

**EXTRACTS FROM THE ADDRESSES
OF THE G.M.K. II**

1997 - 1998

EXTRACTS FROM THE OPENING ADDRESS OF THE G.M.K. II

May 1997

CONCEPTS ABOUT SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Spiritual Direction is the most important and delicate work that the Delegates of Cafh have. This is not only because of the purpose of Cafh, “that souls attain their spiritual liberation,” but also because it implies dealing with the aspect of human beings that needs to be respected the most: their freedom to decide over their lives.

The saying “*Roses, the more they are touched the more they wilt*” can be applied to the relationship between souls and their Spiritual Director. That’s why whoever fulfills that function should be careful not to go too far in their eagerness to help. Excessive counseling is just as bad as not giving the necessary counsel at the appropriate time.

To avoid that danger one has to respect the space that souls need in order to freely decide and be responsible for what they do. On the other hand, one should not lose sight of what they are doing, so as to warn them in time when necessary and help them maintain the course which will lead them to fulfill their vocation.

Before counseling, the Spiritual Director learns to listen without judging and to empathize with the soul she or he has been entrusted with.

Counsel is one of the important aspects of Spiritual Direction. Once souls discover their vocation they know the ideal toward which to orient their lives. The Spiritual Director reminds them of that ideal when it’s necessary, accompanies them in their unfolding, participates interiorly in their vicissitudes, encourages them in their noble efforts and teaches them to overcome their difficulties with their own resources.

Spiritual Directors give counsel in situations of daily life by using their common sense, their practical knowledge of renouncement and their capacity to synthesize so as to apply the concepts of the teachings to everyday problems. They teach everyone to live with a little less than what their income allows so that they can save and collaborate in works that will benefit others. If Sons or Daughters who earn more than the general population have economic problems, Spiritual Directors teach them to control their finances and look at those who have less in order to see all the things they have, instead of looking at those who have more, since this awakens greed and the desire to possess. They encourage Sons and Daughters to increase their skills, according to

their possibilities, not only to have a better income, but also to contribute more positively to the good of society.

If Sons or Daughters have problems with their families or those whom they work with, the Spiritual Director teaches them to seek in themselves the means to improve those relationships, leading them to understand that they don't have control over others but can have control over themselves, that they can know themselves better and learn to give more positive responses.

If an unusual problem is presented, before giving counsel, the Spiritual Director seeks appropriate advice.

What Spiritual Directors do not do is psychological therapy. When they perceive disequilibrium in Sons or Daughters, they recommend them to consult the appropriate specialist. In order to discern these situations, they need to have sufficient knowledge in this area, or they can ask their Delegate for advice.

The Spiritual Director teaches how to pray. The exercise of meditation is prayer; once Sons or Daughters learn to direct their thoughts and feelings, they develop their own way of praying. It's important for the Spiritual Director to remember this, so that Sons and Daughters do not feel guilty if they can't carry out the exercise just as they have been taught. Should anyone not meditate consistently, the Delegate must help him find his own way to pray. What is necessary is that prayer may become the soul's genuine voice which communicates in its own way with the Divine Mother, and that the soul may become familiar with this language.

Spiritual Directors teach how to reflect methodically without allowing oneself to be carried away by ready-made ideas, inclinations or preferences, how to consider different points of view and how to overcome prejudices. They teach how to establish priorities in life and live according to them. They teach how to develop individual and social responsibility and participation, which is not only interior but effective. They teach how to perceive one's own emotions and needs and those of others and to respond to them accordingly.

Spiritual Directors teach the road of renouncement to everyone according to their possibilities and the way in which they express their vocation.

Spiritual Directors make no mention of what they discuss with each Son or Daughter. They only inform the GMK directly or through his Delegate, depending on the case. It would be disastrous to talk with inappropriate persons—for example with other Delegates or with their spouse—or make references, however distant and indirect, during reunions or in conversations, about what Sons and Daughters have confided.

COUNSEL FOR THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

Giving private conference

Spiritual Direction cannot be imposed; Delegates gain the confidence of the souls who have just entered Cafh through their moderate behavior, their prudent judgments and, particularly, through love, made evident in the attention that they give these souls. Even when the Sons and Daughters do not ask for a Private Conference, the Delegates should show their interest in them, their families, their works and projects, always being careful not to meddle in their affairs or ask indiscrete questions. The love and dedication which the Sons and Daughters receive from the Delegates naturally move them toward Spiritual Direction.

The Delegates maintain close contact with the Dames and Knights of their Tables and, if no one asks for a Private Conference, periodically the Delegates call them to converse privately. If there are several Daughters and Sons who do not approach the Delegates, it would be good for the Delegates to consult with their own Spiritual Director so as to evaluate their way of giving Spiritual Direction to the Sons and Daughters.

Giving counsel only when counsel is asked for

Love for the souls whom they assist and the desire that they always make the right choices cause Spiritual Directors to tend to offer their advice and counsel at all times. Spiritual Directors should be careful not to give in to this tendency because they could destroy the capacity of souls to discern and to make themselves responsible for their decisions. Overprotectiveness not only makes one interfere in what is not one's business, but it also harms the unfolding of the soul; it is not the will of the Spiritual Director but the force of the soul's will that produces her progress.

On the other hand, there are souls who generate overprotectiveness with insistent questions, complaints about difficulties and their habit of returning repeatedly to matters for which they have already received counsel and which only they have to resolve. Spiritual Directors should not give in to this.

The opposite pole of overprotectiveness is not to have the established conferences and not to be attentive to the guidance of souls. There is no excuse not to give the Sons and Daughters the guidance they need, just as there is no excuse for Spiritual Directors not to request Spiritual Direction for themselves.

Giving opinions only about topics one has sure knowledge about

Having an opinion is not the same as having sure knowledge. One gives opinions about things that are not evident or for which there are no facts from which to draw a valid conclusion.

When Spiritual Directors talk, they clearly establish what they know and on what basis they know it. When they offer an opinion they make it very clear that it is one among many possible opinions on the subject.

It would be a serious error to give an opinion about something which does not allow for opinions since there is factual knowledge about it. For example, in the area of medicine, one wouldn't give an opinion regarding conditions for which there are diagnostic tests and tested treatments.

Another serious error would be to present as true something that is an opinion. Examples of this would be to present as true facts one's opinions about the future, or about states of consciousness which have not been experienced, or about supernatural worlds which are not known.

Counsel about what one has experience with

When Spiritual Directors recommend a Son or Daughter to do something, they make sure that what they recommend is doable, that it will have positive and foreseeable effects, and that the Daughter or Son has reasonable possibilities of carrying it out. For this they have to support themselves on their own experience. That is why they don't recommend anything that they have not experienced or studied. Moreover, they always bear in mind each soul's capacity; a practice that is easy for the Spiritual Director might not be easy for someone else. What Spiritual Directors never do is recommend something that they haven't sufficiently tried, that they cannot implement in their own lives, or that is so general that it is not useful to anybody. For example, to say "You have to improve your relationships," "save," and "control yourself," seem to be good advice. Nevertheless, this advice leaves souls more confused than before, because on top of the problems they already have, they have the obligation of doing something that they don't know how to do.

Prudent and restrained counsel

The Daughters and Sons not only consult during the Private Conferences; they are in the habit of doing so at any time. Moreover, they tend to take as a teaching and spiritual direction everything the Delegate says outside of the teaching time in the reunions and in the Private Conferences. From the beginning the Delegate needs to teach that this is not so.

Not everything that the Delegates say is the teaching of Cafh; they express the teaching of Cafh when they give a teaching. Outside of that time, the Delegates have their own points of view and interpretation of facts and circumstances. Their version is only one of many possible versions.

However, ordinary conversations are not the appropriate time to ask for or give Spiritual Direction. The Spiritual Director can't give counsel or direction in haste, without getting all the

facts about a specific situation, without listening carefully to the one who is consulting, without taking time for reflection and prayer.

Nevertheless, Sons and Daughters take what the Delegate or Orator says outside of the reunions and retreats very seriously, and they could gradually adopt those points of view and support those opinions as if they were the Teaching of Cafh or the most valid ones. If Delegates notice that the majority of the Sons and Daughters of their Table have the same opinions as themselves, they have to revise the direction they give them. That is why brevity on the part of the Delegates is a virtue.

Counseling about topics related to the Sons' and Daughters' unfolding

Requests for counsel fall generally into three themes:

- What orientation to give to my life
- How to face conflicts
- What decision to make on contingent matters: health, finances, studies, work, purchases, etc.

What orientation to give my life

This topic is central to Spiritual Direction, since it refers to vocation.

The vocation of the Sons and Daughters is to unfold spiritually until they attain spiritual liberation. Spiritual Directors always orient them in that direction, since it is for that reason the Sons and Daughters seek their counsel.

How to face conflicts

Spiritual Directors are not necessarily experts in conflict resolution, nor is it their mission. That is why they discern the cases in which they can help with their advice, and those for which the Sons and Daughters need a specialist's opinion.

When one has a conflict with someone, one generally blames the other person for what is happening and considers the solution is a change in that person. That by itself increases the conflict and doesn't allow one to see simple ways of solving problems that seem insoluble. In these cases, Spiritual Directors guide souls to recognize their responsibility in the conflict they

suffer and to see what they can do on their part to resolve it. Achieving the capacity to face and resolve one's own conflicts is basic for spiritual unfolding.

However, this approach is not enough when the conflicts are very deep and arise from unresolved psychological problems. In these cases the Spiritual Director guides the Son or Daughter to get help from a specialist.

What decision to make on contingent matters

Daughters and Sons ask their Spiritual Directors about everything that affects them. That is why Directors are careful not to fall into the weakness of responding to everything; they are not experts in finance, health, real estate, and all the other issues which everyone has to resolve in daily life. In ordinary matters they can give their opinion by using common sense, their experience and their discernment, but always with great prudence. In matters of health, for example, things are not that simple for a layman to give his advice. In difficult cases, where Spiritual Directors do not know enough to discern clearly, they encourage the S/D to consult a specialist.

Stimulating the development of individual responsibility

Spiritual liberation implies the development of individuality. An aspect of that development is becoming responsible for one's own life; that is to say, assuming the consequences of the past in the present, and assuming the consequences of the present, including our commitments and the decisions we make. Assuming this responsibility means also resolving the conflicts that can arise as a consequence of those decisions.

Adults are responsible for what they do with their life. Whatever the circumstance, one has to find the most positive way of responding to it. Spiritual Direction teaches one to recognize this responsibility and assume it. This has to be very clear as much for Spiritual Directors as for those who receive their counsel.

Spiritual Directors can counsel a course of action, but they cannot impose it. Otherwise, they would be managing the life of the Sons and Daughters and destroying their capacity to discern and assume responsibilities. Demanding submission in Spiritual Direction contradicts the meaning of counseling, since counseling does not obligate. That is why one cannot say that Sons or Daughters are not obedient or that they are at fault for not following advice. Spiritual Directors must have this very clear in their own minds.

The tendency of many persons is to expect others to change in response to their expectations. This moves them to tell others what they have to do and how to do it. In daily life this is an inconvenience which causes friction in relationships. If that tendency is brought to Spiritual Direction, Spiritual Direction will be distorted. Instead of developing individuality it would

destroy any possibility of attaining it. Delegates also have to have this very clear in their own minds.

If Sons and Daughters wanted their Spiritual Directors to tell them exactly what to do, they would be transferring their responsibility onto the Spiritual Directors. Even if the Spiritual Director wished to assume that responsibility, he or she should not do it, since it will be the Son or Daughter who will have to face the consequences of the Director's instructions. Even if the instructions were not appropriate, and the Spiritual Director feels guilt and remorse for giving the wrong counsel, it will still be the Sons and Daughters who will have to pay the consequences. If the instructions were appropriate, the Sons and Daughters would have learned nothing and would be left with an inner emptiness because of their failure to face themselves, the challenges before them.

Nevertheless, there are always cases in which the Spiritual Director—after analyzing options with the Sons and Daughters, their pros and cons and their impact on the direction they want to give to their lives—urges them to meditate and then decide, but the Sons and Daughters insist that the Spiritual Director decide for them, since they say they only want to obey. If the Spiritual Director were to decide for them, they would not realize that what they are doing is precisely the opposite of what they said they wanted to do. If those Sons and Daughters really wanted to obey, they would follow the first counsel which was to meditate and then decide. By insisting on the opposite, they show that what they want is for the Spiritual Director to obey them and assume their responsibility. This evident contradiction is more common than would be expected.

Other suggestions regarding the way of giving counsel

- Show the difference between obligations that must be fulfilled and matters which need to be decided. If it is an obligation, the decision was already taken at the moment of contracting that obligation. If any counsel is appropriate here, it is to fulfill the contracted commitments, be it with others or oneself. By establishing a home one is committed to one's spouse and one's children; by taking a job, one is committed to fulfilling it responsibly; by starting a program of study, one is committed to finishing it; as a Son or Daughter of Cafh, one is committed according to one's vows to what the Rule establishes.
- Before responding to Sons' or Daughters' questions, ask for their opinion about the matter. Many times Sons or Daughters are only looking for confirmation of their own answers. To give other, different answers without having first validated them—which does not necessarily mean saying that they are good—generally leads to arguments. This is so because while the Spiritual Director makes a great effort to make the Sons or Daughters understand the option which he is presenting, the Sons or Daughters feel that

the Director does not understand them. This type of confrontation ends Spiritual Direction.

- Instead of giving advice,
 - a. Accompany the Sons and Daughters in their effort to see the situation clearly and to discover possible answers.
 - b. Help them discern the probable consequences of each of these options.
 - c. Lead the Sons and Daughters to express what they see as *the best possible option, and to discern if this is in accord with what they really yearn for in their life*. If it is a good option, encourage them to put it into practice. If the option that the Sons and Daughters prefer does not seem to be the most beneficial, review with them the different possibilities and their probable consequences, until each side recognizes the validity of the other's conclusions.
- Respect the judgment of the Sons and Daughters even if you do not agree with their point of view, since just as the Sons and Daughters have the freedom to ask for counsel, they also have the freedom to follow it or not. What is important is that the Sons and Daughters see the possible consequences of their decisions.
- Do not check up on the Sons or Daughters once they have accepted counsel. If a Spiritual Director were to follow the Sons and Daughters to check if they fulfill his advice, he would cause anxiety which would obscure the Sons' and Daughters' discernment and hinder their action. Besides, this authoritarian attitude might bring about many other problems. The Rule of Cafh does not give the Delegates the authority of meddling in the lives of the Sons and Daughters.
- If the Son or Daughter does not accept the counsel given, do not change your relationship with them or follow up on the topic. On the contrary, accompany them in whatever decision they make this does not imply either approval or endorsement.

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

There are two aspects to Spiritual Direction: what opening up to Spiritual Direction implies and what one receives through it.

What opening up to Spiritual Direction implies

- Recognizing one's own limitations. It's easy to give an answer to any question. And from that habit, it is a short distance to imagining that one knows more than one really knows and that one is more than one really is. To systematically seek our own Spiritual Direction is to awaken from this dream.
- Understanding what one is living. To explain what one is going through to the Spiritual Director forces one to analyze, evaluate and place experiences within the context of one's vocation—one's guide. The mere fact of explaining what is happening often reveals the course of action one has to take.
- Sincerely confessing one's own inferiority. This goes far beyond recognizing that one does not know everything or has all the answers. It is to honestly recognize the negative tendencies and weaknesses that one hides from oneself, the miseries that one criticizes in others and that one does not want to see in one's interior, the frailty of one's choices. In other words, one's vulnerability in contrast to the security that one usually projects. It is important to recognize this vulnerability not only before oneself but also before the Spiritual Director, because to feel one's own inferiority is not the same as verbalizing it before a witness. The function of the Spiritual Director, in this case, is to be like a mirror where one can see oneself as one really knows one is, without pretexts or pretense.

What one receives through Spiritual Direction

- Someone who listens and does not reveal to others what he or she hears.
- A disinterested and impartial appreciation of one's conduct and what one is experiencing.
- A counterweight to one's own tendencies, when they harm one's own progress.
- Warnings and encouragement when one needs them. This allows one to anticipate dangers and avoid them.
- Independent counsel, free of one's own likes and dislikes, which only seeks the unfolding one needs.

THE DELEGATE'S PREPARATION FOR GIVING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

In the preparation of Spiritual Directors, the following aspects need to be emphasized:

- Their attitude before their own Spiritual Direction
- Their attitude as counselor
- Their behavior
- Their prayer for the Sons and Daughters
- Their training in the topics related to Spiritual Direction

Their attitude before their own Spiritual Direction

The Teaching says: “By having the faculty of asking for counsel from the Delegates, the Sons and Daughters acquire the Supernatural Gift of Counsel.” To be able to give Spiritual Direction, it is necessary to ask for and receive Spiritual Direction.

Spiritual Directors seek Spiritual Direction because they know that it is necessary for their own unfolding and to be able to give Spiritual Direction.

Spiritual Direction demands humility because it is based on the recognition that one needs help. Humility is maintained by practicing it, so that it may not be effaced by a false sense of self-sufficiency. The Delegate learns this and practices it by receiving Spiritual Direction systematically and periodically.

Reading about psychology, conflicts and human relationships allows one to learn what is known about the human soul; introspection and meditation show how one sees oneself; but in order to unfold Spiritual Direction is indispensable.

Spiritual Directors are souls who experience all the vicissitudes of their own unfolding. Besides the experiences they have and the knowledge they have acquired about Spiritual Direction, they need the same help as those who ask for their counsel. The fact of being given the responsibility of counseling others does not transform one into a Master who, from one moment to the next, knows everything.

Without the knowledge of oneself that Spiritual Direction offers, one does not have the capacity to comprehend others. A similar situation is found in the field of psychology. Psychologists need to submit themselves to their own analysis in order to be able to assist others. Even though Spiritual Direction is not psychological analysis, it shares with this discipline the fact that one can't offer what one does not know and can't help others with tools that one does not use oneself.

The Spiritual Director needs to experience what receiving counsel and following it implies. In order to understand the states that one can create in Sons and Daughters with one's counsel, it is necessary to know one's own reactions when the counsel received from one's Spiritual Director does not coincide with what one wants, and the difficulties entailed in following that counsel as well as the difficulties in following even the counsel that fully agrees with what one would like to do.

Moreover, by receiving Spiritual Direction in a systematic way, when the Spiritual Directors orient the Sons and Daughters, they have the living remembrance of how tenuous is the line that separates the counsel which orients from the opinion which imposes, and they are careful not to cross that line.

Their attitude as counselor

Spiritual Directors give counsel without imposing it. The most important thing to point out about this is that *counsel does not obligate*. Whoever receives counsel has total freedom to follow it or not. The Spiritual Director cannot be irritated or upset because a Daughter or Son does not follow his or her advice.

Their behavior

Whether in the presence of the Sons and Daughters or not, the behavior of the Spiritual Director is a permanent reference for them. Nothing escapes the Sons and Daughters since they expect from their Spiritual Directors the example of the teachings and advice that they transmit.

Spiritual Directors need to be permanently conscious of the fact that the Sons and Daughters always take them as an example. The attention paid to their behavior outside the reunions and Private Conferences is as important, or even more important, than in those formal situations, since it is then that they tend to express themselves according to their current personality, their particular upbringing and their formed opinions.

The Delegates' behavior with other Ordained is their teaching about how Sons and Daughters behave with other Sons and Daughters. The Delegates' conduct with whomever they depend on teaches the behavior that the Sons and Daughters need to have with their Delegate.

Fidelity, the spirit of dependence and obedience are basically taught by one's own example. If Delegates impose their power, what they achieve is the submission of some and the estrangement of others from the Path. The arrogance of those who trespass the limits of their functional authority or abuse their power over the Sons and Daughters, forgetting that they represent the Grand Master Knight, denatures their relationship with the Sons and Daughters: fidelity to the vows is transformed into submission to a person, obedience to the Grand Master Knight into adulation and obsequiousness toward the Delegate. If someone were to behave this way he or she

would no longer be acting as a Delegate of Cafh, but rather would be harming his or her own unfolding and that of the Sons and Daughters.

Their prayer for the Sons and Daughters

Spiritual Directors pray for the Sons and Daughters. Praying for them has two fundamental effects. The first is the good of the Sons and Daughters, by the effects of the good intention and the good thought of the one who prays. The second is the good in the relationship between the Spiritual Director and the Son or Daughter. Praying deepens our love for those whom we pray for and keeps them present in our mind and heart. Moreover, it predisposes us to empathize with others whether they be in direct relationship or distant from us. We understand by empathy inner participation with someone. Empathy is the basis of the understanding needed for counsel.

Praying for the Sons and Daughters is indispensable, especially when they suffer difficulties or when the Delegates perceive that they are irritated because of something that a Son or Daughter has said or done.

Their training in topics related to Spiritual Direction

The Teaching says that the Gift of Counsel: "*...opens the way for the development of the ability to grasp knowledge*". Having the Gift of Counsel implies having the appropriate attitude and the necessary knowledge. The appropriate attitude unfolds by *humbly asking for* counsel and by the desire to learn what this practice promotes. Offering allows that attitude to take root in the soul. Study, reflection and the *practice* of renouncement give content to counsel. Neither the attitude of the one who counsels, no matter how good it may be, nor the content of the counsel, no matter how correct it may be will, on their own, result in good counsel, That is why Delegates seek counsel, work on their attitude of renouncement and study earnestly what is needed to orient the Sons and Daughters.

Spiritual Directors concentrate their study on the topic of Spiritual Direction, because that is their specific area. In this sense it is important that they study and meditate on the Rule, the teachings, the topics of the Doctrine of Cafh and their applications in daily life, on the decisions they take, and on the way in which they express themselves and communicate.

They also study the traditional topics associated with spiritual life such as prayer, meditation and mystical asceticism.

While studying, it is fundamental to learn to distinguish the affirmations that are supported on evidence from those that express only points of view. Discerning this difference is the indispensable basis for transmitting the Teaching. This also shows the temporary character of

one's interpretations of the teachings and, especially, the changeable character of one's own opinions.

Cafh has the symbolic ceremony of burning the Teaching notes. Every year the Sons and Daughters participate in this experience, but sometimes forget its meaning and hold onto the Teaching notes and the interpretation that they have made of them. Hence the insistence in the imperious need of comprehending this fundamental concept. The Teaching of Cafh is divine and eternal"; but the way in which each one understands it is temporary and subject to changes.

Interpretations are temporary by nature, because they are based on perceptions, comprehension and incomplete data. And necessarily they evolve in the measure the one who interprets them unfolds and in the measure new evidence appears about the topic the interpretations are dealing with; that is: interpretations change.

One's own opinions come from the culture in which one's points of view were formed, from the influence of momentary currents of thought, and also from one's preferences, study and training. In the measure in which a person unfolds, her opinions also unfold. That is: opinions change.

Therefore, to understand that interpretations are temporary, while at the same time we adopt one of them on which to base our way of seeing things and making decisions, without forgetting its impermanence, trains us to transmit concepts which are open to their own evolution. This shows our attitude of freedom which is the essence of the Teaching of Cafh.

Moreover, it is necessary for Delegates to acquire knowledge about psychology, human relationships and conflict resolution, so they can discern up to what point they are able to counsel and at what point a specialist needs to intervene. That knowledge is also useful for Spiritual Directors to better understand themselves, the processes that they experience and to realize what they don't know.

On the other hand, Delegates are careful to be didactic and apply diverse known methods to transmit knowledge.

To this intellectual and practical preparation, Delegates also add their work on their own behavior, not only with the Sons and Daughters who are entrusted to them but also with the other Delegates and their Spiritual Director. The clearest and most direct teaching that the Daughters and Sons receive about the way of relating is through the behavior of their Delegates with them, with those whom the Delegates do not have authority over and with those who have authority over the Delegates.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OF THE ORDAINED

The Spiritual Direction of the Ordained is based on renouncement. The counsel centers on orienting the Ordained toward the effective practice of renouncement.

The Ordained renounce everything, and they give evidence that this is so.

Exterior renouncement is more immediate and easier to carry out as well as to recognize. It is evident that the Ordained offer their time, energy and resources for the good of souls. Inner renouncement is not so easy. What is most difficult for human beings is to renounce doing, feeling and thinking according to their impulses, moods or what comes to their minds.

The Ordained renounce by doing, feeling and thinking in a way that is attuned with their vocation and their function in Cafh. And they practice that renouncement through obedience and fidelity.

That is the orientation they receive, or ought to receive in their Spiritual Direction.

In the Spiritual Direction of Delegates it is necessary to discern that often counsel is binding, because it relates to the function which they are fulfilling or because it indirectly affects the function. In those cases *that counsel is obligatory*. For example, if a Delegate explains his difficulty to meet with Daughters and Sons in Private Conferences due to time constraints, the advice given to him must be that he must fulfill his obligation of having Private Conferences with them. He cannot leave the Sons and Daughters without Spiritual Direction; that is his priority. The counsel to attend the Daughters and Sons as they should is an obligation. There are other obligations that can be left to the Delegates' discretion.

Another example: a Delegate presents her difficulty regarding the instructions she receives and she is advised to communicate better with her Delegate; following or not those instructions is not a matter for discussion.

Before giving an indication the Grand Master Knight or any other Delegate, inform themselves and discuss matters, especially with those who can be affected by the measures that have to be taken. On the other hand, all Delegates have the right of communicating in a free and fluid way with their Delegates and directly with the Grand Master Knight before, during and after any measure is adopted. Thus, when one receives an indication, that is not the time to argue about it, but to fulfill it. If after applying it, a better option is perceived, a dialogue can be held to reconsider it.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION OF SOLITARIES AND SPONSORED

Spiritual Directors are conscious of the difference between the Spiritual Direction they receive as Ordained and that which they offer to the Solitary and Sponsored Sons and Daughters.

The Ordained are directly responsible for the Work of Cafh in the world, and they express that responsibility—and their renouncement—with their strict obedience, their spirit of dependence and their permanent availability to carry out what is necessary for the good of souls. That attitude

is so characteristic of their souls that it may seem natural to them to expect, or exact, the same attitude on the part of the Solitaries and Sponsored Sons and Daughters. Moreover, they may relate with the Solitaries and Sponsored in the same way they related with those who oriented them in their formation as Ordained, and they may repeat to the Sons and Daughters advice and indications they themselves received in other occasions and circumstances. That confusion can inadvertently lead them to exact obedience, availability and offering from the Sons and Daughters which do not correspond to their category and group, or to their way of perceiving their vocation.

Delegates stimulate the Sons' and Daughters' love for their spiritual vocation and the offering of themselves when they give the Teaching and Spiritual Direction. They do this by transmitting their love for their own vocation and, especially, with their daily example of abnegation and offering to the Work of Cafh. The attitude of offering can't be exacted, but it develops in the measure that the soul unfolds while persevering in her spiritual vocation. That is why one has to pay specific attention to this unfolding, without asking for or expecting something different from what the Sons or Daughters themselves express. And when they express the disposition of offering themselves in some way, one has to be very prudent in accepting their offering and accompany them so that gradually they give proof of their determination.

In the context of Spiritual Direction, direction means orientation without coercion.

Orientation

To give direction is to orient and offer elements in order to maintain that orientation. If the mind gives way to the pressure of desires, the will is oriented to their satisfaction and the direction one chose for one's life is lost. When the soul asks for Spiritual Direction, she is to be taught to guide her discernment and will so that her decisions respond to what she really wants.

When one seeks counsel, sometimes one is not aware of what one really wants. Then, Spiritual Direction is based on helping one confirm again and again the chosen objective for one's life: one's spiritual vocation.

Once that objective is made clear, priorities become more evident. Once priorities are clear, what remains is to discern the means for fulfilling them.

Spiritual Direction without coercion

Spiritual Directors understand very clearly that when Sons and Daughters seek their counsel *they are asking for their opinion* about something and that *to give an opinion is not to give an order or an indication, but only to give advice.*

Even though Spiritual Directors tell the Sons and Daughters that they have total freedom to follow the advice or not, if they expect something else they can't avoid expressing it in their

relationship with those Sons and Daughters. Inner criticisms are expressed in non-verbal messages and, in addition, they lead to exterior criticism. The non-verbal messages (gestures and facial expressions) produce an instantaneous response, which is independent from the content of the verbal message. That is why the way one speaks is just as important as what one says.

Giving counsel with an authoritarian tone and without giving alternatives, makes the one who receives it understand it as an order and feel obliged to follow it. If one follows it, one feels forced and oppressed; and if one doesn't follow it, one feels guilty. This doesn't depend so much on the Sons and Daughters as on the attitude of the Spiritual Directors and the space they give the Sons and Daughters to lead their lives.

On the other hand, explicit criticism or critical comments destroy the gift of giving counsel and cause those who criticize to lose spiritual authority.

Counsel is not obligatory. Nevertheless, the one who gives it sometimes has an expectation that those who ask for it agree with him or her and will follow it. The following situations can happen depending on the attitude of the Spiritual Director and that of the Son or Daughter:

- If the one who asks for counsel already has an idea of what he or she wants to do and doesn't want to change, and if the one who counsels insists on something different, an argument begins. And when an argument begins, Spiritual Direction ends.
- The one who asks for counsel doesn't argue, but doesn't follow it. If the Spiritual Director has expectations, he or she will feel frustrated and even angry. This deteriorates the relationship with the Son or Daughter; it interiorly separates one from the other and the possibility of offering Spiritual Direction ends.
- Sons and Daughters feel obligated and blindly follow the counsel, without discernment. They do not understand, unless the contrary is said, that the advice is valid in a specific context and time. For example, because of a special circumstance that occurred many years ago, a Son was told on that occasion not to meditate; then, without consulting again, he neglects his exercises, and from that time on he no longer meditates. Or a Daughter does not want to follow the counsel of changing her way of performing her function, saying that she has to fulfill it as she has been taught many years ago. Or a Son has been counseled to act in one way before a certain problem and later he counsels all the Sons and Daughters to proceed in the same way, without understanding the differences which circumstances and different individuals require. It is due to instances such as these that Spiritual Directors have to be attentive to how their counsel is interpreted and the effects it produces. Without that feedback, they cannot counsel the Sons and Daughters adequately.

- The Sons or Daughters feel that their Spiritual Director respects their space and does not press them, but establishes a fluid communication of shared reflection. The Sons and Daughters meditate on the advice received and understand the reasons for it; they discern how and when to apply it; they verify its results and learn. For Spiritual Directors this is a source of happiness. They are thankful for all the help they have received which enabled them to give good counsel.

EXTRACTS FROM THE ADDRESSES OF THE G.M.K. II
May 1998

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND ADMINISTRATION

I. SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

For Those of Us Who Receive Spiritual Direction

For Those of Us Who Offer Spiritual Direction

Recommendations for Spiritual Direction

II. ADMINISTERING THE TABLE

Irregular situations in the Table

Irregular situations in Delegation

Insufficient supervision

Reticence

Decisions made without consulting

Unfulfilled responsibility

Recommendations to avoid problems in administration

Recommendations for the GMK/GMD

Recommendations for city, zonal or country Delegates

III. DIALOGUE

The breakdown of communication

Malicious criticism

Gossip

Dialogue: To listen

To validate

To communicate

To speak for oneself

Dialogue and participation

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND ADMINISTRATION

We will reflect on three areas of our work:

- I.** Spiritual direction
- II.** Administering the Table
- III.** Dialogue

I. SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

The need to seek spiritual direction was dealt with extensively by the Ordained in the Assembly of 1997; little can be added to their expositions. Thus, *theoretically*, we know very well what attitude to have and what to do respecting spiritual direction. However, reality shows us that, *in practice*, we still have a ways to go in this direction.

Spiritual direction depends as much on the attitude of the one who offers it as on the one who receives it. In what follows we will consider some attitudes that negatively affect the process of spiritual direction from these two angles.

For Those of Us Who Receive Spiritual Direction

Red flags:

- We don't ask for spiritual direction or we pretend to receive spiritual direction by the fact that we sometimes converse with a person who shares our opinions and approves our conduct.

This attitude is often accompanied by dogmatism and a feeling of superiority. It also could mask the habit of gossiping.

- We pretend to consult, yet we are really seeking approval for our conduct, opinions or what we have already decided or done.

This self-pitying and usually independent attitude is closed to spiritual direction.

- We seek the personal friendship of our Spiritual Director.

The Spiritual Director is our friend by definition. Seeking out his or her personal friendship can mask jealousy and competitiveness with others.

- We maintain a defensive attitude.

We act as judge and interested party in the evaluation of our interpersonal conflicts, without placing them at the Divine Mother's feet in spiritual direction.

We don't see ourselves in context.

We absolve ourselves of responsibility in conflictive situations: it is always someone else's fault.

We don't analyze our conduct.

We always seem to be sure that our opinion is the correct one: it's always the other person who's wrong.

We don't place our ideas in context.

- We don't touch subjects which are close to home. Instead, we speak of generalities or give reports about what we have done or will do, or talk about theoretical matters that are disconnected from our concrete life.

We deny our own problems and are close-minded.

- We ask to change our Spiritual Director when he or she does not agree with our opinions or questions the way we do things.* (See the section "For those of us who offer spiritual direction".)

When our Spiritual Director confronts us with aspects we don't want to recognize, we find many reasons, because of our pride or denial, for seeking another Spiritual Director, or none at all.

For Those of Us Who Offer Spiritual Direction

It could occur:

- That we don't tell the Sons and Daughters what they need to hear because we fear they will react negatively.

This shows our weakness as Spiritual Directors. It could also show weakness on the part of the Son or Daughter, who does not have the strength to hear what must be heard.

- That we have a complacent attitude toward the Sons and Daughters, not emphasizing the seriousness of a questionable action.

Thus, as Spiritual Directors, we become accomplices in proceedings we do not approve of. With this attitude we deceive those who trust us.

- That we don't point out to the Sons and Daughters when they use the time of spiritual direction for bringing up matters which have nothing to do with their unfolding.

As Spiritual Directors, we could be afraid to face conflictive topics, or not be aware that's what we're doing because we don't deal with fundamental subjects in our own spiritual direction either.

- That we base the direction we give the Sons and Daughters exclusively on what they tell us about themselves, and that we counsel them without helping them see their greater context.

This indicates that as Spiritual Directors, we probably don't understand all the contexts Sons and Daughters are operating in and that we also become a judge and interested party when evaluating what is happening.

- That we criticize Sons and Daughters and, consequently, don't encourage them to communicate openly with us, especially when they are confused.

Lack of understanding can lead Spiritual Directors:

~ To judge instead of listening

~ To complicate matters instead of simplifying them

~ To confuse matters instead of clarifying them

- That we get angry with the Sons and Daughters for their attitudes and actions instead of teaching them.

- That we resent the Sons and Daughters when we think they don't listen to us or follow our advice.

Substituting irritation and resentment for the attitude of love and understanding makes a person unfit to give spiritual direction. To get angry at someone is to attack that person. We don't feel like asking advice from someone who attacks us. Therefore, a grouchy or easily irritated person does not have the necessary disposition to give spiritual direction.

- Responsibility for a situation in which a Son or Daughter requests a change of Spiritual Director or Table can fall on the Spiritual Director's shoulders. For example:
 - ~ When we attend Sons and Daughters hurriedly and show that we are very busy.
 - ~ When we press Sons and Daughters to agree with our opinions and punish them with our judgments or attitudes if they don't. When we want Sons and Daughters to copy our behavior or the models we want to impose.
 - ~ When we demand more from the Sons and Daughters than the commitments they made with their Vows.
 - ~ When we give opinions—and expect our recommendations to be followed—in matters which pertain only to the Sons or Daughters or to professionals. For example, treatment of physical or mental illnesses, children's education, resolution of marital problems, financial issues or work-related topics.
 - ~ When we make the Sons and Daughters feel that their character is incompatible with ours.
 - ~ When the Sons and Daughters perceive that we are upset with them and that they can't do anything to change that state of things.

Recommendations for Spiritual Direction

In order to understand our situation as spiritual directors, we need to keep in mind our immense responsibility for the souls who trust us.

A person who has not committed himself with a vow like ours is free to seek spiritual direction or not. Instead, the Ordained who have to give spiritual direction to Sons and Daughters can't do it without receiving spiritual direction.

If we don't seek spiritual direction, sooner or later the following will happen:

- We can't know what it means for the Sons and Daughters to ask for advice if we ourselves don't ask for counsel.
- We can't know what it means for the Son or Daughter to follow a piece of advice if we neither ask for counsel nor pay attention when someone offers it to us.

- Our only reference for evaluating what we do and what is happening to us is our own interpretation of it.
- Since we don't request feedback, we don't have valid references to understand situations and to progress in our unfolding.
- Since we don't accept feedback which displeases us, we adopt a defensive position to justify everything we think, feel or do. Our vision of reality becomes progressively partial and our judgment is increasingly corrupted.
- Consequently, we become so self-enclosed that we don't recognize the help we're offered and it becomes almost impossible for us to be helped.

This situation makes us unreliable with respect to assuming responsibilities in the Table and even less reliable to give spiritual direction.

Besides, these attitudes lead to the abuse of power. Consequently, someone who is in charge of administering a Table and doesn't seek spiritual direction in an honest way has to be relieved of that function.

Seeking spiritual direction means we really look for the orientation we need. We accept spiritual direction when it is given to us, without feeling annoyance when our Spiritual Director tells us something that does not coincide with our opinions or when the orientation we are given reveals aspects of our behavior we need to improve. In practice, this implies:

- Having a permanent, open contact with the Delegate whom we directly depend on. We ask for orientation on administering the Table and thoroughly inform the Delegate about it, just as the Norms establish.
- Having private conference with our Spiritual Director regularly to deal with specific topics of our spiritual unfolding.
- Reporting annually to the GMK, telling him who our Spiritual Director is and the frequency of the private conferences we have with the above-mentioned objective.

This information shows the GMK, and especially ourselves, our attitude toward our spiritual direction.

Besides the orientation we receive through spiritual direction, we need to recognize the teachings inherent in the feedback we continually receive from everyone around us, not only

from Delegates and the Sons and Daughters but also from family members, bosses, coworkers and strangers.

The approval we receive from some quarters is feedback which increases our self-confidence and makes us feel good. This is positive. However, we often lean on this approval to convince ourselves that we are good in every way and that we don't have anything important to work on in ourselves. That is why we have to pay special attention to the feedback that contradicts or hurts us because it is one of the few non-subjective signals which help us to work interiorly.

Conflicts in our interpersonal relationships are especially important in this regard. We are always, or at least partly responsible, for any conflictive situation we're involved in. In any of these situations—in which we are suffering as much as anyone else—we have to ask ourselves what we *ourselves* need to change so as to overcome that state of affairs and not provoke a similar situation again.

II. ADMINISTERING THE TABLE

When we become in charge of administering a Table for the first time, we're very aware that we have a lot to learn and consult with our Delegate about every detail of our activity. With the passage of time, we begin to feel more secure in our function and don't need to be so heavily dependent on such close consultation. Sometimes this security can lead to confusion and we think we no longer need to consult and inform the Delegate about matters which actually do need to be consulted and informed about. Moreover, the case could even arise in which we withhold information because "the Delegate doesn't understand" or "the Delegate" or "the GMK" is against these kinds of plans." To avoid arriving at these extremes, we should reflect on situations which we should correct without delay as soon as we perceive them.

Irregular situations in the Table

- If the Delegate has to ask us repeatedly for information which we should regularly give.

Let's review our obligations regarding the information and permissions we are supposed to be giving and requesting. Let's keep an agenda for fulfilling them and keep a written record of how we fulfill them.

- If we give excuses for not meeting with the Delegate or with the group of Delegates.

We have a reduced capacity for dialogue or we have deeper conflicts in communication. Let us analyze the causes for our attitude and our isolation and ask for spiritual direction.

- If we adopt a paternalistic attitude of superiority toward the Assistant of our group or toward the Delegate, not listening to the opinions of others while demanding that they listen to ours. We criticize others without accepting criticism from others. Or even more, we sabotage reunions with silences, forgetfulness, or deliberate distractions.

We urgently need spiritual direction and we need to work on the rules of dialogue.

- If we don't do our work. For example, we don't participate in the retreats within the Stability Radius, we don't attend the Sons and Daughters in the private conferences, we don't attend the periodic reunions of the groups of the Table or we don't give the Teaching.

We abandon the Sons and Daughters. We have to ask for help from the Delegate or the GMK and search inwardly for what makes us elude our responsibilities.

- If we don't accept the element of subordination in our function, or if we don't accept our obligation to be accountable for our acts in connection with administering the Table. Some specific symptoms alerting us to the seriousness of this situation are:
 - ~ If we don't ask for advice about guiding the Table and orienting the Sons and Daughters.
 - ~ If our reports are incomplete or superficial. We don't inform about permissions that we deny or about sanctions we apply.
 - ~ If we accuse the Delegate of being authoritarian when s/he gives us indications which are contrary to our opinion.
 - ~ If instead of recognizing we are abusing authority, we criticize the indications established, saying that they deprive us of authority.
 - ~ If we distance ourselves from the Delegate, or we become upset when she points at irregularities in how we fulfill our obligations
 - ~ If we interpret it as a punishment or a show of ingratitude when it is mandated that the number of our responsibilities will be decreased or that we will be relieved of our functions. In the past this reached the extreme of transmitting that judgment to other Delegates, even to the Sons and Daughters of the Delegate's own Table. This incites the Sons and Daughters to "defend" the Assistant before the Delegate or the GMK.

These situations indicate an attitude contrary to the spirit of dependence and obedience to the Rule of Cafh, to the norms given for administering the Tables, and to our teachings. Any Delegate who shows this attitude would not be fit to carry out the functions of Delegate and should request to be relieved of office, humbly ask for

spiritual direction and return to the source of his vocation and reason for being an Ordained.

- ~ If when the Table is about to receive a Visit, we “prepare” the Sons and Daughters to give a particular impression. Then later we inquire into what was said during the Visit and in the private conversations the Sons and Daughters had with the Delegate.

This behavior would indicate a proclivity to hide aspects of the life of the Table, independence in orienting the Sons and Daughters and failure to acknowledge the authority of the Delegate of the GMK who carries out the Visit.

- ~ If we discourage or interfere with the Sons’ and Daughters’ direct relationship with their Delegate or with the GMK; if, when they have such a relationship, we accuse them of “going over our head” and ask them what they are going to say or what they said. If we discredit them, feeling that they are betraying us, putting us aside by directly contacting the Delegate.

This would show jealousy and a desire for power on the part of the Delegate of the Table. It is a lack of understanding of the function of Delegate and a denial of the GMK’s authority.

- ~ If we discredit, before the Sons and Daughters, what was said by the Son or Daughter making the Visit to the Table, because what he or she expressed differs from our opinions.

In this situation three aspects stand out:

- 1. The Delegate’s confused notion about the Visit. The Son or Daughter who makes the Visit represents the GMK. If the Delegate of the Table doesn’t understand what this Visiting Delegate expresses, the appropriate thing to do would be to clarify her ideas with the Visiting Delegate or, if need be, with the GMK. To discredit, before Sons and Daughters, what the Visiting Delegate said would be to attack the spirit of Cafh and cause irreparable damage to the Sons and Daughters who witness it.*
- 2. Extreme dogmatism in the Delegate. Any concept which does not agree with the Delegate’s, no matter who gives it, has no value whatsoever and must be rejected.*
- 3. Gossip. Instead of dialoguing with the Visiting Delegate, the Delegate of the Table discredits him or her behind his or her back.*

- If when we experience conflicts we become judges and interested parties, we discredit the Sons and Daughters who don't agree with the way we do things or those we don't have a good relationship with. We brand them as “problematic Sons or Daughters” without recognizing our responsibility in these situations. Some of these Sons and Daughters will be submissive and will yield at the cost of great suffering, while others will rebel and yet others will separate themselves from Cafh.

Any conflict between a Delegate and a Son or Daughter must be evaluated by another Delegate, after listening to both sides and analyzing that situation in the context of the Table and of the particular situation of the Son or Daughter and the Delegate of the Table.

- If we suddenly cut off a relationship with a Son or Daughter or Sons or Daughters who were “mainstays” of the Table (according to our own judgment). When we no longer want them in the Table and ask that they are transferred to another Table. When suddenly Sons or Daughters who have been in Cafh for many years ask to be changed to another Table—Sons or Daughters who had previously had a good relationship with us.

The Delegate mustn't fall into the easy excuse of blaming the Son or Daughter for the situation that has been created. When a Son or Daughter who loves the Delegate asks to change to another Table, there must have been a very painful conflict between them. This has to alert the Assistant and the Delegate who supervise the Table's activity, since such a situation can either mean coercion, dogmatism, intolerance, irritability or indiscretion on the part of the Delegate. It could also indicate that the Delegate does not accept a Son or Daughter's observation on an abnormality in the Delegate's own conduct—even if it is true—and for this reason discriminates against the Son or Daughter, withdraws his trust and the attention he owes that soul.

- If we resist transferring Sons or Daughters to other Tables, or admitting Sons or Daughters from other Tables; if we stipulate conditions for accepting Sons and Daughters into the Table.

This indicates rigidness, abuse of authority and a sense of possessiveness toward the Sons and Daughters. The consequence of this attitude would also be rigidity in the Sons and Daughters of the Table and submission to the person of the Delegate, or rebellion.

- If we feel flattered when the Sons and Daughters of the Table do not accept another Delegate when we announce to them that there will be transfers to others Tables, instead of realizing that we have degraded the meaning of dependence.

This situation would indicate manipulation on the Delegate's part to transform the Sons and Daughters into her followers, from whom submission is required. This leads the Sons and Daughters to adulation and the Delegate to petulance.

- If we allow Sons and Daughters of the Table to criticize other Sons and Daughters or Delegates

Such a thing would evidence that we stimulate the Sons and Daughters to have a feeling of superiority over others and also the vice of gossip. This behavior is totally contrary to the mysticism of union.

- If we give authorizations which are in violation of the established norms, especially those referring to economic, social and work relationships, and loans of money between members of Cafh or between members of Cafh and their Delegate.
- If we deny permissions arbitrarily, causing the Sons and Daughters to suffer.
- If we sanction the Sons and Daughters without previously consulting or informing the Delegate or the GMK about it.
- If we entrust works to the Sons and Daughters beyond the obligations which the Rule establishes for them, without the required pre-authorization of the Delegate or of the GMK.
- If there are Sons or Daughters in the Table who have a conflict with us, and we do nothing to help them get in touch with the Regional Delegate or Delegate of the Country, or to consult with whomever the GMK advises them to in cases where there is no such Delegate.

These are flagrant and unjustifiable faults. They show the Delegate's despotism and open rebellion to the way Cafh is administered.

- If we comment about our own problems to the Sons and Daughters of the Table.
- If we comment with others what the Sons or Daughters of the Table have confided us.
- If we make an enemy of any Son or Daughter.

The previous three items would incapacitate the Delegate to give spiritual direction and to fulfill functions in Cafh. With regard to confidences, if a Delegate considers it

necessary that the GMK should know a confidence a Son or Daughter has made to him, the Delegate should ask for that Son or Daughter's consent to do so.

- If we praise ourselves and our work. If we overvalue ourselves in relation to other Delegates and Tables. Or when we consider ourselves “defenders” of the Rule and representatives of the “true” Cafh.

These attitudes would show infatuation, dogmatism, rigidity and narrow-mindedness. Who would we ever be able to orient?

- If we allow room for an atmosphere hostile to the hierarchical Delegates to be generated in the Table.

This happens in certain situations when, for example:

The Sons and Daughters have problems in their relationship with the Delegate of the Table and transfer their attitude to the hierarchical Delegates.

The Delegate of the Table maintains a conflictive relationship with her hierarchical Delegate and incites the Sons and Daughters to “be on her side.” In this case, she would be attacking the work of Cafh and, by her attitude and conduct, would be separating herself from the Great Current.

Irregular situations in Delegation

Many of the problems mentioned in the previous section turn into crises when the administration, at the level of Delegation, fails. The failure could be either in not detecting the problems on time or in allowing them to grow even when we are aware that they exist. Some of the faults could be the following:

Insufficient supervision

- If we don't follow the established norms for supervising the way the Delegates fulfill their office.

If we find the norms are not suitable, we need to suggest others which are more appropriate.

- If we base our evaluation of the Table only on the opinion the Delegate gives us.

We have to know the situation of a Table in order to evaluate it. Besides establishing an open relationship with the Delegate, we need to know the Sons and Daughters directly, hold a conversation with them, find out how they feel and think.

- If we accept deficient or inadequate reports.

We could not report and suggest solutions to the GMK without having adequate and reliable information ourselves.

- If we don't give sufficient importance to deficiencies in the fulfillment of the established norms, to questionable attitudes of the Delegate of the Table or to conflicts in Sons or Daughters which reveal problems in their relationship with the Delegate.

We would be responsible for the problems these situations give rise to by not correcting the mistakes or irregularities we observe.

- If we let it pass when Assistants don't respond suitably to the Delegate's authority.
- If we don't supervise the work of the Delegate of the Table or the tasks which the Delegate has entrusted a Son, a Daughter or the Table.

Reticence

- If we don't make observations when they need to be made, for fear that the Delegate will react to them.

We would need to work on our desire to "be thought well of" by others, and keep in mind the harm we cause souls and Cafh by this conduct.

- If we underestimate Sons' and Daughters' complaints and requests for help.
- When we let irregularities pass, basing ourselves on the false optimism that "everything is going to work itself out".

The weaknesses of human nature—our own weaknesses, that is—are not cured with excessive familiarity, with laxity or with the passage of time. On the contrary, they get worse if we don't act appropriately at the appropriate moment. Such attitudes would be very harmful since they would leave the Sons and Daughters without the orientation and assistance which we have the obligation to give them.

Decisions made without consulting

- If we don't thoroughly consult and inform the GMK, so as "not to disturb" him with so many consultations and reports.

*That we don't consult **before** acting is harmful enough. But when we don't even inform **afterward** about what has been done, we show that we not only lack discernment but that we are moved by the eagerness for power—information is power.*

Unfulfilled responsibility

- If we transfer to the GMK conflictive situations which we should be taking charge of ourselves and which might be disturbing for the Delegate, assuming the role of "friend" instead of speaking clearly with the Delegate.

This is the opposite extreme to the previous point. This attitude would show that we are disloyal to the Delegate who needs our orientation, and that we are ineffective in the help we should be giving the GMK in administering Cafh.

- If we tolerate Delegates criticizing Sons or Daughters or other Delegates with their words or actions.

This conduct would make us accomplices in the vice of gossip, a habit which destroys human relationships and—so much the more— spiritual ties. This falsity in interpersonal relationships threatens the common good.

Recommendations to avoid problems in administration

Recommendations for the GMK/GMD

- To give directives which refer to the way of conducting Tables and to the orientation of the Sons and Daughters only through their Delegates.
- To request Delegates to revise the Guide for Delegates or to prepare another more adequate system.
- To correct promptly, through the Delegates, any irregularity or mistake noticed in the administration of the Tables or in the conduct of the Ordained.

- To give priority to the Sons' and Daughters' welfare in cases of conflict between them and the Delegate, keeping in mind that, in those cases, the greater responsibility for the situation which has been created falls on the Delegate.
- To relieve Delegates of their functions if they do not satisfactorily mend serious errors they might have made—errors such as those pointed out in these pages—once they have been told and helped to correct them. Not to allow oneself to be swayed by the idea that there would be no one to replace the Delegate in that function, or by the intention of not offending that Delegate.
- To require clear, complete and punctual reports of the ongoing progress of the institutions they are responsible for supervising and to follow up when irregularities are observed.
- To give important permissions in writing. For example, those which refer to economic relationships, dispensations or Works of Cafh.

Recommendations for city, zonal or country Delegates

- To establish two kinds of meetings of Assistants of Tables with their Delegates
 1. Meetings to discuss with the Delegate matters dealing with administering the Table and the orientation of the Sons and Daughters. These meetings should follow a written outline or agenda covering all the information that needs to be given about the Table.
 2. Meetings dealing exclusively about topics of our spiritual direction: going straight to the point without getting lost in side issues or other matters which distract us from our spiritual situation.

If these two meetings are carried out consecutively, the passage from one to the other is to be marked off verbally, so that the tenor of the meeting is obvious to both Assistant and Delegate.

- If the Delegate notices that we don't correct the irregularities he points out to us, that we don't follow the directives he gives us regarding the administration of the Table, or that we don't have spiritual direction, he has the moral and institutional obligation to inform the GMK clearly in writing about this situation and to give the GMK his opinion about the measures he thinks should be taken. He also has the obligation to communicate to us the opinion he is going to transmit to the GMK. *The Assistant involved has the right to explain to the GMK (that is, unless she has an authority she can consult with first—for example, the Delegate of the country—) about any disagreement with the Delegate that she believes*

prevents the proper functioning of her Table or which prevents her from receiving spiritual direction.

- To fulfill the indication to visit the Tables periodically. One can't be informed about what one doesn't know.
- To follow a guide which covers all the aspects of a Table's activities, in order to be informed about that Table.
- To evaluate how the Delegate of the Table carries out his function not only through the information he gives about his work, but also through conversations with the Sons and Daughters in order to familiarize himself with their points of view and their experiences. To carry out enough private interviews with the Sons and Daughters, especially if no one or very few ask for them.
- If the Table or a group of Sons or Daughters carries out exterior activities sponsored by Cafh or which are in some way related to Cafh, to ask the Delegate and the Sons and Daughters involved for clear and complete information about them: agenda, activities, finances, economic and work relationships between the Sons and Daughters. Also to verify with the appropriate person in each case whether these activities are duly authorized and reported on.
- When Delegates notice irregularities, conflictive situations or attitudes, they should inform the GMK immediately as well as give their opinion about how to remedy such situations and assume responsibility for carrying out these measures personally, if they are approved.

III. DIALOGUE

There are problems in communication rooted in deep psychological complexes which are outside the scope of spiritual direction. Such cases require professional assistance and will not be discussed here.

Every Son and Daughter, and in particular every Ordained, yearns to keep the spirit of Cafh as pure as possible. We achieve this by working inwardly in order to live our spiritual ideal more and more fully. We also have to begin in the same way with respect to communication, working inwardly.

Yet why is it so difficult for us to begin improving our interpersonal relationships by working on ourselves?

Perhaps one reason is that we judge our conduct in interpersonal relationships by the intention that we have established for ourselves. We don't realize that while we may think we have the best intention, our conduct may leave much to be desired.

In the context of Cafh, bad intentions, violence or aggression are unthinkable in the relationships among Sons and Daughters. But we have to remember that there are many ways to distort our intention, to be violent and to attack others without our realizing it. The most common of these ways are the breakdown of communication, malicious criticism, and gossip.

The breakdown of communication

A common way for breaking down our communication with others is to judge them negatively. If we have felt affected by their opinions or personal characteristics, we discredit everything they may try to convey to us from then on, refusing to consider their ideas and statements with an open attitude. Our attitude usually generates the same attitude in the person we are speaking with. As a consequence, if that person needs to interact with us he does so defensively, since he has already experienced our critical attitude towards him. Moreover, we don't listen when he tries to tell us something. It should not surprise us if that person does not want to consult with us or interact with us, since he will be trying to avoid our abusive conduct. So, when Sons or Daughters adopt a distant attitude, instead of blaming them, saying "there is something wrong" with them, we have to examine the way we treat them and the judgments we have made about them.

We can even miss the possibility of communicating with people we don't know because we are prejudiced against the habits or beliefs of the group they belong to, or because of what others have told us about them.

Malicious criticism

Criticism is malicious when we find fault with people and talk about them behind their back with the intention of discrediting them. This form of criticism lacks charity, honesty and love for the common good, and the good of that person.

We have indicated above that we should not criticize others. This does not imply revoking our capacity to discern. On the contrary, we have to work at improving our capacity to analyze and discern. We all have the right to give our opinion, as long as we address it to the right person at the appropriate moment, and in a beneficial manner. But we have to be careful that our way of giving our opinion doesn't conceal malicious criticism.

To avoid succumbing to this shortcoming, we have to remember that:

- We do not have the right to interfere in the lives of others with our opinions.
- It is disloyal and dishonest to criticize people behind their back or with the aim of discrediting them.
- The attitude of discrediting others brings harm to us, for it foments our vanity and arrogance.
- In finding fault without seeking solutions, we lose moral authority in the Sons' and Daughters' eyes and also in our own eyes, since this form of criticism destroys what we say we want to build.
- If we think that a Delegate has done someone wrong, it would be disloyal to criticize him in front of others:

Did we tell him how we evaluate his conduct? Did we advise him to seek help? And do we want to become new Inquisitors? Are we looking for the mote in the other's eye without seeing the beam in our own?

- It is not appropriate for a Delegate to censure, with another Delegate or other Sons or Daughters, what has been disposed and resolved about the Delegate's function or the Work of Cafh. This would be malicious criticism, since the place and time to give our opinion about the matters of Cafh is the Full Moon Assembly. To remain silent during the Assembly and then later criticize what has been disposed in the Assembly would be a dishonest attitude. Moreover we always have available the natural channels of communication with our immediate Delegate, and even with the GMK, to transmit our opinions.

Gossip

We gossip when we look for accomplices to bolster our criticisms and when we form separate groups with that intention.

Those who gossip express disloyalty towards the group or context to which they belong because they are criticizing others behind their backs. So we can consider gossip, figuratively, as a cancer in a relationship. Although those who gossip try to convince themselves that they aim to do good, their gossip is not only self-destructive, but it also attempts to destroy the larger group to which they belong.

Those who listen to criticism are as responsible as those who criticize, because by listening to criticism they echo it. Consequently, we have to thoroughly eliminate malicious criticism and gossip each time we discover we are engaging in them with others or inside ourselves.

To prevent these negative aspects in ourselves, it is good to remember some characteristics of people who use destructive criticism and are prone to gossip. For example:

- They don't evaluate themselves.
- They don't accept feedback.
- They make connections with others in order to gain power.
- They abuse their power.
- They confuse what really happens with their opinion of what happens.
- They act according to circumstances, to their own advantage, being submissive, quiet, docile, or arrogant and sure of their opinions.
- They don't take responsibility for their opinions because they don't express them in the appropriate place and moment, but behind the backs of those who are affected by their opinions.
- They protect their image, not speaking when they should, or in front of whom they should, so as not to expose themselves.

What else can we do to avoid mistakes?

- Instead of: criticizing → to express *ourselves*.
gossiping → to share thoughts, opinions and feelings.
destroying → to build the Mystical Body.
- Remember, to the point of engraving it in our memory and behavior, the situations we need to recognize and correct, which we have mentioned above, so as not to hold back the Work of Cafh and so as to avoid causing the Sons and Daughters to suffer.

- Learn to communicate better.

But how can this be done?

Dialogue

In light of what has been said so far, we think that now it is essential for our spiritual work that we learn to dialogue.

Most of the situations we have detailed above are usually the result of our not having learned to communicate.

The rules of dialogue—listening, validating, expressing ourselves without criticizing others, maintaining an attitude of equality rather than superiority—derive from a paradigm of communication based on love and respect for oneself and others.

The dialogue exercises give us guidelines that we should be incorporating into our daily conduct. But this is not easy to achieve. The way we ordinarily relate seems more like a confrontation than a dialogue. Interpersonal conflicts usually occur for this reason.

In our usual relationships instead of sharing feelings, thoughts and opinions with the intention of learning and helping, we brandish opinions and feelings to impose ourselves on others.

We are used to telling others, in various ways, what they should do, feel and think. Or we criticize them. If we aren't successful in our effort to impose ourselves, we become annoyed or end the relationship. So it is inevitable that instead of mutual understanding there are misunderstandings, misinterpretations, annoyances, and disputes. This attitude often brings us to say that we need to "dialogue" when in reality we want to force the other person to accept our impositions. And when that person rejects us, we feel confused and are not able to comprehend why he doesn't want to open up to us.

An interpersonal relationship implies sharing meaning. For this to be possible, it is necessary to send and receive messages and to work together to create shared meaning.

Consequently, to relate it is not enough for someone to communicate something to us. We have to be good receivers of what is being expressed to us and know how to communicate what we think and feel. Only in this way will we be able to achieve shared meaning and establish a constructive relationship between us.

In order to dialogue, each one of us has to incorporate what the person we are talking with expresses. If we only have the opposite expectation—that the person we are speaking with is the one who has to accept and validate our message—we will not be able to generate the appropriate climate for dialogue.

Each message implies a point of view that contains:

- Our perception of the facts: how we describe them.
- Our reaction to the facts: what we feel.
- Our interpretation of the facts: how we judge them.

There are as many points of view (perception+reaction+interpretation) produced by the same circumstance as there are people affected by it. We are not conscious of the basis on which we judge facts, nor of the data we select in order to make our judgment, nor the data we don't take into account. We react according to our previous experiences, which have been influenced by our unconscious. It does not make sense then, to try to establish who has the "true" perception, because all our experiences are influenced by our conditioning and are highly subjective. The best way to understand a circumstance is to consider it from as many points of view as possible. To do that, we have to share meaning with each other.

There are basic norms that can help us to do this.

Listen: Give others room to express themselves, without pre-judging or criticizing what they say to us.

Validate: Recognize the messages being transmitted by the person we are speaking with, and the value of what he or she is conveying. This could be the most crucial—and the most ignored—point in communication.

Communicate: Transmit what we perceive, feel, and interpret without accusing others. Instead of saying "you are attacking me"—which is also a form of attacking—say what is happening to us. For example, "I feel helpless," "I feel that I can't express myself," etc. This doesn't mean simply exchanging some words for others; it implies exchanging an accusatory attitude for an open attitude. It also puts the emphasis on what is inside us, since this is the only thing we can say with certainty, instead of saying what others have inside themselves—which we imagine but don't really know.

Speak for oneself: When we say, for example, "we think...", "we want...", or "they say...", we involve others in our opinions and speak for others. This breaks down dialogue and invites conflict because:

- ~ We restrict another's right to freedom of expression.
- ~ We take on a representative role that no one has delegated to us.
- ~ We use others without their consent in order to give our opinion more weight.
- ~ We don't take responsibility for what we say.

Nor do we speak for ourselves when we confuse our opinions with “the truth.” For example, when we say “that’s not right...,” instead of saying “in my opinion....”

Another way of not speaking for ourselves is to quote other sources—the teachings, for example, or the GMK or Don Santiago—in order to silence others and impose an opinion that we ourselves could not support otherwise. We love all the teachings, the oral as well as the written teachings, but we don’t use them as weapons.

Speaking for oneself implies doing so in the first person: I say, I think, I feel. We reserve the expressions we say, we think, we feel, for when we have arrived at an explicit consensus.

We could say, then, that to dialogue implies:

- That instead of attributing intentions to others, we listen to them so that we can know firsthand what they think and feel.
- That instead of denying others, we validate their experiences; we recognize their individuality and the value of the way they understand things.
- That instead of accusing or criticizing others, we make a self-analysis and get to work on our own self-improvement.
- That instead of speaking about others behind their back, we dialogue with them to create shared meaning.
- That instead of breaking off communication with others, we open ourselves to communication with everyone.

Dialogue and participation

We unite with the Divine Mother through our union with all souls.

All souls are, in practice, all people. First and foremost, they are the people with whom we relate.

Union with those people begins within us. This is not difficult for us. In our prayers we embrace all of humanity and implore for the good of everyone; in this way we are able to feel that we participate with everyone. To actualize our participation, we have to understand that that feeling is partial and also potential. It is partial because only we feel it, we don’t know what others feel towards us. And it is potential because our participation still has to be expressed in the way we communicate with others.

From the point of view of communication, we can understand dialogue as the vehicle of participation. To participate is to share. In order to share we have to open ourselves inwardly to the reality of others, to listen to them and validate them. And in order for communication to be complete, we have to be listened to and validated with the same attitude.

If each of us makes the effort to listen and to validate, we will achieve communication. What we shouldn't do is to begin in the opposite order: wanting to be listened to without wanting to listen, without understanding that in order to be listened to we have to begin by listening.

This is the reason why we give such importance to dialogue.

When we incorporate dialogue in our way of expressing ourselves, the participation which is now only intellectual or emotional will be transformed into a spontaneous attitude toward others. Once we achieve this attitude we will learn to dialogue not only with others, but also with ourselves and, especially, with the Divine Mother.