

Meeting Teams in Trinidad

Arriving in Trinidad, we immediately experienced the incredible hospitality of the island, when we were warmly greeted by Andrea Castagne from Team Stella Maris, who took us to her home for afternoon tea on the lawn. The Trinidadian Regional Couple, Dwight and Christine Gonsalves, arrived and produced a detailed itinerary for the week, including a Press Conference, a slot on Trinity Catholic TV and a meeting with the Benedictine Abbot, Father John Periera. No pressure then!

After a good night's sleep at the home of a previous Regional Couple, Wendy and Stephen Johnston, we met with representatives of the press in Port of Spain. Together with Dwight and Christine, we presented the ethos of Teams and invited local couples to join the planned retreat, entitled, "Marriage a Passionate Adventure." We were asked many questions about how to address the increasing challenges in today's communities, including divorce and couples living together with no thought of marriage. Little did we realise that our conference would be featured on the local TV6 News that evening and would result in many calls to register interest for the retreat!

A shared evening meal with Team 1 was a fantastic experience of the generosity of Teams. Each couple brought a dish to share and the feast was varied and abundant. It was wonderful to have the chance to talk to Alison and Marlon Pantin, who were part of the original Team 1 in Trinidad. They were piloted by mail, 33 years ago, after Father Neil Rodriguez from Trinidad read an article about Teams in the *Osservatore Romano* about an audience with Pope Paul VI, and contacted Teams in England. Father Rodriguez worked with an existing prayer group who were meeting weekly and encouraged the couples to create a team. Franklin Pollidore recalls how: "they grew from being "Sunday Catholics" to cementing their Catholicism. The call to holiness is being a good husband, being a good friend, being a good manager at work. Couple prayer and reading the Daily Word are the important endeavours. Finding the time to sit down is difficult, however, when you sit down, you grow a pair of wings."

The evening concluded with dancing to Calypso and Polish music.

Appearing on Trinity Catholic Television filled us with great trepidation, but the presenter, Sandee Bhanwell, put us at ease. The half hour slot flew by as we shared on the Pope's message to Teams in Rome, September 2015. Sandee was very interested in Teams, in how Teams can include young people, address the needs of divorced or wounded couples. We also took the opportunity to advertise the Retreat.

We then relaxed in the afternoon, sailing on the Caribbean Sea with our hosts.

Father John Periera, the Abbot of Mount St Benedict's, was very interested in Teams as he receives daily visits from couples looking for support in their marriages. Hopefully some new leads there for expansion. The Abbey is beautifully nestled in the Northern Range, with breathtaking views of the Central Plains.

Our final day in Trinidad was the Retreat at the Emmaus Centre. We were joined by two couples who came, as a result of the Press Conference – one engaged and one married. The theme was "Marriage, a passionate adventure – proceed with courage and joy." Piotr and I gave a presentation and then joined another couple for questions on marriage, intimacy and sexuality. A wide variety of questions and thoughts. This was followed by a joyous and delicious shared lunch and an even more joyous Mass, full of wonderful singing.

Altogether, a very busy week, full of new and uplifting experiences, confirming the great family of Teams we have around the world, with couples striving to deepen their marriage spirituality and move forward together in love and faith.