



## The Endeavours: pillars of conjugal spirituality

In the pedagogy of Teams of Our Lady, the Endeavours represent the pillars of our married spirituality. That is to say, they are the indispensable means by which couples can grow in their human and spiritual life, and on their path towards holiness.

Therefore, the six Endeavours - listening to the Word of God, personal and conjugal prayer, rule of life, sit-down, and annual retreat - are understood to be the foundation of married spirituality in the Teams movement. As the Teams Guide tells us, they are an essential characteristic of our movement, a peculiarity at the heart of the pedagogy of our movement.

When we say the Endeavours are the pillars of married spirituality, what does this mean?

Let us imagine the construction of a building. The pillars are a core structural element, responsible for supporting the construction.

We can use this same image to understand the close relationship between the Endeavours and the growth of married spirituality as a path to holiness.

On our journey, as we begin to understand the meaning and the way of living particular Endeavours, the Movement focuses on three guidelines: gradualness, personalisation and effort. In other words, we must progress step by step in living each Endeavour. Each person or couple has their own way of living the Endeavours, so it is necessary to make a special effort to incorporate each of them into our spiritual life.

The pedagogy of Teams of Our Lady proposes that the daily life of the Teams couple should include all six Endeavours. It should not only be one or the other, according to convenience or ease. The spiritual life of the couple cannot be sustained by living or practising only two or three of them. The six Endeavours must be practised or lived simultaneously because they represent a unity that involves the couple in their entirety.

Imagine a building that needs six pillars for its support. It would certainly collapse at some point, if it is only built on three or four pillars, or if one or other of the pillars is weaker.

The Endeavours are not "obligations" imposed by the Movement on its couples. When a couple enters Teams, they are told that the practice of the Endeavours represents a demanding effort to develop and assimilate certain attitudes of life that transform them into missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

Father Caffarel once wrote a short text based on the following question: "Why are you in Teams?" And he himself replied: "In Teams, the essential thing is to seek Christ, to be united to Christ, to live as Christ lived." And the six Endeavours make it possible to attain this objective.

In various reflections, Father Caffarel said the vital needs of a spiritual organism are many. Attendance at the sacraments and the regular practice of the Endeavours are part of these vital needs so that one does not die of spiritual starvation. This means they are essential food for a spiritual organism to develop.

Throughout the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis also speaks of these same vital needs, so the couple can truly transform their decision "from two paths into one", to be built day by day, from simple daily gestures, in which they experience what he calls "conjugal love". By this he means this love sanctified, enriched and illuminated by the grace of the sacrament of marriage.

To think it is possible to live the Endeavours without any discipline or spirit of asceticism, is like thinking it is possible to build a house on sand. The Gospel itself teaches us what will happen to this house.

"And whoever hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a fool, who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and buffeted the house, and it collapsed and was completely ruined." (Mt 7: 26-27)

We, Mariola and Eliseu, throughout our 44 years in Teams, usually say in our sharing that the Endeavours are part of our team-building and Christian DNA. They are already incorporated into our daily life. It is something for which we reserve quality time, not just as a routine, but as a means which allow us, in a creative and always new way, to live with joy the message of the Gospel. We commit ourselves, even today, to live the Endeavours as a whole, because we have them as true pillars of our spiritual and human growth and maturity.

As for us, Bernadette and Sylvestre, members of the Teams of Our Lady for 26 years, we never stop giving thanks to God for the path of sanctification and holiness given to us to follow in our Movement. Thanks to the team and especially to the sharing of the team members, we have gradually assimilated the meaning and the regular practice of all the Endeavours. We can say today that the assiduous practice of them has made us more faithful to the Church and closer to our brothers and sisters. They have contributed to give meaning to our commitment to follow Christ in our Movement, in the Church and in society.

In the perspective of this reflection, we would like to encourage everyone to not simply look at the difficulties that usually appear in the experience of the Endeavours. Live them all with intensity and understand that they are the means at our disposal to seek our holiness as a couple. May the Spirit of God help us on this path of faithfulness to his love, who in his wisdom guides us towards perfection, towards holiness.

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