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Special issue 1st Seminar in Africa

You will be witnesses in Africa

Reality, challenges and prospects for the layfaithful's formation

Catholic Action's contribution

DOCUMENTS

NAIROBI (Kenya), Dimesse Sisters, April 26th/29th 2000

Dear friends,

with great joy and a deep gratitude to the Lord, we present these contributions of the first Seminar held in Nairobi end April 2000, in the week after Easter.

First of all we recall and wish to share with you the fraternal, "Easter" joy which animated the meeting between pastors, priests and laypeople from about ten African countries and Churches and from the Secretariat's countries, gathered around the Eucharist, deeply committed to announcing the Gospel in Africa in the third millenary, in the spirit of conversion of the Jubilee Year.

It is actually very relevant for IFCA's life and future to have found courage enough to start a work in Africa at continental level – which will bring as first fruit a good participation from the African countries to IFCA's Third ordinary Assembly.

Difficulties in the organisation and also at economic level did not fail but they were faced up and partially overcome – even if some problems about visa prevented the friends of Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroons and Ghana from attending the meeting.

As for the report about the works please refer to the final Document, but we wish to highlight here, once again, that it was very important to lay the basis to continue working at regional level, at the service of the laypeople's formation and of CA in order to build an African Church more and more co-responsible and united in announcing the Gospel and in working for human promotion – called to bring the richness of her contribution to the whole universal Church.

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson *† Agostino Superbo*

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IFCA's Seminar and Catholic Action in the itinerary of the Great Jubilee

Mons. Agostino Superbo
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1. The Council Vatican II prepares the Great Jubilee

1.1. – The celebration of the Great Jubilee of the Redemption, according to John Paul II's vision, was prepared for by the Divine Providence through a serie of events, which wove the Church's history in these last decades.
"From this point of view we can affirm that the Second Vatican Council was a providential event, whereby the Church began the more immediate preparation for the Jubilee of the Second Millennium. It was a Council similar to earlier ones, yet very different; it was a Council focused on the mystery of Christ and his Church and at the same time open to the world" (*TMA* 18).

In accomplishing the Council and in putting into practice the conciliar Magisterium, the ministry of "the Popes connected with the Conciliar Assembly", from John XXIII to John Paul II, "has certainly made a signifiatn contribution to the preparation of the new springtime of Christian life which will be revealed by the Great Jubilee, if Christians are docile to the action of the Holy Spirit" (*ibid.*).

1.2. – What did the Council's Church do?

- She shew all men of good will Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world;
- she questioned herself about her own identity as the Body and the Bride of Christ;
- she reaffirmed the universal call to holiness;

• she made provision for the reform of the liturgy;
• "she strove to promote the various Christian vocations, from those of the laity to those of religious, from the ministry of deacons to that of priests and bishops";
• she rediscovered episcopal collegiality;
• "on the basis of this profound renewal, the Council opened itself to Christians of other denominations, to the followers of other religions and to all the people of our time";
• she spoke clearly with regard to Christians' unity "about dialogue with non-Christians religions, about the specific meaning of Old Covenant and of Israel, about the principle of religious liberty, about the different cultural traditions within which the Church carries out her missionary mandate, and about the means of social communication" (*TMA* 19).

1.3. – A Church who loves the world

The Council's teaching aimed to build a bridge towards the whole humanity in the name of the love of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became man for us and for our salvation. He spoke in the language of the Gospel and presented all men God in His absolute lordship over all things, but also as the One who ensures the authentic autonomy of earthly realities.

For this reason, the celebration of the Jubilee can only be expressed "in a renewed commitment to apply, as faithfully as possible, the teachings of the Vatican II to the life of every individual and of the whole Church" (*TMA* 20).

2. The Synods and the Jubilee

2.1. – The Church's Synods in the journey of the new evangelization

The Jubilee was prepared through the celebration of the synods of our Churches, in particular the general and continental Synods.

The apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* is fully turned towards this year 2000.

Through the synodal assemblies, the Church gained a new awareness of the mission of salvation she received from Christ and put into evidence, as the Council had already done, the importance of the different vocations in the Church as it appears from the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortations and, with regard to the laypeople's vocation and mission in the Church, from *Christifideles laici*.

2.2. – IFCA's Seminar in the Jubilee Year

The first IFCA's Seminar in Africa places itself in this jubilar prospect.

It is a seminar of study, that is a place to listen to one another and to confront one another.

Following the Holy Father's invitation, we want to catch the message of the Council about the Church's mission, about the laypeople's vocation and formation, about Catholic Action's laypeople.

We wish to pick up with veneration what the Holy Spirit, through the work of the pastors and the faithful, carried out in these Churches concerning laypeople's formation, in order to build, through the gifts' exchange, the Church in the contemporary world.

For this reason the words of all those who are present are precious, starting from what our Bishops will tell us.

Our task is to recall quickly some guidelines of the magisterium, with no pretension of being scientific and complete, with the only aim to offer some useful directions for our work.

3. The teachings of the Vatican II

3.1. – The conciliar teaching: the Church, people of God

During the Council the Church questions herself and her mystery. She does not withdraw on herself, but she opens to Christ, the Church's Head, acknowledges the primacy of the Holy Spirit's action in the evangelization, accepts God's call who "has willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people who might aknowledge him and serve him in holiness" (*LG* 9).

This people is called a "holy priesthood" because all Jesus' disciples are called to present themselves as a sacrifice pleasing to God.

The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, founded on the sacred order, differs from the common priesthood, founded on Baptism, "esentially and not only in degree" (*LG* 10), but both share in the one priesthood of Christ and are ordered one to another.

The Church, in her holiness and universality, becomes an image of the Trinitarian communion and the reflection on the earth of the same Trinitarian Love.

3.2. – *The Church as communion*

The people of God is presented like "Communion fidelium", communion of the faithful around Christ the Saviour.

Through the episcopal collegiality and the Bishops' communion with the Pope, it is realized as "communion of Churches" - communion ecclesiarum - not as a federation of Churches, but as the God's sole Church spread all over the world.

She achieves her unity and her universality through Peter's ministry and comes close to the men and the women of every time and of every place by constituting the particular Church "a section of the people of God entrusted to a bishop to be guided by him with the assistance of his clergy" (*ChD* 11).

3.3. – *The particular Church and the laypeople's mission*

The Bishop is the sign of the presence of Christ Shepherd in the particular Church; to him is entrusted "the care of the particular Church" (*ibid.*). But the Church "is not truly established and does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy"(*AG* 21). To the whole Church, to the pastors according to their ministry, the Council recommends the formation of the laypeople, so that they may respond with generosity to their own vocation, and may bring their own peculiar contribution to the Church's mission.

They belong, in fact, to the people of God and to civil society, to the nation where they were born as well; they are inside the knots of the social fabric; but they belong also to Christ and to the Church and may bring the presence of the Lord in all the spheres of men's life and existence.

4. The Catholic Action of our times

4.1 – *The Catholic Action of the Vatican II*

The Catholic Action, as an association of Christian laypeople, is explicitly mentioned by the conciliar texts (*ChD* 17, *AA* 20, *AG* 16) "as one of the ministry which are necessary for the implanting of the Church and the growth of the Christian community" (*AG* 16).

The Council makes a clear distinction between CA's historical forms and the various ways in which it is called in the particular Churches, and the essence of this peculiar charism and lay ministry.

The essence is outlined in the Decree on the *Lay Apostolate* n. 20 through four characteristic "notes".

4.2. – *The four "notes"*

The Council does not dictate CA's forms of organization but points out CA's vital structures.

a. The apostolic aim: the aim to achieve is the first feature which outlines the Association's physiognomy: these laypeople wish to give their contribution for "the evangelization and the sanctification of men and the Christian formation of their conscience, so as to enable them to imbue with the Gospel spirit the various social groups and environments".

b. Laypeople's responsibility in cooperating with the Hierarchy: the apostolic aim brings as a consequence the collaboration with the Hierarchy, because the pastors are the Church's guides. CA laypeople have the task to offer this collaboration "their experience and responsibility in the direction of these organizations, in the investigation of the conditions in which the Church's pastoral work is to be carried on, in the elaboration and execution of their plan of action".
CA laypeople' presence close to the Hierarchy is seen by the Council like a richness not only with regard to their action but with regard to their wisdom, because the Council appeals to their "experience".

c. Associated laypeople: the two above "notes" may be realized in the Church in different ways. CA laypeople choose to act not individually "but in unison after the manner of an organic body", to display more strikingly the mystery of the Church-communion and to render the formation and the apostolate more productive.

d. The superior direction of the hierarchy: the fourth note is the logic consequence of the other ones. The Church's mystery shows itself in her unity; her mission is a fruit of her communion. There is no mission unless it comes from the communion with the Pastor of the particular Church, there is no Catholic Action without the superior direction of the hierarchy being acknowledged.
For CA this way of cooperating with the hierarchy establishes its own identity. It is not only a goal to reach, as it happens for the movements, according to the directions given by John Paul II to the ecclesial movements in the great meeting in the Pentecost of 1998.

The four "notes" taken all together constitute the gift the Holy Spirit gave to the Church through these associated laypeople and through the par-

ticular ministry they offer to the "plantatio ecclesiae". The question is not to affirm the monopoly of a role in the Church but to discover a precious gift of the Spirit together with so many gifts - the ecclesial movements and other forms of faithful's associations - through which the Lord willed to show the Church, from the Council onwards, the richness of His mercy.

It would be interesting now to see how CA shows its peculiarity in putting into practice the "criteria of ecclesiality" mentioned in *Christifideles laici* n. 30 (see *CFL* 30 and 31).

I just want to point out some specific elements which highlight also the difference between the gifts brought to the Church by the movements and CA's charism:

• even if CA was set up in the different countries by historical founders, CA has no charismatic leader who associates people: this power comes from the charism and the mission of the particular Church;

• as a consequence the cooperation with the hierarchy is direct and immediate;

• CA is a lay association: they are responsible for it to the hierarchy; the role of the priest Assistant is fundamental but does not diminish the laypeople's reponsibility in giving their contribution to the "plantatio ecclesiae";

• as a lay association, CA offers, together with others, its contribution to the pastoral work at parish or diocesan level, but it assumes as its own place of mission, in the name of the Church, the Christian animation of the temporal realities.

4.3 – CA laypeople: associated laypeople for the particular Church

The passion for the Gospel, the love for the vitality of the particular Church, the bond with all men and women of our time, according to the style of the Lord's Incarnation, are the associating power of CA laypeople. They are called to be, today, close to their pastors, but also very close to their fellow-citizens in the earthly city, humble ministers, servants – with no claims – to the communion with all their brethren in the faith and to the mission towards all men. They wish to offer livelier and newer energies so that our particular Churches may be authentic missionary communities with being a sign of God's mercy and with bearing true hope in history.

4.4. – Which formation in CA?

God's gifts, among these CA, are to be accepted with sincere gratitude but also with true generosity.

The lay charism and ministry involves a proper journey of Christian, ecclesial and apostolic formation, both at individual and community level. If this does not happen, we are once more in front of the poverty of retorical words with no authentic value for the life of the Church and of humanity.

For this reason, it is important for us, in these days, to dwell upon the laypeople's formation.

Conclusion

In its historical journey CA may recall its founders, more or less far in the time. As a charism and a ministry of evangelization, the Council brings it back to the Church of the origin.

In fact *Lumen Gentium* n. 33, in outlining CA though without mentioning it explicitly, brings us back to Paul's collaborators "men and women who helped the Apostle for the Gospel and stroved hard for the Lord" (*Fil.* 4,3; *Rom* 16,3ss.).

IFCA's presentation

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson

IFCA is born in the ecclesial post–conciliar context on the occasion of the Bishops' Synod upon the Vocation and Mission of the Laypeople, held in Rome in october 1987. Among the richness of the different lay movements and associations stirred up in the Church, also the lasting actuality of this particular form of lay apostolate came out that the Synodal Fathers define – and the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* reaffirms – as that association directed to the laypeople and called to be of service "through their faithfulness and good works to promote the growth of the entire Christian community, pastoral activities and infusing every aspect of life with the Gospel spirit".

During the days of the Synod, the representatives of some CA National Associations met in Rome and started a fruitful dialogue and exchange of experiences about their living their common associative identity, in accordance to their own reality and to the pastoral plans of the different local Churches.

These first meetings went on and – supported and encouraged by the Pontifical Council for the Laity in the person of its President Cardinal Eduardo Francisco Pironio – the Forum was set up as a place of meeting, exchange and promotion of CA, in special communion with the Pope and the Bishops.

So on November 9th 1991 was held the Constitutive Assembly of the International Forum of the CA Associations and Federation Movements, composed of lay associations organized at national level and which meet the four notes, taken all together, stated in *AA* n. 20 and included in *CFL* n. 31. On this occasion also the first draft of the Normative Document was approved. The founder–members who undersigned IFCA's constitution were: Spain, Austria, Malta, Italy, Romania (Greek rite), Mexico, Paraguay and Argentina. The first Secretary was also set up and was composed of Austria, Spain Italy, Mexico and Argentina.

From that moment on started a process of consultation of the Episcopal Conferences of the member–countries. They gave their contribution to the Normative Document which was approved in the First Ordinary Assembly held in Wien in October 1994. In this Assembly new countries joined IFCA as members: Colombia, Venezuela and Switzerland, while the Secretariat was still composed of the representatives of Austria, Italy, Mexico and Argentina.

The Pontifical Council for the Laity approved the Normative Document *ad experimentum* for 3 years on June 29th 1995 and recently – on January 3rd 2000 – approved it definitively and recognized IFCA as an international organism.

These are the juridical stages concerning IFCA's journey and constitution whose aims are:

- being a place of meeting and solidarity between the CA of the different countries, regions and continents;
- analysing the worldwide dimension of the great problems that contemporary society poses to the Church and to CA;
- animating and promoting the "new evangelization" with full respect for the different pastoral contexts and for the different methods of organization of every CA.

Considering CA's peculiar identity, its diocesan nature, its being fully inserted in the diocesan and national pastoral activities, IFCA is neither a leading organ nor does it condition the realities of the local CA associations, but it is rather an organ of service which promotes initiatives aimed to support and deepen the specific service that the CA associations are to perform in their own different historical, cultural and ecclesial contexts. In a special way their commitment to laypeople's formation.

IFCA's journey started in Rome in 1991, was consolidated in Wien in 1994 and made a further step in the Second Ordinary Assembly celebrated in Buenos Aires in September 1997, where Albania, Myanmar, Burundi, Luxemburg and Peru joined IFCA as member–countries.

During all this time, three Continental Meetings in America were held: in Venezuela, Paraguay, Mexico; and two Continental Meetings in Europe – to coincide with the Continental Synods – in Malta and in Romania; besides Weeks of formation for Youths at Iasi, Oradea and Myanmar. During

these different activities the representatives of Poland, Slovakia, Bolivia, Salvador, Panama, Ecuador, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Cuba, Moldava Rep. and Ukraine joined IFCA as observers.

With great joy, today, we are opening this First African Meeting, which aims to be a space of reflection and exchange upon realities, challenges and prospects for the laypeople's formation in Africa and upon the contribution that CA can give to this process.

This Meeting takes place during the near preparation towards IFCA's Third Assembly which is going to be held in Rome from 2nd to 6th December with the theme: "The lasting actuality of a gift of the Holy Spirit. Catholic Action, lay faithful who live the ever newness of the Gospel and are sign of communion".

This is our mission: we wish to be faithful to the gift that we have received and to share what we are and what we have: some loaves of bread and few fish, trusting that the Lord will multiply them for the good of His Church and for His glory.

Reality, challenges and prospects for the Christian laypeople's formation

Catholic Action's contribution

Mons. Bernard Bududira
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0. Introduction

Our theme is grounded on and enlighted by the following words of Mattheus' Gospel: "you are salt for the earth...you are light for the world..." (Mt 5,13--14).

You will be my witnesses in Africa. How the baptized and confirmed people living in Africa may be witnesses to Christ? By living in all human realities and making the Gospel's flavour penetrate into them, like the salt in the food, to transform mentalities and structures of society[1] so that men and women may live in good harmony and may enjoy the happiness to walk together.

As light which dispels darkness, the baptized and confirmed people living in Africa will be witnesses by being living and visible signs of Christ's presence through their deeds and words that enthrall, motivate and engage their brothers and sisters to assume all their civil respinsibilities and to lead a life where evangelic and social values are harmonized[2] in such a way that their Christian life and their professional and political life are no longer separated.

Being witnesses to Christ in Africa means therefore to lead, to irradiate an individual and community life imbued with the Gospel in all contexts and situations which cross our continent.

We will try to see whether the faithful living in Africa are witnesses in the sense I have just recalled.

We will examine the challenges which we are to accept in order to form Christian individuals and communities which are actually witnesses. We will recall the necessary contribution of CA to promote attitudes and actions which are able to transform mentalities and to stir commitments at all life–levels. To reach sound motivations, proper and suitable actions, individuals and communities need a formation both in the fields of faith and of the techniques in order to pass on the faith's knowledge and the pedagogic methods of this same faith.

For this reason the last part of my intervention contains some proposals concerning the laypeople's necessary formation.

I. What was done today in the field of the laity's formation in Africa

1.1. – In evangelizing Africa laypeople were associated since the beginning. Announcing directly the Gospel and teaching the Doctrine, accompanying the Christians communities were, and still are, entrusted to lay catechists. This mission was so delicate and important that the Church's authorities were urged to set up schools and centers of formation for the catechists.

The programmes of many catechistic schools and centers foresee – besides theological, biblical, liturgical and catechistic matters – courses of sociological and anthropologic approach as well.

Too few catechistic schools and centers have included in their programmes courses upon the Church's social doctrine, upon the laity's commitment in society's problems, upon develoment and organization of CA movements.

1.2. – In evangelizing Africa at the beginning the Church did not keep into account the laity seen in its specific vocation, that is to build God's Kingdom and to bear witness to Christ's presence through directing social activities according to the Gospel[3]. After the Second Vatican Council, a Panafrican–Madagascar Lay Meeeting held in Accra August 11th–18th 1971, was the first occasion, at the level of the whole Church in Africa, to reflect upon the laypeople's specific mission and upon their formation to help them to engage themselves "in the growth of the Church and in the integral develoment of Africa".

During this meeting, delays were pointed out concerning the catholic laypeople's commitment in bearing witness to Christ and in acting as Christians in responsible posts at economic and political level. In the

Meeting in Accra "Chief" G.P. KUNAMBI, President of "BARAZA LA Waumini KATOLIKI" of Tanzania, introducing the workshop A (Economic, social, political evolution), said, among other things: "The last point is the Christian's commitment in political life, in public administration, in business, in professions. Traditionally most catholics in Africa have considered these things as a "tabou". We were told that it is dangerous to rise higher, because we risked to lose our soul"[4].

The participants in this meeting presented many proposals concerning formation and commitments, but they had but little consequence in Africa. The meeeting in Accra aimed essentially to promote a laity who could respond in a proper way to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council. By the light of these teachings and spurred by them, they had wished – among other things – for a formation which mainly consists of the following points:

1. initiating and integrating the Christians into the socioeconomic, political activities, into trade–unions and into the phenomena of development.
2. Helping priests and religious to become aware of their role in the CA movements.
3. Giving laypeople a doctrinal formation on all matters and at all levels.
4. Establishing centers of formation for laypeople.
5. Organizing groups of catechists for all people, included those who hold posts of responsibility.

Looking at Africa as a whole I see very few explicit answers to these decisions. No doubt that something was done concerning information and sessions upon laypeople's commitment, but a systematic and structured formation is still a wish.

II. The effect of the Synod for Africa and of the exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, what is done to promote and form a laity who is responsible and bear witness to Christ

The Synod for Africa aimed to use at the utmost and in a proper way the teachings of Vatican Cauncil II, of the Synods of the universal Church, of the pontifical encyclicals, of the decisions and directions coming from the symposium of the episcopal conferences of Africa and Madagascar, from the episcopal conferences both at regional and national level. After the Synod for Africa and the exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*, a stage of information took place, followed by sessions of formation.

But, in my opinion, the catholic Church's hierarchy attention in Africa was caught especially by inculturation and ecclesial communities in Africa.

Through the last ones laypeople exert their responsibilities in imbuing their life–enviroments with evangelic attitudes and behaviours. It is in the ecclesial communities that the faithful practise in community prayer, in listening to and meditating the Word of God, which enlightens them in their effort to transform mentalities in order to better the relations with neighbours through dialogue and to achieve reconciliation by means of the evangelic spirit. In these same communities *Justitia et Pax*–commissions found evangelic reasons and also support by the whole community. This helps *Justitia et Pax* to achieve their goal which is to stir up in Christ's disciples the commitment to defend justice for all and to promote societies where citizens may live in peace as a work of the whole community. The cohesion of the members of an ecclesial community which is sound and animated by the same evangelic spirit discouraged, in many places, the rising sects.

In several local Churches, the ecclesial communities' leaders hold formative sessions upon the methodology for praying together, for listening to the Word of God, for analysing local situations, for taking decisions about acting, and for evaluating the possibility to undertake concerted actions. What is lacking in ecclesial communities is an ecclesiology and a spirituality which are structured in such a way as to be a basis for a systematic formation for laypeople, seminarists, priests and religious.

III. The challenges to accept

The delay in promoting a laity which is aware of its own specific vocation to transform society by the evangelic values, and the complexity of the ethical problems in socioeconomic and political fields, set before us the following challenges: I highlight some of them with no claim to put them in order of importance.

1. The first and greatest challenge is laypeople's tendency to separate their Christian life from their work, their profession, and from all their social or political commitments. The reasons for this behaviour are manifold: there are some priests who look with suspicion to political and commercial activities; spiritualities that have preached to escape from the wicked world and to take refuge in the so called "religious practices". A good Christian is judged only by his fidelity to his prayers and to the other activities inside the Church. Many priests lack also a clear vision about laypeople's specific vocation.
2. Owing to this we lack political leaders, economic operators and professionals in mass–media with an evangelic and ecclesial inspiration. It is necessary that all the Church's components, God's family in Africa, join their efforts to accept this challenge.
3. This last challenge is made worse by another gap: lay people and most of the priests and of other agents of evangelization lack formation in the Church's social doctrine. In addition to this a culture of cooperation laypeople–priests in reflecting upon and in studying economic, social and political questions by the light of the Gospel is still lacking.
4. The lack of collaboration between laypeople and priests in reflecting upon the above problems raises from the fact that laypeople were excluded from and deprived of a deserved attention in the fields of spirituality, lay faithful's commitment, ecclesiology and the Church's social doctrine.
5. The exclusion and the consequent lack of a specific contribution from laypeople raise from the fact that the lay leaders both of CA movements and of ecclesial communities, are not well formed to exercise their own specific mission in its full meaning.
6. After having ascertained the meagre outcomes of the post–conciliar meetings and decisions concerning laypeople's formation at the level of local episcopates as well as of roman synods and continental or regional meetings of the episcopal conferences, I conclude that a real coordination lacks so that decisions and actions can be actually carried out. This is a challenge to accept at diocesan, national, regional and intercontinental level.

IV. What is to be done in face of the above challenges

The challenges just identified, that is:
- tendency to separate religious life from social life;
- lack of Christian leaders in the political, economic and media fields;
- lack of a culture of collaboration between laypeople and priests in reflecting upon and in studying socioeconomic and political questions according to the Gospel;
- laypeople's exclusion and consequently their specific scant contribution are all caused by the lack of a vast and deep formation.

• *Formation first of all*

The exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* shows clearly how formation is fundamental to know the truths of the faith and to carry out deeds which express and make this faith concrete in life[5].

Therefore let us aim first of all to formation.

• *The whole community need to be formed*
Whom this formation is directed to?
The target would be the whole community "The whole community needs to be trained, motivated and empowered for evangelization, each according to his or her specific role within the Church", writes the Pope John Paul II in the exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*.
The ecclesial communities persue their mission to bear witness to Christ if their members are formed to know the different situations of their socioeconomic and political environment by the light of the Word of God. This will be their lamp in the mazes of their daily life if they learned to read, meditate, interiorize it and to confront it with the concrete situations of their existence.

• *The leaders of the ecclesial communities*
Those who animate the community, guide meetings and direct actions, need a deeper and a more varied formation according to the different subjects dealt with in the community meetings. For this reason suitable places and longer and more frequent periods of formation are to be arranged.

• *CA members*
It is not enough to belong to a CA movement to be able "to assume all the civil, socioeconomic and political responsibilities in the light of the Gospel and of the faith in God". It is necessary first to be formed in a sound spiritual, ecclesial and individual life, to have deepened the knowledge of the faith. All CA members, especially the leaders, need absolutely such a formation.

• *The priests, the future priests, the religious*
We have seen how the collaboration between priests and laypoeple in reflecting upon and approaching socioeconomic and political questions is lacking. This challenge will be accepted if the future priests, the religious are formed like the laypeople. It is necessary that all of them accept to walk together because the diversity of ministries and fields of action may become complementary in the view of a same goal: to bear witness to Christ in Africa and in the world.

• *Formation. In which fields?*
It is time that laypeople receive a theological formation like that given in the great seminaries and in the theological faculties. It is also time that the Church's social doctrine may become a *vademecum* both for laypeople and for priests. In that way the laypeople which are formed together with the

priests, the religious and the future priests, get accustomed to reflect together.

• *The places of formation*
It would be necessary to foresee different places of formation:
– at the level of the *équipes* and the ecclesial comunities. At this level, it is necessary to inculcate in all a full awareness of their specific vocation and their apostolic responsibilities and to initiate them to an individual spiritual and ecclesial life.
– At parish level it will be necessary to organize longer meetings of the animators of the community or of the leaders of CA movements, with a richer and a more varied programme.
– At diocesan or national level, it is necessary by now to organize two types of formation:
– a periodical formation of both the community and of CA leaders;
– a systematic and academic formation in the institutional centers where laypeople may meet priests or future priests.
In this way the servants of the same people of God will be prepared in the same dynamics.

V. CA contribution

The contribution of CA is essential in accepting the challenges I have detected and in getting good results in forming laypeople. We already ascertained that the ecclesial communities have strengthened and increased just where CA was already acting. In the same way, we think that CA will be the pivot of the laypeople's formation to enable them to respond to their specific vocation.

1. CA is the priviledged place for educating to the apostolic responsibility in the Church.
2. CA, with its own method of approaching the local situation in the light of the Gospel, can help the Christian communities to bear witness to Christ in their concrete life and will offer the appeals to formation its effective methods of analyse and action.

Conclusion

Christ sends his faithful to penetrate the social fabric of humanity like the salt penetrates and transforms the taste of the foods with which it is mixed. For this reason instead of living the Gospel's life out of the world,

Christ send us to mix with the world, in order to give it another flavour, the taste of the Gospel. It is therefore against Christ's will to stir people to escape from the world and to despise the world. But in order to face the contradictions of the world, we need, all of us, to help one another to adhere always and in every circumstance to Christ, light and life.

How may we help one another?

We have ascertained delays, slownesses and sometimes also forgetfulnesses in putting into practice the conciliar teachings, the decisions and the wishes of the Bishops' synods or of the Laypeople's assemblies. This is most certainly due to manifold reasons. Let us search together appeals and at the same time mechanisms which can enable us not to drop our action but to coordinate and carry it out .

Perhaps IFCA's secretariat can suggest methods and actions to this regard to be coordinated and carried out?

Finally, considering how formation is important and necessary, I would suggest to try, in the next future, to set up an Institute where laypeople, priests and religious may follow a formation–programme like that one I have just proposed to you.

Notes

[1] *Ecclesia in Africa* n. 54
[2] *Ecclesia in Africa* n. 54
[3] *Lumen Gentium* n. 31
[4] *Panafrican– Madagascar Lay meeting* August 11–18th 1971
[5] *Ecclesia in Africa* n. 75

Catholic Action at the service of the laypeople's formation

Intervents

The primacy of formation

When speaking of formation we refer explicitly to the process through which people are helped to grow.

We start from the fundamental reality of Baptism through which we are all incorporated into the people of God and we all become sons of the same Father, members of the Church whose Head is Christ.

Through Baptism we were called to holiness: this is the vocation of all Christifideles, either priests or laypeople.

The formative process makes us grow in holiness through a journey which goes on during our whole life, since we are called to grow "to fullness as Christ himself".

This commonly shared vocation to holiness assumes peculiar characteristics in the laypeople, since, by divine vocation, they are to live in the world and from within the world they are to strive towards the full Christian life and to holiness.

The proper and peculiar way of the laypeoples' Christian existence as well as the specific task of their apostolic commitment in the Church concern everything connected with the temporal order (*AA* 7):

"It belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will" (*LG* 31).

As laypeople we are called to render the Church present in the heart of the world and the world in the heart of the Church.

The Constitution *Gaudium et spes* entrusts this ecclesial mission very clearly to the laypeople and give them the following earnest advice: "The Christian who shirks is temporal duties shirks his duties towards his neighbour, neglects God himself, and endangers his eternal salvation" (*GS* 43).

We should live fully aware that we are citizens both of the ecclesial and the civil community and we should help one another to live the Church as mystery of missionary communion.

The call to holiness received in the Baptism requires from each of us to meet Christ, the "Way" to conversion, to communion and solidarity with all our brothers and sisters, especially with the poorest ones.

Many times we meet in our small communities laypeople who are very much concerned about the life of the Church, but who are very little present in the world and are little aware of their own responsibility for building a world richer in humanity, fraternity and solidarity.

This is the challenge: a commitment to form people for the new evangelization, that is a formation which foresees:

- a formation to help the interior growth towards holiness of life, through the spirituality of the incarnation.

- A formation to communion: to foster a special care to engender communion, communion in the Church and communion in the world.
  To this aim it is necessary to love, to feel the Church, this concrete Church; to love, to feel as our own this concrete social and cultural reality we live in and where God thought of us since eternity.
  Only in this way we can contribute to achieve reconciliation at national and regional level.
- A formation which may lead us to a more intimate unity between our faith and our everyday life and which may enable us to bear witness to the resurrection in our surroundings. Very often I question myself whether many times we are not acting as prophets of misfortunes rather than being witnesses of hope and how many brothers of ours will not get to knowing Christ through us since we were not so transparent as to manifest him through our life.

- Formation in the Church's social teaching which enables us to imbue the fields of culture, politics, economy, education, health, art, communication, family with the evangelic spirit.

The Catholic Action, school of formation, is a school for life both through the associative life as a formative moment and through the proposal of formative itineraries from the children up to the third age.

To conclude, I wish to share with you some words of Cardinal Pironio:
"That this providential intuition of the Catholic Action may continue growing and maturing as a sign of communion and mission in the heart of the Church: to live in the world as signs of hope and ardent witnesses to Easter Christ.
Be men and women of prayer with a contemplative heart in order to understand men's and women's sufferings and to cry out the good news of the salvation to the world.
Love the Church and be everywhere in the world a joyful sign of the missionary communion of the Church".

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson

A global and permanent formation

A second serie of reflection concerns the global formation.

If the formation springs as an answer to Christ's call of love and to the choice to follow him as disciples, then, as first basic requirement, the formation ought to be able to keep this call to conversion always alive in the various seasons of our life and to make us choose every day to follow the Lord.

We know that the thousands complexities of the culture we breathe and at the same time we contribute to feed do not help this choice to be steady.

Here are therefore three characteristics, among other ones, which are dear to us as Catholic Action.

• The first one: our formation is global, that is it is directed to all people and to the whole individual. It is directed to all people and accompanies them through life and stretches along everyone's vocational journey, with a particular attention to ages: from the children, to the teenagers, to the youths, to the adults, to the elderly, as already recalled. And with a particular attention to life's conditions: work, study, living in a big city, living in the country, living alone or in a family, living alone because one chooses it or living alone because one has to suffer it, and so on.
A formation which is directed to all people and to the whole individual, because every individual is composed of manifold aspects: spiritual, intellectual, affective, relational, social. A formative journey cares for keeping into account the life's conditions and the different ages of life.

• A second characteristic of our formation is the associative formation, which means a personal and community formation. We choose to travel together, in an association, helping one another as brothers, which means fraternity with everything it involves in human relations, in mutual support, in brotherly correction, in advice, in charity which becomes help: all this is a constitutive datum of Catholic Action.
Today's individualistic culture does not help to live faith. The small group, the community, the association are strong supports to our faith.
Then the formation requires the auto-formation. We should help those who are travelling with us to become protagonists of their own formative journey - according to their own possibilities. The formation is always a process, a complex one, which demands that those who form and those who are formed should cooperate. Therefore the formation and the auto-formation require laypeople who choose to participate in the life of the association to become protagonists.
In this way the formation becomes permanent, lasts along the time, helped by the group, the community but supported also by every individual's choices.

• A third and last characteristic is that ours is a lay formation.
Of course, it is an ecclesial formation; and we say lay formation to mean that - as far as we are concerned - we want to keep alive that component of the people of God so that the whole people, the Church, may also be more alive and vital.
Here is another characteristic: the formation must start from life; there is no theoric formation, no book, no ideas which are to drop upon the people, but there is the capacity to let life meet Christian revelation, so that the various aspects of life may get sense and meaning. If you want, it is the old question of the inductive method rather than the deductive one.
Therefore the formation for today's laypeople makes life grow, promotes life where laypeople are protagonists. As a matter of fact our history as Catholic Action is a history of formation made "by" the laypeople "for" the laypeople.
Our walking in the Church to announce the Gospel means also to help our local Churches in a pastoral planning which keeps into account the laypeople's life: promoting the pastoral planning where it does not exist and enriching the work of the Pastors, of the pastoral bureaux, with the richness of experience of a laity who chooses the formation, so that the whole pastoral action may better meet the exigencies of the men and the women of our time.
This requires from us - as Paul VI did in the seventies - to add to Catholic Action's motto "Prayer, Action, Sacrifice" also "Study".
A laity who is engaged in the formation, is a laity who offers the Church his generosity but also his contribution of study and reflection for the pastoral planning.

Ernesto Preziosi

A layman's experience of faith

by Laurentiu Moisin
leader of the Catholic Action (AGRU) in Bucarest, Romania

I wish to share some reflections of mine with you, which are a fruit of my experience: what means giving the primacy to the spiritual dimension, to the faith, in order to grow in knowing and in loving the Lord and to open ourselves to our community of brothers and sisters in the faith and to whole humanity.

We laypeople belong to the People of God and represent the body of the Church. Anybody who meets us and looks at us, will see our Church in us and will judge the Church from our behaviour.

What do you think about that? Have you ever thought of this responsibility?

What to do?

First of all we should know our faith, know the Church's doctrine, her history and her life; learn as much as possible about it. We should study the Word of God day by day and live it. We should live our faith, through the Sacraments that God gave to us.

In this way our spiritual life will become richer and richer.

And we should announce the Gospel getting those we meet to know what we have learned, starting with our own families. But pay attention to avoid any slogans. I do not know whether this is a danger for you, but in my part of the world, it is a big one.

We were educated to think and speak by slogans. And people do not like it.

Do not forget it. The Church is not something to look at from afar: everything which concerns the Church concerns all laypeople.

Be involved in the life of your Church, of your parish, together with those who participate in it. Do your very best to transform the Christian community into a family and, in a wider sense, be involved in the life of your town and of the entire society.

You, people of Africa, are able to perceive better than other peoples, that life is God's gift and I understood that you are trying to live so.

I do not know whether I say anything new about Catholic Action, but Catholic Action means Action. So you should act.

Look around you: there are a lot of problems to solve and all of them are important.

Start with one of them. Do not think of money. Probably you do not have any. But think that you can help people only by listening to them, or by giving them a bit of advice. And do not act by yourselves but together with the others and for the others.

Miracles can occur in daily life, which make no noise and show the Lord. This does not mean that you should take no interest in social and political life, but it means rather that in every commitment the human person should be in the centre of any structure, any micro/macro economic systems, any political systems.

I wish to conclude by underlining that, thanks to Catholic Action, formation does never end and especially that the spiritual dimension becomes more and more exacting insofar as we let the Lord lead us. To this aim it is very important to find in the priests our travelling companions who are ready to support us in seeking the Lord and in being faithful to Him.

A text of the Gospel seems to me always very topical particularly for the laypeople: that of the disciples meeting Jesus at Emmaus.

How often we are discouraged and cannot see the Lord, and do not let Him explain us the Word of God who is the Lord! But when He reveals Himself to us, then we become able to announce the Good News, to run to the apostles and then to the whole word crying out the joy of the Resurrection with our whole life.

Forming and educating the laypeople to responsibility in society

0. Introduction

In the course of history, Christianism constantly sways between a disembodied "spiritualism" and a kind of "political messianism".

Spiritualism interprets the Gospel in a mere vertical direction, forgetting the meaning of the Incarnation for today's history. This temptation is very strong in fervent religious environments and in some lay associations and spiritual movements and represents a challenge for evangelizing in depth. Another challenge raises from political messianism which, in its turn, favours the horizontal direction, that is the socioeconomic and political liberation, the transformation of history to the detriment of the necessary individual conversion and of the full, integral promotion of the whole man and of every man. It represents a challenge also for today's evangelization. Formation and engagement of the laypeople in the new evangelization to transform society, to fully live their Christian vocation in the city, to be in their environments salt for the earth, "leaven for the dough", light for the world, must keep into account this double challenge.

This means to keep together horizontal and vertical dimension, interiority and commitment, holiness and transformation of history, goal and means, mysticism and politics.

Movements and associations with CA's character are the first ones to be applied to, since they have already suitable structures, places and staffs to this aim and can reach many laypeople.

Let us deal therefore with the theme of the laypeoples' responsibility in society in the light of the Gospel and the faith.

1. Evangelization concerns the entire community

Evangelization is not an exclusive matter of the pope and of the organisms which express episcopal collegiality. It is not even an exclusive matter of the Bishops, priests and religious. Evangelization concerns the entire community who must enlighten the conscience both of the individual and of the community. The community actually evangelizes the *ethos* which influences the whole social life. This means that its action is essentially religious and moral.

2. Commitment and education of every Christian to sociopolitical and economic life

2.1. – The reasons of the laypeople's political commitment

The Church will never be able to put into actual facts either the hope that we must cultivate in our peoples or the Good News that Christ entrusted to her, as long as the laypeople of our countries are content with only criticizing and looking at the sociopolitical problems from afar, standing aside or waiting for messages and declarations from the Bishops. To avoid soiling their hands and to keep their conscience pure, some laypeople, though committed in the Church, avoid caring for and interfering with anything concerning political and social life. This vision and attitude are deplorable.

Just to be faithful to the Gospel every Christian must engage himself in political and social life. Christian faith is not a purely interior and private matter, but it must affect social, economic, political and cultural life.

Those who believe in the Gospel have therefore the imperious duty not only to build the earthly city but to build it according to God's plan.

It is then easy to understand that to care for political and social life is an essential duty for every citizen, that is for every lay Christian. For a Christian it becomes an act of charity.

2.2. – For Christian laypeople political and social commitment is a form of charity

"For those who have a vocation, politics is also an instrument of apostolate, the highest form of charity" (Paul VI).

It is important here to state that the goal of this political commitment, at every level, must not be to achieve either egoistic privileges or unjust advantages, but to achieve and fulfil the common good for the development of man, the defence of the fundamental rights and freedoms, to involve all in a more just and peaceful society in a democratic system which safeguards Christian values of democracy.

3. Formation and education of laypeople to democracy

3.1. – The Church appreciates the democratic system that laypeople must defend

Even with its defects, democracy is appreciated by the Church as a political system which ensures citizens to participate in the political choices and guarantees those who are governed the possibility to choose and control those who govern them, to substitute them in a pacific way when necessary.

And according to John Paul II, true democracy and politics cannot be renewed out of ethical rules, especially out of a truth about man according to which man is an aim and not a mean, he has his own natural rights.

Without this reference to the truth about man or about values, democracy can change into an underhand or declared totalitarism.
The values we refer to are essentially man's rights. Laypeople who engage themselves in politics must defend the values of true democracy, that are the good of the human person and his freedom.

3.2. – Distortion of our democracies
In my opinion, democracy started badly owing to the fact that our country, like many other african countries, was and still is a satellite or branch country of the foreign powers. But also the african leaders and intellectual *élite* do not enjoy a real autonomy of thought, of decision and do not show themselves to be very creative and inventive.
I share these words of Mons. Jerôme GAPANGWA, Bishop of UVIRA (Congo): "In front of the the local sociopolitical situations, the african leaders and intellectual *élite* reacted by copying the foreign solutions or models. But though successful under other skies, they are not a *panacea* for all situations. African problems need african solutions. Camouflage can lead but to failure and ineffectiveness. Africa needs to invent its own way to organize and to live democracy" (CHEZA M., *The african synod* p. 66).
At the same time it is necessary to educate and to form Christian laypeople to dialogue and to non-violence; because violence is the negation of justice and peace. Also the attitude directing the non-violent action is connected with a general ethic grounded on the conviction that every man is unique and must be respected in his life, in his dignity of human person.
It is impossible to build peace, to promote justice or to defend democracy through violent means which are the negation of these same values.

4. Every Christian is committed with the preferential choice for the poor

4.1. – Engagement for the poor's rights
The preferential choice for the poor is a constant teaching and appeal to all Christians and to all responsible men (*Srs* 42).
Besides the preferential choice means to consider the poor not only as those who are in need or those who receive our help, but also as people who bring values for us and for the community and who bring rights as well. The promotional charity for the poor must be understood in this sense, that is as a fight for the fundamental rights. This is what are trying to do CA's members in supporting the war and SIDA-orphans; Italian CA in promoting schools in Albania, in Burundi. The journey however is long and requires sacrifice and self-denial.

4.2. – Preferential choice of the poor as a choice of society
Laypeople must fight against social and economic mechanisms which cause poverty and must appeal always to local and international solidarity. So every man and particularly every Christian who listens to his brother and who opens to God's presence and action, should gradually put his life's habits under discussion. Instead of running towards abundance in front of an incredible poverty, we should diminish our comsumptions in order to help the unlucky and to promote the common good. Here laypeople play a decisive role. This choice for the poor must concern also the refugees.

5. Laypeople's commitment to show solidarity to refugees

The civil war that continues to increase the misfortunes of our peoples, has caused hundreds of thousands of refugees towards the near countries.
Most of them are in extreme poverty, with no home, no food, no money, no school, no protection and are living in conditions of incredible pain which claim an urgent intervention from the international organisms, from the Church and the country of origin, and also from the Church where they at present are.

5.1. – Reception and organization of the refugees by the Christian laypeople
Though rarely rejected, the refugees are nevertheless neglected, misunderstood and ignored. Very often the countries themselves which receive them are in full economic difficulty. They themselves need help.
At the same time the lack of a human, moral and spiritual organization is deplored. This organization and this material support should be Christian laypeople's duty to show their charity and fraternity towards their brothers in Christ.
This moral and spiritual support could help them to become "more men" and less violent. It would have more strength if it were favoured by their Church of origin.

5.2. – The intervention of the Christian laypeople of the countries of origin
In order to make this solidarity concrete, the Episcopal Conferences who receive many refugees, ought to urge the Christian laypeople who are in the different CA associations and movements, to make collections for the refugees who are in need. The Conferences might send a delegation composed of Bishops, priests, religious and laypeople to present these collections to the refugees as a sign of concrete solidarity. The Bishops might send messages to their faithful in a foreign land.

Where are concentrations of refugees, the Episcopal Conferences might agree with the local Churches upon sending compatriot priests to support them at human and Christian level.
What is important is not the quantity but the quality of the fraternity and concrete solidarity, through the care of the pastor who looks for his missing sheep and of the brother who looks for his missing brother. In my opinion, this process might help the refugees to return to their own country, to be received and to be arranged there.

Conclusion

To conclude, laypeoples's commitment to responsibility in society starts from the neighbour's love which must bear witness to man's integral salvation. John Paul II says often that laypeople must bear witness to neighbour's love. The Church must remember today more than ever that her social doctrine may become more credible by her actions than by its inward and consequent logic.
In the same way her preferential option for the outcasts of every kind should urge our laypeople to show their solidarity towards those who are victims of social injustices. This option of the laypeople engaged in society must appear in their programmes of activities and in their choices of priorities.
Our laypeople have the mission to transform society through their commitment in political, economic and social realities in order to transform them in the light of the Gospel and of the faith.

Rev. Salvatore Niciteretse

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Scheme of the conclusion

Introduction

Three images

- the way: the wayfarer – the road – the goal
- the building: the architect – the project – the builder
- the tree: the inward energies – the farmer

a. – A formation for a mature faith

- for the Christian life
- for the witness and for the evangelization which is irradiation
- for a specific service in the Church and in society

The first two aspects are fundamental even if we must own that the second one is particularly important and urgent.

b. – The fundamental characteristics

- authentically human (primacy of conscience)
- authentically Christian (primacy of God and total individual involvement)
- fully ecclesial
- sincerely social
- concrete and effective: able to transform ourselves and the world where we live, in God's image.

An education to bear such a joyful, strong and radical witness that the Lord may say of us "your light… shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven".

c. – The risks to avoid

- an integralism separated from the world
- a sociologism which adapts itself to the world.

d. – The places of formation

- the family
- the ecclesial community (parishes, associative groups, ecclesial groups)
- the civil society
- the formative structures (schools of specific formation, stages, residential courses)

e. – The goals

- one individual
- one family
- one ecclesial community faithful to the Lord's Gospel

in order to build a society at the service of man according to God's plan.

f. – Basic points

- Eucharist
- listening to the Word of God
- listening to the poor's appeal
- education to human and theological virtues
- discernment at individual and community level
- reading the signs of the times.

In order to live Christ's charity "according to laypeople's peculiar way":

- transparency before God
- competency in individual, family, professional, civil and social responsibilities
- sharing
- solidarity
- dialogue with all men and brotherly announcement of the Gospel.

Conclusion

Building the Church means to make laypeople and priests, together, grow in docility to the Holy Spirit in view of an apostolate which is the fruit of an authentic ecclesial communion.

Mons. Agostino Superbo

Letter to the Holy Father

Very Blessed Father,

we met in Nairobi, Resurrection Garden, from 26th to 29th April, - Bishops, priests and laypeople - for a seminar with the theme "*You will be my witnesses in Africa*. Reality, challenges and prospects for the formation of the lay faithful. Catholic Action's contribution". We came from countries and dioceses of Africa: Kenya (Nairobi, Nyeri, Murang'a); Burundi (Gitega, Bururi, Ruyigi); Rwanda (Kibungo); Uganda (Lugazi, Masaka); Central African Republic (Bangui); Togo (Lomé); Sudan; Guinea Bissau; and from other IFCA's countries: Argentina, Italy, Romania, with representatives of international organisms at African level: Unum Omnes, MIDADE, IYCS, Pax Romana.

The meeting was promoted by IFCA's secretariat with the aim to favour listening and exchange of experiences, dialogue and confrontation, reading of the different realities: all this enabled us to catch common aspects, positive results and difficulties concerning the participation of the associated laypeople in the Church, particularly in Africa.

The joint work highlighted the importance of a more intense engagement of the Church in laypeople's formation, also with CA's contribution: a formation to make them more aware of their lay vocation; a global, permanent formation, which cares for all ages and life conditions; which form laypeople to responsibility in the Church and in society, with a special attention to social and political commitment.

We met in the Easter week in the year of the Great Jubilee of 2000 and we shared the joy of the resurrection in the Eucharistic celebration and in the prayer.

We prayed every day for You, Holy Father, begging the Lord to support Your ministry as Pastor of the Universal Church, as guide and witness along the roads of peace, dialogue, unity, solidarity with the whole humanity.

Receive, Holy Father, our Easter greetings in the name of all the participants, in particular of the Bishops who are present from Kericho, Murang'a, Nyeri, Gitega, Bururi, Ruyigi, Kibungo, Lugazi and of the Papal Nuncio in Kenya, and our best wishes for Your next birthday,

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson
National President of Argentine CA
Coordinator of the Secretariat

† Agostino Superbo
General Assistant of Italian CA
Ecclesiastic Assistant

(all participants' signatures follow)

Final document

From april 26th to 29th 2000 a Saminar took place in Nairobi (Kenya) - Ressurection Garden - organized by IFCA's secretariat with the theme: *You will be my witnesses* in Africa. Reality, challenges and prospects for the layfaithful's formation. CA's contribution.

This initiative represents a first step to begin IFCA's work at regional level in Africa, starting from the CA groups already contacted and from new groups which are interested in a reflection upon laypeople's formation in Africa and in CA's proposal.

In the context of the Jubilee Year, the constant point of reference was on one hand the Vatican Council II, with some stages of the post-conciliar journey, such as the Synod on the laity (*CFL*), the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (*RM*) and the continental African Synod (*Ecclesia in Africa*); on the other hand a look at the real situation of the particular Churches in the African continent, at the participation of the laypeople, in particular those which are organized in associations and movements, starting from CA.

The participants were more than 50 - Bishops, priests, laypeople coming from Kenya (Nairobi, Nyeri, Murang'a); Burundi (Gitega, Bururi, Ruyigi); Rwanda (Kibungo); Uganda (Lugazi, Masaka); the Central African Republic (Bangui); Togo (Lomé); Sudan; Guinea Bissau; and from other IFCA's countries: Argentina, Italy, Romania with representatives of international organisms at african level: Unum Omnes, MIDADE, IYCS, Pax Romana.

On april 27th - the day appointed for looking at the real situation and for listening to experiences - H.E. Mons. Bernard BUDUDIRA, Bishop of Bururi, held an opening lecture upon laypeople's formation in Africa, with a particular attention to Catholic Action. It was followed by the interventions of the Bishops who were present from the various countries and dioceses on the base of a questionnaire sent in advance for the preparation.

All of them remarked that the commitment for the laypeople's formation in Africa is still lacking, though it is clearly hightlighted in *Ecclesia in Africa*:

many laypeople live in the Church and in society without being properly encouraged and supported in becoming aware of their own vocation.

Among the positive signs, the presence in the dioceses of committees/councils for the lay apostolate where associations, movements and Catholic Action meet for a service to the particular Church.

On april 28th the representatives of some countries of three continents: Argentina, Italy, Romania, Burundi, in a panel presented some aspects of the CA lay formation: a formation to grow in the lay vocation; a global, permanent, formation, which cares for all ages and life conditions; the primacy of the spiritual dimension; the peculiarity of the social and political formation for lay people who must witness Christ in the society where they live.

Then followed the workshops on these themes and the synthesis by Mons. Superbo who underlined the urgency and the priority of the commitment and the care for the laypeople's formation both by the Bishops and by the priests as well as by the CA's leaders. For example special formative sessions of the community are needed where everyone may know and assume his/her own vocation as individual and community responsibility, with a special attention to youths and children.

It is just CA's task to invest energies in forming laypeople who are responsible in the Church and in society in every context, in collaboration with the pastors.

The notes qualifying CA: ecclesiality, laicality, organic unity and collaboration with the Hierarchy place it fully at the service of the local Church, ready to work daily with all for the growth of communion and solidarity.

On april 29th the concrete proposals to continue the work just started in Africa at regional level were drawn up:

1. favouring the regional work, taking into account the areas already fixed by the episcopal conferences and the national work where CA is present in more dioceses;
2. increasing the communication between the members through meetings and newsletters;
3. contacting realities which were not present at the Seminar in order to involve them in the work just begun;

4. promoting a reflection upon CA's identity among the CA and the committees/councils of the lay apostolate at national and diocesan level;
5. supporting initiatives of formation and exchanges between CA of Africa and of other continents proposing also courses, lecturers, work-camps...;
6. fostering solidarity to grow in IFCA in order to make further initiatives possible;
7. organizing a coordination-group in Africa to suggest both initiatives and ways to look at the situations.

A first important moment of communication about the first Seminar in Africa will be the participation of some representatives in IFCA's Third ordinary Assembly which will be held in Rome on september 2nd-6th with the theme **"The lasting actuality of a gift of the Holy Spirit.** Catholic Action: lay faithful who live the ever neweness of the Gospel in the world and are sign of communion".

(by IFCA's Secretariat)

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Blaj - Vicariate of Bucarest
Laurentiu-Horia MOISIN

IFCA's Secretariat in Rome
Maria Grazia TIBALDI

Programma

You will be witnesses in Africa

Reality, challenges and prospects for the layfaithful's formation

Catholic Action's contribution

SEMINAR
April 26th/29th 2000 – NAIROBI (Kenya), Dimesse Sisters

Twesday April 25th Arrival

ore 19.00 Eucharistic Celebration presided by H.E. mons. SIMON NTAMAWANA Bishop of Gitega and President of Episcopal Conference of Burundi

Wednesday April 26th

ore 15.30 Opening Eucharistic Celebration presided by H.E. mons. PHILIP ANYOLO, Bishop of Kericho (Kenya) charged with the Lay Apostolate

ore 17.00 Lecture by H.E. mons. AGOSTINO SUPERBO IFCA's Assistant

IFCA's presentation BEATRIZ BUZZETTI THOMSON Coordinator of IFCA's Secretariat

ore 20.00 Presentation of the participants

ore 21.30 Evening prayer

Thursday April 27th
Time for listening: report of experiences

ore 8.00 Morning prayer

ore 9.00 Lecture by H.E. mons. BERNARD BUDUDIRA Bishop of Bururi (Burundi)

ore 10.00 Interventions of the Bishops

ore 13.30 Eucharistic Celebration in Nairobi Cathedral presided by H.E. mons. PETER KIHARA Bishop of Murang'a (Kenya)

ore 16.00 Interventions of the Countries

ore 21.00 Evening prayer

Friday April 28th
Time for confrontation and dialogue

ore 7.30 Eucharistic Celebration presided by H.E. mons. MATTHIAS SSEKAMAANYA Bishop of Lugazi (Uganda)

ore 9.00 Interventions of IFCA's Countries
Argentina, BEATRIZ BUZZETTI THOMSON
Italy, ERNESTO PREZIOSI
Romania, LAURENTIU MOISIN
Burundi, Rev. SALVATORE NICITERETSE

ore 10.30 Workshops

ore 15.00 Synthesis of the workshops

ore 17.00 Interventions of the Countries

ore 18.00 Conclusion by H.E. mons. AGOSTINO SUPERBO

ore 20.00 Evening prayer

ore 21.00 Convivial evening

Saturday April 29th
The common prospects

ore 7.30 Eucharistic Celebration presided by H.E. mons. FREDERIC RUBWEJANGA Bishop of Kibungo (Rwanda)

ore 9.30 Address of the Apostolic Nuncio H.E. mons. GIOVANNI TONUCCI

Discussion upon the proposals to draw up common prospects

ore 12.00 Conclusion

After the Seminar of Nairobi

Proposals

by IFCA's Secretariat

From the concrete prospects focused together in the final Document

1. Favouring the regional work, taking into account the areas already determined by the episcopal conferences and also the national work where CA is present in more dioceses:

   2001/2002 eventual meetings in UGANDA and in NIGERIA.

2. Increasing the communication between the members through meetings and newsletters:

   DOCUMENTS of the Seminar in NAIROBI.

3. Contacting realities which were not present at the Seminar in order to involve them in the work just begun:

   ZAMBIA, TANZANIA, ETHIOPIA, NIGERIA,
   DEMOCRATIC CONGO, SENEGAL.

4. Promoting a reflection upon CA's identity between the CA and in the committees/councils of the lay apostolate at national and diocesan level;

   PROPOSALS OF THEMES, COURSES...

5. Supporting initiatives of formation and exchanges between CA of Africa and of other continents proposing also courses, lecturers, work-camps...:

   AUGUST 2001 in Burundi: work-camp and course of human and Christian formation with the CA of some IFCA's countries.

6. Fostering solidarity and co-responsibility to grow in IFCA in order to make further initiatives possible within IFCA's goals:

   CONCRETE PROPOSAL at IFCA's Assembly
   about the initiatives already planned.

7. Organizing in Africa a coordination-group who can suggest initiatives, themes to study and reading of the situations:

   after the Assembly – with the secretariat 2000/2003
   and the representatives of the African countries which are IFCA's members.

A first important moment of communication about the first Seminar in Africa will be the participation of some representatives in IFCA's Third ordinary Assembly which will be held in Rome on september 2nd-6th with the theme **"The lasting actuality of a gift of the Holy Spirit.** Catholic Action: lay faithful who live the ever newness of the Gospel in the world and are sign of communion".