



SPEECH 7/18/2024

Fr. Paul-Dominique Marcovits, Roman Vice-Postulator

I would like to respond to 2 questions here. First, why ask for the canonization of Fr. Henri Caffarel, whose beatification is the first step, and where are we in the process? Second question: What is sainthood?

First, why would the Teams of Our Lady ask the Church to recognize the sainthood of their founder, Fr. Henri Caffarel? Because it is a duty on their part. It is a duty to not keep to ourselves, for our sole benefit, the treasure that the Lord gave us through Fr. Caffarel. What we live, each in our own manner, priests and couples, the considerable aid that we get from each other, should not remain only with us. In making Fr. Caffarel known, we hope that throughout the world, all could know the beauty of the sacrament of marriage as well as the power of interior prayer. It is part of the mission of Teams of Our Lady.

In 2003, Gerard and Marie-Christine de Roberty and Fr. François Fleishmann, respectively Responsible Couple and Spiritual Advisor for the International Leading Team, are invited to the National Conference of Teams of Our Lady in Brasilia, Brazil. It became abundantly clear to them that the Brazilian teams had not only an attachment to Fr. Caffarel, but that there was a "presence" of Fr. Caffarel in Brazil. And this impression was reinforced when they subsequently went to Colombia. In 2005, the International Leading Team decided therefore to ask the archbishop of Paris to open the cause of canonization of Fr. Caffarel.

Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, then archbishop of Paris, gave to Fr. Caffarel, the title most known among us: "Prophet for Our Time". He did this during a mass held in Paris, a few days after his death on September 18, 1996. Prophet for our time, Fr. Caffarel showed the will of God in marriage and what's inseparable, in interior prayer; "I owe all to prayer in my life" he used to say. We understand to this day the reality of this message and our responsibility to make it known.

Here, in brief, is a guide to this work.

Cardinal Lustiger's successor, Cardinal André Vingt-Trois opened the cause on March 25, 2006, and the solemn announcement was made on September 18 of the same year, at the International Conference of Teams of Our Lady at Lourdes, on the day of the 10th anniversary of the death of Fr. Caffarel.

The first step, the diocesan phase, took the form of the construction of a dossier containing both the work of the diocesan Commission which gathered testimonials and the reports of historians and theologians, as well as all the writings of Fr. Caffarel and various annexed documents. The closing session took place on October 18, 2014. The dossier (5500 pages) was then brought to Rome, to the Congregation for the Cause of Saints on November 10, 2014, and the decree of validity recognizing the compliance of the dossier to the rules of the procedure was given on October 9, 2015.



The second stage was the writing of the *Positio*, that is, a sort of thesis on the life and the virtues of Fr. Caffarel. This writing work was given to me, since I had been the postulator of the cause in Paris, with Marie-Christine Genillon, member of Teams like myself. We have been working together since 2006. Fr. Praskiewicz, member of the Congregation for the Cause of Saints, accompanied our work as Relator, a kind of thesis director.

This *Positio* contains first the testimonials received by the diocesan Commission; then a choice of documents from the archives and written texts of Fr. Caffarel; then the detailed account of his life, of his thoughts and of his work; and lastly the presentation of his practice of virtues and of his reputation for holiness. This made 900 pages, remitted to the Dicastery on June 24 2022.

The third step is where we are now. The Consultor-theologians, then the Cardinal members of the Congregation for the Cause of Saints, read this *Positio* and if their opinion is favorable, they will propose that the Pope recognize the magnitude of Fr. Caffarel's virtues, and the People will be able to declare him "Venerable".

Since the opening of this cause, in 2006, we have been asking Fr. Caffarel to intercede such that the Lord would make a miracle that would permit the Church to declare him "Blessed". A miracle is a healing that is physical, instantaneous, definitive and inexplicable by science. To ask this, you must know prayer. It is important to pray alone, with your Team, in an assembly; it is the opportunity to create a communion between all the Team members of the world and Fr. Caffarel, in the service of the Lord.

To accompany us in this work, a new roman postulator was named to succeed Fr. Angelo Palera, who is a conventual Franciscan and a member of Teams of Our Lady and who has greatly aided us on this long path. The successor is Fr. Józef Kijas, also a conventual Franciscan like the one whom he is replacing. He would have liked to be with us, here, but it was not possible.

After having responded to the question: "Why ask the Church to recognize the holiness of Fr. Caffarel" - "Why show the beauty of Christian marriage", we now respond to the question, also essential: "What is the saintliness of Fr. Caffarel?"

The saintliness of Fr. Caffarel is that of a priest, of a priest inhabited by the love of the Lord and who understood married couples whose love is inhabited by the love of God. Priests and couples have received the vocation of love.

Let us recall the story, to which we must unceasingly return, the story that Fr. Caffarel told about his vocation in March 1923: "At the age of 20, Jesus Christ, in an instant became Someone for me. Oh! Nothing spectacular. On this far-off day of March, I knew that I was loved and that I loved, and that henceforth between Him and me, it would be for life. Everything had been decided."



And he remarked on his vocation which was also a mission: "That stayed with me, and since that day, I have had but one desire: to engage myself more intimately than before with Christ, and that other desire to bring others to the same intimacy, because that had been essential in my life, that had given me the joy of living, the grace to live and the urge to live. Moreover, I couldn't NOT want for others this encounter with Christ, this discovery that God is love."

All of Fr. Caffarel's life is there. Christ showed him that He loved him and Fr. Caffarel responded with all his being. His long hours of interior prayer, his teaching of couples, the Weeks of prayer that he led at Troussures where more than 25,000 people came to learn how to pray, to learn how to love, everything had but one goal, "to enter more than before into the intimacy of Christ who gives the joy of life".

When the first couples, in 1939, came to him to ask for help living their love between them, with God, Fr. Caffarel immediately thought: "But, love, I am living it! The love of Christ inhabits me!".

Magnificent vocation of Christian couples! Magnificent vocation of Priests. Both illuminate the mystery of the Church. Fr. Caffarel did not invent any particular spirituality. He listened to couples--later, to widows--he watched, admiring, what the Lord was doing to them. What was he doing? As always: the love of God was incarnating itself in human love, the love of Christ for His Church was animating the bond between spouses. As a priest, he was seeking, finding, seeking again this presence of God in Christian spouses. Fr. Henri Caffarel used to say: "should all the other places of worship be shut down, disused, destroyed...the Christian family would remain the dwelling of God amongst men."

We understand then the response of Fr. Caffarel to a TOOL participant in Brazil, this would be in 1972: "Let us suppose, Father, that you were to die the day after coming to us, what subject would you like to have addressed for the last time before leaving the home of your Teams?" Fr. Caffarel's response was that of a testimonial, a response for us today as well. He reflected, he ruminated on important subjects, conjugal spirituality, the Charter, prayer...and Fr. Caffarel at last responded: "[I would have decided] to talk about the Christian significance of a TOOL meeting. [...] There is there, in the midst of households brought together in a room of the house, the intense presence of the Resurrected, living, attentive to us, loving each of us as they are, with their bad and their good, and in a hurry to help us become what He would want, a new being through the Holy Spirit."

Fr. Caffarel was speaking here as a priest, he was not speaking of himself, but of us, of we who were entrusted to him by the Lord. Fr. Caffarel puts his hope in us.

To conclude this evocation of Fr. Caffarel, permit me to tell you that when I read Fr. Caffarel, I am immediately before God. So we should still listen to him. He tells us what a saint is for him and it is an appeal to us to follow the Lord. This definition fits him well, it is very simple. We will reach our goal, like him, with the grace of God--and with Fr. Caffarel's intercession!



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Let us listen to him:

“A saint is not above all, as certain imagine, a sort of champion who accomplishes great feats of virtue, and spiritual performances. A saint is first a man seduced by God. And who gives over to God his whole life.”

Among us, would there not be couples who live in this way, who have lived this holiness? May Fr. Henri Caffarel attract such TEAMS participants! For us all, marriage is a way to sainthood.

