



# An outgoing

## Catholic Action

"en salida"

**Sharing Pope Francis' missionary dream  
*transforming everything and reaching everyone***

*A contribution so that CA may decisively make  
the Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium its own*

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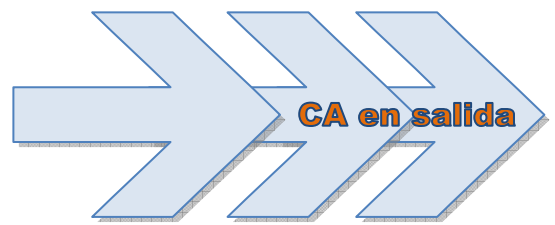
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- This is IFCA

4th October 2014 – *Saint Francis of Assisi*



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## Presentation

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In the first three months of 2013, we went through a historic time in the life of the Church, when we witnessed the humble and courageous resignation of Pope Benedict XVI and the election of Pope Francis, who came from the end of the world with a dream “a missionary option which can transform everything and reach everyone”.

As Catholic Action, we would like to give our share fully in this period in the history of the Church and once again, we would like to put ourselves at the service of this missionary venture. Remembering our identity, inspired by the testimony, gestures and words of Pope Francis, and by his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, with generosity and enthusiasm, we would like to follow Jesus, to let Him come closer to us and to serve our brothers.

*“The life of the Church should always reveal clearly that God takes the initiative, that “he has loved us first” (1 Jn 4:19) and that he alone “gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:7). This conviction enables us to maintain a spirit of joy in the midst of a task so demanding and challenging that it engages our entire life. God asks everything of us, yet at the same time he offers everything to us.” EG 12*

As a Church in action, we cannot refrain from reading *EG*, from reflecting about it as a community and from taking concrete action by applying it to the particular realities wherein CA is present, in communion with the local Church and in the spheres wherein each of its members lives his daily life. It is a programmatic text for all the Church and especially for Catholic Action.

We are highlighting some points which could help us to reflect and to renew the way our CA groups, at national, diocesan and parochial levels, function and to take on, in a decisive way, the challenges of our times. If we undertake this together with a common view we can share our resources, the challenges and the problems of our local realities with a universal, “catholic” vision.

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## A starting point

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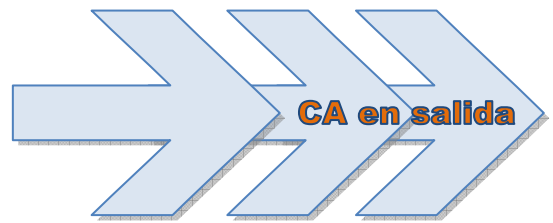
On the 3rd May 2014 Pope Francis met the Italian CA and representatives of different CA Associations from other parts of the world. The Pope pointed out some criteria which are specific to CA, which is totally involved in the mission of the Church, guided by the sure compass of the Ecumenical Vatican Council and *Evangelii Gaudium*:

*In the current social and ecclesial context, you, lay Catholic Action members are called to renew your missionary option, open to the horizons which the Spirit indicates to the Church and to continue being a youthful expression of the lay apostolate. This choice is missionary, everything from a missionary point of view, everything. It is 'the paradigm of Catholic Action: the missionary paradigm.*

*This style of evangelization, animated by a strong passion for the life of the people, is particularly suited to Catholic Action, which is made up of diocesan laity who live in close collaboration with their pastors. In this, the popularity of your association and its ability to put together, in intraecclesial ventures, all it has to contribute to help transform society for the better, is of great help to you.*

*With these three attitudes: remaining in Jesus, going right out to the borders and living your Christian faith joyfully, you can live your vocation.*

(full text of the Pope Francis' Speech to CA on the 3rd May 2014 – Appendix 1)




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## 1. An outgoing CA is a community of missionary disciples

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*In our day Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church's mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary "going forth". Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel. EG 20*

An outgoing CA (like the Church) is a missionary CA. Its foundation is the Word «go and make disciples of all peoples, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that which I have commanded you» (Mt 28,19-20).

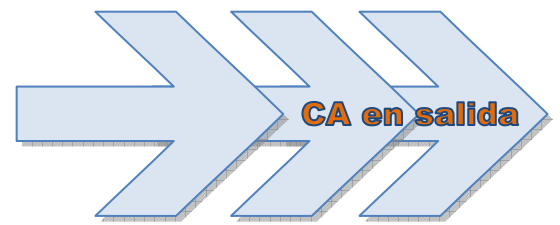
An outgoing CA is a CA which goes out of itself so that Jesus is always at the centre and, following on His footsteps, goes out to meet all the realities. It is a community of missionary disciples who, like Jesus is ready to:

<b>Take the initiative</b>	Take the initiative as Jesus does with us Goes out to meet Is not afraid Looks for the marginalised and the excluded Shows mercy
<b>Get involved</b>	With deeds and gestures By overcoming distances By listening By discerning By going to the geographical and existential peripheries, towards that which is different and marginalised
<b>Accompany</b>	In all their processes Patiently and respecting all limitations Putting itself by the side, proceeding together Looking for the right moment which is different from "moving aimlessly"
<b>Fructify</b>	Without showing a sad or alarming reaction Looking for the best way to incarnate the Word Putting all individual and associative talents together
<b>Celebrate</b>	Celebrating the results in evangelisation Participating and expressing the beauty of the liturgy

**The mission** is not a task among the many other CA tasks, but it is **THE TASK**.

If the Church does not live up to its mission it runs the risk of not being because it loses the aim of its existence.

It is vital that CA renews and updates its commitment towards evangelisation, in order to reach everyone, everywhere, and all situations.



We will be looking together at the three targets of this task:

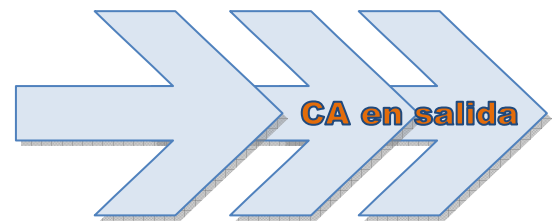
<b>To whom?</b> →to all	CA's popularity	We are part of the people, we are with the people to share a proposal, especially with the poor, the marginalised and the excluded. We are children – young people – adults. Persons from every condition of life without any kind of social distinction.
<b>Where?</b> →in all places	Our presence in our territory and in our CA spheres  CA's attraction	The geographical and existential peripheries in this place and in this city, in the parish, in the diocese, in the country. In the neighbourhood, in the family, in scholastic and work spheres, in the city, in rural zones, in the individual spheres of each CA member, in the new aeropaghi, in the new places where decisions are taken and where culture develops.
<b>When?</b> →On all occasions	CA's ecclesial and social co-responsibility	Always! In our personal contacts –person to person – casual or planned beginning from the missionary action of the community. From and with popular piety. In social and political commitments. In all endeavours aimed at the common good in all spheres and with all people of good will. By participating in social and friendly functions.

The CA lay person is essentially a missionary. He leads a missionary life.

*My mission of being amidst the people is not just a part of my life or a badge I can take off; it is not an "extra" or just another moment in life. Instead, it is something I cannot uproot from my being without destroying my very self. I am a mission on this earth; that is the reason why I am here in this world. We have to regard ourselves as sealed, even branded, by this mission of bringing light, blessing, enlivening, raising up, healing and freeing. EG 273*

CA's associative life, with all its possibilities, offers the natural space for living in a missionary community, which works within and transforms the realities wherein it lives and shares their hopes and anguish.

*An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the "smell of the sheep" and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. EG 24*



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## 2. Personal conversion, pastoral conversion, missionary conversion, which cannot leave things as they are

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*I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. "Mere administration" can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be «permanently in a state of mission». EG 25*

*Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have always done it this way". I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory. I encourage everyone to apply the guidelines found in this document generously and courageously, without inhibitions or fear. The important thing is to not walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters, and especially under the leadership of the Bishops, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment. EG 33*

Being authentically missionary means living a true conversion. While being grateful for the past, we should not hesitate to put aside comfort and security. We should put aside the criterion "we have always done so" and, after careful consideration, give importance to that which needs to be changed. We can then move forward to propose the eternal novelty of the Gospel and focus on our commitment to be ever more faithful to our mission.

We cannot satisfy ourselves just by "administering" that which we have succeeded in doing, but we should be creatively enthusiastic to give new vitality to our service, conscious that we form part of a people, assuming our co-responsibility, as lay people, in the building of the Kingdom, by discerning the new steps we should take beginning from the Gospel.

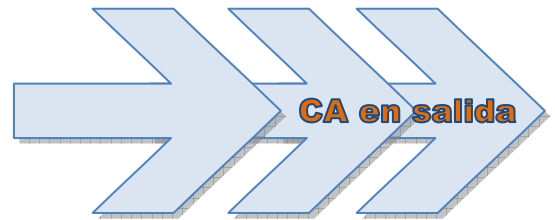
Putting all fear aside, we should open up to the action of the Holy Spirit so that He may inspire us as to the way we should take and to free us from our crave for comfort and pseudo-security

*Spirit-filled evangelizers means evangelizers fearlessly open to the working of the Holy Spirit. EG 259*

*Spirit-filled evangelization is not the same as a set of tasks dutifully carried out despite one's own personal inclinations and wishes. A spirit-filled evangelization is one guided by the Holy Spirit, for he is the soul of the Church called to proclaim the Gospel. EG 261*

We should ask ourselves:

- Which are the difficulties which CA groups in our parishes, dioceses or countries are facing when they try to be permanently in a missionary state?
- Are we offering formative programmes which suggest a personal meeting with Jesus and encourage the development of a lay, mature and committed lay vocation?



We need to examine our spirituality and prayers, our formation, our apostolate and our daily actions from a missionary point of view.

Thus we should:

- ✓ Motivate our groups towards a missionary “outgoing”.
- ✓ Change all that which paralyzes us, which imprisons us, which distances us from realities which we should be fraternally serving, by announcing the joy of the Gospel.
- ✓ Reflect on our Association’s unity as a sign of the credibility of our vocation.
- ✓ Discard all that, even within our CA groups, which could be motivated by prejudices or by the criterion of “associative individualism”.
- ✓ Live our commitment to communion, towards which we should work with a strong diocesan spirit, intensely.

## 2.1 The particular Church

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Given the “diocesan” characteristic of Catholic Action, we should assume our co-responsibility together with that of the Pastors, in the life and in the work of the local Church, by contributing towards a missionary communion, through our active participation in the organisms which exist in the dioceses and promoting pastoral dialogue with “the missionary dream of reaching everyone” (cf. EG 31).

CA should offer the diocesan Church a mature laity, which gives importance to its formation and is always ready to give its share in pastoral projects without renouncing its proper commitment to its lay vocation that of evangelizing all temporal spheres of life.

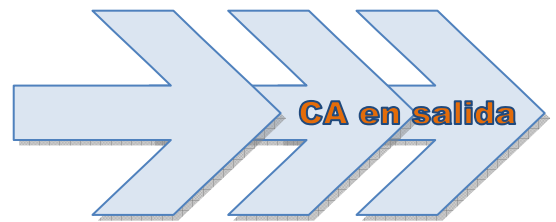
## 2.2 The parish is not an outdated institution

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CA is characterized by its inserment in the parish, in communion with the particular Church and the universal Church. Given that this is its vocation, this is one of its fundamental charistic notes which make it co-responsible in the parish, which is a missionary community.

*The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. **EG 28***

In the parish, CA should cultivate a certain flexibility to be able to adapt itself to different situations with great docility and with a missionary creativity.



CA should be characterized:

- ✓ By its ability to be close to the people, accompanying their processes and enlightening them with the Word of God and the teachings of the Church, just like “a mother with an open heart” (cf. EG 46-49).
- ✓ By being a place where real communion, participation and formation, with a mission orientation, prevail.

Our CA parish groups should be daring, creative, ready to go, to search for and welcome everyone; with great generosity and courage, under the guidance of their Bishop and their parish priest they should be ready to move together, in a wise and realistic pastoral discernment.

### **2.3 Our groups – formation**

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Our parish groups– and those organized in the different countries, whether at diocesan level or for specialized groups – whether they cater for children, young people, adults, older people or workers, families, students or others, these should be communities of missionary disciples.

The formation offered should be holistic, always with a missionary orientation, suitable for every reality and having the Word of God as its focal point and aimed at fostering a happy meeting with Jesus and a vivid fraternal love.

It is CA’s duty to enhance the importance of the lay vocation in the Christian community and to avoid the risk of clericalization.

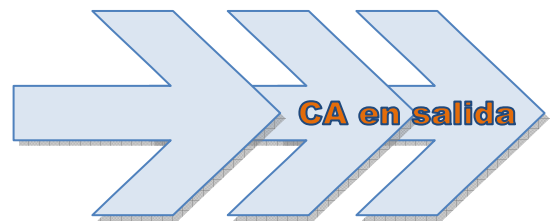
*Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge. **EG 102***

Like all vocations in the Church, even the lay vocation needs to be proposed and formed, to ensure a reciprocal enrichment at the service of communion and evangelization. “It is the convergence of peoples who, within the universal order, maintain their own individuality” (cf. EG 236).

CA should be a “school of sanctity” to be able to foster mature and co-responsible lay vocations in the mission of the Church. The method – See – Judge – Act - continues to be a precious tool which can help us to discern the signs of the times.

*I am aware that we need to create spaces where pastoral workers can be helped and healed, “places where faith itself in the crucified and risen Jesus is renewed, where the most profound questions and daily concerns are shared, where deeper discernment about our experiences and life itself is undertaken in the light of the Gospel, for the purpose of directing individual and social decisions towards the good and beautiful. **EG 77***





**CA's promotion** is the offer of our particular and associative vocation, defined by the 4 conciliar distinctive notes (cf. AA 20 LG 31) and by our service to all the local Churches, to all the parishes, in all the countries, for a stronger missionary presence, as the place and space of friendship and fraternity, where faith is radiated, where riches and fragility are shared, a place, where together we become “fully human” and witnesses of the love of God.

*We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others? EG 8*

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### 3. The social dimension of evangelization

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The Pope's Exhortation reminds us that faith has social consequences and that we cannot be “pilgrims towards heaven and deserters from the world”.

*From the heart of the Gospel we see the profound connection between evangelization and human advancement, which must necessarily find expression and develop in every work of evangelization. EG 178*

The social dimension presents fundamental aspects which are the spheres where we are to carry out our mission.

#### 3.1 The poor, the marginalized, the weakest

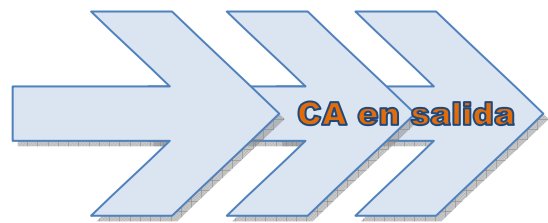
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CA should make the inclusion of the poor and their holistic development its priority by being close to them, sharing their plight and promoting their dignity.

Are the poor, the excluded and the weak part of our community? Do we create occasions when we can share our faith and show our solidarity? Do we accompany them and are we ready to learn from them? Are they part of our community? Do we undertake to be prophets who denounce this reality? Does the Social Teaching of the Church form an important part of our formation programme and do we reflect upon it? Do we let the poor evangelize us?

*For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily theological before being cultural, sociological, political or philosophical. God shows them «his mercy first». This divine preference has some consequences in the life of faith of all Christians called the have «the same attitude as Jesus» (Ph 2,5). (...)*

*We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church's pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them. EG 198*



*Jesus, the evangelizer par excellence and the Gospel in person, identifies especially with the little ones (cf. Mt 25:40). This reminds us Christians that we are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth. **EG 209***

*This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. True love is always contemplative, and permits us to serve the other not out of necessity or vanity, but rather because he or she is beautiful above and beyond mere appearances: “The love by which we find the other pleasing leads us to offer him something freely. **EG 199***

*Since this Exhortation is addressed to members of the Catholic Church, I want to say, with regret, that the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care. The great majority of the poor have a special openness to the faith; they need God and we must not fail to offer them his friendship, his blessing, his word, the celebration of the sacraments and a journey of growth and maturity in the faith. Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care. **EG 200***

*I have always been distressed at the lot of those who are victims of various kinds of human trafficking. How I wish that all of us would hear God’s cry: “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labour? Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone! This infamous network of crime is now well established in our cities, and many people have blood on their hands as a result of their comfortable and silent complicity. **EG 211***

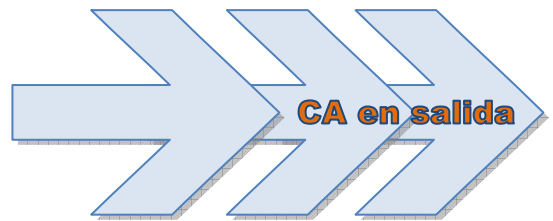
*Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenceless and innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this. **EG 213***

### **3.2 The Common Good**

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Pope Francis refers to us lay people and to our duty and urges us to assume our responsibility in the search and in the building of the common good:

*Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God...We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. In some cases, it is because lay persons have not been given the formation needed to take on important responsibilities. In others, it is because in their particular Churches room has not been made for them to speak and to act, due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. **EG 102***



This quotation motivates us, CA lay people, to reflect as to how we can intensify the programmes we present for the formation of a co-responsible laity for the building of the Common Good in every country and the initiatives which help participants to transform themselves. And also, how are we contributing towards the political and social formation of our members and how are we accompanying those of our brothers who opt to serve, “at the highest degree of charity” in the different levels of administration of our countries?

*I ask God to give us more politicians capable of sincere and effective dialogue aimed at healing the deepest roots – and not simply the appearances – of the evils in our world! Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. EG 205*

### 3.3 Dialogue

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Vatican Council II insists on a culture of dialogue, on the need for a predisposition to approach others and to listen to them attentively.

How can we create spaces which favour social, ecumenical and interreligious dialogue?

Starting from our communities, there where we live, how can we foster a culture which favours a culture of openness?

*In a culture which privileges dialogue as a form of encounter, it is time to devise a means for building consensus and agreement while seeking the goal of a just, responsive and inclusive society. EG 239*

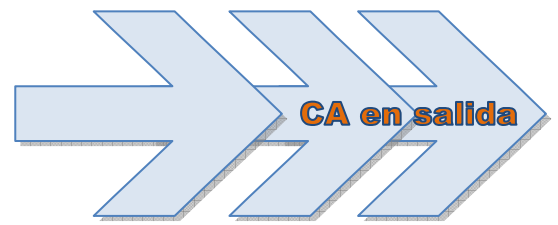
*Evangelization also involves the path of dialogue. For the Church today, three areas of dialogue stand out where she needs to be present in order to promote full human development and to pursue the common good: dialogue with states, dialogue with society – including dialogue with cultures and the sciences – and dialogue with other believers who are not part of the Catholic Church. EG 238*

### 3.4 Peace

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In all the societies, where CA is present and committed, there are tensions of diverse nature, social violence, wars, terrorism or new forms of organised crimes which result from drug trafficking, from human trafficking or other forms of fratricidal hate. It is urgent that we pull our efforts together to organise joint initiatives for peace, by bringing people together and helping them to meet, always aiming at helping to heal the wounds, to overcome boundaries and above all to instil the need for peace and for fraternal co-existence in people’s hearts.

*The Church proclaims “the Gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15) and she wishes to cooperate with all national and international authorities in safeguarding this immense universal good. By preaching Jesus Christ, who is himself peace (cf. Eph 2:14), the new evangelization calls on every baptized person to be a peacemaker and a credible witness to a reconciled life. EG 239*



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#### 4. CA and the proposed challenges

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As a lively community, incarnated in different realities, Catholic Action is called to take evangelization, to “inculturate it” so as to be able to “inculturate the Gospel”.

We are highlighting the challenges which we have to face as presented by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* so that we may reflect as to: which concrete actions we should take in order to overcome them, always being realistic but never losing hope.

*An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. EG 183*

#### CHALLENGES IN OUR WORLD

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**No to an economy of exclusion**

*Just as the commandment «Thou shalt not kill» sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills’. EG 53*

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**No to the new idolatry of money**

*The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption” EG 55*

*“In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule. EG 56*

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**No to the money which governs rather than serves**

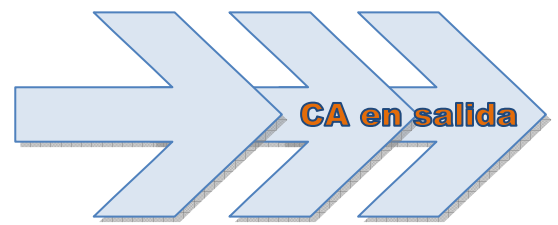
*Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs. EG 57*

*A financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and an eye to the future, while not ignoring, of course, the specifics of each case. Money must serve, not rule! EG 58*

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**No to injustice which generates violence**

*Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. EG 59*



## CULTURAL CHALLENGES

**Religious freedom** *We also evangelize when we attempt to confront the various challenges which can arise. On occasion these may take the form of veritable attacks on religious freedom or new persecutions directed against Christians; in some countries these have reached alarming levels of hatred and violence. EG 61*

**Globalization** *In many countries globalization has meant a hastened deterioration of their own cultural roots and the invasion of ways of thinking and acting proper to other cultures which are economically advanced but ethically debilitated. EG 62*

**New religious movements** *The Catholic faith of many peoples is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God. EG 63*

**The family** *The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis, as are all communities and social bonds. In the case of the family, the weakening of these bonds is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children. EG 66*

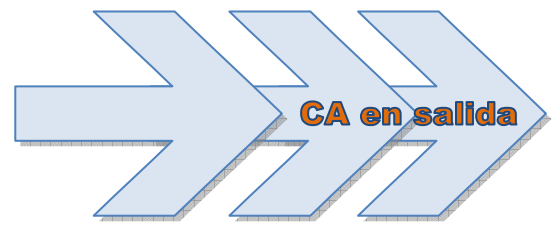
**Individualism** *The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era favours a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. EG 67*

**Inculturation of the Gospel** *It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the Gospel. In countries of Catholic tradition, this means encouraging, fostering and reinforcing a richness which already exists. In countries of other religious traditions, or profoundly secularized countries, it will mean sparking new processes for evangelizing culture, even though these will demand long-term planning. EG 69*

**The city** *In cities, as opposed to the countryside, the religious dimension of life is expressed by different lifestyles, daily rhythms linked to places and people. EG 72*

*New cultures are constantly being born in these vast new expanses where Christians are no longer the customary interpreters or generators of meaning. Instead, they themselves take from these cultures new languages, symbols, messages and paradigms which propose new approaches to life, approaches often in contrast with the Gospel of Jesus. A completely new culture has come to life and continues to grow in the cities. EG 73*

*What is called for is an evangelization capable of shedding light on these new ways of relating to God, to others and to the world around us, and inspiring essential values. It must reach the places where new narratives and paradigms are being formed, bringing the word of Jesus to the inmost soul of our cities. Cities are multicultural. EG 74*



## CHALLENGES FOR PASTORAL WORKERS

**Unity** *I especially ask Christians in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another, and how you encourage and accompany one another: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (Jn 13:35). This was Jesus’ heartfelt prayer to the Father: “That they may all be one... in us... so that the world may believe” (Jn 17:21). Beware of the temptation of jealousy! We are all in the same boat and headed to the same port! Let us ask for the grace to rejoice in the gifts of each, which belong to all. EG 99*

**Yes to the challenge of a missionary spirituality** *Today we are seeing in many pastoral workers, including consecrated men and women, an inordinate concern for their personal freedom and relaxation, which leads them to see their work as a mere appendage to their life, as if it were not part of their very identity. EG 78*

**No to selfishness and spiritual sloth** *At a time when we most need a missionary dynamism which will bring salt and light to the world, many lay people fear that they may be asked to undertake some apostolic work and they seek to avoid any responsibility that may take away from their free time. EG 81*

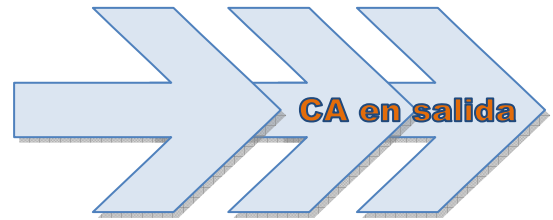
*The problem is not always an excess of activity, but rather activity undertaken badly, without adequate motivation, without a spirituality which would permeate it and make it pleasurable. EG 82*

*And so the biggest threat of all gradually takes shape: “the gray pragmatism of the daily life of the Church, in which all appears to proceed normally, while in reality faith is wearing down and degenerating into small-mindedness”. A tomb psychology thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum. Disillusioned with reality, with the Church and with themselves, they experience a constant temptation to cling to a faint melancholy, lacking in hope, which seizes the heart like “the most precious of the devil’s potions”. Called to radiate light and communicate life, in the end they are caught up in things that generate only darkness and inner weariness, and slowly consume all zeal for the apostolate. For all this, I repeat: Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization! EG 83*

**No to a sterile pessimism** *The joy of the Gospel is such that it cannot be taken away from us by anyone or anything (cf. Jn 16:22). The evils of our world – and those of the Church – must not be excuses for diminishing our commitment and our fervour. Let us look upon them as challenges which can help us to grow. EG 84*

**No to spiritual worldliness** *Spiritual worldliness, which hides behind the appearance of piety and even love for the Church, consists in seeking not the Lord’s glory but human glory and personal well-being. EG 93*

*Those who have fallen into this worldliness look on from above and afar, they reject the prophecy of their brothers and sisters, they discredit those who raise questions, they constantly point out the mistakes of others and they are obsessed by appearances. EG 97*



## OTHER CHALLENGES

### **Youth ministry**

*Youth ministry, as traditionally organized, has also suffered the impact of social changes. Young people often fail to find responses to their concerns, needs, problems and hurts in the usual structures. **EG 105***

### **Vocations**

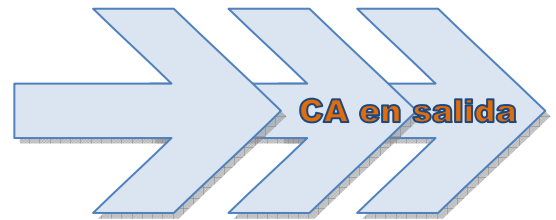
*Many places are experiencing a dearth of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. This is often due to a lack of contagious apostolic fervour in communities which results in a cooling of enthusiasm and attractiveness. Wherever there is life, fervour and a desire to bring Christ to others, genuine vocations will arise. **EG 107***

### **Lay people**

*Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church. We can count on many lay persons, although still not nearly enough, who have a deeply-rooted sense of community and great fidelity to the tasks of charity, catechesis and the celebration of the faith. At the same time, a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places. **EG 102***

### **Women**

*The Church acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make to society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men,... But we need to create still broader opportunities for a more incisive female presence in the Church. **EG 103***



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IN SHORT

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## An outgoing CA (CA en salida)

*The Pope has invited us to be an outgoing Church. To be faithful to our identity, we should be part of this Church en salida. We need and the people of God need a “CA en salida”. A CA who takes the first step, who is involved and supportive, who bears fruit and rejoices (cf. EG 24).*

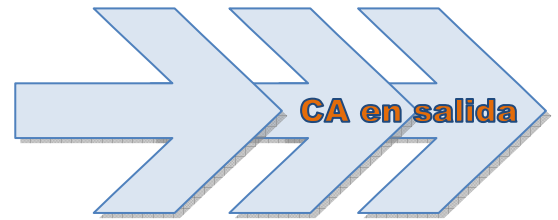
*We need, and the people of God need, an outgoing CA.*

- *A CA en salida is ready to reach everyone, in all places and in all circumstances.*
- *A CA en salida gives a missionary oriented formation and realizes its proper baptismal vocation by carrying out this mission.*
- *A CA en salida encourages a profound interior life and creates «spaces where pastoral workers can be helped and healed» (cf. EG 77), offers opportunities for a deeper personal and communitarian meeting with Jesus, by listening to His Word, by celebrating the Sacraments and thus identifying and configuring ourselves with Him. Our “masterpiece” is holiness.*
- *A CA en salida prays, and because it prays, it is not afraid of converting itself and proves to itself that here lies the vital principle of its growth in Christian living.*
- *A CA en salida has come across its treasure and wants to share it with others. So, as a community of missionary disciples, it evangelizes fervently and tirelessly and offers its associative life to all.*
- *A CA en salida is the CA of Pope Francis which reveals the compassion and mercy which should shine out on the face of the Church and in all its deeds.*
- *A CA en salida is the CA of Jesus Christ evangelizer, guide and pilgrim, the Father’s missionary and friend of all men.*

*May the Holy Spirit give us strength and may Mary, the Mother of Evangelization, give us the courage to announce the novelty of the Gospel fearlessly and may they help us to join the Holy Father in carrying out his dream of «a missionary option able to transform everything» (cf. EG 27) so as to reach everyone!*

Emilio Inzaurraga to the ICA’s XV National Assembly, 2014





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## 5. Let us proceed together

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CA follows the same way as the Church and along this journey it has continually rediscovered itself. Attached, right from its origin, to the institutional dimension of the Church, as a collaborator in the hierarchical apostolate, it has, little by little, widened its ministeriality in the Church and in the world.

We have undertaken to live for the Church and for the totality of its mission as our proper vocation. One could say that Catholic Action does not have all the charisms, but has the charism for everything.

For this reason, in this new missionary lap, we would like to offer “the gift we have received” (because “good things tend to want to spread (cf. EG 9) by promoting our particular vocation and our service to all the local churches, to all parishes, in all countries, in order to collaborate in the formation of a mature and co-responsible laity in the evangelizing mission.

We would like to offer our association as a space which radiates the novelty which Jesus brings in our lives, and as a commitment in the Church and in the world which Jesus stirs in us.

Let us remember our history with all its weaknesses and strengths, with grateful as well as purifying memories, which help us to look at the past, to live our present and to proceed with trust towards the future.

CA is beautiful because, for older and young people, it becomes an exercise of lay co-responsibility meant above all as a journey of fraternal sharing among lay people and with their pastors, sustained by reciprocal esteem, affection, acknowledgement (cf. EG 101 e 102; LG 37).

The new evangelizing dynamism of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, which encouraged the creation of new movements and communities, is a richness for Catholic Action as well. As an Association, we see in it the many-sided grace of the Holy Spirit whom we continue to thank for His work in our Association. In the school of the Holy Spirit, following the way indicated by the Council, we have been driven to be “always new” in our original identity which materializes in creative programmes and answers related to the actual exigencies in evangelization.

Thus Catholic Action, which is organized differently in different countries, presents the same associative presence in the local Church, at national and diocesan level, with a unitary identity, at the service of communion and mission.

CA Associations in the different countries, get together in the International Forum of Catholic Action, a space where they can meet, exchange views and promote their ideals, a place where friendship, sharing and solidarity prevail.

# ■ APPENDIX

## ■ ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO THE ITALIAN CATHOLIC ACTION

*Paul VI Audience Hall - Saturday, 3 May 2014*

*Dear Friends of Catholic Action,*

I welcome all of you, who represent this beautiful ecclesial reality! I greet the participants at the National Assembly, the parish presidents, priest assistants and friends of Catholic Action from other countries. I greet President Franco Miano, whom I thank for his report, and the new General Assistant, Bishop Mansueto Bianchi, to whom I offer my best wishes for this new mission, and his predecessor Bishop Domenico Sigalini, who worked so hard. I thank him for the dedication with which he served Catholic Action for so many years. A special greeting goes to Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference, and the Secretary General, Bishop Nunzio Galantino.

The theme of your Assembly “New people in Jesus Christ, co-responsible for the joy of living” fits well within the Easter Season, which is a season of joy. It is the joy of the disciples in encountering the Risen Christ and it needs to be interiorized within an evangelizing style capable of influencing life. In the current social and ecclesial context, you, the laity of Catholic Action, are called to renew the missionary option, open to the horizons that the Spirit points out to the Church and the expression of a rejuvenated lay apostolate. This missionary option: everything must be missionary, everything. It is the paradigm of Catholic Action: the missionary paradigm. This is the choice that Catholic Action makes today. Above all the parishes, especially those visibly tired and withdrawn — and there are many. Tired parishes, closed parishes... there are many! When I greet parish secretaries, I ask them: Are you a secretary to those who open doors or those who close the door? These parishes need your apostolic enthusiasm, your complete availability and your creative service. It is about assuming missionary dynamism in order to reach everyone, putting first those who feel distant and the most vulnerable and forgotten people. It means opening the doors and letting Jesus go forth. Many times we keep Jesus closed inside the parishes with us, and we do not go out and we do not let Him leave! Open the doors so He can go out, at least Him! It is about a Church which “goes forth”: a Church which always goes forth.

This style of evangelization, driven by a passionate interest in the life of the people, is especially suited to Catholic Action formed by a diocesan lay apostolate that lives in close co-responsibility with its Pastors. Here the popularity of your Association is a great help, because it is able to combine its intra-ecclesial endeavours with its contribution to the transformation of society in order to direct it towards the good. I thought I would give you three verbs which can serve to trace out a path for all of you.

The first is: to remain. But do not remain closed, no. To remain, in what sense? To remain with Jesus, to remain to enjoy his company. To be proclaimers and witnesses of Christ we must first

remain close to Him. It is from meeting Him, who is our life and our joy, that our testimony gains new meaning and new strength everyday. Remaining in Jesus, remaining with Jesus.

The second verb: to go. Please, never let Catholic Action be stationery! Do not stop: go! Go forth into the streets of your cities and countries, and proclaim that God is Father and that Jesus Christ has enabled you to know him, and for this reason your life has changed. You can live as brothers and sisters, bearing within you a hope that does not disappoint. May there be in each of you the desire make the Word of God run to the borders, thus renewing your commitment to meet man wherever he may be found, there where he suffers, there where he hopes, there where he loves and believes, there where his most profound aspirations are, the real questions, his heartfelt desires. Jesus is expecting you there. This means going forth. This means: to go out, to be outgoing.

And then lastly: to rejoice. Always rejoice and exult in the Lord! Be people who sing life, who sing faith. This is important: not only to recite the Creed, to recite the faith, to understand the faith but to sing the faith! There it is. To speak about the faith, to live the faith with joy; this is called "singing the faith". And I am not the first to say it! St Augustine said it 1,600 years ago: "sing the faith"! Be people who can recognize their own talents and their own limits, who know how to see over the course of their days — even the darkest — the signs of the Lord's presence. Rejoice because the Lord has called you to be co-responsible in the mission of His Church. Rejoice because you are not alone on this journey. The Lord is there and he is with you. There are your Bishops and priests who sustain you. There are your parish communities, your diocesan communities with whom you can share the journey. You are not alone!

With these three attitudes: to remain in Jesus, to go to the borders and to live the joy of Christian belonging, you can carry forward your vocation and avoid the temptation to be "static", which has nothing to do with remaining in Jesus; avoid the temptation to withdraw and that of intimism, so hackneyed; intimism is so sweet it's disgusting... And if you go forth, you will not fall into this temptation. And also avoid the temptation of formal seriousness. By staying in Jesus, going to the borders, living joy and avoiding these temptations, you will avoid carrying forward a life that resembles more that of a statue in a museum than that of people called by Jesus to live and spread the joy of the Gospel. If you want to listen to the advice of your General Assistant — who is so mild because he has a gentle name, he is Mansueto! — if you want to follow his advice, please be donkeys but never statues in a museum, never!

Let us ask the Lord, each of us, for eyes that know how to see beyond appearance; ears that know how to listen to cries, whispers and also silence; hands able to support, embrace and minister. Most of all let us ask for a great and merciful heart that desires the good and salvation of all. May Mary Immaculate and my blessing accompany you on your journey. And I thank you because I know you pray for me!

Now I ask you to pray to Our Lady, who is our Mother, who will accompany us on this journey. Our Lady always followed Jesus, to the end she accompanied him. Let us pray to her that she may always accompany us on our path: this path of joy, this path of going on: this journey of staying with Jesus.

*Ave o Maria, ...*

## ■ IMPORTANT REFERENCES TO THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON CA FROM THE II VATICAN COUNCIL TO POPE FRANCIS

### □ *Church's documents on the laity and on Catholic Action*

#### ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II

##### *Lumen Gentium* – Dogmatic Constitution on Church

31. The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.

33. The laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. This was the way certain men and women assisted Paul the Apostle in the Gospel, labouring much in the Lord. (cf. Ph 4,3; Rm 16,3 ss).

#### EXPLICIT QUOTATIONS IN ECUMENICAL VATICAN COUNCIL II

##### *Christus Dominus* - Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Ministry

17. The faithful should be earnestly urged to assume their duty of carrying on the apostolate, each according to his state in life and ability. They should be admonished to participate in and give aid to the various works of the apostolate of the laity, especially Catholic Action.

##### *Apostolicam Actuositatem* - Decree on the apostolate of the Laity

20. Whether these forms of the apostolate have the name of "Catholic Action" or some other title, they exercise an apostolate of great value for our times and consist in the combination and simultaneous possession of the following characteristics:

- a) The immediate aim of organizations of this kind is the Church's apostolic aim, that is, the evangelization and sanctification of men and the formation of a Christian conscience among them so that they can infuse the spirit of the Gospel into various communities and departments of life.
- b) Cooperating with the hierarchy in their own way, the laity contribute the benefit of their experience to, and assume responsibility for the direction of these organizations, the consideration of the conditions in which the pastoral activity of the Church is to be conducted, and the elaboration and execution of the plan of things to be done.
- c) The laity act together in the manner of an organic body so that the community of the Church is more fittingly symbolized and the apostolate rendered more effective.
- d) Whether they offer themselves spontaneously or are invited to action and direct cooperation with the apostolate of the hierarchy, the laity function under the higher direction of the hierarchy itself, and the latter can sanction this cooperation by an explicit mandate.

##### *Ad Gentes* - Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church

15. Now, in order to plant the Church and to make the Christian community grow, various ministries are needed, which are raised up by divine calling from the midst of the faithful congregation, and are to be carefully fostered and tended to by all. Among these are the offices of priests, of deacons, and of catechists, and Catholic action. Religious men and women likewise...

## PAUL VI – APOSTOLIC EXORTATION NUNTIANDI (1975)

70. Lay people, whose particular vocation places them in the midst of the world and in charge of the most varied temporal tasks, must for this very reason exercise a very special form of evangelization.(...) Their own field of evangelizing activity is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics, but also the world of culture, of the sciences and the arts, of international life, of the mass media. It also includes other realities which are open to evangelization, such as human love, the family, the education of children and adolescents, professional work, suffering.

73. The laity can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord is pleased to give them.

## JOHN PAUL II - APOSTOLIC EXORTATION CRISTIFIDELES LAICI (1988) – explicit quotation

31. Among the various forms of the lay apostolate which have a particular relationship to the hierarchy, the Synod Fathers have singled out various movements and associations of Catholic Action in which "indeed, in this organic and stable form, the lay faithful may freely associate under the movement of the Holy Spirit, in communion with their bishop and priests, so that in a way proper to their vocation and with some special method they might be of service through their faithfulness and good works to promote the growth of the entire Christian community, pastoral activities and infusing every aspect of life with the gospel spirit".

### *Speeches by Popes to CA*

PAUL VI - 25 April 1977

We would like to draw your attention: Catholic Action's specific relevance which, as regards the collaboration of lay people in the hierarchic apostolate of the Church, has a place which is not historically incidental, but is theologically justified in the ecclesial structure. After that which the Council said (cf. Apostolicam Actuositatem, 20; Ad Gentes, 15) and that which we ourselves have highlighted in our Apostolic Exhortation «Evangelii Nuntiandi» (cf. PAULI PP. VI Evangelii Nuntiandi, 73) Catholic Action's specific role, in the constitutional plan and in the operational programme of the Church, cannot be underestimated. It is called to carry out a distinctive form of lay ministry, addressed towards the «plantatio Ecclesiae» and towards the development of the Christian community in close union with ordained ministers. To answer better to this specific function, it must cultivate its associative structures with special care, and through them it must not only show and practice its principle of obedience, which is fundamental, but must make that programization of activities and interventions possible, as only it, normally, ensures close observation of social surroundings. The associative criterion, besides, if understood well and applied wisely, does not suffocate, but rather stimulates, an individual and responsible sense of initiative and an alert comprehension of the needs which arise from concrete situations and also offers adequate solutions.

JOHN PAUL II - LORETO 5 September 2004 Angelus

Dear friends I invite you to renew your “Yes” and I entrust you with three tasks. The first one is “contemplation”: commit yourself to follow the way to sanctity, always keeping your gaze fixed on Jesus, the Master and Saviour of us all.

The second task is “communion”: strive to promote a spirituality which fosters unity with the Church’s pastors, with all your brothers in faith and with the other ecclesial associations. Cultivate a spirit of dialogue with all men of good will.

The third task is “mission”: carry, as lay people, the yeast of the Gospel into your houses, schools, places of work and entertainment. The Gospel is a word of hope and salvation for the world.

BENEDICT XVI – Message to the VI IFCA Assembly - August 2012

Co-responsibility demands a change in mindset especially concerning the role of lay people in the Church. They should not be regarded as “collaborators” of the clergy, but, rather, as people who are really “co-responsible” for the Church’s being and acting. It is therefore important that a mature and committed laity be consolidated, which can make its own specific contribution to the ecclesial mission with respect for the ministries and tasks that each one has in the life of the Church and always in cordial communion with the bishops (...)

Dear friends it is important to study in depth and to live in the Church this spirit of profound communion, characteristic of the beginnings of the Christian community, as attested by the Acts of the Apostles: “The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (4:32). May you feel as your own the commitment to working for the Church’s mission: with prayers, study and active participation in ecclesial life, with an attentive and positive gaze at the world, in the constant search for the signs of the times. Through a serious and daily commitment to formation never tire of increasingly refining the aspects of your specific vocation as lay faithful called to be courageous and credible witnesses in all social milieus so that the Gospel may be a light that brings hope to the problematic, difficult and dark situations which people today often encounter in their journey through life.

### **Complete compilation of the Church’s Teaching to CA (in Italian)**

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### **THIS IS IFCA**

*Dépliant enclosed*

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