

We write this letter in our role as the newly appointed Liaison Couple for the Eurasia zone. As we do so, we ask ourselves the question “Why did we so readily take on this responsibility which will occupy us until July 2019?” The answer turns out to be a very simple one. As Pope Francis says in his encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, “I delivered to you, what I also received” (1 Corinthians 15:3). How could we not accept when we have received so much as members of Equipes Notre Dame.



Our journey in married spirituality began in 1996 when we moved to a new parish where we bought a house to enable us to have Helena’s father live with us. Although we did not know about the sit down at the time, we had had a family “conference” to decide what we should do and everyone agreed that we should go ahead. It was a difficult decision to make as he was nearly 90 years old and we had two teenage daughters and we were not sure how it would work out. Sadly, Dad died before he could join us and it looked as though we had moved for nothing. However, God’s plan for us was soon revealed. We had never heard of Equipes Notre Dame but there was a team in our new parish looking for more couples. Rather reluctantly we decided to try just one meeting. Since then through our membership of Equipes Notre Dame we have developed in our love of God and of each other, made many dear friends and experienced the hospitality of team members who have opened their homes and their hearts to us.

Our previous responsibility was to set up the Transatlantic Super Region in 2006. This comprises a very diverse set of countries in Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. Great Britain is a protestant country where around ten per cent of teams members are Christians belonging to denominations other than catholic. Sometimes they are married to Catholics but there are also protestant couples. We ourselves are only in Equipes Notre Dame thanks to the expansion zeal of an Anglican couple. South Africa is also protestant but here the team members are almost exclusively catholic. The country is still trying to put the years of apartheid behind it and the Catholic Church is in the forefront of the initiatives to create a “rainbow” nation. Ireland is a catholic country but the number of worshippers has declined dramatically mostly due to sex abuse scandals within the Church. Trinidad, although largely Christian, has a significant Hindu population (30%) and in Malawi some people still adhere to tribal religions. There are couples in Malawi who, through their experience of Equipes Notre Dame, have had their tribal marriages blessed in church.

Added to these countries, our responsibility now includes the continents of Oceania and Asia, with teams in Australia, New Zealand, India, the Philippines and South Korea. Our priority is to get to know the team members in these countries and to learn of their successes and difficulties. In 2014 we will be visiting Australia and New Zealand to attend their super regional conference. These are only held every three years due to the huge distances and expense of travel. Altogether our zone covers a vast geographical area which has comparatively few teams but great richness in the diversity of Christian worship and cultures. At the end of our six years we will consider it a job well done if we have increased the number of teams in our zone and their understanding of married spirituality so that their commitment to Equipes Notre Dame encourages others members to say “I delivered to you, what I also received”.

Paul and Helena McCloskey

Liaison Couple for the Eurasia Zone