

“May they be one”

(January 1960 editorial)

This was taken from a talk given by Father Caffarel to the annual International Conference of the Movement in November 1959 in Paris

For the past forty eight hours, we have lived again through a great experience of fraternal life. This fraternity that we experience at all levels, team, Sector, Region, never shows its richness better than at such supra-national gatherings.

Each time a frontier is crossed, we have the feelings of a wonderful broadening of soul. This is true at the human level, but even more true at the Christian level. At the very depth of our being, as baptised people, there is the feeling, the desire, the taste of universality. In the heart of every Christian, is to be found the Church's ability to gather within itself people of all races, of all languages, of all colours, of all conditions.

“May they be one”. Such was Christ's call at the most solemn moment of his life. A few years later, Saint Paul echoed this call in a wonderful passage in the Epistle to the Galatians: *“You are, all of you, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All baptised in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ. There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”* (Gal 3: 26-28).

The Church is the place of this universal gathering. And the ambition of our Movement is to help its members experience this great fraternity in Christ and in the Church. It does not intend to be a church within the Church, but a body that allows couples from everywhere in the Church to know one another, to love one another, to unite together to praise God and to proclaim his love. This has always been my understanding of the Teams of Our Lady. This was the hope that characterised its founding.

You understand my disappointment when I heard a couple say to me: *“What difference does it make to me to learn, from the Newsletter, that a team is starting in California?”*. Even if this couple practise the obligations of the Charter perfectly, I would say that they haven't understood a thing about the Teams of Our Lady.

Do not be surprised, therefore, when the Leading Team reacts strongly against tendencies to try to adapt the Movement to local peculiarities and to erect barriers, whenever these tendencies appear.

Our aim is that couples of whatever background, of whatever country, of whatever culture, of whatever skin colour, should feel at home in the Teams of Our Lady.

It is for the same reason that we are opposed to those who would like to change the structures and the methods so that - they say - they correspond better to the particular mentality of their region or of their country.

The day that each country, each region, were to adopt its own structures and methods, we would no longer have a single movement, but as many movements as there are countries, and International Conferences of Teams would see each delegation arrive, gathered round its flag or, what is even more serious, chauvinistic at heart.

In fact, couples from Essen in Germany and from Los Angeles in California, white and coloured couples from Mauritius, couples from Europe and couples from America - strange as it may seem - are very comfortable with the structures and methods of the Movement.

This is not surprising since there are no frontiers at the spiritual level. I know that you understand me and that you will share my great joy as you listen to some passages of two letters from a missionary in Japan:

“On my return to my missionary centre, I am sending you my joyful greetings. We are currently translating into Japanese the Charter and other Teams of Our Lady documents. In the meantime, I will begin with a group of couples in my parish. I shall have the opportunity in July to talk about the Movement to a big meeting of priests and lay people, with the view to making it known in Japan. We will soon have everything translated. We want to remain in full union with the Leading Team in spite of the distance.”

A few days ago we received another letter:

“We had our first meeting on the 23rd of October. In this community of couples, we could feel that the Lord was in our midst. The first team, which has five couples, is therefore in existence in Japan. I have the strong conviction personally that many more will follow”.

At a time of ‘globalisation’ of the world, should not Christians be the first to want unity?

Henri Caffarel