



Newsletter

Teams of Our Lady

Irish Region



Pope Francis meets International Leading Team (ERI)



Photo copyright Vatican Media

Pope Francis met the members of the Équipe Responsable Internationale (ERI) on 4th May. This meeting took place in the context of the upcoming International Gathering in Turin from 15th to 20th July.

“The Christian family is going through a genuine “cultural storm” in this changing era and is threatened and tempted on various fronts. Your work, therefore, is valuable for the Church. You closely accompany married couples so that they do not feel alone in the difficulties of life and in their marital relationship. In this way, you are an expression of the “outbound” Church, which is close to the situations and problems of the people and unreservedly committed to the good of the families of today and tomorrow. It is a true mission to accompany married couples today! Protecting marriage indeed means protecting an entire family, it means saving all the relationships generated by marriage: the love between couples, between parents and children, grandparents and grandchildren; it means saving that witness of a love that is possible and forever, which young people struggle to believe in. Indeed, children need to receive from their parents the certainty that God created them out of love, and that one day they too will be able to love and be loved as their mother and father did.”

Summer 2024

Issue 137

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From the Regional Couple

Dear Friends,

A tree in our garden is gradually coming into light green leaf. It gives height and structure and each year we welcome the late greening of the branches, as a herald of warmer days. At this time of year, we love trying new plants which introduce colour and texture. We marvel at how the new arrivals accentuate and enrich the familiar “bones” of the garden, as the planting pays off, in spades (excuse the pun!) This is a good image of how we see the Holy Spirit blessing the Teams Movement here, this past year. The interplay of our existing structures e.g. the Team meetings, endeavours etc is invigorated by new initiatives towards mission. As we know, the Spirit is always creating anew!

The most recent example is the ongoing work with the Bishops’ Council for Marriage and the Family, which seeks to draw together the great variety of marriage and family movements and associations, to increase their visibility and accessibility to those who await their help. The beautiful leaflet “Marriage Movements - Accompanying Couples” is building a bridge between previously stand-alone movements which support couples and families.

Pope Francis described what families are going through in our time as the “genuine ‘cultural storm’”. He made his comments during a recent meeting with the international leaders of Équipes Notre-Dame in advance of the Turin Gathering this July. We share here, some further excerpts from his address:

“It is a true mission to accompany married couples today! Protecting marriage indeed means protecting an entire family, it means saving all the relationships generated by marriage: the love between couples, between parents and children, grandparents, and grandchildren; it means saving that witness of a love that is possible and forever, which young people struggle to believe in. Indeed, children need to receive from their parents the certainty that God created them out of love, and that one day they too will be able to love and be loved as their mother and father did. Be sure that the seed of love, sown in their hearts by their parents, will germinate sooner or later.

I see a great urgency today: to help young people to discover that Christian marriage is a vocation, a specific calling that God addresses to a man and a woman so that they can fully realize themselves as generative, becoming a father and a mother, and bringing the grace of their Sacrament into the world. This grace is the love of Christ united with that of the married couple, His presence between them, it is God’s fidelity to their love: it is He who gives them the strength to grow together every day and to remain united.... Marriage... is a “three-way step”, in which Christ’s presence between the bride and groom makes the journey possible”.

The Pope offered two further reflections to our Movement. Firstly, he encourages...

“Take care of newly wed couples... help them to live the beauty of their Sacrament and a spirituality of the couple. In the first years of marriage, it is necessary above all to discover faith within the couple, to taste it, to savour it by learning to pray together”.

Secondly Pope Francis reflects on the importance of co-responsibility between married couples and priests within Teams. *“You have understood and live tangibly the complementarity of the two vocations: I encourage you to take this into the parishes, so that the laypeople and priests discover its richness and necessity. Married couples... have the gift and the responsibility of building the ecclesial*

community, alongside ordained ministers. Without Christian communities, families feel alone, and loneliness does a great deal of harm! With your charism, you can become rescuers attentive towards those who are in need, those who are alone, those who have family problems and do not know how to talk about them because they are ashamed or have lost hope. In your dioceses, you can make families understand the importance of helping each other and of forming a network; building communities where Christ can “dwell” in the homes and in family relations.”

Treat yourself to a quiet moment to read the full text of this short address of Pope Francis to the couples responsible for the Equipes Notre-Dame Movement 04.05.2024.

At the close of this year, we thank you for your prayerful support and commitment to your Team and the wider Movement. A sincere word of appreciation to all who served the Movement this year as RCs, or on Sector or Regional Teams. We wish you a blessed time to relax and refresh this Summer and look forward to moving together in God’s grace, next year.

Activities of the Regional Team: April - May 2024

Mission to the International Movement:

Collaboration with Super-Regional couple for the International Conference in Turin 2024.

Attendance at an online meeting of couples from the Zone with responsibility for communications.

Mission within the Region:

Regional Team meeting 25th May 2024.

Ongoing piloting in Cork and Belfast.

Mission within the Sectors:

Preparation for RC day 2024.

Mission towards the Church:

Teams of Our Lady participated in ongoing Synodal Training and meetings in preparation for the Synodal Assembly in October 2024.

Linking with Youth 2000 to arrange a stand at the Summer Festival 2024



A Word from the Regional Chaplain Fr. Richard Sheehy

As you will note from this and previous newsletters, our Regional and Sector teams have been very active over the past year or so, reaching out to couples and to other movements involved with marriage preparation and support.

As part of the preparation for the second gathering in Rome in October for the Synod on Synodality, each diocese is asked to respond to the question: *'How can we imagine the life of the Church in Ireland where people are co-responsible for the Church's mission in different ways?'* Ecclesial movements were invited to put together their own submission, and Teams Ireland took the initiative of inviting representatives from 14 organisations or movements which are involved in promoting Christian marriage to an online meeting in March to reflect together on the above question.

The most important fruit of the meeting, it emerged, was the fact that it took place; that the various Christian movements and organisations which seek to foster the well being of marriage and family life in Ireland had an opportunity to meet, become familiar with the work of one another, and lay the groundwork for future collaboration. Any perception of being in competition melted away and was replaced by a desire for future work together.

It is in keeping with the spirit of the Building Hope initiative in the Dublin diocese, which is encouraging parishes to work together in a greater spirit of partnership, rather than each parish simply ploughing a lonely furrow. It also fulfils one of the tasks that the current Regional Team set itself at the beginning of its four-year term: to reach out to other organisations concerned with supporting the sacrament of marriage.

Another significant finding of the group which met online in March was not only how little they knew about one another, even though they all fall under the umbrella of the Irish Bishops' Council for Marriage and the Family, but also how little known the movements are in our Church generally. The majority of parishes and priests are unaware of the work of Teams. Bishop Denis Nulty, a great supporter of Teams and chairman of the Bishops' Council for Marriage and the Family, launched a flyer in February providing details of 16 movements and organisations supporting marriage and the family.

This publicity is helpful, but perhaps the real challenge for all of us Team members is to make Teams known in our own circles of family and friends and in our parish. Perhaps we are a little shy at times of sharing our good news with others, but the future of Teams depends on our making people aware of what the spirituality of the movement has to offer. I would not be involved with Teams if a couple had not stopped me outside the church in Rathmines one Sunday evening and invited me to come to a meeting...

Our Regional and Sector teams have undertaken a number of initiatives in recent months to reach out to others, piloting new teams in Cork and Belfast. The Dublin Sector Couple, Anne and Mark O'Leary, hosted three excellent online sessions about marriage to mark International Marriage Week in February, while online information evenings about Teams and Tandem were also held.

These are all very worthwhile initiatives undertaken with generosity by those involved, but nothing still beats the word-of-mouth invitation.

Many of us are looking forward to the International Gathering of Teams in Turin in July, most of us attending such a gathering for the first time, and I have no doubt you will be reading a lot about it in the next issue of the newsletter. As a group of participants we had a lovely meeting over lunch in John and Elaine Cogavin's home a few months ago, and more recently we took part in an online meeting hosted by Paul and Annette O' Beirne, Super-Regional Couple, where we had a chance to meet some of the other participants from the UK and from Trinidad who will also be travelling to Turin. I have no doubt that the gathering will be a wonderful experience of the Church Universal.

Wishing all Team members and your families a wonderful refreshing summer with quality time together and plenty of sunshine! Our Lady of Teams, pray for us!

Richard

Tribute : Jim Jordan



Jim was a proud Belfast man through and through. He was born and lived in a well-known part of North Belfast called Ardoyne. His local church was the Holy Cross Monastery of the Passionist Order. Due to the troubles which began in the late sixties Jim and his wife Lynne were forced to leave their home in Ardoyne and settle on the Glen Road in West Belfast where Jim and Lynne were very involved in a group called Euro Children. The purpose of the group was to send children from troubled and deprived parts of Belfast to spend short breaks in sunny parts of Europe.

After moving to another part of West Belfast, called Poleglass, Jim became an active member of the St Vincent Conference in his parish. Later in the mid-eighties Jim and Lynne responded positively to an invitation from Fr Anthony Curran to join the Belfast 2 Team. They remained active members of the team until the outbreak of covid. They often expressed how meaningful it was for their spiritual life to be involved with the teams.

During their time in teams their dear son Kevin died after a fairly short illness. Naturally both of them were heartbroken at the death of Kevin.

Jim was a very committed Catholic and often related about how he had to defend his faith at his place of work. His Christian values were very central to his whole way of living.

He was an ardent supporter of Glasgow Celtic Football Club and enjoyed telling about all their successes. He was also very knowledgeable about Gaelic games. When in good health Jim and Lynne loved to spend time holidaying every year in places like Tenerife.

For the last five years Jim needed to attend hospital three days every week to receive dialysis. Jim will be greatly missed by Lynne, his son, two daughters, grandchildren and great-grandchildren as well as his many friends who had the pleasure of knowing him.

May his soul rest in peace.

Jim was married to Lynne.

He was born in 1938.

He died on 26 September 2023.

“Towards October 2024” A summary of contributions from Diocese and Groups of the Catholic Church in Ireland.

In response to the invitation by the General Secretariat of the Synod to deepen the reflection on the Synthesis Report (A Synodal Church in Mission), the Irish Episcopal Conference received contributions from all the dioceses of Ireland along with a further ten contributions drawn from associations of lay faithful, ecclesial movements, Church agencies etc.

As an Ecclesial Movement of the Church, Teams of Our Lady participated by hosting a virtual meeting with representatives of eight different Marriage and Family Movements active in Ireland. The consensus at the meeting was a gratitude to have an opportunity to meet and work together.

In this atmosphere of mutual support we considered the Synodal Question: “*How can we imagine the life of the Church in Ireland where people are co-responsible for the Church’s mission in different ways?*”*

In two breakout rooms fruitful “*Conversations in the Spirit*”, were facilitated by Teams of Our Lady couples. The feedback was subsequently collated in two parts:

the response to the Synodal Question* and

an appendix to highlight examples of synodality in each Movement.

Part ii) “*Keeping the Synodal Dynamism Alive – Testimonies and Best Practice*”. The examples of Fr Caffarel’s approach to the first couples, collegiality in Teams at every level of the Movement, Tandem Teams (the initiative to accompany young couples) and the recent online initiative for International Marriage Week, were offered as some examples of how Teams of Our Lady live synodality.

Our contribution was added to the document which was submitted to the General Secretariat of the Synod in May 2024.

<https://synod.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Towards-October-2024-Summary-of-Contributions-from-Dioceses-and-Groups-of-the-Catholic-Church-in-Ireland-print-and-online-version.pdf>

In the meantime, two Teams couples have accessed the National Synodal Leadership Training Course, on behalf of Teams of Our Lady, which is ongoing.

Prayer Intentions

For those who have died:

Philip Lewis, father of Padraig, Team 41

Christianne Valadie, sister of Bernadette Blayne, Team 24

Denis Martin, brother of Michael, Team 21

Mary Banotti, sister of Joan Kinsella, Team 3

Annual Contributions

Message from the regional serving team on the annual contribution

A year ago, we promoted the AID initiative (e.g., Awareness, Indication, Discernment) to raise the overall awareness on the financial situation of Teams of Our Lady Ireland and, most of all, to offer an opportunity to discern about the importance of keeping the gift of Teams available for both existing and prospective couples.

This year, we would like to promote the **ACT initiative** (e.g., Accept, Connect, Transmit).

Fr. Caffarel, describing the very first team, wrote: *"In 1939, with the first four couples, something happened that was not just a nice idea; it was something more than simple enthusiasm, it was not just a perchance encounter. Providence and the Holy Spirit were there in some way. Now, I give thanks to God."*

A crucial moment in Fr. Caffarel's life was the drafting and putting into effect, in 1947, "The Charter of The Teams of Our Lady." It was a very significant move by the leadership of Teams to communicate the essence of the Movement. It was uncompromising. One third of the Teams members abandoned Teams, as result, but the rest made the movement strong and global. The means set out in the Charter are demanding. *"Having grasped the spirit of the Teams, you will have no trouble in accepting their discipline,"* says Fr. Caffarel.

Accept: Each couple belonging to the movement accepts its requirements. Active participation to the life of the broader movement and financial support are vital factors of the strength of Teams. We thank you all for your annual contributions and hours you devote to the movement, serving in different roles in the past, present and/or future.

Connect: Integration of members not only into their team but also into the movement is expressed by: 1) praying the Magnificat daily in communion with other members, 2) keeping up to date with the life of the movement, 3) participating in meetings organised at different levels of the movement.

Transmit: How do we **pass on the gift of Teams to other people, regions and times?** Every couple can participate in the apostolic mission of the movement by: 1) practicing hospitality, opening our homes in a spirit of fraternity and evangelization, 2) taking responsibility for roles of service at different levels; 3) showing fidelity to the movement and to the Church.

As we remind you that we are approaching that time of the year when we want to reflect on our annual contribution, we would like to thank you for your generosity. Your support has been instrumental over the years and your response to the AID initiative put Teams of Our Lady Ireland in a more comfortable position.

Based on the ACT initiative goals, the regional serving team would like to share with you the fruit of your generosity. Below some of the main ongoing projects:

Presence at both Youth 2000 and the Evangelium conferences to engage with young couples
Piloting in Cork and Belfast to form, in God's will, new teams
Turin 2024 International gathering solidarity (I.G.S.) fund to support attendees of our region
Turin 2024 I.G.S. fund to facilitate participation from within the Super-Region
Developing a new web-site to facilitate engagement with couples

The regional serving team continue to explore ways to make Teams more accessible to all couples.

Yours in Christ,

Paola and Paolo

Treasurer Couple on behalf of the Regional Serving Team

How to donate?

1. Electronic transfer or Standing Order to Teams bank account

NEW – Please, note that a **new bank account** has been set up to have access to online services and to make the management of Teams of Our Lady Ireland finances more flexible and secure.

Name on the account: **Teams of our Lady – Ireland**

BIC IPBSIE2D

IBAN IE95IPBS99061534419218

2. By post (please, contact us at treasurer.tol.ie@gmail.com for our postal address)

NB: Please, indicate your Team Number in the reference section (e.g. Dublin 45)

Responsible Couples Day 2024

When?	October 19th, 2024
Where?	Avila, Morehampton Road, Donnybrook, Dublin 4.
What?	An opportunity to begin our year of service with prayer, mutual help and reflection on the mission we are called to within our Team and beyond.
Cost?	Voluntary contribution.

Attendance at the RC Day is a vital element of our responsibility for the upcoming year. Like a river it nourishes the essential links between the base Teams and the Movement and helps our Team to bear fruit from month to month during the year. We are a body and treasure the unique contribution of each one.

A few final thoughts...

Whether it is your first RC day or your 41st you will have a gift to share and a gift to receive. Your Team depends on your presence. Before you tidy away your Teams bag, please put the 19th October in your diary or in exceptional circumstances appoint another to take your place. Ensure the register has been updated to include your correct contact details, we will be in touch and have a great Summer!

Turin Updates

15-20th July 2024: International Meeting of the Teams of Our Lady, Turin, Italy

8 couples and 2 Chaplains from Ireland are ready to meet Teams members from all over the world!

Various couples from Ireland will “report” from the meeting by a WhatsApp group message each day. You are invited to join this group in advance of July 15th, if you would like to receive the messages and experience the event remotely. Do check in with your Team members and help them get set up on WhatsApp if necessary, so you can all enjoy the buzz. We will be in touch with your RC with further details.

There will also be updates from the meeting on the Equipes Notre-Dame International website, just click the Torino 2024 button. Already, you can see details of the planned programme.

Around the Region

Dublin

Annual Sector Outing – Date for Your Diary!

The next event being planned in the Dublin Sector is the Annual Outing. This is currently proposed for Sunday, 15th September 2024, from 2pm.

The venue will be St Enda’s Park, Rathfarnham. A reminder and full details will follow nearer the time.

On a recent liaison visit to one of the Teams, we mentioned, in conversation, the Catholic Grandparents Association (CGA). None of the members of the Team had ever heard of the CGA. So, given the important role which grandparents have in passing on the Faith, we asked Catherine Wiley, who founded the CGA, to write a short piece about the Association and what it does, for inclusion in the newsletter. That piece appears in this edition!

Bishop Nulty officially launched the new revised Accord marriage preparation programme in Whitefriar Street last February. As part of the ceremony, the bishop also launched a new flyer / leaflet: *Marriage Movements – Accompanying Couples*. The leaflet, which was produced with the support of the Irish Bishops’ Conference Council for Marriage and the Family contains a brief description of 16 different marriage support movements / organisations and includes contact details for each. It is intended that the leaflet will be distributed to couples during marriage preparation programmes and also made available in parishes.

Anne and Mark O’Leary

Mullingar

Summer Outing:

We are planning our summer outing on Saturday June 29th at 2.30 pm with Fore Benedictine Abbey, Castlepollard as our destination. We are looking forward to seeing Team members, friends and family (all are welcome). We will meet at the car park beside the Abbey at 2.15pm

Hopefully weather permitting we will enjoy a walk, picnic and the chat in the peace and tranquillity of Fore. This year Rosemarie and Brendan Gavin, our Regional Couple, hope to join us as they would love to meet the Mullingar Team members in person.

Wishing you all a happy and peaceful summer and we remember in our prayers all of your intentions.

God bless,

Pauline and Richard Sheridan

Catholic Grandparents Association

The Mission of the Catholic Grandparents Association (CGA) is to “Pass On Our Faith and Keep Prayer at the Heart of Family Life”.

As a Private Association of the Faithful, endorsement by the Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life and the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelisation, the apostolate works to encourage and support grandparents (and the elderly) in their important vocation – grandparenting. We pray that our grandchildren will know the beauty and truth of the faith passed down to us, which has sustained us throughout our lives.

CGA has grown in response to a call nearly 25 years ago by Catherine Wiley (Irish grandmother of ten) to begin a grandparents’ pilgrimage in Walsingham, England, and a second pilgrimage at the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock, to a worldwide organisation active in over 60 countries.

In 2008, at Catherine’s request, Pope Benedict XVI gifted the CGA with the Prayer for Grandparents, now translated into 27 languages and shared around the world. In 2020, after years of advocating for a day to honour grandparents, Pope Francis proclaimed an annual World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly to be celebrated throughout the Church, on the 4th Sunday of July, the Sunday closest to the Memorial of St. Joachim and St. Anne. This year’s celebration is on 28th July.

Grandparents from around the world meet monthly, via *Zoom*, for our “Faith Café” where faith is nourished listening to a renowned Catholic speaker and meeting with other grandparents who share similar struggles and joys. Parish ministries for and to grandparents continue to spread, supporting and encouraging grandparents where they live and providing a vital service to their Church.

Please visit: catholicgrandparentsassociation.org for more information on our initiatives and events.

Contact us at: info@catholicgrandparentsassociation.org.

Memories of International Gathering at Fatima, 2018



Members of the Transatlantic and Oceania Super-Regions



The sit-down



Some members of the Irish group at Fatima, including Elaine and Jim Keogh, Regional Couple and the late Fr. Paddy Dundon

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We would like to receive contributions for the Autumn Newsletter by Sunday, 1st September