

OUR LADY
May 1949 Editorial

Have you ever asked yourself when and why our teams of couples placed themselves under the patronage of Our Lady?

The first team that came into existence before the Second World War, did not think of giving itself a name. Indeed, when its members were asked one day to add their testimony to that of other groups of couples, they had no option but to give themselves a name that I must confess to having forgotten. Likewise, the teams that were created immediately after the end of the war did not give themselves an identity: their first priority was to establish the kind of groups they were to be and how to live out their lives. Furthermore, we must admit we were afraid of being thought of as a narrow and closed circle. We were Christian couples meeting to seek Christ: why worry about anything else? In fact, we should have foreseen it; things went horribly wrong. Everything that exists needs a name so as to be identified; and since we did not choose one, others gave us one... To my surprise and horror, we heard people talking about... “Caffarel groups”. I was not impressed; I thought it was a joke. However, we had to face the evidence: this name was spreading. Admittedly, more discreet people merely referred to “C. teams”. Even that was unacceptable! We needed at all cost to put an end to it. Hence, we had to place our teams under the patronage of a more... normal... and authentic... saint! It was then that I did what Péguy¹ did when he took his children in his arms and laid them in the arms of Mary:

*“At peace in the arms of she who is laden with all the sufferings of the world.
Henceforth all went well – naturally.
How could it go other than well?
Since it was Our Lady who cared – who took charge of everything...
Meanwhile, he who had placed them in her arms, walked away with peace of
mind and clear vision.
Like a man who has struck a good deal...
Like a man who has escaped from a great danger!”*

(Péguy – “The Door to the Mystery of the Second Virtue”)

...And this is why our teams are the “Équipes NOTRE-DAME” (Teams of Our Lady).

I would be terribly sorry if you were to pay no more attention to this patronage than if you were looking for mystic connotations in such inscriptions as “Hôtel Notre-Dame” or “Garage Notre-Dame” or “Restaurant Notre-Dame” that ones sees a bit everywhere throughout France.

You come together to seek Christ, to imitate him, to serve him. You will not succeed without a guide and there is no better guide than Mary. I would like us, in our Teams, to nurture a faith in the all-powerful tender care of Our Lady and that every couple should experience the trust and security that little children feel in the presence of their mother. I

¹ Charles Péguy: French writer and mystic (1873-1914). His essays illustrate the rebirth of French spiritualism. He was killed at the beginning of the Battle of the Marne.

would like this to be one of our characteristics – I would then have great confidence in the future.

*“And she took them under her protection and responsibility,
And in her care for all eternity” (Péguy)*

The Teams would then be protected from intellectualism and a criticising mentality. This is one of the first benefits of a Christian’s closeness to Mary. Hearts would be kept in humility – who would pretend to be clever in Our Lady’s company? Brotherly love would reign: this is always the case when mum is among her children... The spring of joy would then not run dry since the “Cause of our joy” would be among us!

I think that there may be some among you who listen to what I am saying with embarrassment; they have difficulty in understanding the very exceptional place given to Our Lady in Catholicism. Catholics have hardly said the Our Father to Almighty God that they immediately turn to this wonderful young girl greeting her with a Hail Mary. People are concerned less this devotion is liable to sentimentalism rather than to reason.

I will not pretend that I can convince them by means of this short note! As it reaches you for the month of May of the Marian Year [1949], may it be a pressing invitation to you to seek a deeper acquaintance with Mary. May our Teams as a whole be a cathedral to the glory of Our Lady. May we work at it with the vigorous enthusiasm of builders in the Middle Ages.

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