

Report of Ifca's activities

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(november 1994 - august 1997)

1. IFCA's first ordinary Assembly in Wien, elected - according to point 4 of the Normative Document - Austria Italy, Malta and Mexico as member-countries of the Secretariat. During the first meeting in Rome, March 1995, I was elected as its Coordinator.

2. The first ordinary Assembly decided to adopt the following guidelines shared by all Associations and Federations of Movements of Catholic Action:

2.1 Guidelines for Catholic Action:

- commitment to promote people's education and formation, starting from the formation to an authentic spiritual life;
- cooperation for the Church unity, in order to foster the ecclesial communion;
- commitment for the evangelization according to the three ways stated in Redemptoris Missio: "missio ad gentes", new evangelization, pastoral cure;
- commitment for a special attention to youths, teenagers, children, in order to promote their dignity and rights.

2.2 IFCA's guidelines for the years 1994-1997:

- promoting the knowledge of CA, particularly in those countries where it does not exist helping to set it up whenever possible. To this aim IFCA's VADEMECUM is to be completed with all the necessary basic data to let CA be known;
- developing the relationships between IFCA's members for a mutual help and a more effective joint action; to this aim, continental meetings will be organized during the next three years;
- setting up a form of coordination for the youths, inside IFCA, to help the exchange of experiences and to promote CA among the youths.

3. IFCA's Normative Document, which was approved in its final form in the Constituent Assembly, in 1991, took into consideration the opinions of the Bishops' Conferences of all member-countries. Once this delicate work was over, it was sent to the Pontifical Council for the Laity for approval. In fact on June 29th 1995, Feast of the Saints Apostles Peter and Paul the Pontifical Council for the Laity acknowledged IFCA officially as an International Organism of pontifical right, with a private juridical person. Copy of the Normative Document is available.

4. With reference to the common guidelines, the Associations and Federations of Movements of Catholic Action took upon themselves the engagements there stated which they deepened in different ways in their own concrete contexts, enlightened by the lecture that Card. Pironio held in Wien.

5. As for the lines concerning the three years which are ending, the Assembly charged the Secretariat to carry them out. To this aim 5 meetings were held

Rome March 18-19th 1995 and April 12-14th 1996;

Buenos Aires November 7th 1996;

Malta April 3-4th;

Buenos Aires September 11th.

During the first meeting IFCA's programme was drawn up. The following meetings enabled the Secretariat to verify whether and how it was fulfilled and to foresee new engagements. Three meetings were originally planned, they became five, thanks also to the two continental meetings in Latin America and in Europe. This allowed a more intense work and a closer attention to some situations, considering the little time each member has available in his own country.

In the various meetings of the Secretariat the preparation of this II Assembly was object of analysis, programming and fulfilment: I wish to thank you all for your efforts.

6. The ordinary work of the Secretariat

- After IFCA's official acknowledgment the drawing up of IFCA's VADEMECUM was intensified, as it is an instrument for informing and promoting CA throughout the world.

After a real storm of phone-calls, faxes, consultations, amendments, translations and reviews, the Vademecum will be presented in this Assembly. It is a first draft which will be immediately sent over to all countries and will be useful especially for those ones where CA will be promoted in future. Needless to say that this first draft is to be enriched according to IFCA's journey and this requests the cooperation of all. The title "Vademecum 2000" aims to make us get ready to the great Jubilee and to express our spirit: the willingness to face as CA the new engagements and situations of the third millennium.

The Vademecum is made up in a way so that new parts can be easily inserted or changes of some parts made according to the evolution both of IFCA and of the countries. It is laid out as follows:

- General introduction: which collects the most significant stages of IFCA's life, a thankful acknowledgment to Marcelo Zapiola, who was the first to inspire IFCA's constitution, a short anthology of the ecclesial Magisterium upon CA.

It shows CA as a path to sanctity and offers some useful practical information.

- A first part, where each country - which is IFCA's member and has a national CA organization - is presented in a specific file, with a description of its history, associative structure and dynamics, statistical data, character, mission, general information.

- A second file collects all countries which, though living different situations, have gradually joined IFCA's journey. Each of them is presented through a short history, its present situation and its perspectives.

Just today we are starting with spreading the Vademecum and this will be a commitment of the next Secretariat.

- Our aim to get an instrument to help the communication among the various countries, to exchange experiences and solidarity in IFCA as well as to enable us to inform other countries about who we are, what we do, was achieved through IFCA's "NEWSLETTER". It was planned at first to issue once in a year and up today 3 numbers were published. With regard to this instrument, we ask CA of all countries for a more active collaboration in sending their news.

- The continental meetings, especially after they were held in Europe and in Latin America, proved to be quite useful.

The first was held in Latin America, november 8-10th 1996, in Asunción - Paraguay and was attended by: Argentina, Mexico, Paraguay, Venezuela - as member-countries - and by Bolivia and Peru as observers. The second one was held in Europe, Malta, April 4-6th 1997, and was attended by Austria, Spain, Italy, Malta, Rumania (greek and latin rite) Italian Switzerland as member-countries and Poland, Slovakia and Hungary as observers. "In dialogue with God, in the Church, with the world and the cultures" was the topic in both cases as a preparation for this Assembly as well. In both meetings the exchange among different realities was to great advantage for the participants who can get new ideas they may apply in their own contexts.

- Owing to the increase of IFCA's countries as well as of its activities, it was necessary to ask various bodies for an economic support. Among these the Foundation Pio XII received our requests and in two occasions, besides this Assembly, answered positively. We also visited the Pontifical Commission for Latin America and gave them a plan for spreading CA in Latin America: up to now no answer was received.

7. Activities with the Pontifical Council for the Laity. On April 18th 1998 John Paul II, as a sign of great attention to CA, appointed Giuseppe Gervasio, ICA's President, as Councillor of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and myself as a member for the period 1996-2001. We will carry on this commitment in IFCA's representation.

Speaking of this participation in the Pontifical Council for the Laity, I received an invitation to draw up our contribution for the preparation of the next Bishops' Assembly in Latin America to be held next November. This is why I asked all countries for their suggestions and a document was drawn up which was sent to the Commission charged with the preparation of the Assembly.

YOUTHS

- Two IFCA's youths were invited to the "second meeting of those charged with the Youth Pastoral Action in Europe", September 11-16th 1995, organized by the Pontifical Council for the

Laity.

- Two youths attended the Forum preceding the World Youth Day in Paris (Spain and Argentina), August 14-18th 1997.
- Representatives from many countries participated in the World Youth Meeting in Paris, August 19-24th 1997.

MIDDLE EAST

The first meeting of Laypeople of Middle East was organized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity and held in Beirut, June 10-14th. I participated in it. It was an opportunity for people of different religions to meet after the recent visit of John Paul II, and I got the possibility to present IFCA and see where it might be possible to set up CA in those countries where there is no lay association with properly apostolic aims. The field is now open and I feel sure that IFCA will carry this engagement on.

8. Secretariat's activities with various Organisms

- After IFCA's acknowledgment, the International Catholic Organizations were contacted (ICO). The application for IFCA's adhesion was addressed to them and Giuseppe Gervasio attended their conference in Rome, June 30th-July 2nd 1997.
- UMOFC's Assembly in Canberra, Australia, February 1996 was attended by Argentina, Spain, Italy.
- Contacts were kept with UNUM OMNES and some countries will participate in their next Assembly in Jerusalem in November.
- UMOFC, UNUM OMNES, IFCA: a meeting is planned for June 1998 for a joint reflection upon common topics and for a greater effectiveness of our work.
- Many IFCA's member-countries participate in MIDADE (Italy, Spain, Venezuela...).

9. Other activities

- Meeting with the leaders of CA and with Mons. Matthias U Shwe (M. Grazia Tibaldi).
- Interdiocesan Meeting celebrated in Loikaw - Myanmar - March 9-11th 1996, attended by 3.000 CA members (Eduardo Ramirez Cato and his wife Lourdes).
- Seminary of formation for laypeople upon "Leadership and spirituality" in Myanmar, in collaboration with the President of the Bishops' Conference and the President of the Commission for the Laity (February 8-14th 1997). 100 lay leaders from different dioceses were present (M. Giovanna Ruggieri - ICA and Eduardo Ramirez Cato).
- National Symposium in Poland promoted by the Pallottini Fathers, with the participation of the Polish Bishops and the Pontifical Council for the Laity, with the goal of setting CA up again. It was attended by Italy.
- Summer University organized by AGRU in Cluj (August 6-10th 1995). It was attended by ICA - through a regional delegation from Calabria, Lungro diocese - greek-byzantine rite.
- A seminary in Cuba was planned in collaboration with UMOFC, but owing to technical problems (visa) it could not be held.
- As IFCA we receive the appeal from Burundi, through don Salvatore, with the perspective of finding out concrete aids for a situation of great sufferings due to the fights between the ethnic groups. The first issue of "Newsletter" shows concrete proposals to this regard.
- The national Assemblies of Argentina, Italy, Mexico have favoured the participation of the countries there invited.

10. Special invitations

- On May 16th 1995 I was invited to participate in the Pastoral Commission for the preparation of the Great Jubilee of 2000. I attended one meeting in Rome and considering that the meetings were frequent and very short (just one day) Giuseppe Gervasio, ICA's President, took my place in this Commission.
- As IFCA-Europe we were invited to the European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz. IFCA participated through a rumenian representative, a greek-catholic priest together with representatives of Italy, Malta and, of course, of Austria.

11. IFCA's present situation. Thanks to the different activities planned and to the communications set going throughout the world, an increase of the member-countries followed and the perspectives are very favourable, considering the countries where CA is present as

well as those with which we are in contact with the aim to foster its setting up.

The situation concerning the member-countries is the following:

* IFCA's member-countries:

Argentina, Austria, Spain, Italy, Malta, Mexico (countries which founded IFCA), Romania/greek-byzantine rite, Romania/latin rite (Iasi), Switzerland (Lugano), Myanmar (Tayngyi, Loikaw, Taungoo), Burundi (Bururi), Colombia, Venezuela, Paraguay (Asunción), Luxemburg.

* Countries with different CA realities which which we are in contact:

Albania (they asked to join IFCA), Poland (they are going to set up CA), Peru, Bolivia, Slovakia, Cuba, Antille (23 countries), Salvador, Panama, Ecuador.

* Other countries with which we are in contact:

Hungary, Czech Republik, Slovenia, Bulgaria, France, Middle East - Holy Land.

While preparing the Continental Meetings the countries were requested to send data which allow us to catch CA's presence at continental and word level.

12. IFCA's financial situation. The activities just presented show that they were many more than those planned. This involved consequently contingent expenses. The fees from the countries could not cover them. Various countries, people and organisms offered contributions for achieving the activities.

I feel the necessity of thanking all those who participated in the efforts.

At the same time I think it necessary to urge the solidarity of all members to cooperate financially with IFCA's activities. Nobody is so poor as not being able to give a contribution and nobody is so rich as not needing it. The budget is available.

13. The Assembly in Buenos Aires. Our meeting today in Buenos Aires is full of meaning. Many times Latin America was called by the Pope the continent of hope. We wish to be a concrete sign of this hope which is becoming a reality here.

We come from 18 countries of 4 different continents and show the presence of our particular Churches and of the universal Church as well. This is also a sign of the priorities that we have taken upon ourselves for the formation of the laypeople, the solidarity and the exchange between the Churches.

In the perspective of the celebration of the Jubilee of 2000 in this year devoted to Jesus Christ, which is going to end, when the year devoted to the Holy Spirit is opening, CA as a sign of the Spirit wishes to pay the utmost attention to the celebration of the Bishops' Synod of America during next November.

14. Open questions

- At this moment we have no Assistant, since Mons. De Giorgi, IFCA's first Assistant, was appointed Bishop of Palermo. I personally wrote and talked with Mons. Stafford and they are studying a solution.

This will be a commitment for the next Secretariat.

- After the recent resignation of Card. Pironio and the Presidency of Mons. Stafford at the Pontifical Council for the Laity, it is necessary as well to intensify the relationships with the Pontifical Council for the Laity. A clear sign is the presence of Mons. Rylko today here and also in Malta.

The next Secretariat has to keep and better the relationships with the Pontifical Council for the Laity and extend them to other dicasteri of the Holy See.

- In front of the perspectives of its growing, IFCA has to think its organization over, in order to be able to look after CA realities all over the world.

15. Conclusion

- I wish to thank the Lord for this gift to serve the Church in IFCA and my family for its support and understanding.

- I thank John Paul II for his constant addresses upon CA and especially for his words to the Polish Bishops who were asked by him to renew their commitment for CA.

- My thanks to all members of the Secretariat for their example of commitment in the Church. In particular to ICA, to Maria Grazia Tibadi and to the équipe in Rome.

- To all of you, whose answer to Lord's call and to the invitation to this Assembly are the most precious gifts for your labour in the apostolic work.

- I entrust IFCA's future works to the Holy Virgin of Luján, whom we are going to visit in these days, and to St. Joseph, IFCA's patron.
- Our friend Marcelo Zapiola, who went ahead to our Father's home on December 9th 1994 , is most certainly interceding on behalf of IFCA's works for the next three years.

Buenos Aires, Argentina, September 12th 1997

II ORDINARY ASSEMBLY - Buenos Aires, September 11-14th 1997

Christ, the one Saviour yesterday, today and for ever

IN DIALOGUE WITH GOD, IN THE CHURCH, WITH THE WORLD AND THE CULTURES