

FINAL REPORT

The Second European Continental Meeting of the International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA) was held from July 31st to August 2nd, at the Seminary of Iasi in Romania, upon the topic *Christ the Saviour yesterday, today and for ever - Which Christians and which Christian communities sign of hope for Europe - Ways for laypeople's formation and mission in different contexts.*

It was held in preparation to the Second Special Assembly of the Bishops' Synod for Europe and to the Great Jubilee of 2000.

It was attended by representatives from IFCA's member-countries and observers: Spain, Italy, Ital. Switerland, Malta, Slovakia, Moldava Rep., Romania (both greek-catholic and latin rites), and from MIDADE.

It was held in Romania, in a country of eastern Europe, to express our joint commitment as CA laypeople to build a single Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals".

According to the Synod's *Lineamenta* and questions, we tried to read the different contexts where the Christians live in Europe and to draw up concrete proposals for the formation and mission of the laypeople, witnesses of the Cross and the resurrection in Europe.

I Part

We asked ourselves how CA laypeople live the participation and co-responsibility in the Church, which contribution they bring to dialogue in the Church and between the Churches and which kind of communication, in particular, is going on between associations and movements: led by the Holy Spirit they are called to foster and foster the missionary tension of the pastoral activity.

From the review of the various situations it came out that the laypeople are present enough in the ordinary life of the Church (catechesis, liturgy, missionary commitment, pastoral action...); the awareness of the lay vocation is growing in the Christian community, of which all baptised are "living stones" and signs in the world - where their witness is not often "visible".

A good level of dialogue is going on through pastoral councils, synodal moments and ecumenical exchanges. In some dioceses the meetings between pastors and youths are further moments of dialogue and sharing.

At the same time a risk of centralization of the pastoral activity is perceived, since it does not involve committed laypeople. There is a good communication between associations and movements through the Lay Committees. And good relationships, often informal, with the other Churches; a deep exigency of dialogue with people of other religions and cultures is felt.

Among the causes of concern for the present and the future of the evangelization, at east and west, common elements linked to secularism emerged: indifferentism, removal of religion from life, consumerism, "never ending noise" (music, radio...) which does not allow to be alone.

The lack of sense of God, of transcendence, of sin; freedom unconnected from truth, attention to individual more than to person, development linked to prevailing interests with little respect for family and moral, science and technics separated from ethics, money and career as main goals, amusement for amusement, fear of sacrifice: these are some of the common elements which cause us uneasiness and at the same time urge us to catch the positive signs and to see how much Christianity affects our continent.

In this contradictory outline, society continues to look at the Church as a partner to whom it turns to be helped particularly in searching the meaning of life, in educating to values, in paying attention to youths, in pointing out new and ancient poverties connected with globalization and solidarity.

The present difficulties, due to a development of societies which look only to material things and therefore unfit to human person, were often denounced through declarations, pastoral letters and documents presented both by bishops and laypeople.

II Part

In this reality, CA laypeople are called to respond fully to their vocation in order to be - as the *Letter to Diogneto* says - "soul of the world". Therefore they must always look for the essential and receive and strengthen their faith in Jesus Christ living in His Church, as the heart of their formation and witness.

In this perspective, a lay spirituality came out to be most necessary, which, from within the individual's problems, may help him to become saint in everyday's life, to re-discover the sacraments in their contents and depth, as God's gifts. In some realities, the Eucharistic Adoration was resumed, which has become a very enriching moment. Youths who ask for a spiritual way must be encountered with opportunities stirring up questions of sense and leading to meet Christ.

The proposals of formation must aim to global, permanent itineraries, which may help people to "be" actually lay and to discern about things which are to "be done" and about the many requested services.

Close to the spiritual priority, the communion between laypeople and priests and all members of the Christian community was also highlighted: it is a task of the whole CA and of each CA lay member to foster the co-responsibility through which laypeople are integral part of the Church, accepting fully and mutually the principles about the communion stated in Council Vatican II and in *Christifideles Laici*.

Co-responsibility requests a deep formation for both priests and laypeople: the collaboration with the hierarchy - one of the "notes" qualifying CA - fosters it and promote its mutual exercise.

It is necessary in fact to mature and to nourish a great willingness to work together in building the community and on the roads of mission.

It is important that in the Church the Pastoral Councils are constituted or revived for real relationships of communion. It seemed also useful that lay Committees, with lay leaders, are set up at national and diocesan level.

Laypeople, at their turn, must offer their competency on specifically lay topics (politics, economy, work, communication), thanks to a full awareness of their vocation lived in the world, where they are called to witness Christ and their membership to the Church. Besides their witness in everyday's life, they are to give opinions and mass-media, such as newspapers, radio, TV, internet, are very good instruments to communicate.

Missionary commitment must be a priority for all and towards all, every occasion must be seized to welcome all people (those who get near for feasts, funerals, for sacraments for themselves or for their children), to keep dialogue always open, to accompany people in their life with instruments which may help them. The question is to recover the precious contribution of the laity for mission and evangelization, according to *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Paul VI and *Redemptoris Missio* of John Paul II.

There are most certainly difficulties and problems which prevent Europe from displaying its Christian soul and sometimes we ourselves and our communities we are a hindrance to the synthesis between faith and culture.

It is urgent to draw up proposals for a broader formation, which may enable people to make opinion, to make choices of solidarity and respect for the dignity of human person, in order to accept "together with all people of good will of our continent the european challenge, that is the exigency to build up an Europe with a strong memory of its own history, seriously committed to put into practice man's rights, solid with the peoples of the other continents in promoting peace and development on a world scale"(John Paul II, *Angelus* 15/2/98).

August 2nd 1998