



Audience aux Equipes Notre Dame

September 10, 2015

POPE FRANCIS' ADDRESS TO

THE ÉQUIPES NOTRE-DAME

I am happy to receive you, dear leaders and spiritual advisers of the *Équipes Notre Dame*, on the occasion of your world gathering. This meeting, which I have the joy of living with you, precedes by some weeks the Synod of Bishops, which I wish to have gather at Rome, for the Church to reflect with ever greater attention on what families live, vital cells of our societies and of the Church, and which find themselves, as you know, threatened in the present difficult cultural context. In this circumstance, I ask you, as well as all the couples of your Teams, to pray with faith and fervor for the Synodal Fathers and for me.

It is clear that a movement of conjugal spirituality such as yours, is fully within the care that the Church wishes to have for families, and it does so be it by promoting the maturation of couples that take part in your Teams, be it with the fraternal support given to the other couples to whom they are sent.

And, in fact, I would like to insist on this missionary role of the *Équipes Notre Dame*. Every committed couple certainly receives much of what it lives in its Team, and its conjugal life is deepened, perfecting itself thanks to the spirituality of the Movement. However, after having received from Christ and from the Church, a Christian is irresistibly sent out to witness and transmit what he has received. “The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized” (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 120).

Christian couples and families are often in better conditions to proclaim Jesus Christ to other families, to support, fortify and encourage them. What you live as a couple and as a family – supported by the charism itself of your Movement -- the profound and irreplaceable joy that the Lord makes you feel in your domestic intimacy between the joys and sorrows, in the happiness of the presence of your spouse, in the growth of your children, in the human and spiritual fruitfulness that He grants you, all this is witnessed, proclaimed and communicated outside so that others, in turn, will put themselves on this path.

In the first place, then, I encourage all couples to put into practice and to live in depth, with constancy and perseverance, the spirituality followed by the *Équipes Notre Dame*. I think that the “concrete points of commitment” proposed are truly effective aides, which enable couples to progress with confidence in conjugal life on the way of the Gospel. I am thinking, in particular, of the prayer of couples and in

the family, good and necessary tradition that has always supported the faith and hope of Christians, unfortunately abandoned in so many regions of the world; I am thinking also of the time of monthly dialogue proposed between spouses – the famous and demanding “duty to sit down,” which goes so against the current in relation to the habits of the frenetic and agitated world impregnated by individualism -- a moment of exchange lived in truth under the gaze of the Lord, which is a precious time of thanksgiving, of forgiveness, of mutual respect and attention to the other. I am thinking, finally, of faithful participation in Team life, which brings to each one the richness of teaching and of sharing, as well as the help and comfort of friendship. In this connection, I stress the mutual fruitfulness of this meeting lived with the accompanying priest. I thank you, dear couples of the *Équipes Notre Dame*, for being a support and encouragement in the ministry of your priests, who always find priestly joy, fraternal presence, emotional balance and spiritual paternity in their contact with your Teams and your families.

In the second place, I invite the couples, fortified by the meeting in Teams, to the missionary commitment. This mission, which is entrusted to them, is all the more important in as much as the image of the family -- as God wills it, made up of one man and one woman in view of the good of the spouses and also of the generation and education of children -- is deformed through powerful contrary projects supported by ideological colonizations. You are certainly already missionaries by the radiation of your family life to your ambits of friendship and relations, and also others. In fact, a happy and balanced family, inhabited by the presence of God, speaks on its own of the love of God for all men. However, I invite you also to commit yourselves, if it is possible, in an ever more concrete way and with ever renewed creativity, in the activities that can be organized to receive, form and support in the faith particularly young couples, before and after their marriage.

I also exhort you to continue to be close to wounded families, which today are so numerous, because of the lack of work, of poverty, of a health problem, of mourning, of worry caused by a child, of the lack of balance caused by an estrangement or absence, of a climate of violence. We must have the courage to come into contact with these families, in a discreet but generous way, materially, humanly or spiritually, in those circumstances where they find themselves vulnerable.

Finally, I cannot but encourage the couples of the *Équipes Notre Dame* to be instruments of the mercy of Christ and of the Church towards persons whose marriage has failed. Never forget that your conjugal fidelity is a gift of God, and that mercy has been given to each one of us. A united and happy couple can understand better than anyone else, as from inside, the wound and the suffering caused by an abandonment, a betrayal, a failure of love. Therefore, it is necessary that you be able to bring your testimony and your experience to help Christian communities to discern the concrete situations of these persons, and to receive them with their wounds, and help them to walk in faith and in truth, under the gaze of Christ the Good Shepherd, to take part in an appropriate way in the life of the Church. Do not forget either the unspeakable suffering of youngsters who live these painful family situations: you can give them much.

Dear *Équipes Notre Dame*, I renew my confidence and my encouragement. From the moment that the Cause of Beatification of your Founder, Father Henri Caffarel, arrived in Rome, I have prayed that the Holy Spirit may enlighten the Church in the judgment that she will have to pronounce in time in this regard. I entrust your couples to the protection of the Virgin Mary and of Saint Joseph, and I impart to you my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.

Vatican City, September 10, 2015

Translation by ZENIT

(September 10, 2015) © Innovative Media Inc.