

A CHAIR ATTENDANT'S SPIRITUALITY
December 1948 editorial
(12 months after the promulgation of the Charter)

A few months of life together... then: disappointment. It surprises only those directly involved: they had entered into marriage to TAKE and not to GIVE.

After a few years of enthusiasm, a member of Catholic Action leaves his group: "*I no longer get anything out of it*". That's another one who is more concerned with taking than giving.

A young couple leaves for South America. Their parting words: "*It is no longer possible to see big in France*".

The government introduces a new tax, a recovery package, spending cuts... Complaints arise on all sides. People don't ask themselves whether the country's interest requires it. "*It does not suit me, therefore I moan*".

The list is endless.

Even with God, we come to take and not to give: "*What's the point of going on receiving communion and going to confession? I get nothing out of it*".

The wife loses interest in her home, the Church activist in his movement, the parishioner in his parish, the citizen in his country, man in his Creator.

Race of profiteers! Their loyalty is governed by self-interest. They don't even have the honesty to acknowledge it; they criticise and blame others.

I do not intend to suggest at this point a wide-ranging examination of conscience. In my marriage, my parish, my country, the Church: am I a parasite or a good worker? Such an important problem cannot be dealt with in a short article. I will expand on it another time.

In a more limited field, I want to invite each couple to ask themselves: why did we join the Teams? To take or to give?

Then to each team I would ask: why have you joined the Movement? Was it only to find ready-made study topics? to receive a newsletter? to gain from the experience of others? If so, you are not where you belong.

Meditate on these words of Saint-Exupéry in 'Pilote de Guerre' (War Pilot):

"I no longer dwelt as an architect in this human community. I benefited from its peace, its tolerance, its well-being. I knew nothing about it, except that I dwelt there as a sacristan or chair attendant; therefore as a parasite; therefore as one vanquished. Likewise the ship's passengers make use of the ship and give nothing to it. In the comfort of its lounges, which they consider unassailable, they play games. They know nothing of the work of the master cylinders under the eternal pressure of the sea. What right would they have to complain if the tempest breaks up their ship?"

But if you say to me: "*We want to participate in the great task undertaken by the Teams of Our Lady, we want to establish the Kingdom of Christ in the homes, we want holiness to take root in the modern world and not to remain the exclusive preserve of monks, we want to train good workers in society, robust apostles of Christ*" – then I will say that you have the right idea; your team will be a help to all teams.

Your team will receive from all teams; for we must always return to this primary truth: whoever comes to take, goes away empty-handed; whoever comes to give, finds.

Having thus grasped the spirit of Teams, you will have no difficulty in agreeing to their discipline. Your reaction will not be: such and such a rule troubles us, therefore we revolt against it. But you will say: this obligation is useful for the good functioning of the Movement, therefore we'll play the game.

And so now, dear friends, you will understand why we cannot accept that teams should do exactly as they like with the Charter. It is not that such or such a breach of the rule (not

to attend a retreat, not to prepare a written answer to the study topic, neglect to adopt a rule of life, forget to pay your annual contribution...) is a catastrophe; but it is a symptom: the team has

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