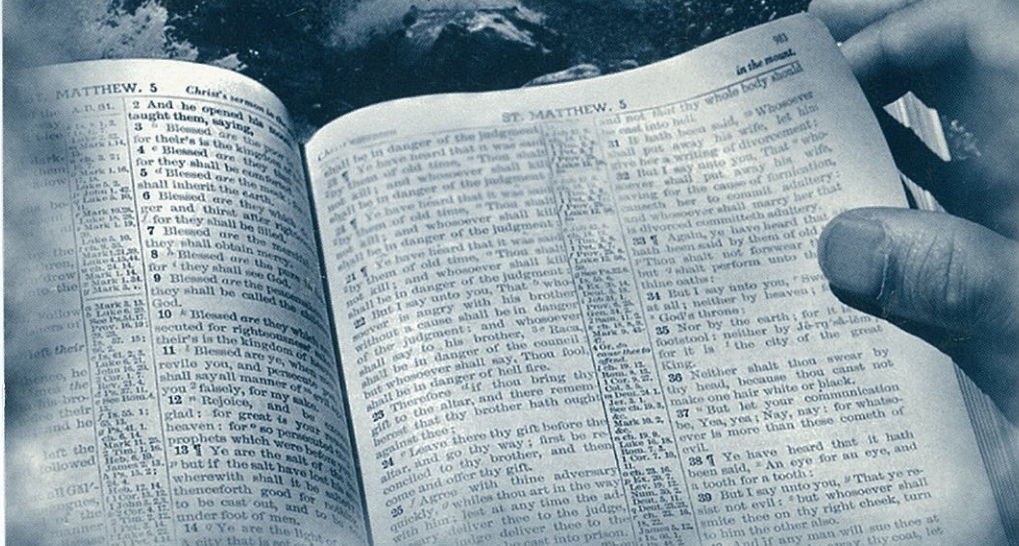


The Origin and Vision of . . .

Marriage Encounter

Rev. Robert White, O.F.M.



MATTHEW. 5

Christ's sermon in the mountains

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
3 **Blessed are the poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 **Blessed are they that mourn**, for they shall be comforted.
5 **Blessed are the meek**, for they shall inherit the earth.
6 **Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness**, for they shall be filled.
7 **Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake**, for they shall obtain the kingdom of heaven.
8 **Blessed are they that are reviled and persecuted**, for they shall see the kingdom of heaven.
9 **Blessed are they that have been persecuted for my sake**, for they shall be called the children of God.
10 **Blessed are they that are persecuted for my sake**, for they shall be persecuted for righteousness' sake, and their persecutors shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."
11 **Blessed are they that are persecuted for my sake**, for they shall have the kingdom of heaven.
12 **Rejoice and be glad**, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted were the prophets which were before you.
13 **Ye are the salt of the earth**; but if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned? it is good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trampled under foot of men.
14 **Ye are the light of the world**; as a city that is set on a hill, cannot be hid.

ST. MATTHEW. 5

and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
15 **Thou shalt not swear by thy heaven, neither by the earth, neither by Jerusalem, neither by the Lord, saying, "I will not be defiled."** But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No."
16 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not kill;" but whosoever shall kill the body, he shall be in danger of the judgment.**
17 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" but whosoever shall look at a woman to lust after her, he shall be in danger of the judgment.**
18 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but whosoever shall swear by the heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, or by the Lord, saying, 'I will not be defiled,' he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
19 **But I say unto you, "Whoever swears by the heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, or by the Lord, saying, 'I will not be defiled,' he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
20 **But whosoever shall say, "I will not be defiled," he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
21 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not kill;" but whosoever shall kill the body, he shall be in danger of the judgment.**
22 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" but whosoever shall look at a woman to lust after her, he shall be in danger of the judgment.**
23 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but whosoever shall swear by the heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, or by the Lord, saying, 'I will not be defiled,' he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
24 **But I say unto you, "Whoever swears by the heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, or by the Lord, saying, 'I will not be defiled,' he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
25 **But whosoever shall say, "I will not be defiled," he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
26 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not kill;" but whosoever shall kill the body, he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
27 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not commit adultery;" but whosoever shall look at a woman to lust after her, he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
28 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but whosoever shall swear by the heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, or by the Lord, saying, 'I will not be defiled,' he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
29 **But I say unto you, "Whoever swears by the heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, or by the Lord, saying, 'I will not be defiled,' he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
30 **But whosoever shall say, "I will not be defiled," he shall be in danger of the judgment."**
31 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, "Thou shalt not kill;" but whosoever shall kill the body, he shall be in danger of the judgment."**

*The Origin and
Vision of . . .*

*Marriage
Encounter*

Rev. Robert White, O.F.M.

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F.I.R.E.S.

INTRODUCTION

I've been asked so many times, throughout all these years of marriage and family ministry, "How did the idea of M.E. (Marriage Encounter) come to you?" or "Why did you start M.E.?" or "When was the first M.E. weekend?" or "How did the whole thing begin?"

I've responded to these and similar questions in interviews, articles, talks and conferences, but I have always felt dissatisfied with my answers, especially when I realize — through the phenomenon of so many expressions of M.E. all over the world — that the origin and roots of M.E. are practically ignored.

With this concern in my heart I have been living, writing, traveling and ministering, always wondering what to do to deal efficiently with the origin and roots of M.E.

At the same time, good friends and special events related with today's marriage and family life, have been suggesting the need for a book with the history of M.E.

One day, after my morning prayer, one name spontaneously came to my mind: "Father Bob White." I thought, "He could be the writer of the history of M.E. He is a Professor of History at the St. Bonaventure University in New York. He is one of the pioneers of the original M.E. in the United States. He is a humble, wise and open person. He is a true believer, and he is enthusiastic for marriage and family. Let us propose it to him!"

Fr. Bob's answer was positive and simple: "Yes!" He said, "You can count on me." And from that very moment he started to plan his book, being in frequent communication with me. Taking advantage of his sabbatical year, he traveled several times to Spain to be in direct and friendly touch with the pioneers of the original M.E. He also has been traveling to Japan to realize how the original M.E. is working with married couples of different cultures

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and religions. He always returned from these trips very enlightened and full of enthusiasm.

Therefore, if you want to find the answers to the key-questions about the original M.E., just keep reading. This book will accompany you in your journey. And you will touch M.E. “roots.”

I would like to clarify one of the previous questions: “When was the first M.E. weekend?” Even though the first “Official” M.E. weekend was celebrated in 1961, my first experience was 33 years before, when I was in my mother’s womb. Yes, it was when my father and mother, 7 months after their wedding, had an argument and separated. But the Lord — through my near birth and the wise and loving advice of my grandparents — blew upon the hidden fire in their hearts. And 3 months before my birth they encountered, and never again parted.

I firmly believe that Marriage is the heart of the family, and families the heart of humankind. This has been in the past, it is in the present, and it will be in the future. Definitely, families are forever. They are our hope.

Fr. Gabriel Calvo

Washington, D.C.

January 1, 1999

PREFACE

Marriage, the commitment of a man and a woman to live in a husband and wife relationship, is the most necessary institution of modern society. This institution is the “heart” of the family which is the fundamental cell of society. As the family is, so will society be. For a healthy society, healthy families are needed. For every healthy family, a strong and vibrant marriage is an essential requisite, for the married couple is the source of a family’s nourishment. Wherefore, whatever will inspire, fortify and enhance marriages, will at the same time purify, strengthen and improve families, which in turn will reinforce society. A process founded almost forty years ago to assist in the formation of healthy marriages was the Marriage Encounter Weekend. This historical survey discloses the origin and vision of the Marriage Encounter Weekend.

Marriage Encounter has changed the lives of thousands, perhaps millions, of couples throughout the world in the last thirty-five years. Questions often arise concerning its beginning. How did it begin? What was its purpose? What made the Marriage Encounter Weekend take the shape it did? This history of the origins and vision of Marriage Encounter endeavors to respond to these and other questions.

Fr. Gabriel Calvo, the originator and designer of the process known as The Marriage Encounter Weekend, has often been asked the question: “How did the idea of Marriage Encounter come to you?” In reply he praises the question for its answer is the “key to any real understanding of its mystique, spirit and purpose.” To him Marriage Encounter was actually a simple intuition. “I like to think of it like the striking of a match, because the intuition has its origin in two feelings, two moving experiences, which as they were striking against each other, produced the spark that led to Marriage Encounter.” What were these two moving experiences?

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Ideas and thoughts from several authors inspired Fr. Calvo in the development of this instrument for couples. Otto Wilmen wrote: “Nothing is so practical as a good theory.” But every good theory must have some connection to reality. Louis Evely stated that a question without an answer is very painful; but something worse than that is an answer without a question, for answers are given which are not sought. A Spanish poet, Antonio Machado taught: “We all know the value of a glass of water, but few realize the value of thirst.”

Questions and thirsts of couples are the cause of the development of the instrument known as the Marriage Encounter Weekend. Couples questioned and thirsted for “something” to help them live a fuller and more meaningful married life. Fr. Calvo brought a response to their questions and thirst. The concept followed in the weekend was based on the realities of the lives of couples. There were couples who enjoyed being married and others who did not. The challenge was to bridge the gap. Marriage Encounter weekend became the instrument. This history discloses how the Marriage Encounter Weekend endeavored to bridge this gap.

When asked the question “What are the roots of Marriage Encounter?” Fr. Calvo replied: “the interaction of the Bible and life.” The Bible is God’s Word which relates the lived experience (vivencia) of God with the human race. The Bible reveals God’s plan (vision) and actions with humans in the world. The life refers to the interweaving of the signs of the times, couples, the teachings of the Church (its Magisterium), families and homes. This overview of the Origins and Vision reveals how this was brought about.

I became interested in the origins and vision of Marriage Encounter because I did not understand certain aspects of Marriage Encounter. I found a conflict between what was happening on the weekend and what I believed the Manual to be

saying. From the Manual it was evident that the couples were to gain some way of living married life more fully in their everyday life according to God's plan. On the weekend I saw a stress on dialogue to get to know one's spouse. The way for the couple to discover God's will for them, i.e., His plan for marriage through dialog, was veiled, however. So I began to inquire into the roots and origin of Marriage Encounter. This narrative of the Origin and Vision of Marriage Encounter is the result of this investigation.

The material for this monograph has been gathered mainly from interviews with Fr. Gabriel Calvo, the priest founder and chaplain of Marriage Encounter, as well as from his articles found in *Marriage Encounter* magazine (known also as *Agape*) and his books. Many thanks to Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer-Escola, who were seeking "something" for married couples, for their many kindnesses to me through explaining the beginnings and bringing me to the first place of the Marriage Encounter. José and Marguerita Pich Botey have given much insight into the international development of Marriage Encounter and without whose assistance this would not be published.

Heartfelt appreciation and thanks to many other couples in Spain, including the Renoms and the Ricarts, who gave valuable insights and clarifications to the history of the development of Marriage Encounter. A deep gratitude to the Marriage Encounter couples and Fr. Donnon Murray, O.F.M., in Japan, who helped me understand the international power of the weekend. Interviews with these couples and priest showed that the spirituality of marriage, as experienced in and through the Marriage Encounter Weekend according to the original methodology and essence, transcends cultures. The experience of Marriage Encounter led these couples to a new way of living married life. A Japanese husband related:

"When I returned home from my Marriage Encounter Weekend, I asked my wife if I could get her some tea. Perhaps

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because you are an American, you do not understand the tremendous change that had taken place in me in regard to my relationship with my wife. Here in Japan the wife always serves the husband. I was profoundly affected.”

Their enthusiasm and that of all who have experienced the Marriage Encounter Weekend throughout the world greatly influenced my desire to discover the origins and visions of Marriage Encounter and to pass on its original aim and purpose.

This history is dedicated to the original couples and priests who have shared their lived experience (*vivencia*) with us through the Marriage Encounter Weekend. If this story helps any couple to desire to live married life in a fuller, deeper and more meaningful way in the Lord, the time and effort to compile and write this history was more than worthwhile. If any marriage and family is fortified and strengthened, the history has contributed in a small way to the betterment of society through the family, of which the married couple is the “heart”.

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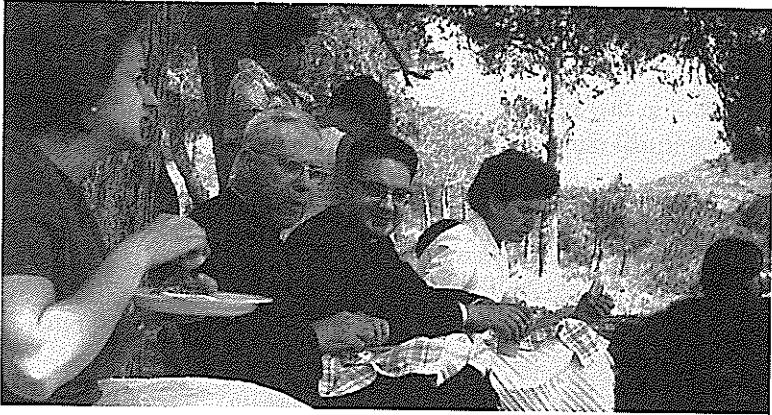
CHAPTER 1

The Meeting of the Founders

The beginning of MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER (the official English translation of the Spanish Encuentro Conjugal) started in Barcelona, Spain, when Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer-Escola met with Fr. Gabriel Calvo, a Roman Catholic priest of the Institute of Diocesan Labor Priests in Barcelona, Spain. At the time of this meeting both the couple and the priest were searching to fulfill their respective calling in life; they each sensed an inner movement and felt the urge to respond. This meeting was also given further incentive and direction through two concomitant incidents: an address of Pope Pius XII on February 10, 1952, and the thirst of some Spanish couples for “something” within the Church for couples. In the convergence of these three events the seed of the instrument called Marriage Encounter was formed and implanted. To understand the living spirit and mystique, origins and vision of Marriage Encounter, the story must begin with the life, thoughts and desires of this couple and priest and their meeting in 1952.

JAIME AND MERCEDES FERRER-ESCOLA

Jaime Ferrer and Mercedes Escola were united in marriage in a chapel in the Benedictine Monastery at Montserrat on November 5, 1943. They were 27 and 29 years old respectively. Prior to their marriage both were raised in the Catholic Church. They both had experienced the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Jaime escaped from the Communist Area of Barcelona and joined the forces of Franco. Mercedes served the spiritual needs of the people in Barcelona as best she could. After the Civil War they, individually, continued to be involved in different Church activities called apostolates. Also each of them, beginning in their high school years, as was the custom in Spain for Catholic youths, had selected



Fr. Vicente Lores with Fr. G. Calvo.

a spiritual mentor. During their engagement Jaime and Mercedes had decided that as a married couple they should have one spiritual mentor to guide them in their marriage spirituality. They believed that one spiritual mentor would better serve the interest of their marital unity; for them the essence of marriage was that two were to be united in not only body but also in mind, heart, soul and will. They believed that separate spiritual mentors would be detrimental to true unity. They decided that Mercedes' spiritual mentor, Fr. Demetrio Preciado, S.J. was better for them. Jaime's director had not helped him, while Mercedes was satisfied with hers. Fr. Preciado became their spiritual adviser during their engagement and had accepted to continue this capacity after their marriage.

THE FERRERS AND FR. VICENTE LORES

However, a few days after their marriage Fr. Preciado died. Jaime and Mercedes sought out Fr. Vicente Lores, the General Director of the Diocesan Laborer Priests who lived at the seminary in Barcelona. He agreed to be their spiritual mentor; they told Fr.

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Lores, as they had Fr. Preciado, that he was free to use any information gained from one to help the other.

But in fact Jaime and Mercedes were searching for more than just a spiritual mentor. They were looking for “something” in the Church that “we could both do.” They lamented: “The Church has married us, but has done nothing further for us as a married couple; in fact, it has separated us. In secular affairs we could go together as a couple, but in the Church there were associations or groups for men only or women only; nothing for couples.” Jaime and Mercedes tried the existing associations or groups in the Church, but found none of them a true guide for “couple” spirituality.

Jaime and Mercedes held and were convinced that when a man and a woman entered into marriage, the union involved every aspect of their life, and especially the spiritual, which, they believed, was the most important. “If married life concerned itself with nothing more than enjoying physical union and accruing material things, we would not have married,” they stated. They always concurred that, in marriage, husband and wife were to help one another, and this included, above all, spiritual matters. For “it was out of the spiritual union that each and every couple-action was to flow.”

Some priests, however, told them that since the soul belonged to God, the soul of husband and wife must remain apart. Jaime and Mercedes disagreed. “That the soul belongs to God, we know, but so does the body; if God joins two persons in marriage, then it is clear that both the soul and the body of each spouse are to be united.” Of this they were (and still are) certain. They pursued their search for “something” for the couple in the Church. They felt an inner charge that something needed to be done for couples within the Church to satisfy this spiritual thirst. They personally were finding it very difficult to discover their way as a couple in the

Church. They knew other couples had the same desire and were faced with the same difficulty.

From time to time they approached Fr. Lores and asked him to develop “something” to help married couples as married couples, especially in the area of marriage spirituality for the spiritual union of husband and wife. At the same time there were other couples — relatives and friends of the Ferrers — whom they discovered were interested in having “something” to deepen their married spirituality. Fr. Lores as the General Director of the Diocesan Laborer Priests was an extremely busy man. In Barcelona the members of this Institute were teaching and living at the diocesan seminary.

Fr. Lores promised the Ferrers that as soon as his Diocesan Laborer Priests had their own residence, he would do “something” for couples. Exactly what this “something” would be, the couple did not know. (Probably he did not know at the time either.) Fr. Lores continually told the Ferrers to pray, and God would show the way. In 1952 a residence independent of the seminary was established for the Diocesan Laborer Priests at 39 Modolell Street; Fr. Lores desired and was urged by the Ferrers to fulfill his promise to do “something” for couples.

THE DESIRES OF THE FERRERS WERE ANSWERED

Jaime and Mercedes had been searching, asking and praying for nine years for “something” for couples in the Church. One night they were asked to come to see Fr. Lores; they did not know what to expect. When they met with Fr. Lores, he asked them: “What exactly do you want?” Jaime and Mercedes replied: “We want the Church to give lessons, a program or “something” so that we as a couple can hear about marriage spirituality; “something” that we as husband and wife are able to go and listen to together.”

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Fr. Lores was very understanding of their request. He replied: "This is easy to do. However, I will not be able to do it, because I am too busy."

Jaime and Mercedes accepted the fact that he was too busy; they suggested a newly ordained priest who was a member of the Diocesan Laborer Priests and had begun to work in the diocese of Barcelona. From what they had heard of this newly ordained priest, the Ferrers thought that he might be able to help them. Fr. Lores reminded Jaime and Mercedes that this young priest was only 25 years old and had no experience with family life and its problems.

The couple responded: "We do not want him to solve our problems; we simply want him to be present and encourage, guide and support us." Well, take him!" Fr. Lores replied. A time for the meeting between Jaime and Mercedes and Fr. Gabriel Calvo was set.

FATHER GABRIEL CALVO

Fr. Gabriel Calvo was born in Barcelona, Spain, on February 21, 1927. He was the first child of Gabriel Calvo Canet and Carmen Garcia-Manrique; they later had another son who died in infancy, and two daughters. Fr. Calvo was raised in the Catholic faith. However, in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, Barcelona was under the control of the Communists; they closed all the churches and burned many of them; all Catholic practices and teachings were forbidden; in the schools the Communist doctrine was taught.

In 1941, when Fr. Calvo was about 14, a deeply significant event occurred in his life. One of his best friends committed suicide. Fr. Calvo sought an answer to his question "Why?" Through his search he was led to the decision to become a priest and work among the youth. He joined the Institute of the Diocesan

Laborer Priests because their principal ministry was to the youth. He entered their seminary in Salamanca, because this group had no seminary of its own in Barcelona. He pursued his studies in philosophy and theology at the University of Salamanca.

During his time in Salamanca the foundation for Gabriel's spirituality was shaped. He read about a method of spirituality that was used by the Belgian priest, Monsignor Cardijn, in his "Jeunesse Ouvriers Chretienne" (J.O.C. [Young Christian Workers]), a movement for the youth. He now looks back and says he was "in love" with its methodology: "to see, to judge and to act." For him this method of spirituality did not divorce or separate faith and life, but rather, it joined and united the Bible with reality. He asserts that for him this methodology established an honest and profound relationship between faith and life, belief and deeds. Fr. Calvo made this his method of prayer. During those years in Salamanca Fr. Calvo was working with members of the J.O.C. movement in that city. To lead the youth in this method he experienced the training courses in the method and in this way intensified and deepened its practice in his own life.

THE GREAT CALL OF POPE PIUS XII

A few months before his ordination to the priesthood Fr. Calvo learned about Pius XII's great call which challenged and set him "on fire." The Pope, in an exhortation on the eve of the centenary of the Apparition of Mary at Lourdes in France (February 11, 1952), issued "a cry of alarm" because the world was changing "without knowing about the ways which may bring souls and bodies, the good and bad, civilizations and people into chaos!" The Pope stated that before God, he and the Church had the responsibility "to undertake everything to save the human race from such tremendous misfortune." The following words of the Pope became branded in Fr. Calvo's mind and continue to burn within his soul even to this day.

“IT IS NECESSARY THAT EACH OF THE FAITHFUL, EACH MAN AND WOMAN OF GOOD WILL, EXAMINE WITH THE RESOLUTION OF THE TRANSCENDENTAL MOMENTS OF HUMAN HISTORY, WHAT EACH CAN AND MUST DO AS ONE’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE SAVING WORK OF GOD, IN HELPING THE WORLD OF TODAY WHICH IS GOING TO RUIN.

“The persistence of such a general condition, which we have no doubt to call explosive at every instant, must not be allowed to go unshaken. Its origin must be looked for in the religious lukewarmness of so many, in the low moral level of the private and public life. Its source must be looked for also in the intoxication of simple souls. They are given poison, so to speak, like narcotics, in the pursuance of true liberty. It cannot be permitted that good people, contemplating with crossed arms a devastating future, end in the same rut.

“Today the time has arrived, beloved sons and daughters, . . .to take definitive steps; . . .it is the hour at which all good peoples, all those who are concerned about the destinies of the world are to unite and hold their line; “It is the hour of rising from sleep for our salvation is near.” (Rom. 13:11)

“IT IS A WHOLE WORLD THAT NEEDS TO BE REMADE FROM ITS FOUNDATION, PRECISELY THAT MEANS TO BE TRANSFORMED FROM THE JUNGLE (SAVAGE) TO THE HUMAN, AND FROM THE HUMAN TO THE DIVINE, WHICH MEANS ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD. MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ARE CRYING OUT FOR A CHANGE OF DIRECTION. . .

“Receive this holy charge with a noble spirit of surrender; recognize it as a call from God and as a worthy rule of life; this holy charge, which your shepherd and Father is entrusting to you, is to launch a powerful re-awakening of ideas and words.

“TO REAWAKEN DEMANDS OF ALL A TOTAL RENOVATION OF CHRISTIAN LIFE THAT DEFENDS MORAL VALUES. IT REQUIRES THE RENEWAL OF EACH AND EVERY PERSON WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF CALLING, BOTH CLERGY AND LAITY, AUTHORITIES, FAMILIES AND ASSOCIATIONS.

“Keep very clear, beloved sons and daughters, that the root of the present evils and of the regrettable consequences is not, as in earlier times of Christianity, in the pagan religions, and their invincible ignorance of the eternal destiny of mankind or the real way in order to gain it; it is much more in the insensibility of the spirit, in the slovenliness of the will and in the coldness of the heart.

“. . . The action to which we today call the pastors and faithful must be a reflection of God, that is, it must be enlightening and unifying, generous and amiable. . . Let people of good will be invited to this action; let these same offer themselves spontaneously. Let their rule be the unconditional faithfulness to the person of Jesus Christ; that His work be revealed as an active element in the grandiose current that God will move and guide by means of his ministers.

“There are fervent souls who eagerly await to be called; let their impatient longing be shown the vast field which has to be broken up. There are others, the sleepy, who are ready to awake; others, the fainthearted, who

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must be encouraged; and others, the confused, who will have to be guided. All are asked that they adapt themselves effectively, that they be used with diligence, that their productiveness of work correspond to the urgent necessity of defense, of conquest and of positive reconstruction..." (translation *mine*)

These words of the Pope, particularly, "that each person was to re-examine with a courage worthy of the transcendental moments of human history, what each can and ought to do personally, as one's contribution to the saving power of God," were burning with great intensity within Gabriel as he approached his ordination day, May 31, 1952, to begin his priestly ministry. He understood the Pope to be calling him to "something." He prayed for guidance, openness and generosity of heart. He was looking for the "signs of the times" to know how he would be able to fulfill this call of the Pope.

FR. CALVO MEETS WITH JAIME AND MERCEDES FERRER

After his ordination Fr. Calvo was assigned as chaplain to the secondary school for boys directed by the Christian Brothers of De la Salle in Barcelona. He was also spiritual adviser at a school for girls directed by the Theresien Sisters. He promoted catechesis at "Barceloneta" a poor neighborhood near the sea where there were shelters called "barracas."

In the month of October (1952) Fr. Calvo met Jaime and Mercedes through his General Superior, Fr. Lores. He knocked on Gabriel's door and said: "Gabriel, I want you to meet Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer who are friends of mine. Please, listen to them and say "yes" to whatever they ask of you."

Fr. Calvo asked them: "What can I do for you?"

Jaime and Mercedes made known their need and desire to grow together spiritually as a couple in and with God and the Church in and through their marital union. They then added: “We need you to be our Spiritual Mentor.” Fr. Calvo asked “Whose?” “Certainly ours, as a married couple,” they responded.

At the moment Fr. Calvo felt a little uneasy and somewhat at a loss. To him this was a strange request for, at the time, everywhere in the Church spirituality was believed to be something private and individual; therefore, spiritual direction was for the individual. His life and training in the seminary had focused on the individual and not on couples and families. He openly explained to them his inner restlessness. They understood his hesitation but insisted that a spirituality for couples was a necessity within the Church. They pointed out to him the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:6: “What God has joined together, man must not separate!” “Do you not see,” the couple exclaimed, “that this is God’s plan and we want to live according to it. Please help us!”

At this juncture the message of Pius XII flashed into his mind. Perhaps this was the “sign of the time” for which he was praying. He went to his room to fetch the Pope’s speech “Call For Action” to share it with Mercedes and Jaime. As they read the message together, their hearts were set afire. Mercedes pointed out the part of the passage where the Pope spoke of **FAMILIES** specifically and exclaimed: “Do you not see? The Pope is calling **FAMILIES**. We want to be one of these families. We have been longing for a long time to live and serve the Lord as a married couple. But to do this, we need you!”

Fr. Calvo replied: “But how can I help you? I honestly do not know. I came into the priesthood with the idea that young people are the key for the transformation of the world and history; and I have been trained to dedicate my priestly ministry to them.”

The Ferrers disagreed with him. “Where do young people come from? They come from families. Families are the future and

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hope of humankind, and we, married couples,” they strongly affirmed, “are the key to every healthy and happy family.”

Jaime and Mercedes persevered in stating their belief that the future and teacher for humanity is the family and that the keystone of the family is the couple. They explained that all the current associations in the Church tended to separate husbands and wives and also parents and their children. This action divided not only the couples but also the family. They believed that if God’s plan for the family as expressed in the Pope’s call was to be heeded, something was needed in the Church to strengthen and deepen the couple relationship with each other for a healthy and strong family life.

Fr. Calvo made known to the couple that he did not know their life. The couple told him: “Come to our home and you will learn about our life.” At that moment Fr. Calvo, through the wisdom, enthusiasm and insistence of Jaime and Mercedes, felt an ebbing of his uneasiness and fears.

He asked them: “Do you know of other married couples who are searching and feel as you do?” Their response was immediate: “Oh, yes! We know dozens of married couples who are looking for a new and different direction for their lives. Fr. Calvo, are you ready to meet them?” He replied: “Yes!”

He then invited Mercedes and Jaime to come with him to the little chapel near his room; together they prayed before the Blessed Sacrament for the Lord’s guidance.

Whenever Fr. Calvo and the Ferrers reflect on these precious moments, they conclude that at this moment the Spirit of the Lord was planting “something” precious in the heart of each of them for the sake of untold numbers of married couples and families. Gabriel had the feeling that all three were experiencing an historically “transcendental moment.” The question was “where was the Lord leading them?”

CHAPTER II

The Generating of the Movement

After the visit with Fr. Calvo the Ferrers contacted their relatives, friends and neighbors whom they knew were not fully satisfied with belonging to ecclesial organizations designed either for men alone or women alone and were seeking “something” for couples. These couples were dreaming of and desiring “something” which would help them grow as married couples. Five couples who played and worked together -- Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer-Escola, Ricardo and Rosario Ferrer-Espona, Jaime and Anita Plana-Rodriguez, Ignacio and Carmen Renom-Plana and Alberto and Maria Casanellas-Bassols -- came to the first meeting held at Gabriel’s residence in late September or early October 1952. Before the next meeting these couples invited other couples, so at the second meeting they had doubled, and within a few meetings there were twenty couples. This was too many for a single group and so they divided into two groups. The Ricarts and the Renoms say: “All of us felt something deep within us that pushed us to respond to the invitation to come to the meetings.” “As a married couple,” they add, “we were thirsting for something to deepen our relationship with each other and as a couple with God.”

THE INFLUENCE OF THE “CALL” OF POPE PIUS XII

Through the aforementioned address of Pius XII each of these couples believed they heard a “call” to a mission both within the Church and from it to the world; they were ready to respond. Their answer to the “call to action” of Pope Pius XII was to be couples endeavoring to transform themselves and their own families “according to the mind and heart of God” and through their family life, other families, in order to bring about a “better world.” They wanted “to contribute to the saving power of God in

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order to help a world which was started . . . on its way to ruin.” These couples responded to the call of the Pope not only “with a noble spirit of dedication, recognizing it as a call from God and as a worthy rule of life,” but also with a conviction that the Pope was entrusting to them personally this holy charge “to launch a mighty re-awakening of thought and action.” This reawakening, they understood and concluded, was for the total improvement of Christian life and it had to begin with the couple and the family, that is, with them. To answer the Pope’s call for renewal they accepted his challenge. They looked for a way to live their married and family life according to the mind and plan of God.

In order for them and their families to live God’s plan and to discover their true identities, these married couples realized through their meetings that they first had to know God’s teachings and that of His Church about marriage as a Sacrament. Then, they also had to discover to what mission God, through the Church, was calling them as couples, parents and families. In this way the couples believed they could fulfill their part in the “call” of the Pope to transform the world. The couples, according to Mercedes, believed that answering the Pope’s call would bring about a “better world.” The call of Pius XII to “reconstruct the world from its foundations” took root in the rich soil of these couples’ hearts and wills. The “voice of alarm” of the Pope, which called specifically for the family among other institutions, galvanized a small humble group of couples in Spain. They were eager and enthused to learn and discover the true identity of their marriage in God’s plan and to reach out to other married couples.

THE FIRST MEETINGS

These couples began to meet regularly at Fr. Calvo’s residence. The residence was chosen in order to take advantage of the Most Blessed Sacrament. (The Blessed Sacrament is the Sacrament of the Eucharist reserved in the tabernacle under the

form of bread. It is the specially real, true and living presence of Christ Jesus in the world.) The couples and Fr. Calvo agreed that the purpose of their meetings was “to get together to pray and to study marriage spirituality and to share their own lived experiences, that is, their “vivencias.” In this way they believed they would discover who they were and their place as married couples in the plan of God; they would also discover ways to help and encourage each other to live according to God’s will, as made known especially through His Word. In the beginning these meetings had no set plan or method, but gradually one emerged.

After many months the couples with Fr. Calvo agreed that in order to know and to live the doctrine and teachings of God and the Church concerning marriage and the family, they needed to study and analyze together the recent pontifical documents referring to marriage and the family. The documents of Pius XI and Pius XII on marriage, especially the latter’s “Discourses to the Newlyweds (1939-1943)” became the sources for this study. Each couple procured a copy of these “Discourses” of Pope Pius XII.

Prior to each general meeting each couple received information on a topic chosen from these “Discourses” with an appropriate passage of Scripture. Each of the couples prepared at home for the general meeting by living through four steps. First, a couple would read the assigned Scripture together and share on what it said to each of them. Second, in the light of that Scripture each spouse reflected alone on the questions of the assigned topic; each then wrote his or her thoughts from this personal reflection; third, the spouses came together to exchange and talk about their reflection and the changes God was calling them to make in their married and family life; and fourth, each couple wrote a common testimony about their lived experience of this assignment. This summary was to be shared later with the other couples at the general meeting.

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These general meetings came to be held every two weeks. Each meeting began with prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. The prayer time before the Blessed Sacrament, they believed, was essential to accomplish the goal of the meeting and therefore of their lives. The prayer before the Blessed Sacrament made the relationship with Jesus a living and true reality; each person could speak to the Lord with greater openness and feel His Spirit in the community of couples. During this time of prayer the couples invited Jesus, the Lord, to be with them during their meeting. After the time for prayer, the couples moved to another room where each couple then shared their testimony with the other couples. Dialogue ensued among the couples concerning what they heard from each other. Before leaving the meeting each couple would make an honest and realistic commitment as a couple to some action at home. It was through this methodology that the couples sought to renew, transform and deepen their couple relationship and family life "according to the heart of God." In this manner the methodology of "observe, judge and act" of Cardijn was adopted by these couples.

The "Discourses of Pope Pius XII" became the source book, or the "textbook" for their study of married and family spirituality. God's word gave them the light, energy and the Spirit for their renewal according to the heart of God." The family relationships within the home was the place where each couple lived out their agreed to actions. It was in and through the family environment the couple grew together "in the Lord," that is, in accord with God's plan for marriage.

MORE COUPLES JOIN THIS WAY OF LIFE

Because these couples had as their goal to reach out to other couples, they began to invite to their prayerful sharings other married couples who were similarly thirsting for a definite marriage spirituality. With the increase in the number of couples

coming to these meetings, it was necessary to form new groups. A group was composed of eight to ten couples; each group had to find a priest and a meeting place with a little Chapel nearby. All the groups followed the way and method of the original groups. These sharing groups began to refer to themselves as “Team.” As the number of Teams increased, the couples saw the necessity for all of them to meet together to connect and interrelate so to mutually enrich each other and to insure that they walk in the same spirit and direction. The meetings for all the Teams were held every four to six weeks; these meetings were called “retreats.” With the growth of the number of Teams, two priests, Frs. Meliton Carrillo and Juan Pintó, joined and assisted Fr. Calvo.

Through the monthly retreats the Teams took another important step. They decided to open them to any married couple whether they intended to join a Team or not. An “ecclesial team,” that is, a team composed of a married couple and a priest, led each retreat. During the day or afternoon of “retreat,” usually held in a small hall or auditorium, the couples reflected on marriage and family life. The topics were based mainly on the talks and themes from the aforementioned “Discourses” of Pius XII. The topics included the Sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony), conjugal fidelity, conjugal chastity, obedience, sacrifice, mutual confidence, marital intimacy, couple prayer, spiritual help to each other, education of the children, work, and other subjects of married life. The aim was to help each couple deepen, strengthen and enliven their marriage according to the mind and heart of God in the light of God’s Word. Through these means married couples, together with the priests, came to understand married and family life as a way to holiness.

CHURCH APPROVAL

This new and exciting phenomenon for married couples began to spread throughout the diocese of Barcelona. The original couples

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and Fr. Calvo desired to have the approval of the Church for their “Movement.” (“Movement” here and throughout this booklet means a course directed by the Holy Spirit; it does not denote an organization.) Fr. Lores was asked to approach the Archbishop for a formal ecclesiastical approval. The Archbishop, Monsignor Gregorio Modrego, was concerned about this “new thing” in his diocese; he had contacted Fr. José Casals, Director of DLP’s Residence at 39 Modolell Street. The basis of the Archbishop’s concern was the rumors of problems associated with such marital movements. Because of these rumors the Archbishop became wary of this new couple “phenomenon” in his diocese. The Archbishop, when he met with Fr. Lores, confided to him that the “Team-meetings” might be dangerous both for couples and priests. He suggested that it might be prudent to discontinue the Team-meetings. Fr. Lores told the Archbishop that if he told the couples to stop these meetings, the couples would obey.

The Bishop through Fr. Lores requested the couples not to meet as Teams until further notice. The couples, deeply disappointed and also exasperated and angry, reluctantly obeyed. Beginning in March 1953 no meetings of the Teams took place. The monthly “retreats,” however, were permitted to continue. Shortly after this meeting and the couple’s compliance with the Archbishop’s request, he became very sick. The couples did not know whether the ban would ever be lifted. They resorted to prayer and continued to hold the monthly “retreats.”

About six months later and after the Archbishop had recovered from his sickness, Fr. Calvo, his Superior and three couples went to tell the Archbishop the desire couples had to live their married life as couples “in the Lord,” and also to explain this new “phenomenon” in his diocese. The Archbishop listened very attentively and openly, especially to the couples. Afterward, the Archbishop told them he was ready to approve and bless the “Movement,” but before he could do that, they needed to have a name. “Due to the laws of the Church,” he explained, “I cannot

authorize any group or movement that does not have a formal name.”

Fr. Calvo, his Superior and the couples felt as if they were flying as they came out of the episcopal residence, yet at the same time they were concerned about the demand of the Bishop that they needed a name to gain official approval. Neither the couples nor Fr. Calvo were keen on labels; in fact, as Fr. Calvo phrases it even today: “From the very beginning we were allergic to names and labels.” They did not want to be labeled and become another Church organization. They preferred to be an open and free “movement of the Spirit of God for service to marriage and the family.”

Some of the members of the Institute of Diocesan Laborer Priests suggested the Teams take a name that linked the couples to their Institute. Fr. Calvo was very much opposed to such a linkage because the Teams would lose their anonymity as a group solely meant for and led by married couples. After much praying and sharing they chose the name: “Matrimonial Teams for a Better World.” In November 1953 the Bishop formally gave his approval to these couples. The Team-meetings were fully reinstated.

The growth of the “Movement” was constant and continual as couples strove to illumine their married and family life with the light of basic Christian truths. The “Matrimonial Teams for a Better World” based each of their marriages on a profound religious and sacramental understanding of the meaning of marriage. They incorporated this understanding into their marital relationship as lived in and through their daily family life. A most important ingredient discovered by the Spanish couples for this way of life was “mutual confiding” between the husband and wife. “Mutual confiding” was the master key for unlocking the door to live married life according to the plan of God.

CHAPTER III

Influences of the Spanish Matrimonial Teams

The “Matrimonial Teams for a Better World” hoped primarily to form and enrich their growth in Marriage Spirituality. For this end the original couples, along with Fr. Calvo as their chaplain, desired to experience as many other movements as possible. All of these experiences influenced in some way the origin, growth and spirit of the couples and the Teams.

TRIPS TO BELGIUM AND PARIS

In 1952 Fr. Calvo visited Belgium to deepen and increase his experience and understanding of the methodology of “observe, judge and act” used by Monsignor Cardijn in the Jeunesse Ouvriers Chretienne (The Young Christian Worker Movement). On this trip he did not meet with Monsignor Cardijn, but the experience helped him to define more clearly and sharply the “observe, judge and act” process for the Teams and “retreat” meetings for the married couples.

In July 1953 Fr. Calvo went to Paris to visit with Msgr. Henri Caffarel and the “Teams of Our Lady.” Monsignor Caffarel had formed groups for married couples in 1947. Each team was composed of four to eight couples and their purpose was, first, growth in the spiritual life of the couple and family through a program of prayer and study; secondly, monthly meetings to give support to couples endeavoring to live a life based on the Gospel; these monthly meetings consisted of a meal and sharing; thirdly, growth in the couple’s intimacy through conjugal prayer and the deeper communication afforded by the obligation, the duty to Sit-Down and dialogue. In hearing from Fr. Calvo about the new couple-experience in Spain, Fr. Caffarel was supportive but not at all interested in becoming linked with it. For his part Fr. Calvo was

impressed with the attempt of Msgr. Caffarel's group to deepen Marriage Spirituality through a stress on the dialogue at the monthly meeting. However, these Teams of Our Lady did not have a particular interest in any other pursuits or missions outside of couple spirituality.

Fr. Calvo returned and explained to the Spanish couples the marriage spirituality of the Paris couples, especially their dialogue. The Spanish couples did not agree about waiting one month between dialogues. They explained that from their experience an ever-present atmosphere of "mutual confiding" between spouses was of the utmost importance. Spouses needed to create an atmosphere of dialogue, for God is speaking to them at all times in and through their on going living experiences. For this spouses needed to develop dialogue as a permanent attitude in their marriage and not a duty. The Spanish couples also believed that Pope Pius XII called each family to "remake the world from its foundation." The Spanish couples believed part of living this was their service to married couples and families through the "retreats."

THE SPANISH MATRIMONIAL TEAMS AND THE BETTER WORLD MOVEMENT

Two experiences which had a momentous and essential effect on the development and direction of the Matrimonial Teams were the "Essercitazioni per un Mondo Migliore" (Training for a Better World) of Fr. Ricardo Lombardi, S.J. and the "Oasis Movement" of Fr. Virginio Rotondi, S.J. These, together with the audience with Pope Pius XII in August 1958, had an immeasurable impact on the newborn "Movement" in Spain.

Fr. Calvo, a few months after his Ordination but before November of 1952, read in the Church publication, *Ecclesia*, that a foundation had been established by Fr. Ricardo Lombardi, S.J. at Mondragone, Italy. The article indicated that Fr. Lombardi believed that "the call" of Pope Pius XII on February 10, 1952 was

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something special. At first Fr. Lombardi offered himself personally to spread “the call” throughout the world. He traveled to many cities not only in Italy but also in France and Germany. Everywhere he went, crowds came to listen to him. Yet he realized that although speaking to crowds was good, it was far more important to touch the mind, heart and soul of leaders within the Church. For this reason, the article pointed out, Fr. Lombardi had established a Center for the “Essercitazioni per un Mondo Migliore” at Mondragone, a village near Castelgandolfo, the summer residence for the Pope. The basis of the training offered to Church leaders was the encyclical “*Mystici Corporis*” (*The Mystical Body*), which the Pope had issued June 23, 1943. Fr. Lombardi’s aim was to inflame and excite as well as inspire and deepen in the minds, hearts and souls of leaders of the Church, an understanding of how to live in a real way the doctrine put forth in this encyclical.

Through the article Fr. Calvo became eager to deepen himself and perhaps help the couples to deepen themselves in the doctrine, essence, and spirit of this encyclical of Pius XII. He told the Ferrers of his desire. They wholeheartedly supported and encouraged him to go to Mondragone to experience the Courses of the Training. They believed that all current movements in the Church needed to be experienced, if the Matrimonial teams for a Better World were to contribute to the development of marriage and family spirituality.

This experience of Fr. Calvo’s brought two important results. First, Fr. Calvo was greatly influenced by one of the basic teachings of the encyclical: **unity and openness**. In reflecting on this Fr. Calvo believed that unity and openness had to go together. The result was the phrase: **united to be open**. The Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, and each part belonging to it, was to be united and open. Each part had to be united to the Body to be open. If any part were not open, it could not be truly united to the Body, the Church. And to be open that part must necessarily be united with the rest of the Body. The basic vision of each part of

the Body was to be the world and not their part or the Body itself. Any movement, then, which was joined to the Mystical Body, was to be open to the world and act as a bridge between the Mystical Body itself, the Church, and the world.

This principle, “united to be open,” became very deeply rooted in Fr. Calvo’s thinking and consciousness. He related this teaching to the Sacrament of Marriage. A man and woman are united as a couple in, through and with Christ and are part of the Mystical Body, the Church, as a couple; because of this the couple must be open and act as a bridge to the world. To be truly open the couple would have to be careful to remain united as couple to the Body. And, to live continually in this way required that the couple continually review and revise their relationship as a couple, and as a couple in and with the Mystical Body.

Second, Fr. Calvo desired that the Spanish couples of the Teams experience the “Essercitazioni” precisely because of this doctrine of **“unity and openness.”** It would be so easy for a couple to give in to the tendency to focus too much on themselves and/or a movement; the vision of the couple to fulfill “the call” of Pope Pius XII must be the world outside themselves. Each Matrimonial Team couple needed to understand that they must be united in order to be open. A couple is not married solely for themselves and their own family, but in and through their couple and family unity they must be a bridge from the Mystical Body to other couples and families in the world. Fr. Calvo believed that this teaching would be deepened and more enlivened among the Matrimonial Team couples, if they experienced the Essercitazioni in its international environment, that is at Mondragone, Italy.

Moved by these ideas Fr. Calvo approached Fr. Lombardi concerning the role of couples and families “in the remaking of the world.” Fr. Calvo remembered his first meeting with the Ferrers who had pointed out the reference of the Pope to the “re-awakening of families” as well as others. At the time of this

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conversation Fr. Lombardi was not convinced that couples and families should be invited to the Center. He saw the family secure under the leadership of the Church and as an object of evangelization but not necessarily as being itself an evangelizer. According to Fr. Calvo, Fr. Lombardi at this time did not seem to be aware of the leadership role of couples and families in Spain, France, South America and the United States.

When Fr. Calvo returned to Spain, he explained to the couples and Fr. Lores that Fr. Lombardi was not too enthusiastic about couples and families making this training to be evangelizers. Fr. Lores told Fr. Calvo and the couples not to be concerned about that and to continue with their work. Fr. Calvo and the couples prayerfully left the situation in God's loving hands..

Fr. Lores, as General Superior of D.L.P., had a very close relationship with many bishops in the Spanish hierarchy. This also was due to a Spanish college in Rome which was established by Blessed Manuel Domingo y Sol, the founder of the Diocesan Laborer Priests. Many of the Bishops of Spain had studied at this college during their seminary training.



Fr. Ricardo Lombardi, S.J., founder of the Better World movement (on left) with Fr. Gabriel Calvo, founder of Marriage Encounter at Barcelona Airport.

THE FOUNDING OF A “BETTER WORLD” CENTER IN SPAIN

Some Spanish bishops at this time were seeking the opportunity to found the “Better World Movement” in their own respective dioceses and in time to establish a Center in Spain. These Bishops wanted to bring the spirit enkindled through the Essercitazioni into their respective dioceses.

The Spanish Bishops invited Fr. Lombardi to Spain. On this trip Fr. Lombardi visited Madrid and while there Fr. Lombardi was asked to establish a Center for the “Better World Movement” in Spain. The Catholic Action group in Madrid offered him a place at La Granja de San Ildefonso, a place near Segovia. This would become the Center for the “Better World Movement” in Spain. The directors of the Center were Fr. Federico Bellido and Juan Alonso Vega.

The Ferrers and the Ricarts believed that couples and families could also be evangelizers and thereby contribute substantially to bringing about the “better world” called for by the Pope in his message of 1952. The couples approached Fr. Bellido to pursue whether courses could be given for married couples. He



*Spanish couples travel to “Better World” center for training.
Rocca de Papa, Rome, Italy*

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inquired how it could be done for couples since the Training was intended for individuals. These couples offered to give a course for couples at La Granja. Fr. Bellido agreed but firmly believed that these couples must first experience the Course of Training at the International Center at Mondragone. The couples consented.

In July 1956 twenty-two married couples from the “Matrimonial Teams for a Better World” went by bus and two cars to Mondragone with the intention of capturing and assimilating the vision that the training offered. They hoped through this to be able to give the training to married couples in Spain. The Team couples were open to experience a truly world vision which incorporated the entire Church. They understood how easy it would be for them to become cabined within their own movement and nearsighted in their vision. Fr. Lombardi, Director for the Better World Center, with his ecclesial team, presented to the “Matrimonial Team of Married Couples and Priests” the “Great Call of Pius XII For a Better World,” based on the Encyclical of “The Mystical Body of Christ.”

THE OASIS MOVEMENT

While at the Center for a Better World the couples came into contact with another movement whose Center was nearby. Fr. Virginio Rotondi, S.J., was a close friend and collaborator with Fr. Lombardi when the latter began the “Better World Movement.” Through his preaching Fr. Rotondi had also attracted crowds, among whom were many young people. He believed that the Pope’s call for a “better world” must also include young people. So, for these young people he founded the “Oasis Movement.” The name “Oasis” came from the situation of the youths who lived in a world which, in spiritual matters, was like a desert. The movement through its course was like an oasis in a desert which nourished the youths with the spiritual necessities for living life more deeply. After the youths experienced the course of this movement, they

pledged to live out a “yes” to all God asked of them, especially in sexual matters. The foundation for this response was Mary’s whole-hearted response of “Yes” to the request of the Father through the Angel Gabriel to become the Mother of His Son. In imitation of Mary’s “spirit of yes,” each youth voluntarily took a temporary promise to live a life of chastity.

The “spirit of yes” (in Spanish “clima de si”) deeply penetrated into the mind and hearts of the Spanish couples. Today the Spanish couples declare that this Oasis movement and its expression “clima de si” left “a deep impression, like a footprint, on the spiritual discipline of the married couples and the orientation of the Matrimonial Teams.” For the couples who made the experience with Fr. Rotondi the saying of “yes” to the Lord, especially to the person of Jesus, became one of the most spiritually significant attitudes in their lives. The phrase became symbolic for the spirit of generosity needed to do all that God would ask of them. This outlook was adopted by all the Spanish couples of the movement. According to Ignacio Renom this phrase became the “rule” of the lives of the Teams and those who joined later.

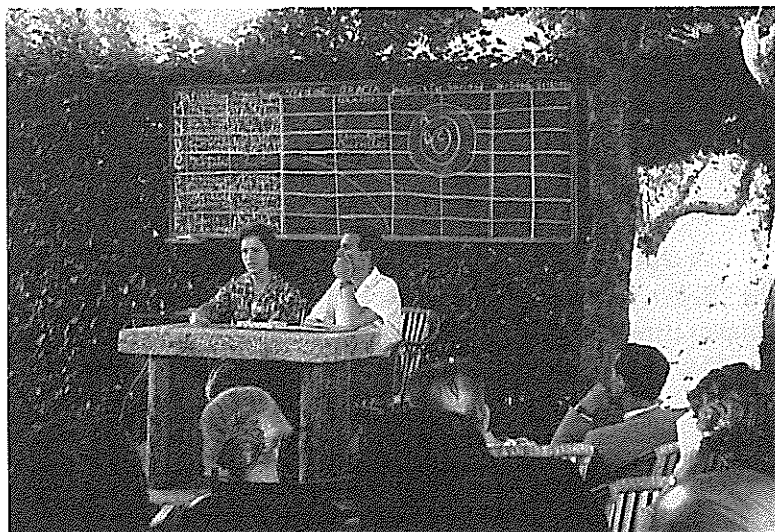
THE INFLUENCE OF THE BETTER WORLD MOVEMENT

A closer relationship of the Matrimonial Team couples with the “Better World Movement” developed in June 1957 when four couples experienced the first Course at La Granja. José Ramon and Elena Ricart Carratala were the prime movers for the Better World Movement, not only for the Matrimonial Team couples to go to Segovia, but also for Spanish couples to go to the International Center which had moved to Rocca di Papa. Through José and Elena the Training Course was offered frequently and regularly at Segovia for “The Matrimonial Teams for a Better World.” This Course changed the attitude among the Matrimonial Team couples as more and more couples began to learn and live

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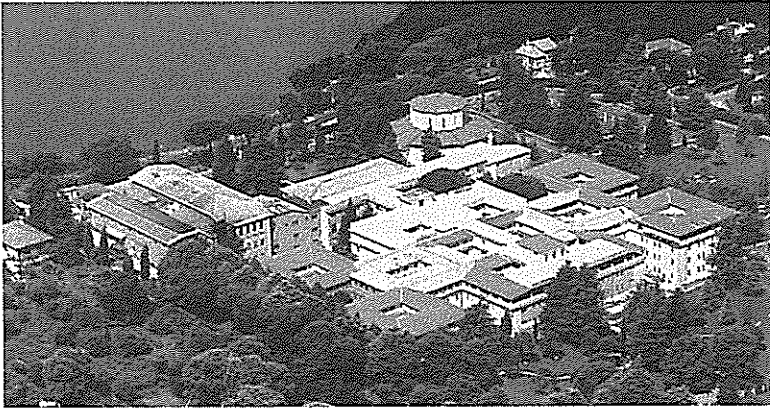
more deeply the doctrine “to be united to be open.” This relationship with the “Better World Movement” gave a deep and well-grounded impetus and spirit of openness for the Matrimonial Teams.

The fruits and benefits of the Better World Movement’s spirit began to show in the Matrimonial Teams. The hope, confidence, generosity and love of the couples and priests of Barcelona influenced couples from other regions of the Spanish peninsula and islands. These latter couples began to visit their Bishops and request that groups of “Matrimonial Teams for a Better World” be formed in their respective dioceses. The Barcelona Matrimonial Teams began to go to dioceses where the Bishops were inviting them. By the end of 1957 the growth and vision of “The Matrimonial Teams for a Better World” was slowly spreading into many dioceses in Spain.



José Ramon and Elena Ricart Carratala present “Better World” training at La Granja in Spain.

Another influence of the “Better World Movement” on the Team couples was their name change. The leaders of the “Matrimonial Teams for a Better World” thought it best that the group in Spain change their name in order to avoid confusion because of the similarity of names. The two movements were totally independent of each other. During the course of the “Ejercitaciones” (the Spanish word for the Italian “Essercitazioni”) in November 1957 the Ferrers proposed to the directors of La Granja that the name of the Spanish Matrimonial Movement needed to be changed. The directors, Federico Bellido and Juan Alonso Vega, were in total agreement with the proposal and most thankful to the Spanish couples. The Spanish couples adopted the name “Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII.” They took this name because Pius XII had influenced their foundation and his words were foundation for their movement to help bring about a better world. According to Jaime Ferrer evidence shows that the Matrimonial Teams were using this name in September 1957; this new name began to be used in all their writings beginning on January 1, 1958. The Archbishop of Barcelona approved the name change on May 18th of that year.



Rocca Di Papa Center For "The Better World Movement"

CHAPTER IV

The Trip to Rocca Di Papa in 1958

In March 1958 the Matrimonial Teams were multiplying in number and some changes were taking place. As these Matrimonial Teams became more present in other areas of Spain, the movement was becoming more national. Fr. Calvo was nominated the National Chaplain and the Ferrers became the National Coordinating Couple for the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII. In April this National Team began to visit other diocesan Teams.

The Ferrers and Fr. Calvo also desired to promote and strengthen unity among the 19 different groups concerned with marriage and family life. They proposed a national gathering in June in Madrid for the leadership of these groups. At this meeting the Ferrers and Fr. Calvo suggested that all the groups ought to have a united *raison d'être* and vision. To accomplish this they suggested that all couples and priests, especially the leadership of

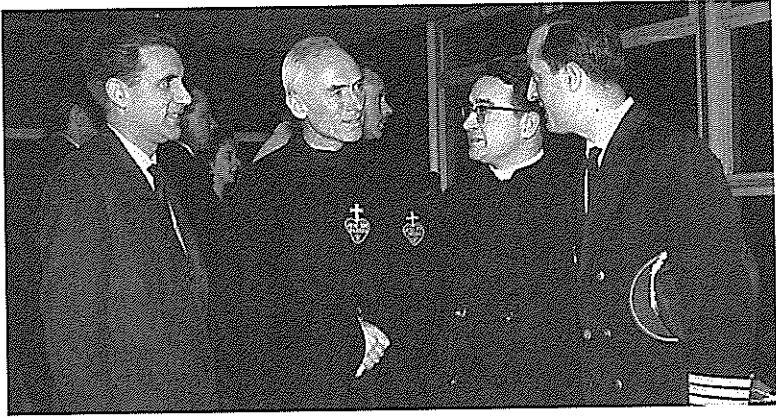
each organization, experience the “Ejercitaciones por un mundo mayor” at La Granja; all groups, except Teams of Our Lady, agreed. Within a short period of time the first national Training for these organizations involved in the ministry to couples and families in Spain was held at La Granja.

THE DECISION FOR THE TRIP TO ROCCA DI PAPA

The “Training for the Better World” at La Granja, which had been going on for a year and a half, was very beneficial to all the organizations and especially to the Matrimonial Teams. This Training was a great support for the married and family apostolate in Spain. However Fr. Calvo and the Ferrers believed that the experience at La Granja was limited because it was only national and could not give a truly world-view experience. A more international environment and experience would give their Matrimonial Teams and the other matrimonial groups in Spain a more broadening and penetrating grasp of the mission of each of their own movements and the Church, as well as getting in touch with the original roots of the Better World Movement. Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII, and couples and priests from other organizations who ministered to couples and families, joined to experience a training at Rocca di Papa in August 1958. Included in their desires and plans was a private audience with Pope Pius XII, who in the summer months lived at Castelgandolfo which was in the vicinity of Rocca di Papa.

The decision to go in August of 1958 was prompted by the announcement that at the Pius XII International Center for the Better World Movement at Rocca di Papa a new and totally different course was to be offered between August 6th and 13th. It was to be directed by the leader at the Center, Fr. Lombardi, S.J. and his assistants, by Fr. Virginio Rotondi, S.J. and Juan Pablo Paludet, a Franciscan. A prerequisite for attending this training was that the

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Fr. Richards (with the Cronx Heart) Fr. Calvo - José R. Ricart (left) Captain of the Plase (right)

married couples had to have experienced the trainings at La Granja. For practical reasons, one of which was language, this special course was limited to Spanish speaking couples and their chaplains.

The Ferrers, Fr. Calvo and the couples were strengthened in their decision through a visit to Spain in May 1958 by Fr. Richards and three couples from Uruguay. Fr. Richards, a Passionist priest ministering in Latin America, had formed there an association of married couples which they named the Christian Family Movement. This Team had come to Rome on the occasion of the Second Congress of the Secular Apostolate. At that time they had made personal contact with the Movement for a Better World and probably heard about the Spanish couples. A representation of the Christian Family Movement in South America was also invited to attend the August Exercises at Rocca di Papa. They decided to visit the Spanish couples.

By the end of May the Spanish couples began to prepare for this trip which would become very important for their future

orientation. The couples, especially those who planned to go, began an intensified living of their spiritual life. They formed a strong prayer chain; they placed in the hands of God the direction of the undertaking, the fruit of the Course at Rocca di Papa and the perseverance needed to fulfill the resolution made by each couple as well as those adopted as a community.

THE TRIP TO ROCCA DI PAPA

(The following information about the preparation before and the trip itself, as well as the activities at Rocca di Papa, is taken from a newspaper article written by Jose Ramon Ricart and his wife Elena who were participants. The article appeared on the 19th and 20th of September, 1958, in the Barcelona newspaper.)

Many couples, some of whom were not making the trip, organized and worked proficiently and tirelessly to overcome the burdens and difficulties which such an undertaking entailed. These couples helped to obtain the necessary documents, to procure the necessary permission for absence from work, to place the children among relatives and friends. Any financial problems which might deny the opportunity to a couple desiring to go were taken care of through the generosity of others.

The group was composed of 100 couples, 7 priests and a few children between the ages of seven and fifteen, as well as two babies who needed their mothers. The couples represented the different associations of marriage and family life, though most of them were from the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII. The couples came from various cities of Spain — Alfara, Avila, Barcelona, Bilbao, Gerona, Haro, Lerida, Mallorca, Manresa, Murcia, Pamplona, San Sadurni, Segovia, Valencia and Zaragoza. The group, praying at the Basilica of Our Lady of Mercy, Patron of Barcelona, left the city by train at 4:30 P.M. on August 4th.

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On the trip the group prayed every hour for a special intention. At each hour a member of the group was chosen to go through the train with a bell and to tell the others the intention of the prayer for that hour. The group was to pray a *Hail Mary* in honor of Our Lady for that particular intention. This action edified other passengers. Also during the trip, now and again four or five couples held “meetings,” following the method used at the “team meetings.”

On their arrival in Rome the opportunity was given to those couples who had never been to Rome to remain there a couple of days for sightseeing. The others traveled by two motor coaches to Rocca di Papa where they arrived at midnight. They enjoyed the hospitality and cordiality of the staff at the Center. Their spirits were high with expectation and the fruit they foresaw from this pilgrimage.

Before leaving Spain the couples had been told that the Pope himself, although he was ill, would definitely receive them in a private audience. This expectation and confirmation of the private audience had increased the efforts and the sacrifices which many had made in order to make the trip. Besides, many of the Bishops of the participants, realizing the importance of the “Essercitazioni” and of the audience with the Holy Father, wrote letters approving and blessing the purpose of the trip. By this action the Bishops of Spain showed with what caring interest they supported the movements of family renewal. The couples, on the other hand, felt a certain degree of responsibility for the fruitful outcome of the “Essercitazioni” which they were to experience; they were also sure that the private audience with the Holy Father would be of great value for their report to the Bishop and fellow-parishioners of their respective diocese on their return.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT

Soon after their arrival at Rocca di Papa word spread among them that all private papal audiences for special groups had been canceled because the Pope was too ill for private audiences; all groups were to go to the general audience on the following evening, the 6th of August. This cancellation of the private audience was like a gigantic “pothole” in their trip. Feelings of disappointment and frustration were deep. In looking for a solution the couples and priests decided “to pray with faith.” They formed prayer groups for the following day and decided to use the next day for prayer. They prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, begging the Lord for a solution “to this momentous and seemingly insurmountable problem.”

Fr. Virginio Rotondi, the confessor for Pius XII, collected all the letters the couples had brought with them from the Spanish Bishops. He forwarded them to Castelgandolfo so that His Holiness could read them before the General Audience, with the probability that the Pope would explicitly greet the Spanish married couples.

THE GENERAL AUDIENCE ON AUGUST 6TH

By five o'clock on the next afternoon, Wednesday, the entire group was in the courtyard of the papal palace with five thousand other people from different countries — Madagascar, Ireland, Canada, France, Portugal, Germany, Brazil, Italy and other countries. The crowd was so immense that it overflowed outside the courtyard into the public square. The people were singing hymns in their native languages. It was a very warm evening but no one complained as they waited patiently for the Pope.

A little before six o'clock his holiness appeared on the balcony; he was enthusiastically and excitedly greeted with honor and respect. As was the custom at these audiences the Pope

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consoled all, prayed for their needs, blessed joyfully and greeted and encouraged some groups whom he explicitly cited. Among the latter were the Spanish married couples.

During the audience Fr. Rotondi, who had joined the Spanish group, seemed to be disconnected from all that was going on; he appeared to be deep in prayer, seeming only occasionally coming back to reality. At one of these times a Vatican guard who was not in uniform approached him and whispered: "Father, please come up after the audience." Fr. Rotondi replied: "Okay!" and returned to his prayers. All of the Spanish people noticed the interchange and they began to pray, for they felt that something important was happening. The Pope raised his hands, gave his blessing, and left.

There was much joy and singing among the people as they left the courtyard. Fr. Rotondi, without hurrying, ascended the stairs to the interior of the palace. Before supper Fr. Paludet announced: "The Holy Father has granted you an audience and he will speak to you." The audience was scheduled for Sunday, August 10th.



Spanish couples at audience with Pope Pius XII. August 10, 1958

THE COURSE AT ROCCA DI PAPA

Meanwhile the couples began their Course at the Center. The Center had its own atmosphere created by the setting and the symbolic structure of its buildings. It was on a hill overlooking Lake Albano. There were no doors and this symbolized "Openness" and said all were welcome. The Church, dedicated to the Blessed Mother under the title of the Assumption, was twelve sided. The main building on the ground floor had a large auditorium, offices, the dining room and classrooms. Tunnels connected this building with the living quarters which were like wings of the Center. Each room was furnished simply but adequately. Around this building were open-terraces which allowed for conferences in the open air.

The Course for the Spanish and South American couples was not to be the usual "Essercitazioni" because almost all the participants had already experienced a training in the light of the encyclical *Mystici Corporis*. Fr. Lombardi desired to begin this special Training from the point of decision which all had made at the end of their previous Training. He wanted all to discover new horizons and perspectives, but set no specific goals. In other words, all that was known was the starting point and the direction, which was marriage and family spirituality. This type of spirituality had yet to be defined practically and, still more, to be applied to the Christian people at large, albeit some groups existed who enjoyed this spirituality in varying degrees. The final goal, of course, was "the better world," that is, a world living "according to the mind and heart of God." However, the concrete and proximate form of this goal was not predetermined. "The Course was designed as if an assembly had gathered to study the mutual influences which existed between the always renewing action of the Church and the current efforts toward a Christian family revitalization."

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The schedule was quite intense. This was especially the condition during the moments when the married couples interchanged their opinions and experiences. The day began with meditation led by Fr. Paludet whose stimulating and provocative reflection always hit the mark. This was followed by a dialogue Mass. Shortly after breakfast (around 10:30) Fr. Lombardi held the first conference which lasted almost an hour and a half. After this couples from different regions met in groups to exchange their experiences, objectives and difficulties. From after lunch until 5:30 the couples were free to study, review, pray or rest. In the evening there were two conferences, one of which was given by Fr. Lombardi and the other either by him or one of the Spanish priests. This closed the "school" part of the day. The scheduled day ended with praying the Rosary, a short Eucharistic devotion, supper and spontaneous and unplanned entertainment by members of the groups. The day itself ended with a final visit to the Lord to make an examination of the day and night prayers.

THE OASIS MOVEMENT AND THE MARRIED COUPLES

Fr. Rotondi was very interested and curious about the Spanish couples. Fr. Calvo approached him and asked whether these couples could make the Oasis experience and pledge. He told Fr. Rotondi that what he was doing for the youth was something "born in heaven;" Fr. Calvo added that he believed that this experience could also be connected with married life and families. He asked Fr. Rotondi if he thought it were possible for couples to make a commitment similar to that which the youth made. Besides the promise to live chastely, the young people pledged to attend Mass and receive Holy Communion everyday if possible, to meditate for at least ten minutes each day, to confess at least once a month, and to pray the rosary. Many of the Spanish couples were already living this way. Fr. Rotondi was pleased that some of the couples desired to enter into the "Oasis Movement."

Some of the Spanish couples agreed to participate in the “Oasis Movement.” They as married couples believed that the “clima de si” was already a part of the spirituality of many of them. They judged that they could make a similar commitment as the youth of the “Oasis Movement” made. To the married couples, the vow of chastity meant to live their sexual relationship in accord “with God’s plan” as expressed in the teachings of the Church.

Some of the couples took this marital “vow” of conjugal chastity. The couples believed that through this explicit commitment before others they were called to live more genuinely as Christian married couples. Today Fr. Calvo calls that moment of their promise a prophetic action, a heroic action. Jaime and Mercedes, one of the couples who made the promise, in reflecting on that moment said:

“Through this promise we and the other couples expressed our faith in the power, fidelity and fruitfulness of the graces which each couple receives continually throughout married life because of the Sacrament of Marriage. This action gave witness to the generosity of God to the married couple. A couple’s response to God’s generosity cannot be but one of gratitude and generosity in kind.”

Mercedes and Jaime as well as Ricardo and Rosario Ferrer, the brother and sister-in-law of Jaime, and others as well, explain that a deep spiritual union between couples who live according to God’s plan for marriage brings deeply rooted, intense and profound joy and fruitfulness to both couple- and family-living. This, they said, can only be experienced through a commitment to generosity.

CHAPTER V

The Private Audience with Pope Pius XII and the “FAC” Movement

At Rocca di Papa very early on Sunday morning, August 10th, the Spanish couples assisted at Mass; the priests who were present for the Course celebrated Mass as well. After breakfast, the loudspeakers repeatedly reminded them of the necessity to leave by 8:30 A.M. for the private papal audience at Castelgandolfo. Two buses which belonged to the Center and several private cars were waiting at Center’s entrance to transfer all as quickly as possible. As the first couples congregated in the lobby one could feel the excitement for the specialness of the day. There was an air of lightheartedness among them as they mutually admired each other’s stylish look. This was especially true concerning the women. One husband remarked: “Every time I look for my wife, I see nothing but the identical black of the women, all of whom have grown a couple of inches.”

The trip from the Center to Castelgandolfo along the banks of the lake was short; the sun was shining brightly and the morning air thoroughly refreshing. Father Lombardi arrived in a small car with two companions, Don Casale and Mari-Carmen, a missionary who worked as the Spanish secretary for the Better World Movement; it was no surprise that she had come; she had been the guardian angel of the Course; she was the superior of the Pius XII Center at La Granja until 1957. There she saw the first fruits that the ideology and self-discipline of the “Better World Movement” produced within the heart of the married couples. On their arrival at Castelgandolfo they entered the Papal residence and were led by one of the attendants along several corridors and through many rooms until they came to a room with a closed door. There they waited several minutes with great expectancy until a guide told Fr.

Lombardi to have the group enter the room behind the closed doors. The couples took the seats in the back of the room, and left the front seats vacant.

Fr. Lombardi asked the couples representing the different regions to occupy the front seats, and the first place was offered to the delegates of the Christian Family Movement from Uruguay. It was a little before 9:30 A.M. when a door was quietly opened and a priest announced in a clear, distinct and enthusiastic voice: "The Holy Father!"

Automatically those present knelt and a courteous rumble of applause was heard for some seconds. The Pope entered, as though coming from a distance, "and coming to meet a beloved, for he entered with extended arms in a gesture of giving, as a sign of giving himself." He sat down in a chair which was on a platform raised a few inches above the floor and in an amiable gesture beckoned the visitors to be seated. A priest, who entered after him, took a place some distance at his left side. The Pope took from the fold at the end of his sleeve a paper folded in four parts. When he opened it, some of the group saw writing scrawled in longhand with many corrections of transposed, crossed out and added words. They understood that what the Pope was about to read he himself had written especially for them.

THE MESSAGE OF THE POPE

The Pope began to read in Spanish:

"In spite of the exigencies of time and place we have desired to receive you separately, most beloved children, in order to single you out for a short, but special greeting — not only to assure you of our paternal affection but also to demonstrate the interest we continue to have in your movement of Matrimonial Teams for a Better World.

“What a formidable work this is to remake the world from its foundations; but if you hope to accomplish it successfully, it is certain that the first thing you must do is to fortify that prime organic element which is the family, which has been repeatedly called society’s fundamental cell. Whatever it is, that the whole body will be; this is shown to be well understood by those who assault it on every side with complicity of the forces of evil and its unleashed passions.

“Make, then, your families true centers of sanctity, where the Lord is always present with his grace; where there is communal prayer leading to communal participation in the divine worship and reception of the sacraments; where God’s law is observed completely; where each of its elements seriously aspires to perfection through the means that the same family life provides and within the boundaries of its duties; where is forged the spirit of the children of the future, who shall be worthy of the Church; where there is warmth and fire sufficient to irradiate to the benefit of those who surround you; where the eyes of God can find repose, a God Who knows that here His holy and adorable will is continually accomplished.

“Forward, then, the families which stand here, chosen from the best, and for that reason obligated to the rest. Forward, Spanish families, who have always been the mirror of all Christian virtues. Forward, all the families of the world! To convert this earth into a New House of Nazareth, in which the presence of the Christ child will be your example, your strength and your perpetual consolation.

“And rest assured that only in this way will humanity and with it all families and each one of its souls

discover that peace and consolation, that everyone seeking another path seeks in vain.

“We offer our blessing with all our heart. May it be our pledge of heaven’s greatest graces so that such a noble ideal might soon be fulfilled.” (translation and emphasis mine)

As the couples listened to the Pope’s message delivered in a slow but melodious and clear Spanish, they lost all concept of time. At the end they believed he had given them a lengthy discourse and they wanted to hear more. He had spoken about two minutes according to the report in the Barcelona newspaper. The authors of the article asked: “Why did it seem so much longer than it actually was? Was it because the couples’ attention was so intense that they were caught up in each and every emphasis, idea and phrase? Was it because the Pope summed up with preciseness the ideas and learning which they developed year after year so methodically and deliberately among themselves, and thereby their Shepherd was affirming their intensely lived activity? Was it because of the unusual preeminence of his support and urging for them to continue, which pointed to the beginning of great responsibility? Or, was it all of these that kept them from realizing time?”

The opening phrases of the address deeply etched into their minds and hearts that the Pope himself considered the audience and his message of the gravest importance. The citing of the words from his address in 1952 to “remake the world from its foundation” made them more keenly aware that the Pope recognized them to be a response to his “cry of alarm.” Furthermore the Pope had stated very forcefully the ideals that the family was not only to become the center of holiness for all its members, but also the very life within the family was the means

for achieving this holiness. Also he made it incontrovertibly clear that in and through the family was the only way to remake the world “according to the mind and heart of God,” and any other way was futile.

They understood that to become a living reality in their couple and family life these words of the Pope needed to be discussed and digested. These couples understood these words to be a blue print for their own lives as well as a call for couple and family spirituality. The article in the Barcelona paper stated that “the transcendence” of the Pope’s words would “reach their maximum value by confidently allowing them to advance the growth of this newest area of spirituality — that of the spiritual life of the married couples in common, of the spirituality of the family to be the means of perfection for the couples and the cell of apostolic illumination.”

The Spanish couples returned enthusiastically to Rocca di Papa to continue the rest of the course, but now with the goal and responsibility far more clearly delineated and explained for them.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE “FAC” MOVEMENT

On their return trip to Spain the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII visited Velate di Varese, a village located northeast of Milan near the foothills of the Alps. This visit had a profound impact on the development of their ideology. In this village was the “Villa Sorriso di Maria” (Villa of the Smile of Mary). The Villa was the center for the study and circulation of an experimental effort which sprang up and developed out of the spirit of the “Movement for a Better World.” The motto of the Villa was “Fac,” a Latin word meaning “act.” The leader of this movement was Fr. Paolo Arnabaldi, a Salesian priest. Its field of experimentation was primarily the parish, but it also influenced other groups. The spirit of the Villa excited the curiosity of the Spanish couples and they wanted to know more about its Course. The

Course of training at Varese is more easily explained than that at Rocca di Papa. The Course was designed to synthesize within a few days “the dynamic of the ideology of Christianity.” The essence of this course detailed the way a “Christian militant — or an activist, if you will — should act in order that the vitality proper to the doctrine of Christ in all its social, apostolic and familial manifestation might flourish.” The entire program centered around two questions: Will you be able to be this Christian militant and to act on it? and, How will you transmit it?

These questions and the motto “Act” became part of the spirit that the couples brought back to Spain from their trip to Rocca di Papa. The couples were determined to live the way the Pope had outlined for them. They sensed his words — “to make their families centers of sanctity” and “forward Spanish families. . . obligated to the rest” — to be statements of not only encouragement and urgency but also included mission and commission.

As the couples rode toward Spain, they were filled with joy and thanks for all the opportunities and gifts God had given them during these days. They prayed that whenever God would ask more of them, they would be willing to live genuinely their commitment of “Yes,” the “Spirit of Yes” and the “Fac” attitude.

The couples returned to their dioceses filled with zeal and enthusiasm. This spirit was given greater impetus in October. On the ninth day of that month Pope Pius XII died. His death, occurring two months almost to the day after the audience, caused the Spanish couples to look upon his address as his “last will and testament” to them. This thought inflamed the desire within them to fulfill the teachings and directions of Pope Pius XII’s “last will and testament” made directly to them. They resolved to study the address, phrase by phrase, at their team meetings in order to discover appropriate ways to put into action in their married and family life its instructions, and to discharge the mission the Pope had commissioned them to do.

CHAPTER VI

The Basic Ideology Adopted by the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII

To these aforementioned events were added several incidents which the Teams of Pius XII regarded as “signs of the times.” These “signs” led the Teams to draw up a written document formulating the fundamental concepts of their aims and the methodology necessary to guide any couple who joined them towards the life and mission in accord with the Pope’s address of August 10th, 1958.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

First, there was a great growth in the number of couples who began to join the Teams. When the enthused couples returned from Rome to their respective parishes and dioceses they eagerly related all that had happened. To the Bishops the couples spoke of the mission and commission they believed the Holy Father had enjoined on them. Bishops of some of the dioceses where the Matrimonial Teams did not exist, in turn desired that they be established there. New Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII were formed in many areas in Spain and also in its islands.

Second, the following September (1958) Fr. Richards returned to Barcelona. He perceived the rapid growth in Spain of the number of organizations ministering to marriage and family life. In fact there were 79 different organizations and all of them were multiplying in numbers. Teams of the Holy Family, Clubs of Married Couples, Groups of Cana, Apostolic Work Groups, Nazareth Groups of Families, plus other groups that had sprung up earlier. He suggested to Fr. Calvo and Mercedes and Jaime that the different groups ought to be coordinated into one organization,

similar to what they had done in Latin America in forming the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano. For such a union to become a reality among the Spanish groups would require time and much sacrifice for each of them. To put into effect such a union now became the special goal of the Teams of Pius XII, particularly the leadership. One of the prerequisites for the birth of such an organization would be that each group member must understand its particular identity and how it fitted in with and served the other groups in the organization and the Church.

Third, there were a series of events in 1959 and 1960 which pushed the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII to identify themselves more specifically. In January 1959 Pope John XXIII called for the convocation of the Second Vatican Council for the renewal of the Church. The Spanish couples were confident that the renewal must necessarily include marriage and family spirituality. Perhaps if they had some concrete procedure, they could submit it to aid in the development of such a spirituality. The second event occurred in November 1959. The second "National" gathering of the family apostolate was held in Spain. Out of this flowed a greater and more intense awareness of marriage and family spirituality. This awareness pointed out to the Teams of Pius XII the need for them to have a more explicit ideology and a methodology.

In 1960 some Spanish couples went to Rocca di Papa to experience the Trainings in their international environment. These couples were blessed by an audience with Pope John XXIII who reiterated the importance of their movement and encouraged them to develop a vision and way of life for marriage and family spirituality. This address became another basic document for the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII.

In November 1960 the Third National gathering of the Family Apostolate leaders took place in Madrid. The meeting was presided over by Bishop Vicente P. Enrique Tarancon, the secretary of the Spanish Episcopate and also the president of the Family

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Life Commission in Spain. During the meeting a bridge was built among the various associations of the marriage and family apostolate by the forming of the “Movimiento Catolico de Espiritualidad y Apostolado Matrimonial” (MOCEAM). The Bishop encouraged Fr. Calvo very strongly to further the development and growth of the Teams of Pius XII; the Bishop became their episcopal advisor.

Fourth, at this time many things were happening in the world for and among married couples. There were not only the “Teams of Our Lady” of Abbe Henri Caffarel in Paris and the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano of Fr. Pedro Richards in Uruguay, and the developments in Spain, but also in the United States in 1947 Pat and Patty Crowley had founded the Christian Family Movement in Chicago; this Movement was also spreading to Canada. All these beginnings were done without the leaders knowing of each other. Gradually, knowledge of them became known through the contacts and “talk” in Rome and at Rocca di Papa. Fr. Calvo, reflecting on this moment in history, said: “This was a clear sign to us that the same Spirit, the Spirit of God, was blowing among married couples everywhere.”

These remarkable and distinct “signs of the times” impelled the Spanish couples of the Teams of Pius XII to carry out their commitment to answer the two questions, namely, how to live out the experience of “the call” in being and doing, and how to transmit this experience to others, and thus to live out the “Yes” and the “Do” more definitively and faithfully. The great influence from the recent trip to Rocca di Papa and the audience with John XXIII pressed the members of the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII to draw up the document: “Fundamental Ideological Points and Methodology for the Teams of Pius XII.” The couples and priests drew from their own way of life the contents for this document. Its purpose was to impart a spirituality for any and all couples who desired to join them. This ideology and methodology are essential

for understanding the development and purpose of the Marriage Encounter Weekend (Encuentro Conyugal, in Spanish).

Also, in the years between 1958 and 1960 Fr. Calvo developed the schema for three grades of encounter to help couples embrace the “movement’s” spirituality as a way of life. The fundamental ideological points of the Teams of Pius XII will be considered below, and in the next chapter their methodology including a survey of the encounter schema of Fr. Calvo.

The Ideological Points

FIRST POINT:

THE TEAMS, A “MOVEMENT”

The basic concept for Teams of Pius XII was “movement.” The response to the call of Pius XII (Feb. 10, 1952) “to rebuild the world from its foundations” exerted the teams “to promote progressive perfection” in their married life. The Teams of couples were to motivate one another and other couples to live conjugal spirituality for the Christian reconstruction of the family and society.

The concept “movement” implied and connoted that the Teams were to possess an active and dynamic disposition, since the word “movement” presupposes that there is always a sense of proceeding. For the Team couples this meant that no couple could be satisfied today with the spiritual stand they had yesterday. Wherefore, a couple that adopted a passive attitude and remained static, or believed a satisfactory goal had already been reached, could not truly be said to belong to the “Movement.” Such a couple could, in outward appearance, continue to belong to the “Movement,” but before God they were standing on the edge of, and not effected by, that current of spirituality which continually vivified, strengthened and fortified each Team couple.

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For this reason the “Fundamental Points” accentuated the striving of the married couple for Christian perfection. The Lord called all to perfection, to become what God made each to be. Each spouse was called to perfection in and through married and family life. Christian perfection was always in motion because it develops in stages. For these couples, then, the striving for Christian perfection had the characteristic of “always more,” always a sense of movement. The “movement” toward Christian perfection was always a component of the married and family life of each day.

Such a “movement” demanded some structure but it had to be flexible, simple and constant. The structure had to exist solely for the benefit of the “movement” and never the “movement” for sake of the structure. Wherefore, among the Teams was born an intense awareness that the structure should not go beyond a schematic or a planning organization; the structure must always be kept to the minimum and at a level just sufficient to provide for and cater to promoting living “progressive” conjugal spirituality for the Christian reconstruction of both family and society.

The Teams were to be, and to see themselves as, a concrete response to the “cry of alert” which came from the Church through the mouth of Pope Pius XII. The couples were to understand that they met together as Team to give each other assurance and support in their response for the reconstruction of the world which began with them and their families.

SECOND POINT: **CHARACTERISTIC PROPER TO** **MARRIAGE SPIRITUALITY**

The Teams strongly believed that Marriage Spirituality had its own proper characteristics. These were proposed and assimilated sometimes at once and then again little by little, in fact almost imperceptibly. The foundation for Marriage Spirituality was

“mutual confidence.” *“Mutual confidence”* was the opening of the mind and heart between husband and wife in both the natural and supernatural aspects of life. *“Mutual confidence”* was the way that spouses, looking in the same direction, must walk together; it was the natural link which united them with each other in order to advance toward that goal which God was proposing to them. This *“mutual confidence”* was the fruit of the Sacrament of Matrimony and possessed its own spiritual essence which was of fundamental value. In and through the Team-meetings this maximum communication between husband and wife was habitually promoted. *“Mutual confidence”* was the most stressed characteristic of Marriage Spirituality for the Teams of Pius XII. *“Mutual confidence”* was always to be in “movement,” for spouses were always to be more and more mutually confiding to one another. Whatever furthered or deepened the mutual confiding belonged to Marriage Spirituality.

THIRD POINT:

THE ESSENTIAL NORMS:

PRAYER AND EUCHARISTIC LIFE

The essential norms for married couples belonging to Teams were the proper and due valuation of prayer and an intense Eucharistic life. The Teams, through their own experiences, realized that in the principles and tendencies of most men and women there was a danger that prayer occupied an important and prime place only in theory; that all too often it remained on the theoretical level. Usually when there was much work to be done, prayer was shortened in order to have more time for the work. Yet, the words of Christ are decisive and unequivocal: “Without me you can do nothing!” To shorten prayer was to go contrary to the Gospel message and to God’s plan. If there was much work, then it was necessary to pray more, so that Jesus could better move and act in the work; that is, that the Lord inspire the work and the worker and then help in doing the work. Each one was to struggle

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to make this primacy of prayer clear in their own minds and actions.

For the Team couples the Eucharist was the “sign of union” for it is the “bond of love” between the Lord and every human person. The Eucharist became the source and strength for each spouse’s union and bond with each other and as a united couple with the Lord. It was also the place where the couples were brought to unity as Team. For these reasons the “Movement” promoted the Eucharistic life for each couple and Team.

FOURTH POINT:

ATTITUDE OF GENEROSITY

Each married couple of the “Teams of Pius XII” was to embrace an attitude of increasing generosity with Jesus and service to their brothers and sisters. This attitude enabled the married couple to be open to any function or work which they noticed to be present. For an understanding of this point it was necessary to carry into effect the summons to the “spirit of yes” (Clima de si) of the “Oasis Movement.”

This spirit exacted great generosity. This spirit demanded carrying generosity towards its ultimate consequences and embracing all its positive and active aspects. The couple was not to wait passively until someone asked them to give their “yes,” but they were to anticipate the desires of others; they were to try to guess those things that were not yet stated. This attentive, generous, permanent action would lead logically to “progressive” perfection in the couple’s spiritual life.

FIFTH POINT:

A DEFINITE PLAN OF LIFE TO BE ADOPTED

Each couple of the Teams of Pius XII was to adopt directions and norms of life which fitted directly into the given circumstances

of their own lives. The directions and norms of life were not to be imposed; no definite obligations were placed on couples in order to be part of the “Teams of Pius XII;” this was considered to be against the spirit of the “Movement.”

The spirit of the “Movement” was openness to all married couples no matter what their spiritual level might be. The only criteria espoused was that a couple desired to grow in the way of Christian perfection as a couple. The original couples, because of their own lived experiences, were convinced that if any couple faithfully followed the offered directions and methodology, this couple’s spiritual life would always be in “progressive” movement. To insure this “progressive” movement in the spiritual life of a couple, each couple needed to adopt a definite plan of life. The Teams, once again because of their own experiences, held that in the spiritual life the couples must avoid the pitfall of getting entrapped within a circle, as it were. Wherefore, the Teams of Pius XII urged the couples to proceed as quickly as possible. To avoid what might be only the delusion of progression, the couples must have a clear path, that is, a definite worked out and detailed plan of life to follow. This plan must be specific but unique to each couple. The plan was to be drawn from their state and form of life, their qualities and talents and their own “forward movement” in the way of sanctity.

Since “no one is a judge in his or her own case,” this outline for their way of spiritual growth was to be drawn up through common consent with their spiritual director. The spiritual director was to be a priest well acquainted with their spiritual life and aware of their strengths, their life as a couple, and their living as a family. This spiritual direction was essential for both husband and wife. To fashion couple unity, the same spiritual director for both was highly recommended.

SIXTH POINT:

**RELATION WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES
IN THE CHURCH**

The Teams of Pius XII were to be in union with and working with “others who were active in the ‘womb’ of the Church.” Without exception the norm for this was a real display of union and collaboration. This lived ideal for union and collaboration with other groups and associations was an important application of the doctrine of the *Mystical Body* for both individual and collective action. All ecclesial action, if it was to be apostolic at all, was meant to be the bridge between the *Mystical Body* of Christ and the world. The purpose of the bridge was to be a means for the spirit of the *Mystical Body* to enter into the life of the world as leaven. All those engaged in apostolic activity emanating from the *Mystical Body* were to take to heart the prayer of Jesus “that all may become one.” The Teams understood this unity of actions to be the will of Jesus, the Head of the *Mystical Body*.

The Teams of Pius XII earnestly desired and pledged to endeavor to fulfill this last will of the Lord. Fr. Richards had spoken of this unity of action among the matrimonial groups in Spain. Without this unity among the different members and groups of the *Mystical Body*, the reconstruction of society according to the mind and heart of God would not be possible. This unity of collaboration among all working from within the “womb” of the Church could be accomplished only at a very high price. The price was to die to self in order to live for fulfilling the will of the Lord “that all be one.” Each member of the *Body*, both the individual and/or group, had some special charisma. Each was to offer this unique gift and work together with and strengthen the other. Without this unity of collaboration the *Mystical Body* would be torn, disjointed and weak within itself and could not effect the potential power of its presence.

SEVENTH POINT:
THE APOSTOLIC WORK

The fruit of the couple's interior life was a specific "apostolic" action or work. Each couple, as couple and as a member of the Team, was called by God to an apostolate. The word "apostolate" is derived from the word "apostle" which means "one who is sent." From the interior spiritual life the couple was to come to the realization that just as Jesus had called and sent the Apostles, so now He was calling and sending the couple into the world. This action or work of the couple, then, was considered an "apostolic mission," or an "apostolate." Since this action flowed from the couple's interior spiritual life, it was not something that could be rushed into.

The activity was not necessarily what a husband or wife individually or as a couple wanted to do, that is, their own favorite project; it was the Lord who was inviting and sending them to do this activity. As a consequence the Lord became deeply involved in the motivation of the couple and was the ultimate source of the activity.

Marriage spirituality has as one of its fruits an ardent desire for a united apostolate. At times the couple might experience difficulties because of not yet being sufficiently structured and registered in the organizations and works of the apostolate. The spouses could participate in any given apostolate in any number of ways, but were expected to search for an apostolate that they could carry out together. Whenever such participation in an apostolate was not possible, certainly there could always be collaboration by means of an intense spiritual support. The apostolate, even a noble one, was to be continually reviewed so that the openness of the couple in their activity flowed from, as well as into, their unity in and with the Lord.

EIGHTH POINT:

THE PURPOSE OF THE TEAMS

The couples did not consider belonging to the Teams to be the purpose of the “Movement,” but only the means to its purpose of living marriage spirituality. The goal was for Team couples to strive continually for, and to move unrelentingly toward Christian perfection, and to irradiate the Gospel. The Teams of Pius XII had no doubt that the entire work of being members of a Team had supernatural objective, that is, the radiation and irradiation of the Gospel through the life and actions of each couple. The main concern of each spouse and couple was the common good in a broad vision of the Mystical Body. Each couple and Team were to avoid anything which circumscribed, hindered or confined this objective. One snare the teams had to shun was the building of too strong a friendship among members of a particular Team. Such a booby trap could lead the couples and Team to become “closed.” The consequence of this would be the sterilization of the work, because the vision of the reconstruction of couple and family life in the world would be lost. A couple or Team so stagnated would be a betrayal of the ideal of “movement” and would truly have separated themselves from the true spirit of what it means to be a Matrimonial Team of Pius XII.

CHAPTER VII

The Team's Structure and Methodology

For the fulfillment of the above mentioned fundamental ideological points, and especially considering the ever increasing number of Teams of Pius XII in Spain, the original couples saw the necessity to develop a structure, a standard to insure unity within the group. With the many movements for marriage and marriage spirituality in Spain at this time, variations and innovations could easily creep into the "Movement" and obscure, if not radically change, the original purpose and vision of the Teams of Pius XII. To offset this possibility the Teams developed a detailed structure and methodology.

THE TEAM: ITS COMPOSITION

The basic unit of the structure was called "Team." A Team consisted of four to eight couples and a priest. Any couple who desired to follow the directions of Pope Pius XII about marriage and family life was qualified to become a Team-couple. Each couple was to be a life-giving cell for their Team.

Each married couple on a Team was responsible for nourishing it. The experience of the couples since 1952 taught them that a Team composed of couples with similar background and lifestyles was best for the fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences. If the differences in education, age, status and culture were too dissimilar, the mutual understanding could become too difficult or complex. Such circumstances could hinder the fruitfulness of exchange between and among the couples. They also discovered that a minimum of four and a maximum of eight couples were best for the most fruitful exchange within a Team.

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Each Team couple was to participate in the general activities flowing from the nature of the “Movement,” especially the monthly “retreats” for married couples, which were organized in each locality. The purpose of these “retreats” was community prayer as well as to present the teachings which interested all married couples, and to provide mutual knowledge to the members of different Teams.

The priest was an integral member of each Team. The Teams always saw themselves as “ecclesial,” that is, working within and having an aim and function similar to that of the Church. Also, the goal of each Team was essentially spiritual. The priest, they believed, was the representative of the Church and the one whom God had placed among human kind to nourish the spirit. The priest was to carry out his office as teacher, father and shepherd within the Team. The role of the priest was to support and animate the faith of the couples. The priest was to contribute during the meetings with his prepared reflections about the theme. For the Team it was natural and essential that the priest be present at all formative and spiritual meetings. No priest was permitted to join a Team without first informing his bishop and/or religious superior.

THE TEAM MEETINGS

The Team met every two weeks to insure the couple’s formation and development in matrimonial spirituality. A biweekly meeting rather than a weekly or monthly meeting was decided on because of the experience of the original couples. According to Mercedes Ferrer,

“The couples found that a meeting every week was too much because, with all the duties at home with the children and work, proper time could not be given to actually living out what they had learned — the “act” aspect of the methodology. To meet once a month was insufficient for, as Fr. Lores observed, the couples

would eventually tend to neglect the action altogether as well as to put off the inquiries until a few days before the meeting. —And he was right! — A bi-weekly meeting seemed best; it did not interfere with all the obligations of home and work. Also the “act” section of the “inquiry” had an effect on marriage and family life during the two week period; one week was too short for this and four weeks too long because of the tendency to forget.”

Both spouses were to attend the Team meetings together. The couple was to bring their prayed over and written out response to the “inquiry” to the meeting. (The inquiry will be explained below.) If it should happen that only one of the spouses could attend, he or she attended alone and presented the response. If neither spouse was able to attend, their response to the “inquiry” was to be sent, so that it could be shared for the good of the other couples. If a couple was unable to prepare the “inquiry,” which was something very exceptional, the couple was still expected to attend the meeting.

COUPLE’S PREPARATION FOR THE MEETINGS: THE “INQUIRY”

The “inquiry” or “survey” was the method used to help develop and strengthen marriage spirituality. It consisted of questions about a certain area or topic of marriage, e.g. mutual trust, work, couple prayer, and so on; these topics were drawn from the “Discourses” of Pope Pius XII. The questions were divided into the three steps of “Observe, Judge and Act.”

At home during the two weeks between meetings each couple reserved a minimum of an hour to respond to the “inquiry” which they had received at the previous meeting. The couple was

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to withdraw to a peaceful and silent place which was favorable to intimacy and mutual confidence. They placed themselves in the presence of God by praying simple prayers together, that is, acts of thanks, offering themselves to God and petitioning. Together they read the words from Sacred Scripture prescribed in the “inquiry”; they briefly shared on what it said to them personally. Then the spouses separated and, in the light of that Sacred Scripture, reflected on their life as each viewed it and prepared his or her personal answers to the questions of the “inquiry.” After this the spouses came together to listen openly and actively with both mind and heart to each other’s personal reflection. After this dialogue the couple constructed a written summary of the “Observe, Judge and Act” inquiry for the upcoming meeting of Teams. This summary also included comments on their lived experience of the “Act” assigned at the previous meeting, and the instruction or challenge of the Scripture to them. This summary was the essential part for the couple; the “inquiry” obliged the couple to review (hence also called a “survey”) and to revise their life in accord with what they perceived to be the call from God (Act). The couple was to keep the summaries of each “inquiry” in order.

An “inquiry” was done well if each partner, first, readily sought for self-discovery, second, through mutual sharing sought to discover the call to action and to perfection within their married and family life, and third, shared as a couple their summary with the Team. The best response to the “survey” was not the most skillfully composed, but rather the simplest, shortest and most honestly expressed lived experience. The response was born in one’s home in the presence of God; it was the “spiritual child”, the fruit of the encounter, the discovery by two souls of God’s will for them. The “act” designated in a concrete way the married couple’s commitment to begin to live their ordinary life in line with their discovery through the “inquiry,” which was based on Sacred Scripture and the teachings of the Church.

THE ORDER OF THE MEETING

The bi-weekly meeting was intended as a means to improve the fruit of the “inquiry” through the couples’ giving and receiving. This interchange among the couples was done in a climate of simplicity and charity, with the awareness of the Church, and always looking at the reality of the world. The most suitable length of time to accomplish this was found to be about two hours. They discovered that in this period of time all the couples and the priest could adequately comment on and ask about the responses in order to absorb as fully as possible the different sharings. The two hours were divided into five integral parts — prayer, review of the assigned “act,” sharing of the response to both the Scripture and “inquiry,” and the assignment for the next meeting.

The meeting without fail was to begin with communal prayer in a chapel before the Blessed Sacrament. This prayer time, which lasted twenty or thirty minutes, was an essential and principal activity of the meeting and was not to be omitted; it formed the focal point of the meeting. It preceded any sharing of “inquiries” or “surveys.” It had to be alive and sincere and all were led to appreciate its prominence. Whenever a Team foresaw difficulties to come together habitually in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, this Team was obliged to make this known to the Coordinator Team, so that an adequate and proper solution could be proposed.

At the beginning of the meeting the priest “exposed” the Blessed Sacrament and directed the prayer time. He invited the married spouses to express with naturalness, frankness and in a clear voice any of their thoughts, feelings, dreams, interior desires, etc. All were to participate in this prayer in an atmosphere of simplicity, honesty and universality. For some spouses it was difficult to pray in this way. The love of the Eucharistic Jesus was to help heal any difficulties that might be present in any relationship.

After the prayer all went to another room where they seated themselves in a circle. During this part of the meeting the couples

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very simply presented what they themselves had discovered; they listened openly to one another. For the first five minutes the chaplain had each couple read their summary of the “act” of the previous meeting’s assignment. The next ten minutes were devoted to the Biblical text. Each couple presented their short commentary and the priest summarized them at the end. After this the meeting moved into the sharing of the “inquiry” or “survey.” This part of the meeting lasted about seventy five to ninety minutes. Each couple shared individually on each of the sections — observe, judge and act — separately. Either one of the spouses read their summary. The priest helped them to express their summary in a concrete way; he endeavored to summarize briefly what each married couple shared and to coordinate and blend the summaries; he shared his own personal reflection. During the meeting a previously assigned couple, but not always the same one, took notes of all that occurred.

At the end of the meeting a couple gathered the summaries of the attending couples. Between the meetings either the priest or a couple reviewed the summaries. These summaries were returned at the following meeting together with a comprehensive summary of the meeting. Before the meeting ended an “act” was agreed upon, so that until the next meeting each day could be better lived in line with the “Movement.” Also, a couple distributed the theme for the following meeting. The meeting ended with a blessing led by the priest.

THE PRAYER NETWORK

A wide network of prayer was established among the members of the Teams; the sick and children were encouraged to add their spiritual power to this network of prayer. Each Team was asked to sow this spiritual concern among married couples so that the atmosphere of the Communion of Saints was alive in all the Teams.

THE LINKING OF THE TEAMS INTO ONE MOVEMENT

With the continual spread of the movement throughout many dioceses in Spain the original couples had to find a method to link all the teams together and to integrate new Teams into the proper spirit and direction of the "Movement."

Each Team became linked together in the Movement in a simple structure. Each group of four to eight couples designated one couple to be a member of a regional Team. These regional Teams developed as needed. By 1963 there were regional Coordinating teams in Balears, Northern Spain, Castille, Catalonia and Madrid. The regional Team selected one of their couples to be in contact with the Central Coordinating Team of which the National Chaplain was a member. The Central Coordinating Team was at first headquartered in Barcelona. To execute this contact and spread information, a periodical bulletin was sent to the Teams.

THE PROMOTER COUPLE FOR NEW TEAMS

In response to the goal of integrating new Teams into the spirit and basic direction of the movement, the regional coordinator designated a married couple from an existing Team to be the "promoter" couple for a new Team. The duty of the "promoter" couple was not only to lead and guide the new Team, but also to sow, nourish and encourage an always-present active attitude for spiritual growth; this latter duty was of the greater importance. They were to help the new Team to avoid any deviation from the ideological points. The "promoter" couple worked to bring the new Team to a point so that it could "launch out" on its own. For this purpose the "promoter" couple strove to encourage these couples just beginning in the movement to experience, in a retreat, the Spiritual Exercises and to attend the "Trainings for a Better World" at the center near Segovia. Normally the term of the "promoter" couple was for a period of not less than two years, although

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occasionally they stayed on for a longer time; sometimes they joined the newly formed Team.

During this time “in order to launch a newly born Team into movement” it was necessary for these couples to have a special “encounter” meeting with the Chaplain. An “encounter” was a special method of retreat which took place in a boarding residence. This “encounter” proceeded in accord with defined concrete norms. Its purpose was to motivate the spouses, both individually and as a couple, to grasp more firmly and become more fully aware of the deep significance of the Sacrament that unites them, of their common objective in marriage, including their activity as a Team, without forgetting their matrimonial and common plan of life. This “Encounter” was considered a necessary spiritual exercise to open the door for new couples to the “Movement.” During the years 1960 and 1961 Fr. Calvo developed three different grades of “Encuentro,” that is encounter. Any couples entering the Movement were expected to experience all three levels. These Encounters contained the basic elements of the Marriage Encounter Weekend and the Retorno.

ENCOUNTER OF ZERO GRADE

The first “Encounter” entitled “Encuentro de cero grado”, was an orientation encounter. This introductory course was to lead the couples to discover who they are and introduce them to marriage spirituality and the commitment of Christian marriage. It was held for about two hours each evening for seven consecutive days. In this course the following topics were treated: spiritual divorce, dialogue, conjugal love, responsible parenthood, the mission of the couples in the education of their children (problems and principles for solution), the Sacrament of Marriage and Matrimonial Spirituality, and in the last session, the Commitment of Christian Marriage. The motivating couples for these sessions used their own lived experiences (vivencia) to give witness to each

of these topics. The participating couples were given an “inquiry” about each of the topics considered.

ENCOUNTER OF THE FIRST GRADE

The second level, “Encuentro de primer grado,” was for groups of ordinary couples who sought to grow in marriage spirituality. This was an overnight experience in a place where the couples boarded. The content was ideological and spiritual as well as technical. The ideological content was Marriage in the light of reason, Marriage in the light of faith, Marriage, a cell of society, and Marriage, an organ of the Church. The spiritual ingredients were God’s Word, the word of the Church (its teaching authority and tradition), prayer (personal, couple and communal), the renewal of the sacramental “yes”, and the Tabernacle (the Eucharist — the presence of God). The technical elements consisted of a network of prayer and sacrifices, three promoter or animator couples, two priests and a doctor. Time was set aside for couple Dialogue (personal reflection and couple sharing) based on personal, intimate and community “inquiries” or “surveys,” a review and revision of the couple’s life and the commitment to a plan of life.

This “Encounter of the First Grade” was based on the Word of God. Certain Scriptural passages were chosen to “light” the way for the couples. The first was Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the clean of heart (the single-hearted) for they shall see God.” The second was Mark 4:3: “Listen carefully to this. A farmer went out sowing.” The third was chapter 2 of the Gospel of St. John. This told the story of the marriage feast of Cana where Jesus came to the aid of a couple through the request of Mary to carry out the will of the Father for the couple. The final citation from the Word of God was John 15: 14-16: “You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer speak to you as slaves, for a slave does not know what his master is about. Instead, I call you friends, since

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I have made known to you all that I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure so that all you ask the Father in my name He will give you.”

The procedure for the “Encounter of the First Degree” was divided into four steps. In each step a motivation was presented by either the promoter couples or the priest, followed by an intimate “inquiry” for personal reflection, conjugal dialogue and communal sharing. In the **first step** the motivating talk was “Marriage in the light of reason.” The motivating couple treated of the natural truths of the concept of couple, and the false concepts and experiences of marriage in our environment. The priest spoke of the true concept of marriage as a natural institution using Genesis (Chapter 1 and 2) as a base. The doctor explained conception and birth including the problems and their solutions according to nature.

The **second step**, entitled “Marriage in the Light of Faith,” treated the supernatural truth about marriage. The motivating couple talked about what the Sacrament of Marriage was not; the priest presented what the Sacrament of Marriage was all about — sacramental graces, attitudes, dispositions, and so on. The third part of this step dealt with the question: “Why is there such a lack of knowledge about the Sacrament of Marriage in this modern day?”

The **third step** treated Marriage as the “seal” or “sign” of the Church. Marriage is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. The team couple promoted the attitude: “If we improve married life, we are improving the life of the world.” For this attitude each couple needed to develop a mentality about the universal common good. A promoter couple spoke about the family as a little society. The essential elements of a society are variety, unity, authority and service. The priest spoke of marriage as the cell of the Church. The family was a “little church” and like the universal Church was one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

The **fourth step** motivated the couples to discover their mission. It was divided into four parts. They looked outside themselves to the community around them. The parts of this step followed the method of “observe, judge and act.” The question was asked: “What kind of material and moral problems did couples have in the environment in which they lived?” “What did the couples who were present believe were the basic causes?” “What concrete actions could and should the couple take to offer a solution to the problem?” The second part looked at what kind of spiritual and religious problems modern day couples experience. “What are the authentic causes?” “What could and should the couple do?” The third part was concerned with the mission of Christian marriage in our society. “Why was the influence of Christian couples so insignificant in our society?” The fourth part was: “What can we do to persevere in the spirit of this encounter?” From these answers each couple drew up a plan of life.

ENCOUNTER OF THE SECOND GRADE

The third level, “Encuentro de segundo grado,” composed of five steps, was a weekend for married couples who were involved in marriage groups in the Church. The encounter was to help the couples make a deep couple review and revision of their married life. This encounter was an intense method of spiritual maturation for married couples. The purpose was to strengthen the unity of each couple and each Matrimonial Team of Pius XII. The content of the second degree was psychological, ideological, spiritual and technical.

The psychological content was the initial testimony of each couple, the personal reflection, the conjugal dialogue and the meeting of the Teams. The ideological content was encounter with self which was based on personal honesty, an encounter with the Father through the everyday realities especially including the reality of the family; an encounter with the Son through mutual

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love between husband and wife: Sacraments; an encounter with the Holy Spirit through the Christian community (Church) including the Teams.

The spiritual ingredients were the Word of God, personal prayer, conjugal prayer, community prayer, renewal of "yes," TABERNACLE, priest as chaplain of the Team, meditations on the actual state of the family, Parable of the Sower, Nazareth, Cana, and the Cenacle, (the Upper Room, the scene of the Last Supper).

The technical components included a network of prayers, promoters of the experience, intimate and communal questionnaire (inquiry) after each of the meditations and the review and revision and plan of life.

In the procedure of "Encounter of the Second Degree" the **first step** was a meditation on the crisis of today's family. The motivating couple presented facts, data and statistics concerning family life. The purpose was to make the couples fully aware of the family crisis and encourage them to look at their own responsibility in this matter.

The **second step** was to meditate on the Parable of the Sower (Matt. 13). The purpose of this meditation was first to encounter oneself with personal and absolute honesty, for an encounter with self was the key to a deep encounter with one's spouse. The second purpose was to encourage each spouse and couple to arrive at an attitude of reconciliation and to motivate them to come to a reconciliation with one another and then with others. The reconciliation of the couple with each other was a fundamental step in leading to their reconciliation with God.

The **third step** was to meditate on Nazareth. The purpose of this meditation was an encounter with the Father and with heavenly realities, especially the reality of the divine value of the human. The Holy Family was to be the ideal example. There were two points to this meditation. The first point was always to do the will

of the Father. The second was the story of Cana (John 2). The purpose of the Cana meditation was an encounter with the Son of God through the sacramental graces, the fruit of the Sacrament of Marriage, and the living of the conjugal marriage in grace and charity. The couples were to grasp the “mighty intercessory powers” of Mary — “Do whatever he tells you.”

The **fourth step** was a meditation on the Cenacle. (The Cenacle is the upper room where the apostles were when the Holy Spirit came down upon them on Pentecost.) The purpose of this meditation was an encounter with God’s Spirit for a conscious and active participation in the Christian community’s life (ecclesial [couple and priest], diocesan, parochial and Team.)

The **fifth step** was a review and revision of life. This revision was an inquiry through a series of questions into many areas of the couple’s life. “What do I like about you?” “What do I not like about you?” “What separates us?” “Are we living in the Grace of the Lord?” “What unites us with the Lord?” “What separates us from the Lord?” “Are we conscious of the Sacrament of our Marriage?” “What are the signs of this?” “Do we pray together?” “Confess together?” “Go to Mass and Communion together?” “When?” “Do we read the Word of God and share it with each other?” In relation to Mary: “Do we have devotion to her?” “What are the signs?” “Do we have confidence with a priest?” “Do we share periodically with him?” “When?” “Do we have the children God desires us to have?” “What do we think of each one of them individually?” “Where do we agree?” “Disagree?” For couples without children: “Have we discovered our mission in society, in the church, in the family, among the relatives?” “Are we at peace with all?” “Do we care about other people?” The answer to these questions requires concrete examples.

CONCLUSION

This structure and methodology helped the couples and Teams to be united in lifestyle, purpose and vision. Through it they strove to live out and deepen “the call” of the Pope “to make their families centers of sanctity.” However, this growth had a danger to which the Franciscan Fr. Paolo Paludet had made reference. He called this danger “conjugalism,” that is, for couples to become, even unconsciously, closed “circles of good couples” and to feel secure and protected inside the group. This danger could cause the loss of the original mission, for it would be so easy for couples to enjoy living at the “top of the mountain” without feeling the need to go out to meet and share with “the lame, deaf and crippled in the valley.” This danger was lessened for the Teams of Pius XII by some events which they saw as “signs.” These events impelled Fr. Calvo and the couples to create the instrument called “Marriage Encounter.”

CHAPTER VIII

Marriage Encounter It's Birth

While Fr. Calvo was serving the couples of the Teams of Pius XII nationwide, other couples began “knocking at his door.” These couples were unhappy and dissatisfied with their marriages. For these couples the everyday problems of life were causing separation, conflicts, tensions, disappointments and despair. They found themselves and their sons and daughters screaming at, fighting with, hiding from, lying to, manipulating and cheating one another. They were questioning the purpose and meaning of married and family life. They wondered if there could be something more to married life. If so, what else was there and how was it to be secured? Or, were the dreams they had about their married life pure illusions? Were these dreams only fulfilled in fairy tales? Why was it so difficult for them to speak with each other? Why did they not enjoy one another like they used to? They were in intense pain and by these questions thirsted for a different way to live married and family life. They informed Fr. Calvo that they did not belong to and had no intention of joining or becoming involved in any existing “Movement.”

Fr. Calvo felt and understood their pain and thirst. He related that whenever he met any of these couples, their pain and anguish seemed to him like the “sting of a wasp” within him. He asked himself: “What can I and what ought I to do?” These tormenting questions brought into sharper focus for him the whole dimension of his service to couples and families — as a man, a christian, a brother and a priest.

THE CHALLENGE

Fr. Calvo, on the other hand, looked and saw the group of couples with whom he had been working during these last eight years. Although they had similar daily problems, they found meaning and joy in their marriage and family lives. These couples, in the midst of the problems and vicissitudes of life, lived with hope; their lives evidenced what married life could be. These couples lived their marriage in an atmosphere of openness and “mutual trust.” The spiritual basis for this atmosphere in their marital relationship was a profound understanding of the religious and sacramental aspects of marriage.

The challenge, as Fr. Calvo saw it, was to develop the means to bridge these two different groups of couples. He needed a means, a “cup” to bring the “water to give drink to the thirsty.” With this irrepressible challenge in his heart and mind, Fr. Calvo gathered from among the Teams of Pius XII priests and couples who lived “in unity and openness.” At this meeting, during the community sharing, all present began to realize that they all had the same feelings and concerns for these couples. The group decided to dedicate some time to pray and listen so they would be able to discover what the Lord was revealing to them through this “sign.”

THE “CUP” IS CONSTRUCTED

The unanimous decision of those at the gathering to help these questioning, disconcerted and disconsolate couples moved Fr. Calvo to set to work to create a “cup to give drink to the thirsty.” He wrote that at this time “he went with mixed emotion of anxiety and hope, knocking on the doors of the homes of couples who seemed to possess the secret of marital and family unity and happiness.” These couples opened the doors of their homes and hearts to him; they invited him to penetrate the most intimate and sacred depths of their married and home life.

Through these visits Fr. Calvo discovered more concretely that their secret of marriage was exactly what the other couples who called on him in their desperation did not have and were earnestly thirsting for. As he listened to the lives of the Team couples he found they were striving to orient their relationship and family life according to the principles and ideals revealed in the plan of God for marriage and family — a plan mysteriously revealed throughout the Bible from its very beginning and explained in the “Discourses of Pius XII to the Newlyweds.” Each of these couples was striving to discover and accept in their everyday life, through mutual trust, their place in God’s plan. Fr. Calvo described this experience in these homes as “tremendous and unique, a true grace, a revelation” which illuminated, strengthened and stimulated his life as a priest and minister of God in the service of His family. It was at this point in his life, he says, “He decided to take a new path.”

Fr. Calvo invited the Team couples to join with him in fashioning a “cup” and filling it to quench the thirst of those thirsting couples, and bridge the gap between the two different styles of married life. To do this Fr. Calvo knew he needed divine guidance. He asked the couples of the Teams of Pius XII, together with their families, to pray and sacrifice at home and beg the Lord for guidance. He himself went for a time to pray and fast at the Benedictine Monastery of Montserrat, located in the mountains in the province of Barcelona. (This is the monastery where Jaime and Mercedes were married and spent their honeymoon in 1943.)

After much prayerful reflection Fr. Calvo began to fashion the “cup;” he believed that the resource for a united and happy marriage was already present in the marital union but couples were unaware of that “treasure hidden in the field” of their relationship. They needed a means to discover it. He drew from all his past lived experiences with the couples and Teams, especially the three grades of encounter plus the insights he had gained from the visits in their homes. He developed a prescribed procedure; he also

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formulated a long questionnaire for the Teams in order to test the validity of this new instrument.

When Fr. Calvo returned to his residence in Barcelona, he gave the couples, who had committed themselves to join with him in this new adventure, the instrument and the long questionnaire which these couples were to answer within a definite time period. At the designated time the couples and Fr. Calvo gathered together in an atmosphere of deep prayer and reflection. The couples had made the questions their own; they enriched what he had written with their wise suggestions and lived experiences as spouses and parents in a degree he had not anticipated. The result was that a couple of months later he and the couples had in their hands a new and precious instrument to help the other couples.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

In January 1961 (the 5th, 6th and 7th, which was the Feast of the Holy Family) an ecclesial Team composed of Fr. Calvo and Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer along with twenty-eight young, working class married couples gathered at Corbera, a village about 25 kilometers from Barcelona. Here they experienced the first “Encuentro Conyugal” (Marriage Encounter). As this Team began the weekend they had different thoughts. Jaime and Mercedes reflecting on this moment said:

“We were simply doing what Fr. Calvo had asked of us. He wanted to help these couples who were in need and we went along with his wishes. In our minds there was not the remotest thought that this would be repeated. Fr. Calvo had pieces of paper on which were written an outline and a few ideas; we, Jaime and I, filled out the theory with our own experiences.”

Fr. Calvo in his reflection commented that inside of him was the feeling that this was indeed the beginning of something new.

During the weekend the Team sensed that they had something “new.” When the couples arrived on Friday night they showed little or no sign of conjugal love, unity and peace. As Saturday progressed the Team saw the spouses walking in the garden as loving couples. In fact on Saturday night Fr. Calvo wrote that couples were anxious to call their family, relatives and friends to tell them the great news: “We have found a new way of life.” Late on Sunday afternoon the couples cried with joy: “We got married again!”

Was this the “cup,” the remedy, to bring a way of living married life in a more satisfying way to couples outside the Teams of Pius XII? Was this the instrument for the Teams of Pius XII to answer his challenges? Was this the answer to the searching by the Teams to fulfill their mission to “remake the world from its foundation according to the mind and heart of God?” The Teams of Pius XII had to review the events of that weekend.

THE EXPERIENCE WAS REPEATED

As the Team of the weekend itself reflected on their experience, Mercedes and Jaime and especially Fr. Calvo sensed that something wonderful, extraordinary and unique had happened. Fr. Calvo felt deep within himself that the experience called for repeating the weekend; inwardly he questioned: “What will happen if we repeat it?” The Team, Fr. Calvo, Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer shared with each other their impressions of the experience and also with the other couples of the Teams of Pius XII. These latter couples became enthused and suggested that it be repeated. They all prayed and spoke about the Marriage Encounter weekend with other couples. The couples who made the weekend also excitedly spread the news of what was happening in their lives as a result of the weekend experience. Their testimony caused other couples to thirst for a similar experience of this way of living married life. It was decided to repeat the weekend at the beginning

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of April. The news was greeted with great enthusiasm. More couples than could be accommodated desired to experience the encounter. A third weekend was then planned. The Encuentro Conyugal was excitingly becoming a service of the Teams of Pius XII in Barcelona for married couples.

The Barcelona Teams came to believe that the *Encuentro Conyugal* was indeed the instrument to introduce a marriage spirituality to married couples thirsting for a deeper way of living married life. They also recognized that it was fulfilling for them the response to the call of the Pope: “to remake the world from its foundations according to the mind and heart of God.” and also, that his commission to them “Forward, then, the families which stand here. . . obligated to the rest” now had a concrete expression for their mission.

This weekend for married couples was called “Encuentro Conyugal” whose official translation into English is “Marriage Encounter.” The “Marriage Encounter Weekend” facilitated for the Teams of Pius XII to introduce couples to live their married life “in the Lord,” that is “according to the Plan of God.” Mercedes and Jaime remarked:

“If we follow God’s plan for marriage, we will be happy. The happiness which people desire can only be given by God, for He has reserved the offering of this gift to Himself. To follow God’s plan means for husband and wife to live united with one another and as a couple with God. The consequence of this spirituality is unity and happiness. This is what we have discovered in our life and so have all the couples of the Teams. If we seek the union in any other way or through other means, we are deceiving ourselves or being deceived, perhaps by the devil. We (*the couples of the Teams of Pius XII*) frequently talk about this, living marriage in the plan of God, as the source of true happiness.”

The couples outside the Teams of Pius XII who had experienced a new way of living their married life and were striving to live their life in accord with God's plan, discovered and enjoyed the same gifts of unity and joy that the Teams of Pius XII had. What was the methodology and essence of this "cup?"

CHAPTER IX

The Marriage Encounter Weekend

The “Marriage Encounter Weekend” was the instrument, the tool, developed by Fr. Calvo together with the couples of the Teams of Pius XII to introduce married people to a different way of living married life. This way was founded on the principles and experiences the Team couples were endeavoring to live in their own married life since 1952. This instrument, then, had a definite methodology, form and interrelated parts, each having their own function and purpose. Its methodology can be described; its form is the individual steps whose function can also be explained. But like any other tool, its capabilities, beauty and worth can only be fully understood and appreciated through an actual experience which is not possible to describe or explain in any way because it is specific and personal to each and every couple.

THE METHODOLOGY OF THE WEEKEND

The basic purpose of the Marriage Encounter Weekend is to offer couples the opportunity to experience their marital relationship in accordance with the plan of God. The schema, divided into consecutive dynamic steps, provides the couples the opportunity to see the reality of their marriage and more importantly its hidden potentialities. The steps move the couples to observe the present state of their married life, to judge that life in the “light” of God’s plan for marriage found in His Word (the Bible), and then move to the action they must take in their own relationship as a couple, to live out their marriage according to God’s plan, that is “in the Lord.” Through following the steps in the stated order the couples are to become reconciled with each other in the Lord and then as a couple with the Lord. This opens the couple to God’s gifts of unity and happiness.

The couples are led to this experience through the ecclesial team. The ecclesial team, composed of a priest and several couples who are striving to live this way of life, motivate and animate the new couples desiring to live married life in a different way by sharing their ideas, thoughts, feelings and most of all their lived experiences of each step. Through their sharing the team gently “blows on the ashes covering the smoldering fire of their relationship, and the fire flames up with new energies of faith, hope and love.” The ecclesial team believes that it gives nothing but an opportunity for a couple to recognize, discover and experience the latent potentiality and greatness already present within the couple’s own married relationship.

The Essence of Each Step of the Marriage Encounter Weekend

FIRST STEP:

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

This step is divided into two parts. During the first part of this step the couples introduce themselves to one another. This is followed by the team explaining the facilities and the basic concept of Marriage Encounter. The team creates a relaxing, comfortable and warm atmosphere conducive to intimacy for the respective participating couples.

In the second part of this step the team defines what Marriage Encounter is not, and what it is. They point out attitudes which hinder and those which help the experience. They explain the threefold rhythm of the weekend: Motivation, Personal Reflection, and Conjugal Sharing.

At the conclusion of this step the couples should be more at ease and gradually become more expectant and hopeful with regard to the experience.

OBSERVE:

What is the Present State of Our Marriage?

The "Observe" phase is divided into two parts, namely, the perspective or viewpoint of the observation and, secondly, that which is observed. Marriage Encounter begins with looking at the reality of one's married life from one's own particular standpoint; this is called an "attitude of self." This attitude is basic to the process of Encounter. For this reason each participant is given time for a deep personal encounter with self; it is from this position that the reality of one's marriage is observed.

SECOND STEP:

ENCOUNTER WITH SELF

ENCOUNTER WITH SELF OBVIOUSLY PUTS ONE IN TOUCH WITH ONESELF, WHICH IS A PRE-REQUISITE FOR A FRUITFUL MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND. The spiritual basis for this step is the Gospel of St. Matthew (5:8): "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." One of the purposes of the weekend is to observe how God is present and active in the couple relationship. In this step each spouse looks at his- or her-self to become aware of and accept personal ownership of their respective strengths and weaknesses and to recognize within his- or her-self the areas for growth, and be open to change.

In this step each spouse, then, begins to discover some of their personal talents, qualities, abilities, ambitions, dreams; each looks at his or her own background and history; each recalls as well as they can his or her own life experiences which have formed his or her personality, attitudes, judgments and outlook on life with its hopes and dreams. It is necessary for each spouse, in so far as it is possible, to discover who he or she is and to accept that reality

— the good and the bad, strengths and weaknesses, virtues and vices — and recognize where he or she is able to change and be open to growth. This means that each spouse must face him- or her-self honestly, lovingly, and gently. To do this each one must remove any masks which hides one's true self. Masks are the conscious or unconscious means a person uses to hide from oneself. Honesty, acceptance and openness are the most important ingredients for this step. By the end of this step each spouse will begin to live an "attitude of self." This attitude is the very foundation of the Marriage Encounter experience; it is the source of each personal reflection.

This encounter with self is also necessary to accept another person in one's life, and form a healthy, viable relationship with that person. No one can truly and fully accept another into his or her life before he or she has first accepted oneself. When one does not try to understand and accept oneself, one cannot understand and accept another. Also, for a spouse to give his or her whole self (heart, mind, soul, spirit and body) to the union, each must know and accept what it is he or she is giving.

THIRD STEP:

OUR MARRIAGE IN THE MODERN WORLD

IN THIS STEP EACH SPOUSE FROM HIS OR HER OWN POINT OF VIEW IDENTIFIES THE SIGNS AND THE AREAS OF SEPARATION PRESENT IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP. This step is the beginning of the encounter. It is divided into two parts: "The Symptoms of Spiritual Divorce" and the "Topics for Conjugal Review."

In marriage the spouses are never in the audience; both are always in the play. Each spouse has a responsibility for maintaining their marital union as well as for any separation or isolation in the marital relationship. Any marital relationship can grow, especially in the areas where there is separation. Within each

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couple's relationship there are differences and disagreements; these can often be very deep seated. As a result, the mind and will of the spouses remain separated; the couple are "unmarried," as it were, in certain areas of their married life. In the Encounter this separation is referred to as "spiritual divorce," that is, some separation in mind, will, heart and/or spirit. The reality of this separation manifests itself by certain signs or symptoms. In this part of the step each spouse, from an attitude of self, identifies the symptoms and/or signs of spiritual divorce which are present in their couple relationship. This realization can be the beginning of a great opportunity for growth and the strengthening of the married relationship.

In the first part, two important concepts are presented: the law of growth for love and the fact that love is in and of the will, making one free to either accept it or reject it. Wherefore, it is said that "love is a decision."

An inquiry which lists signs of separation (spiritual divorce) is given to each spouse. During the personal reflection each spouse identifies and accepts the signs present in the marriage for which he himself or she herself is responsible. During the conjugal dialogue they share their personal reflection with one another in an atmosphere of honesty and a spirit of trust.

In the second part of this step the spouses identify the areas or topics of their married life in which the signs of separation in their relationship are most strikingly present. There are some topics within married life which couples refuse to talk about, or, do not fully share with one another, or one spouse cannot accept the other's views. When this exists the spouses cannot be said to be fully and totally married to one another. These are subjects that require greater understanding and acceptance. These are areas of a couple's married life where they can reach out to each other and grow in their relationship. For the reflection and dialogue a list of some areas or topics which may separate a couple is given to each

spouse. In the reflection each spouse identifies the topic(s) or area(s) where he or she shuts off or does not understand and/or accept the other, and from an attitude of self tries to understand why this is so. In this way each spouse indicates a desire to review the separation in the identified area. During the conjugal dialogue the couple, in opening themselves to these topics, begins to reach out to each other. The couples may find some topics to be very difficult to speak about and they may feel down, but they are hopeful.

The ecclesial team shares their lived experience of each part of this step and what doing this meant and means to their union as husband and wife.

JUDGE:

What Ought Our Marriage To Be?

After observing and identifying the reality of the separation in their marriage, and where new growth in unity can take place, the couple moves to judge what their marriage ought to be. For this the couple reflects on the plan of God for Marriage. This plan is found in the revealed Word of God, the Sacred Scriptures, and the Bible. Before a couple can listen to the Word of God, each spouse must examine his or her life to discover if any obstacles which hinder listening to God's Word are present. Each spouse must strive to put aside these obstacles and be as fully open to hear God's Word as possible. It is through and in God's Word that God reveals His plan or vision for marriage. This is the genuine and real focal point of the Encounter — Marriage according to God's Plan. In the following steps the couple discovers the human and divine activities present in their marriage for them to live in accord with the plan of God for marriage. In the light of all the potential present in their relationship, each couple reviews their marriage.

FOURTH STEP:

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER — OPENNESS TO THE PLAN OF GOD

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STEP IS FOR EACH SPOUSE TO OPEN THEMSELVES TO GOD’S WORD. The couple, as this step begins, is painfully aware that they are not fully united as husband and wife, but they are hopeful. They sense, because of the team couples, that a secret is to be revealed. Preparation to receive the secret is necessary. This preparation is the burden of the fourth step; it is a transitional step for it requires a leap in faith.

The basis of this step is the Parable of the Sower as found in the Gospel (Matthew 13). To facilitate this reflection, the Word of God, at least the Parable of the Sower, ought to be in the hands of each spouse. The Parable is read slowly and listened to. Each spouse listens while at the same time internally asking the questions: What is Jesus saying to me? What are His words saying to my heart? Each spouse is to discover what it is in each of them personally that obstructs the Word of God from taking root and becoming fruitful. Each is to discover the type of soil within him or her. Are they always open to God’s Word? To be fully open to God’s Word they must be open to each other, because God speaks to them as a couple through each other. If each spouse is open to God, then, they need to be open to each other. The spouses are open to God, in so far as they are open to each other. They can become the seed of God’s Word for each other in their relationship through conjugal dialogue. In conjugal dialogue a spouse listens to his or her spouse to come to know God’s Will for their relationship. In this sense, when a husband or wife is open to their spouse, they are open to God. When each spouse is open to receive the seed, to listen to God’s Word, the seed produces fruit “thirty, sixty and a hundred fold.”

The priest explains the parable. The couples share some of the obstructions which were and are present in their marriage in listening to God's Word as it is revealed to them in and through each other in their life together. They also share how striving to live their married life in openness to each other to listen to God's Word for them has effected their marriage relationship.

In the reflection each spouse makes a self-encounter about his or her type of soil; what are the obstacles that do not allow God's Word to take root in him or her for their relationship; when and how they listen to each other.

FIFTH STEP:

MARRIAGE IN THE PLAN OF GOD

MARRIAGE IN THE PLAN OF GOD IS THE FOCUS OF THE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND. This step is totally founded on listening to and reflecting on God's Word as revealed in the Bible. The plan or vision of God for Marriage is announced in the Book of Genesis. Each couple ought to have in their hands the Word of God or at least a copy of the pertinent verses from the first chapters of Genesis. The first two chapters of Genesis reveal God's plan for marriage. The third and following chapters reveal what happens when His plan is not followed. All the couples are to listen to God's Word which clearly reveals God's plan for their marriage. A Golden Rule for living marriage according to the Plan of God is: All that promotes genuine unity between husband and wife and between the married couple and God is in accordance with God's plan and vision of marriage. All that endangers, hinders or corrupts genuine unity between husband and wife and between the married couple and God is against God's vision and plan.

Every couple has already actually experienced living marriage according to God's plan at some moment in their marriage. However, most couples did not recognize that moment as

enjoying God's plan, though they knew the moment was different. During the reflection and dialogue portion of this step the couples are asked to reflect on three specific events of their life when they felt closest to or most united with each other. They are to recall and re-experience the beauty, mystery and wonder of those moments. In the conjugal dialogue they share and re-live these moments with each other. After experiencing this step the couple is now aware of moments when they were living their marriage according to God's plan. They also have experienced the effects of such a moment once again as they recall those moments. They enter the next step with the question: how can they live their married life each day in accord with God's plan.

The priest comments on the Scriptures and the couples share their lived experiences of either living or not living, as the case may be, their married life according to God's Plan.

SIXTH STEP:

MUTUAL CONFIDENCE AND DIALOGUE

THIS STEP POINTS OUT THAT MUTUAL CONFIDENCE IS THE HUMAN INGREDIENT OF LIVING MARRIED LIFE ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN, AND A MEANS TO DO THIS IS DIALOGUE. To live married life according to God's Plan has both a human and a divine element. This step reviews the requisite human element: mutual confidence or trust. Each spouse needs to identify and remove whatever obstructs mutual trust in their relationship. There can be no unity without reconciliation; no reconciliation without dialogue; no dialogue without encounter with self.

Mutual Confidence is the reciprocal trust between husband and wife. This mutual confidence will grow to the extent husband and wife open the doors of their hearts, minds, spirits, and souls to each other. Anything inside of one is offered to be received inside the other. Mutual confidence creates an atmosphere within and

around the couple to achieve an authentic and deep-rooted interpersonal encounter. Some people have a way of engendering mutual trust. Married people need to develop this ever-present open invitation of trust in each other. **MUTUAL TRUST IS TO BE A CONTINUING WAY OF LIFE FOR MARRIED COUPLES.** Spouses invite each other to such a confidence by actually practicing it on one's own. *Trust never can be demanded; it can only be given.*

The vehicle for the growth of mutual trust is conjugal dialogue. Conjugal dialogue here means interpersonal communication. This is obviously a great deal more than simply ventilating, blaming or dumping. When a couple truly dialogues in the sense of intercommunicating, the actions as well as the words themselves engender life and warmth; the words come from one heart to live and reside in the other heart. The words are the spouse and not just about the spouse. The communication must flow then from a self-encounter. Such a dialogue includes both giving and receiving **mutually**. There must be an interchange. It must be mutually desired for the two lives to unify so that the heart, mind, and will of the couple experience unity so that the two lives unify. This is precisely what an encounter is all about. The key is a "listening and open heart; a meeting of the hearts." The deeper the giving of self, the more one needs to become an individual.

This mutual confiding must become a way of living married life. The couple must communicate concerning all matters of daily life, both great and small. The sharing, the confiding, is to include all that is going on in a spouse's life; feelings, beliefs, hopes, accomplishments, pains, hurts, heartaches, fears, happenings and so on. There must be no secrets. At the end of the day when the spouses retire, both must know that the other has kept nothing hidden. According to the Ferrers, without this assurance true, genuine unity between the spouses is impossible. This produces inner peace within each spouse and brings a natural unity and happiness. (Strictly professional secrets are not to be shared, for

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these secrets in themselves usually have nothing to do directly with the marital relationship.)

In dialogue two very important conditions are required: clarity and humility. The listener must be positively sure he/she clearly understands what the other is saying. An attitude of humility is equally essential; one cannot have the attitude "I know what is best." or "I have the truth." This destroys mutual confidence. Also, God speaks to the couple through each spouse, not through one.

In this step the spouse's reflection is to uncover what obstacles keep him or her from mutual trust, from reconciliation. Through the conjugal dialogue the couple must take steps together to help to remove the obstacles to mutual trust in their relationship. This is not always easy; it can be the source of much pain. The spouses must always be honest, humble and gentle with each other.

To help the couples, the team couples share how they have overcome and/or are overcoming their obstacles to mutual trust and dialogue, and what effect this has had on their relationship.

SEVENTH STEP:

CANA

PURPOSE OF THIS STEP IS TO BRING THE WORD OF GOD CLOSER TO THE LIFE OF THE COUPLE. This step is a communal meditation on the Gospel story of the Wedding Feast of Cana (John 2). It is the transitional step to the Sacrament of Marriage and its Graces.

To overcome some obstacles to mutual confidence, a couple often needs a power beyond the human. Dialogue and good intentions in themselves are not enough to effect reconciliation and the openness for the gift of unity. The couple requires a greater power. This and the next step lead the couple to discover the hidden divine

presence and action placed at their disposal for living their marriage according to the plan of God.

This step is to be done in a prayerful atmosphere, in a chapel if possible. Each couple is to have a copy of the Gospel text. As the Word of God is read slowly, each spouse listens, inwardly asking himself or herself: What are these Words of the Lord telling me about us? What thoughts and feelings come to me as I hear the story? The responses to these questions are shared in common. Special attention is to be given to the role of Mary in this story: her intercessory power and her words to the servants: "Do whatever He tells you."

Couples come to realize that Jesus is present in their marriage just as he was at Cana, and they are further led to wonder in exactly what way is He concretely present to them.

The priest sets the scene for the Gospel narrative. The team couples share from their lived experiences what this story meant and means to them in their marriage. The other couples also share the meaning of the Gospel to them and their marriage.

EIGHTH STEP:

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AND ITS GRACES

THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE AND ITS GRACES HAS AS ITS ESSENTIAL POINT THE FACT THAT MARRIAGE IS THE LIVING SIGN OF THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRIST WITH HIS PEOPLE, WHO ARE HIS CHURCH. It is important therefore that every couple be aware of the essential meaning of marriage being a "Sacrament." A Sacrament, by its very nature, insures the presence and action of Jesus in everyday life not only within the couple's relationship but also their relationship to others. The Sacrament of Marriage makes Cana a reality in the life of the couple; this is "the great treasure

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hidden in the field” of their living relationship. (cf. Matthew. 13:45)

Through the Sacrament of Marriage a man and a woman are joined together in and through Jesus; He is the life giving “yoke” that joins the two to live as one. When the couples are so joined, they look not at each other but in the same direction with Jesus, who continually looks to do the will of the Father. It is this looking in the same direction in and with Jesus that effects unity in their relationship. St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians writes: “Defer to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (5:21)

The couple yoked through and with Jesus in the Sacrament of their Marriage becomes a living sign of the relationship of Jesus, the Savior, with His people, His Church. His presence flows out from them to their children and to others. Jesus freely gives to the couple the gift of Himself; this gratuitous gift is called “Grace.” It is the Grace of love, which is the Holy Spirit, Who is Himself the love emanating from the perfect union between Jesus, the Son, and His Father; this Grace is a sharing in fact in the divine life itself. Among the Graces received through receiving the Sacrament of Marriage are included unity, healing, proper parenting, sanctifying each other (all are called to be saints), witnessing (influencing others), etc. The couple living under the magnitude of this gift becomes a living sign of the death and resurrection of Christ, for in living out of love they die many times to singleness to live as a couple in the Lord. In this way the couple becomes a living sign and witness to others of God’s presence and action in the world.

Through this step the couple becomes much more appreciative of the deep and holy dimension of their love and commitment to each other to live a life of unity in the Lord. The couple becomes more conscious that for their living together in unity they have the help of divine power which is always flowing in and through each of them from Jesus Himself. In receiving the very life

of Jesus Himself they also receive His strength, endurance, perseverance, humility and the power to forgive and accept. The couple, as they live their life united to the life of Jesus, becomes a living sign for themselves and others of His Presence within them. The couple sees and recognizes the presence and action (the Grace) of God in their married and family life and that they bring that presence wherever they go and to whomever they meet.

The priest explains the meaning of the Sacrament of Marriage; the team-couple shares their lived-experience of the presence and action of Jesus (Grace) in their married and family life.

NINTH STEP:

THE GREAT REVIEW

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STEP IS TO EXPERIENCE A DEEP PERSONAL REFLECTION “IN THE LORD.” Each spouse is now more aware of who they are and the tremendous power that exists in their marriage as well as its responsibility. Each is at last really ready to experience Marriage Encounter; this step and the following one are the heart of the Encounter Weekend.

In the ninth step each spouse examines and reviews his or her married life through a deep personal reflection in the presence of the Lord. Each spouse is given an “inquiry,” a set of questions, to aid in reviewing the most important areas of their married life — self, the marriage, God, children, home, Church, community, their apostolate. Before and during the personal reflection each spouse is to pray and listen for the Lord’s guiding and directing presence and action.

After the ninth step the couples come together for a short prayer; this prayer should be in the chapel, when that is possible. This prayer may be in the form of a reading from the Scriptures or any other prayer(s). All team and couples pray together.

TENTH STEP:

THE GREAT DIALOGUE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STEP IS TO EXPERIENCE LIVING MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN. The couple, ever mindful of the Lord's presence, privately shares their personal reflection of the previous step. They become the seed of God's Word for each other as God speaks to them through each other.

TO ACT:

To Make Our Marriage What It Ought To Be

For the experience of the Marriage Encounter Weekend to be a new way of living married life, the couples enter the "act" phase. Because of the experience of the last step, the couples at this point are desirous of committing themselves to living married life according to God's plan. In this regard Marriage Spirituality enunciates what action is necessary within the relationship to live the Plan of God, that is to experience unity, and the Christian Commitment of Marriage, which centers on achieving an open marriage. It is from these two steps that a plan of life is drawn up.

STEP ELEVEN:

MATRIMONIAL SPIRITUALITY

IN THIS STEP, MATRIMONIAL SPIRITUALITY, THE COUPLE REFLECTS ON THE ACTION TO SUSTAIN THE LIFE, SPIRIT, SOUL, CREATIVITY, SACREDNESS AND MYSTERY OF THEIR MARRIAGE UNION "IN THE LORD." Through their reflection and dialoguing on the "Evaluation of Marriage" the couples are aware of the fruit of the Spirit of God (Cf. Ephesians 4:22) in their marriage and they desire to hold on to what they have experienced, a deep unity in

their relationship. It is obvious that this relationship, like any relationship, must be nurtured and nourished, otherwise, it will wither and die. It becomes incumbent upon the couple, then, that they reflect on the ways and means that are necessary for them to experience unity in their married life and insure the presence and growth of the Spirit of Jesus in their relationship. His Spirit is the saving power of their union; it is the source of the gift of unity.

Therefore in this step, Marriage Spirituality, the couples commit themselves to whatever actions are necessary to sustain, feed, nourish, strengthen and deepen that relationship with the Spirit of Jesus. These actions are food for the Spirit of love, which is God's love, living in their married and family life.

Marriage Spirituality, then, must not be disconnected from real life, but rather joined to and rooted in the ins and outs, ups and downs of a couple's daily life. Marriage Spirituality feeds the union of the couple with Jesus' Spirit as they walk in and through the realities of their life. It removes any gap that exists between faith and life.

To achieve this goal the couple commits themselves to specific and concrete actions based on the **four pillars** of the **Encounter**: Marriage in the Plan of God, Confidence and Dialogue, Cana, and the Sacrament of Marriage and Its Graces. To live married life in this way the husband and wife must have an ever progressing and deepening mutual confidence and dialogue; the content of the mutual confidence is found in ALL the lived experiences and happenings in each spouse's life. The quality of each spouse's presence to and love of the other determines the quality of the couple's presence to and love of God. These two presences cannot be separated.

The source of power for this quality of presence to each other and God is the Sacrament of Marriage and its Graces. Through the Sacrament of Marriage a man and a woman become a new entity, a couple, whom God "yokes" in and through Jesus. Jesus is present

and desires to be active in their relationship. Jesus is active in and through the daily events and happenings of the couple's married life. The couple must always be open to listen to God's Word. "Do whatever He tells you!" The attitude of mutual confidence needs to be ever present, for God speaks to the couple through each spouse; the spouses need to listen individually and together to the Scriptures, for God reveals Himself in them. Each spouse prays individually but they are to pray together, listening to each other to seek guidance through God's Word as it is made known to them through each other. The couple going to marriage enrichment programs is part of marriage spirituality. The act of love making as well as all the acts done for one another are all ways of increasing the Spirit of Jesus within the relationship. It is the living out of the Golden Rule referred to in God's plan for Marriage.

The team couples share their "acts" in striving to live their married life based on the four pillars of the Marriage Encounter.

TWELFTH STEP:

THE CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT OF MARRIAGE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS STEP IS TO HELP THE MARRIAGE TO BE OPEN; EACH COUPLE REFLECTS ON THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND MISSION TO THE WORLD TO BUILD A MORE CHRISTIAN AND THEREFORE A MORE HUMAN WORLD. The goal of Marriage Encounter for the original couples was to introduce married couples to a way of living married life in order **"to remake the world from its foundations according to the heart of God."** In this step each couple is summoned to commit themselves to join with all couples striving to live the Sacrament of their marriage "in the Lord," that is, according to God's plan. The Christian commitment of Marriage means that each couple has an obligation and a mission to be a witness of the Presence of the Lord within them to each other, their children and others, and in

that order. The idea of “commitment” includes “a decision, promise, choice, responsibility, faithfulness, and unconditional self-donation, all of which results in a sacred bond.” There are any number of degrees possible within an unlimited number of possible commitments that any couple can make. Each couple has an obligation and a mission to share the treasure of this experience with others.

This obligation and mission flows from the Sacrament of their marriage. Each couple has a responsibility to become witnesses in society of married love and unity by living out in a concrete manner the Sacrament of Marriage and its Graces as well as Marriage Spirituality. These practices must follow a proper order in accord with the plan of God, that is, from couple to family and from the family to society. Marriage is not simply and solely a relationship between a man and woman but something that involves an open relationship with everyone with whom a couple comes into contact. The couple is to draw up a concrete and specific plan of living their married life and commit themselves to endeavor to live it in relation to each other, their children, their Church and their community after they leave the weekend. An inquiry to concretize this plan is given to them for personal reflection and conjugal dialogue.

The team shares how they are endeavoring to live their commitment to their plan of life and how this is strengthening, deepening and enlivening their marriage bond “in the Lord.”

THIRTEENTH STEP:

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING TO GOD

The prayer of thanksgiving is a joyful communal celebration of the Eucharist to praise, glorify and thank God for all He has done for and given the couples and their families. They petition God for all that is needed in married and family life whether for themselves or for others.

AFTER THE ENCOUNTER

As the couples leave to go home, each is given another “inquiry” to be done at home during the succeeding two weeks. The “Inquiry” has two parts. One concerns the family in which all its members evaluate life and relationships within the home. The parents give the example to their children of listening with an open heart, mind and soul. The second part of the “inquiry” is for the husband and wife. Both parts of the “inquiry” are to be completed before the couples return for a meeting to share on their lived experiences at home.

CONCLUSION

This was the methodology and the essence of the instrument used by the original couples in Spain in the 1960’s. It was to give couples a way of living married life based on a profound spirituality that united life and faith, and brought growth to the spouses as couple and as couple with God. It was this “cup” that the Teams of Pius XII offered to couples in different areas of Spain and ultimately to many parts of the world.

CHAPTER X

The Growth of Marriage Encounter in Spain Between 1961 and 1970

The Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII promoted the Marriage Encounter experience as their primary service to all married couples. During the 1960's as the Teams of Pius XII spread to other dioceses, this service followed them. Between 1960 and 1969 these Teams began to work with other marriage and family movements in Spain. At the request of the Bishops of Spain these movements formed the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano (MFC). The MFC adopted as one of its primary services the Marriage Encounter. This growth of the Marriage Encounter experience brought it outside the leadership of the Teams of Pius XII.

With the spread of Marriage Encounter outside of Barcelona, the Teams of Pius XII were aware of the dangers to the loss of vision, spirit and methodology of Marriage Encounter. Accepting these "signs of the times," the Teams of Pius XII appointed a couple to coordinate the Marriage Encounter experience. This couple, Diego and Fino Bertomeu-Granell, were vital in coordinating and promoting the spread of Marriage Encounter throughout Spain and the Spanish islands in accord with its original vision and mystique for not only the Teams of Pius XII but also MFC.

THE FORMATION OF MOCEAM IN SPAIN

During his visit to Barcelona in 1958 Fr. Pedro Richards, Founder of MFC in Latin America, had spoken again to the couples about the merit and value of uniting the many marriage and family associations into one association similar to that in Latin America. His urging infected the Teams of Pius XII to work more

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resolutely to unite in some way the marriage and family movements existing in Spain. Among the many marriage and family associations, the two most notable were the Matrimonial Teams of Pius XII and the Obra "Apostolica Familiar". In 1957 these two groups had led the promotion of a National Family Day (Jornada Nacional Familiar). Such days were held in 1958, 1959 and 1960; on these days the other marriage and family groups joined them. A ground swell sprang up to unite these different groups serving marriage and family life at the Third National Family Day, headed by Bishop Taranon, the bishop of Solsona and secretary of the Spanish Bishop's Conference and Advisor to the Matrimonial Teams. With the support of the bishop the groups present formed a confederation which became known as "Movimientos Catolicos de Espiritualidad y Apostolado Matrimonial" (MOCEAM). Out of this confederation evolved the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano (Christian Family Movement) in Spain.

In August 1962 the first national assembly of MOCEAM took place. During this meeting, through the leadership of the Teams of Pius XII and Obra Apostolica Familiar (OAF), statutes were drawn up to solidify the union of these marriage and family organizations and movements as a national confederation.

THE FORGING OF MOVIMIENTO FAMILIAR CRISTIANO IN SPAIN

During the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) the Bishops of Spain urged the MOCEAM to unite more formally into one movement within Spain. In November 1964 the leadership of the "Teams of Pius XII" and "Obra Apostolica Familiar" met in Madrid to accelerate the joining of these groups and organizations into one movement.

The following January the leadership of these two national movements, namely, Jaime and Mercedes Ferrer-Escola and Fr. Calvo, from the "Teams of Pius XII", and Pepe and Isabel Gascon-

Laguna and Fr. Salvador Munoz Iglesias, from the “Obra Apostolica Familiar”, met at Zaragoza to further the union. These couples and priests officially committed their two movements to create the “Movimiento Familiar Cristiano” in Spain. This name was taken from South America for the reason that, if at anytime in the future they would join with them in a world movement, they would already have the name for such a unified movement. Also, this name pinpointed more exactly their *raison d’etre* and ambition.

In February of 1966 the MOCEAM held their third meeting in Barcelona, Spain. At this meeting the two national movements, “Teams of Pius XII” and “Obra Apostolica Familiar”, designed a common plan to be worked on until the meeting in April of the following year. In April they formed “Movimiento Familiar Cristiano” (MFC) and sent a petition to the National Conference of Spanish Bishops for approval at the national level. Before granting this petition of approval, the Conference of Spanish Bishops required that all current organizations and associations who joined the MFC were to relinquish their own individual names and independence so that all of the groups were to be known as the Movimiento Familiar Cristiano (MFC).

In November (1967) the “Teams of Pius XII” and the “Obra Apostolica Familiar”, and the other associations that had joined, agreed to abandon their former names and individual associations. With this self-extinction of the individual associations and movements, the Spanish Bishops approved the MFC at the national level in Spain. In Madrid on February 24th and 25th, 1968, the National Assembly of the MFC elected Pepe and Isabel Gascon-Laguna as the National President. The Conference of Bishops from a list of three names presented to them appointed Fr. Calvo as the National Chaplain (Consiliario Nacional) of the MFC.

Each of the former movements brought with them whatever could be of service to this newly founded Movement. The “Teams of Pius XII” offered the “Marriage Encounter Weekend” as a

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service for the MFC. The MFC committed itself to the spread of the Marriage Encounter weekend. This instrument became one of the MFC's primary services for the growth of spirituality in both married and family life. The President Couple, Pepe and Isabel Gascon-Laguna, and Fr. Calvo appointed Diego and Fina Bertomeu-Granell the co-ordinators and promoters for Marriage Encounter in the MFC.

THE SPREAD OF MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER IN SPAIN BY TEAMS OF PIUS†XII

Meanwhile, Marriage Encounter was spreading in Spain during these years between 1958 and 1967. With the return of the married couples from Rome in 1958 many Bishops throughout Spain invited the "Teams of Pius XII" to form Teams in their respective dioceses. The growth of the number of Teams was very rapid. The Barcelona "Teams of Pius XII" had this new instrument of Marriage Encounter. The problem was how to prepare the Teams of Pius XII outside of Barcelona to experience and understand Marriage Encounter so they could offer a Marriage Encounter. The solution adopted was to call a national meeting for the priests of the Teams of Pius XII. This meeting was held in September (1962) in La Granja (Segovia), the retreat center for the Better World Movement. At this meeting Fr. Calvo presented "Marriage Encounters of the First and Second Degree." In this way the priests present were introduced to the essence and method of Encounter; they were to bring this experienced methodology with its essence back to their respective dioceses and train the couples of the Teams of Pius XII in the methodology and essence of Marriage Encounter. This would enable Marriage Encounter Weekend to be experienced in these areas.

As a result, in the following year (1963) Marriage Encounter enjoyed a vigorous increase as it spread to areas in Spain wherever the "Teams of Pius XII" were present. On March 8th, 9th and 10th

“Marriage Encounter” was experienced in Segorbe-Castellon by seventeen couples and the Bishop, who celebrated Mass at the end of the weekend. He graciously approved the experience. Several more Encounter weekends were presented because of the insistence of couples who had experienced the weekend. Because of the difficulties for many couples to attend from Friday through Sunday, the Encounter experience was presented on two days — Saturday and Sunday.

Diego and Fina Bertomeu-Granell experienced the first weekend at Segorbe-Castellon. Because of their experience this couple became so enthused about Marriage Encounter that they decided to offer themselves to help spread the Marriage Encounter experience in Spain. They were a childless and wealthy couple, which made it somewhat easier for them to fulfill their generous offer.

Meanwhile the Encounter was becoming more known in Spain. In October MOCEAM and the Institute of Pastoral Theology held a conference. At this Conference Fr. Calvo presented an explanation of the “Encounters for Married Couples” (Encuentros Para Matrimonios). His presentation concerned the Zero, First and Second Grade Encounters. At this meeting the Pastoral Theology group, with help from the MOCEAM, organized pastoral courses for married couples; the title given was “Cursillo De Pastoral Matrimonial.” Through these “little courses” Marriage Encounter became better known.

On the 16th of December 1964 the tenth Marriage Encounter was experienced in the village of Bechi in the diocese of Castellon. With this Encounter Jaime Ferrer said: “The Encounter was now strong enough to be exported to dioceses where the Teams of Pius XII were not present.” In November 1965 Marriage Encounter started in Valencia and Palma de Mallorca with excellent results. The Teams of Pius XII wanted to spread Marriage Encounter to other areas of Spain. For this to happen the promotion of Marriage

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Encounter needed to be coordinated to preserve its vision and methodology.

THE APPOINTMENT OF COORDINATORS FOR MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

By July 1966 the Marriage Encounter Weekend had become one of the most fruitful family apostolates of the “Teams of Pius XII”. The Teams of Pius XII decided to make the diffusion of Marriage Encounter the principle apostolate of the Movement. They appointed a couple, Diego and Fina Bertomeu-Granell, the coordinators for this and together with Fr. Calvo were assigned to promote Marriage Encounter. These coordinators planned to promote Marriage Encounter first in the dioceses where the “Teams of Pius XII” had spread. Their plan was to inform and promote interest among these couples within the Movement for this new apostolate. During the next few months, different places where the teams were, requested information concerning this new apostolate for marriage and family life. During 1967 Fina and Diego fulfilled this charge, most of the time without Fr. Calvo, because he was in America.

Diego and Fina Bertomeu were most diligent and attentive in fulfilling their responsibilities. At the beginning of January 1967 Diego and Fina traveled to Palma de Mallorca to contact and exchange with the couples of the “Teams of Pius XII” who were presenting Marriage Encounter there. In the same month, on the 14th and 15th, this couple introduced the first Marriage Encounter in Madrid to promote this apostolate in that diocese. Diego and Fina led a Marriage Encounter at Seville on January 21st and 22nd. On February 4th and 5th they presented a Marriage Encounter in Valencia. At this Encounter there were three couples from “Obra Apostolica Familiar” (OAF); these couples became interested in experiencing a Marriage Encounter after a conversation with the couple who was in charge of the Teams of

Pius XII in the diocese of Madrid. Through this Valencia experience greater contact began to exist between the Teams of Pius XII and OAF in Valencia; Marriage Encounter became a bridge between the two movements. Marriage Encounter began in Granada on February 25th and 26th. A second Marriage Encounter was held in Madrid in April and the Team couples were from Madrid's first Encounter experience; Madrid was the first diocese to have diocesan teams for Marriage Encounter. Several more Encounters followed in this diocese. Marriage Encounter was given in Seville on the 14th and 15th of April, in Bilbao on the 4th and 5th of May, in Zaragoza on the 20th and 21st of May and in Caceres on the 3rd and 4th of June. Later that year a second Marriage Encounter weekend was experienced in Seville. During the summer Encounters were also presented in Barcelona, Valencia and Palma de Mallorca. After the initial formation of the MFC by the couples in April 1967, Marriage Encounter began to be promoted in the areas where the MFC was present. According to Diego and Fina, Encounters were presented in all but three of the dioceses where the MFC was existing by the end of the summer of 1967.

FIRST MANUAL FOR "MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER" IS PRINTED IN SPANISH

The Marriage Encounter Teams up to this time (September 1967) had been following a typed outline drawn up by Fr. Calvo. This outline, which set forth the essence and methodology of each step of the weekend, was mimeographed and given to the different couples offering the Marriage Encounter Weekend. With Fr. Calvo's return to Spain in September 1967 from his second trip to America, he and Diego and Fina exchanged their experiences; neither knew of the other's activities. Fr. Calvo compared himself and the Bertomeus as farmers who had sown seed, and now it needed to be cultivated. The question was how to cultivate both in Spain and America the original and authentic spirit and mystique

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of Marriage Encounter. They became very much aware as they read the signs of the times that the outlines were not sufficient. A guidebook, a manual, was needed to explain and deepen the vision and methodology.

For this purpose Diego and Fina Bertomeu called for a special assembly in Barcelona. They invited couples and priests who were presenting Marriage Encounters in Barcelona, Palma de Mallorca, Segorbe- Castellon and Zaragoza. The assembly was presided over by Diego and Fina Bertomeu and Fr. Calvo. These couples and priests discussed three basic themes: what Marriage Encounter is and what it is not; the characteristics of couples and priests who motivate the two day experience; Marriage Encounter as a service of MFC. The essence and methodology of each step of the experience were to remain as they were on the original mimeographed sheets. The Manual was published in November 1967. Some copies of this Manual were sent to couples and priests in Mexico and the United States where Fr. Calvo had promoted Marriage Encounter during his two visits there.

Marriage Encounter began to expand into other diocese in Spain. Because the discussions for establishing unity among the different matrimonial and familial movements were in progress, Diego and Fina invited couples from these movements to participate in a special Marriage Encounter on the 3rd and 4th of November at Majadahonda (Madrid). Couples from six dioceses and two foreign priests, Fr. Hessler from the United States and Fr. Lopez from Guatemala, experienced this special Marriage Encounter. The couples who participated gave dates for Diego and Fina to come to the dioceses where the Teams of Pius XII did not exist and offer Marriage Encounter. Marriage Encounters were offered at Talavera on the 1st and 2nd of December, at Toledo on January 13 and 14th, 1968, and in Murcia on the 17th and 18th of February. The following week the MFC was formally established; the couples present at this meeting adopted Marriage Encounter as a special service to married and family life; they nominated Diego

and Fina Bertomeu to be responsible nationally for Marriage Encounter in the MFC.

MFC PROMOTES MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

The first Marriage Encounter under the leadership of MFC was given on the 23rd and 24th of March in Segovia at the center of the Better World Movement. On May 11th and 12th an Encounter was presented in Barcelona for all the couples of MFC who desired to participate in the trip to America.

On the 1st and 2nd of June the President couple of the MFC called The First National Assembly of Diocesan Teams of Marriage Encounter which met in Madrid. This assembly was led by the Bertomeus and Fr. Calvo. One or two couples and a priest came from the different dioceses. The purpose of the meeting was to make all the Teams aware of the reality that Marriage Encounter was a service of MFC. At this meeting the themes which were discussed at the Barcelona meeting of the previous September, namely, what Marriage Encounter is not; what Marriage Encounter is, the characteristics of the animators of Marriage Encounter, and the spirit for animating a Marriage Encounter were emphasized. Also at this time it was decided to make a revision of the Manual for they had used all that had been printed in November 1967. Couples and priests were selected to take care of this revision and they were to meet on the 13th and 14th of July in Valencia. The MFC supported the Encounters which were to begin in Mexico and the United States in the month of August. A Marriage Encounter was given in San Sebastian on September 14th and 15th.

To better coordinate and promote Marriage Encounter within MFC the Coordinating couple, Diego and Fina Bertomeu, announced in September that there would be a two-day meeting in three different areas for Marriage Encounter Team-couples. The meetings were held in Murcia, Zaragoza and Madrid. At the

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meeting in Murcia, held during the first days of October, there were couples from Granada, Almeria, Valencia and Murcia; in Zaragoza on October 26th and 27th the couples were from Zaragoza, Bilbao, San Sebastian and Segorbe-Castellon; on November 24th and 25th couples from Madrid, Valladolid, Toledo, Talavera de la Reina, and Segovia met.

The National Chaplain (Fr. Calvo) and the coordinating couple (Fina and Diego Bertomeu) of Marriage Encounter presided over each of these meetings. At the meeting couples and priests shared ideas and suggestions for the betterment of Encounter. They examined the way of life which characterized a couple striving to live according to the Marriage Encounter way of life; the life of a team couple who was presenting an Encounter had to be authentic.

At the meeting these teams agreed to begin to initiate the formation of Encounter teams in the dioceses where it was not but where MFC existed. This was to satisfy the apostolate commitment which MFC had made when it was formed to promote Marriage Encounter as its primary service. These teams consented to help form Marriage Encounter Teams in the aforesaid dioceses and work with couples there until they were ready to operate on their own. The Marriage Encounter Teams from Murcia were responsible for promoting Marriage Encounter in Abbadate and Alicante; couples from Zaragoza for Huesca and Teruel; couples from Valladolid for Burgos; couples from Madrid for Guadalajara and Salamanca; couples from Toledo for Ciudad Real; couples from Granada for Cadiz; and couples from Barcelona for Lerida and Salsona. On November 2nd and 3rd Diego and Fina with Fr. Calvo visited MFC in Las Palmas of the Canary Islands.

The first weekend of November the National Couple of the MFC (Pepe and Isabel Gascon-Laguna) and its Chaplain (Fr. Calvo) journeyed to the Canary Islands to offer the first Marriage Encounter at the retreat house in Las Palmas. The following week Fr. Calvo and the Pich-Botey and the Ruiz- Ruiz couple were

invited to participate at the sixth ICCFM Executive Meeting in La Pree, France. (This was mentioned above.)

During the third weekend of November (the 15th and 16th) the Second National Assembly of Diocesan Teams of Marriage Encounter was held in Toledo. Present at this meeting were the Gascon-Lagunas and Fr. Calvo, the National President couple and the National Chaplain of MFC respectively, the Bertomeus and all the couples responsible for the extending of apostolates which included services to the engaged couples, families and married life, especially Marriage Encounter, and many couples from Diocesan Teams involved in presenting Marriage Encounter. Various topics were developed by couples from different areas of Spain. A couple from Granada spoke to the question of the Environment for the Encounter; a couple from Barcelona addressed recruiting couples for the Marriage Encounter Experience and the Post Encounter; a couple from Palma de Mallorca discussed the spreading of the Encounter into the rural areas of Spain, for up to this moment Marriage Encounter had been mostly in the urban areas of Spain; a couple from Bilbao presented the topic of Conjugal Spirituality; and Fr. Calvo through his presentation deepened the spirit and mystique of Marriage Encounter.

In Toledo in November 1969 the Third National Assembly of the Diocesan Teams of Marriage Encounter was held. Very many couples and priests attended. At this convention were the President Couple (Gascons) and the National Chaplain (Fr. Calvo) as well as the Board of MFC, called Comision Equipo Nacional (CEN). The CEN was composed of couples who were responsible for all the different services of MFC for couples and families. The meeting was concerned with the following themes: the actual state of Marriage in today's world, motivated by a couple from Zaragoza; dialogue and mutual confidence guided by a couple from Murcia; and, marriage spirituality led by a couple from Barcelona. Fr. Calvo and Jose and Margarita Pich-Botey spoke on the topic of a

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broader vision for the extension and promotion of Marriage Encounter in the world.

The MFC continued to promote Marriage Encounter in other areas of Spain during 1970 and 1971. Couples from Las Palmas in the Canary Islands brought the service of Marriage Encounter to the island of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote in January 1970. On February 4th and 5th of that year the first Marriage Encounter was presented in the diocese of Tarragona and the following week it was brought to the diocese of Zamora. The Fourth National Assembly for M.F.C. met in Madrid on the 29th and 30th of January 1972. A majority of the diocesan teams of Marriage Encounter met with Fr. Calvo, Gascons, Bertomeus; the Bishop and the national team from CEN of the MFC were also present. The purpose of the meeting was to revise and actualize the third edition of the Manual. Prior to the meeting couples were informed of this project and asked to send experiences and suggestions, and for their cooperation in this project. These were shared and a definite outline was readied for the next edition of the Manual.

At the time of this meeting the Bertomeus announced that after Marriage Encounter was presented in Lugo and Calatayud, there were only three dioceses in Spain where the M.F.C. was present that had not experienced the Marriage Encounter. They expressed the hope that these dioceses would soon have the Encounter.

MARRIAGE RETORNO

While Diego and Fina Bertomeu were promoting the spread of Marriage Encounter, they became alarmed by the loss of part of the original Marriage Encounter. They noticed that husband and wife who were experiencing the Marriage Encounter were reconciling with each other “in the Lord,” but did not persevere to the reconciliation as a couple with the Lord. Also, the starting point of prayer was not being fully experienced by the

“encountering” couples. They perceived too, that the Team couples especially were lacking nourishment in the spiritual reality of marriage. This couple, sensing that these omissions might change the original vision of Marriage Encounter, spoke about these matters with Fr. Calvo. He saw these conditions as a sign that a separate experience was necessary for the “Encuentro de segundo Grado” to be realized.

After listening to the Bertomeus, Fr Calvo believed that couples needed to be given the opportunity to experience directly the “Encuentro de segundo grado.” He set to work to develop an outline to help the couples experience a reconciliation with God as a couple. He finished the outline in January 1967. At first this experience was called “Re-encuentro Conjugal” (Marriage Re-encounter), but later the name was changed to “Retorno Conjugal” (translated into English “Marriage Retorno”).

Marriage Retorno was a weekend experience focusing on a couple’s relationship with God as revealed in and through the Bible. During the weekend the couple first reconciled with each other in order to remove any human obstacles that may hinder or block them from hearing God’s Word to them through each other. The rest of the weekend is divided into three stages corresponding to God as Father (Creator), Son, (Redeemer) and Holy Spirit (Sanctifier). In each of these stages the methodology of observe, judge and act is followed. Each spouse observes where they are in relationship with God in each of these stages; each listens to the Word of God as God reveals His view of His relationship to them; each spouse then makes known to the other what action they believe they need to take to bridge the gap between where they are in the relationship, and what God invites them to be in and through their married life. Through this experience God’s Word, God’s action, becomes the common soil in which couple’s life is rooted. During this weekend the couple would experience more directly reconciliation with the Lord, the starting point of couple prayer, and be nourished in the spiritual aspect of marriage.

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In February 1967 Fr. Calvo and Diego and Fina Bertomeu offered the first Marriage Retorno in Cartagena, Spain. In 1971 in Ireland Jose and Margarita Pich-Botey and Fr. Calvo offered the first international Marriage Retorno. This was sponsored by the ICCFM and was participated in by members of that Movement including, from the United States, Pat and Patty Crowley, Jamie and Arlene Whelan, the Devines and Fr. Heinen.

These Spanish couples and priests were firm in their belief that Marriage Encounter was the fundamental step for the renovation of family life for it brought reconciliation between the spouses and the couple with God. These couples of Spanish MFC understood that Marriage Encounter was their fundamental service for helping to create stronger and healthier families in the world. Such families were essential “to remake the world from its foundations according to the mind of God.” They believed that they were fulfilling the “call of action” of Pius XII. In this mission the contacts with the other Christian Family Movements in the world helped them to bring this experience outside of Spain. This diffusion was helped in no small way by the formation of the International Confederation of the Christian Family Movement in 1966.

CHAPTER XI

Marriage Encounter Spreads Outside of Spain During the 1960's

During the 1960's there was frequent contact between the Marriage and Family Movements in Spain and the Christian Family Movement (MFC) in Latin-America. This led to the establishment of the International Christian Family Movement (ICCFM). One of its main apostolates was to spread the Marriage Encounter to other areas of the world, especially Latin America and the United States.

THE FORMING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT

Several circumstances awakened the necessity of forming an international assembly among the married groups around the world. The first was the influence of Fr. Richards. His coming to Spain created a close bond between the Movements in these two areas of the world. This closeness became more evident when the Latin American MFC invited Fr. Calvo and Jose and Margarita Pich-Botey to attend their third meeting in Rio de Janeiro in July 1963. Fr. Calvo and the Pichs represented the different Spanish organizations but mainly the Teams of Pius XII. The theme of this conference was: "The Father of the Family, Shaper of the Modern World." At this meeting the Latin-American representatives from different countries elected Pepe and Luzma Alvarez-Icaza from Mexico as the President Couple of the Spanish Latin American MFC. During this meeting the Pichs and Fr. Calvo spoke informally about what was going on in Spain, especially of MOCEAM and the movement toward unity among the groups concerned with marriage and family life in Spain.

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The second circumstance was the fact that the fourth session of the Vatican Council, which began in September 1965, strongly influenced the Marriage and Family Movements of the world to form a global structure. The president couple of the Latin American MFC, Pepe and Luzma Alvarez-Icaza, were invited as “auditores” to the Council. They were to represent the Families in the Church. In November the Mexican couple asked Jamie and Mercedes Ferrer and Francisco Claraso and his wife, Assumpta Raventos, to come to Rome to assist them to coordinate the expectations and suggestions of Families in order to present them to the Council. Fr. Calvo was already in Rome. These couples and Fr. Calvo formed the “House of the Family.” They drew up the three following questions and responded to them: What would families like to say to the Council about family problems? What did they like most about today’s Church? What did they think needed to be changed or improved in today’s Church? This joint venture not only gave the leadership of the Teams of Pius XII a greater impetus to bring about the MFC in Spain, but also made the members of the “House of the Family” realize the strong value of a united voice from the different Christian Family Movements throughout the world.

The final event was the fourth meeting of the Latin American MFC at Caracas, Venezuela. To this meeting this group invited not only Fr. Calvo and the Ferrers, but also asked marriage organizations and movements from countries around the world to send representatives. At the end of this meeting these representatives signed a document which founded the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements (ICCFM). The founding members were: MFC of Latin America, CFM of the United States, and the MFC of Spain. The Confederation’s main purpose was to be the international voice for the family.

FIRST MARRIAGE ENCOUNTERS IN LATIN-AMERICA (1966)

During the Caracas meeting the Ferrers and Fr. Calvo spoke about Marriage Encounter. Most of the representatives expressed an interest in making the experience available in their respective countries. At the end of the meeting the newly elected president couple, Pepe and Luzma Alvarez-Icaza of Mexico, invited Fr. Calvo and the Ferrers to Mexico City to introduce Marriage Encounter. After the first experience of the Encounter the Ferrers returned to Spain because of their family obligations. Fr. Calvo remained behind and he, with Mexican couples who had experienced the Marriage Encounter, offered the weekend experience in three different regions of Mexico. The Mexican MFC sponsored the Marriage Encounter Weekends. From Mexico the Marriage Encounter began to spread into nearly all Latin-American countries where the MFC was active.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES

In November of that year (1966) Jaime and Ana Maria Benet-Abiega, who had experienced one of the Encounters, invited Fr. Calvo to go to Miami, Florida, for some rest and relaxation. While in Miami the couple spoke about Marriage Encounter and they decided to have a Marriage Encounter for the Spanish-speaking couples at the end of November. Seven Cuban couples and two priests — Fr. Villaronga and Msgr. Fitzpatrick, now the retired bishop of Brownsville, Texas — participated in the weekend. Fr. Calvo left a typed copy of his schema of the weekend with the Miami couples and priests.

PAT AND PATTY CROWLEY AND MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

In 1965 Pat and Patty Crowley, the founders of the Christian Family Movement in the United States, traveled to Barcelona, Spain on their return to the U.S. from Rome. Pat and Patty had been in Rome for ten days participating in the discussions of the Special Study Group on Population and Birth Control. They came to Barcelona “to attend a family group meeting.” While there the Crowleys picked up some new ideas on the importance of husbands and wives discussing all their inner thoughts, desires, hopes and dreams. In writing about the visit with the Spanish couples Patty Crowley wrote:

“We picked up some new ideas on the importance of husband and wife discussing all their inner thoughts. They (the Spanish couples) put Pope Paul’s injunction about the importance of dialogue as expressed in his first encyclical (*Ecclesiam Suam*) into reality within the family.

“I remember how impressed we were on hearing of this idea of sitting down and learning the technique of dialogue. As a couple we had done this. But the group in Spain had put dialogue into focus. We brought the idea back as an action item of the Christian Family Movement of Spain and pondered about how to use it here (in the United States).”

(author’s parentheses)

For the Spanish couples the focus of dialogue was to help the couple discover in the “light of God’s Word” who they were as a couple and to what mission action God was calling them and their family in and through all that was happening in their individual, couple and family life. Through this combination of spirituality and apostolate, the couple and the family were to grow in unity in

and with the Lord. For the Spanish couples the priority of prayer was not to be lost no matter how “noble” the activity of the mission might be.

In August 1967 the U.S. CFM held its Convention at Notre Dame University in Indiana. According to Patty Crowley:

“It was one of the best, if the roster of speakers is any standard: Harvey Cox, Father Bernard Haring, Fr. Gregory Baum, Bill Antonio, Sidney Callahan, Father John Thomas and Gordon Zahn. Fr. Clarence Rivers thrilled us with his liturgies, and a young man by the name of Ray Repp introduced his music, first to hundreds of children at the Convention, and then to all of us in CFM.”

At the same time and in the same place the ICCFM was holding its third meeting at Notre Dame’s Center for Continuing Education. Fr. Calvo, the priest chaplain of Marriage Encounter, attended this meeting as an observer. His efforts for promoting Marriage Encounter were cited in the minutes of that meeting under the heading of: Interchange of Apostolic Experience.”

In this sense, the most important step given was the propagation of Marriage Encounter, started in Spain but which Fr. Calvo afterwards took to Mexico and which spread from there to other Latin-American countries. In a short time it had spread also in the U.S. to Paterson and Newark (New Jersey), New York, Lansing, Erie, Detroit and Chicago. It was pointed out at the meeting that Marriage Encounter attempts to show an efficient way to dialogue in the Lord as well as how to achieve the unity of the couple. Fr. Hessler, Fr. Calvo and the Gomez-Benets proposed that some of the leaders present it to the convention in order to afford all those present an opportunity to experience this first hand, and indeed everyone was greatly interested.

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Among the representatives of CFM from other countries were Alfonso and Mercedes Gomez-Benet from Mexico and Jose and Margarita Pich-Botey from Spain. The Gomez couple who had recently experienced an Encounter and was thrilled, kept pestering the Crowleys during the Conference for time to introduce Marriage Encounter. The Crowleys found it impossible to put them into the schedule because everything had been minutely planned for the convention months before. Even so the Gomez couple persisted. Patty wrote: "Finally and perhaps just to be rid of them, I approached the administration at Notre Dame and asked if a few couples could stay over a few days and make an Encounter." The administration of the University agreed. The Gomez' went around to couples and spoke so enthusiastically about Marriage Encounter that ten couples decided to stay and experience the Encounter. Those participating CFM couples came from five different continents. This was the first International Marriage Encounter and also the first in English. The members of the animating ecclesial team were Alfonso and Mercedes Gomez-Benet and Fr. Donald Hessler MM.

Robert and Mary Munson of Florida experienced this Encounter and, on their return home, they immediately sought out the Marriage Encounter outline left the year before by Fr. Calvo. They had this outline translated into English; this became the first English translation of the Marriage Encounter Weekend. The Marriage Encounter weekend began to be given in Miami and in other cities in the U.S.

THE FORMING OF THE "ENCUENTRO FAMILIAR AMERICA-ESPANA"

In October 1967 the Fourth Assembly of ICCFM gathered in Madrid, Spain for the first time. At this meeting Pat and Patty Crowley, mindful of their desire to make Marriage Encounter an action of the CFM in the U.S., met with the Ferrers and Fr. Calvo.

Pat and Patty Crowley and Pepe and Luzma Alvarez-Icaza invited the Spanish couples to come to the United States to promote Marriage Encounter among the CFM couples and Hispanic married couples living in poor areas of the U.S. They, the aforementioned couples and priest, formed the “Encuentro Familiar America-Espana” (EFAE). The main purpose of EFAE was to promote the Marriage Encounter (Encuentro Conyugal) among Hispanic married couples living in poor areas of the USA so that an MFC/USA could be born. However, according to Patty Crowley, she and her husband, Pat, insisted that when the Spanish couples came to the U.S., “at least one of the teams be English speaking so that those who spoke only English could share in the experience.”

The Spanish MFC, mindful of its commitment to the promotion and growth of Marriage Encounter, responded favorably to the invitation. It was agreed that the Spanish couples and priests would pay for the flight to and from the United States, while the CFM couples in the U.S. were to provide housing and transportation in the U.S., as well as arrange the schedule as to where and when the Marriage Encounter Weekends were to take place. The time was set up to coincide with the fifth meeting of the ICCFM in Newark, New Jersey, in August of the following year (1968).

“MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER” EXPERIENCE BROUGHT TO CITIES IN THE U.S.

On August 4th the U.S. CFM greeted 51 couples and a few of their children and 17 priests of the Spanish MFC. The Spanish MFC had organized themselves into 17 ecclesial teams to offer the Marriage Encounter experience. Between August 4 and 28 these teams traveled to about 30 cities in the U.S. to offer the Marriage Encounter experience to mostly Hispanic and some non-Spanish speaking couples, the majority of whom were CFM couples. According to Fr. Calvo most of the couples lived in poor neighborhoods of the big cities.

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Enthusiastic reports began to pour in after each of these experiences. The minutes of the Sixth ICCFM Executive Meeting in La Pree, France, in November, dedicated to examine “The Problems and Values to the Family,” reported:

“The Crowleys gave a report of the EFAE program in August 1968. The Marriage Encounters appear to be one of the best services rendered to date through the Confederation. Plans are underway for a Marriage Encounter at Notre Dame in August 1969 at the time of the annual Convention.” Fr. Kenny and Jamie Whelan gave a brief report on the development of the Encounter in the U.S. and stated that about 80 weekends had been given up to the time of the meeting. Those present affirmed that Marriage Encounter was to remain a service of the International Confederation.”

According to Jamie and Arlene Whelan the ICCFM was to become the agent for Marriage Encounter, but leaving it independent in each country.

A MANUAL FOR “MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER” IS PRINTED IN SPANISH

The need for copies of the schema of the weekend became more pressing. It had already become evident when Fr. Calvo returned to Spain in 1966, but after 1967 it was imperative that the schema be produced in a more suitable way and be more easily available, for the Marriage Encounter was spreading both in- and outside of Spain. It was no longer possible to get along with simple typewritten mimeographed copies. The President couple in Spain issued a call for a national meeting of the couples of the Diocesan Teams of Marriage Encounter for the first two days of June 1968 to plan for the printing of a Manual.

The Coordinating couple (Diego and Fina Bertomeu) and the Chaplain (Fr. Calvo) arranged and presided over the meeting. Six couples from different dioceses in Spain, Fr. Lopez from Guatemala and Fr. Hessler from the U.S. joined them. At the meeting these couples and priests discussed the following themes: Marriage Encounter as a service of MFC; what Encounter is and what it is not; the characteristics of couples and teams who motivate the experience; and, the proper spirit for motivating each Encounter. The methodology and the essence of each step of the weekend were to remain as it was on the typewritten sheets.

At this meeting several conclusions were drawn. Since there was need for a new set of outlines, it was decided to print a "Manual" in Spanish. During the following months, after a great deal of work, a new edition was prepared and the Manual was printed and ready for distribution by November, 1969; copies were sent to Mexico and America. This Manual is the basic source for all Marriage Encounter Movements in the world. Also, at this meeting the Spanish couples formally accepted the commitment of the agreement of the EFAE of the past October, at the ICCFM meeting in Madrid, to sponsor the trip to the United States to introduce Marriage Encounter in many cities in the U.S., in accord with this recent "Manual."

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER AND THE SPANISH MFC IN THE U.S.

In July 1969 the Pichs and Fr. Calvo were invited by the CFM in the US to come and participate in the birth of MFC/USA. This was due to the efforts of the EFAE and the rapid spread of the Marriage Encounter among the Spanish-speaking couples. The assembly of Spanish-speaking couples was headed by Bishop Patrick Flores who at that time was the Auxiliary Bishop of San Antonio and Chairman of the Bishops Commission for Hispanics in the U.S. This assembly elected Gustavo and Isabel Ervity as

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National President of the MFC/USA. One of the primary services of the newly formed MFC/USA was Marriage Encounter (Encuentro Conjugal).

“MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER” PLACED UNDER A COMMITTEE OF THE ICCFM

In August 1969 the CFM convention held at Notre Dame offered two Marriage Encounter Experiences. Couples from around the world were present at this meeting because it coincided with a meeting of the ICCFM. The Alcocers from Mexico, the Sissons from the Philippines, the D’Silvas from India, the Gascons and Pichs from Spain, the Nolans from New Zealand, the Thompsons from Scotland, the O’Siochains from Ireland, the Murphys from England and the Muldoons, Luceys, Weisserts and Fr. Chuck Gallagher S.J. from the U.S., experienced Marriage Encounter. Also, a training session was offered for couples and priests who were interested in presenting Marriage Encounters in their respective countries. Through the enthusiasm of the CFM couples the Encounter was introduced to the Philippines in October and from there to Taiwan. The Nolans brought the Encounter to New Zealand.

From this meeting the ICCFM was truly the agent for the spreading of Marriage Encounter. During the meeting the Confederation established various committees, one of which was a committee for Marriage Encounter. Jose and Margarita Pich-Botey, who had been placed in charge of the international relations of the ICCFM to help the members of the Board develop their roles in a better way for the development of the Family, was appointed chaircouple for this committee. This committee couple was to give a report on the developments of Marriage Encounter at each meeting of the Confederation. At this meeting Fr. Calvo gave the rights of Marriage Encounter to the ICCFM.

CHAPTER XII

Marriage Encounter in the U.S.: 1969-1971

After the August experience of 1968 the CFM couples in the U.S. who had experienced the Marriage Encounter began to devote all their apostolic energies to the promotion of Marriage Encounter in their local areas. Fr. Donald Hessler, who had been part of the ecclesial team at Notre Dame and had brought the Marriage Encounter experience to many Spanish couples, sensed that many couples throughout the U.S. would be demanding the Marriage Encounter experience.

As events unfolded in the U.S. the connection between CFM and Marriage Encounter severed as they each became separate and independent organizations. This radically changed the role of Marriage Encounter. In Spain its role was to be a service of the MFC; in the United States Marriage Encounter established itself as its own independent organization. Marriage Encounter in the United States subsequently divided itself into several independent organizations.

THE MEETING AT ELBERON, NEW JERSEY

At Fr. Hessler's urging an invitation was extended to all couples and priests who had presented two or more Marriage Encounters in English to meet at Villa Stella Maris in Elberon, New Jersey, on the weekend of January 24 - 26, 1969. Twelve people answered this call: Bishop John J. Fitzpatrick from Florida, Fr. Charles Gallagher, S.J. from New York, Fr. Jerome Haladus, O.P. from Montreal, Fr. Frank Heinen from New Jersey, Fr. Jude Mili, O.F.M. from West Virginia, Robert and Mary Munson from Florida, Jamie and Arline Whelan from New Jersey, Mrs. Paul Wolf from Iowa and David and Doreen Wright from Quebec.

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Those present formed themselves as the National Executive Board of Marriage Encounter in the United States; they elected Jamie and Arline Whelan as Executive Couple.

The purpose of the Executive Board and its Executive couple was to provide a central clearinghouse for information, publicity and communications to promote the growth of Marriage Encounter in the United States and Canada. They divided the United States and Canada into geographical districts and appointed a couple responsible for each district.

At this meeting plans were formulated to write a commentary on the Marriage Encounter Manual and to compile a handbook of techniques which various teams had found useful in conducting the Encounter weekend. At that time the only source material for the Encounter was the English translation of the Spanish copy left by Fr. Calvo in Miami. The Elberon meeting was structuring Marriage Encounter to become its own entity in the U.S.

MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER IN THE U.S. BECOMES INDEPENDENT OF CFM

The same interrelationship which Marriage Encounter and the Christian Family Movement enjoyed in Spain did not take shape in the U.S. Since in Spain Marriage Encounter was the primary apostolate of MFC, Fina and Diego Bertomeu were very insistent that the leadership of MFC be involved in Marriage Encounter. In the U.S. the leadership of CFM did not accept Marriage Encounter as its primary service, for its roots and objectives were different.

Although the Crowleys never experienced the Marriage Encounter but only the Marriage Retorno when it was presented in Ireland in 1971, they did much to bring Marriage Encounter to the U.S. It seems they did not actively promote it as a service of

CFM, perhaps because they did not fully understand the relationship of Marriage Encounter to the MFC in Spain. Many of the leaders of CFM did not seem to have much interest in Marriage Encounter. One reason for this may be that the leadership in CFM did not experience the Encounter and therefore were not fully acquainted with it to understand its possible assistance to CFM. The roots of CFM in the U.S. were different from the MFC in Spain and Latin America. The CFM in the U.S. was formed from a social action group in Chicago which was organized with wives and husbands in different groups. They decided to join together through the efforts of Pat and Patty Crowley and formed CFM. The primary intent was for social action with the belief that through social action the couple and family would become united. In Spain and Latin America the MFC was formed by the joining of groups who were promoting married and family life; from the unity of the couple and the couple with God flowed the action of the couple to the world. The primary objective of ME was to assist couples “to be united to be open;” from their unity as a couple with God each couple is to discover their apostolate, or service in the world. As a result of this difference of roots, perhaps, the leaders of CFM found ME a threat to their movement. This may have been further increased when many members of CFM who did experience Marriage Encounter became very enthusiastic in promoting it within CFM. Marriage Encounter became a divisive issue within CFM. Or, perhaps Marriage Encounter enthusiasts saw CFM as controlling the offering of ME and desired to withdraw from its control. The reasons for the separation of ME from CFM in the U.S. may have been a combination of all of these factors. The separation began in April 1969.

In that month Pat and Patty Crowley met with Jamie and Arlene Whelan. The Crowleys suggested that the relationship between CFM and Marriage Encounter be a close, cordial, mutually supportive affiliation. This meant CFM and Marriage

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Encounter were to be two separate movements for the promotion of married and family life in the U.S.

In August 1969 at the CFM Conference, the National Executive Board of Marriage Encounter in the U.S. met and passed a motion "that CFM and Marriage Encounter are two separate and independent movements with different purposes, albeit a common interest in families and the Church, and therefore decided that a liaison team would meet with the Executive Board of CFM when necessary on matters of mutual concern."

This motion constituted a definite break between the Christian Family Movement and Marriage Encounter in the U.S. Present at this meeting were: Jamie and Arline Whelan (New Jersey), Fr. Charles Gallagher, S.J. (New York), Fr. Jerome Haladus, O.P. (Rhode Island), Fr. Frank Heinen (New Jersey), Fr. Mickey Kenny (Quebec), Fr. Jude Mili, O.F.M. (West Virginia), Bob and Mary Munson (Florida), and Dave and Doreen Wright (Quebec). Added to the Board were Ed and Harriet Garzero (New York), John and Kay Devine and Fr. Jerome Fraser (Detroit) and Barbara and Armando Carlo and Fr. James Dunne (Chicago). Bishop Fitzpatrick had previously resigned from the Board due to other commitments. Fr. Frank Heinen was selected to join Jamie and Arline Whelan on the Executive Secretary Team of Marriage Encounter.

This Board accepted what was done at the meeting in Elberon, N.J. The Board decided on further tasks, paramount among them being the need to set up guidelines for the presentation of the Marriage Encounter Weekend. Its other duties were: to coordinate the development of the Marriage Encounter across the United States and Canada; to make materials available to couples and priests who had experienced an Encounter and were interested in presenting one; to be a clearing house between areas. The general consensus was that the Board was to serve the needs

of the local Marriage Encounter groups found in the different cities throughout the U.S.

DIVISION ARISES WITHIN THE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER GROUPS

In the U.S., Marriage Encounter couples and priests were a totally independent movement, unlike in Spain and Latin America where Marriage Encounter remained a service of the Christian Family Movement. This independence seems to have brought a loss of focus for Marriage Encounter as it lost its connection to the family and its mission “to rebuild the world from its foundation according to the mind of God.” Gradually, within the established geographic districts of the country, diverse techniques and interpretations concerning the Marriage Encounter Weekend began to appear. This was especially true with the Long Island group, known as the New York Metro Marriage Encounter. The Long Island group became very strong with its stylized and non-negotiable methodology, with its exclusive emphasis on feelings and omission of any reference to family. The group did not confine their activities within the agreed to geographic boundaries. The result was conflict which caused pain, confusion, rivalry and competition among the different Encounter groups in the U.S. As a result two centers formed, one in Chicago and the other in New York. In 1971 these two centers became independent of each other and formed two major groups: the New York Expression, now Worldwide Marriage Encounter, and the Chicago Expression which later took the name National Marriage Encounter. There are other groups of Marriage Encounter in the U.S. and all are working independently of one another. These divisions and loss of a common goal have weakened each Marriage Encounter, for the different groups are in competition with each other. This means couples become very interested in promoting their own organization rather than furthering the living of marriage according to God’s plan and making their families the center of sanctity.

CONCLUSION

The telling of *The Origin and Vision of Marriage Encounter* reveals its original purpose. The Marriage Encounter Weekend was and is an opportunity to introduce married couples to a way of living married life in our modern world; it is an occasion for couples to experience a marriage spirituality. The weekend provides an opening for couples to understand in a tangible way the link between the Sacrament of Marriage, the Bible, the teaching of the Church and the couple's life as lived in the family and home. The Church teaches that a man and wife, through their marital commitment, are to progress through this life style to goodness, to their salvation. This orders and demands a spirituality for every couple. Priestly, religious and single spiritualities are not suitable. Marriage spirituality is to produce an exemplary and virtuous couple, not the marriage of two individual saints.

The story of the origins of the method of spirituality offered in the Marriage Encounter Weekend begins in 1943 with the marriage of a Catholic couple, Jaime Ferrer and Mercedes Escola in Spain. They sought direction to live as a Catholic couple. They were looking for "something" within the Catholic Church for helping them fulfill their Baptismal promises as a couple. Because of these promises Jaime and Mercedes had been striving individually to live a fully Christian life; each had taken steps for their spiritual development as singles. When they married they believed that now this formation was to be continued but in and through their life as a couple.

Both civil society and the Church recognized this new reality. Jaime and Mercedes believed that promises of Baptism were still present but the Sacrament of Marriage had changed the way they were to live out their Sacrament of Baptism. One reason for marrying was to help each other fulfill these promises. Their new

way of living was just as holy as the past. They believed that it was in and through their marital bond that God was pouring his special gifts (graces) on them. God, in the person of Jesus, was the living yoke which bound and nourished them in their union. This meant that God was living with them as a couple. From this intimacy they concluded that they were to accomplish God's will in and through their couple and family life in the world. But, they found no association or movement which dealt directly with helping them to live marriage in this way. There was nothing in the Church to quench their or any couple's thirst and hunger for the spiritual nourishment of marital life.

Mercedes and Jaime espoused and zealously pursued the quest that "something" new and unique be created within the Church to help them and other married couples to live their Christian life as a couple. For almost ten years Jaime and Mercedes prayed and asked that "something" be founded to enliven, enrich and deepen the spirit of the Sacrament of Marriage within a married couple's relationship. Toward the end of the summer of 1952, this couple met Fr. Gabriel Calvo. He understood their desire and was willing to assist them in developing a spirituality for couples and families. These three were joined immediately by other couples and later by priests. Together they, priests and couples with Fr. Calvo, began to develop a marriage spirituality, that is, a method to give continual life to their growth as a couple "in the Lord" and as a couple with God.

The roots for this spirituality were the teachings of the Church in the light of the Bible, the Word of God. These couples lived in a world which brought to their marriages and families problems, hardships and difficulties, as well as joys, pleasures and moments of happiness. The question was how could the Bible and Church teaching concerning marriage be integrated into their life as a source of growth for their union as a couple and as a couple with God. The answer to this question led them to adopt and adapt a process, a methodology.

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This process was that which Fr. Cardijn used for the Young Christian Worker Association. Fr. Calvo had discovered and used it during his seminary days when he was working with that movement in Salamanca, Spain. He found that it joined faith with life. The methodology was observe, judge and act.

This methodology had the couples look at the reality of their marriage, what the Word of God said it should be, and what actions a couple needed to take so that their marriage could be the way it should be. The topics the couples used in their review of the reality of their life came from the 79 talks of Pope Pius†XII to the newlyweds during the years 1939 to 1943. In these 79 addresses the Pope did not just exhort and encourage couples to live Christian lives. He addressed different subjects of married life and also confronted the multiple problems of married, familial and home life. The addresses not only supported but also clearly asserted that marriage was a way of life with its own spirituality. Together these discourses formed a program containing the entire doctrine and aesthetic of the Church pertaining to marital and familial life.

For these Spanish couples the Word of God was from the beginning a critically important part of their sharing. The Bible became the main root for couple union. For two unique individuals to live in unity of heart, mind, will and soul meant that the spouses needed to have a common source of life. For these couples it was the Word of God. The Word was living and empowering. The Word was the source of God's Spirit; God's Spirit had the power to produce a return of one hundred, sixty or ten fold. "Also, the Bible had been the source of their spirituality in the single life. The Word disclosed to them God's vision or plan for marriage. In Genesis, for example, God joined the man and woman together as a couple; God walked with the couple in the garden; God talked with the couple and made known His will to both of them. The couple was "naked" to one another and before God.

God's Word, then, was to be the "light" for their marriages. It was in the light of God's Word that these Spanish couples viewed their life together as couple and as couple in the family. Through God's Word they were led to an understanding of who they were to be and how they were to live, both inside and outside their home, in the Lord, that is, in accord with God's plan for marriage. By living in accord with God's Word the couples experienced the presence and action of God in their married life.

How were these Spanish couples to recognize the presence and action of God in their marriage? Of special importance to them was the Lord's statement: "Blessed are the pure of heart, they shall see God." They believed that when each spouse honestly and sincerely encountered oneself within their relationship, each was becoming less self-seeking and manipulative; each became more pure, more forthright. Encountering meant listening. The spouses began by listening alone to their lived experiences of the moment in the light of God's Word. In listening alone each spouse was noticing and examining what was going on within him- or her-self in their married life. As each spouse accepted his/her own inner thoughts, feelings, dreams, desires and hopes, and what the Word of God was revealing to that spouse, he or she was becoming genuine of heart; they began to be aware of their selfishness and pride. Each was becoming more conscious that God was guiding and directing them in their married life. God was effecting in each of them not only His Word, but also His gifts dwelling in the Sacrament of Marriage: the graces of unity, reconciliation, sanctification, parenthood, and for any other need of the moment. Through these gifts God, in the person of Jesus, was helping each of them to discover the response each needs to make to do the Father's will for their marriage, their family, the home and to their community. Through this each spouse was discovering God's presence and action in their marriage. The more aware they became of this, the more candid and truthful each became. Each spouse jotted down all that was going on within him or her during

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these moments. (This kind of an encounter with self came to be called in the Marriage Encounter Weekend the “personal reflection.”) The spouses were looking in the same direction with Jesus, for His Word was showing the direction, “light” of the way.

The spouses needed to share with one another what the Word of God revealed to them separately, their discovery. It is with this frame of mind that the spouses came together to listen and fully understand the other. They shared with one another all that had happened during their personal reflection. (This sharing came to be called the “conjugal dialogue.”) During the dialogue the spouses listened to one another to hear what God was calling them to as a couple. They listened to discover how they could live their relationship more in accord with God’s plan for marriage. The purpose of the dialogue, then, was to discover God’s Will for them at that moment; each spouse recognized the necessary changes each needed to make to live more deeply their marriage “in the Lord.” Each spouse desired to change because God had pointed out the way. In this way the Word of God became the root, the source of life for their relationship. During the course of the dialogue each spouse discovered more and more about their partner, but, this was not the primary purpose of the dialogue.

This praying together the Scriptures became an essential part of the everyday life of the couples. Out of this practice the climate of a dialogical way of living married life between the spouses evolved. This environment meant each spouse was to be open and listening to the other, and through the other to God, twenty-four hours a day. During the day whenever the opportunity presented itself, the couple shared all that had taken place in their life since the last time they listened to each other. This style dialogue became a way of life for them.

The Spanish couples described this way of life by the term “*mutual trust*.” *Mutual trust* was essential for the total union between spouses. The Spanish couples strove to be fully open and

to have a listening attitude at all times. They believed that God is always speaking with and to the couple through each spouse. Sometimes thoughts, ideas come to one spouse for the good of the other. One must trust that the other has need to hear. Mercedes related that Jaime says whatever thought has passed through his mind. Often, she said, it was an answer to a question she had or was having; sometimes his thought may help her at some other time. Mercedes said that she always tells Jaime that he answered her question, or when his idea has helped her at a later time. He has done the same. Through this openness with each other the gift of unity became more pronounced and the spouses became more aware of the presence and action of God in their marital relationship. They and the others believe that God continually is speaking throughout the day to couples in and through each other. Mutual trust, dialogue, openness are the essential natural ingredients upon which the gifts of the Sacrament become effective.

A young couple in Barcelona shared that they always know what the other is doing throughout the day. When they pray together at night they exchange all that happened that day; this includes ideas, thoughts, insights, fears, joys, and musings; then they talk about their next day's schedules. As they exchange their schedule, they reveal for which activities they will especially need the Lord's help and pray about it. The husband said:

Because we put all of our sharing in the form of prayer, we need to be very honest, for the Lord knows all that has happened and what is going on inside each of us. Often times on the next day I think about what my wife is doing and on occasions am reminded that she needs extra help at that hour. So I pray. I feel united with her. Often she remarks in the evening how she felt "something" at that moment; the same happens with me. We feel united and that we are with each other in spirit and "heart" though we are physically separated. If our

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schedule changes, we inform each other as soon as we can.

It was this marriage spirituality that these couples endeavored to share with other couples who were hungry and thirsty for “something“ for their marriage. They began by forming an association open to any couples who wished to join them in their way of life. Influenced by the call of Pope Pius XII to bring about a better world, they at first referred to themselves under the name of *Teams of Married Couples for a Better World*; later they changed their name to *Teams of Married Couples of Pius XII*. Their vision was to fulfill the call of Pius XII to help bring about a better world through families. In 1958 they understood the Pope to tell them to fortify the families of the world. The Pope charged them to make their families centers where God’s word is alive and lighting the way, and to help other couples do the same. From this these Teams of married couples believed they had an apostolic calling to spread this way of living marriage in order to help other couples who were thirsting for a more satisfying and fulfilling married and family life.

When the couples in 1960 came looking for a way to live marriage, Fr. Calvo recognized that the couples with whom he had associated over the eight years had strong dynamic marriages. Their vibrancy came from their way of life, their marriage spirituality. For these searching-couples he drew up a schema, the Marriage Encounter Weekend, to introduce them to a living experience of the way of life of the Teams of Pius XII. In this schema the couples were to discover the basic roots of this spirituality, that is, the Bible and its revelation of God’s plan for marriage, the necessity of mutual trust and dialogue between the spouses, the presence of Jesus and his powerful gifts in and through the Sacrament of Marriage, and the call each couple has between them, in their family and home and to the ecclesial and civil society. Through the experience of this way of living, the couples would discover the presence and action of God in their married

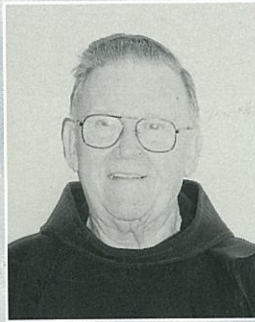
and family life. The experience was to assist the couples to become aware that everything was already present in their marriage for living in accord with God's plan; the couples did not need to go outside their own relationship. The process was simply a way of allowing the potentiality within their relationship to come to its realization. Perhaps they too would exclaim with Mercedes: "The best wine is yet to come."

Since the aim and purpose of the weekend is to provide a couple with a way, a method, of continually discovering their place in God's plan and the tremendous potentiality that is within their marriage, the Weekend is open to be enjoyed by all couples, no matter what their religious or non-religious tradition is. The original weekend was for Catholic couples in Spain. Wherefore, these couples of Spain were to discover through the methodology who they were in the light of their faith. Christians who are not Catholic, through the method of *observe, judge and act*, can discover who they are and the presence and action of Jesus in their couple relationship, and their relationship within their family and home, in the light of their particular Christian confession. The terminology may be different, but the belief is the same. The Christian Scriptures are the foundation for all Christian believers. For those of the Jewish faith, their belief, founded on the Hebrew Scriptures, shows a deep conviction of the presence of God working in human affairs. This methodology helps them to discover how God is present and working in their own relationship and family through God's covenant with them and favor toward them. The same is true for couples of other faiths. This methodology helps them to get in touch with the divine reality living in their midst according to their own tradition. For those who profess no religious beliefs, Marriage Encounter can be of great help to them. Often these couples are aware that a superhuman power is at work within their everyday relationship. Marriage Encounter, through the methodology, helps them to recognize and identify this power and gives them the assurance that they do not face life alone. Perhaps it may open up to them a new understanding of what the

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term “god” means. In Japan, a pagan country, where people have faith, many couples have been brought to a deep awareness of the presence of an almighty power through Marriage Encounter and have converted to Catholicism. This is not the purpose of the Encounter, but often it is the result.

In today’s world where couples often sense all is lost in obtaining a secure union, this methodology, this way, can help any married couple who desires to deepen and enliven their relationship discover a new potential within their marriage bond. The everyday living of this methodology of *observe, judge and act* is a way for couples to strive to have a strong, ever-growing, ever-vibrant and ever-fascinating and creative marital relationship. The living out of such a marital relationship by more and more couples is bound to produce more wholesome, life-giving and energetic families which, in turn, will truly effect the movement toward a better world. Through these families the world will be “transformed from the savage to the human and from the human to the divine.” This transformation will begin with and continue on through couples, who discover and understand the specialness of their calling within families. As Pope Pius XII said: “And rest assured that only in this way will humanity, and with it all families and each one of its souls, discover that peace and consolation that everyone seeking another path seeks in vain. Forward all couples of the world!”



Reverend Robert White

Father Bob White is a Franciscan Priest, ordained in 1951. He is Professor of History at St Bonaventure University in New York and one of the pioneers of the original Marriage Encounter in the United States.



Reverend Gabriel Calvo

Father Gabriel Calvo is a member of the Spanish Diocesan Laborer Priests, ordained in 1952. He conducted the first Marriage Encounter in Barcelona in 1962.