



My Very Dear Couples,

Equipes Notre-Dame

In this Year of Mercy, we are invited to celebrate mercy as the most perfect expression of “God’s tenderness.” The etymology of a Latin word for mercy, *miser cordia*, contains the word “cor” or heart; a heart that is available and open to welcome everyone, above all those to those do not consider themselves to be worthy of being loved. To say that God is merciful means that His love precedes us, that He does not renounce us, that He loves us as if we were His, because He loves us for what we are and not for what we can give Him. And what are we worth? Our worth is measured in terms of the intensity of God’s love for us.

Pope Francis invites us to go forth to the “peripheries.” In our Movement, for couples the peripheries are their spouses, children, family and the Team; and for Spiritual Counsellors, they are all those who have been entrusted to their pastoral care. Very dear couples, it is important that we experience intensely, with true passion, this time of grace and mercy, suffering with those who suffer, rejoicing with those who rejoice, being happy with the happiness and joy of others.

“Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction,” wrote Benedict XVI (*Deus caritas est*, 1). And he also said, “It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love.” (*Spe salvi*, 26) Do you want to know what the love that saves is? Contemplate Jesus Christ’s cross; look at his side that is pierced, from whence springs blood and water. And do you want to know why he was wounded? So that through the visible wound you can see the invisible wound of love.

Father Caffarel and the first couples sought out a method together, a way that would lead them to live and experience holiness within the couple. And holiness emerges through the capacity to recognise the precious gift of God in the other person, who is also beloved of God, just like each one of us. The Endeavours are simple instruments at our disposal so that we can follow the way that leads to holiness.

2017 is the centenary year of the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima; May to October 1917. The next great international gathering will be at Fatima in July 2018 and is an extraordinary grace. Fatima’s message reminds us of what is most important in our lives, what is expected of us, and what we ought to be constructing at every

moment. Our Lady asked the little shepherds for prayers and to be available to “console” God, meaning not to leave him alone. He finds himself alone not only when we forget him and do not make Him the centre of our lives, but also when we leave our brothers and sisters alone, when we do not pay attention to those who are close to us and who find themselves within our periphery. I would ask you to make all this the subject matter of your Sit-Down and your married prayer; these two Endeavours that form the golden rule of married spirituality.

May God’s blessing accompany you always.

In union with the Lord,

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