



## Presentation on Young Teams of Our Lady

I would like to start with a small exercise. Shall I start? OK! I would like to ask you to mentally describe your cars. I'll give you ten seconds. Now may I ask you to describe your best friend? Ten seconds.

You probably had a harder time describing your best friend in ten seconds than describing your car. It matters little whether the adjectives were more or less specific, more or less correct. There were probably some ladies who thought "my car is big and it's ... green". On the other hand, some gentlemen may have taken more time and thought about the horsepower and engine capacity. But my point is not this: my point is that it is very easy for us to explain, in a short time, something concrete and physical and, on the other hand, it is very difficult to define something that we like a lot but has an emotional or spiritual dimension.

We could come here and give you a theoretical, historical, formal or even bureaucratic presentation of who we are. But that is not what we want. Our proposal today is to lead you along a path explaining what teams are for us, what they mean in our young peoples' growth, what they imply for our lives and how they help us move from an inherited Faith to a chosen Faith.

To tell you about the Young Teams of our Lady, I will tell you three stories. I will open the heart of our movement and try to explain to you, with names and people, why Teams are good and why they are works of God, for us young people. We are evangelizing instruments, faithful to Jesus and to the family charism of our movements.

### **1. We are evangelizing instruments...**

This is the story of how we young people have an extraordinary desire to enter the heart of those who seek us, and how we can often be the Surprise or the Hope that many seek and wish for.

Two years ago we went to the World Youth Days in Krakow. We were about 300 Portuguese team-members. A trip of more than 3,300km by bus. Almost two whole days, almost 48 hours, with less legroom than we have here in this basilica.

On one of these buses the driver was very touched by us. With our joy and enthusiasm, we managed to surprise him and help him open his heart. We managed, he told us, to fill it with Hope. Hope in a generation that many consider



lost, Hope in young people considered by many as disinterested, unfocused, disoriented or even weak and lukewarm. Angelo, the driver who accompanied us for 48 hours on the way to Krakow and 48 hours on the way back, was truly moved by the contact with us, seeing that we had a clear life goal, seeing that we know what we want, seeing that we find in our spiritual life and in our relationship with God the source of our Joy, our Enthusiasm, and even our Motivation.

Therefore, through our Joy and Depth, and in an almost involuntary way, we were true evangelizers. Pope Francis, a few years ago, said that there is no better way to evangelize a young person than through another young person. We can also be a sign of the Presence of God for young people.

Taking the passage of the Prodigal Son, the theme and spiritual basis of your Gathering, I would say that, in a way, we feel that the Father asks us to be happy witnesses to His house. May we be, for the Sons who have gone away, a clear sign of the Tranquillity, Happiness, Joy, Peace and Sense that can be felt when we are in His House, in His Company. May we be true evangelizers.

## **2. ...faithful to Jesus...**

I'll tell you, now, another story. One about the son who was very sorry for the enormous amount of work that his mother had at home (preparing dinner, giving baths to his brothers...etc.). The son was very worried about his mother's fatigue. Then he was asked what he was doing to help his mother, and he replied that when he went home he would go to his room to pray.

This story is something of a caricature but it is real. And it is particularly real in adolescent faith: a very intense faith but only present in certain aspects of life. Just present on Mass days or other celebrations. A childish faith.

We respond to this challenge by focusing on Jesus.

We know that we are asked to be not only better Catholics but also better sons, better friends, better students, better professionals, better citizens and better politicians, better Christians...

We don't want to be like the son of this story. We don't want to have a dead faith, a faith "without works" (James 2) a sporadic faith or a faith only present in the Teams. We want a living Faith that radiates Joy and Life.

We live this faith with the demands that Jesus' life taught us. And we know that it must be intimately linked to an enormous amount of Charity, Patience and Humility as the Church challenges us to have.



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We are faithful to the framework of our movement that brings together many charisms, "many parts of the same body". We are faithful to the Church and to its inexhaustible knowledge; we are faithful to its Tradition, to Pope Francis and the Bishops and Priests who accompany us. We are aware of the importance of a Church with "freedom in what is not important, observance in what is mandatory, and in everything, charity".

They say that "there are three paths to failure: not teaching what we know, not practicing what we teach and not asking what we don't know." We avoid these paths with the help of the Church that Jesus left us, the Church that we love and intend to follow and serve.

Returning to the parable of the Prodigal Son, we also avoid being the eldest Son, who, though being close to the Father, could not practice what He taught.

### **3. ...with a family charism**

Some years ago I was told the story of a girl called Leonor. One day, five-year-old Leonor, was at school, and the teacher asked all the students to draw a picture of what they wanted to be when they grew up. Boys and girls drew doctors, firemen, policemen, pilots, etc. Not Leonor, Leonor drew a "young woman". The teacher insisted that Leonor choose a profession, but Leonor insisted: what she really wanted to do when she grew up was to be "a young woman" like the young people in her parents' team, like the young people who came to her house every month.

Dear Couples, young people create a deep and true relationship with the couple who accompanies their team. And they do it, I believe, because it is a relationship with three parts, the young people, the couple and Our Lady. A relationship that is not focused on the couple but spreads to the whole family. Couple and children.

This is because the youth teams, in their genesis, in their charism, are a family movement. A movement that defends the family and puts it at the centre of their existence.

Dear couples, along with the priests who accompany us, you have in our movement the opportunity and possibility of being true examples for us young people. Family example, love example, dedication example. I ask you: is there anything greater than this?

These three stories try to explain to you why the teams are a movement with young evangelizers, faithful to Christ and with a great sense of family.

But let me conclude with one last story.



The person that I wanted to tell you is about John. A few years ago, John was a relatively normal young man, an average student; he liked football and went out at night. He lived his Faith in a way, also considered, "normal." He was faithful to the commandments (at least to those he understood), went to Mass with his family on Sunday, and when he did not forget, even prayed at night.

One day, through a friend, John got to know the Teams. He was captivated. Even today, he cannot explain if what he liked most was the cheerful and happy spirit with which hundreds of young people lived the commitment of feeding their Faith, or if it was a long conversation he had had, on a pilgrimage, with an older team member. He says that what may also have captivated him was the couple: their example as a family, their example of love for each other, their example in the path to holiness and their natural and real example of how a home can be "the sweet and joyful face of the Church," as our dear Father Caffarel said.

John has been in the Teams for three years. He recognizes today that Our Lady's Youth Teams have helped him to move from a culturally and inherited Faith to a living and chosen Faith.

John has one more spectacular feature: John does not exist.

We team members are all John. We are all those who during these last 40 years have been part of the movement. It is all of us who in one way or another have been touched by a God who loves us and by a Mother who protects us, guides us and never leaves us. John is Antony, Theresa, Thomas, Francis, Peter, Margaret or Joseph.

John is extremely grateful to Father Caffarel and especially to the couples of the Teams of Our Lady.

John constantly thanks our Mother, Queen of Heaven, for the grace he receives for being in the Father's House and for being in His Presence. He thanks our Mother for everything he has, all that he has received, everything that has been and still is to be given to him. And he thanks her despite feeling that he has given very little.

Dear couples, we say goodbye the way we began: it is very difficult for us to come here to speak to you. We feel small. First because we are eternally grateful. Grateful not only because if it was not for you, we wouldn't exist as a Movement, but also for all the help and dedication you have given us during these last 40 years.

I will not leave without asking you three things: help us, help us, help us. We need you.

We are many - more than 5,000 - but we want to be more. Not because we want the worldly success of numbers, but because we believe, as we told you, Teams are



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good and are works of God. We believe that we are evangelizing instruments, faithful to Jesus and with a family charism.

We are present in Canada, the State of California in the United States, Brazil, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Angola, Mozambique, Lebanon, Syria, Spain and here in Portugal but we want to be in more places, with more young people.

Speak to us and help us to achieve this wish of ours, which, we believe, is also the wish of the Church and the wish of God.

Thank you for everything!