

Forum Internacional  
de Acción Católica

International Forum  
of Catholic Action

Forum Internazionale  
di Azione Cattolica

## NOTICIAS NEWSLETTER NOTIZIE

1998/1

*At the issue of this "Newsletter", Cardinal Eduardo Francisco Pironio has gone back to the House of the Father.*

*It was he, who from the presidency of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, inspired IFCA's setting up and then followed it and went along with us in our journey.*

*In August of last year, when his sickness prevented him from joining the Second General Assembly in Buenos Aires, he gave us his Prayer of Consecration of the Catholic Action to the Virgin, Our Lady of Luján, in whose sanctuary he now rests.*

*In his Spiritual Testament we read:*

*Magnificat! I thank God for having used up my poor energies and talents in the devotion to the dear laypeople, whose friendship and witness have enriched my spirit. I loved Catholic Action very much. If I did not do more it is because I was not able to do it. Magnificat!*

*On the eve of his death, Cardinal Pironio said to the Pope: from Heaven I will continue to pray for the Church.*

*Certainly we have gained an intercessor near the Father.*

*Those who had the immense grace of sharing his pilgrimage here on the earth, witnessed his trust in the merciful love of the Father, his docility to the Spirit, his service and readiness to the Church, his joyful acceptance of the cross and his unshakeable hope in the resurrection.*

*He was able to offer his deep and right word, his serene joy and his generous friendship to all.*

*With simplicity and humbleness he shew the path of Mary to us and his life was: Fiat and Magnificat!*

**W**e thank God for the gift of his life. Our homage may be our commitment to live personally and at institutional level what he, more than 30 years ago, asked of the members of Argentine Catholic Action:

that in the action may we not lose silence  
that in the cross may we not lose joy  
that in the fight may we not lose hope. So may it be.

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson  
President of Argentine Catholic Action  
IFCA's Coordinator

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## A greeting from the new Assistant

**W**ith great joy I address my first greeting to you all at the beginning of my office as IFCA's Assistant. I express my gratitude to H.E. Card. James F. Stafford, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, who wanted to appoint me for this office. I wish also to express my sincere esteem towards you all, leaders, assistants and members of the CA associations of the whole world; you are a great gift for us, while we are preparing to the Great Jubilee of 2000, under the precious guidance of the Holy Father, John Paul II.

As General Assistant of the Italian Catholic Action I have picked up the inheritance of H.E. Card. Salvatore De Giorgi, IFCA's first Assistant. Now, after the stage of Buenos Aires in September '97, I wish to continue our journey with you, alongside with the Secretariat's Coordinator.

I will care for meeting the Bishops, your Pastors, the priests assistants in their particular Churches, where CA lives – often with effort, always with hope – but it will be good to find out occasions of meeting also in those particular Churches where CA does not yet exist, so that the associations may give their contribution to the New Evangelization.

My office as IFCA's Assistant becomes for me a concrete way to serve the universal Church, in full unity with Peter's successor, John Paul II, who cares much for our associations.

I wish IFCA to grow as a place of friendship and dialogue between old and new CA of all continents, so that everywhere laypeople may multiply and grow in faith, who "under the movement of the Holy Spirit" might be of service "through their faithfulness and good works" to the Church (cf CFL 31), in witnessing and announcing the Gospel to all our brothers and sisters.

The memory of Card. Pironio is still alive among us; I entrust to his prayer all of you and my office, now that he lives in God's light.

We ask of him, who followed IFCA's birth and first steps until the Assembly in Buenos Aires with fatherly care, to present CA's laypeople and assistants of all the world to most holy Mary, God's Mother, with the words he wrote for us to the Virgin of Luján:

*«Most holy Mary, help us to be faithful to our hour. To this "dramatic and magnificent" hour, full of challenges and hopes. Lay faithful are needed who live the sanctity of their Baptism and the apostolic commitment of their Confirmation; who live with daily simplicity the Easter mystery; who are afraid neither of the cross nor of the martyrdom. Who only live the joy of sanctity in the missionary communion of the Church».*



# Message to John Paul II after the Second Assembly

Rome, October 28th 1997

Holy Father,

the representatives of CA from Argentina, Italy, Mexico, Romania and Spain, have met for the first time, as IFCA's Secretariat, in Rome on last October 26th.

The Secretariat was elected by the participants to IFCA's Second Ordinary Assembly held in Buenos Aires from 11th to 14th September '97, and we enclose the final message together with the guidelines of the programme until 2000.

In the name of all the friends of IFCA's Secretariat and of all the countries which are IFCA's members, I wish to thank You for the message You sent to Buenos Aires, which have encouraged us to go on and to intensify our commitment at the service of our particular Churches and of the Universal Church towards the third millennium.

The perspectives which are opening to the new evangelisation request, in all continents, a more and more aware and active participation of the laity: the associations and the movements of Catholic Action are ready to give their contribution for the formation of laypeople – of all ages, in the family, in the various environments – fully inserted in the ecclesial communities and authentic witnesses of Christ in the society and in the world.

I assure You of a constant memory in the daily prayer to Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of the Catholic Action: for Your service as Pastor of the universal Church and for any intention of Yours.

With the hope of getting soon the possibility of meeting You, we ask Your apostolic blessing.

*Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson*

National President of ACA and Coordinator of IFCA's Secretariat

## The answer to IFCA

H. E. Mons. Giovanni Battista RE, Substitute of the Secretariat of the Vatican City answered the letter of IFCA's Coordinator, writing among other things:

«In the name of His Holiness, Who always follows the activity of Catholic Action with care, I wish to thank you heartily for your kind attention. While assuring a particular recollection in the prayer, He sends His apostolic blessing to you, to the Secretariat's members and to all CA national associations composing the Forum».

## Enclosed A

### FINAL MESSAGE

IFCA's second Assembly met in Buenos Aires from 11th to 14th September to reflect upon the theme "in dialogue with God, in the Church, with the world and the cultures" and to draw up consequently the guidelines for the years 1997–2000.

The Assembly was attended by representatives from: Albania, Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Burundi, Colombia, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar, Paraguay, Peru, Polonia, Romania (Greek-Byzantine rite and Latin rite), Spain, Switzerland, Venezuela, UMOFC and Unum Omnes.

In the complex and contradictory phase of transition which characterizes this moment of our history, the necessity to promote and support a fruitful meeting between the Gospel and the cultures is more and more urgent, to lead to a renewal of hearts and minds and to turn the development of the societies and of the peoples in solidarity, according to the values of the dignity of each person.

The dialogue – which in the faith becomes dialogue of salvation and leads to the announcement of Christ, the only Saviour, yesterday, today and always – is the path and suggests to the Christian community the style to witness and serve today.

The reflection of the Assembly was based upon the lectures by Vicente Espeche Gil "The world we live in" and of Mons. Stanislaw Rylko "The Church and the world: dialogue and path of salvation; CA laypeople from the Second Vatican Council towards the third millennium".

The participants, through creative and articulated workshops, drew up the guidelines for the years 1997–2000.

During the Assembly new members joined IFCA: Luxemburg, Burundi, Albania and Peru.

The Secretariat was renewed and the following countries were elected: Argentina, Italy, Mexico, Romania and Spain for the years 1997–2000.

The Assembly was concluded with an eucharistic celebration in the Sanctuary of the Virgin of Lujan.

The guidelines for the Catholic Action in general drawn up in the first ordinary Assembly were confirmed:

"The Assembly has focused some perspectives of work shared by all the national CA associations and engages itself:

- in educating and forming lay people, beginning from the formation of an authentic spiritual life
- in the cooperation for the unity in the Church, so that the ecclesial communion may increase
- in the evangelization according to the three ways drawn up in *Redemptory Missio*: "Missio ad gentes", new evangelisation, pastoral care.
- in a special attention to the youth and to the children, to promote their dignity and rights".



- While preparing CA's members to the Great Jubilee of 2000, time of conversion and joy, of solidarity and hope, in the memory of Jesus Christ's incarnation
  - following carefully the celebration of the continental Synods
  - thinking how IFCA can celebrate the Holy Year in a significant way.

- **Keeping, updating and deepening the options of the first Assembly**

*Promoting the knowledge of CA through*

- attention to the nations where it does not exist, in particular Africa and Asia
- circulation and integration of the VADEMECUM
- presentation of IFCA also by further instruments (dépliant, other media)
- communication via internet
- collection and circulation of the Bishops' magisterium and of the theological and pastoral reflection upon CA

*Developing the relationships among IFCA's countries*

- continental meetings
- regional meetings (for instance for Europe, Eastern Europe, Mediterranean, Middle East...)
- meetings between near countries
- twinings between diocesan associations
- dialogue and cooperation with the observer-countries

*Living solidarity with the member-countries*

*Offering opportunities of meetings for the study and the formation at international, continental levels or upon suggestion of a country*

- upon topics of common interest (theology and CA, relationship between laypeople and priests in the pastoral work...)
- for the formation of the leaders
- in dialogue with other organisms

*Reminding the member-countries about the exchange of experiences upon*

- primacy of the formation (contemplation and action)
- attention to the seminarists
- ecumenical and interreligious dialogue

*Coordination at youth level*

- consulting the member-countries, in particular the youths of the different countries, in order to study the most suitable forms
- fostering the participation of the youths at IFCA's meetings
- going on with the collaboration with the Pontifical Council for the Laity - youth section

*In particular*

- caring about a closer relationship with the Bishops
- caring about systematic contacts with the national, regional and continental Bishops' Conferences, in particular with the Bishops charged with the Lay Apostolate
- intensifying the relationships with the Pontifical Council for the Laity (on occasion of the *visita ad limina*...) and with other departments

*Economic support to IFCA*

- arranging for the punctual payment of the yearly fee and increasing it, when possible
- sharing among the different countries the yearly and triennial budget (Secretariat, initiatives, Assembly)
- caring about the requests for funds (Foundation Pio XII, America Latina Pontifical Commission, Propaganda fide...).

## PRESENCE OF IFCA IN CUBA

### INTERDIOCESAN MEETING OF LAYPEOPLE "PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH OF CUBA"

El Cobre, 27/30th november 1997

55 days before the visit of John Paul II

Under the protection of our Lady of the Charity in El Cobre, Patroness of Cuba, in the ancient Seminary of Saint Basil the Great (1723), at present used as a house for meetings, near a mine of copper in the vicinity of the city of Santiago, at 869 kms from La Habana, at the eastern end of the big caribbean island, there this important interdiocesan meeting of laypeople took place.

The Executive Secretary of the Bishops' Commission of the Laity, José Enrique Collazo, chaired the meeting. Seven pastoral leaders of each cuban dioceses attended it. Each delegation was appointed through a diocesan Assembly and was composed of at least one youth, a family, some priests, one religious and committed laypeople, men and women in due proportion. Also some national leaders of the Bishops' Commission of the laity and the Director of the Lay House of La Habana were present.

The foreign guests were: Guzmán Carriquiry, Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity; Christina U.Z. de Zapiola, National Counsellor of the Argentine Catholic Action, for IFCA; Germán Cortés, Secretary of the CELAM's Lay Department; a priest from Colombia for CELAM's Formation Department; the Vicepresident of the Lay Council from Venezuela; and one representative of INDO-SOC (Institute of Social Doctrine, Mexico).

The meeting was attended also by: Mons. Hector Peña, Bishop of Honguín and President of the Bishops' Commission for the Laity and Mons. Pedro Maurice Estiú, Archbishop of Santiago and President of the Commission *Justitia and Pax*. Also the papal nuncio Mons. Beniamino Stella was present. He celebrated the closing Mass during which he read a message from the Cardinal Archbishop of La Habana, Mons. Jaime Ortega Alamino. All of them concelebrated the Eucharist in the various days and gave interesting homilies.

General goal of the Interdiocesan Meeting of Laypeople: "Promoting a laity in Cuba for the new evangelization towards the third millennium". Specific goals:

1. Deepening the vocation and the mission of the laypeople in the Church and in society to help them to live their own identity and spirituality.
2. Reflecting upon the history of the laity in Cuba to learn to go towards the future.
3. Drawing up a project of Lay Action towards 2000 in order to strengthen their unity and organization.



Lectures of doctrinal contents were given. The workshops were attended by many lay people who gave remarkable contributions about four topics and were closed with the presentation of a concrete project for each of them: formation, lay mysticism and spirituality, organization and lay movements, and what to do.

The foreign guests were charged with a panel where each of them presented the characteristics, the goals and the organization of his/her own association. It was followed by an open dialogue with the laypeople attending the meeting, who shew great interest in knowing the various lay realities in Latin America and in the world.

The warmth of the Cuban people towards the foreign guests, their interest in telling their own experiences and in listening to those of the others were really noteworthy. I could noticed in them a great commitment in accepting the challenge of this historical moment and a great effort to prepare themselves. The Bishops of Cuba care to offer them all means to participate, within and out of the island, in every opportunity of formation to enrich themselves.

My stay in Cuba was an unforgettable experience: a beautiful country with an interesting geography, a warm climate and a fruitful nature. I was struck by the people: patient, lacking in suitable conditions for a harmonious and full life, enduring since so many years dictatorial regimes and the hard experience of communism. Poverty here is really piercing. In this environment naturally mild and socially aggressive and painful the Cuban people is fighting for a better and righter country. The Church of Cuba, servant of its people, is working with much courage to be leaven for the liberation of the country.

Under the permanent motherly protection of Our Lady of the Charity in El Cobre, the people of Cuba is waiting with great hope for John Paul II, with open arms and heart.

Cristina U.Z. de Zapiola  
Buenos Aires, January 1998

## JOHN PAUL II

From the speech in the Cathedral of La Habana, on January 25th – during the meeting with clergy, religious, seminarians and laity:

*- To the laity here present, who represent so many others, I am grateful for your daily fidelity in maintaining the flame of faith in the heart of your families, so overcoming all obstacles and working courageously to make the spirit of the Gospel present in society. I invite you to nourish faith by means of a continuing biblical and catechetical formation, which will help you persevere in your witness to Christ, pardoning offences, exercising the right – as Catholic believers – to serve the people in all the ways already open to you and working to gain access to those still closed.*

From the speech at the international airport of La Habana, January 25th:

*- May nations, especially those which share the same Christian heritage and the same language, work effectively to extend the benefits of unity and harmony, to join efforts and overcome obstacles, so that the Cuban people, as the active agents of their own history, may maintain international relations which promote the common good.*

## II continental Meeting

### Europe-Mediterranean area

IFCA's Second European Meeting will be held in Romania from Friday 31st July until Sunday 2nd August in IASI, at the Seminary.

The topic and the programme are going to be drawn up during the foreseen preliminary meeting in Rome on March 21st.

- \* For the topic the following items will be taken into consideration;
- the second year of preparation towards the Jubilee of 2000, devoted to the Holy Spirit (cf TMA);
  - the Second special Assembly of the Bishops for Europe (spring 1999);
  - IFCA's Second Assembly of Buenos Aires (cf Final message);
  - the present situations of our CA-associations and the contacts going on with the observer countries in Europe and in Mediterranean area.

## Week of formation for Youths

### Europe-Mediterranean area

IASI (Romania), Seminary, August 3-9th 1998

*«As the salt of the earth...»*

Protagonists of hope in the Church of 2000

The topic was chosen:

- with reference to the Gospel, to understand the relation of the Church and of the Christians, in particular that of the lay faithful, with the world (cf Letter to Diogneto)
- with reference to history and magisterium: this is the second year of preparation to the great Jubilee of 2000, at more than 30 years from the Council, in a worldwide context – mediterranean and european – of great transition.

**Working method:** short introductory interventions, broad space to questions and workshops.

– Interventions and experiences:

- \* to know the reality where the youths attending the meeting live and work in CA, in the youths pastoral action, in relation with the diocesan pastoral work, with CA structure
- \* to intensify and promote the associative commitment of the youths in the particular Church, in the parish and in the various environments: practical itineraries, exchange-programmes...

**Daily prayer** (liturgic group)

*morning* following the itinerary of preparation and action of the youths with the Pope, according to 1998 theme  
«The Holy Spirit will teach you everything» (Jn 14,26)

**Eucharistic Liturgy:**

Readings of the day  
attention to the greek-catholic liturgy; other moments to be determined

**Eucharistic celebration** (prefestive)

closing the seminary † Petru GHERGHEL, Bishop of the particular Church of Iasi. All the youths of the diocese will be invited.

**Workshops** to know CA – on August 4,5,6th – 18-19,30:

*CA at the service of the particular Church*  
*The formatin of the leaders, of the animators and the choice of the small group*  
*The communication*  
*The life of the group: programmes, methods, techniques of animation, proposals*  
...

## NEWS FROM THE SECRETARIAT

### PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM PRO LAICIS

On monday 27th october the members of IFCA's Secretariat had the great joy of meeting, for the first time, H.E. Mons. James Francis Stafford, President of the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis, together with Guzman Carriquiry, Undersecretary, and Mons. Vincenzo de Mauro. Just on the same day was held the plenary Assembly of PCL (of which Eduardo Ramirez Cato, IFCA's former coordinator, is a member) and this favoured the opportunity of this exchange with the new President, who shew a great interest in CA and in IFCA's activities.

### ASSEMBLY OF UNUM OMNES

On november 5-10th was held in Jerusalem the General Assembly of the International Federation of the catholic men "Unum Omnes" upon the topic: "On Jesus' footsteps towards the third millennium". The participants came from four continents, from 16 countries (Germany, Luxemburg, Italy, France, Switzerland, Austria, Ireland, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Argentina, Sri Lanka, India) out of 35 countries which are members of this organism. During the Assembly new leaders were elected: Heinz-Josef Nüdel (Germany) as President; Ernesto Preziosi (Italy) and Alejandro Madero (Argentina) for Vicepresidents – both of them belong to CA and to IFCA's Secretariat.

### THE AMERICAN SYNOD

A letter of greetings was sent by Giuseppe Gervasio, ICA's National President and by Mons. Agostino Superbo, ICA's General Assistant and IFCA's Ecclesiastic Assistant, to the Cardinal and Bishops joining the special Assembly for the Bishops' Synod for America. The Pastors of member-countries and Observers of the International Forum of CA (IFCA) were welcomed and invited to a meeting on december 5th at 19,30 at ICA's seat, via della Conciliazione, for a moment of friendship and feast.

The works of the synodal Assembly, specially in the last days, were very intense; this is why on december 5th evening we could have a very warm meeting only with Mons. Porras Cordoso, CELAM's delegate for the laity and Mons. Arancedo from Argentina, of the Commission for the laity. Other contacts with Card. Alzamora, Lima/Peru and Mons. Rosa Chavez from El Salvador.



## NEWS FROM THE COUNTRIES

### COLOMBIA

The XVI National Assembly of CA of Colombia was held in Medellín on September 22-26th and was attended by the representatives of 11 dioceses of the country. Topic: *The Catholic Action, force of change towards the third millennium.*

The final document approved by the participants engages the CA in some priorities:

- a school of formation for leaders
- the project «Catholic Action TODAY»
- centres of formation for families.

The assembly, through the national president - Amparo Sardi - sent a letter to the President of the Bishops' Conference begging of him to put on the agenda of the Conference's works a reflection upon CA.

### VENEZUELA

The UMAC celebrated 70 years from its foundation and held its XXII Assembly in Caracas on 2-5th October. Topic: *The CA towards the third millennium.*

New National President Beatriz Elias Peres.

The Assembly was also the occasion to present the new structure of the CA, still being tested in some dioceses and parishes, according to which the CA of Venezuela is going to be organised in groups of women, youths and families.

### AUSTRIA

The Austrian Catholic Action elected in September 1997 a new board. The president of the Austrian Catholic Action is Dr. Christian Fries, theologian and assistant professor at the University of Wien, vice-presidents are Dr. Luitgard Derschmidt, president of the Catholic Action Salzburg and Dr. Otto Friedrich, journalist at the catholic weekly "Die Furche".

The main topic at the autumn conference in September 1997 were minorities in Austria, at the spring meeting in February it will be the position of Austria within European security systems.

The Austrian Catholic Action started in January an initiative called "Dialog-forum - Future of the Church", to get out of the crises of the Austrian Church. This initiative is supported by a group of prominent Catholics like the former vice-chancellor Dr. Erhard Busek and tries to support the Austrian Church in getting its credibility. It tries to get a wide, credible support for the delegates day in October '98 in Salzburg through the inclusion of all groups of the Austrian church (like the "Kirchenvolks-Begehren"), realising an open and wide discussion of themes without excluding explosive ones. This initiative was welcomed by the majority of the Austrian bishops, especially by the head of the Austrian Episcopal Conference, Bishop Johann Weber.

February 1998

## Prayer to the Virgin of Luján

*Virgin of Luján, Mother of the poor and the humble, Mother of those who suffer and hope: You chose this place in the silent immensity of the Argentine pampas, to listen to our prayers, to soothe our hearts and to tell us about your Son "the Saviour of yesterday, of today, of always". This simple place is the spiritual heart of our people.*

*Today we have come to You, a small group of disciples, apostles and witnesses of Your Son, gathered in these days in the International Forum of Catholic Action. You have always inspired the great undertakings of the Argentine Catholic Action and unforgettable militants and leaders of this providential apostolic association of the Church grew up and matured close to You.*

*Today we have come from far and from near countries. We are different faces and different cultures with a different language, but we understand each other in the same Word of your Son who says to each of us: "Here is Your mother". Yes, we feel You so, Maria, as our*

*Mother and our Lady. We only ask You to look at us and to listen to us. We have so many things, so many sorrows to tell You, so many graces to ask of You for ourselves, for our countries and local Churches! But we miss time and words. It is enough for us to have come here to look at You and to know that You look at us and change us.*

*We are young and adult people, men and women, who wish to live the Church in the heart of the world, as Your Son asks of us. Fully committed with the hour and the time we are living. We wish to live with calm, strong and humble fidelity, in close union with our Pastors - Bishops and priests - with our religious and with all the lay faithful, the communion of the missionary Church. We feel ourselves marked with the Holy Spirit and sent again by Your Son to announce all the Peoples the Good News of the Kingdom: the love of the Father. Through the faith we have fathomed the world we live in and through the heart of a Church-communion, we have committed ourselves in a*

dialogue and in making a journey of salvation. We do feel the challenges of this century which is going to end and the hopes coming from "the new" which is approaching.

Virgin of Luján, Jesus' Mother and our Mother: today we leave our uneasiness and hopes, our sorrows and joys in Your heart. We wish to offer You our poverty, our prayer, our joy, our hope, our love for the Church inserted in the world as a universal sacrament of salvation. We beg You to make us strong in difficulties and calm in danger. You well know what we need: a great spirit of contemplation to understand the poverty of men and the sorrows of the peoples; a great readiness to accept and live the Word of God, a calm fortitude to embrace the cross of Your Son and a joyful readiness to serve our brothers.

We wish to love the Church intensely and to live in deep communion with our Pastors. That we might be people who pray and missionaries. That we might accept the Word of God and contemplate it, live it and communicate it with the fire of the Spirit.

Most Holy Mary, help us to be faithful to our hour. It is a "dramatic and magnificent hour", full of challenges and hopes. Lay faithful are needed who live the sanctity of their Baptism and the apostolic

commitment of their Confirmation; who live with daily simplicity the Easter Mystery; who are afraid neither of the cross nor of the martyrdom. Who only live the joy of sanctity in the missionary communion of the Church.

Thanks Mother and Lady of Luján, for having received us in Your house, for having looked at us and listened to us, for having spoken to us and strengthened us, for having taught us "to be Church".

Now we go back to our homes, our countries, our local Churches, with the certainty coming from these words of Your Son: "Here is your Mother" and carrying in our hearts the joy of repeating with You to Jesus Christ - of today, of yesterday, of always - these words of Yours: "I am the servant of the Lord: let it happen to me as you have said". And we go back home, carrying Your presence as our mother who says to us. "Do whatever he tells you".

So we will commit ourselves and so it may be. Amen. Alleluja!

+  Card. Pironio

(Card. Eduardo F. Pironio)

Luján, September 14th 1997  
IFCA's Second Ordinary Assembly