

Forum Internacional
de Acción Católica

International Forum
of Catholic Action

Forum Internazionale
di Azione Cattolica

NOTICIAS NEWSLETTER NOTIZIE

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D*uc in altum*, Catholic Action!

At the beginning of the third millennium we are assuming that the speech made by John Paul II, to the Italian Catholic Action, is implicitly addressed to all CA.

We ask the Holy Spirit to help us interpret it in the spirit of Luke's gospel, as the "Novo Millennio Ineunte" (1) suggests: *Duc in altum* (Lk 5,4). Peter and his companions trusted Christ's word and threw the nets. "And having done so, they caught many fish" (Lk 5,6).

Going through the three *Duc in altum* entrusted by the Pope to ICA and to all CA, we find valuable elements which help us to evaluate our associative identity and our ministeriality in the Church and in the world. Above all this is a great encouragement to move forward with hope, in whatever situations we find ourselves, so that in each particular Church we can say that CA is alive, strong and doing well!

This seems to put also a greater responsibility on IFCA to ensure that CA member countries and new ones work together to support each other, meet and promote CA in the various continents so that they may all contribute responsibly towards the new evangelization and help in fostering justice, solidarity and peace.

This is precisely the aim of continental meetings: in Africa in Bujumbura in August 2002, in America in April/May 2003 and in Europe in September 2003.

A special word to young members: you will find some news about the "3rd Week of Formation" held in Miromir, in the Diocese of Plovdiv in Bulgaria, and an indication of the website wherein other information, material and appointments may be found.

We hope that CA proves to be an association where young people find the fundamental elements of the christian faith so that they may become "salt of the earth and light of the world" and live happily according to the Beatitudes: «Christ has not limited himself to *pronouncing* the Beatitudes, He has *lived* them. Going through His life and rereading the Gospel, we are amazed at the fact that: the poorest of the poor, the mildest of the humble, the purest and most merciful of heart was precisely He, Jesus. The Beatitudes are nothing but the description of a face, *His face!* At the same time, the Beatitudes *describe the christian*: they are the picture of the disciple of Jesus, (...) who wants to tune his life with the Gospel' s expectations. Jesus turns to this man and calls him "blessed"» (John Paul II, WYD 2002, 25 July 2002).



Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson



+ Francesco Lambiasi

Index

Address by the Holy Father to the participants in ICA 11 th national Assembly	p. 3
IFCA and Holy Land	p. 6
Meeting of the Secretariat	p. 8
10 th Symposium of the European Bishops	p. 8
Youths' Coordination and 3 rd Week of Formation	p. 9
News from CA	p. 10

Address by the Holy Father to the participants in ICA 11th National Assembly

Dear Catholic Action Children, Youths and Adults!

1. I am very pleased to welcome you to this special Audience on the occasion of your 11th national Assembly. The relation between Catholic Action and the Pope is very strong and has become even stronger by time. In fact, since its very beginning, your Association saw in the person and in the teaching of the "white Father" a qualifying point of reference for its programmes and action. This bond of friendship finds expression in some very meaningful meetings: every year, at Christmastime, children from ACR come to give me their greetings and every three years we meet on the occasion of your national Assembly. This is exactly what is happening this morning, in the opening hours of your 11th national Assembly.

I wish to greet in a special way Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Italian Bishops' Conference and the Bishops who have accompanied you, the national President, Miss Paola Bignardi, the General Ecclesiastic Assistant Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi, the other Assistants and the other CA leaders. I extend my greetings to each and everyone of you who is participating in this Assembly and to all ICA members.

2. On this occasion, in the first place, I would like to start by thanking you for your love for the Church, which through your faith you regard as your family. Thanks for your commitment in the everyday life of your parish communities. I know that you "are there", even when you choose to be discreet and prefer to mingle with the People of God in your humble and daily service.

May this ecclesial service of yours never be a mere activism, but may it be a concrete sign of the Lord's compassion who cares for the sufferings of the poor and invites you all to open your heart to all those who are in difficulty.

I ask you to continue building links of communion and dialogue among the People of God: in the Pastoral Councils, in your relations with priests and with the other groups and movements. Your service will be even more appreciated, if you are able to bring out, in a gentle and calm way, the mature image of an open and enterprising laity.

To attain this, it is important that you mould authentic Christian consciences, through a formation aimed to youths, adults, children, the elderly, families and teenagers. In this respect I wish to express a particular appreciation to all those who in Catholic Action are committed with the educational service and accompany people through teaching, listening, understanding and support them with their encouragement and example. In the history of the Feminine Youth Groups, the traditional motto was: "The ideal is worth more than life". Especially you, dear educators, who form people, do your very best to help the younger ones realize the beauty of an existence, devoted to the ideal proposed by Christ in the Gospel, even today.

3. On this happy occasion, let me entrust to you some messages, so close to my heart.

First of all, I wish to tell you that the Church cannot do without Catholic Action. The Church needs a group of laypeople who, faithful to their vocation and close to their own Pastors, are ready to share with them the daily toil to evangelize every sphere of life.

As your Bishops wrote recently to you, "Catholic Action has a direct and close bond with the diocese and its Bishop, takes upon itself the Church's mission, is devoted to the particular Church and to her global mission. She makes the pastoral journey, the options, the spirituality of the diocesan Church its own; all this makes Catholic Action not an ecclesial association among the others, but a gift of God and a resource for the growth of the ecclesial communion" (*Letter of the Permanent Council of the Italian Bishops' Conference to ICA national Presidency, March 12th 2002*).

The Church needs Catholic Action, because she needs laypeople who are ready to devote their life to the apostolate and to establish, particularly with the diocesan Community, a bond which leaves a deep mark on their life and on their spiritual journey. She needs laypeople, whose experience shows, in a concrete and daily way, how great and joyful Christian life is; laypeople who can see in the Baptism the roots of their dignity, in the Christian community their own family with whom they share their faith and in the Pastor, the father who guides and supports his brothers' journey; laypeople who do not reduce faith to a private matter and do not hesitate to bring the Gospel's leaven into the fabric of human relations and institutions, into the territory and into the new areas of globalization, so as to build the civilization of love.

4. Just because the Church needs a Catholic Action that is alive, strong and beautiful, I would like to repeat to each and everyone of you: *Duc in altum!*

Duc in altum, Catholic Action! Look to the future with courage. May your history, marked by the luminous examples of Saints and Blessed, shine with your fidelity to the Church and to the needs of our time even today, with that typical freedom of those who, guided by the Spirit's breath, strove towards high ideals.

Duc in altum! Be a prophetic presence in the world, by promoting those dimensions of life which are often forgotten and as such even more urgent, such as interiority and silence, responsibility and education, giving freely and being of service, sobriety and fraternity, hope for the future and love towards life. Act effectively so that today's society may recover the true sense of man and of his dignity, the value of life and family, peace and solidarity, justice and compassion.

Duc in altum! Be humble and daring enough to fix your eyes on Jesus so that your authentic renewal may start from Him. It will be thus easier for you to discern what is necessary from what passes with time. In this way you can live your desired renewal as an adventure of the Spirit, who will help you along the hard paths in the desert and will help you to be purified, so that you may experience the beauty of the new life, which God always grants to those who trust in Him.

Catholic Action, do not be afraid! You belong to the Church and are close to the Lord's heart. He never stops to guide your steps towards the newness of the Gospel, which never loses its value and is never out-dated.

With these guidelines in mind, all of you here, members of this glorious Association, know that the Pope supports you and is with you through his prayers. He ardently asks you to persevere in the commitments you have undertaken and blesses you all with his whole heart.

Rome, Pope Paul VI's Hall, April 26th 2002

IFCA and Holy Land

On the occasion of ICA 11th national Assembly, an appeal was launched to support the Church in the Holy Land, particularly Christian schools in Palestine, and CA in Bethlehem.

CA in Bethlehem was started in 1952. As IFCA's Secretariat, while thanking ICA for having resumed contact these last 10 years, we hope that CAB becomes a member of IFCA at the next Assembly. We propose all IFCA's countries and friends to participate in ICA's initiative, particularly by supporting Christian schools in Palestine and CAB in its activities aimed towards formation.

The solidarity of friendship

IFCA wishes to reaffirm its solidarity with the people who live in the Holy Land, in particular with the Christian communities, with the laity belonging to them and with the CA of Bethlehem (CAB).

At this difficult moment, our solidarity of friendship urges us to look at their needs and to take them upon ourselves to help them through concrete actions in collaboration with the local Church.

Supporting Christian schools in Palestine

In the Holy Land all schools which are in Israel - also the private ones - are supported by the Government, while the schools in Palestine are extremely poor.

The Secretary general responsible for Christian Educational Institutions in Palestine, the Franciscan Father Abdel Masih Fayer Fahim, of the Guardianship of the Holy Land, sent us a list of 54 Christian schools which need our help. These schools are held in highly esteem and are open to both Christian and Muslim children who are helped to live together in mutual appreciation and harmony.

Pupils, in the primary and secondary schools, number 20.028: of these 9.258 are Christian and 10.770 Muslim.

The catholic schools (14/Latin Patriarchate; 9/Guardianship of the Holy Land; 4/Salesians fathers and other male religious orders; 11/various female religious orders; 3/greek-catholic Patriarchate) and schools run by other Christian creeds (5/greek-orthodox Patriarchate; 2/copt-Orthodox; 3/Lutherans; 1/Anglicans; 2/Quakers).

5 of these schools are boarding schools for orphans.

Today many pupils stop attending school. This is a worrying phenomenon for the present and the future of the young generations. Besides many parents cannot pay the school-fees owing to unemployment.

The schools continue offering their service, even if some of them risk to close down.

The annual cost for adopting a pupil is 500 euro. This includes the running of the school and a daily meal for the pupils.

An annual scholarship for a university student amounts to 2.000 euro.

An annual adoption of an orphan is also possible: the cost is 7.200 eur. This includes the school fees and full board and lodging.

Exchange for the formation and support to CA in Bethlehem and in other places

CA in Bethlehem started in 1952. These last few years ICA renewed its contacts with CAB, especially through its visits during pilgrimages and through invitations to Italy.

Father Ibrahim Faltas, who is in charge of the catholic school in Bethlehem, participated in IFCA's 3rd Assembly in Rome.

During the visit of an ICA's delegation to the Holy Land in Christmas 2001, the parish priest and the CA's President asked ICA for more collaboration with the CA of Bethlehem (CAB) especially when it comes to the formation of laypeople: adults, youths, and educators.

The exchange should envisage sessions in Bethlehem and in other places in the Holy Land as well as in the countries which are ready to offer their help.

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"... Christian communities on every continent, with trepidation and hope I ask you to proclaim that Jesus is truly risen, and to work so that his peace may bring an end to the tragic sequence of atrocities and killings that bloody the Holy Land, (...)

Denunciation must be followed by practical acts of solidarity that will help everyone to rediscover mutual respect and return to frank negotiation. In that Land Christ died and rose from the dead, and left the empty tomb as a silent but eloquent attestation.

By breaking down in himself the hostility the dividing wall between people, he has reconciled all through the Cross (cf. Eph 2:14-16), and now he commits us, his disciples, to remove every reason for hatred and revenge.

John Paul II, *Urbi et Orbi* Message, March 31st 2002

Meeting of the Secretariat

The third meeting of the Secretariat was held in Rome on April 29th-30th until May 1st, immediately after the 11th ICA's national Assembly.

We envisaged to send the Pope's address to ICA to the Bishops of the countries where CA is present, to the Presidents and Secretaries of the Episcopal Conferences, and to the Bishops charged with the Lay Apostolate.

We checked the preparation of the continental meetings, beginning from the one in Africa.

We also envisaged to intensify the relations with the ICO after IFCA joined them, which happened in their world Assembly in Bangkok (December 2nd-9th 2001), with a particular attention to the collaboration in the continental meetings with: WUCWO, ICCM, MIDADE, JECI-MIEC, JOCI...

Monday April 29th we went to the Pontifical Council for the Laity, where H.E. Msgr. Stanislao Rylko welcomed us for the usual updating.

10th Symposium of the European Bishops

Rome, April 24th-28th 2002

Theme: "Youths of Europe in the changement. Laboratory of faith"

IFCA participated in it through a young representative: Oana Tuduce from Oradea (Romania), national leader of the Romanian youths and ASTRU (CA's greek-catholic youths).

The 10th Symposium of the European Bishops was promoted and organized by the Council of the Episcopal Conferences of Europe (CECE), under the direction of its new President, Msgr. Amédée Grab, Coira, President of the Swiss Episcopal Conference.

This great meeting was attended by about 100 Bishops, by the Presidents of all European Episcopal Conferences and by the prefects of some roman departments and 32 youths. Every Episcopal Conference, as well as some ICO, sent their own young delegate to the meeting.

Also European organizations were represented such as those for the Priests (CCPE), Men and Women Religious (UCESM) and Laypeople (European Forum for the Laity). It was attended also by some ecumenical representatives from all Europe.

Youths' Coordination and 3rd Week of formation

After Miromir 2001

On the occasion of the Holy Father's visit to Bulgaria, we have put the first information in IFCA space in ICA website, starting with "Youths Coordination and Weeks of formation for Youths".

Please see the undermentioned site for any further information about Youths' coordination and activities in the different countries:

http://www.azionecattolica.it/FIAC/Attivita/Coor_giov_e_sett_form

There you find an index of the material already available concerning the "3rd Week of Formation 2001" and some excerpts from the Press release of 23/5, about the week in Miromir, during which we visited the places which also John Paul II visited as a pilgrim, namely Sofia, Rila, Plovdiv.

Excerpts from the Press release of 23/5/2002

http://www.azionecattolica.it/FIAC/Documenti/Comunicati/Com_Bulgaria

"In Bulgaria with the Holy Father"

(...)

IFCA offered prayers for the Holy Father: for the shepherd of the universal Church, the untiring pilgrim, in the name of Jesus Christ, of peace, dialogue, unity and fraternity for all peoples and for all the Churches which welcome him.

(...)

On the website ACI there is already some information about the week in Bulgaria: as a sign of gratitude towards our friends there and to share in their joy and hope.

This is also a desire and a commitment to continue our journey together, "to launch out into the deep" at this moment, when the Pope is visiting their country, to confirm them in their faith, the gift from God which has to be preserved and made to bear fruit in the Church, in Bulgaria, in Europe and in the whole world, following the teachings of Saints Ciril and Methodius, patron saints of Europe. (...)

NEWS FROM CA

Argentine

24th Federal Assembly of the Argentine Catholic Action
August 17th, 18th and 19th 2002 - Buenos Aires
"Here am I among you as one who serves" (Lk 22,27)

Events are taking place in our country which are upsetting the social and economical order and cause anguish, confusion and distress to all of us. Our country is clashing with an epochal crisis which undermines its own foundations. It places us in front of a possible rebirth which will be carried out by the protagonists of this "today", so chaotic and exhausting but at the same time so full of hope. Catholic Action chooses to stay "within the society" "among the people" "among those who suffer most pain, exclusion and poverty" so as to "be of service" in this reality. It strives to help every brother by announcing the Gospel, through commitment to values, by carrying out works which promote every man's, every woman's, every child's dignity as God's children. CA chooses to reflect upon its "staying" in society in a "new" way that may be fruitful and may enable us to instil into society roots of dialogue, reconciliation, solidarity, justice and peace. CA chooses to do this by listening to the voices of its brothers who are engaged in temporal realities and are working to build up a better society, fully aware that we live our holiness in our daily commitment in the world. We should not flee from it but should rather bring to it the announcement of redemption and the hope that is stemming "here and now".

A strong commitment

This Federal Assembly, in this particular time, should urge us to a strong commitment "to be and to act" in accordance with our lay vocation and mission in CA which is "necessary" in the Church and in society. Though we may feel a little disappointed at not being able to look at each other face to face in a general Assembly, our challenge will be that of "making of this Assembly a gift" as a gesture of austerity, work, sacrifice and renewed commitment in society and in the Church. We know that this "gift" has a price which will condition the impulse the Assembly usually gives to our itinerary. But since we entrust it and unite it to Jesus, Lord of History, we feel sure that this will give more abundant fruits of service. For many reasons this Assembly has a deeper taste of "cross" and therefore even a greater taste of fruitfulness and hope. We are living in difficult times, which invite us to difficult decisions and to great efforts for communion and dialogue towards the Common Good of our own Association. In fact, as an Association, we start by giving our contribution to the country. This requires temperance of soul, firm belief that the Holy Spirit animates and sup-

ports us and generosity to pursue what we should promote, even if it is no longer the initial project that we dreamt of through this Federal Assembly. Our country needs a quite new gesture. It needs to dialogue and to find out ways in order to revive. It needs to rediscover the essential values through which it may rebuild its present and its future. We have a great contribution to give, particularly by approaching those who are most suffering need and pain. This is the commitment of all those who have undertaken, as their vocation and mission, to be witnesses of hope, prophets of justice, messengers of peace, servants to society through charity. May the faithful Virgin, our Mother and star of Evangelization, help us to imitate her generosity and courage.

Austria

The Catholic Action of Austria (KAÖ) invites to discuss European issues on-line. Due to the 50th anniversary of the "Schuhmann-declaration" on May 9th the Katholische Aktion Österreich (official politically engaged movement of the Catholic Church in Austria) has started an on-line forum to discuss European issues. The Katholische Aktion Österreich intends to stress the social importance of the EU Enlargement. The forum discusses the entry of eastern European countries into the Union, referring not only to its opportunities and benefits but also to its fears and criticism. Statements from notable persons as Bishop Kapellari, Bishop Homeyer, President of the ComeCE, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Austrian Minister of foreign affairs, and Franz Fischler, EU-commissioner started these exchanges of views with their input. The KAÖ invites everybody to comment on Europe at www.kaoe.at

Catholic Action of Lugano (Italian Switzerland)

Spighe is the name of the publication issued by CA in Lugano

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of its publication, we are giving a brief presentation about it, starting from its very beginning. The year 1922 was a very important year in the life of our Diocese: Msgr. Bacciarini issued the Statute on which CA was to function. CA was to embrace four branches: men, male youth, women and female youth. Already at the end of the 18th century, the first groups, forerunners of today's catholic organizations, particularly Piusverein (or Piana Society) started to emerge. At the beginning of the 19th century, the first centres and oratories appeared. The need for some action in the religious and spiritual sphere was already being felt. Youth Groups in different Cantons, like the "Fascio Luigi Rossi", started to exist but the political influence was still very strong. It was only just after the war that there was a turning point. The social crisis and the "communist dan-

ger" (the spreading of socialist ideas) made a truly catholic action, free from any political ties, necessary. Msgr. Bacciarini, the new bishop, started setting up groups for young people and women. In 1917, the group "Fascio Luigi Rossi" became FGCT (Ticino Catholic Youth Group). In 1920, UFCT (Ticino Female Youth Group) was set up. The aim of starting the publication of *Spighe al Vento* in January 1922 was precisely to help the new associations to function. Enriched with basic facilities, like printing, it was possible to spread "the good catholic literature" to counteract atheistic literature. In 1989, *Spighe* became the official publication of the diocesan CA and just in the same year through the initiative of Msgr. Eugenio Corecco, a Congress was organized to relaunch CA. *Spighe* is 80 years old. It reaches UFCT members, families and young people. It combines the wisdom of an 80 year old with the enthusiasm and freshness of a young person. Happy Birthday, *Spighe*!

Spain

A new Bishop Ecclesiastic Assistant and a new Vice-Ecclesiastic Assistant for the Spanish Catholic Action

Don Atilano Rodríguez Martínez, who has been Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Oviedo since 1996, has been nominated, last February, as the new Bishop Assistant of the Spanish Catholic Action. Don Atilano has for years recognized Catholic Action, as a peculiar means in the Church for promoting associated lay apostolate. He has accepted this new pastoral mandate, which his fellow Bishops have entrusted to him, with great enthusiasm. We, as Catholic Action Movements, are very satisfied and pleased with this appointment because we have already experienced the cordial brotherly collaboration and comprehension with which our new Bishop Assistant has started working closely with us, precisely Catholic Action's way of being of service in the evangelizing mission in our times. We are starting our work with some other good news. Since last September, José Julio Marín, a priest from the diocese of Teruel, has been appointed new Vice-Assistant of the Spanish Catholic Action. Julio has for many years been the Assistant of the Junior Movement and during these last three years he has been in Paris as the International Assistant of MIDADE (International Movement for the Apostolate with Children). This means that while our mission remains unchanged, the work of being of service for the Reign of God through Catholic Action, is being entrusted to new people. We are pleased to have Don Atilano and Julio amongst us and thank God for Don José María Conget who for ten years was a really good Pastor for Catholic Action and who is now interceding for us before God. We would also like to thank José Antonio Valdarrama, the outgoing Vice-Assistant, for his generous dedication to our Catholic Action for so many years.

September 2002