

TEAMS OF OUR LADY – CANADA

NATIONAL GATHERING 2026

“RETURNING TO THE SOURCE”

PRESENTATION: CONFERENCE #2: FORMATION – THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR TEAM SUCCESS

SPEAKER(S): ELLEN & TJ HOLT

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ORIGINAL LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

We are TJ and Ellen Holt, and we are truly grateful to be with you

A little bit about ourselves. We live in Kingwood, Texas, just outside of Houston and we have been blessed with three adult daughters. Two of our daughters are in series relationships – but as of today no weddings are on our calendars.

We have been members of Team 6 in Kingwood for 26 years. Teams has been a foundational part of our marriage and our faith journey.

We are humbled to currently serve as the TransOceanic Zone Couple, helping Regions and Super Regions that are English-speaking across many parts of the world.

And through that experience—walking with couples in different cultures, different realities—we have seen something very consistent:

Wherever formation is strong... teams are alive.
And where formation is weak... teams struggle.”

And that’s what we want to reflect on today. How formation is the key building blocks in the Teams of Our Lady movement.

Formation is something that unfolds over time. It’s a bit like a seed.

At first, you don’t see much happening...but beneath the surface, something is taking root.

We remember a time in our own team when things felt... a little routine. We were meeting... we were faithful... but something was missing.

And it wasn't until we began to take formation more seriously—especially the endeavors like personal and family prayer and the Sit-Down—that things began to change. Not only for ourselves, but for our Team, as well.

The change did not overnight...but slowly and we began to notice that our Team was having

- deeper conversations
- more honesty
- more prayer”

That's the beauty of formation. Not only for us as couples, but for our Teams, our Sectors and Regions.

Formation brings life.

Because growth alone is not enough.

A team can grow in numbers... but not in depth.

We can use the analogies of a tree. You see the branches, but what really matters is what you don't see: the roots.

Father Caffarel warned us *“Growth can be a danger if it is not accompanied by in-depth formation.”*

Formation is what gives depth. It's what allows Teams to be sustaining and has helped the movement last over the last 80 years.

But how do we live out our vocational call to Christian marriage

It is through formation, tools like the endeavors, that help us live that vocation. Not just in big moments, but in everyday life.

Moments like

- choosing to listen instead of react
- choosing to forgive
- choosing to begin again”

In his wisdom we feel that Father Caffarel saw how *“Marriage is not only a human union, it is a divine vocation.”*

So let's talk about our formation can help with our growth and our commitment to each other

Our spiritual life cannot be improvised. It requires intention. It requires commitment.”

And as we have learned that fidelity is built... not in big moments... but in small, daily choices.

Father Caffarel reminds us *“Nothing solid can be built without spiritual discipline.”*

FORMATION LEADS TO MISSION

Formation never stays inside the team. It always leads outward.

We've seen couples become:

- more patient
- more open
- more available to serve

And often they don't even realize it, but others do. We have seen this in our own base Team. Twenty-six years ago, we were couples who were all relatively new to the area and our parish. Now we are couples serving our community and parish through Eucharistic ministers, lectures,

Father Caffarel reminds us: *"The mission of Christian couples is to make Christ visible in the world."*

So, we've talked a lot about formation, but now it comes down to something very simple: what is *my role* in this?

Because formation doesn't just happen because we belong to a team, it happens because each of us chooses to live it.

We must be faithful to the Charter and the Endeavors.

And let's be honest... that doesn't mean we do everything perfectly.

It just means we keep trying.

We show up.

We stay engaged.

We come back when we drift.

And over time that consistency really matters.

The second thing is we all help create formation in the team.

It's not just up to the team responsible. It happens when each of us:

- shares honestly
- listens without judgment
- actually participates"

When one couple opens up... it often gives another couple the courage to do the same.

And we have found that is how formation grows...little by little."

As a Team our goal is to create a space where people feel:

- safe to be honest
- encouraged to grow
- supported when things are hard?"

And that is why this movement of Teams is so beautiful. It gives us the chance to be a light in the night of the world. We have heard countless stories of how Teams couples are approached by other couples who say – we don't know what you are doing, but we want to look as happy as you are.

You might be thinking *how do we help this actually happen in our teams?*

And that's where the role of the Team Responsible becomes so important. As we rotate this responsibility, we understand the importance of one of the simplest—but most powerful—things a Team Responsible can do... is prepare the meeting."

It's more than just following the outline of the meeting. It's asking

*What does our team need right now?
How can this meeting help us grow?"*

A meeting is prepared with care creates focus... it creates purpose... it creates space for something deeper.

The important aspect of the Team Responsible is encouraging the Endeavors.

Not as something we *have to do*, but as something that really helps us.

We ask how has God touched your life by practicing one or more of the endeavors this month?

"Because when the Endeavors are lived - formation naturally grows.

As leaders we should understand the importance of inviting couples to participate or to get involved - not to pressure them but invite them.

Inviting couples into:

- deeper formation
- retreats
- opportunities to grow

Sometimes a couple just needs to be asked before they take the next step.

A Team Responsible helps move the team from routine... to mission.

It's very easy for a team to settle into a routine.

We meet...
we share...
we go home...

But formation calls us to something more. To live our vocation intentionally and to become a witness in the world."

So, if formation is so important... the question becomes:

What supports it?
What makes it possible?

What are our Pillars of Formation?

Before building anything, it is important to start with a solid foundation.

At the center of Teams is one goal: holiness.

Father Caffarel clearly stated "*The Teams of Our Lady have as their essential aim to help couples to strive after holiness – no more, no less.*"

As a Team we are given support so we don't have to do this alone. As members of Teams, we carry each other in times we need help or are struggling.

And Our Lady walks with us. She leads us to her Son. She is our perfect model in how to say "yes" to love and to serve.

Next are the Charisms of Teams

Conjugal spirituality makes our movement unique. We encounter Christ in and through each other. And that's not always easy. But that's where grace is. We are given the ability to seek and grow closer to Christ by seeking and growing closer to each other.

And the presence of a priest spiritual counselor also makes our movement unique. They are a sign of Christ presence. How complementarity our vocations are and how important it is to share our experiences together. Also helps to keep fidelity with the church and scriptures.

The Mystique of Teams

The mystique of Teams is how we live. In **Christ's** Name When we meet and He is present.

'Where two or three are gathered in My name...'

We help each other through **Mutual Aid** in real ways. We share honestly—not perfectly through our lived and shared testimonies.

This is how we learn from the experience of others.

The Endeavors or Concrete Points of Effort.

These are not rules, but real tools. Tools to grow our relationship with Christ.

Listening to the Word of God

Personal Prayer

Conjugal Prayer

The Sit Down

The Rule of Life

The Annual Retreat

When we practice or return to them - things come back into focus.

Formation continues throughout our lives. We are never finished. We are always being formed. And formation prepares us to serve not each other in our Team, but in our Sector and Region.

There are three types of Formation
Initial, Permanent and Specific

With Initial Formation This is Piloting and New Teams Meeting/Celebration.

In Permanent Formation
Faith and Life including Personal Prayer
Vocation and Mission
Second Wind / Renewal
Deepening

What happens when you are open to the endeavors and other fruits of formation?

- Couples become more united
- Prayer deepens
- Trust grows
- Teams become witnesses

Through **Specific** formation

- o Initiation and Liaison
 - Information Couples
 - Pilot Couples
 - Liaison Couples
- o **Responsible Couples Formation**
 - Team Responsible Couples
 - Sector Responsible Couples

- Regional Responsible Couples
 - o Information/Formation for Priest Spiritual Counselors and Advisors
 - o Train the Trainers

So, when we look at everything together Formation is not something extra. It's the foundation.

It strengthens couples, it builds teams and it sustains our mission.

Father Caffarel in his wisdom reminded us “*The world needs witnesses—and witnesses are formed.*”

And when couples are formed... they become the light the world is waiting for.