

Forum Internacional
de Acción Católica

International Forum
of Catholic Action

Forum Internazionale
di Azione Cattolica

NOTICIAS NEWSLETTER NOTIZIE

Special issue

2005/1

Rome, September 6th 2004

IFCA Fourth Ordinary Assembly

**"DUC IN ALTUM, CATHOLIC ACTION,
TAKE COURAGE FOR THE FUTURE!"**

DOCUMENTS

Index

- Presentation p. 3
- Manifesto p. 5
- From the Congress to the Assembly
Beatriz Pascual
Secretary General CA Spain p. 7
- Report about IFCA's activities 2001-2004
Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson
Coordinator IFCA Secretariat p. 10
- Workshops' proposals p. 20
- CA in Burma-Myanmar
Bernard U Ka p. 21
- Elections and New Secretariat 2004-2007 p. 22
- Closing address by H.E. Mgr. Stanislaw Rylko
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity p. 23
- Homily by H.E. Mgr. Francesco Lambiasi
Ecclesiastical Assistant of IFCA p. 24
- First meeting of the Secretariat p. 27
- Guidelines of the program 2005-2007 p. 28
- Advisory Office for the Promulgation of Saints p. 29
- Member and Observer Countries Present p. 30

Presentation

The Fourth IFCA Assembly after the International Congress on CA, which reached its climax with the Eucharistic Celebration during which the Holy Father beatified Alberto Marvelli, Pina Suriano and Pere Tarrés, was held on the 6th September.

With our faces beaming with joy and our eyes dazed by the sun, we returned to Rome, treasuring the precious three key words in our hearts. We overcame our fatigue and with great joy and a deep sense of responsibility, we came back to celebrate this ordinary, but at the same time extraordinary event, in IFCA's history.

After the initial meetings and the Assembly during which IFCA was set up, which were all held in Rome, other IFCA Assemblies were held in Vienna (1994), in Buenos Aires (1997), in Rome during the Holy Year 2000 and again in Rome (2005), the place where the Congress was held and from where we left on a pilgrimage to Loreto.

The Pastors, CA leaders and Assistants, from IFCA member, as well as observer countries, met together for only one day in order to put together the many ideas, the views and suggestions which came out during the Congress. These had now to be included in IFCA's next three-year program 2004-2007. They also looked at the work which was carried out by IFCA during the last three years 2001-2004.

The Assembly clearly expressed a very important aspect of our organization's identity, that is corresponsibility. In fact, it is the Assembly which accepts new member countries, elects the member countries to form the new secretariat, indicates the priorities which IFCA should work on and on which the new secretariat is to elaborate its new triennial program.

The various interventions, the workshops, the homily of the concluding Eucharistic Celebration, put together in these ACTS, help us to get an idea of the participants' associative spirit. These consider IFCA and their belonging to it as an opportunity to meet, exchange and experience solidarity with other fellow CA members in so many diverse particular Churches: truly a sign of great hope and trust.

During the Fourth Assembly, held after the Congress, IFCA saw the beginning of a new phase which called for a new commitment from all. H.E. Mgr. Stanislao Rylko, during his closing address at the end of the Assembly, appealed to the courage and the humble pride of all CA stressing that CA's associative charism is a gift to today's and tomorrow's Church. He extended his best wishes to the new IFCA Secretariat in all its undertakings.

We would like to thank all those who have worked hard so that this Fourth Assembly could materialize. We would like to thank especially Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson who has coordinated the Secretariat during the last two three-year periods. During this period, the work of the Secretariat has grown so much that it has led to the celebration of the International Congress on CA.

The Congress is an important step in IFCA's life. It is a beginning and a continuation. We hope to continue this journey with the prayers and the support of all those who have made it possible for IFCA to reach this stage and of all those who will join us as we continue on our way intensifying our commitment as we go along.

These "historic" months in the life of the Church and of the world have filled us with gratitude towards Pope John Paul II. We treasure His presence amongst us in Loreto, the living examples He has given us with the beatification of the three CA members and the three keywords He has entrusted to us. We would like to renew our filial love and faithfulness to the new pastor of the universal Church, Benedict XVI, and assure Him of our continued love and support.

Duc in altum Catholic Action. Face the future with courage!
Let us move ahead with trust and hope as witnesses of the Risen Christ and united in prayers let us look forward to "listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church and to Catholic Action today".


Paola Bignardi


+ Francesco Lambiasi

Rome, 15th May 2005, Pentecost

<http://www.fiacifca.org>

a site where you can follow IFCA and CA in the world

International Congress on Catholic Action
Rome- Loreto, 31st August / 5th September 2004

Manifesto

*"Duc in altum Catholic Action,
take courage for the future!"*

The participants of the International Congress on Catholic Action, coming from more than fifty countries from Africa, America, Asia and Europe, lay people, priests and bishops, renew their commitment so that Catholic Action (CA) may be in the churches in every country, a mature and responsible expression of a laity capable of living the magnificent adventure of integrating faith with their everyday way of living.

1. A history of free and responsible lay people

Throughout its history, CA has contributed towards the formation of lay Christians, conscious of their proper vocation, ready to assume their proper responsibility within the life of the Church and to build, with the leaven of the Gospel, a civilization of love together with all men and women of good will.

Remembering the ups and downs in this history with gratitude, we feel the responsibility to appreciate its richness and to make it relevant to our times.

2. A precious gift to the church and to the world

Humbly and joyfully, we acknowledge the richness of the charism from which CA originated:

to be lay Christians committed in the life of the Church and in her whole mission; in close relations with its pastors, at the service of the ecclesial communion, in each particular Church and in every parish community;
to be lay Christians who love life and who share a commitment to work with all humanity for the recognition of each person's human dignity. Men and women who live deeply rooted in their own country, community and city.

Children, Youth and Adults who wish to assume these commitments in their community by being witnesses of a spirit of fraternity which eventually becomes a reality for all.

This charism makes of CA a particular form of secular apostolate which, recognised by the Hierarchy, may take different forms and names in the various realities.

A project for life

Conscious of their baptismal vocation, encouraged by the testimony of Blessed Pina Suriano, Alberto Marvelli and Pere Tarrés and so many other outstanding persons, whose veneration we renewed today at Loreto, we take upon us the challenges which the Holy Father John Paul II pointed out to us in his message to this Congress. We would like to go on being "a workshop for forming lay people, who enlightened by the Social Teaching of the Church, strongly commit themselves to work in favour of life, to safeguard the dignity of the human person, to work towards the realization of freedom in education, to promote the real meaning of matrimony and the family, to be involved in charitable work towards those most in need, to foster peace and justice and the application of the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity in the different social realities".

At the end of this congress, convinced – as the Holy Father has insisted – that the Church needs CA, we confirm our commitment to make our associations always more active, to help in establishing CA in those countries where it does not exist yet and to strengthen the relations which unite us.

We entrust these commitments to Mary, Mother of the Church and Our Lady of Loreto.

From the Congress to the Assembly

Beatriz Pascual
Secretary General of CA, Spain

As from the 31st August we have been participating in an event which is very important for Catholic Action's future in all the different parts of the world. Mgr. Rylko, President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, in his presentation of the 1st September, has described the Congress as a milestone which opens a new season which, in fact, has already started.

In this providential context, we prepare ourselves to participate in our Fourth Ordinary Assembly of the International Forum of Catholic Action. It is an Assembly which is meant to be a strong driving force for CA present in the different realities of each different Country.

The experiences, the reflections and our being together these last few days have been very enriching. But now we must look forward and plan for the future. We could start by asking ourselves two questions: What questions have arisen? What should we do?

It might be too soon to try giving an answer now, although there have been so many valid contributions. We should take time to let our questions mature and to find concrete answers. This is the work which we should undertake together as IFCA and as Catholic Action in each specific Country.

At the beginning of our Fourth Assembly, we should simply let some of the questions, which we asked ourselves while we were listening to the words of Pope John Paul II and of the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, resound in our minds. Both speakers have directed our minds and hearts to reflect on:

- Catholic Action's charism
- ecclesial communion
- the formation of lay apostles
- the mission

1. We have been asked to rethink, rediscover and to take up with renewed faithfulness **Catholic Action's charism**. This has been given to us for the good of all and for the benefit of the whole Church.

2. During these last few days, as CA, we have been called to experience and give our share towards **ecclesial communion**:
 - by realizing CA's strong link with our pastors through attentive listening and filial obedience, which however does not limit our lay autonomy but is a profound way of living ecclesial communion.
 - by living in our local Church and committing ourselves to its pastoral project and by identifying ourselves fully with the parish, the place for dedicating ourselves with generosity.
 - we have also been asked to reflect on CA's endeavours towards ecclesial communion with the other associations and movements so that lay apostolate in every diocese may be a harmonious choir.
3. The urgency for the **formation of lay apostles** has also been pointed out to us. This formation should be solid, profound, ongoing and global. It should be aimed at all, children, youths and adults and should cater for people's different ways of life. This formation should have Jesus Christ as its centre and should make us aware of the meaning of our baptism. It is up to CA to give this humble service to help Christians mature in their faith by putting its charism and pedagogy at the service of the ecclesial community in our dioceses and in our parishes.
4. As CA lay people we are called upon to be living witnesses of the **correlation between our faith and our way of life**, the importance of spiritual life, of prayer and of the contemplation of the face of Christ. It should be a spiritual life which does not close itself within itself but keeps an open eye on real life, as faith has social and political implications. The Social Teaching of the Church has been recommended to us. In this teaching, the Church gives us principles for reflection, criteria for assessing realities and guidelines for our action in the world.

We should take the areas, indicated by Pope John Paul II in his message to IFCA, as the challenges for our apostolic work. These are:

- the dignity of the human person
- the defence of life
- matrimony and the family
- education
- the poor and our commitment towards peace and justice.

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit is today pushing to promote the vocation of lay Christians and is asking CA to offer its charism to contribute towards this epiphany of the laity.

What should we do?

- Taken that CA is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, we should listen to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to help us understand and cultivate CA's original charism.
- We should undertake a renewal of CA and entrust our efforts to the Holy Spirit so that he may lead us to live the newness of the Gospel and to be a prophetic presence in the Church and in the society of our times.

The Pope is with us and does not cease to repeat that the Church needs CA. Even the Pontifical Council for the Laity has assured us that it will be with us in our commitment for renewal. We are convinced that our Bishops will support our efforts in working for a CA which is full of life, strong and beautiful in every local Church.

We are faced with an exciting task of spiritual and apostolic renewal. Let us continue on the way and example of so many CA men and women who have gone before us and who were of service to the mission of the Church. Above all let us listen to Christ telling us: "do not be afraid, I am with all of you at all times".

With this trust and knowing that we are in good hands, we are prepared to face the future with hope.

Report on the activities of the International Forum of Catholic Action

February 2001-August 2004

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson
IFCA Secretariat Coordinator

The first steps in the new millennium

To mark the Great Jubilee, the 3rd IFCA General Assembly was held in Rome from the 2nd to the 6th December 2000 with the theme: "The lasting actuality of a gift of the Holy Spirit. Catholic Action, lay people who live the Gospel and are a sign of communion".

On this occasion, the following countries: Argentina, Burundi, Spain, Italy and Mexico were elected to form the Secretariat for the years 2001-2004. Catholic Action in Poland, in the diocese of Kibungo in Rwanda and in the dioceses of Gitega and Ruyigi in Burundi were accepted as members of the Forum.

At the beginning of this millennium, the Forum's plan of action was to continue the work started during the preceding Assemblies and to follow up the suggestions made during the 3rd Assembly. Continuous reference was made to the Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI), the conclusions of the 3rd Assembly and particularly to the address by John Paul II to IFCA on the 4th December 2000. The ensuing plan of action was the following:

- Work to promote and get to know conciliar Catholic Action.
- Help IFCA member countries to establish contact and to get to know each other and Catholic Action's associative new and potential realities in order to foster solidarity among the countries particularly in the field of formation and the "exchange of gifts".
- Support the initiative of Youth Coordination through formation sessions and continental and international exchanges.
- Improve and sustain communication both through information as well as through the exchange of material and experiences.
- Strengthen the relations with the Bishops of member and observer countries and with Bishops responsible for Lay Apostolate.
- Keep close contact with the Pontifical Council for the Laity and with the other Holy See's dicasteries.
- Work more closely with other ICO: WUCWO, IFCM, MIDADE, JEC, VM...

Secretariat Meetings

The first meeting of the Secretariat was held in February 2001 in Madrid, Spain. During this meeting, Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson, President of the Argentinian Catholic Action was elected as the Secretariat's Coordinator. The Secretariat started by analyzing the conclusions drafted by the working groups of the 3rd Assembly and planned the activities for the three-year period in the light of the *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.

During the second meeting, held in Rome in October 2001, the Secretariat kept on asking the Pontifical Council for the Laity to appoint an Ecclesiastical Assistant to replace Mgr. Agostino Superbo who vacated the post due to his being appointed Archbishop of Potenza. On the 26th November, H.E. Mgr. Francesco Lambiasi, Bishop of Anagni and Alatri and General Assistant of the Italian Catholic Action, was nominated Ecclesiastical Assistant of IFCA.

At the end of the ordinary meeting of the Secretariat, a two-day meeting on the Identity of Catholic Action was held. During this meeting interventions were made by the theologian P. Alfonso Fernández-Casamayor from the Spanish Catholic Action and Mgr. Ignazio Sanna from the Italian Catholic Action.

After this, in most cases, the meetings of the Secretariat coincided with other activities and were held as shown:

- April 2002: Rome, Italy.
- September 2002: Warsaw, Poland.
- June 2003: Rome, Italy.
- August 2003: Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina.
- November 2003: Lima, Peru.
- December 2003: Rome, Italy.
- February 2004: Rome, Italy.
- June 2004: Rome, Italy.
- August 2004: Rome, Italy.

The aim of the meeting held in Warsaw was to plan the 3rd European-Mediterranean Meeting. Representatives from Malta, Switzerland, Rumania, Italy and Poland participated in the meeting.

During this period, Mexico started being represented by Gloria Alanis, the actual National President of the Mexican Catholic Action, who replaced Ricardo Martínez Trujillo. Alejandro Madero, the present National President of the Argentinian Catholic Action joined the Secretariat. Sebastian Rizi, representative of the Catholic Action in Burundi, was unable to attend the Secretariat meetings because he could not obtain the necessary visa. Meanwhile the Secretariat relied on the invaluable contribu-

tion of Rev. Salvador Niciteretse, Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Catholic Action in Burundi. It was mainly through his involvement and dedication that action could be taken in the African continent.

Continental Meetings

The 2nd Continental African Meeting was held in the city of Bujumbura, capital of the Republic of Burundi, from the 21st to the 25th of August 2002. The workings of this meeting were based on the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa*. The participants started by analyzing the actual situation, the challenges and prospects for the formation and the mission of lay people and the contribution which Catholic Action can make. About a hundred participants attended the meeting and these included bishops, priests, religious and lay people from Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi as well as representatives of the IFCA Secretariat from Argentina, Italy, Mexico and Rumania.

The 2nd European-Mediterranean Meeting was held in the city of Sarajevo, capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, between the 3rd and 7th September 2002. In the light of the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* the theme chosen was: "For a Fraternal Europe". The meeting was attended by Catholic Action representatives and leaders from eleven countries: Argentina, Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Spain, Hungary, Israel, Malta, Moldova and Rumania. An analysis of the situation in eastern and western European countries was shared from the point of view of "the problems which unite us". This was followed by a study on the future of Europe based on its roots.

Between the 6th and 9th November 2003, the city of Lima, Peru, hosted the 4th Latin-American and Caribbean Meeting. Representatives from the Secretariat and from the following countries: Mexico, Guatemala, Cuba, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Chile, Argentina, Spain and Italy attended the meeting. The group started by analyzing the Latin-American realities and the challenges which these present in the light of the *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America*. The working groups went on to share the prospects and problems of their respective countries and exchanged pastoral experiences which could answer to these realities.

Meetings with countries

The activities held in the different countries were an answer to invitations made by Episcopal Conferences, local Bishops or local Catholic Action

Associations, organized together. These are the principal activities which have been carried out:

As a continuation of the 2nd Continental African Meeting, in August 2002, the IFCA team from Rumania, Mexico, Italy and Argentina visited different dioceses in Burundi and met the Catholic Action groups of each place.

Between the 27th and the 29th August 2002, in Kabgay, a meeting was held between the Episcopal Commission for Lay Apostolate and Catholic Action Movements in Rwanda and the delegation from the International Forum of Catholic Action, made up of representatives from Rumania, Mexico, Italy, Argentina and Burundi. During these meeting, the two groups got to know each other, they exchanged experiences and tried to suggest as to how the new evangelisation could help to foster deeper solidarity in Africa and in the whole world.

From the 6th to the 10th July 2003, a meeting for lay people was held in Kabgay, Rwanda, with the theme: "A study of the situation, realities and challenges. Catholic Action's contribution."

From the 13th to the 17th July 2003 in the diocese of Gitega, Burundi, a seminar for Ecclesiastical Assistants and leaders of Catholic Action Movements in this country was held. The theme was: "Lay people's responsibility for the new evangelization. The input by Catholic Action Ecclesiastical Assistants".

During these last two meetings the IFCA delegation was made up of Spain, Italy and Burundi.

With the collaboration of the Forum, the First National Meeting for Lay Leaders and Ecclesiastical Assistants of Associations active in Catholic Church in Rumania, was held in Oradea, Rumania, from the 10th to the 12th August 2003. This was attended by 60 representatives from the 11 dioceses in the country.

From the 4th to the 8th May 2004, a Regional Formation Seminar for Catholic Action Lay Leaders and Ecclesiastical Assistants, was held in Murang'a, Kenya. This was organized through the initiative of IFCA and in collaboration with the Diocese of Murang'a. The 61 participants included Bishops, priests, religious and lay people from Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia as well as IFCA representatives from Burundi, Malta and Rumania. The theme for this meeting was: "Lay people's vocation in Africa: witnesses and apostles of Christ"

In order to organize these Continental Meetings, members of the Secretariat visited Bosnia-Herzegovina in November 2002 and in May 2003 and Peru in February 2003.

Youth Participation

The 3rd Seminar on Youth Formation was held in Miromir, Bulgaria, from the 25th to the 31st August 2001, as a continuation of the work started with youth during the previous triennial. The meeting was attended by about a hundred young people and Ecclesiastical Assistants from Bulgaria, Italy, Malta, Moldova, Rumania and Ukraine. The meeting's main objective was to present the Church of the Ecumenical Vatican Council, with special reference to the vocation of lay people in society and in the Church, through an ecclesial association like Catholic Action. The meeting also offered young people an experience of friendship and fraternity within the Church. Representatives from the Forum took part in the reunions held before and during the World Youth Day held in Toronto in 2002. On this occasion, a meeting for Catholic Action Youths attending the Meeting was also held.

The Spanish and Argentinian Catholic Action presented a proposal to the Secretariat. They offered to work on a Coordinating Youth Project. The aim of this project is to help and strengthen youth participation in those countries where Catholic Action is established, to encourage more enthusiasm in young people who form part of Catholic Action in these countries and to offer resources and youth services to IFCA member and observer countries. In order to start this project, member countries were asked to send the particulars of their youth leaders as well as all the relevant information about their activities so as to establish easier contact and to help this project materialize. To this date, very few countries have replied. We hope that the meetings during the 4th Assembly will help to achieve this objective. We also hope to set up a missionary promoting team to help countries which are interested in establishing a Catholic Action Youth Section.

In order to facilitate youth participation in the various activities, the Secretariat gave financial help to young participants and asked member countries to encourage and make it easier for young people to participate.

Relations with other international organisations

Between the 2nd and the 9th December 2001, the World Assembly of the Conference of International Catholic Organizations was held in Bangkok. During this meeting, the International Forum of Catholic Action was recognized as an ICO. On this occasion, IFCA was represented by Eduardo Ramirez Cato, who was the Secretariat's Coordinator between 1994 and 1997. From the 1st to the 7th December 2003, the 35th ICO Assembly was held in Rome. IFCA was represented at this meeting by the Secretariat's Coordinator and the President of the Malta Catholic Action. Both occa-

sions were an excellent opportunity for ICO to get to know each other and thus work closer together.

The President of the Mexican Catholic Action represented IFCA at the 3rd Regional Conference of the World Union of Catholic Women Organizations/WUCWO, for Latin America and the Caribbean. This meeting was held in Pueblo City, Mexico, in April 2003.

During the 4th Continental American Meeting, held between the 6th and 9th November 2003, the First Conjoint Reunion of the World Union of Women Organizations/WUCWO, the International Federation of Catholic Men/IFCM and the International Forum of Catholic Action/IFCA was held. This was the first step towards concrete common action in the continent.

The first reunion between IFCM Central Committee and IFCA Secretariat was held in Rome on the 3rd June 2004. The aim of the meeting was to get to know each other better and to establish more cooperation and thus be better able to work together at continental level.

Relations with continental organizations

From the 21st to the 24th June 2001, the Secretariat's Coordinator took part in the Continental Meeting of Lay Movements and Associations, organized by the Department of the Laity - DELAI - of CELAM and which was held in Caracas, Venezuela.

The leader of ASTRU, the Greek/Roman Catholic Action Youth Association of Rumania, represented IFCA at the 10th Symposium of European Bishops held in Rome from the 24th to the 28th April 2002. The theme was: "Young People in Europe in a period of change. Laboratory of Faith". This Symposium was promoted and organized by the European Episcopal Conference Council (CCEE).

Relations with the religious

In December 2002, Maria Grazia Tibaldi took part in a Seminar, organized by the Union of General Superiors/GSU, on the theme "Together for the Gospel in the third millennium: lay people and religious in front of the challenges of our times",

Relations with the Pontifical Council for the Laity

The Secretariat has kept close contact with the Pontifical Council for the Laity. Whenever the Secretariat met in Rome, it had meetings with Cardinal Stafford, with the present President Mgr. Stanislaw Rilko, with the Secretary Mgr. Clemens and with the Subsecretary Prof. Guzmán Carriquiry.

The Pontifical Council for the Laity invited IFCA representatives to participate in different thematic meetings such as the Seminar on "Men and Women", which was held in January 2004.

At the invitation of the Youth Section of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, young people from the Italian Catholic Action, represented IFCA at the preparatory meetings for the World Youth Day of Toronto and for the coming World Youth Day, which will be held in Cologne in 2005. They also took part in the Meeting about Universities in Rocca di Papa, Rome, from the 31st March to the 4th April 2004. The theme was: "Young people and University: witnessing Christ in a university context/environment"

The preparations for the International Congress on Catholic Action undertaken recently, have given room for coordinated efforts and good relations, which undoubtedly will enrich the work of the Secretariat.

Relations with the Pastors of the different local Churches

The Ecclesiastical Assistant and the IFCA Secretariat have kept contact with Bishops of different dioceses all over the world. They meet the Bishops while these were in Rome attending the Bishops' Synod, on *ad limina* visits or for any other reasons. The Bishops were made aware of the services offered by IFCA and at the same time shared their worries and sought advice.

Communication

The Secretariat continued with the publication of the quarterly "Newsletter" issued in four languages: English and Spanish, which are IFCA's official languages as well as in Italian and French. In 2003 a special number was issued. This included the messages of John Paul II to Catholic Action from the 3rd Assembly to date.

The Acts of the 3rd Assembly were also published in the four languages.

The setting up of the web page of the Forum - www.fiac.ifca.org - was undoubtedly a significant effort. This could be visited as from the middle of this current year. Therein one can find information about activities, documents, the electronic version of the "Newsletter" as from 1996 to date, lives of Catholic Action witnesses from all over the world and news from the different countries. The web site may be visited in English, Italian, Spanish and French.

We recommend all the countries to send in information about their activities so that this may develop into a useful means of sharing and promoting CA. The web page includes information from countries which as yet do not have the possibility of having their own page.

It is also worth noting that, as a result of the different activities which have been organized, there is greater familiarisation, communication, solidarity and sharing of "gifts" among the Associations in the different countries. This was also evident from the economic aspect in each specific activity, in the exchange of formative material, the invitation to leaders from other countries to participate in each other activities and in other established ways. We wish that these ways of communication may develop even further and that each national Catholic Action may include among its ordinary activities, twinnings with other Catholic Action groups.

International Congress on Catholic Action

The International Congress on Catholic Action was an initiative of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. It has been possible through its collaboration and that of the Italian Catholic Action.

The working sessions were planned between the 31st August and the 2nd September of this year in Rome. On the 3rd and 4th September, the Congress participants joined the Italian Catholic Action Pilgrimage in Loreto, to which Catholic Action delegations from other countries were also invited. On the 5th September, the climax of the Pilgrimage and the Congress was reached with the Eucharistic Celebration, presided over by His Holiness John Paul II and the beatification of three Catholic Action members.

The participants at the Congress numbered about 200. This number included Bishops, priests and lay people from all over the world.

The preparatory work and the organization of this ecclesial event were the main activities of the Secretariat starting from December 2003 to this day.

Economic Support

The contributions by member countries have not been sufficient to cover the expenses incurred in connection with the activities organized during this triennial.

For the ordinary running of the Secretariat, we have had the financial support of the Pius XII Foundation.

For the realisation of extraordinary activities, we have received the following financial support:

- *Propaganda Fide* and the Episcopal Conference of Burundi, for the 2nd African Meeting.
- *Renovabis* for the 3rd Young People's Meeting in Bulgaria and for the 3rd European-Mediterranean Meeting in Sarajevo.

- Pontifical Commission for Latin America, for the 4th American Meeting in Lima
- Italian Episcopal Conference for the Week of Formation in Kenya.
- Italian Episcopal Conference, Spanish Episcopal Conference and other donations for the International Congress on Catholic Action.

We hope that in future, Episcopal Conferences may help economically activities organized by the Catholic Action of their country conjointly with that of other countries.

It is worth pointing out that the Italian Catholic Action provides the administrative office and pays the current expenses of the Secretariat.

The 4th Assembly

The report of the work of the Secretariat, during the period which comes to an end today, stops here. In the name of the Secretariat, I would like to express, before this Assembly, our gratitude to the Italian Catholic Action for its contribution and support to IFCA.

In a special way, I would like to thank Maria Grazia Tibaldi, who, with her efficient, daily and persistent work, together with her ever availability and generous commitment, has accompanied and helped to develop IFCA since its beginning. She has done all this because of her conviction that the Forum is of great importance. The realization of all the activities, which have been presented today, is mainly due to her.

I would also like to thank Anna Meucci and Maria Laura Naticchioni, Rev. Salvator Niciterese of Burundi and Oana Tuduce of Rumania for their collaboration with the Secretariat. My thanks also go to Ninette Borg Grech, President of the Malta Catholic Action who has helped in organizing the secretariat, to Araceli Cravero President of the Spanish Catholic Action Adult Group and to Maria Giovanna Ruggieri from the Italian Catholic Action who have helped by translating into the different languages.

During this period, we have had the special blessing of the beatification of men, women, young and adult members of Catholic Action: on the 11th March 2001, 72 Spanish martyrs, on the 22nd June 2003 Ivan Mertz, founder of Catholic Action in Croatia and yesterday, the beatification of Alberto Marvelli and Pina Suriano from the Italian Catholic Action and Pedro Tarrés from the Spanish Catholic Action. To these we must add the canonization of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla on the 16th May of this year and Anacleto Flores and his companions from the Mexican Catholic Action Youth, martyrs, who will be beatified in the near future. In order to spread this gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, we renew our commitment to

work insistently to present to all the world lay people's vocation and Catholic Action as a school of sanctity.

We begin this Assembly at the end of the International Congress on Catholic Action, which was a real grace, and with the grand concluding event of the beatification of three exponents from the Italian and Spanish Catholic Action. I ask every local Catholic Action to reap the fruits from this ecclesial experience which we have lived together and which has urged us to reflect on our identity and our service in the Church and in the world.

I appeal to IFCA to go on pressing for a fuller and deeper presence of Catholic Action in all the world, to strengthen relations with other international Catholic Action organizations and to keep improving its services.

In the name of all the participants in this Assembly, I would like to thank, with filial affection, His Holiness John Paul II for his presence amongst us yesterday and for his Teaching on Catholic Action these last years. Renewing our fidelity and our commitment to be witnesses of the love of the Father in the world, we can rest assured that our Lady of Loreto, the Virgin who said "yes" and who is our hope, will be always with us.

Material still available and obtainable from: info@fiacifca.org

1. Booklet in 4 languages "DUC IN ALTUM CATHOLIC ACTION":
 - John Paul II
 - Message to the Congress
 - Homily and Angelus of the 5th September at Loreto
 - Angelus of the 12th -December
 - Manifesto
 - What IFCA is
2. The DOCUMENTS of the International Congress on CA available as follows: Italian in April, Spanish and French at the end of June, English at the end of July

Workshops' proposals

YOUTHS

The setting up of a youth coordinating group had already been put forward by Spain and Argentina.

1. Forward a list of email addresses of participants to the group to encourage exchanges etc.
2. Decide on at least ONE continental meeting of young people and identify a REFERENCE PERSON or A COORDINATOR FOR ACTIVITIES for young people.
3. Difficulty: finding resources for these activities.

ADULTS

1. Promote a formative program for Adults
2. Give due attention to participation in public life
3. Coordination and interrelation among Adults/Youth/Children.

FORMATION

1. Information on websites
2. Encourage/coordinate contact among countries to facilitate exchanges
3. Prepare a common picture of the basic principles of CA.

PROMOTION OF CA

(Make available information about CA's different realities)

1. Publish the ACTS of the Congress (printed + CD)
2. Update IFCA's website and links with countries etc.
3. Present CA especially to Bishops
4. Provide a simple basic course (abc) about CA and make available the necessary resources
5. Create a group of "lay promoters/animators" to run these courses in places where there is a possibility of setting up CA
6. Develop a basic statute.

ASSISTANTS

(in the group: Asia, Africa, America)

1. Regional meetings on CA for Assistants, possibilities for meetings about Structures
2. Occasions for indepth study of CA's charism in relation to other charisms for Assistants and lay people
3. Promote CA in Seminaries (pastoral formation).

CHILDREN:

This theme was not discussed, however the necessity for more information to and by IFCA about Children came out. Closer relations should be established in order to find human and other resources for this initiative.

CA in Burma - Myanmar

*Intervention by Bernard U KA
Leader of CA Burma - Myanmar*

During the election session, a representative from the CA in Myanmar (ex Birmania) addressed the Assembly. After greeting the audience, he expressed his gratitude to all those who made it possible for him and for his Bishop to participate in the Congress and in the IFCA Assembly. This was an occasion for both of them to meet so many representatives of other CA members, involved in apostolic work, in other parts of the world.

He started his presentation about CA in Myanmar by giving a brief description of the country from the geographical and religious point of view. He started by saying that in his country the Catholic Church is present in three Archdioceses and in nine Dioceses. The Catholics make up 1.92% of the entire population. It was the Italian PIME Fathers who started evangelizing the east and north-east part of the country, the Karen tribu, a little over one hundred years ago.

The Bishop Mgr. Gobbato is looked upon as an outstanding figure in the country. The first diocese of Taungoo was then divided into the dioceses of Taunggyi and Loikaw.

In keeping with its statute, CA has been entrusted with the organization of the religious activities in the various parishes, always under the guidance of the Bishops.

CA members meet once a month and they have extraordinary meetings whenever these are felt necessary. Members are mainly male but efforts are being made to strengthen female participation. CA collaborates with the other associations. This common commitment has been greatly encouraged during the Holy Jubilee. CA also participates in ecumenical prayer meetings. Christians have to face very difficult situations. Many are poor and illiterate, others work as public officers and have very little time at their disposal.

Today, CA is found in all the parishes of the diocese of Taunggyi and Loikaw and the members number 3900. The Church needs CA and CA in Myanmar is ready to collaborate with the other associations for the new evangelization of the country.

Elections and New Secretariat IFCA 2004/2007

IFCA - International Forum of Catholic Action
FOURTH ORDINARY ASSEMBLY
Rome, Domus Pacis, September 6th, 2004

During the morning session, Gloria Isabel Alani - President of CA in Mexico - who presided over the session, asked the member countries to indicate their disposition to stand for election on the Secretariat. This availability is a sign of support for the Secretariat, both on the part of those who are eventually elected as well as of those who show their availability. Nearly all the countries indicated that they are available. In the afternoon session, the Electoral Commission was set up. It was made up of representatives of three countries, Peru, Colombia and Kenya.

The member countries present (18) elected
the 5 Countries who will form the Secretariat 2004-2007

- ARGENTINA
- BURUNDI
- ITALY
- RUMANIA
- SPAIN

Closing address

Mgr. Stanislaw Rylko
President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity

With great joy we welcomed H.E. Stanislaw Rylko, who once again came to give his salutation to the Assembly, after the Congress and the Pilgrimage to Loreto. He came to join the participants in thanking the Lord for the meeting in Loreto.

Mgr. Rylko emphasized how the day had been a special occasion for "a renewed self-awareness by CA, not only for the Italian CA but for all CA *tout court*, an awareness that CA is an important part of the life of the Church in all parts of the world". In spite of his suffering, the Holy Father wanted to be present among that big and beautiful gathering of CA members and with his weak voice he gave a very strong message: "it is worthwhile to involve the best resources of the Church to make of CA a valid and prophetic project of today's and tomorrow's Church".

Once again, with his presence in Loreto to beatify three CA witnesses, the Pope expressed his trust in CA. He wanted to show that the way followed by CA in the past and that for the future is holiness. Holiness: this is the right way!

Mgr. Rylko expressed his wish that the "unique" day in Loreto may continue to be lived in all the national Associations present. He thanked IFCA for being instrumental in organizing the International Congress on CA which continued in Loreto.

In a special way, he thanked the Italian CA for its valid contribution towards the organization of the Congress and the Pilgrimage to Loreto. He emphasized the special responsibility we all have to share the grandeur of CA's charism with CA all over the world and with all CA groups which have still to come.

The President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity ended his message by wishing, like the Holy Father, all CA, to have the courage and the humble pride, to live its associative charism, which is a gift to today's and tomorrow's Church. He gave his best wishes to the new IFCA Secretariat for the work that lies ahead and that it may be able to "listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church and to CA today".

Eucharistic Celebration

Readings: 1Co 5,1-8; Lk 6,6-11

Homily

H.E. Mgr. Francesco Lambiasi
IFCA Ecclesiastical Assistant
General Assistant of the Italian CA

Dear Brethren,

A little leaven makes all the dough rise: put away all the old leaven so that you may become new dough in Christ, our Easter, who was immolated. Our christian feasts did not start as christian feasts. They were gifts which the Holy Spirit gave, first and foremost to Israel and through Israel they have been passed on to us, the new Israel, the Holy Church of God. This applies also to the feast of feasts: Easter

As we know, in the beginning, this feast was the feast of a nation of farmers, who, with the arrival of spring, felt the need to renew their own lives. In the northern hemisphere, in spring, nature comes to life again. This used to happen and still happens today in the Holy Land. Nature awakens, the wheat begins to ripen and as a result the need is felt for making new bread.

At this time, for a whole week, the Jews, refrained from eating leavened bread. They searched all over their houses and in every nook and corner to remove even the smallest particle of old leaven. During this interval, they made bread with flour and water only and without any leaven. Then they started making bread from new dough made with new leaven.

Easter was initially an agricultural feast. Later, we find in the history of Israel, that Israel was freed at this time. By coincidence, the people of God left Egypt and started experiencing freedom and living as a free nation at the time when nature was reawakening. Thus the feast of the new bread became the great feast of the liberation from exile and of the passage to freedom, the feast of Easter

Let us now come to the third passage. It is Christ who has brought about the new Easter with His death and resurrection. Jesus is our Easter. He is the lamb immolated for us. As Paul says - let us not celebrate the New Easter with the old leaven, with the leaven of malice and perversity, but with the leaven of sincerity and truth.

Easter is our spring. It is the new bread of our freedom. This is all realized in the Holy Eucharist because the Eucharist is not a rappresentation of the death and the Resurrection of Christ but a representation, that is the presentation of Easter. When we celebrate Easter, we are united with the love of His death and with the life of His Resurrection. This is what we experience when we gather in the name of the Lord. This is what we have experienced these days. We have made an experience of Easter and have experienced spring. The Pope has invited Catholic Action to start living a new spring. So, my dear brothers and sisters, the message is clear.

Catholic Action is not a discovery of the past, it is not a fossil which we place in a museum. Catholic Action is a charism, it is a prophecy, it is good news and freedom and as such it is spring, it is Easter.

I think that the message from our experience in Loreto is precisely this: when Catholic Action stops thinking about establishing or re-establishing itself but thinks of the Church, it regains life and lives on. There is relativity between Catholic Action and the Church. Catholic Action relates to the local Church, to that particular community, to that specific Bishop and parish priest. The Church does not think about itself, it thinks of the Kingdom of God. A Church which projects itself, disregarding the Kingdom, fails even as a Church. A Catholic Action which is fully steadfast with the Church is thus a Catholic Action which is truly alive.

This is therefore the message we get from these days' reflections. Let us think of the Church, let us think of the Church as the Kingdom of God and Catholic Action will live on. Someone might say: but there are already others doing this, there is no place for us. There is always a place for christians who want to have a living experience of the Church, of the Kingdom of God and of Easter.

Let us look forward, *Duc in altum*, Catholic Action! Face the future with courage even if this means leaving old things behind. We must get away from our wordly and clerical way of reasoning because Easter means new life. It is full of surprises, it is a new life ahead of us.

This is the wish which we extend to one another. We know that the realization of this wish does not depend on us. Let us ask our Lord to give us the grace to return to our communities, to our homes, to our everyday routine with at least a spark of the flames of Pentecost.

I do not think it would be sentimental if we had to propose to fix an appointment to meet each other during our Eucharistic Celebrations, in a way that, every time we celebrate the Eucharist in Rome, in Buenos Aires, in Toronto, in Vienna, in Bujumbura, every time we keep our appointment with Christ, we all feel united together.

May the Risen Christ give us the grace to have a living experience of Easter, the experience of a new spring, of freedom and of a new life.

We have received the news from the President of the Mexican Catholic Action of the sudden death of Father Guadalupe Rodriguez Martinez, vice National Assistant. He died on the 30 April, 2005.

Padre Guadalupe had participated in the Assembly and in the Congress.

*We all remember his friendly smile amongst us
and feel sure that he is praying for us in the communion of saints.*

First meeting of the Secretariat

On the 6-7th December 2004, the Secretariat met for the first time, in Rome. On the 6 December, during the opening session, H.E. Mgr. Francesco Lambiasi, IFCA's Ecclesiastical Assistant, after consulting the members of the Secretariat, proposed Paola Bignardi as coordinator. After interventions by the members of the Secretariat, Paola Bignardi accepted the post.

The Secretariat drew up the lines of action to be taken and the Coordinator asked the members of the Secretariat to prepare recommendations on the different areas entrusted to them.

- The setting up of a group of people who will be ready to work on the promotion of CA in other countries: Spain
- Youth Coordination : Rumania
- Work at continental level:
 - America: Argentina
 - Africa: Burundi
 - Europe/Asia: Italy, Spain, Rumania.

On the 7th December in the morning, the Secretariat started its work with a Eucharistic Celebration presided over by H.E. Mgr. Lambiasi in St. Peter's Basilica, in the Vatican Crypt.

At 11 a.m., a meeting was held with H.E. Mgr. J. Clemens, Guzmán Carriquiry and F. Kevin at the Office of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. This was an opportunity for a preliminary evaluation of the work carried out during the Congress as well as to present the plans ahead for the coming three-year period.

Guidelines of the program 2005-2007

After the Congress, the Pilgrimage to Loreto and the IV Assembly Contemplation, communion and mission are the three keywords entrusted to us by John Paul II. These present a challenge to every individual Catholic Action group and all Catholic Action together as IFCA, with a commitment which should be taken up and made to bear fruit.

The priorities are:

- **PROMOTE CA:** present, help to establish and sustain the association in all parts of the world by:
 - a. meeting the Bishops and the priests of the interested local Churches, as well as at national and continental level.
 - b. supporting CA members and helping in forming their leaders
 - c. preparing a group of people and providing adequate material to help in the promotion of CA.
- **CREATE AWARENESS BY:**
 - a. studying further certain aspects: being lay people 40 years after the Second Ecumenical Council; CA, the Parish, Other Movements; ecumenical and interreligious dialogue
 - b. enhancing twinnings.
- **STRENGTHEN:** youth coordination and establish closer contact between adult and youth sections.
- **GIVE IMPORTANCE TO:** relations with International Catholic Associations (ICO, Movements,...), with Coordinating Bodies of male and female religious and missionary communities
- **CONTINUE:** to keep the close collaboration which exists with the Pontifical Council for the Laity and with other Vatican Offices.
- **INTENSIFY:** communication through the website, the newsletter "NOTICIAS", the publication of useful material such as booklets, CD,...
- **PRESENT:** CA as a school of sanctity through its history and above all through the many witnesses, our companions in our everyday lives as lay people, on the way to holiness.
 - a. Setting up an advisory office for the promulgation of saints.

ADVISORY OFFICE FOR THE PROMULGATION OF SAINTS *Directed by IFCA Secretariat in collaboration with ICA National Presidency*

After the meeting of the Secretariat held in December 2004, in view of the strongly felt need for this service and because of the requests for help already received, steps were taken to set up this office. This has been possible through the availability and experience of some postulators.

OBJECTIVES

- Offer legal assistance in connection with the process (when this has already been started)
- Provide information and guidance regarding the process (before this is started)
- Offer support and advice in the documentation and research process
- Draw up a complete list of the processes which have been concluded or which are still in process in all parts of the world
- Collect the relevant documentation and research material of the processes

FUNCTIONS

- Work on the promotion of "CA as a school of sanctity" and make known the individual witnesses in collaboration with the local churches through exhibitions, printed material, CD, ...)
- Collaborate in the organization of meetings and research work at international and national level
- Provide material to be published in the various CA means of communication (publications, websites, ...)
- Work on the formation of postulators and vice postulators in order to encourage the involvement of CA and of the local Churches in the pastoral work connected with the beatification and canonization of new candidates.

As regards the documentation and the historical part, this Office refers to "PAUL VI Institute" which is in charge of following the history of the Catholic Movement and of Catholic Action. This institute is in the process of setting up an "International Section". This Office works in collaboration with the Congregation responsible for the processes towards sainthood.

Email Address: saints@fiacifca.org

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

International Advisory Office for Processes towards Sainthood
ICA, IFCA
Via della Conciliazione 1, 00193 ROMA
Tel 0039 06 661321 / fax 06 66132360

IFCA member Countries 2004

EUROPE

SPAIN
ITAL. SWITZERLAND - LUGANO
MALTA
AUSTRIA
POLAND
RUMANIA (Latin and Byzantine Rite)
ALBANIA
ITALY
LUXEMBOURG

AMERICA

MEXICO
VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA
PERU
PARAGUAY
ARGENTINA
* ECUADOR

AFRICA

BURUNDI (Bururi, Gitega, Bubarza, Ruyigi)
*BURUNDI (Bujumbura, Muyinga)
RWANDA (Kibungo)
*RWANDA (Byumba, Kabgayi, Byumba)
* DEM. REP. OF CONGO (Bukavu)
* KENYA (Murang'a, Maralal, Nyahururu)
* TANZANIA (Kigoma)
* UGANDA (Lugazi)
CAMERUN (Yaoundé)

ASIA

BURMA - MYANMAR

*NEW MEMBERS accepted during the Fourth Assembly

Observer Countries

Present at the Fourth Assembly

BOSNIA HERZEGOVINA

BRAZIL

BULGARIA

CUBA

GUATEMALA

LITHUANIA

PORTUGAL

MOLDOVIAN REP.

HOLY LAND: BETHLEHEM AND NAZARETH

UKRAINE

HUNGARY

ZAMBIA



FIAC
FCA



FORO INTERNACIONAL
ACCION CATOLICA
INTERNATIONAL FORUM
CATHOLIC ACTION

