

“DANGER”

(December 1959 Editorial)

What you are going to read is the beginning of a conference given on the 14th of November this year, during the great annual gathering of Responsible Couples of Teams. It seems pertinent to me to address this same warning to all team members.

When a driver sees a road sign announcing the approach of a junction and bearing the warning “Danger”, he slows down and pays attention. I wonder whether I should not reproduce such a sign on the front page of a leaflet intended to make the Teams of Our Lady known to those who feel attracted to them ! For, to join the Teams of Our Lady is dangerous.

When we did not yet have the Charter, Teams were threatened by the danger that lies in wait for all movements whose ideal is not backed up by obligations. People are enthused by the ideal, but their life remains stagnant. Today, thanks to the Charter, team members are considerably sustained by the obligations. But let us beware of a new danger: that of emptying the obligations of their spirit. We must indeed fear in case the practice of the obligations becomes an end in itself: a lofty aim, a ceiling. We must fear in case it should appear to members of Teams that Christian perfection consists in observing the obligations of the Charter. They would think themselves perfect on easy terms and would rest snugly on the couch of self-satisfaction and of a good conscience.

I received a letter recently which clearly proved to me that this peril is not an illusion. It came from a couple of outstanding human and spiritual worth. This is what they wrote to me: *“We have left our Team of Our Lady after having belonged to it for many years. We felt stifled in it: a world shut in on small problems, a world that did not want to see the real demands of the Gospel ideal. The observance of the Charter became, on some days, like some hypocritical screen behind which one could be self-satisfied on easy terms and could close one’s eyes and ears to all the questions raised by society today”*.

Many times in my travels, I have had occasion to hear criticism of a team in the same vein: for being shut in upon itself, for being a ‘clan of the just’, a ‘sect of the pure’.

I am well aware that most teams do not deserve such reproaches. Nevertheless, I cannot refrain from asking myself the agonising question: will our teams train Christians or produce Pharisees?

Troubled by this danger, I must confess to you that I sometimes call into question our concept of the Movement. At such times, I ask myself whether it would not have been better to leave our 6,000 couples without a ‘Movement’. Perhaps they would experience more failures, but no doubt they would be more humble. At other times, I say to myself that we should restrict ourselves to a more demanding ideal - without specific obligations - an ideal one can grow closer to but never perfectly fulfil. The advantage of this is that it would keep alive a beneficial concern, a salutary tension. Or again, I wonder if couples should stay only a few years in Teams. We would awaken in them the desire for a more Christian life; we would offer them some major guidelines to sanctify themselves in marriage and the lay state and we would then disband the team. Should we remain novices all through life?

But in truth, I do not believe that the solution is to be found in innovations: the antidote to the danger lies in the Charter itself. It is to be found in the first section entitled ‘Why the Teams of Our Lady?’ - the least original section but the most important.

The least original section... Fortunately so, I would say, for it would be perilous to aim at being original in this domain. Indeed, all that this section strives to do is to outline the

Christian life in a few words, as it is incumbent on all married Christians. Any movement of couples could easily subscribe to this summary of a spirituality for married Christians.

And yet, this first section is by far the most important. Thanks to it, the obligations that follow have a direction; one is spared from taking them as an end in themselves. They remain what they are: means. The end is Christian life in its fullness, just as it is outlined on the first page of the Charter: *“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect”*.

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