

INVENTIVENESS

March 1949 editorial

At the end of a retreat for priests, one of the participants asked the retreat giver: “*You have spoken to each one of us. You know us well now. In your opinion, what is our most common and worst sin?*” His reply was unexpected: “*You lack inventiveness*”.

I will not wait for you to ask me the same question to give you the same answer. “*It isn’t a very grave sin,*” you would say; “*there is no commandment of God that requires inventiveness!*” – Not so! God asks us to love. And love, all new love, all living love, is inventive. Let me remind you of your personal experience. If your love today is no longer inventive, would it be that you have allowed ageing to get a hold on you? Do you remember the time of your engagement, or the early years of your marriage? Was not your imagination fully awake, your inventiveness always on the look out for what might please ‘the other’, for more frequent occasions to be together?

Let me come to the subject of this editorial: you do not appear to me to be sufficiently concerned to INVENT your team life. “*It’s our Responsible Couple’s job*”, you think – Of course. But are you not all responsible with your Responsible Couple?

I can hear you saying: “*Whose fault is it? You have given us a Charter that set us on the rails; you give us study topics and texts for meditation; what is there left to invent?*”

A comparison will make clear what I have in mind. The gothic style had its rules. The architects of our great cathedrals respected them. Yet each of them managed to “invent” an original masterpiece. Far from frustrating their inventiveness, and precisely because of the constraints the rules imposed on them, these rules acted as a challenge and forced the architects to surpass themselves and make something more beautiful. On the other hand, some of the architects of the gothic revival in the 19th century who slavishly followed the rules, without trying to invent, have produced a rigid gothic: churches without a soul.

The monthly study topic is for everybody. Hence it addresses itself to no one in particular. It is up to each team to re-invent it – I stress to ‘re-invent’: to adapt it in such a way that it answers the questions and meets the needs of the couples in the team.

The same applies to the text for meditation.

Friendship, mutual help... there too, make an effort of imagination and seek, with no less fervour than the young engaged couples I referred to above, whatever will promote a renewal of closeness, progress in real fraternal charity... etc, etc...

It is the whole of team life that needs to be constantly rethought, constantly re-invented if you want your team to be alive, to have its own personality, to be an original team (not mock gothic), if you want our whole Movement to progress. Two centuries of relentless effort have led the gothic style from its early tentative steps to its famous masterpieces. It may require perhaps two centuries for the Teams of Our Lady to find their perfect form. Be that as it may, I assure you that the Leading Team is constantly concerned with re-inventing the Movement so that it meets ever better God’s expectation and the needs of so many couples. But, on our own, we won’t succeed. Help us!

Henri Caffarel