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## THE PRIEST: A LIGHT FOR COUPLES AND FAMILIES.

Dear Intercessors,

*"The priest is not a priest for himself, he is a priest for you!"* as the holy Curé of Ars, patron saint of priests throughout the world, used to say. This past August 4<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. The Pope urged his brother priests worldwide in a Letter, *"We know that on the ladder of mercy we can descend to the depths of our human condition – including weakness and sin – and at the same time experience the heights of divine perfection: "Be merciful as the Father is merciful"*.

The Church is going through a deep crisis. Do we pray enough for our priests, who are mediators like Christ? *"A priest's prayer is nourished and is incarnate in the heart of God's people..."* and *"it is precisely in the prayer of the People of God that the priest's heart finds its place."* Already in 1947, Father Caffarel, seeing the difficulties confronting their lives and their priesthood, encouraged and invited Christian families to support them and remember them in their prayers.

**Aude & Olivier de la Motte, EIAI – Responsible Couple for the Central-Europe Zone.**

## SPIRITUAL LETTER OF FATHER PAUL-DOMINIQUE MARCOVITS, O.P.



The priest is a light for couples and families because he shares various points in common with them. Because of the deep kinship of their vocations, the light is reciprocal. Amongst the various points in common, here are three.

Firstly, awe. Personally, I owe everything to the Lord, he dazzled me. Just before I turned six, I made my First Holy Communion. It was so beautiful! I saw then that that would be my life. And so it has been. Spouses too tell of the decisive moment in their love, they can put a date on that moment. And it continues to be magnificent today. The establishment of a life is always a gratuitous event, a light that illuminates everything in a totally new way. Years later, it is still there.

What the priest also has in common with couples and that enables them to understand each other thoroughly is the experience of liberation. We are built on what is free, but also on conversion. So much work is involved in building together a life! Spouses know this. Priests too. **Priests are made to give life, to give God's life.** So this life often passes through the priest burning him: he needs to be converted himself otherwise his service will sound hollow and he will be unproductive.

And so the experience of interior liberation, forgiveness, the joy of finally being able to start over, this experience is necessary in order to be able to help others. The priest is also a father. Paternal spirituality is not an empty phrase, it is a reality that fills the whole heart, all of love, all of love in its great purity. The priest does not give life to others so that they belong "to them", but so they may belong to God and that they grow in complete freedom. Love is necessary for these grand things of life! "Priests and couples have received the vocation of love," says the prayer for the beatification of Father Henri Caffarel.

But the priest also has a special task: he gives life to others through the sacraments, sometimes to successive generations! The priest is also man of the Word, through his teaching, his preaching. The priest also represents a presence, a strong presence: God is in him in order to give himself to others, to forgive others. As a priest he is also a man of the Church, he introduces to the Body of Christ, which is the Church. Like the holy Curé of Ars, "he shows the way to heaven." It is necessary that a movement like the Intercessors prays for priests. We are linked to each other in order to bear witness to the greatness of God's love for all of humanity. We need to pray for vocations!

**Father Paul-Dominique Marcovits, o.p.  
Spiritual Counsellor to the Intercessors.**

# THE COUPLE AND THE PRIEST

FATHER HENRI CAFFAREL, *L'ANNEAU D'OR* N°14 – MARCH-APRIL 1947.

Father Caffarel invites us to pray for priests, for all our priests! Let us take this particular intention and commit it to our prayer of intercession. Let us give thanks for the Spiritual Counsellors in Teams of Our Lady, who are committed to accompanying couples towards holiness. Let us pray for our bishops, the Apostles' successors, and for our Pope.

*«Will it be necessary for the Eskimos to come and evangelise France? When they talk about their bishop, they call him "the big chief of prayer," Father Caffarel tells us.*



*"Such grief must tear the heart of Pius XII before this divided humanity threatened by the worst catastrophes. May he at least know himself understood from your homes and supported by your prayer."*



“When we know that, through the priest, Jesus Christ continues to carry out his priestly activity, it is easy to admit that the same term of mediator is appropriate as a definition of both Christ’s mission and that of the priest. This word immediately contextualises the priest: he is the man in the middle, not to separate, but to unite, the man who goes from the One to the others, from God to humanity, in order to bring about a reconciling and an alliance. Peace between God and humanity in general was concluded, it is true, through Christ’s death; but it needs to be rendered effective between God and each person in particular. It is really completely different to peace in the usual sense of the word, it is more about love, communion, “nuptials” says the Bible, between each person and their God. (...)

Two loves inhabit a priest’s heart, the love of God and the love of men. That is why we see him, sometimes mingling with his brothers, sharing their existence, taking on their sorrows and joys, being a worker with the workers, sometimes retiring through prayer into the intimacy of his God. With men, he speaks of God; with God, he speaks of men, pursuing a single goal, the union of God with men. These two loves melt into one in a priest’s heart. (...) **Appreciating, welcoming, helping priests is good, but it is not everything. Couples and homes must also pray for them.** For the parish clergy firstly. Is it not normal to expect this help from those to whom one consecrates one’s heart and time? Why is it that all too often the faithful appear to be so lacking in support for their clergy, more prompt to criticise than to serve? And when a priest fails, they are outraged.

Ought they not firstly ask themselves what is their share in the responsibility? Did they support and protect him with their prayers? Are they really so unaware that every boss is the enemy’s special target?

Even more rare are those who pray for their bishop, despite the invitation in the missal to do so. They talk about the bishop who has received the fullness of priesthood as if he were a civil servant. Almost everyone seem to be unaware that he is the spiritual head and the father of the diocesan church, the Apostle’s authentic successor in their midst, responsible for them before the Father.

How can I finish off this article without referring to the priest towards whom all Catholic gazes are turned and whose face it is enough to contemplate to see that he is a man of prayer and penitence and that he feels the heavy load on his shoulders of “concern for all churches”? From the top of the hill, Jesus Christ lamented on the great town,

*“How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks...”*

## IN THE WORDS OF THE CURÉ OF ARS.

*Prayer is nothing more than a union with God. The more you pray, the more you want to pray. Humanity is poor and needs to ask God for everything. Humanity has a beautiful job, that of praying and of loving... This constitutes humanity’s happiness on earth.*

*God does not look at the long or beautiful prayers, but those that come from the bottom of the heart, with great respect and a true desire to please God. I can’t tell you how much a small quarter of an hour, stolen from our occupations, from some futility, in order to pray are very agreeable to him.*

*You have a little heart, but prayer expands it and makes it able to love God.*



**EXCERPTS FROM THE LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO PRIESTS**  
ON THE 160<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF THE HOLY CURÉ OF ARS, ST JOHN VIANNÉY,  
AUGUST 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2019.

*To my Brother Priests. Dear Brothers,*

FIDELITY TO HIS  
COMMITMENTS  
IS AT THE HEART  
OF A PRIEST'S  
VOCATION.  
MAY HE FIND  
TRUE COMFORT  
IN THE HOLINESS  
OF GOD'S  
PEOPLE, WHOM  
HE IS IN CHARGE  
OF LEADING.

I write this letter ... to all of you. (...) Like the Curé d'Ars, you serve “in the trenches”, bearing the burden of the day and the heat (cf. Mt 20:12), confronting an endless variety of situations in your effort to care for and accompany God’s people. (...) “Always, but especially in times of trial, we need to return to those luminous moments when we experienced the Lord’s call to devote our lives to his service”. How beautiful it is when an elderly priest sees or is visited by those children—now adults—whom he baptised long ago and who now gratefully introduce a family of their own! Dear brother priests, I thank you for your fidelity to the commitments you have made. It is a sign that, in a society and culture that glorifies the ephemeral, there are still people unafraid to make lifelong promises. Thank you for the times when, with great emotion, you embrace sinners, healed wounds, warmed hearts and showed the tenderness and compassion of the Good Samaritan.

Let us give thanks for the holiness of the faithful People of God, whom we are called to shepherd and through whom the Lord also shepherds and cares for us. He blesses us with the gift of contemplating that faithful People “in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance, I see the holiness of the Church militant”. Let us be grateful for each of them, and in their witness find support and encouragement. “For his mercy endures forever”. (Gaudete et Exsultate, n. 7).

Dear brothers, once more, “I do not cease to give thanks for you” (Eph 1:16), for your commitment and your ministry. For I am confident that “God takes away even the hardest stones against which our hopes and expectations crash: death, sin, fear, worldliness. Human history does not end before a tombstone, because today it encounters the “living stone” (cf. 1 Pet 2:4), the risen Jesus. We, as Church, are built on him, and, even when we grow disheartened and tempted to judge everything in the light of our failures, **he comes to make all things new**”.

May we allow our gratitude to awaken praise and renewed enthusiasm for our ministry of anointing our brothers and sisters with hope. May we be men whose lives bear witness to the compassion and mercy that Jesus alone can bestow on us. Fraternally, Francis.

**THE PRIEST, THE LIGHT OF CHRIST.**



“At the beginning of the conclave that was to elect him, Cardinal Bergoglio made a striking speech: he highlighted the dangers that the Church will encounter if it stops being “*mysterium luna*”. The “mystery of the moon” is an expression taken from the Church Fathers to suggest the nature and mission of the Church: like the moon, “*The Church shines not by its own light, but by the light of Christ*,” St Ambrose states. This light of Christ is born by the priest within him, within his fragile humanity and sinfulness. It belongs to the good shepherd who knows and loves his sheep. The priest meets couples and families, listens to them and supports them in their vocation. He encourages them to progress in their spiritual life and invites mothers to make their children pray. When he goes home at night, he presents the joys and sorrows of various people to the Lord: the deceased grandfather; the young man who has announced his entry into the seminary; the sick child; the little girl who is going to make her First Communion or the couple celebrating their wedding anniversary.”

**Father Louis de Raynal.**

*Born, baptised and ordained a priest in Dijon, I am currently a parish priest in a number of Burgundy villages. Although I am a diocesan priest, I also belong to the Society of St John-Mary Vianney. Since 2006, I have been happy to serve Teams of Our Lady. My commitment within the Responsible Team for France Luxembourg Switzerland has led me to discover the Movement in a deeper manner with all the questions that the Church today faces: those of love, the couple and the family. I believe in the sacrament of marriage. It is a treasure house of permanent graces to help spouses make their life a “I love you.” It signifies Christ’s presence that ceaselessly dispenses the graces of love in the heart of a Christian couple.*

## INTERCESSORS

### Contact us:

EIAIFatima2018@gmail.com

### Find us:

intercesseursmobile.org

<https://equip-es-notre-dame.com/fr/>

[communication-et-liaison/prier-les-intercesseurs](https://communication-et-liaison/prier-les-intercesseurs)

BE WATCHFUL AND PRAY.

### GENERAL INTENTION:

Let us pray for the Church, for its ministers and its consecrated laity and let us give thanks for their commitment, in particular that of the Spiritual Counsellors who belong to Teams of Our Lady. May the Holy Spirit keep them in the peace and joy of their ministry. May Christian families welcome, accompany and support the vocations the Lord has elicited for our world.

### ► NEWS FROM THE EIAI:

- The EIAI (Equipe Internationale d'Animation des Intercesseurs, International Team for the running of Intercessors) established at the Fatima Gathering in 2018 operates, thanks to email and skype exchanges and the support of the ERI (Equipe Responsable Internationale, International Leading Team).
- We are still looking for an English-speaking Correspondent Couple for the EurAsia Zone.
- The Intercessors' Letter is distributed throughout the world and translated into English, Italian, Spanish, Brazilian, Portuguese, Arabic and Polish.
- We are in contact with 18 Intercessor Correspondents, who are present in each of the Teams Regions and Super-regions and are in charge of passing on the Intercessors' messages.
- Invited by the ERI, Paco & Olga presented the Intercessors at the College for Teams of Our Lady Regional and Super-Regional Responsible Couples in July in Valencia.
- Upcoming Event in 2020! 60 anniversary of Father Caffarel's call.

## PACO & OLGA GARRIDO'S TESTIMONIAL

### INTERCESSOR RESPONSIBLE COUPLE FOR THE EURAFRICA ZONE

#### PRESENT AT THE VALENCIA COLLEGE, SPAIN, JULY 2019.



Our life is one long thanksgiving. One of these moments of thanksgiving was at the meeting last July 16<sup>th</sup>, with the International College of Teams of Our Lady. Upon the invitation of **Paola & Giovanni Cecchini Manara**, secretaries to the ERI (International Leading Team), we came to Valencia to present the Intercessors' Movement. We received an incredibly warm welcome from Mercedes & Albert, Responsible Couple for the Spain SR and all their team. We felt like we were with family. We were able to spend the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> with them in a night of adoration and the day of the 16<sup>th</sup>. We were moved by the emotion and the joy of knowing that we were united with Team members worldwide who were represented by their Super-Regional Responsible Couples. During the day, we were able to meet, get to know and talk to each of the Responsible couples, especially with those from our Zone (EurAfrica) and those from America, and to send our greetings to the Intercessor leaders in their Super-Regions. On the Tuesday evening, we gave a brief presentation of the Intercessors' Movement using a slideshow. Starting with the call Father Caffarel made to Team members in 1960, "*I am looking for volunteers to pray together as a couple, at night, once a month for the Teams of Our Lady movement,*" we explained **why we pray, for whom we pray, what are various commitments are, how we organised ourselves to live inspired by the spirit of intercession** (thanks most notably to the Intercessors' Quarterly Letter), how we communicate the prayer intentions that are entrusted to us in order to present them to God as Intercessors.

We spoke of the new structure, the creation of EIAI at Fatima 2018, of how it is organised and what its projects are in order to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Intercessor Movement. We gave each Super-Region Responsible Couple a questionnaire to fill out and their answers show that although the Intercessor Movement is known of in their Super-Regions, they believe it is necessary to promote the Intercessors even more and to publicise intercessory prayer more in their zone, especially at the Teams gatherings or events in their Zone. At the end, we bore witness to the richness of being an Intercessor: the grace of being united with everyone in the communion of Saints, the grace of being more open to forgiveness, the grace of being more merciful and compassionate. Every day, we realise a little bit more that our sacrament of marriage works in us and strengthens us through our commitment as Intercessors. We truly believe in Father Caffarel's invitation to be Intercessors, "*Do not lose the treasure that is hidden behind this commitment.*" **Paco & Olga.**