

Normative document

our translation

Rome, 28 April 2017

Introduction

In many countries, throughout this century, associations of lay people have been formed which, “in closer union with the hierarchy, have pursued, and continue to pursue, ends that are properly apostolic” (AA 20.1).

Among these associations the Ecumenical Council Vatican II draws particular attention to “those which, though using differing methods, have yielded abundant fruit for the kingdom of Christ. Deservedly praised and promoted by the Popes and numerous Bishops, they have received from them the name of Catholic Action, and have most often been described by them as a collaboration of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate” (AA 20.1).

This particular form of group apostolate, whose identity and mission have been reposed by the Ecumenical Council Vatican II itself (cf. *Lumen Gentium* 33.3; *Ad Gentes* 15.9 and especially *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 20.2 and 20.4) and by the constant teachings of the Roman Popes and the Bishops (cf. most recently *Christifideles laici* 31.3) is still alive and functioning in many countries on the various continents. This fact was also confirmed by the work and by the final documents of the recent Synod of Bishops on the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world, which took place in October 1987 (cf. *Propositio* 13 and the Message of the Synod of Bishops *On the paths of the Council* 5.4).

In particular – and also as a result of the 1987 Synod of Bishops – several national Associations of Catholic Action have recently developed new relationships aimed at encouraging the following goals:

- a- a deeper reciprocal understanding;
- b- a common reflection on the identity of Catholic Action associations in the variety of the forms and methods of organisation and
- c- a careful analysis of the typical service which Catholic Action is called upon to provide within the Church and within society, with reference to the specific pastoral and cultural context in which it is working.

The utility of these relationships with their specific goals has become increasingly clear in relation to:

- the solidarity and common pastoral concern which must unite Christians in the different countries and continents,
- the global dimension of the great problems which contemporary society poses to the Christian conscience,
- the objectives and the directives of pastoral commitment which the Church today entrusts to all Christian communities and which are summed up in the urgent call to “begin a new evangelisation”. That call “is directed not only to individual persons but also to entire portions of the populations in the variety of their situations, surroundings and cultures” (ChL 34).

Therefore, encouraged by the *Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis* (with a Letter dated November 6th 1991 n° 1845), an International Forum of Catholic Action was set up with a provisional Secretariat, in order to build up a new place of meeting, exchange and promotion of all the associations which recognize themselves in the tradition of Catholic Action, without conditioning, in any way, each local CA reality. On account of what has been said above, and wishing to give a stable form to this cooperation which has

already shown itself suitable and useful for the development of the apostolate, through this act the “International Forum of Associations and Federations of Movements of Catholic Action” is constituted with the following goals and norms.

Historical note

The Normative Document of the International Forum of Catholic Action was drawn up and approved unanimously in the Constitutive Assembly of the Forum, held in Rome on November 9th 1991, attended by the National Associations and Federations of Movements of Catholic Action of the following countries: Argentina, Austria, Spain, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Paraguay, Romania (Greek rite).

The constitution of the Forum had already received support from the *Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis*, whose President, Card. Eduardo Pironio, with his Letter of November 6th 1991 n° 1845 underlined the opportunity of the Forum as “a new place of meeting, exchange and promotion of all the associations which recognize themselves in the meritorious tradition of Catholic Action, in an intense and peculiar communion with the Pope and the Bishops”.

As regards a Normative Document, the *Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis* has offered contributions and guidelines in order to establish an organization which can be effective without conditioning, in any way, each local CA reality.

In the same Letter the Cardinal President declared “as appropriate the presence of the Hierarchy to assist in a particular way the International Secretariat. To this effect, considering also the necessary connection of the Forum with the *Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis* as well as with the other ecclesiastical authorities, it is essential that Bishop General Assistant of ICA – appointed by the Holy Father – should be “de jure” member of the above Secretariat”.

The Normative Document fully accepting the contributions and guidelines so received, aims to give a stable form to this “new place of meeting, exchange and promotion” which will benefit the development of the apostolate which the Associations and Federations of Catholic Action exercise in close union with their Pastors in the different countries, and will, at the same time, facilitate a more effective service on the international level, in an appropriate relationship with the *Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis* and with the different ecclesial structures and organizations on the global, continental or regional level.

The text of the Normative Document after approval was sent to the Bishops Conferences of the above countries. They examined it and sent us their own observations and additional proposals, which were handed over to the *Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis* for a more suitable examination.

On the basis of the observations and proposals from the Bishops Conferences, the Normative Document was accordingly revised and approved unanimously in the 1st Ordinary Assembly of the Forum, in Vienna October 29th-November 2nd 1994, attended by the National Associations and Federations of Movements from: Argentina, Austria, Colombia, Spain, Malta, Mexico, Paraguay, Italy, Romania (Latin rite), Italian Switzerland and Venezuela.

The Normative Document in the new drawing up and after a careful formal review was finally presented to the *Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis* by the General Secretariat for approval with a letter dated March 19th 1995, which was written at the end of the works carried out in Rome during the annual meeting March 18th/19th 1995.

Norms

1. Composition of the Forum

1.-1. The International Forum of the Associations and the Federations of Movements of Catholic Action is made up of the associations of lay apostolate constituted on the national level, which correspond to the four notes, taken together, that are set out in the Decree of the Ecumenical Council Vatican II *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no.20, 2-3, and which therefore fit the re-definition contained in the post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* no. 31,3.

1.-2. Compliance with the requirements specified in the preceding paragraph shall be ascertained and certified by the local Bishops Conference.

1.-3. Diocesan and regional Associations can also be members of the Forum where corresponding organizations on the national level do not exist. In this case compliance with the requirements referred to in point

1.4. must be ascertained and certified by the diocesan Bishop or by the competent regional Bishops Conference.

2. Goals and aims

2.-1. The Forum's goals are:

– to be a place where concern and solidarity for the Catholic Action of different countries, regions and continents can find expression;

– to analyse the worldwide dimension of the great problems that contemporary society poses to the Church and to Catholic Action

– to animate and promote the “new evangelization” with respect for the different pastoral contexts and the different methods of organization of each Catholic Action.

2.-2. The Forum pursues the following aims:

a) to encourage reciprocal understanding among Associations and Federations of Movements of Catholic Action in the different countries;

b) to promote initiatives aimed at supporting and developing the specific service which the Associations and Federations of Movements of Catholic Action are called upon to provide. This service remains consistent with the identity of Catholic Action but varies in the methods and forms required by the different cultural, social and ecclesial contexts in which they are operating;

c) to promote initiatives aimed at a deeper understanding of the problems which affect the life and the mission of the Church on a global, continental or regional level.

d) to establish dialogue and cooperation with all lay apostolate organisations with a special attention to those International Catholic Organizations already recognised.

e) to represent the Associations and the Federations of Movements of Catholic Action belonging to the Forum with the Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis and other organs of the Holy See.

f) to represent the Associations and the Federations of Movements of Catholic Action belonging to the Forum with the civil International Organizations, respecting the ecclesial nature of the Forum and inside its goals.

2.- 3. As regards its organization and its activities, the Forum conforms itself to the four notes, taken together, laid down by the Vatican II Decree Apostolicam Actuositatem no. 20.2 and 3.

3. Composition of Forum

3.-1. The Forum is made up of the following National Associations or Federations of Movements: Argentina, Austria, Spain, Italy, Malta, Mexico, Paraguay and Romania (Greek rite).

3.-2. Other Associations and Federations of Movements of Catholic Action may request to join the Forum by providing proof of compliance with the requirements set out in Art. 1.

3.-3. The requests to join the Forum have to be presented to the General Secretariat who will submit them to the Assembly for the approval. The decision will be taken by the absolute majority.

3.-4. In order to speed communication and as a sign of communion, the Forum takes up its seat in the city of Rome, seat of St. Peter's chair and of the Dicastery for Laity Family and Life.

4. Organs and functions

4.-1. The organs of the Forum are: a) the Assembly b) the General Secretariat.

4.-2. The Assembly is the Forum's main organ. Its members are all the CA Associations and the Federations of CA Movements accepted in the Forum. The Assembly meets in ordinary session every four years and in extraordinary session whenever called by the General Secretary and after a resolution passed by the vote of the majority of its members.

4 - 3. The Assembly meets in ordinary or extraordinary session to examine the Agenda for which it was summoned. The agenda should be sent through email or any other means at least three months before the meeting. The Assemblies are validly constituted in the first call when the majority of its members who have a right to be present are physically present or have sent a proxy, in the second call with any number. Every CA Association or Federation of CA Movements, present at the Forum, has only one vote and can have only one proxy.

4. -5. The Assembly validly reunited decides with the absolute majority of those present, including the proxies, the resolutions about the activities of the Forum and of the General Secretariat and chooses the five Countries who eventually nominate the five lay people who are to sit on the General Secretariat. The Assembly lays down the criteria which determine the annual fee depending on the Forum's situation.

It can also approve documents or declarations and make recommendations, which do not bind its members, after expressed formulation.

The Assembly may, with the approval of the absolute majority of the members present including the proxies, amend the Normative Act. These amendments should then be submitted for the approval of the Dicastery for Laity Family and Life.

4.-5. The organizational aspects of the Forum are assured by the General Secretariat whose functions are: representation, communication, proposals of initiatives, implementation of the decisions of the Assembly.

4 - 6. The General Secretariat is made up of: five lay people coming from five Forum Member Countries which are elected every four years and which reflect CA's diversity. These five members nominate the Secretariat Coordinator from among themselves. The Secretariat Coordinator chooses the Secretary and the Administrator from outside the members of the Secretariat. These become members of the General Secretariat but have no right to vote.

The five elected members, the Secretary and the Administrator make up the General Secretariat. The Ecclesiastical Assistant is part of the Secretariat.

5. Ecclesiastical Assistant

The Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Forum is nominated by the Ecclesiastical Authority, from among three names proposed by the General Secretariat according to the norms laid down in the Canon Law, and represents the Hierarchy in every organ of the Forum itself.

6. Administrator and Financial Resources

The Administrator and the Financial Resources: The Administrator should prepare an annual balance sheet and a forecast budget to ensure proper availability of resources in accordance with operational requirements. The balance sheet should be approved by the General Secretariat and should be sent annually to the members which make up the Forum Assembly.

The financial resources for the functioning of the Forum come from contributions from the members as determined by the Assembly, as well as from donations, freely coming from private or public civil and ecclesial entities with the aim of supporting the Forum's activities.

Art. 6 - 1. Secretary: has the duty to see to the overall coordination of the organizational Secretarial services and of the functional operational services.