine love is! In it, we find the infinitely nuanced range of all the feelings that can blossom in a human soul.

This new heart is the crucible within you where all your feelings undergo a sort of restructuring: they are purified there, they draw an entirely new vigour and substance from it; far from being dehumanised, they are, one might say, super-humanised.

Henri Caffarel

## Prayer for the Canonisation of the Servant of God, Henri Caffarel

God, our Father,  
You planted deep in the heart of your servant, Henri Caffarel,  
A fountain of love, which bound him totally to your Son  
And inspired him with a wonderful capacity to speak of Him.

A prophet for our time,  
He revealed the dignity and beauty of the vocation of every person  
In the words Jesus addresses to each of us: "Come follow me."

He made couples enthusiastic about the greatness of the sacrament of marriage,  
The sign of Christ's fruitful love for the Church and of His union with her.  
He showed that priests and couples  
Are called to live a vocation of love.  
He was a guide to widows: love is stronger than death.  
Prompted by the Holy Spirit,  
He accompanied many Christians on the path of prayer.  
Seized by a devouring fire, he was a dwelling place for you, Lord.

God, our Father,  
Through the intercession of Our Lady,  
We ask you to hasten the day  
When the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life,  
So that people everywhere will discover the joy of following your Son  
In accordance with their particular vocations in the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we invoke the intercession of Father Caffarel for.....  
(Indicate the particular favour being sought)

Prayer approved by Monsignor Andre Vingt-Trois – Archbishop of Paris.  
"Nihil obstat": 4th January 2006 – "Imprimatur": 5th January 2006.

*In the case of a particular favour obtained through the intercession of Father Caffarel, Contact: The Postulator,  
Association "Les Amis du Père Caffarel"  
49 rue de la Glacière – F 75013 PARIS*



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<sup>1</sup>ERI: International Leading Team of the Teams of Our Lady



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