

“COSY SITTING ROOMS”

June 1948 editorial

Are Teams cosy sitting rooms?

One of our friends wrote to us as follows:

“Some people who are heavily involved in Catholic Action at diocesan and national level are very critical of groups of couples. It is not that they are unaware of the need to give couples a solid doctrinal foundation so that, throughout their life, they may draw from the sacrament of marriage the graces that flow from it; but they criticise couples for withdrawing into these groups and living ‘apart’ from the many people who lack a sufficient Christian formation to be of one mind with them. These groups allow couples to have a clear conscience on easy terms. And so many are dissuaded from taking on urgent tasks which no one else will take on and are satisfied with a Ghetto or “cosy sitting room” Christianity.”

“I thought it right to report the opinion of these Christians who are in no way ill disposed but who have strong reservations regarding Teams. Is there not something lacking in our attitude if friends have the impression that we are shying away from essential tasks?”

“Will Teams of couples merit the reproach that the French writer André Gide (1869-1951) addressed to couples: ‘The door of the house occasionally opened, revealing welcoming light, warmth and laughter; then closed for the night. Nothing tramp-like could enter in, nor the freezing cold outside. I hate you, families: closed doors, possessions jealously guarded’.”

You are right, dear friend, to pass on the remarks you have heard. You are even more right to invite us to examine our conscience. And so, I don’t hesitate to let our readers see the content of your letter.

There is a word, however, in your comment that I would like to underline: “...*if friends have the impression that we are shying away from essential tasks*”. I believe, in reality, that it is more a matter of impression than of fact. I have just looked at the list of our teams and I was struck by the number of men and women who assume very high and very onerous responsibilities in a variety of fields. Many of our friends fulfil key roles in numerous movements of Catholic Action, in family associations, in professional associations, trade unions and even in high positions in the present government.

But, be that as it may! I will not dwell on it. I have no wish to enter into polemics. It is not a matter of being right, but of responding ever more fully to God’s and our fellow humans’ expectations. After reading this article, may couples in each team ask themselves whether it is possible to go further still in commitments and giving of self. I will not press the point.

Let me return to our correspondent. He says:

“One of the reasons that perhaps explain why groups of couples limit their horizon and become inward looking, is the feminine influence. The task of the mother of a family is indeed to ensure the happiness and success of her family; hence her tendency to push aside all that might, from outside, compromise the balance and stability of her home; hence also her mistrust and jealousy regarding anything (job, trade union, associations, political party/involvement) that takes up the time and energy of her husband at the expense of purely family activities. Being an admirable guardian of interior peace, she wants to protect it against all external threats – that is her role. Now, a group of couples enlarges

the circumference of the circle without breaking it. It is still an area of peace and order. It can also be controlled: it does not call for charity on a worldwide scale, an unlimited giving of self. But what feminine prudence and the requirement of good order have initiated, male fear of involvement and lassitude can complete. Then, even in a group of couples, the couple will still remain inward looking.”

Many wives do indeed experience this “temptation” and must resist it. But it is nonetheless true that many wives in our Teams, who are generous, audacious and persevering, are initiators of admirable apostolic initiatives. Would that I could say here all that I know...!

Continue therefore, good friends, to seek Christ, to gain a deeper understanding of his mind and to make your home richer in love and grace; our contemporary world has an urgent need of it. It is the first thing Christ expects from you. Continue to pray together at your team meeting and to bear one another’s burdens; and charity will, more and more, erupt in your hearts. You will then be more and more passionately attached to the Kingdom of God and no appeal will leave you indifferent.

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