

## MISUNDERSTANDING AT THE START

(November 1959 editorial)

The young boy who stands alone in the playground away from other boys, the adolescent who prefers his books to any other company, are rightly a source of concern to their teachers. This 'isolationism' is not normal: is it not a sign of a troubled conscience or mind? The normal boy likes his 'gang' and the adolescent his 'group'.

On the other hand the adult person who cannot bear to be alone, who retains a taste for the gang or the group is very worrying. Isn't this a case of infantile or adolescent immaturity? And what about couples who cannot bear to be on their own?

I have a definite feeling that more than one group of couples - or indeed team of Our Lady - show signs of a similar infantile or adolescent immaturity.

The gang, and later the group, are necessary if young people are to become adults. They make if possible for them to 'structure' their personality. They prepare them for the 'conjugal team'.

But the need of so many couples today to form a group and even to dream, as some do, to create closed communities apart from the world, within which they would live more or less in self-sufficiency, reflects more adversely than favourably on them. Perhaps they think that they are inspired by lofty charity, but I fear that it is more often out of weakness, abdication and utopia.

For some, it is running away from conjugal closeness. The latter cannot be a perpetual effervescence of emotions. It is important that spouses should try to come closer to each other and to bind their union more deeply. But it is terribly difficult: it causes the bravest to tremble and great is the temptation to seek out one's friends and talk of other things.

To others, it seems so much simpler to unload on the group of couples the decisions for the running of one's home. There are some also for whom the group is a refuge in which they feel protected from a cruel world.. A small neutral country sheltered behind its frontiers... what a dream !

It is not surprising that groups, based on these conditions, are not long - I would not say - in dying (it would be the lesser evil) but in slowly deteriorating. They take ages to die.

It is not without paying a price that a couple, like an individual, refuse to grow to maturity. To acquire one's personality, to become aware of one's particular vocation and to assume it fully, is a difficult conquest; it requires a hard struggle. But this is precisely our duty as human beings.

Do not conclude from this that I am setting fire to what I am most keen on. This note is not an indictment of groups of couples. But it is an indictment of the questionable motivation that leads more couples than we think to join groups of couples, an indictment of the infantile or adolescent immaturity that remain in so many people who think they have become adult.

On the other hand, if the members of a team are united in helping each other to acquire their individual human and Christian personality, to become better aware of their own vocation - their particular vocation as an individual and as a couple - then indeed, the team has its full justification and will not experience these acute or latent crises which often have no other cause than a bad start.

There is a saying of the philosopher Louis Lavelle on which I suggest you meditate. It is to do with the love between two beings but it is perfectly valid for a team of Our Lady: *"Love cannot be the complicity of two 'selfishness' which, isolating themselves from the*

*world, make of this isolation the object of their delight. But love dissolves those two 'selfishness' and creates around them a wider circle which it continuously widens and in which the whole universe manages to fit" (Louis Lavelle, "The awareness of self", Grasset P 197).*

If we translate this into Christian language: a team of Our Lady must be a success story of charity,

\* where Christ is present, for "*ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est*",

\* where the whole universe is present, for where the Head is present, the whole Mystical Body is present.

*Henri Caffarel*