

# BULLETIN



# OF THE FRIENDS OF FATHER CAFFAREL

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## EDITORIAL

To & José Moura-Soares  
(*Responsible Couple,*  
*International Leading Team*)



To Find, you need to Seek

In one of Father Caffarel's marvellous letters<sup>1</sup>, we found a sentence that can explain why we are once again preparing an International Colloquium on Father Caffarel, "***Finding the path to holiness consists, in fact, in seeking.***"

This desire to show to the world and to the Church how important Father Caffarel was for the Sacrament of Marriage, a path to holiness, is not only a challenge, but it is also an honour. Indeed, this goal of helping people fulfil their vocation towards holiness was one he held for his entire life.

The teachings communicated in his books as well as the works he founded are such treasures that everything ought to be shared with everyone.

Grasping Father Caffarel's personality, examining his spirituality, identifying the effect of his propositions on an international level are all ways of enabling us to know him in a dynamic form and are also ways of joyfully showing everything that his man of God left to the Church.

The manner in which Father Caffarel's thinking allowed a solid Christian spirituality, founded on baptism and marriage, to germinate in the heart and life of many people is a source of joy for the initiative that will occur in December 2017.

Henri Caffarel influenced the building of couples' relationships, but also that of widows, by giving a life meaning to their situation, by proposing a spirituality of widowhood as a continuation of marriage

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<sup>1</sup> Being Present for God: 100 Letters on Prayer

and by thus giving the signification of widowhood for the Church as Christ's spouse.

As a man of encounters, where private prayer was a source of life and love, intercessory prayer too was important to him. It was a means of contributing to the construction of man, his great preoccupation, as he explained it to us in his *Being Present for God: 100 Letters on Prayer*, "I would like, dear friend, that, when you start your meditation, you always have the strong conviction that you are expected: expected by the Father, by the Son and by the Holy Spirit, expected by the Trinitarian family, where your place is in fact ready. Remember that Christ said, **'I am going to prepare a place for you.'**

This gift that was offered to the Church, through his dynamism, leads us undoubtedly to the beautiful challenge of the Mission, and the necessity of presenting all his propositions to the world. This was also the meaning of the Pope Francis' exhortation during the private audience with the Teams of Our Lady Movement in September 2015, where he encouraged us to give others what we have already received.

At a moment when it is so necessary to affirm joyfully all the gifts God has given us, it would therefore be an error not to contribute to this cause so that Father Caffarel, tireless bearer of this fire of love, be better known and loved.

A saint is firstly someone who is "**alive,**" someone towards whom everyone moves in order to live and overcome the difficulties of their daily life. Therefore, the more we know Father Caffarel, the more he is loved, thus contributing to accelerating the day when the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life.

And we will finish with Pope Francis' statement on this subject, made at the Movement's audience, "The cause of beatification of your founder, Father Caffarel, has been introduced in Rome. I pray that the Holy Spirit enlightens the Church in the judgement that it will have to pronounce on this subject one day."

Paris, November 18, 2016

Tó & José Moura Soares

*On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of the Teams of Our Lady, the International Leading Team and the Association of the Friends of Father Caffarel are organising a scientific colloquium on December 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017, placed under the patronage of Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris*

**HENRI CAFFAREL, A PROPHET OF OUR TIME,  
AN APOSTLE OF MARRIAGE AND A MASTER OF PRAYER**

**A colloquium for the Cause of Canonisation of Father Henri Caffarel.** The aim of this event is to show the influence of Father Caffarel's thinking and intuitions on the theology and spirituality of marriage and on prayer.

**A colloquium that forms part of the Collège des Bernardins' programme.** A former Cistercian college, the Bernardins today is one of the prestigious places where encounters, dialogue, research and culture take place as well as being a centre of theological and biblical training. Since 2009, the Catholic Academy of France has its headquarters there.

**An international colloquium.** Simultaneous translation in five languages (English, French, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), with broadcasting in real time as a webinar (streaming) will allow a greater number of people, Team members or not, around the world to participate in the event.

**A scientific colloquium.** The event's steering committee has called upon researchers and specialists to explore aspects of Father Caffarel's personality or thinking and the legitimacy of his works: his vocation as a man of God, his foundation in the Church, his teaching and his pedagogy of private prayer, together with his vision for couples and marriage. Numerous testimonials from numerous countries across the continents will illuminate the talks... They will show the universal character of his propositions that remain pertinent for today's men and women.

## **A Word from the Postulator of the Cause**

**Father Angelo Paleri,**

*Father Paleri's speech that was given at the Gathering of Responsible Couples in Teams of Our Lady from France, Luxembourg and Switzerland, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016.*



Father Henri Caffarel was a prophet of our time, and this is how Cardinal Lustiger defined him at his funeral.

Father Caffarel was also a child of his time. In his youth, he was in contact with the Marists recently established in Lyon, his native town, and also with the Jesuits. In particular, Alphonse Plazenet, a Marist and Jean Rouillet, a Jesuit. Henri Caffarel lived in a historic period where ideas and visions of the spirituality of marriage would be developed within the framework of Vatican II (and also in the articles and works of the Jesuit Paul Doncoeur, the Dominican Ambroise-Marie Carré and Father Jean Viollet who in 1918 founded the AMC (Association of Christian Marriage) and the lay person Alain Christian). Father Caffarel met leading Catholic figures like Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, Henri Bergson, Blessed Vladimir Ghika (a Moldavian prince who converted to Catholicism, was a priest and founder of religious institutions and promoter of charity initiatives, and was killed in the Communist prisons of Bucarest). All these men contributed to the development of Catholic thinking in the France of that era.

Henri Caffarel was also a prolific writer and founder of magazines that spread the word of God similar to, in other European countries and beyond Europe, the conventual Franciscan St Maximilian Kolbe in Poland and in Japan, the Blessed Carmelite Titus Brandsmas in Holland and the Blessed Giacomo Alberione in Italy.

Once he had founded in France the Teams of Our Lady and the Fraternity of Our Lady of the Resurrection for widows, he felt the need to set up contacts in other European countries in order to understand

more deeply their respective spirituality and to consider models of organisation. In Italy, for example, he got in touch with Father Paolo Liggeri (founder of 'La Casa' in Milan and the first Italian centre for listening), who had the Italian translation of Father Caffarel's book "Thoughts about Love and Grace" printed in 1960, and with Father Enrico Mauri (founder of the Opera 'Madonnina del Grappa' for widows in Sestri Levante). Father Caffarel was named Consultant to the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity, where he contributed by sharing his intuitions and knowledge while enriching his own experience.

This young priest, who gave himself completely to the One who called him and to whom he dedicated his existence, was someone who was perfectly at one with his era, inasmuch as he searched for, along with other great contemporary spirits, for solutions to the urgent problems of society. New horizons would open thanks to the profound intuitions and reflection of individuals who worked together. (...)

In the 1970s, the vocation that he had felt during his youth appeared again (at the time, he had thought of becoming a monk and of dedicating himself exclusively to prayer); incidentally he was one of the first priests in France to experience the charismatic revival movement within the Catholic Church (and this would lead him to travel to the United States). During the last 20 years of his life, he dedicated himself primarily to helping lay people to pray, to understanding the meaning of prayer at the centre in Troussures, which is where he ended up living.

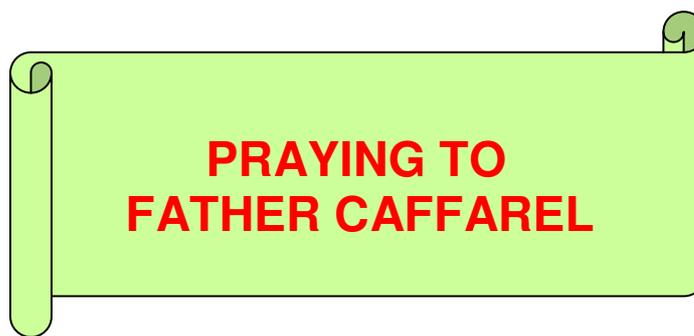
It is therefore possible to state that Father Caffarel fully experienced the Church's mission. He shared with everyone the joy of meeting Christ on a daily basis, by understanding everyone's experience (the laity, married couples, widows and widowers) through the listening to the Word as well as constant and shared prayer.

Numerous people who appreciated him then asked for the opening of a diocesan enquiry into his life, his virtues, his reputation for holiness, the signs. This enquiry took place in Paris, between 2006 and 2014 and was approved by the Congregation for the Cause of Saints in 2015. The Rapporteur who is responsible for the writing of the *Positio*

is Father Zdzisław Jozef Kijas, with whom Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits actively collaborates. Currently, the *Summarium testium* is almost finished (this refers to the synthesis of the most important documents relating to of Father Caffarel's life and actions). The historic research must continue because certain elements were omitted or could not be collected during the diocesan enquiry (this material will be used to write up his *Biographia ex documentis*).

Let us pray that the Servant of God, Father Henri Caffarel, continues to be present in the lives of all the faithful (in particular married couples) and to intercede for their human and Christian fulfilment in their marriage and in communion with Christ.

Father Angelo Paleri, o.f.m.conv



*TEAMS OF OUR LADY'S LETTER*  
*ITALIAN SUPER-REGION*  
*OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2013*  
*DECEMBER 2015- FEBRUARY 2016*  
**ANNINA & GIAMPAOLO MARTINELLI**  
**VARESE 4**



Dear Father Caffarel,

Spontaneously we say *Father* to you, or in French *Abbé*, which indeed recalls the Hebrew *Abba*, precisely for you, who by a strange twist of fate, even without a religious vocation, bore this title, while in fact you were an 'ordinary' diocesan priest. But, for us, to be able to call and recognise you as *Father* is consoling. And it is a reason to hope to be able to address you as a *father*, who is concerned with his children's

wellbeing. We have never been particularly big *supporters* of your elevation on the altars, not that we do not doubt your holiness, but because *we are already convinced* that your passage on earth left incontestable and permanent traces of the *holiness of life*, of that *good life according to the Gospel* to which the Italian Conference of Bishops calls us in this decade in which we live. It is not up to us to “make you holy”—you already are by yourself, but we realise that in order to make known your life and your great work of highlighting the sacrament of marriage, this process will certainly be useful for many. Whether it be for the gift you gave us of the Teams of Our Lady, or because your intuition led numerous priests to learn to live with married laity, to share the same path “equally”, but according to the diversity of vocations, and not *for* them, according to the rather reductive conception of only being there to give. But also, so that the *style*—what we call by a word that is rather unpleasant the method—meaning what we seek to experience as *daily support*, becomes a programme for life for an ever-greater number of couples throughout the world.

With these feelings and thus with great trust and hope, we took four days to make the pilgrimage to your tomb in the small graveyard at Troussures, 80 kilometres to the north of Paris. We were close to you, at the end of May, in order to ask you to intercede with Our Lord, you who always were so close to him—and even more so now—in order to grant us a grace that we covet closely and that has taken up a lot of space in our prayer and in the sharing at every single of our Team meetings these past years. We journeyed right up to your tombstone in order to tell you, and so that you could hear us even softly, of our worry for the special person in our heart, our only son, who still seeks his place in life. We also brought and left at your tomb all the Team members that we know—in case you might have forgotten them, which obviously seems impossible to us—for they all have a ‘grace’ that they ask of you—and those that we do not know and the whole Teams Movement that today more than ever awaits the Grace to *dare to proclaim the Gospel* in a more complicated and powerless world. We spent the day with you, walking around, praying in the house of spirituality that was your home during the final years of your very active life. (...)

Dear *Father Caffarel*, from now on, we wait patiently and trustingly. With you, the Lord will have an extra reason to take our supplication into consideration. It cannot be otherwise because we feel that your

private *prayer*, which for us is the model and the reason for our search for a daily familiarity with God, can be much more efficient than that of our well-tried attempts. (...)

*December 2015-February 2016*

*Spontaneously, we say Father to you!* This is how we opened our reflection almost two years ago. Today again, we call you *Father*, with the same tenderness of children who return to you, having “emigrated.” In order to be precise, we have not really “emigrated.” Simply, once we had entrusted a few intentions to you, we returned home.

*You*, who suggested that we experience the communion of saints in the *Intercessor’s* group, you became henceforth *our Intercessor*, the ambassador of our pleas to the Father.

We have read that *the Father already knows* what we need, but we are not resigned *to stay seated and wait* for His knowledge and His work be unveiled. We are a stiff-necked people, given to trust only after having touched with our hands the miracle and having put our finger in the wound. The Father, through his Son Jesus, invited us on numerous occasions *to pray without being disheartened*, to such a point that the Gospel tells of multiple miraculous intercessions, which never just “fell from the sky” without the direct implication of the bidder. Jesus always concluded his marvellous actions by saying, “*Your faith has saved you,*” and we too are called to express our faith in prayer, an indispensable means if we wish to succeed *in touching the hem of his cloak*.

In this state of mind, we set off again to your house, Father Henri Caffarel. Almost two thousand kilometres in the three days after Easter to get to the simple and bare tomb of *our founder* (a small headstone stuck in the grass of the small graveyard, engraved with the name, three dates and the phrase, “Come and follow me”). A founder who *did not entrench himself* in the Movement’s walls, but who lived apart in order to continue to support it in prayer, leaving the task to



bring new blood and new reflections in this changing world to other spiritual counsellors and couples.

Walking along the grass where you now reside *awaiting the final resurrection* (we do not much like the idea of 'eternal repose'), once more we felt the call to essential things that you experienced as a Christian, a believer and a priest. In your simplicity, independently of the grandeur of the pedestal on which many friends will succeed in elevating you, you are holy, so close to Our Lord already in your life that, we are sure, you can now murmur directly in his ear. We would like that the echo of our prayers also be found in your murmurs.

John Paul II's vigorous call in *Familiaris consortio*, "*Family, become what you are*" brings us in turn to address this affectionate call to you, "*Become what you are,*" meaning "Become a Saint!" just like a nod to the incredulous who, in order to trust, need to put their finger in the first wound that we obtained healing for.

Our friend *Arzena* underwent the dreaded *expulsion*. But we found her a temporary and appropriate dwelling the very same day and a year later, she was given social housing. Her husband found work, that he then lost, but found a new one straight away. (...)

For others who are even closer to us, we are sure that you continue to intercede *without ever tiring*. It is not that we want to put pressure on you, but we would like someone who, like you, already lives in the infinite dimension of eternity, to give more attention to the "*little*" things in our limited earthly life. Unfortunately, we are made of a body and spirit of flesh that demands satisfaction starting already here on earth, otherwise we would not understand why the *Great Architect* did not *just make us spirits...!* Indeed, He revealed to us that "*the Kingdom of God is already here*" and that "*in Him the prophecy of Isaiah was accomplished,*" according to which the blind see, the deaf hear and the sick are healed.

Dear *Father Caffarel*, once more we confide in you our sorrows, doubts and aspirations. *Help us to strengthen our faith*. Not to "move mountains" (even if it is something that intrigues us), but because we wish to see *the blind see, the deaf hear and the sick healed*.

Annina & Giampaolo Martinelli

Varese, Italy



## FATHER CAFFAREL'S ARCHIVES

Father Caffarel's Third Talk  
Brazil 1972

### Prayer

This morning, I would like to talk to you about a subject that is very close to my heart. However, from the start, we need to agree on the terminology. I am going to speak to you about what in French we call *oraison* (private prayer, prayer without words). It is not what you here call "oracion," so in order to understand each other properly, some clarifications are necessary.

Let us talk about vocal prayer. This is when we talk to God or else when we recite ready-made prayers or else when we introduce a prayer. It is called vocal prayer, precisely because the voice intervenes in this prayer.

In contrast to vocal prayer, there is mental "*oraison*" or mental prayer. The voice is not involved, but what does intervene is the mind within ourselves, the heart, the profound will.

This mental prayer can be subdivided into different categories. It can be called meditation. Meditation is mental prayer when reflection predominates. Mental prayer in general designates that form of mental prayer where there is the mind, love, silence, and attention to God. What differentiates it from meditation is that reflection is less present.

And then there is prayer or rather contemplation. Contemplation is the mental prayer of those who have progressed and who can remain a long moment before God in silence, without being bored, with a feeling that something important is happening, a little like two spouses, who having talked, say nothing more. They are happy side by side, in silence, and completely attentive to each other. (...)

This morning, therefore, I am not going to talk to you about vocal prayer, but about mental prayer, without necessarily distinguishing between the three forms: meditation, prayer and contemplation. (...)

Mental prayer cannot be considered to be an arbitrary desertion or abandonment, but mental prayer is demanded by our love of Christ. What would you think of a man and woman who were married and who did a whole lot of things, as much in the professional domain as social actions, Catholic actions, and who gave up on having deep intimate moments together? I am sure that you would tell them, and you ought to say it to the young fiancés that many of you look after, that without deep intimacy, love declines and the couple becomes sick.

Deep intimacy, total intimacy, body and soul, is demanded by love, for the growth of love. Mental prayer is demanded by this relationship of love between Christ and I, that is all religion, and it alone enables this love to grow.

Our relationship with Christ is directly paralleled with the relationship between man and woman. No intimacy, no progress in the intimacy, no progress in love, threat for the couple.

1/ That said, let us ask a first question: **What is this mental prayer that is so important?**

I would like to give you a few definitions out of the very many that exist. One Father of the Church, St. Clement of Alexandria, defined it in

this way, *“Prayer is conversation with God.”* The great St Teresa of Avila described prayer as *“being on terms of friendship with God frequently conversing in secret with him who, we know, loves us.”* Don Marion, one of our contemporaries describes it as *“the intercourse of a child of God with his Heavenly Father, under the action of the Holy Spirit”* and Father de Foucauld said it even more simply, *“Praying is*



*thinking of God while loving him.*” This last definition is very simple and very beautiful. I am there, in a church, in my room and I think of God while loving him. This is what a young fiancée does when she thinks about her fiancé while loving him in the evening before going to sleep. It is love. Prayer is one of love’s demands.

Let us remember those definitions and note the following: in prayer two people are involved and these two people are active. There is God and there is me. And this is why the words used in all these definitions signify a relationship between people. It is the word exchanging friendship, the word encounter, the word intercourse, the word dialogue. It is important when talking about prayer to use words that let you understand that there are two people in the relationship.

And do I need to say it, of the two people; the most active by far is God. It is therefore a complete mistake to think of a distant, deaf, silent, impassive God. That is not love! Look at two spouses who love each other. There is a continuous exchange between them. If one of them is as impassive as an iceberg, the other hardly feels stimulated to respond.

**Prayer therefore is a shared activity between two people. Never forget it!**

What does God do in prayer? He tries to talk to us. I say he tries because very often, I’m deaf. Firstly, I need to listen to him. How does he talk to me? Well, he can talk to me through Scripture, the Gospel, the Bible. This is why in prayer, there is room for reading Scripture. I will begin by listening to God before chatting to God. Sometimes, I will pray before the beauty of the countryside, before a forest, before the ocean and God will talk to me of creation. Sometimes, he will talk to me within myself. (...)

Therefore, in mental prayer, God is present, God is active and wants to speak to me. For my part, I need to be active and my first activity consists in making myself attentive to God. You know this very well that this is one of love’s great demands. How many wives and husbands have said to me, *“He or she doesn’t pay attention to me. My spouse lives beside me. He looks at me, we meet up, but he never pays attention to me.”*

God can say the same thing: men pay no attention to me. Therefore, in prayer, I will try to pay attention to God and it is difficult because my

attention is caught up by memories, worries, projects, concerns. This is why schools for paying attention to God are necessary. (...)

So, the first thing, of course, is to pay attention to God. There are many people who come to mental prayer and who are there, their head in their hands, and then who immediately start telling stories, we don't know if they are talking to someone or if they are talking to themselves like maniacs, they are not looking after the other person. That said, the same is also true in love! There are men and women who talk, who talk to the other person, but the other person is a pretext to give them the right to speak!

What other action will man have in prayer? Well, it will be to react. When I discover the immensity, grandeur and transcendence of God, adoration surges from the depths of my heart pushing me to bow down before God. When I consider the beauty, love, generosity and mercy of God, praise surges forth from my heart. That is what I call reacting. In life, we react all the time. A husband reacts constantly to his wife, a wife reacts constantly to her husband.

### **In prayer, I react to God.**

If I perceive something of the great purity of God, of his tireless love for me, but suddenly, I discover that I am impure, that my love is very poor beside his, then it is in my heart this new reaction, to repent. When I realise that he is a very good father, when I reread the short passage in St Luke, when Christ says, *“If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?”* And Christ continues, *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”* The reaction therefore before God's goodness is filial demand!

Here then, very briefly, is God's action in mental prayer and man's action: two beings who communicate, who exchange.

2/ Having said that, there is scarcely any need to reply to the question, **Why practise mental prayer?** Well, because prayer is the opportunity to realise and take stock of my relationship with God, and to try and reach a true relationship with God. A son can claim to be independent, self-sufficient and free, the fact remains that he only exists because his father gave him life that he needed an education, all the material and moral benefits that the father gave him and continues to give him. He

can want to be independent, he cannot deny that between him and his father, there is a relationship.

Well, between God and man, whether man wants it or not, there is a RELATIONSHIP. God is the one who created me, and he is the one who, every instant, supports me in my existence because if he did not, I would fall back into nothingness; like the mark of the sun on the sea, if the sun moves, there is no more mark on the sea! If God goes away, I no longer exist. So, whether I like it or not, the most fundamental relationship imaginable exists between God and I. And not only is God, for me who is a Christian, the one who enables me to exist, but he gives me his grace so that I keep faith, so that in me, there is charity, that means that my disorganised and bad nature gradually is healed and I am able to develop...

In fact, the majority of Christians do not even suspect that there is a relationship between God and them, and if they do suspect it, they do not worry about reaching a just relationship!

But that ought to be the major concern between two people, between a father and son, between a husband and wife, between two friends, to reflect upon what their relationship ought to be and to work to make this relationship perfect; and a very perfect relationship between a father and son, between a wife and husband, makes for something that is very harmonious. And as long as one has not understood the laws of this relationship, there is tension between the father and son, between the husband and wife, between those two boys who pretend to be friends, but do not think about and reflect on the laws of friendship.

Well, prayer is the big moment of the day, when I acknowledge my relationship with God and when I endeavour to reach a just relationship with God. Without that, there will always be that tension, like between a father and son who do not get along, like between a husband and wife.

Therefore, thanks to mental prayer, I discover that, since God is the source from which springs in me human life, spiritual life, well, I ought to have with regard to him all the relationships I spoke of earlier:



adoration, praise, repentance, demands. This is what makes me discover and deepen and develop my relationship with God.

The person who does not pray will experience an approximate relationship with God like a husband and wife, who never reflect upon the requirements of mutual love and who improvise all the time. Christ, surprisingly, prays. There are numerous passages in the Gospel that show him leaving men and going away to be alone. *“Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place.”* *“And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him,”* As his reputation grew, the numerous crowds came to him and he would have had good reason not to retire to be alone. He is the Son of God, after all, but he went to be alone to pray. *“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”* And it is in his prayer that his relationship with the Father was renewed, deepened and he had discovered the benefits of this prayer to such an extent that he invited us, that he invited his apostles to practise mental prayer. (...)

When I pray, I am like a river that is connected to the source, and so the water passes by and sinks into me. When I pray, I am the branch of the tree that is a little bit broken and which then is stuck back onto the trunk, in order to let the sap pass that will allow flowers and fruit to be born. This is true too in married life, when husband and wife get together, their love spills over and is renewed. I am going to give you some feedback from lay people like you, who pray and who tell of the benefits that they receive. *“Prayer helps to hold and control one’s life, not letting oneself live according to the times, the moment and the humour.”*

First benefit of praying, a life that is no longer dispersed. (...)

*“Prayer,”* wrote another person, *“balances my life. It is like the keel that balances the boat and enables it to remain stable come hell or high water.”* And another, *“Thanks to prayer I acquired a better scale of values.”* And another, *“One is less self-centred when one has tried to be totally and solely centred on God for half an hour.”*

And if these testimonials from couples are not sufficient for you, I want to cite the testimonial of a great French doctor, (Alexis Carrel) who was not a Catholic to begin with, but who became one. Simply through observing his patients, he discovered the importance of prayer, *“The influence of prayer on the human mind and body is as demonstrable as that of secreting glands. Its results can be measured in terms of*

*increased physical buoyancy, greater intellectual vigour, moral stamina, and a deeper understanding of the realities underlying human relationship.*” And I do not have the time to read you the pages from the great French Jewish philosopher, Henri Bergson, who having studied the mystics a lot, said that in his opinion, if a St Ignatius, a St Teresa, a St Catherine of Sienna had had extraordinarily efficient lives, it was because they were the great souls of prayer.

Bergson’s testimonial is enough to reply to the objection of those who say, *“Prayer is escaping from life and the great human causes”* and the previous phrase of Dr Carrel that I cited responds admirably to the question raised by some, *“What’s the point in praying?”* What’s the point? Well very simply to become myself. What’s the point in eating? To become myself, to continue to exist! Prayer is as necessary to the soul as bread is to the body.

We all come into the world with an original illness that comes from original sin. We are destroyed, all the interior mechanisms are false. If I do not open myself up to God’s action through prayer, I will remain a spiritual, moral, physical and psychic invalid for my whole life. Many psychic illnesses are cured by prayer! Many psychic illnesses, nervous depressions and other things would be avoided if we prayed.

And one of the most remarkable effects of prayer is gradually to awaken deep within me a new faculty that will enable me to be in contact with God. And all the great spiritual leaders, all the saints speak of this faculty that enables them to seize God’s messages. They call it sometimes the centre of the soul, the fine point of the soul, the summit of the soul. St Paul called it the spirit (*pneuma*) and how many times have I noticed that when this new faculty awakens in the depths of our heart, the human being unifies, balances, assumes an extraordinary strength, but I do believe that I have never encountered people who awaken and develop this faculty if they do not pray. (...)



### **3/ I now want (...) to try and make you understand the great difference that exists between Christian mental prayer and mental prayer in other religions.**

Muslims pray, Hindus pray, Buddhists pray. What characterises Christian prayer? It is that Christians know that the invisible God, in order to enter into communication with them the Christians, made himself visible, became incarnate. Therefore, Christian prayer is fundamentally a relationship with Jesus Christ, an encounter with Jesus Christ, as was the case for the Apostles, a closeness with Jesus, who told us, *“No longer do I call you servants...but I have called you friends...”*

Christians, who pray, possess in their hearts this great desire for a spiritual encounter, ever more true, ever more deep with Christ. They aspire to becoming, like St Paul, passionate about Christ.

But just as in human love, if the understanding does not become deeper, the love does not endure, and so it is with Christ. Hence this necessity for prayer in order to become passionate about Christ. That is where I look at him, that is where I discover him and that is where I am filled with enthusiasm for him. And gradually, my Christian life will become a growing friendship between Jesus Christ and myself. A life together, Christian life is a life together.

*“If you knew the gift of God,”* Christ said to the Samaritan woman, if you knew the kind of friend I am for you, I would like to be for you. Firstly, I know you forever, you always existed in my thoughts, in my heart, well before being born. I love you, not like a number in a crowd, but personally. I love you as you, and not simply because you are a man amongst men. I am going to tell you something more. I love you as you are, with all your goodness and all your evil, because when you love, you love the other person as they are. (...)

In St Mark, there is this marvellous little sentence, *“He looked at him and loved him,”* talking about Christ before the young man. This is true for each of us, at this very moment, he is looking at me and he loves me as I am.

This is what gradually I discover thanks to prayer, this is what I realise, thanks to prayer and yet, I have not yet told you the most marvellous part of Christian prayer.

Prayer does not simple consist of talking to Christ, prayer consists of opening myself to Christ's prayer. And think about Jesus who, at night, went into the mountain and there, beneath a star filled sky, spoke to his Father. It would not surprise me if he had said to his Father, "Father, I wish I had millions of voices to sing your praise. I wish I had millions of hearts to respond to your love." Well, that is what he does, through Baptism and the Eucharist, Jesus comes to live his life in me. I can close the door on him when he knocks on my door, but, as is said in the Apocalypse, *"If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."* If I open myself to Christ, Christ will come and live in me and for Christ, **living is praying**. He lives in me, he prays in me. If he lives in millions of Christians, he prays in millions of Christians and at last his great desire is fulfilled. There are millions of lips to sing the praises of his Father, there are millions of hearts to love his Father. The Christian's prayer is Christ's prayer.

When the heavenly Father looks at the surface of the earth, like at night, when you see South American from high up in a plane, you can see small lights almost everywhere; when the Father looks at the earth, he sees numerous small lights. They are the prayer of his son Jesus present in the hearts that have opened to up him.

To such an extent that St Paul's phrase, cited yesterday, can be reworked by slightly transforming it thus, *"I pray, but it is no longer I who pray. It is Christ who prays in me."*

So, when I come before God, when I am weak, when I am tired, when I do not manage to gather myself together but when I think about the great and marvellous reality, even if I don't know how to make up a prayer, there is Jesus Christ in me who prays his marvellous prayer to the Father. And my prayer, what is it going to consist of? Believing in this prayer of Jesus in me, adhering with all my strength to this prayer of Jesus in me; I do not have to make up a prayer, I just need to join with the prayer that he makes in me. Retain these two words that are



key for a life of prayer, not so much for making up a prayer but rather for joining with a ready-made prayer within oneself.

This is what Christian prayer is and Christian meditation will consist of reflecting on the elements that make up Christ's prayer in me in order to adhere to it. To discover that his prayer is made up of adoration, I adhere to his adoration, of thanksgiving, I adhere to his thanksgiving, of filial love, I adhere to his filial love.

However, of course, this prayer of Christ within me is a little like a small seed sown in the undergrowth. It runs the risk of being suffocated by the undergrowth, so asceticism, all the efforts of Christian life will consist in clearing the ground so that the little light of Christ in me can develop.

Just as the gardener gives the seed water, sun, fertiliser and good earth, if I want Jesus' prayer in me to develop, I need to feed it at all costs by having recourse to the Word of God, by nourishing it with the sacraments, by exercising it with prayer.

In the Old Testament, there is this little phrase of God's to the prophet, "My son, give me your heart." Well this is what Christ says to me, "Give me your intelligence, give me your heart, give me your body, give me everything in you that can become a prayer and I will make sure that you become a living prayer."

And so, we understand, and this is where I will finish, we understand what St Augustine said, "A Christian is another Christ," or again, "Let us rejoice, we did not simply become Christians, we became Christ and Christ in prayer." A 17<sup>th</sup> century author said, "There is nothing greater than a Christian who is a living Jesus Christ on earth."

These are not beautiful ideas invented by pious Christians, but they are based on great affirmations made in the Scripture, for example, this one of St Paul's, "*Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,*" or St Paul to the Corinthians, "*Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?*"

Jesus Christ is alive within me and he is praying within me. There you have it.

HENRI CAFFAREL

**Prayer for the Canonisation  
of the Servant of God  
Henri Caffarel**

God, our Father,  
You planted deep in the heart of your servant, Henri Caffarel,  
A fountain of love, which bound him totally to your Son  
And inspired him with a wonderful capacity to speak of Him.

A prophet for our time,  
He revealed the dignity and beauty of the vocation of every person  
In the words Jesus addresses to each of us: "Come follow me."

He made couples enthusiastic about the greatness of the sacrament of  
marriage,  
The sign of Christ's fruitful love for the Church and of His union with her.  
He showed that priests and couples  
Are called to live a vocation of love.  
He was a guide to widows: love is stronger than death.  
Prompted by the Holy Spirit,  
He accompanied many Christians on the path of prayer.  
Seized by a devouring fire, he was a dwelling place for you, Lord.

God, our Father,  
Through the intercession of Our Lady,  
We ask you to hasten the day  
When the Church will proclaim the holiness of his life,  
So, that people everywhere will discover the joy of following your Son  
In accordance with their particular vocations in the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we invoke the intercession of Father Caffarel for.....  
(Indicate the particular favour being sought)

**Prayer approved by Monsignor Andre Vingt-Trois – Archbishop of Paris.  
"Nihil obstat": 4th January 2006 – "Imprimatur": 5th January 2006.**

*In the case of a particular favour obtained through the intercession of Father  
Caffarel,  
Contact: The Postulator,  
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I renew my (We renew our) membership to the Association  
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