

Forum Internacional
de Acción Católica

International Forum
of Catholic Action

Forum Internazionale
di Azione Cattolica

NOTICIAS NEWSLETTER NOTIZIE

Special issue

2003

Magisterium of John Paul II to Catholic Action (2000-2003)

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of John Paul II's Pontificate, we sent a message to the Holy Father to express Him the warmest greetings and the filial love of Catholic Action, which is present in so many dioceses and countries of the world.

"Children, youths, adults, families of Catholic Action have met You in Rome, in Italy, during Your apostolic pilgrimages in the world. They have grown up, have been formed at the school of Your magisterium. "I know that you are there" you told us recently.

On this occasion of joy and gratitude, we wish to assure You of our constant remembrance in our prayer and of our humble and daily commitment for the new evangelization, together with our Pastors.

We look at Your example of passionate and untiring apostle and of witness to Jesus Christ, man's Redeemer, at the service of peace, of the person's dignity, of the poorest.

With You and with the whole Church, we thank the Lord who called You "from far-away" to Rome, as Christ's Vicar, Peter's successor, Bishop of Rome and Pastor of the universal Church.

"Help the Pope and those who wish to serve Christ and, with Christ's power, to serve man and the whole mankind!": these are the words You repeated after 25 years in the evening of October 16th. Holiness, rely on us: we will continue walking with the Pope and praying for the Pope".

In this spirit we think it important and useful to collect John Paul II's magisterium to CA in these last years, beginning from His address to IFCA general Assembly on December 4th 2000, when He invited us to return "to the sources of the Second Vatican Council, to grasp more clearly... the characteristic features that define the face of Catholic Action, despite its various acronyms and names in so many countries of the world".

John Paul II's messages in the third millennium, in 2002 and 2003, to CA of Italy and Poland have been received by all CA with great joy, gratitude, and responsibility.

We feel the Holy Father's encouragement as strong and binding for us: "The Church needs you, she needs laypeople, who in CA have met a school of sanctity, where they have learned to live the Gospel's radicalism in their normal daily life;... because you have chosen to serve the particular Church and her mission as a guideline of your apostolic engagement... because CA is an open and very welcoming place... because you do not stop looking at the world with God's eyes" (September 8th 2003).

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson

+ Francesco Lambiasi

Index

IFCA Third ordinary Assembly	p. 3
11th National Assembly of Italian Catholic Action	p. 5
Meeting of the diocesan Assistants of Italian Catholic Action	p. 8
National Pilgrimage of Catholic Action of Poland	p. 12
Extraordinary Assembly of Italian Catholic Action	p. 15

IFCA Third ordinary Assembly

Roma, December 2nd-6th 2000

I first greet you, dear brothers and sisters of the International Forum of Catholic Action, holding an Assembly during these days here in Rome.

I greet the Bishops present and the national Presidents who have gathered for the Assembly. I extend a special greeting to Bishop Agostino Superbo, whom I thank for the courteous words he just addressed to me, expressing the sentiments shared by the other participants.

Your presence today is meant as a sign of renewed fidelity to the Church and a commitment to continue with ever greater enthusiasm on the path of the new evangelization. Catholic Action, like every other group, association and ecclesial movement, is called to be an authentic school of Christian perfection. That is it is called to be that "school of faith" which, as I said to the young participants in the unforgettable Prayer Vigil at Tor Vergata, during World Youth Day, helps to form true disciples and apostles of the Lord.

Continue, dear friends, to deepen your search for God. May your hearts always be open to the great apostolic expectations and challenges of our time. Grow in an authentic ecclesial spirit, nourished by the study of the Council documents, whose teaching is always timely. Be faithful to the guidelines I set down in the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles laici*. Thus you will be an ever greater resource for the whole Church on her way to the third Christian millennium.

By returning to the sources of the Second Vatican Council, you will be able to grasp more clearly the characteristic features of your Association, especially its ecclesial, secular and organic nature, in constant collaboration with your respective Pastors.

These are the essential traits that define the face of Catholic Action, despite its various acronyms and names in so many parts of the world.

If the progress of the communities in which you work sometimes seems slow or difficult to you, do not be discouraged, but increase your love and your efforts to make the Church's image ever more splendid by your holiness of life and apostolic zeal.

In your mission as humble servants of the unity of God's People, be constantly inspired by the examples and teachings of the saints and blessed who were formed within your Association: I am thinking in particular of the holy Mexican martyrs, of the Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, Gianna Beretta Molla, Pierina Morosini, Antonia Mesina and Sr Gabriella of Unity.

May you be guided and protected by Mary, the Immaculate Virgin, whom you are especially honoured to invoke as Mother and Queen of Catholic Action.

Audience in Paul VI's Hall - December 4th 2000

11th National Assembly of Italian Catholic Action

Rome, April 25th-28th 2002

Dear Catholic Action Children, Youths and Adults!

1. I am very pleased to welcome you to this special Audience on the occasion of your 11th national Assembly. The relation between Catholic Action and the Pope is very strong and has become even stronger by time. In fact, since its very beginning, your Association saw in the person and in the teaching of the "white Father" a qualifying point of reference for its programmes and action. This bond of friendship finds expression in some very meaningful meetings: every year, at Christmastime, children from ACR come to give me their greetings and every three years we meet on the occasion of your national Assembly. This is exactly what is happening this morning, in the opening hours of your 11th national Assembly.

I wish to greet in a special way Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Italian Bishops' Conference and the Bishops who have accompanied you, the national President, Miss Paola Bignardi, the General Ecclesiastic Assistant Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi, the other Assistants and the other CA leaders. I extend my greetings to each and everyone of you who is participating in this Assembly and to all ICA members.

2. On this occasion, in the first place, I would like to start by thanking you for your love for the Church, which through your faith you regard as your family. Thanks for your commitment in the everyday life of your parish communities. I know that you "are there", even when you choose to be discreet and prefer to mingle with the People of God in your humble and daily service.

May this ecclesial service of yours never be a mere activism, but may it be a concrete sign of the Lord's compassion who cares for the sufferings of the poor and invites you all to open your heart to all those who are in difficulty.

I ask you to continue building links of communion and dialogue among the People of God: in the Pastoral Councils, in your relations with priests and with the other groups and movements. Your service will be even more appreciated, if you are able to bring out, in a gentle and calm way, the mature image of an open and enterprising laity.

To attain this, it is important that you mould authentic Christian consciences, through a formation aimed to youths, adults, children, the elderly, families and teenagers. In this respect I wish to express a particular appreciation to all those who in Catholic Action are committed with the educational service and accompany people through teaching, listening, understanding and support them with their encouragement and example. In the history of the Feminine Youth Groups, the traditional motto was: "The ideal is worth more than life".

Especially you, dear educators, who form people, do your very best to help the younger ones realize the beauty of an existence, devoted to the ideal proposed by Christ in the Gospel, even today.

3. On this happy occasion, let me entrust to you some messages, so close to my heart.

First of all, I wish to tell you that the Church cannot do without Catholic Action. The Church needs a group of laypeople who, faithful to their vocation and close to their own Pastors, are ready to share with them the daily toil to evangelize every sphere of life.

As your Bishops wrote recently to you, "Catholic Action has a direct and close bond with the diocese and its Bishop, takes upon itself the Church's mission, is devoted to the particular Church and to her global mission. She makes the pastoral journey, the options, the spirituality of the diocesan Church its own; all this makes Catholic Action not an ecclesial association among the others, but a gift of God and a resource for the growth of the ecclesial communion" (*Letter of the Permanent Council of the Italian Bishops' Conference to ICA national Presidency, March 12th 2002*).

The Church needs Catholic Action, because she needs laypeople who are ready to devote their life to the apostolate and to establish, particularly with the diocesan Community, a bond which leaves a deep mark on their life and on their spiritual journey.

She needs laypeople, whose experience shows, in a concrete and daily way, how great and joyful Christian life is; laypeople who can see in the Baptism the roots of their dignity, in the Christian community their own

family with whom they share their faith and in the Pastor, the father who guides and supports his brothers' journey; laypeople who do not reduce faith to a private matter and do not hesitate to bring the Gospel's leaven into the fabric of human relations and institutions, into the territory and into the new areas of globalization, so as to build the civilization of love.

4. Just because the Church needs a Catholic Action that is alive, strong and beautiful, I would like to repeat to each and everyone of you: *Duc in altum!*

Duc in altum, Catholic Action! Look to the future with courage. May your history, marked by the luminous examples of Saints and Blessed, shine with your fidelity to the Church and to the needs of our time even today, with that typical freedom of those who, guided by the Spirit's breath, strove towards high ideals.

Duc in altum! Be a prophetic presence in the world, by promoting those dimensions of life which are often forgotten and as such even more urgent, such as interiority and silence, responsibility and education, giving freely and being of service, sobriety and fraternity, hope for the future and love towards life. Act effectively so that today's society may recover the true sense of man and of his dignity, the value of life and family, peace and solidarity, justice and compassion.

Duc in altum! Be humble and daring enough to fix your eyes on Jesus so that your authentic renewal may start from Him. It will be thus easier for you to discern what is necessary from what passes with time. In this way you can live your desired renewal as an adventure of the Spirit, who will help you along the hard paths in the desert and will help you to be purified, so that you may experience the beauty of the new life, which God always grants to those who trust in Him.

Catholic Action, do not be afraid! You belong to the Church and are close to the Lord's heart. He never stops to guide your steps towards the newness of the Gospel, which never loses its value and is never out-dated.

With these guidelines in mind, all of you here, members of this glorious Association, know that the Pope supports you and is with you through his prayers. He ardently asks you to persevere in the commitments you have undertaken and blesses you all with his whole heart.

Paul VI's Hall, April 26th 2002

Meeting of the diocesan Assistants of Italian Catholic Action

Rome, February 17th-20th 2003

Dear Assistants of Italian Catholic Action!

1. I am happy to greet you on this occasion, that sees you gathered in Rome for your National Convention on the theme: "Renewing the Catholic Action in the Parish". In a special way I greet the General Assistant, Bishop Francesco Lambiasi, and the National President, Dr Paola Bignardi.

During these days, you will reflect on how the Catholic Action can contribute to the beginning of the new millennium so as to recreate the face of the parish, the basic structure of the ecclesiastical body. Moreover, the two-thousand-year experience of the People of God, as the Second Vatican Council and the Code of Canon Law authoritatively confirmed it, teaches that the Church cannot give up her parish structures, that are communities of believers rooted in the neighbourhood, bound to each other around the Bishop in the network of diocesan communion.

The parish is "the home of the Christian Community" to which one belongs through the grace of Baptism. It is the "school of sanctity" for all Christians, even for those who do not belong to an ecclesiastical association or do not practice a special spirituality. It is the "laboratory of faith". It is the "training ground of formation" where they are formed in the faith and brought into the apostolic mission.

Keeping in mind the rapid changes that came with the beginning of this millennium, it is necessary for the parish to feel a more urgent need to live up to and bear witness to the Gospel by creating a profitable dialogue with

the people in the neighbourhood where they live or spend a great deal of their time, while paying special attention to those who live materially or spiritually deprived and wait for a word that will accompany them in their search for God.

2. The bond between the parish and the Italian Catholic Action has always been tight. In the parish communities, the Catholic Action anticipated a great deal of the pastoral renewal of the Council with prophetic intuition; and over the year has accompanied its implementation. It has brought to the parish the sensitivity and the requests of those who, in the routine of every day life, feel the effects of that change that touches every person before it affects communities, and concerns the places where people are living before it influences the organization of the pastoral ministry. Much remains to be done. Now 40 years since the opening of the Council, Vatican II continues to be "a sure compass" to guide the course of Peter's barque (cf. *Novo Millennio in eunte*, n. 57) and the conciliar documents represent "the holy door" through which each parish community must pass in order to enter into the third millennium of the Christian era not just chronologically, but also spiritually.

I am certain that the Catholic Action will contribute to the indispensable work of renewing the parish through the daily witness of communion. It will be ready to lend its service to forming lay people who will be mature in faith and bring into every situation apostolic zeal for the mission. The real contribution that the Italian Catholic Action can offer the Christian community is a spirituality of communion lived with the Bishop and the local Church. I would like to recall what I wrote on this subject in the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio in eunte*: "Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us" (n. 43).

3. Only a renewed Catholic Action can contribute to renewing the parish. For this reason, dear Assistants, lead the Association on the path of renewal, which was clearly outlined and courageously undertaken by your

last National Assembly. Support it with your priestly ministry so that the "courage for the future" and the "creativity of holiness", which the Spirit of the Lord will certainly not fail to grant to the leaders and members, may make the Association ever more faithful to its missionary mandate.

I exhort you to contribute with the fruitfulness of your priestly ministry to promoting the vast and broad work of education that can bring the freshness of the Gospel to many people who often feel dissatisfied and agitated. To do this, it is essential to ensure for the Association leaders, teachers and well formed directors, and to raise up lay people with a strong apostolic drive who can take the message of the Gospel everywhere. This will enable the Catholic Action to express again its own charism as an Association chosen and promoted by the bishops, by means of a direct and organic collaboration with their ministry for the evangelization of the world, through the formation and sanctification of its members (cf. Art. 2 *Statuto*).

On the occasion of the 11th National Assembly of your Association, I took the opportunity to emphasize how an authentic renewal of the Catholic Action is possible through the "humble boldness" of setting one's gaze on Jesus who makes all things new. Only by keeping our eyes turned toward Him, are we able to distinguish what is necessary from what is not. I ask you to be the first to assume this contemplative vision in order to give witness to the newness of life that comes from it at the level of the person and the community. The indispensable structural and organizational renewal will be the result of a unique "adventure of the Spirit", who brings about an interior and radical conversion of persons and associations at the various levels of the parish, diocese and nation.

4. Beloved, put at the service of this formative and missionary endeavour your best energies, namely, the wisdom of spiritual discernment, the holiness of life, the variety of theological and pastoral responsibilities and the familiarity of simple and genuine relationships.

In the diocesan and parochial associations, be fathers and brothers who are able to encourage, to awaken the desire for an evangelical way of life, to support in the difficulties of life children, adolescents, young adults, families and the elderly.

Take to heart the education of strong and free, wise and humble Christian personalities, who can promote a culture of life, justice, and the common good.

The Pope is close to you and encourages you not to lose heart, above all, when, combining the service of a Moderator with the other tasks in the Diocese, you start feeling the fatigue and complications of such a ministry. You may be sure: to be Assistants of Catholic Action, on account of the unique relationship of co-responsibility inherent in the experience of the Association, makes it a source of fruitfulness for your apostolic work and your holiness of life.

Lastly, I want to take this opportunity to invite all the priests "not to be afraid" to welcome into their parish the associative experience of Catholic Action. In fact, they will find in it not just valid and motivated support, but also a closeness and spiritual friendship, together with the richness that comes from sharing spiritual gifts with every member of the Community.

I entrust these hopes - like those which each of you carries in his heart to the intercession of Mary, the Mother of the Church, and, upon you and all the priests who together with you exercise the ministry of Assistant for Catholic Action in the Italian Church, I cordially bestow my Apostolic Blessing.

Message from the Vatican, 19th February 2003

National Pilgrimage of Catholic Action of Poland

Rome-Cassino, April 24th - 27th 2003

Dear Brothers and Sisters, representatives of Catholic Action in Poland!

A cordial welcome to all of you. I greet the assistant priest, Mons. Piotr Jarecki, the President and the other members of the Presidency.

You have come to the tombs of the Apostles to give thanks to God for the fruits of the work of Catholic Action in Poland, after your rebirth that took place ten years ago. Although it may not be a long period of time, there is much to be thankful for. I know that Catholic Action in Poland now possesses a completely reorganized structure that includes the many lay persons who serve the Church with dedication, rediscovering its proper charisms and personal fields of engagement in the work of evangelization. Ten years ago the Polish Bishops were asked to work hard to restore this form of lay apostolate in the Church. Today I can say that they have achieved this task, and all of you members of Catholic Action are a magnificent gift for the entire community of the People of God.

As you know, Catholic Action grew out of religious renewal movements in the second half of the nineteenth century that developed in many Catholic lay circles. Later, during the time of Pope Pius XI, Catholic Action became an active form of participation by the laity in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church. The words of St Paul became its programme: "to unite all things in Christ" - to renew all in Christ (cf. Eph 1: 10). Thanks to the persevering fulfillment of this programme of renewal of the reality of the Church and of the world "for Christ, with Christ and in Christ", Catholic Action became a school of formation for the laity that was ready to courageously oppose the secularization that was spreading ever more strongly in the twentieth century.

I recall these historical facts in order to show a certain analogy between these beginnings and the beginnings of the renewed Catholic Action in Poland. As before, there is also now at the very sources of your existence a profound desire on the part of the lay faithful to actively participate with the Bishops and the priests in their responsibility for the life of the Church and for the preaching of the Gospel. The purpose of the spiritual programme of activity has not changed: to renew themselves, their own environment, the community of believers, and in the end the entire world to the foundation of the love and power of Christ. Finally, these two beginnings are united by the same challenge that involves the secularization of various sectors of social life.

As witnesses of the Gospel, respond to this challenge in every milieu: in the family, in the workplace, at school or in college. Receive it, knowing that "from the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the laymen's right and duty to be apostles. Inserted as they are in the Mystical Body of Christ by Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 3).

Duty and right: this is quite appropriate. You have the duty and the right to carry the Gospel, to be witnesses of its reality for modern men and women, and to kindle the faith in those who are far from God. If the Church acknowledges your right and sustains you in doing this work, then remember at the same time that this is your duty.

And I also remind you of your Baptism, in which you became apostles of justice by means of the grace of justification, and of your Confirmation, in which the Holy Spirit has made you capable of completing the prophetic work of the Church. It is most important to remember that the power to fulfill this duty, such an exalted task, comes only by placing yourselves in Christ. Catholic action cannot be limited only to the social dimension of the Church.

If it is to be the school, the formative community of the laity ready to transform the world by means of the Gospel, it must shape your own spirituality. And if you are to transform reality based on Christ, such a spirituality should be founded on contemplation of his face. As I wrote in the Letter *Novo Millennio Inuente*, "Our witness, however, would be hopelessly inadequate if we ourselves had not first contemplated his face" (n. 16).

"Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help

of Christ. The Son of God, who became incarnate 2,000 years ago out of love for humanity, is at work even today: we need discerning eyes to see this and, above all, a generous heart to become the instruments of his work.... We can count on the power of the same Spirit who was poured out at Pentecost and who impels us still today to start out anew, sustained by the hope "which does not disappoint" (Rom 5: 5)" (n. 58).

So that you walk on this road, the road of contemplation of the face of Christ, the road of formation of the spirituality of Catholic Action founded on this contemplation, the road of the apostolate and of witness, I bless you from the heart.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I assure you all of a remembrance to the Lord, I entrust you, your families and the Communities from which you come to the motherly protection of Mary, and I bless all of you from the heart.

Paul VI's Hall - April 26th 2003

Post-synodal apostolic Exhortation **ECCLESIA IN EUROPA**

15. In today's Europe too, both in the post- Communist countries and in the West, the parish, while in need of constant renewal,(25) continues to maintain and to carry out its particular mission, which is indispensable and of great relevance for pastoral care and the life of the Church. The parish is still a setting where the faithful are offered opportunities for genuine Christian living and a place for authentic human interaction and socialization, whether in the situations of dispersion and anonymity typical of large modern cities or in areas which are rural and sparsely populated.(26)

16. At the same time, together with the Synod Fathers, I express my great esteem for the presence and activity of the different apostolic associations and organizations, and for Catholic Action in particular. I also wish to note the significant contribution that, in fellowship with other ecclesial realities and never in isolation from them, they can offer to new movements and to new ecclesial communities.

EXTRAORDINARY ASSEMBLY OF ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION

Rome, September 12th-14th 2003

Dear Participants in the Extraordinary Assembly of Italian Catholic Action,

1. I am pleased to greet you all with joy and affection, dear brothers and sisters who have gathered in Rome for your Extraordinary Assembly on the theme: "History becomes prophecy". I address a cordial greeting in particular to your General Assistant, Bishop Francesco Lambiasi, and to your National President, Dr Paola Bignardi.

The specific goal of the work that awaits you in the coming days is the most important task of revising the Statutes of the highly-esteemed Catholic Action, to bring them in line with the changing needs of the times and the apostolic perspectives of the new millennium. In recent years, your association has observed the norms and guidelines contained in the 1969 Statutes, which captured the spirit and decisions of the Second Vatican Council. They have helped you to discover better and better, in living it as "as lay persons", the greatness of the Christian vocation and apostolic commitment in an ecclesial and cultural context that is very different from that of previous years.

Updating the Statutes means telling yourselves, the Christian community and civil society today what the features of an Association like yours should be to meet the needs of the mission of the Church and of the evangelization of the world. The new Statutes will express your spirit, the lofty goals you set for yourselves and the approaches that define your mature ecclesial experience and give them an unmistakable quality as well as a unique place in the panorama of lay associations.

2. Your long history originated from a charism: a special gift of the Spirit of the Risen One who never lets his Church lack the talents and resources of grace that the faithful need in order to serve the cause of the Gospel. Reflect upon the charism of Catholic Action, dear friends, with humble pride and deep joy!

It has inspired many young people, such as Mario Fani and Giovanni Acquaderni who founded it more than 130 years ago. This charism also guided and accompanied the journey of holiness of Pier Giorgio Frassati, Gianna Beretta-Molla, Luigi and Maria Beltrame-Quattrocchi, and a multitude of other lay people who lived in heroic fidelity to their baptismal promises with an extraordinary normality. The Pontiffs and Pastors who recognized your charism over the decades, blessed and supported your Association until they accepted it - like the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) - as an association especially chosen and promoted by the ecclesiastical authority to link it more closely to its apostolic office (cf. *Nota Pastorale della CEI*, 22 May 1981, n. 25).

3. This charism has been more fully described in the conciliar Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (n. 20): you are lay Christians expert in the splendid adventure of making the Gospel and life converge, showing how well the "Good News" responds to the searching questions in each person's heart and is the highest and truest light that can guide society in building the "civilization of love".

As lay persons you have chosen to live for the Church and for the globality of her mission, "dedicated", as your Bishops wrote, "with a direct, organic connection, to the diocesan community", so as to enable everyone to rediscover the value of a faith lived in communion and to make every Christian community a family that cares for all its children (cf. *Lettera del Consiglio Episcopale Permanente della CEI*, 12 March 2002, n. 4).

As lay persons you have chosen to follow in the form of an Association the Gospel ideal of holiness in the particular Church, so as to cooperate as a unit, "an organic body", in the evangelizing mission of each ecclesial community.

As lay persons you have chosen to form an Association whose special connection with the Pastors respects and promotes the constitutive secular character of its members. The spirit of that "syntax of communion", which is a characteristic of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, and the rules of democratic participation in group life, help you express to the full the unity of the entire ecclesial Body of Christ and the variety of charisms

and vocations, with full respect for the dignity and responsibility of every member of the People of God.

The organic synthesis of these goals - missionary, diocesan, unitary and secular - is the most mature and ecclesially-integrated form of the lay apostolate. By renewing your Statutes, you intend to reassert the value of these features today and to specify how they should be interpreted, so as to continue to touch the hearts of the many communities and lay persons who will be able to model their life on this ideal.

4. "The Church cannot do without Catholic Action": this is what I told you last year, during your 11th Assembly. I repeat it to you at the end of a particularly busy year, devoted to ICA's renewal.

The Church needs you, she needs lay people who have found in Catholic Action a school of holiness in which they have learned to live the radicalness of the Gospel in ordinary daily life. The Blesseds who have emerged from your ranks, and the Venerables such as Alberto Marvelli, Pina Suriano and Fr Antonio Seghezzi, impel you to continue to make your Association a place where its members grow as disciples of the Lord, at the school of the Word and at the table of the Eucharist; a training ground where they can practise love and forgiveness, learn how to conquer evil with good and, with patient tenacity, weave a network of brotherhood that embraces everyone, especially the poorest.

Dear young people and adults of Catholic Action, your Association will be renewed if each one of its members rediscovers the promises of Baptism, choosing Christian holiness with full consciousness and availability as "the high standard of ordinary Christian living" in daily life (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 31). For this, we must let ourselves be moulded by the liturgy of the Church, cultivate the art of meditation and the interior life, and make an annual spiritual retreat. Dear friends, ensure that every one of your groups is a true school of prayer, and that each member has access to help in discernment and in fidelity to his vocation.

5. The Church needs you, because you have chosen service to the particular Church and her mission as the scope of your apostolic commitment; because you have made the parish the place where, day after day, you express faithful and enthusiastic dedication. In this way you continue to fan the missionary spirit of those men and women of Catholic Action who humbly and unobtrusively help make the Christian communities come alive in various parts of the country.

I urge you to devote all your energies to the service of communion in close unity with the Bishop, collaborating with him and with the presbyterate in the "ministry of synthesis", so as to weave a strong, tighter fabric of cordial communion, which is intensely human precisely because it is genuinely Christian. Help your parish rediscover its zeal for Gospel proclamation, and foster the pastoral solicitude that goes in search of everyone to help each to experience the joy of the encounter with the Lord. And through your presence, may every community shine in the neighbourhoods of your cities and villages as a living sign of the presence of Jesus, the Son of God who came to dwell among us!

6. The Church needs you, because Catholic Action is an open and welcoming environment in which anyone can express his availability for service, finding useful opportunities for formative dialogue in a congenial atmosphere that encourages generous decisions. There are witnesses and teachers in your Associations who are prepared to accompany their brothers and sisters on their way to a convinced and mature faith, capable of witnessing in the world.

I recommend that you emphasize a solid formation, adapted to the demands of the new evangelization. Always care for every person and help everyone to defend the treasure of faith, sowing it in every walk of life. May Catholic Action be once again for a growing number of people and communities the great school of lay spirituality and of the apostolate of movements and associations!

7. The Church needs you, because you never stop looking at the world with God's eyes; hence, you succeed in interpreting this time of ours and in making out in it the signs of the Spirit's presence. You have in your tradition the magnificent witnesses of lay people whose contributions were crucial to the growth of the human city.

Continue to make available to towns and villages, in workplaces and schools, in health-care and recreation centres, in culture, economics and politics, your skills and credibility, which can contribute to making our contemporary world the great work site of the civilization of love. May Catholic Action help the ecclesial community not to fall into the trap of disregarding the problems of life and families, of peace and justice, and may it witness to trust in the renewing and transforming power of Christianity. Thus, it will have an incisive effect on civil society, for the construction of the common home under the flag of the dignity and vocation of men and women, according to the Italian Church's "Cultural Project".

8. Dear members of Catholic Action, as I encourage you to explore ever more deeply the riches of your charism, I urge the diocesan and parish communities to carefully reappraise the Association as a place for the growth of lay vocations as well as an apprenticeship in which people learn to express them with ever greater confidence.

"History becomes prophecy": you have chosen this theme for your Assembly. I hope that you will reinterpret with wise discernment your own impressive background, distinguishing what is the fruit of time from what is a gift of the Spirit, which bears the seeds of a new future that has already started. I am sure that this Extraordinary Assembly will reveal the mature and serene face of the lay people involved, and I am deeply confident that you will adopt firm, clear options to make Catholic Action an Association that is equal to the mission entrusted to it.

May Mary, Mother of the Church, sustain you in your mission. To her, venerated in the Holy House of Loreto where you plan to go on pilgrimage next year, I entrust each one of you, your families and all your projects.

With these sentiments I cordially impart to you all my Apostolic Blessing.

Message from Castel Gandolfo, 8th September 2003

Magisterium of John Paul II to CA on the Web

Italian

[http://www.azionecattolica.it/aci/
Chi siamo/Documenti/Giovanni_Paolo_II](http://www.azionecattolica.it/aci/Chi_siamo/Documenti/Giovanni_Paolo_II)

Spanish

[http://www.accioncattolica.org.ar/
papa_ACA/index.php](http://www.accioncattolica.org.ar/papa_ACA/index.php)

Giovanni Paolo II all'ACI 1978-2003
So che voi ci siete
Roma, ottobre 2000, editrice AVE – 15 euro

From the Homily of John Paul II - 1 January 2004

3. "An ever timely commitment: teaching peace": this is the theme of the Message for today's World Day of Peace. It is ideally linked to what I proposed at the beginning of my Pontificate when I reasserted the urgent need to form consciences to the culture of peace. For peace to be possible, I wished to repeat, it is also a duty (cf. Message, n. 4).

Challenged by situations of injustice and violence that threaten various parts of the globe and the never-ending wars, often ignored by public opinion, it is becoming more and more necessary to build roads to peace together; consequently, educating for peace becomes indispensable.

For Christians, in fact, "to proclaim peace is to announce Christ who is "our peace" (Eph 2: 14); it is to announce his Gospel, which is a "Gospel of peace" (Eph 6: 15); it is to call all people to the beatitude of being "peacemakers" (cf. Mt 5: 9)" (Message, n. 3). Archbishop Michael Aidan Courtney, my representative as Apostolic Nuncio in Burundi who was tragically killed a few days ago as he carried out his mission encouraging dialogue and reconciliation, was also a witness to the "Gospel of peace". Let us pray for him and hope that his example and his sacrifice will bear fruits of peace in Burundi and throughout the world.

4. Every year in this Christmas season we return in spirit to Bethlehem to adore the Child lying in the manger. Unfortunately, in the land in which Jesus was born tragic conditions endure. In other parts of the world, hotbeds of violence and conflict are also still smouldering. However, we must persevere without giving in to the temptation to despair. All are asked to make an effort to see that the fundamental rights of the person are respected, by constantly teaching respect for the law. With this in mind, it is necessary to strive to transcend "the logic of simple justice and to be open also to the logic of forgiveness". Indeed, "there is no peace without forgiveness!" (cf. Message, n. 10).

People are becoming more and more aware of the need for a new international order that will make the most of the experience of the United Nations Organization and the results it has achieved in recent years: an order that can provide satisfactory solutions to the problems of our day, founded on the dignity of the human person, on an integral development of society, on solidarity between the rich and poor countries and on sharing resources and the extraordinary results of scientific and technological progress.

5. "Love is... the loftiest and most noble form of relationship possible between human beings" (ibid.). The awareness of this guided me in drafting the Message for today's World Day of Peace. May God help us build together the "civilization of love". Only a humanity in which love is triumphant will be able to enjoy authentic and lasting peace.

Noël 2003
1 Janvier 2004

Jusqu'à ce que l'esprit soit
répandu d'en haut sur nous,
Et que le désert se change en
verger,
Et que le verger soit considéré
comme une forêt.
Alors la droiture habitera dans
le désert, Et la justice aura sa
demeure dans le verger.
L'oeuvre de la justice sera la
paix, Et le fruit de la justice le
repos et la sécurité pour
toujours.

Ésaïe 32, 15-17

***Allons a Bethlébem,
pelerins
de paix ed de esperance***

Natale 2003
1 gennaio 2004

In noi sarà infuso uno spirito
dall'alto;
allora il deserto diventerà un
giardino...
Nel deserto prenderà dimora
il diritto
E la giustizia regnerà nel giar-
dino.
Effetto della giustizia sarà la
pace,
frutto del diritto una perenne
sicurezza

Isaia 32, 15-17

***Andiamo a Betlemme,
pellegrini
di pace e di speranza***

Christmas 2003
1st January 2004

Until the spirit from on high is
poured out on us. Then will
the desert become an orchard
and the orchard be regarded
as a forest.
Right will dwell in the desert
and justice abide in the
orchard.
Justice will bring about peace;
right will produce calm and
security.
Isaiah 32, 15-17

***Let's go to Bethlehem,
pilgrims
of peace and hope***

Navidad 2003
1 de Jenero 2004

Cuando sobre nosotros sea
derramado el Espíritu de lo
alto,
y el desierto se transforme en
un campo fértil, y el campo
fértil sea considerado bosque,
entonces Habitará el derecho
en el desierto, y la justicia se
Establecerá en el campo fértil.
El efecto de la justicia Será
paz; el resultado de la justicia
Será tranquilidad y seguridad
para siempre.
Isaías 32, 15-17

***Vamos a Belén,
peregrinos
de paz y de esperanza***

Year	Value
2000	100
2001	105
2002	110
2003	115
2004	120
2005	125
2006	130
2007	135
2008	140
2009	145
2010	150
2011	155
2012	160
2013	165
2014	170
2015	175
2016	180
2017	185
2018	190
2019	195
2020	200