



WELCOMING REMARKS AT THE OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL GATHERING 07/15/2024 CLARITA AND EDGARDO BERNAL FANDIÑO

Dearest Family of the Teams of Our Lady, His Excellency Monsignor Roberto Repole, His Excellency Prefect Donato Cafagna, Deputy Mayor Michela Favaro, Councillors Francesco Tresso, Chiara Foglietta and Marco Porcedda, Regional Councillor Gian Luca Vignale, Giampiero Leo, Councillor of the CRT Foundation, special civil and religious guests and speakers who honour us with their presence, team of translators and collaborators, former international leaders of the Teams Movement, volunteers and friends of the Teams, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good afternoon. From this stage, as the international responsible couple of the TEAMS OF OUR LADY and on behalf of the ERI, the international responsible team and the numerous logistic team of collaborators and volunteers from Turin who welcome us in this great venue, we give you the warmest welcome and embrace you with the same affectionate embrace that we hope to give personally in this week of celebration and meeting to each and every one of you.

Although the genesis of our movement dates back to February 25, 1939, we establish its official life from the promulgation of the founding charter, which Father Henri CAFFAREL, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1947, proposed to the movement, which was already, at that time, a tangible, dynamic and growing reality with an evident and timeless charism, the same one that unites and identifies us today. The 1st International Meeting of the Teams of Our Lady was convoked by our founder, seven years after the promulgation of the charter, in June 1954, in a pilgrimage that took place in the sanctuary of Lourdes where the consecration of the TEAMS OF OUR LADY to the protection of Our Lady took place.

Today, seventy years later, we gather here in this living shrine, made up of the willing hearts of about 8000 pilgrims from all continents, who have come together today with the same purpose that Father Caffarel warned in preparation for the first meeting: "*today, as yesterday, the pilgrimage is still an act of faith, it must be a testimony of faith and is worth whatever the faith of the pilgrim is worth*".

From this moment on, this place of events, the INALPI ALPITOUR, becomes a great temple that for 5 days will welcome us with a single purpose, TO GATHER IN THE NAME OF CHRIST. You have all arrived in this beautiful city of Turin, carrying the burden of all the efforts and sacrifices you have made to be here. It is time to unload it and put it aside in order to contemplate and live the presence of the Lord and of our Mother and intercessor the Virgin Mary, in the strength of this community of faith, with which we celebrate this miracle and this gift of God that are THE TEAMS OF OUR LADY.

It is very exciting to think that from places very distant from our usual environment, coming from countries and cities of the five continents, since at least a couple of days ago, thousands of disciples with cultures and languages different from ours, have started a pilgrimage that has brought them to this meeting point.

From the very moment we crossed the threshold of the entrance gates of this great enclosure, the miracle of shared faith took place, the language barriers disappeared and we all began to speak one language, that of the fraternity of love, which merges into the communion of pilgrims who live the same life project of the Teams and who recognize each other as brothers and sisters. With all of them, from now on, united as a single body, we will travel the road to Emmaus, living the same stages that those disciples lived 20 centuries ago, disenchanted and frustrated, lamenting the loss of all their hopes,



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exposing their frailties, They let themselves be touched by the enlightening Word of a stranger who instills confidence in them and moves their hearts, they invite him without letting him continue on his way and when they share the table, they enter into communion and recognize him and although they no longer see him, they have the imperious need to announce that he is real, that he is alive and they return to the Jerusalem from which they had fled.

This journey guided by the profound and beautiful reflections that Professor Marcolini will make, interweaving it with the Eucharistic liturgy, will be the thematic framework in which we will have the privilege of listening to the interventions of some really special speakers, who in the light of the daily accents will share their knowledge and their points of view, on topics that will be a source of richness and actuality in the moment of life that we are going through as a movement and as a church.

Each of these interventions will be accompanied by testimonies, which, with intimate sharing offered with great generosity and in an incarnated way, will give us couples and priests, will transfer these reflections to personal life, addressing different realities in the multicultural universe of our movement, a mirror of the universality and internationality that we live.

The moments of shared prayer and Eucharist, which are the vital oxygen that nourishes our spirituality, will be a challenge of silence and attitude, in which individual awareness, respect and personal concentration, multiplied by the thousands of people who will be in this enclosure, will create the climate and atmosphere conducive to establishing that intimate dialogue with the One who summons us.

The afternoons will be more playful, but no less spiritual. Turin, although not properly recognized as a place of pilgrimage, has a history of holiness with a particular sensitivity towards the less fortunate who found, in the so-called SOCIAL SAINTS, the face of the Lord's mercy. This city in the different epochs of its history until today has been the cradle of many saints, brought to the altars by the church and also of holy men and women who, being so, have not yet been declared saints. The list is endless, as we have just seen in the choreography presented a few minutes ago, in which some of them were mentioned: St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo, Giulia and Tancredi di Barolo, Pier Giorgio Frassati, St. John Bosco, Ernesto Olivero, Luigi Ciotti, among many others.

We will have the opportunity during our meeting to follow in the footsteps of some of these extraordinary saints and to perceive that climate of spirituality, making guided visits and having moments of prayer, in the iconic places, some in the city itself and others outside of it, where these men were born, found their vocation and developed their work that had and continues to have universal repercussions.

In addition to visiting the sites of the saints, the audience will also have the opportunity to visit the Universal Expo of the movement, where each SR or RR will open a window into their own life of movement, and thus know more closely, the exciting universality in which the spiritual heritage of our founder has multiplied, sowing the seed of the TEAMS OF OUR LADY in all corners of the world.

We will also have a beautiful theatrical surprise that, for more than a year, has been prepared under the direction and ingenuity of a fellow team member that you will have the opportunity to meet and a group of actors and dancers, who will touch the most sensitive fibers of our being with an unpublished work, written for this occasion.

The richness of a meeting is lived by meeting each other. An international meeting is not only listening but also a permanent sharing, an exchange of ideas, an encounter with the stranger, as the disciples of Emmaus had, a dialogue, in moments of rest, at meals, on journeys -some longer than others-, to hotels, in mixed team meetings, etc.



Many of you will not be staying in hotels in the city but in hotels in the surrounding area, which will imply longer trips, but also the opportunity to get to know more of these wonderful lands of Piedmont. Do not miss these opportunities to enjoy the joy of belonging to the same family with brothers and sisters scattered all over the world, but united in the same heart and with the same north.

Those of us who have had the opportunity to participate in one or more international meetings have woven everlasting bonds with those friends with whom 6, 12, 18, or more years ago, we met in a mixed team, in the coexistence of a hotel, in the bus of a recreational outing. An international meeting is a party that has many moments of celebration, some more formal, some more spiritual and others more playful; do not fail to participate and take advantage of every moment of this week that next Saturday will seem to pass fleetingly, but will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark in your hearts.

Dear family and friends of the teams of Our Lady, after more than 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years, hundreds of meetings, coordination trips, meetings of support teams, planning, countless correspondence with the organizing team, with participants, with guests, after successes and setbacks, negotiations with hotels, suppliers, catering, transportation, meetings with civil authorities, insurance, meetings with security and health entities, worries, sleeplessness and also moments of relaxation, fraternity, always in the key of prayer, the long awaited moment has arrived to formally start this XIII International Encounter. The work is done with love, dedication and devotion and it is now when we put it in the hands of the Lord and in the intercession of Our Mother Mary, and of Father Caffarel who is undoubtedly watching us, so that they may bless it and allow the fruits that the movement needs and the Lord wants, for the good of the Church and of each one of us.

There will surely be details that were forgotten or unforeseen events that we must solve, but we are certain that, with willing hearts like those of each one of you, with the Spirit that guides us, and the collaboration and understanding of all, we will make this XIII Encounter an unforgettable moment in our lives.

We wish you an intense week of emotions, encounter and recollection.

Welcome back and so be it,

CLARITA AND EDGARDO BERNAL FANDIÑO
International Responsible Partner 2018-2024

