

Let Us Journey Together

Bishop John Hine, Chair of the Committee for Marriage and Family Life, a committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, was the keynote speaker at the recent weekend Gathering of the Transatlantic Super-Region of Equipes Notre Dame.

The Transatlantic Super-Region covers a number of English-speaking countries including Great Britain, Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa and Malawi. On the weekend of October 8th to 10th, 76 couples and 9 chaplains met in the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick, for the second Super-Regional Gathering, together with guests from USA and Australia. 7 couples came from Trinidad, and 2 from South Africa, but sadly the Malawi representatives were refused entry Visas. A lively programme was also provided for 23 children who accompanied their parents to the event.

Bishop John spoke on the topic of "Journeying as a Christian Couple in the Modern World", and noted that the theme of the Gathering "gives a great picture of the whole church, all of us, united on our pilgrim journey through life, helping each other along the way, and in this way constitutes a clear challenge to a culture which is riddled with individualism and competitiveness, with all the problems this raises for the whole notion of marriage." Turning to the couples in the hall, he noted that, "You are the ones who live the intimacy of marriage day by day, and as teams, you reflect on your experience, on the joys and agonies, on the growing pains involved in the stages of marriage as well as the freedom it can bring of living in the truth of an honest relationship where pretence and protection have become irrelevant."

The programme over the weekend also included reflective liturgies, talks and workshops. Peter and Di Wordsworth, former Regional Couple for Northern Britain gave a practical talk on Team Life – "Down the Garden Path", comparing Teams Life to the jobs and seasons in a vegetable garden – preparing the soil in Spring is like spreading the news of Teams, sowing the seed is like piloting watering is like liaison – they concluded that the compost heap was equivalent to the teams review meeting at the end of the year – messy, but vital for getting good spiritual growth the following year. On Sunday, Canon John Udris, Dean of Northampton Cathedral spoke of St Therese of Lisieux and her way of prayer, which, in her own words, *'For me prayer is a surge of the heart, a simple look turned towards heaven, a cry of gratitude and love in the midst of trial and as well as joy.'* Making comparisons to the teams endeavours for prayer, he concluded by suggesting that St Therese would ask each one of us, *'why should this treasure not be yours?'*

The weekend closed with a joyful Mass after which Paul and Helena McCloskey, and Father Ken Payne, who celebrated 50 years as a priest earlier this year, handed over responsibility for the Super-Region to Antony and Janet Denman, and Canon John Udris.