

TEAMS OF OUR LADY, A PRODUCTIVE PRESENCE IN AMERICA

Dear brothers and sisters of the Teams of Our Lady,

This message is the fruit of our reflections and what we experienced during our service within the Church as Liaison Couple for the America Zone.

The scope of the 'liaison' function is such that it demands limits, and so we chose to highlight the expansion of the America Zone on the continent and to give you some information about our Super-Regions and Regions.

America has the greatest number of Catholics in the world. The Church is facing a very great pastoral challenge that has evolved out of the intense urbanisation of its population that began in the middle of the 20th century and has brought about cultural uprooting, the loss of family customs and the neglect of religious traditions. In this context, the Church has sought to give new life to evangelisation by spiritually uniting the American peoples, by encouraging them to be united and by helping them to strengthen the family as the cornerstone in the building of society.

Teams of Our Lady crossed the Atlantic and arrived in Brazil in 1950, then in Canada in 1956, the US in 1958 and Columbia in 1961. Today they are in 19 of the 35 countries of America, with almost 5500 Teams, 30500 couples and 3300 Spiritual Counsellors. Altogether they make up about 42% of the Movement. These Teams are divided into 3 Super-Regions (USA, Hispano-America and Brazil) and 1 Region, Canada.

Typical of the **America Zone** are the great distances (14000km from north to south) and the territorial dimensions of some countries, like Canada, the US, Brazil and Argentina. In certain situations, such great dimensions hinder the expansion and setting up of Teams.

God's grace has allowed the Teams of Our Lady to flourish and to renew themselves in America, because there are still lots of couples waiting at the edge of the road for 'Samaritans,' who will sympathise with their hardships and will supply them with the happiness to become Christian couples.

The **Canada Region** has French-, English- and Spanish-speaking Teams. Their challenges include expansion and training, which would allow them to be independent from outside resources. Up until now, the solution has been the presence of people from outside doing the training and the financial support of international solidarity within our Movement. In 2014, the number of Teams increased by 10%, thereby awakening the hope of a renewal in the Region.

The **USA Super-Region** is one of the largest Super-Regions in the Movement and has English-, Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking Teams. Currently it is going through an 'aggiornamento' with the support of the International Leading Team (ERI). Provinces have been created and will be effective as and from the Rome Gathering this coming autumn. Simultaneously, service teams at all levels of the Movement have been revitalised and in particular, the liaison service in the Sectors has been restored. At the moment, the launch of the New Teams Gathering is currently being prepared.

The **Hispano-America Super-Region** is spread over 16 Spanish-speaking countries, from Mexico to Argentina. Its difficulties include distance and the decentralisation of the Teams over its vast territory. The Teams there try to overcome this by making management training a priority. The Super-Region has also successfully concluded the 3rd stage in the training of its Sector Responsible Couples, thanks to the financial support of international solidarity within our Movement, which will also help with the implementation of a new Training Plan across the whole Super-Region.

The **Brazil Super-Region** has only Portuguese-speaking Teams and its challenge is to follow up on the implementation of the new Training Plan. Initial and Specific Training have been established and now the Super-Region is preparing to launch in 2016 the 1st stage of the Permanent Training (Teams on the way). The richness of the expansion in Brazil is based on the service teams' faithful implementation of the organisation project across all levels and zones of the country.

We are grateful to God for the opportunity He gave us to share in the lives of the couples and priests in the America Zone, who bear witness to the joy of serving and making the Teams of Our Lady, Father Caffarel's marvellous work, a reality.

GRAÇA & ROBERTO
COUPLE FOR THE AMERICA ZONE