



Equipes Notre-Dame

Eurafrica Zone: enlarging horizons



There are two dimensions to our service in the International Leading Team (ERI) as the “couple for the Eurafrica Zone.” On the one hand, we are members of the ERI and, as such, participate in their reflections, deliberations, activities and decisions. On the other, we are a “liaison couple,” with the responsibility of transmitting the Movement’s general orientations to the Super-Regions and of receiving from them their opinions and needs. We try to build a spirit of community and unity and to do it with humility because our mission is directed towards couples who already have a large experience of the Movement.

Our position is indeed very privileged: we are lucky enough to share in the reflection about the challenges for the future of the Teams, to help with the creation of activities and documents of general interest, to promote the Movement’s expansion in new countries... and the opportunity to see how all this takes form and progresses thanks to the faithful and tireless efforts of the Super-Regions.

As a member couple of the ERI, over the last two years, To and Zé gave us the task of updating the official document on **“Priest Counsellors and Spiritual Accompaniment in the Teams of Our Lady.”** Passionate work that led us to examine the early sources of the Movement. We followed the methodology that is specific to the Teams, that is collegiality. The final result is the product of several people’s efforts and ought at the same time be compatible with the charisma and the experiences undergone at the base of the Movement. This new document will contain three distinct parts. The first part, in response to a desire that Father Caffarel once expressed, **dives into the knowledge of the grandeur and mystery of the sacrament of orders**, into the significance of the priest’s presence for each Team, as well as into the idea of the “complementarity” of the two sacraments. In the second part, a reflection upon the **“art of spiritual accompaniment” through processes that enable growth** in the love and union with Christ, like those that occur in the life of a Team. A third and last part contains **criteria and proposals for organising and supporting the service of spiritual accompaniment** by priests and other companions.

As Liaison Couple for the Zone, our principal mission is to pray daily for the responsible couples of the 4 Eurafrican Super-Regions. In this prayer, we take to heart their projects, activities, conflicts and progress and entrust everything to the care of the Holy Spirit. Our duty is to be aware and up-to-date with the life in the Super-Regions, to know their history, their evolution, their “personality,” in order to better understand their aspirations and reactions to the Movement’s proposals and requests. For this it is essential to maintain regular contact and above all to establish fraternal relationships and mutual trust. Lending a deep and fruitful ear is easier when the human relationship is one of sincere and warm friendship, which does not prevent passionate debates and a critical spirit, all of which are also necessary. Consequently, just like any Liaison Couple, we need to go out and meet those who have been entrusted to us and also foster a connection between all of us.

This past year, we were able to visit two Super-Regions. August saw us in Togo and Benin, countries that today make up the most important centre of the Teams in the French-speaking African Super-Region. For over a week, we accompanied Roger and Emilia Agbozoh and Father Raoul N’Sougan to various celebrations (the 30th anniversary of the Teams in Togo), visits with bishops, meetings with Responsible Couples... We were able to appreciate with great admiration their capacity for organisation in the midst of economic difficulties, their fidelity to the Movement’s charisma and orientations, and their enthusiasm for spreading the Teams in all the countries in the region.

In September, we went to Italy, to the national training session for the Sector Responsible Couples. We enjoyed a couple of magnificently organised days, with a very dynamic and creative programme. Also in Italy, in Genoa, the annual meeting for the Zone took place in February and this was a great occasion to exchange information and experiences. We dedicated an important amount of time to getting to know thoroughly the activities for the international expansion of the Movement. Spain is working on the launching of Teams in Sweden, to be created from Spanish-speaking emigrant communities; Portugal is encouraging the way forward towards full independence for the Teams in Portuguese-speaking Africa; Italy is running and training teams in Albania and Romania; French-speaking Africa is spreading Teams to Ghana and Nigeria, two large neighbouring countries that speak English but have a common culture with Togo and Benin.

For us, it is a grace from God to be able to accompany the work in the Eurafrica Zone from the ERI, and to see close up how the spiritual and geographic horizons of the Teams of Our Lady are being enlarged.

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