

MISSION OF LOVE

LOVE IN MISSION



20th July, 2018



Mission of Love, Love in Mission

In this hour of farewell and sharing, touched by a deep emotion, we find no words to define what is in our soul, so we give thanks to God for what these six years at the service of this wonderful Movement have been.

We do not want to assess all the activities carried out during this time, but just to speak to you of the spirit that has driven us and enlightened the path we have chosen to take.

Sharing the moments of intimacy we had with the Lord is a source of joy for us. It was He who often took us by the hand with a lot of tenderness and led us to overcome obstacles.

When we started it was not easy to hear the voice of the Lord in the call he made us. We knew that the future did not belong to us, but several limitations made us hesitate in our Yes.

Dear friends, it seemed to us that we were refusing the Father's embrace to accompany and console us on that Path and to show us that the future did not belong to us.

We do not like nostalgias, hesitations or regrets. We remember very well that our Yes, was not only difficult to give, but a revolutionary yes, because it meant adopting a life program, exactly the opposite of what we wanted to do.

However, holiness has always seemed to us a personal and conjugal challenge, which can be attractive and possible, because despite our faults we continue to walk with Christ, keeping a constant love relationship with Him.

Pope Benedict says in his last Exhortation "**Gaudete et Exsultate**": "*Holiness is a community path that must be done two by two*", affirming also "*Holiness is daring, it is an evangelizing impulse that leaves a mark in this world.*"

Encouraged by the Holy Spirit, and in an attitude of listening, vigilance and discernment, we embarked without fear with **Pride, Hope and Praise** in this **Mission of Love**.

Pride for what Teams of Our Lady have been and are, and for what they want to continue to be, witnesses of the Sacrament of Marriage.

Hope in the Father who always waits for us, who sees us from afar, knows our sufferings and joys, and proposes a different future, which we sometimes do not understand.

Hope that the call of the Lord may always find in everyone a confident opening to responsibility, as changing our reality, profoundly transforms the way we live our life. We are a sign of hope, especially for those with whom we dialogue. This hope ensures that the different cultures and civilizations become those of a single family united by the spirit of the Teams of Our Lady.



Praise God for giving us the Light to place ourselves once again on the right Path and to show us that serving Him is an occasion to love Him more and more.

Praise still for over the years sending us several calls for conversion as a couple, to show us the path of holiness.

We placed everything in Our Lady of Aparecida's hands and She welcomed us in Brasília under her cloak, in 2012. Everything was delivered to her and she never failed in her answer to our confidence; difficulties and successes, but above all our poor and humble prayer that never wavered.

Helped by the richness of Father Caffarel's thought in the true rediscovery of our vocation and mission, we came to Fatima, "*conscious that the love that refuses labor and fight is a love lost from the beginning*" (Love and Grace, pg. 42).

He brought us by the hand here, where, with great joy at the feet of Our Lady of Fatima, we will deliver this great treasure to our dear friends Clarita and Edgardo.

Through prayer we have lived the joy of the presence of His Son in a simple and humble way, experiencing in our lives the audacity of Jesus becoming flesh, dwelling among us and telling us:

"You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you" (Jeremiah 1: 7-8)

When we discern about the inheritance we have received from the Movement of Teams of Our Lady, we feel compelled to give a fair return to its gifts, considering as priorities the challenges of Identity, Openness, Communication, Communion and Mission.

Identity Challenge

This challenge opens us to the confrontation with society, where we bear witness to fidelity to the charism of our Movement.

The testimony of fidelity to conjugal spirituality, nourished by the Sacrament of Matrimony, forced us to go to the source, to re-read the roots of our identity in the face of today's problems to help us rediscover the true nature of human love, a reality that makes us advance in the path to holiness.

To face with courage, effort, vigilance and discernment the multicultural coexistence, trying to recreate methods, keeping the doctrine firm in the harmony and freshness of the first Love. Through the power of the Spirit, it was encouraging and comforting to live TOL's ecclesiality and to say like Peter: "*It is good to be here...*"



Openness Challenge

Teams of Our Lady, a Church movement, supported by the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony, wants to be open to the appeals that come to it, because Teams live by the power of testimony, not to teach, but because, living in intimacy with Jesus, they walk by His side.

Purifying ourselves from the old dough to be the new yeast is an option that cannot leave for a postponed tomorrow the decision to set out to help others to break away from a life that needs change.

Pope Francis has recently exhorted us not to forget all those who suffer to find their way. They need to know the reason of our joy.

Being "*outgoing*" teams, with enthusiasm and Love, we are willing to renew the anthropology of Man, recognizing the complementarity of sexes, and developing mutual help to progress in the path of holiness. By practicing the "*art of accompaniment*," they help those who need to make a steady and clear path.

Having a mission of love as our vocation and enriched by the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage, we must feel capable of responding to the Pope's call to help, accompany and form all the couples who suffer and are going through fragile moments.

Communication Challenge

It is necessary to understand and analyze the potentialities of Teams' fast internationality influencing their whole and creating a human space rich in cultural differences, which requires great dialogue and a strong investment in formation.

This difference of cultures requires an effort of understanding and respect, so that Teams of Our Lady can live this integration and thus build and enrich its path of unity.

The commitment to contribute, through these formation and reflection actions, to the integration of the differences in TOL, looking for unity in diversity, brings us closer and offers us the experience of a fruitful life in a community that gives fruit to the outside.

Integrating the cultural differences of the Movement requires zeal and an absolute fidelity to its charisma. It is a great challenge which we are called to answer through welcome, dialogue and proximity.

Communion Challenge

Communion generates life!



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The Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* of John Paul II reminded us of the duty to "make the Church the home and the school of communion" to ensure "the effectiveness of any commitment to evangelization". It also stressed that "***it is necessary to promote a spirituality of communion***"

The experience of being a Church that listens, prays and lives in communion is given to us by the Teams of Our Lady.

As we are a family of families, the strength of the Spirit, which makes us live as a team, turns the Movement into a great team of teams.

If the family begins in the conjugal communion, when it extends to the children, it lives in perfect communion.

Living this reality in the Teams of Our Lady is both a challenge and a task.

A challenge to witness, in joy, the Sacrament of Marriage that unites us and where Reconciliation is Sign of Love, because forgiveness has a healing power.

Priority task: to ask the couples immersed in conjugal love and reflection of the Love of Christ, the family accompaniment that transforms, capable of adopting a new lifestyle in this individualistic world, accustomed to live without Christ.

Task and challenge that can only be achieved if we do so with the irreplaceable support of our dear Spiritual Counselors. "*It is impossible to separate the priest's mission from the mission of Christ. He prolongs and perpetuates it over the centuries.*" (Henri Caffarel).

If it sometimes seems to us, and it is true, that our life and that of the Movement do not correspond to the beauty of what we announce, it is because we must humbly acknowledge that the presence of Christ in our lives is weak and tenuous and that the Light that arrives to us does not spread.

As Father Caffarel wrote in "L'Anneau d'Or", (The Gold Ring 117-118):

"Far from being passive, this communion by love is an intense, common activity, a synergy; the participation of two in the same vital act of getting to know and loving God, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit who inhabits the spouses."

Mission Challenge

"Audacity and apostolic courage are part of the mission" (Gaudete et Exsultate-131)



Vatican Council II launched a radical reformulation of the mission's theological foundation. The decree "Ad Gentes" presents the mission as a mandate that is not only divine, but takes us to God who sends and enters the heart of humanity to save it.

Today, the Church is in a fruitful renewing moment.

Father Caffarel in "*The Marriage, this great Sacrament*" reminds us that the spouses united by the sacrament of Matrimony are chosen and called by God to be a reflection of His Love.

After Pope Francis' audience in 2015, Teams of Our Lady were called to be a living, serving, dialoguing and merciful Church. This was the spirit and the attitude expressed in the apostolic exhortations "*Evangelium Gaudium*" and "*Amoris Laetitia*" and also in the message that Pope Francis left us at the said audience.

They are guiding principles insofar as they invite and impel us to dialogue and follow the differences, increasingly visible in today's lives of couples and families.

We know that everyone remembers, but it is never too much to insist, that His Holiness advised us to go out to serve, to accompany the most fragile, accepting them as bearers of realities that will make us develop and practice mercy and develop "the art of accompaniment" to which the Pope refers so often.

More welcoming spirit, more work together, more mission, were priorities that we defined as objectives.

The Teams of Our Lady "*on the way out*" are not aimless teams, but teams walking towards others to reach the peripheries. But reaching the periphery does not mean running the world without direction or purpose. Often it is better to slow down, to put anxiety aside, to look at others and listen, choosing to accompany those who have fallen by the wayside, because that is where we will find Jesus.

It is within this spirit that the Teams of Our Lady have expanded everywhere. Thus, on January 1, 2018, the Movement has 13,580 teams, of which 139,820 are members, assisted by 10,195 Spiritual Counselors, spread over 92 countries in 5 continents.

In Fatima, we are living the force of internationality, with the presence of about 8,500 members of the Teams of Our Lady, coming from 80 countries on five continents. We know that these Gatherings are privileged places to strengthen this internationality in the communion and acceptance of the different cultures, making us stronger and bolder to look at the future with confidence and hope.

Every man and woman is a mission and this is their reason for living on earth. Being called and being sent are the two movements that our heart feels as inner forces of love that promise a future and impel our existence forward.

To live one's own responsibility for the world with joy, is a great challenge.

"I am a mission on this Earth, that is the reason why I am here in this world" (Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* – 273)



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The path of Peter's barge

The International Leading Team chose to walk beside the Church, as its program.

Thus, there was an immediate response to Pope Benedict XVI's invitation to profess our Faith with joy and confidence and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the beginning of Vatican II

Knowing where our Path came from, the way and the end of our itinerary were questions we made ourselves and all those who entered Peter's barge in the first College in Bordeaux.

Peter's barge, with the presence of Jesus, even when it seemed that he slept, was a privileged place for the Gathering. When the wind blew and the waves were high, He was our compass: "**Where is your faith?**" (Lk 8: 22-25)

This experience strengthened us for the Way, showing us with confidence and tenderness that when we enter Peter's barge, we consciously accept to be Church cells because: "**Only one thing is necessary**" (Lk 10, 38)

Faith is the foundation of our spiritual life and it is this demand that gives meaning to life, it is not a refuge for people without courage.

Throughout the year we have worked the virtue of conjugal Love, based on forgiveness and reconciliation, which helped us to dive into deep waters, making God known and proclaiming His Love.

It is in faith, where the demand and the fight do not cease to increase; it is here that we live the love of being a man and of being a woman, which is what leads us more and more to become a couple, God's masterpiece.

True conjugal unity is a promise that embraces sexual desire in a profound way, committing man and woman one to the other in sickness, wealth and poverty, based on the covenant with God, as we said on our wedding day.

This matter was the subject of deep and careful attention of this International Leading Team, with the elaboration of the "Spirituality and Sexuality" notebooks, re-opening the door to an issue that greatly concerned Father Caffarel.

To love ourselves as a man and a woman and to keep alive the union with God is something that cannot be unknown or postponed in a Movement whose charism is conjugal spirituality.

The practice of inner freedom to prepare our hearts and to perceive our sexuality in the context of conjugal communion and individual holiness seems fundamental to us. Therefore, this subject was dealt with, in several Colleges, so that everyone could accept this proposal.

At Boston College, we decided to visit Jesus and stay for a year in the House of Bethany. Jesus who loved Lazarus and his sisters felt the need to be welcomed into their home, throughout his missionary journey, his prophetic activity.



We wanted to enter the House of Bethany and know better Jesus who assumed our condition. We learned from His example to abandon ourselves to His Love.

Jesus invites us to select and give priority to the presence of God and to listening to His Word.

Jesus proposes a hierarchy of values that gives order to gestures. Yet a spiritual choice of God has consequences: it centers life on the essential, turning worries into love, the only thing that matters.

This is the richness of conjugating the stories and the knowledge of the genesis of the character of each person that has a place in the family. How important was His counsel in the life of this great family of the Teams of Our Lady.

It is fundamental to make choices and risk options! ... *"It's not just about doing some good actions, but about seeking social change"* (Gaudete et Exsultate "- 99)

Following the discernment about how we needed to become more like Jesus, the main concern for that year became to advance in obedience, to re-live life placing Jesus at the center of the Movement's existence, occupying the first place through prayer.

A virtual platform for catechetical formation at distance was created in the model of the Encounter of the disciples of Emmaus, available in the five official languages of the Movement.

The secret of success is not found in what is done, but in the action of the One we receive at home, who makes us feel that *"Only one thing is necessary"* (Lk 10: 38-41)

The Teams of Our Lady, who travel in the **boat of the Lord**, who dwell in His house and remain in His presence, feel called to transform reason and heart and take on a new attitude by adhering to the person of Jesus Christ.

Arriving in Rome with renewed spirit made us aware and humbly prepared to go to the world to proclaim the Gospel: *"Take nothing for the journey"*

(Luke 9:1-6)

When we held the College of Rome, which had this theme and preceded the great Regional Gathering, we prepared ourselves to live the joy of being received by the Holy Father.

At the 2015 International Rome Regional Gathering, we consciously proclaimed the commitment we had assumed without fear and with determination:

"Here I am, Lord, send me!" (Is 6,8)

In Rome, couples and spiritual counselors, on behalf of the whole Movement, committed themselves to living and radiating throughout the world a Love commitment.

Father Caffarel's prophetic intuition on "Vocation and Mission" became very clear in the spirit of the Teams of Our Lady.

Through the speech that Pope Francis addressed to the participants in the Regional Gathering we realized how much the Church counts and needs our Movement and each one of us in particular to be leaven in today's world.

In order to be a leaven of hope in families and a sign of reconciliation, the Holy Father made it clear to us that the peripheries had to be the object of increased attention and concern for us.



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... *He who abides in me bears fruit* "(John 15: 5)

Revealing to Christ our projects of life, the values that stir our hearts, and our goals for this society where we live, has given us the hope of being heard and guided by His Light.

The proposal to mobilize the whole Movement was launched with the intention of assimilating the condition of disciples of the Lord who get from His mouth and heart the inspiration and strength for their life and mission. This made us set out for Fatima, aware of our vocation.

While choosing the route "*I am the way, the truth and the life*" (John 14: 6), we lived with expectation and joy the two Synods (the Extraordinary in 2014 and the Ordinary in 2015), where we became aware of the concerns of the Church on "the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of the New Evangelization".

It became clear that the theme of the family was not only a theoretical theme that one had to study, but rather a living and up-to-date theme that clearly showed the concerns of today's society.

If the Teams of Our Lady do not assume these problems or relegate them to the background, they will be undoubtedly suffering the influence and impact of the individualism that is being lived today.

If we do not consciously discern how to enlighten these lives without an ideal, we won't be able to indicate new ways to make society discover that the joy we have, comes from Christ and is strengthened by the graces of the sacrament of matrimony that gives meaning to life: "*Abide in my love*" (John 15: 9).

The missionary disciple, according to Pope Francis, and prophetically quoted by Father Caffarel, is the one who bears witness to the action of God in him. There is no doubt that our mission is above all a testimony of the Christian style of life we adopt, as we become witnesses and prophets of His Love.

Awakening and renewing the missionary spirit, characterized by a mission of mercy in the world, the ERI proposed a spiritual itinerary for the pilgrimage to Fatima.

Hearing the voice of God through His silence is important. It is the silence that prolongs the Word where we are confronted with ourselves. Any true vocation begins with an encounter with Jesus who gives us a new joy and a new hope.

We cannot conceive our Movement as a bank of services and graces, but we can imagine a Movement which won't lose the ardor and urgency of achieving its vocation.

It is necessary to continue the discernment of our charism, to recognize our specific vocation, giving priority to the formation of all team members, preparing them for new responsibilities.

In the recent "Gaudete et Exsultate" exhortation, Pope Francis once again encourages us on this path and suggests we go forward leaving the community on the margin to navigate the sea and to launch the nets in deep waters (cf. Lk 5: 4)

This requires from all of us a change of mentality, challenging us strongly to a new perspective that will clearly lead us to understand what service the Teams should render to the Church and to the World.



We believe in the timeliness of the Teams of Our Lady as a fundamental element in the families of today's society. They are the living cells of a Church on the way to God.

In a serious and profound discernment, the ERI produced a document that was the result of this whole journey, "**Vocation and Mission of the TOL on the threshold of the third millennium**", which attempts to respond to the anxieties felt in all the Supra Regions and Regions these days. The criterion of evaluation of the life of our Movement is above all the experience of conjugal spirituality and the sharing of this wealth with others.

Discerning and welcoming, discerning and accompanying, practicing the "*art of accompaniment*" to be close to frailties is the axis we propose to everyone in that document, which from this moment is available to all team members.

Called to confirm our charism, both as a couple and as a team, with pride and praise of our founder Father Henri Caffarel, prophet for our time, we feel able to go beyond the borders, when we listen to the Father's desires and to men's needs.

United to Christ who enables us to serve with daring and apostolic zeal, let us use our charism to serve others. He knows our frailty and supports us with His spirit, repeating with serenity and firmness: "Do not be afraid"

Let us ask the Lord for the grace of not hesitating when the spirit demands that we take a step forward; let us ask for apostolic courage to share the Gospel with others and stop trying to make our life a museum of memories.

In every situation, may the Holy Spirit cause us to contemplate history in the light of the risen Jesus.

"In this way, the Church will not stand still, but constantly welcome the Lord's surprises."
(Gaudete et Exsultate - 139)

CONCLUSIONS

Dear friends, at this final hour we wish to bid farewell to each and every one of you in particular and to remind you that the Blessed Virgin has spoken and smiled again, not to the three children but to thousands of people from all over the world

For the little shepherds, Faith was simple and pure and that's probably why the Lord said:

"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 18: 3)

We need to have this simplicity to prevent our rational logic from closing the doors of our heart.

"Seeing and acting with mercy: that is holiness." (Gaudete et Exsultate - 82)

Before we leave, let us entrust ourselves to Mary. She is the protagonist of all this wonder. In a silent, discreet, obedient and unlimited fidelity, she offered us the light that enlightens us...



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“Then your light shall break forth like the dawn” (Is 58,8)

It is necessary to have the little shepherds’ courage and boldness. Through Mary, they received God’s message of conversion and salvation, showing how the weak and humble can be audacious announcers of Love in our world.

Aware of our Vocation and Mission, announcers of the Bliss of Conjugal Love, let us leave, assisted by the Spirit who guarantees us a renewed and constant creativity, in deep fidelity to TOL’s Charism and to the Church of which we are part.

“Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God.” (Gaudete et Exsultate– 34) ,

because **Reconciliation** is always sign of Love.

To and José Moura Soares