

THE SECOND WIND

A Look Towards The Future

Foreword

The Teams movement has evolved over time from its origins in 1937. The second wind was published in 1988 and looked at the future of the movement in the light of the issues at that time. This has been adapted as a study topic for use by Teams over 4 meetings to reflect on the signs of our times and what the Second Wind has to say to us now.

Chapter 1

THE CHARISM OF TEAMS OF OUR LADY TODAY

When the Charter of Teams of Our Lady was promulgated forty years ago, no one could foresee the changes which would occur in the Movement, the Church and the world. History may change, but the charism of Teams, the original spiritual gift, is still working through the signs of the times to inspire couples in the service of love.

As you read these pages, we hope you will find new reasons to feel encouraged about the future of Teams, and that these and the suggestions for living out your aspirations within and for the Movement will fill you with the hope and vitality of a Second Wind.

1.1. The Movement Today

The will of God for Teams at a given moment in history only reveals itself little by little. It can be grasped in the light of the events we experience, as well as through the convergence of ideas between the International Leading Team (ERI) and the Super-Regional Couples as they pursue a common reflection. It can also be perceived in the needs expressed by responsible couples at all levels and by the "grass-roots" Teams.

Father Caffarel, in a number of his writings, calls for an effort to be faithful as well as creative, in a quest for ongoing renewal. His desire is that Teams truly be a "leaven of renewal," and not merely a conservative movement upholding the faith within the Church.

Teams aspire to be that leaven of renewal in the Church, but today they face a different set of circumstances, which were analysed by Father Caffarel at his 1987 meeting with the regional responsible couples of Europe. Certain aspects of the founding charism that were not clearly grasped at the beginning are just now being clarified and integrated into the spirituality of Teams.

For example, it has become apparent that:

- The first matter in need of better explanation in the teaching of the Movement is the fact that a harmonious marriage cannot be built on love alone: **self-sacrifice** is equally important. In fact, the two are inseparable. Without self-sacrifice, there can be no love; without love, self- sacrifice is meaningless.

- The second matter to which the Movement must give more thought is the human and Christian significance of sexuality. Teams have not given couples enough help understanding and living the true dimension of their sexual relationship. Consequently, some find the Church's moral teaching unacceptable and readily find excuses for ignoring it. This is an urgent matter, especially for a movement devoted to the spirituality of marriage.

- The third aspect to attend to is the importance of the Teams' mission in the Church as a

movement of couples: in the beginning, the very idea of such a movement was a quiet revolution, and in some places it is still a novelty today. Teams must help the Church deepen her vision, theology, and mystique of the couple as the summit of creation: *man and woman He created them.*

There are other needs that could not be foreseen in the beginning but that the passing years have revealed: such as, the need to give some young couples who join Teams a basic education in our Christian faith; to accompany couples who feel a need to go farther than their Team; to help couples adapt when both husband and wife work outside the home; to help jobless couples through their ordeal; and to help couples prepare for ageing, death, and widowhood.

Finally, as Teams become increasingly international, we should welcome the enrichment of our diversity while at the same time protecting the unity of the Movement.

1.2. The Church Today

The Church also stands at a decisive moment in history. Ever since the Council (1964), the Church, the People of God, has chosen to make a more positive commitment to and in the world. Nothing that is human can be foreign to a Church whose vocation is to be the seed of the Kingdom of God, in the tangible realities of men's and women's lives.

The Church has expressed her will to opt in preference for the poor and youth, to question a materialistic society nonetheless in search of a certain mysticism, to accept the tensions and difficulties of a dynamic plurality, and to seek the means of a new evangelisation touching every aspect of the human condition.

At each period in history, the Spirit of God calls forth specific gifts, or charisms, which give rise to religious orders and movements in answer to the needs of new generations. Today, it is not unreasonable to think that the credibility of the Christian faith rests mainly on concrete examples of love with a great power to shine and bear witness: the love of couples, of families, and of small Christian communities. The mission to which the Church is urgently calling Teams is one of bearing witness through love. Without the love of married lay people, without families who have learned to share, without faith communities of couples, like Teams, it will be difficult for the Church to convince our world that the Gospel is a call to love and that this love is truly possible.

1.3. The World Today

One look at the spiritual situation of today's world reveals an abundance of failures, wounds, and sins. However, despite all these negative signs, we know that the Spirit of God is at work and that the Lord is with us until the end of time. This compels us to look also for signs of hope and grace.

Many factors deeply affect today's couples: individualism is rampant; sexuality is debased; violence is tearing apart the great human family and is present in every relationship. People seem incapable of sustaining a long-term effort; they free themselves effortlessly of all objective moral standards; they are afraid to commit themselves to lasting fidelity. These are troubling tendencies, but alongside them, growing ever stronger, there exist encouraging tendencies: a search for new values of authenticity and coherence, a desire for peace within and without, a greater wealth of interpersonal relationships between husband and wife and between parents and children, and a return to nature preserved from human intervention.

This world has great God-given potential; however, we only perceive that potential mingled with the presence of sin. That is precisely why we feel so strongly that there is need for a new reconciliation in each historical situation.

Questions for discussion

1. Do the themes outlined in section 1.1 'The movement today' still ring true today? Are there any differences or new issues that need to be added?
2. What significant developments have taken place in our church and world since 1988? How do these change the context in which Teams live? You may wish to refer to the teachings in *Laudato Si*, *Amoris Laetitia* and *Christus Vivit*, amongst others.
3. Before moving onto the next section how do you think that we as couples and spiritual counsellors can respond to these times?

Chapter 2

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT MARRIAGE

Today's Christian couples must have the possibility of hearing the Good News about the controversial and fragile reality of marriage.

The Good News teaches us that the sacrament of matrimony is at the service of love, happiness and sanctity. Only in sacramental marriage can a man and woman fulfil their deepest aspirations to love and happiness and answer the call to sanctity written deep in their hearts but often left unheeded. Teams want to be a path leading them to discover the richness of the sacrament of matrimony and of the profound communion between husband and wife. We believe that this affirmation is exactly what today's world needs to hear. The Lord is waiting for us to proclaim it in our words and our actions.

2.1. Marriage at the Service of Love

*God created man in His image;
in the divine image He created him;
male and female He created them. (Gen. 1,27)*

Man and woman, while of the same nature, are different yet complementary. Thus, in uniting as a couple, they form one being. The conviction that we are one being inspires us to continually praise God, who created human love. It calls us to remain humble, knowing we need each other in order to feel our oneness. It strengthens us in faithfulness, so that we may be one flesh.

This image of the couple reveals the richness of sexuality as it was willed and created by God. How important it is, then, that Christian couples be concerned about the human and Christian quality of their sexual relations. Christian spirituality is an incarnated spirituality. The specific nature of the spirituality of marriage derives from the sexuality (in the sense of sexual character) inherent in the sacrament of matrimony.

2.2. Marriage at the Service of Happiness

The sacrament of matrimony helps us live through times of crisis and doubt. Crises are necessary if we are to grow in love. They compel us to surpass ourselves; they test our creativity and lead to new behaviours. They can have a positive influence if we, as a couple, are able to discern God's will for us at that moment in our lives.

If we have our spouse's good at heart, we will want him or her to find personal fulfilment, be it psychologically, professionally, or as a mother or father. To care about our spouse's happiness, even in his or her sexual life; to discover that reconciliation does not mean resignation but rather a chance for renewal; to live in order to give; to decide to stay in love with each other... Far from limiting us or bringing us down, these attitudes open us up to each other, and to others. They open the door to happiness.

2.3. Marriage at the Service of Sanctity

Married Christians are called to sanctity. They do not answer this call as individuals - although each retains his or her individuality but rather they walk the road to sanctity as a couple. The great revelation of the spirituality of marriage is this: conjugal love and love of God are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they go hand in hand. Husband and wife can follow in the demanding footsteps of Christ, as a couple.

True wisdom in marriage consists in the desire to live "for you" and not "for me." Communion flows from the reciprocal current of giving and receiving. This is the highest form of unity within a couple, because it flows from their oneness in Jesus. Communion is not only the culmination of conjugal love, it is also the greatest gift a couple can give others. Parenthood, hospitality and friendship, work and commitments are all manifestations of the irresistible tendency of communion to transform itself into giving.

The Christian couple who live in this conjugal state of grace, who are nourished by the Word of God and the Bread of Life, are truly living a eucharistic life. Their whole life is a holy sacrifice. Husband and wife are signs -"sacraments"- of God's love for each other and together for their children and for the world.

Questions

1. How can we convey the 'Good News' about Marriage in today's world? What are the challenges and opportunities in this?
2. How do we respond to friends and family who live together and choose not to marry, or same sex couples who marry?
3. The document highlights marriage as leading to love, happiness and sanctity. What other ideals would you suggest that Marriage leads to?
4. "*Communion flows from the reciprocal current of giving and receiving.*" Can you think of examples where you have seen this in action? How has this affected you and others?

Chapter 3

A MOVEMENT OF SPIRITUALITY AND FELLOWSHIP FOR MARRIED COUPLES

Teams of Our Lady offer married couples a chance to discover the Lord's presence in their marriage and a chance to live in Christian fellowship with other couples, as a way of giving thanks to God and bearing witness to Him in the world. This way of looking at and living conjugal life may not necessarily be entirely new. However, it can help couples live their life with more strength, light, and hope. A Team is formed of couples who are aware of their own weaknesses and difficulties and who decide to form a faith community in order to walk a road of conversion together.

Through deepening friendship, through pooling their joys and sorrows, through sharing on the endeavours, Team members support and encourage each other as they seek to know God's will and to learn the truth about themselves. Team life is a life of encounter and communion. The goal of a Team is not for each couple to attain a predetermined degree of perfection, but for each couple, in union with the others, to become part of a living and dynamic process tending to reconcile that which is divided, bring closer that which is distant, strengthen that which is weak, build up that which is incomplete: in short, to carry out a common task in the brotherly love which unites us to Christ.

The spirituality of marriage is centred around the couple, of course, but it also takes family life into account. Children are called to life through their parents' love, and family life is seen as a community in which all participate.

The experience of Team life builds our capacity for dialogue, mutual respect and openness, which in turn shapes our attitudes towards parenting. We want to bring up our children in a way that leaves them "free to be" and stimulates them to reach full maturity. We want to experience with them a faith that is a personal encounter with Christ.

It is our hope that our children will truly be able to "be themselves," that they will enter into relationships freely and with a sense of solidarity, and that they will be able to fulfil their commitment to society. Above all, we hope that they will carry on the values of Christian marriage thanks to our witness in word and deed.

Finally, Teams are a lay movement, for couples united in the sacrament of matrimony. The life of the Movement depends on the willingness of its members to accept leadership responsibilities in a spirit of service. Those who accept responsibility do so in close collaboration and communion with the priests who accompany Teams as spiritual counsellors. The union of these two sacraments makes each one appear in the eyes of the world as a specific expression of God's love.

3.1. Education

Teams are like a spiritual school for couples. We come to Teams not only to deepen our knowledge of our faith, but also to learn to exercise human and Christian discernment, using our hearts as well as our minds, in our search for a greater coherence between our faith and our life.

Our discernment can be nourished in several ways: by reading and discussing the study topic as a couple and as a Team; by reading Teams' publications; by attending sessions and retreats; and by keeping abreast of the orientations the Movement periodically proposes. Our search as individuals, as a couple, and as a Team is rooted in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), in a deepening prayer life, in hearing the Word of God, and in a correct interpretation of the signs of the times.

To train and educate us, Teams question us, help us understand God's plan for us as a couple, and call us to adapt our conjugal, family and professional life to fit Gospel values. Two goals remain to be pursued by the Movement: to afford a better insight into the Christian significance of man's and woman's work as it relates to God's plan, and to shed light on the relationship between private and public ethics.

3.2. Teams Endeavours

Love is a choice that husband and wife make anew each day. It requires not only the heart's consent but also an effort of will to carry out this decision. Teams offer simple, practical means to help couples nurture their love, reaffirm their decision and pursue their road of conversion.

These means are not things to do, but attitudes to awaken within us and to assimilate. Being accountable for our attitudes is not a matter of bookkeeping, but a matter of orienting our lives gradually in a chosen direction: that of God's will.

The endeavours should be seen as a means of spiritualising and unifying our lives and of achieving union with God. In this, Mary is the best guide, and that is why Teams bear her name. By her attitude of humility and receptivity, nourished by the Word and the Life of Christ, she shows us the way to union with God.

The manner in which the endeavours are expressed, as objectives rather than commands, reflects the spirit in which they were presented:

- *A regular reading (or hearing) of the Word of God.*
- *A daily period set aside for a true "conversation with the Lord" (personal prayer).*
- *A daily meeting of husband and wife for conjugal and, if possible, family prayer.*

- *A monthly in-depth talk between husband and wife in the Lord's presence (the sit-down).*

- *A drawing up of one's rule of life, which is an encouragement to work at unifying our personality and to find out who we really are.*

- *A yearly retreat made together as husband and wife, if possible, in order to reflect on and organise our life in the Lord's presence.*

There are three important ideas to keep in mind while making use of these spiritual means.

- **Gradual:** The Lord takes hold of us wherever we are. We do not need to rush ahead or try to "skip a grade." All we need is a sincere desire to progress from our present situation.
- **Personal:** Each person, as well as each couple, moves forward at a particular pace. The endeavours should not serve to discourage us but, on the contrary, they should inspire and assist us our whole life long.
- **Determined:** Any long-term effort, be it marriage or personal prayer life, requires determination. We cannot experience an ongoing conversion unless we are determined to take our wishful thinking about progress and express it in tangible ways that will change our lives and shape us little by little.

3.3 Stages in the life of a Team

Teams of Our Lady call couples along a road that leads to a true encounter with the Lord and to a commitment to follow Him. The methods of Teams provide couples with a means of pursuing these goals at each stage of their lives.

A Team is a Christian community comprised of 5-7 couples and a priest¹, all moving forward along the same road. The priest is truly a member of the Team but in a different way; through him, Christ is present as the head of the community. Teams are enriched by the encounter of two sacraments: Holy Orders and Matrimony. Where a lack of priests makes it difficult to form new Teams, the Movement could train couples to accompany those Teams.

Any community dedicated to a life-long walk together will experience difficulties as it passes through various stages of growth. Teams are no exception to this, but they aim to face these challenges joyfully, with courage and realism.

¹ Now more commonly 4-6 couples and a spiritual counsellor

The principal stages in the life of a Team are:

Initiation

Today, many couples lack a basic education in the Christian faith; they need initial instruction in marriage and community life, as well as, in religion. Such instruction could be provided within the framework of "uncommitted Teams." At the end of this initiation phase, couples may choose the path that suits them best: either Teams, or another couples' movement, or a different means of spiritual growth.

Piloting

Specific training in the spirituality of marriage and the fundamental methods of Teams

takes place under the guidance of a Pilot Couple. Piloting must follow the same plan throughout the Movement if Teams are to develop on the same basis world-wide.

At the close of the piloting period, an inter-Team training session would help new members consolidate their knowledge and understanding of Teams' goals and methods.

Team life

a. After piloting, the Team needs to gain a deeper understanding of the spirituality of marriage through study topics concerning conjugal love, Christ and the Church.

b. From then on, each Team may choose the study topics which suit it best, from among those published by the Movement or other topics in keeping with the specific nature of Teams.

Couples need to participate in training sessions organised by the Movement if they are to better comprehend the universal dimension of Teams, in the image of the Church, as well as the importance of their mission in the world.

c. With age and experience, certain couples may wish to follow a more demanding path. More than the study of a new topic, this might mean a method of progressively changing their life, or a new deepening of their prayer life, or a more demanding commitment. The Movement should help them find or follow paths that complement those of their Team.

These stages are but a few of those that couples may experience in their spiritual walk together. They represent the starting point of a growth process that, just like charity, knows no bounds.

Questions:

1. *“Teams are like a spiritual school for couples...”* In your discussion as a couple reflect on your journey as a couple and what and how you have learned.
2. *“The goal of a team is not to attain a predetermined degree of perfection but.... To become part of a living and dynamic process..”* Reflect on your experience in your team. How has it grown or changed over time and how can Teams strengthen growth within the team?
3. Reflect on the endeavours as an attitude for you as an individual or couple. How do the principles of gradual, personal and determined help you with the endeavours?
4. Reflect on the stages in the life of a team and what stage your team is on that journey.
 - a. What are the richness and challenges relating to that stage of your team’s journey?
 - b. What can your team offer to the movement and what support can the movement offer to your team?

Chapter 4

A LIFE OF COMMUNION TO ANSWER A CALLING AND FULFILL A MISSION

No matter what the spiritual development of each couple, all try their best to live a life of communion with the little faith community of the Team. It takes patience, openness and humility; there can be no holding back. The Team should not be seen as an end in itself, for communion cannot be contained. It will inevitably overflow the boundaries of the Team, as it nourishes the generosity of the members. Teams are a movement of spirituality, and a true spirituality implies that those who have freely received, freely give.

The Movement's gift to the Church and the world is this: we must work for the coming of the Kingdom of God by founding our lives on a new image of the couple.

They have no wine, said Mary at the wedding at Cana; with profound intuition, she foresaw Christ's saving act. Today the Earth is still in need of many kinds of "wine."

We in Teams must be sensitised to those needs and wants, whether spoken or unspoken, physical or spiritual. Only then will we be open to the great questions of our time, attentive to the causes of suffering in marriage and family life, and ready to collaborate with other movements in this area.

Teams of Our Lady have one specific, direct objective: to help couples fully live their sacrament of matrimony. At the same time, Teams have a missionary objective: to bear witness by their lives and words to the values of Christian marriage. On which tasks should we concentrate our efforts for the next few years?

4.1 In the Movement

Stimulated by the Second Wind, we should all strive together to strengthen the feeling of community and improve mutual help in our Teams. We must continue to remind ourselves that the endeavours are attitudes to assimilate, and that they are only means to an end. For each individual and for each couple, to live as a Christian is a daily struggle. That is why Teams offer choices that encourage spiritual growth, but they abide by only one law: the Spirit of love.

Creativity helps to combat the subtle menace of a routine that can eventually lead members to abandon the endeavours. The longer a Team is together, the greater the danger that the meetings will become social events. The couples will excuse themselves and each other for not having followed a road they no longer freely accept, and they will neglect their personal and collective responsibility for their Christian commitments.

Two other stages of Team life pose problems that still await a creative solution.

First, the training of "uncommitted-Teams:²" it seems best that each country develop its own structure based on the needs and characteristics of its young couples, as long as there is an international exchange of experience in this respect. Second, a way must be found to offer mature couples a "more demanding commitment"

Let's be inventive and contribute as best we can to these initiatives that indicate a desire to forge ahead. The Movement will thus be able to respond to real aspirations, and couples will not feel the need to look elsewhere.

Our Movement has always been concerned with educating its members and has always given reference points and criteria for discernment. While couples remain responsible and free, they still need support in their search to understand the Word of God in relation to the signs of the times. This calls for ongoing training and for a day-by-day search to enable them to express the realities of faith in modern terms.

Each of us should be aware that couples who accept a responsibility within the Movement in a spirit of leadership and service have an important mission to fulfil. They need and deserve our support.

4.2 In the Church

While Teams are not a movement of action, Teams members are definitely people of action, in the sense that they benefit from the ample spiritual nourishment of Teams and then freely determine what the Lord has called them to do. In the same way, each member is a missionary, wherever he or she is, according to each one's personal choices. It is true, again, that Teams as a movement do not commit themselves to collective endeavours, because couples in Teams must hear and answer the Lord's call for themselves. However, this fruitful freedom to choose our commitments must not obscure for us the fact that the Movement has its own charism and that we cannot turn a deaf ear to our fellow men and women, especially to the call of our bishops in the area of pastoral efforts concerning the family. It is also important for Teams to be open to all without distinction as to class or race, and to pay more attention to their country's needs, preferably as they are called to do so by the local Church.

Here, to name but a few, are some of the urgent areas of diocesan action relating to family life:³

- to accompany youth groups;
- to prepare engaged couples for Christian marriage;
- to support young married couples;
- to help couples in difficulty and divorced remarried couples;
- to have concern for young couples who are living together outside marriage⁴.

While it would be a grave mistake to bring these latter couples into Teams, we can envision parallel structures for them in which Teams couples could serve effectively.

²

⁴ Parallel Teams of cohabiting couples who meet monthly occurs in France and Belgium

4.3 In the World

To answer both our calling and the expectations of today's world, we must practise and proclaim three things:

a. Marriage is at the *service of love*. If there is a marriage crisis today, it is mainly because people no longer really believe there is a link between love and marriage. We in Teams do, however, and that is why we have decided to love each *other* as long as we live.

b. Marriage is at the *service of happiness*. In this sad and anguished world, the very word "happiness" has an unfamiliar ring. Let us live our conjugal life as a road to happiness and make it apparent to others by our attitudes and by testifying to the methods that help us achieve this happiness.

c. Marriage is at the *service of sanctity*. This is without doubt the most specific vocation of Teams: not only to call lay people, married lay people, to holiness, but to affirm that human sexuality can be a path to holiness. This is still a new path in the Church, and as far as the world is concerned, it is practically revolutionary. The Second Wind is an invitation to apply

the Gospel message to human sexuality, that is, to learn to see it through God's eyes and to live it according to His plan so that it may serve the coming of His Kingdom. Dear friends, the seed we are planting in Lourdes, at Mary's feet, must sprout, grow, blossom and bear fruit, just as the Child she carried in her womb became a Man, the Man of salvation. To bring that little seed to fruition, we will need time and caring, hope and patience; we will also need to keep our hearts open to the Spirit and to God's unexpected ways.

We entrust the Second Wind to Mary, knowing that she will lead Teams wherever the Lord wants them to build up His Kingdom.

*The International Leading
Team of
Teams of Our Lady*

Questions

1. This section calls for creativity whilst still being faithful to the core charisms of teams, enabling couples to fully live their sacrament of matrimony. What opportunities and challenges does this bring?
2. We are asked to proclaim marriage at the service of love, happiness and sanctity. How can we best do this in our current times?
3. As a movement of active Christians we are called we are called to take action.
 - a. In what areas do you feel called to take action personally and as a couple?
 - b. Are there areas that you think lend themselves to action by Teams members? How do they relate to some of the calls to action from Pope Francis in recent years?

Other useful documents to consider alongside this study topic:

Vocation and Mission- Teams of Our Lady 2018 <https://equip-es-notre-dame.com/en/vocation-mission/>

Laudato Si- On care for our common home. Pope Francis 2015
<https://laudatosi.com/watch>

The Joy of Love- Amoris Laetitia, Vatican 2015
https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf

Epilogue

Exhortation by Father Olivier

Magnificat! With the Virgin Mary we sing to the Lord our joy and our

gratitude. With her we live the great hope of the people of God.

With her we welcome the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham, the Messiah made flesh in her womb.

Although the Messiah has come, all is not over. Not yet! The Messiah brought us Good News which we must implement. Therein lies the new hope of the People of God.

The Teams of Our Lady have the vocation and mission to live and announce an important aspect of this Good News: the Good News for couples, for Christian couples called to build up the Kingdom of God.

We firmly believe that the creation of the Teams of Our Lady forty years ago was a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. And during the past forty years the Movement has spread to the whole world. It has remained faithful to its founding charism. In keeping with this faithfulness, the Movement today wishes to accentuate in a new way certain aspects of the life of the Teams, in order to answer the urgent needs of today's couples.

There is a "marriage crisis" in many countries. The divorce rate continues to climb. The number of young people who live together yet have no desire to marry is enormous. That is why the aim of the Teams of Our Lady is more than ever up-to-date: to help Christian couples to fully live their sacrament of matrimony. And more than ever the mission of the Teams in today's world is up-to-date: to bear witness to the values of Christian marriage.

To be able today to respond to our vocation and mission, we need a "second wind," or second breath. We must ask it of the Holy Spirit, the Breath (the Wind) of God, Breath of life, creating and sanctifying Breath. Under His inspiration we are proposing a special, three-fold objective for the coming years: LOVE, HAPPINESS, HOLINESS.

1. LOVE

Go and proclaim, and show by your lives, that marriage is at the service of love.

LOVE has always been the great dream of men and women, of the young in particular. In our world, people still believe in love, but not in the link between love and marriage. Notably, for many young people love cannot be commanded, it is essentially free. It must be freed of all constraints, such as, a commitment, an institution, a sacrament... Yet we in Teams know that marriage is the natural place, the favourable and privileged atmosphere in which true love can develop.

LOVE, which is a great flame, a fire, needs to be fed, nourished, sustained, or it will become, as all fires that die out, a simple pile of ashes. Marriage is the will, the decision, to build this love every day, even on the days when "we don't feel like it."

LOVE, to be true, needs time. To grow stronger, it needs to face difficult moments; it needs time to allow the progressive discovery of the other; it needs to be tested in patience, which is

the contrary of "I want everything now, and on a silver platter." Marriage ensures that love will have enough time; marriage upholds the progress of mutual self-knowledge, and invites us to have patience for the long walk together until the end.

LOVE needs fidelity: you do not throw your heart to the wind, but you give it to someone, forever! Fidelity is precisely the first demand of marriage.

LOVE in marriage tenderly prepares the nest which will welcome the fruit: the child in whom the man and the woman find themselves reflected, at once themselves and someone else...

Marriage, far from being an obstacle to love, is still the best "invention" for protecting love and making it grow indefinitely.

I often think of my grandfather. My grandparents got on very well together and, in the family, they were called "the lovers." My grandmother died a few months before the celebration of their golden wedding anniversary. My grandfather wished to watch over her for three nights, all alone. On the day of the funeral, during the family meal, he who was normally a silent man looked at the young couples around the table and said: "You young people think you know what love is. You don't know anything about it. You have to live together for fifty years to know!" Marriage is the best servant of love.

2. HAPPINESS

Go and proclaim, and show by your lives, that marriage is a path to happiness.

We live in a world that is often morose and joyless. And there are certainly good reasons to be anxious: the unending wars, violence that attacks the innocent, sickness, lack of work, poverty, and often... for the young, dim prospects for the future.

All this is true. But each of us, nonetheless, bears in his heart the desire for happiness. Who will tell us where to find it? Absolute happiness is God alone. But on earth we can have a "taste of happiness".

- A man and a woman who love each other, who choose to unite their lives and their destinies, who walk together, hand in hand, with the grace of God on them and in them: these two people are strengthened to face life, and there is something between them which must be happiness.

- A man and a woman who know that they are united by God also know very well that their days will not always be rosy and that even their love may go through troubled times. But they know that the strength of God in them will enable them to understand, forgive, and be reconciled. In those moments of deep communion, there is something like happiness.

- And there is also the union of the flesh which, if it is both an expression and a means of love, brings true moments of happiness. Because "sexual love is not merely a remedy for concupiscence, it is the 'spiritual communion in the flesh' of two people who love each other. "

Happiness must also be built up: it does not just happen. It is built up by sharing all that one has and all that one is. It is built up by giving oneself to the other. And marriage is nothing other than the decision and the permanence of this gift from one to the other: the gift of

bodies seeking physical harmony, the gift of hearts and spirits in privileged friendship. The greatest joys in marriage are:

- to make your spouse happy;
- then, to create a nest of happiness for your children;
- and finally, and not so easily, to create a happiness that rubs off on all those with whom you come in contact.

Never forget: happiness is contagious!

3. HOLINESS

Go and proclaim, and show by your lives, that marriage is a path to holiness. We know that God alone is holy. And we can never bless and proclaim His holiness enough, as Mary does in the Magnificat.

But we also know-and we have been repeating it for forty years in the Teams of Our Lady- that all Christians are called to holiness and that, for spouses, this means that they are called to sanctify themselves through their conjugal life.

This means that a life of prayer and contemplation is wide open to them, and that they need to approach the sacraments fervently and frequently. And this means, in particular, that the sexual life, which for some was a taboo and suspect subject for so long, must be considered:

- not only as a natural thing, willed by God: "Man and woman He created them;"
- not only as a good thing which has nothing shameful about it: "He saw that all this was good..."
- but as a means of sanctification.

Certainly, we know that a **powerful** force is at work here, which, if not mastered, can be an obstacle to prayer, to union with God, and to the spiritual life. Therefore, it is important to control this force, to dominate it, to tame it, and to put it to good use in seeking the Kingdom of God.

This is what I like to call "applying the Gospel message to human sexuality." We must learn to humanise sexuality, so that it becomes a true factor of human growth. We must learn to harmonise it, so that it serves the blossoming of the couple. We must learn to care for it, which forty years ago would have been an unbelievable thing to say. Because here we have substantial matter for the life of the couple: sexuality must not be sacrificed; on the contrary, it must be made to blossom. However, this cannot be done without real self-sacrifice, and it is here, I think, that spouses must seek the best application of the penance necessary in all Christian lives.

Without doubt, the most specific message of the Teams of Our Lady lies in the statement that marriage is a path of holiness. This is why, in the perspective of a Second Wind, one of our major objectives must be to work together in applying the Gospel message to human.

There is work to be done!

Prayer to the Holy Spirit