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International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA)
Unum Omnes - International Council of Catholic Men (UO/ICCM)
World Union of Catholic Women Organisation (WUCWO)

*Listening
to the Holy Spirit
towards the Third Millennium*

SPECIAL ISSUE 1st MEETING

Rome, Domus Mariae, September 2-3rd 1998

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Presentation

On our journey towards the Great Jubilee of 2000, we were questioned by a joint wish and commitment of unity around what is essential and thanks to the friendship that, in these years, is born and grown between some leaders of our organisms, we planned - upon IFCA's proposal - a meeting to reflect and pray together, to deepen our mutual knowledge and to intensify the exchanges of experiences.

It was held in Rome, the city which is seat of Peter, whom we could meet on occasion of the meeting of ICA's Adult Section on september 5th.

The participants were the continental and national leaders and assistants of ICCM, WUCWO and IFCA - three organisms, each of them with its own history, its own structure - and some experts who introduced and enriched our reflection. This led to a joint document which opens this booklet.

Then follow the contributions by father Thomas Spidlik sj and Stella Morra, who helped us to catch the importance of listening to the Holy Spirit at the threshold of the third millennium, as international organisms of associated laypeople, with different ways of organisation: men, women, youths and children, in the parishes and in the environments, all of them at the service of the particular and universal Church, in the different societies where the Lord calls us to live our vocation.

The mutual presentation, the reports of the workshops highlight common elements and a variety of richness, as well as criteria for a mutual promotion and participation in the initiatives that every organism is promoting at all levels.

By her intervention, Lucienne Sallé, representing the Pontifical Council for the Laity, encouraged this first step as a concrete sign of wil-

ling to listen, to collaborate and to enforce unity, through proposals to meet and to form the christian faithful called to follow Christ who said "be one so that the world may believe".

Moment of prayers under the guide of Mons. Agostino Superbo, IFCA's assistant, helped us to meet the Word and to participate in the eucharist, which enforced the basis of our joint commitment and fed new energies for the future.

We present therefore a collection of the materials of the two days of work: we do hope that these ACTS may become an useful instrument to share and spread contents, style and atmosphere of the roman days.

Beatriz Buzzetti Thomson
Coordinator of IFCA's Secretariat

Buenos Aires - Rome, June 29th 1999.
Feast of Saints Peter and Paul

Listening to the Holy Spirit towards the Third Millennium: with some hints for a reflection upon ecclesial groups, movements and associations

Joined in a meeting of reflection and friendship in Rome on September 2nd and 3rd 1998, as leaders of the International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA), Unum Omnes (UO) and World Union of Women Catholic Organization (WUCWO),

1. We agree to highlight some joint commitments:

- strengthening unity in the Church: we own that "we have only one Teacher, the Christ" (Mk 23-10). We represent international catholic organizations which reunite many national catholic organizations all over the world. We recognize our own diversity and complementarity and we feel united, as we know that this is a sign of the Spirit's richness.
- Intensifying our commitment for the evangelization, primary task of all Christians. Our joint goal is to spread the Good News with a new vitality in view of the Third Millennium.
- Acting especially for the respect of Human Rights, which means acting for the Evangelization: we recognize the value of every human being, as God's image and our organizations are earnestly engaged in making human rights known and respected, with a particular attention to the outcast from society.

- Caring especially for the youths and proposing them to participate in our organizations.

- Intensifying our relationships, setting up networks with other similar associations (OIC), working in the Church and in society, with an active presence in various areas:

- formation
- culture
- communication
- politics
- economy
- social doctrine of the Church

with attention to the international organisms and, especially, to ONU.

- Keeping closer links through exchanges in information (sheets, addresses...) and mutual invitations to initiatives...

- As members of God's People, we think it necessary to practice dialogue (after Vatican Council II and *Ecclesiam Suam*) and to listen always to the Holy Spirit at the threshold of the Third Millennium.

2. We wish also to share some hints for a reflection on the journey of ecclesial groups, movements and associations - keeping in mind the many and distinct members of IFCA, UO, WUCWO - to start and encourage a dialogue which, after our first meeting, will be possible and fruitful.

Ecclesial groups, movements and associations: in the ecclesial community - that is in our particular Churches and, with them, in the great journey of the universal Church - they express the gifts, the charisms of the different forms of evangelic witness and service with which the Lord guides and enriches His Church all along the roads of history.

Ecclesial groups, movements, associations therefore are, for the faithful who join them, a way to live baptism, confirmation, marriage which marked their lives, nourished by the Eucharist, guided by the Word, supported by specific gifts, by specific charisms that the Lord bestowed to them.

Ecclesial groups, movements, associations, therefore, recognize themselves as "living part" of a "whole" which is the ecclesial community; as active subjects of a greater community in which they are rooted and without which they cannot exist; as members who build up, each for its own part and all together, a body, one vital body. Each of them with its own specificity, with its own identity, with its own history, with its own style: but each of them as a part of a whole from which it receives and to which it gives, in a necessary bond with the others on behalf of the full vitality of both the whole and the parts.

Ecclesial groups, movements and associations find their own meaning, their own value only in this ecclesial dynamics, which is the dynamics of an organic communion, where variety - and therefore diversity - complement and develop into unity, unity in the common growth in the faith, for which everyone offers its own specific and irreplaceable contribution.

It is the dynamic principle which comes from the Lord's Spirit who lavishes diverse hierarchical and charismatic gifts on the Church, who guides her in the way to the entire truth, that is the source both of variety and unity.

Dynamics of communion - and of organic communion - is also dynamics of mission, since communion is not to shut oneself up or to retreat into oneself but to offer the other one's own gift and to open to receive the other's gift: there is a circularity which links communion and mission and leads from mission to communion.

For ecclesial groups, movements and associations this means to discover the basic importance of the gift, of the charism received, of the form of witness and service springing from oneself's own specific identity just with the view of announcing the Gospel in the concrete history, just with the view of animating the historical reality with the christian spirit.

The dynamics "variety - complementarity - unity" supports the commitment for the mission and - more properly - the commitment for bringing one's own contribution, springing from one's own identity, to the only mission which the christian community, in its unity, in its organicity

is called to: the mission to announce and to serve, in the history, God's plan of love, of liberation and of salvation for man.

Hence the exacting perspective which opens to ecclesial groups, movements, associations: to be active, vital subjects for the growth of the ecclesial community in the faith, in the communion, through a more and more widespread practice of participation and co-responsibility; to be active and significant subjects for the announcement of the Gospel in the concrete historical situations on behalf of a more and more fruitful encounter between Gospel and cultures, on behalf of an effective christian animation of society so that she can rediscover the essential cornerstones of the central position of every human person, of the inviolability of universal human rights, of the absolute priorities springing from the "preferential love for the poor", which must be unmistakable sign of the love and actions of the Christians in the history, according to God's plan.

3. We wish to thank the Lord for this first meeting which enabled us to live a church-experience in Rome and entrust the very first fruits to our leaders and members, with the hope to pursue our common journey further.

Listening to the Holy Spirit

SPIRITUAL DIMENSION

Tomás Spidlík s.j.

The primary importance of the unrepeatable Divine Call

Much is being said about the vocational problem of priests and religious. In reality, however, this is a fundamental question of existence. One has to consider it not only in the profane but also in the biblical sense. Profanely speaking, one presupposes existence before the decision on a vocation, depending on one's own gifts and inclinations. From the religious point of view, it goes the opposite way: God Himself prepares a person for his/her vocation, in view of which He creates him/her and prepares the circumstances that should guide him/her towards it. Therefore, Christians lay people too should ponder deeply on this personal call.

This line of thought actually results from the great mistakes of the ideologies of our times. Some are clearly false, but it is also a mistake to think that one can propose a new form of ideology, which is both proper and Christian, that can substitute the personal dialogue between God and man or that any organization can identify the living message of Christ with itself.

A practical conclusion for us: our organizations, our associations and the Catholic Action initially started on a grand scale and even today can boast of a glorious tradition but they have to be on guard not to project themselves as a system of immutable abstract principles. In that sense they would be in direct contrast with the so called "modern movements" which are more charismatic and more dynamic. All these movements and associations should, in reality, be "moved by the Spirit" which is always alive in the Church.

Every prayer, from the dogmatic point of view, is essentially charismatic and it is, therefore, essential to give consideration to the charismatic aspect in every choice of action that is decided upon. In this way our prayers are addressed to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit.

We have to make another dogmatic consideration. The participation with the Spirit does not depend on our enthusiasm or on how much we feel His presence. The Spirit is God and God is invisible. His presence is only noticed through manifestations and the most perfect manifestation is love and not fervour of the moment.

The primary importance of the people of God and the universal priesthood

We often hear this complaint: that in the early documents of the Catholic Action much emphasis was made on the aspect of the obedience of the laity to the hierarchy. This, they say, is not in accordance with the spirit of Vatican Council II which gives first importance to the role of the People of God. The participation of the laity, therefore, cannot be reduced to an act of obedience to the hierarchy and should be creative.

What should be said about this objection or about this question?

First of all one should avoid any serious equivocal misconception. In the "People of God" there should be no distinction between the followers and the leaders. The Church herself is the people of God, each member with different functions and different responsibilities. To emphasise these diverse functions, the Church used Paul's terminology of the unifications of the members in the "Body of Christ".

Vatican II preferred to use the term "People of God" for a special reason: the human body consists of organs but each of them is not free on its own, while on the contrary, the unity of the Church is formed by free persons, conscious of their individual duties and who, therefore, are able to take initiatives. The union through obedience is, therefore, transformed into a real collegial dialogue.

This holds good both for the clergy as well as for the laity.

In this perspective one should consider the distinction between the ministerial priesthood of the clergy and the common priesthood of all Christians. It is a mistake to consider the two as being totally distinct. In

fact, both the clergy and the laity have to pray one for the other, both have to forgive the trespasses of one another, both have to be witnesses of Christ and to propagate His teachings in the world.

What, therefore, does ministerial priesthood possess over and above the common universal priesthood? The answer is simple: it is the sacramental character, the unfailing power of the Spirit.

In this sense, Vatican Council II provides us with an important, through generic direction, namely to listen to the signs of the times. One of these is the ever increasing lack of priests. The most spontaneous response to this situation seems to be the following: that many activities that were previously considered to be part and parcel of the priestly duties are not so, at least not exclusively so. These activities should, therefore, be taken up by the laity. Among these activities one may include spiritual exercises and spiritual direction.

Collegiality and international contacts

Collegiality is one of the terms typical of Vatican Council II. Unfortunately, it is not always well understood. Up to now there are many who consider collegiality as a ridiculous type of "democratization" of the Church. These people forget that the Council itself declares that collegiality is not a juridical disposition. While the structures remain, they should be rendered more lively.

This can be demonstrated by an example. In any official document one finds a declaration regarding the identity of one's father; but this identity often expresses different situations. It may happen that one's father died during the son's infancy or he may be still alive. Sometimes father and son become estranged and lose contact; at other times they continue to live together. Juridically they remain as father and son but this fact may express itself in different ways. The relations between the faithful and the Pope may be expressed in a similar way. The same thing may be said about the relations between the laity, their bishops and their priests, and even between the priests themselves.

Collegiality is not intended to "restructure" the Church but to put a new life in interpersonal relations.

And taking the different local Churches into consideration, lay associations can help in the formation of persons with balanced universal visions and should, therefore, be conscious of the contribution that they can give towards this aim.

Some practical hints regarding the spiritual discernment

As we have said, the call by God is personal and unrepeatable. But, in the same time, it is lived in a community. Today we are more conscious than before of this discernment within the community. This leads to a habit known as "communal discernment".

Here I would like to point you out some forms of community reunions in the hope that they would not degenerate into discussions of a superfluous nature.

The informative type. Here, the aim is to pass information about the place where one works and about one's experience. Other people's activities serve as an inspiration to oneself.

The "praising and complaining type". This is done in two stages. In the first instance, each person speaks of the things that please him/her in the community in which he/she lives. In the second, the same person speaks of those things that hurt him/her, without accusing anybody.

The results? Those present realise how little it takes to avoid making other people's lives unpleasant.

The project type. Sometimes there is the possibility of a new initiative. After the project is explained and discussed, conclusions are collectively made as to the advantages and disadvantages of the project.

Voting. Communal discernment is not like a parliamentary democracy in which the majority imposes its will on the minority.

If the community wants to decide together, the decision has to be unanimous. This aim can only be achieved in such a way that those who have different opinions from the rest should notice this and should be persuaded by arguments to conform to the general opinion, freely and voluntarily.

Generally speaking, it may be said that in making the communal discernment, prayer is more useful than discussion.

Listening to the Holy Spirit

ECCLESIAL DIMENSION

Stella Morra

I have been asked to reflect on the ecclesial dimension of the following theme: *listening to the Spirit*.

To my mind it all boils down to the two words: the **roots** and the **wings**. It seems to me that the big ecclesial question that we have to face is: "Where do we have our roots?" and "Which wings do we use to go where?"

I feel that on one hand we all have a need to recover roots, deep beliefs, spirituality, aims and reasons; while on the other hand we are confronted with an expanse of ground over which we can fly, a sky that is new to which we are not accustomed and for which our wings are not strong enough.

Before beginning I would like to offer you a short quotation from a book by an Italian theologian, Dianich, because, it seems to me, that it is important for us to keep in mind that this is not a question about ideology or one of pure, rational, systematic thought. The ecclesial dimension is, first and foremost, a personal question that interests us and that is close to our heart. It is for this reason that we reflect, discuss, ponder, confront one another, think about organizations and ideas. Had it not been a personal question all this could not be.

The quotation runs as follows:

No man is an island; one lives with others to work with them; one makes friends to enjoy oneself with them; one looks for good colleagues to study with them; people fall in love and live their lives together. In the same way those who believe in Jesus experience a life of faith together. From this point of view, people do not raise many questions regarding the Church; they crave for it as they do for the air they breathe. If we suffer terribly because of it, this shows that it is a deep part of our life and of our sentiments.

Three short points on which I shall reflect.

The roots and the wings

The first is the question of our roots and our roots for the ecclesial reflection lie in Vatican Council II. The Council's question was: "Church, who are you?" and thus at the basis for our reflection is the Council's documents *Lumen Gentium*. This is not a question of how we appear to be but it is a question of personal identity. Only by understanding who one is and why he is "himself" (an individual person) can one respond to one's vocation. There cannot be a response to a vocation without a subject, a person. And the Church asked herself the question about her own identity "who she was", in order to respond to her vocation as a community given to her by God together with spiritual gifts in order to be able to live it.

Vatican Council II states that the Church has both roots and wings. Its roots are *Dei Verbum* and *Sacrosantum Concilium*, the Word of God and the Liturgy, the sacramental fullness of the ministerial priesthood. The Church subsists on the Eucharistic: there can be no Church without the Eucharistic, the Word of God and the Sacraments.

And then the wings. These are the Council's documents *Gaudium et Spes*, *Ad Gentes* and *Unitatis redintegratio*, that is the reunderstanding of the Church's role in the world, her duty to evangelize all the peoples and her avowal of the necessity of the unification of all those who believe in Christ.

The obedience of the Church to the Word and her calling through the Eucharistic for the world and for its evangelization is not a theory but it is a part of the history of salvation; another keyword of the Council.

Since the Church is part of the history of salvation, she finds herself in a state of continuous tension between her historical earthly nature and her eschatological character, between her being here on earth, now, for men and women whom she encounters, in this historical era of which she forms a part, and her not being of this world, as she is a sign of the Kingdom of God, the pledge of a community that will reach its fullness when its Master will return.

Because of this state of continuous tension of the Church, it is impossible for us to stop and do nothing. If we stop we shall fall. We may, therefore, either become too much attached to our historical past or we may be too eager for change, thus forgetting to keep our feet on solid ground. We are in fact called upon to live in this difficult and uncomfortable situation.

There are already, in the Church, people who, even now, are a sign of the Kingdom of God: the contemplative people who live in the world according to the Kingdom. And there are in the Church people who, by their lives and their deeds, become a sign of Christ's incarnation in the history of the world, a sign of the Kingdom of God which will come but which demonstrates the frailty of the time in which we live now: those who live in the century. From this point of view, we can envisage, in a new way, the similarity between the ministry and the lay people, the priests and the laity. Both live now, on earth, in this century.

This root of Vatican Council II bequeaths us many heredities and with respect to us, today, it is important to underline at least three points.

The first. That we stay in our time, that we live the incarnation, our history, that we make use of the things around us, does not make us second class citizens. This is only one of the two poles of tension which make the Church. With no century, no history, no things, there would be no tension. Therefore, laypeople who in a special way and according to the Council, seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will, by doing so, ensure that the Church does not lose the balance.

The concrete Churches

The second. The second point to be emphasised is the following. The concrete Churches, the local communities are all the time called upon to consider themselves in relation to what is essential. In order to keep the balance they must have a clear mind as to what is important and what is not, what is to be considered absolute and should not be changed, and what is not. Above all, the Churches must base all their activities on the Word of God, the Sacraments and charity. The Church is built on these.

The third. The third important point is the great question that the Council has put to us regarding the quality of the new relations - not only juridical - with those who live the same tension, but also with those realities of life that the Council considered to be of subjective importance: the other Churches, the world, the things around us.

Which relations

The question therefore arises: "Which relations should there be within the Church, and between the Church and the other realities outside it?"

The Church is above history. True, there is a common ground; but this is not fully covered by history because there is the Eucharistic that does not depend simply on matters but transcends into higher sphere. One of the two poles is embedded in history but also history is not enough. The two realities are interwoven; they meet and lead towards the Kingdom of God, following the design that God has for whole history.

But the basic question is "relations". How can one explain the mystery of the Eucharistic in such a way that people of this day and age could understand that it is not simply an abstract truth? How is the Church, which is not of this world, connected with the world? How does she explain it? Through which lives? How can the history outside the Church be listened to? Who is to convey into the Churches this part of history which they cannot come across in this world?

This is an open question. It is clear, however, that the Kingdom of God, towards which we certainly direct ourselves, tells us through the Word of God and the signs of the times, how we should be, more than ever, in all circumstances, servants of the Kingdom.

The ecclesiology of communion

Another step forward: it seems to me that, with regard to this question, from the Council till today, we are to refer to *Mulieris dignitatem* and *Christifideles Laici*. The latter in Chapter 2, states that the "question is an ecclesiology of communion". This, to my mind, is a step forward, provided that the "ecclesiology of communion" is not simply a good intention but is a strong will to understand and to build up the Churches upon it. It appears to me, therefore, even considering *Christifideles Laici* para.30 and others, that deep down the question is one of combining **diversity** with **complementary**, **particularity** with **universality**, **individual** with **community**.

We refer to diversity because in the communion diversity is a value in itself; it is a sign of the richness of the Spirit; of a Spirit who, when listened to, produces fruits according to God's fantasy. On the other hand, diversity has to exist with complementarity, that is it has to be a diversity that explains itself, that relates, not a sumtotal of diversities but the fruitful encounter of diversities. We also refer to particularity, since we underlined the value of the particular Churches but also of the Incarnation. It is a fact that every minute in the history of our lives has

an eternal value because we are not angels; because the Son of God became man. On the other hand, this particularity functions if it is the place of universality.

Besides: individual, because faith depends on God who is our Father, and although faith is very much a personal matter, it is not of a private nature. It is individual because it concerns me but it is also a fact of communion since it affects other persons.

These pairs of words, it seems to me, represent the names of the tensions that I referred to previously: a Church that forms part of history and is eschatological at the same time. History and eschatology are the general names; in these years, at the end of the second millennium, this tension, I think, is being called by names that refer to the ecclesiology of communion.

I shall now give an example of what is particular-universal. We are in the habit of following the gerarchical, or we may say, juridical argument when talking of the relation between particular and universal: there are many particulars and their sumtotal is the universal. By this logic, it happens, therefore, that every particular tries to stretch out. But the idea of the relation between particular and universal, according to communion, is that the subject, which is a person, experiences what is universal through what is particular. None of us, in fact, arrives directly to what is universal; each one of us has only one life, one place, one story, through which he can take cognition of other particulars as part of the universal.

A case in point in this matter is the relation between men and women. It appears to me that *Mulieris dignitatem* speaks very clearly on this matter. We can only consider humanity from the point of view of sexual persons. We are either men or women, and it is only through our encounter with the opposite sex that we form an idea of what is humanity. And it is not by chance that the Holy Scripture uses the love between man and woman as a privileged image to demonstrate the communion between God and man. This is not a poetic allegory but a fact stretched to the limit. It is an extreme case of us human beings, being only "partial"; a case to show that on our own we cannot be "all". I think this offers us many reasons for reflection because the ecclesial experiences of lay organizations, by defending their own particular interests, may delay the Church's development. By their organized forms and tradition, that is by the experience gained from relations and from

their structured relations, lay organizations may be of inestimable value to take a step forward with regard to the ecclesial problems of relations today.

I conclude with a final observation.

I think that the question regarding laity or the reflection upon laity is not, as often said, a corporative one, a question of each lay organization wanting to distinguish itself and thus increasing the divisions. On the contrary, I believe that lay people, especially women, owing to their culture, tradition and historical background, have a special duty because for a long time they have had to learn to be fathers, lawyers, doctors, believers, catechists, sons and daughters and all these things together and have long since learned to decide whether, say "to listen to my 15 years old who has a problem", or "go to a parochial meeting" or "iron because so I have already solved a tomorrow's problem" or to have to choose, from time to time, for example, what is most essential to do for that evening, for that day. In doing so, lay people learned long ago, to work together in order to help one another in the task of doing so many activities and have to decide, from time to time, which of these is the most important.

This, I believe, may be a decisive source of wealth to be offered to the Churches of the third millennium.

Report of the workshops

Workshop n. 1

1. Which positive and interesting elements have you found in the presentation of the other organisms?

- WUCWO: its presence in so many countries of the world
- UNUM OMNES: its attention to wide areas of the world in need of the Holy Spirit
- IFCA: a "young" organism, which is spreading
- linking aims between WUCWO and UO.

2. Which common aspects have our organisms which can be brought to light and promoted?

- concern for the world - for solidarity
- concern for the young people
- concern for the economic activities overwhelming "common man"
- need for politically active catholics
- communication of the truth
- listening to people both by the lay leaders and the hierarchy
- training in listening
- involving young people in concrete things.

3. In which activities could we foresee coordination and cooperation?

- critical assessment about world activities - recall to "real" needs
- inter-aid in formation
- making communication more "comprehensible".

4. Please suggest two recommendations to present in the assembly

- a. Formation of leaders to listen to people: - formation of the laity can be a theme to suggest for the World Congress of the laity of 2000 (PCL)
- b. Family life - promotion of life and culture of the family as a personal and spiritual community (PCL Congress 2000).

Workshop n. 2

1. Which positive and interesting elements have you found in the presentation of the other organisms?

- the number of countries where our organizations work
- we all have committed leaders
- we all are world-organizations
- we all share the concern for solving the problems of the Church
- we all express interest for working in network all together
- we all feel the influence of the Holy Spirit acting in each of us
- priority of the formation, in order to put the Vatican Council II into practice
- commitment with the young people
- commitment for the social teaching of the Church.

2. Which common aspects have our organisms which can be brought to light and promoted?

- working with the Church and promoting Church's teachings
- working together for unity
- informing public opinion about our aims and ideals
- informing each organization about activities
- working in two directions: in the Church and as Christians in the society.

3. For which activities could we foresee coordination and cooperation?

- choosing a common theme as "Family" sharing the aspects without duplication
- holding seminars as continents sharing the organizations
- identifying the different areas for cooperation
- evaluating together what we have done
- sharing the list of people of each organization in each country so they can know each other
- working together in UN and OIC
- working together in the countries of Eastern Europe.

4. Please suggest two recommendations to present in assembly

- a. Forming a kind of committee with the three organizations
- b. inviting delegates of the other organizations to the different meetings.

Workshop n. 3

1. Which positive and interesting elements have you found in the presentation of the other organisms?

- opening to dialogue and common prayer
- ecclesial criteria.

2. Which common aspects have our organisms which can be brought to light and promoted?

- common interest for an ecclesial task
- international structure as a form to live the universality of the Church
- concern for the formation
- commitment for the evangelization.

3. For which activities could we foresee coordination and cooperation?

- promotion of the laypeople in the Church and in society
- joint public presence through declarations, communications...
- joint contribution to the preparation of the World Lay Congress of 2000 (PCL)
- pushing the coordination at local level
- spreading the publications of each organism
- going on with this kind of meetings
- final common declaration about this meeting.

4. Please suggest two recommendations to present in the assembly

- a. bettering the communication
- b. joint analysis of the social and political reality.

Catholic Action is like the water...

Thanking for the invitation sent to the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Lucienne Sallé recalled the interest that the same Council and in particular the late President, Cardinal Eduardo Pironio, always took in IFCA. She highlighted then some points of reflection for the future:

1. The Bishops' Synod upon laypeople's vocation and mission in 1987 and the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, which arose from it, are still topical today. They are essential to fulfil laypeople's vocation. Catholic Action remains a privileged place for the achievement of the following exigencies:
 - the members' formation, a permanent formation, intimately linked with the spiritual dimension;
 - the call to action, which is to be carried out not only at individual level but also at public and international level; the Christians should be present in the Non-governative Organizations (ONG), and in all environments where public opinion is made;
 - the duty of making communion within the associations, within Catholic Action, but also with the new forms of associations. Catholic Action has its own place in the concert of all the associated forms in the Church. Catholic Action lives and develops also today in various countries, particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe.
2. Catholic Action is indispensable for the Church. Even if it does not gather such a big number of members as in the fifties, it remains a current integrated in the daily life of the ecclesial communities. Catholic Action is like the water; it is necessary, indispensable to life; it is simple, it is part of daily life; one drinks it without thinking, but it becomes a treasure in the dry areas where it must be conveyed with great care.

Catholic Action's spirituality is to live faith in daily life; it is the spirituality of the review of life, it is also the spirituality of the diocesan dimension of the Church around the Bishop.

Catholic Action's action aims to transform daily life in its ordinary dimension; it is an action placed at disposal of the parish and diocesan Church.

3. Catholic Action, throughout the world, is a family. Being so, it must help the world of today to live the sense of the family, of the mutual gift between men and women and between generations.

It is up to IFCA to lead Catholic Action towards the Great Jubilee. It will be a moment of conversion for all and an opportunity to leave what is old to put the accent on what is essential. IFCA is invited to participate actively in the World Meeting of Laypeople, organised by the Pontifical Council for the Laity, which will be held in Rome in 2000, for the solemnity of Christ the King.

Lucienne Sallé
Pontificium Consilium pro Laicis

Vespers at Sistina Chapel

On thursday 3rd September, in the afternoon, the participants could visit Sistina Chapel and celebrate the Vespers in this place, which is so meaningful for the believer (the Pope's election is held in Sistina Chapel) and for all those who love beauty and art.

The historical and artistic information concerning the Sistina Chapel were given us by the Master of the liturgic Celebrations of the Sovereign Pontiff, H.E. Mons. Piero Marini, who participated with us in the prayer.

Report on Vatican Council

The Council of Vatican II was a significant event in the history of the Catholic Church. It was the first general council since the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965. The council was convened by Pope John XXIII and was held in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The council was a landmark event in the history of the Catholic Church, as it was the first general council since the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965. The council was convened by Pope John XXIII and was held in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The council was a landmark event in the history of the Catholic Church, as it was the first general council since the Second Vatican Council in 1962-1965.

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International Forum of Catholic Action

The International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA) is a global organization of Catholic Action groups. It was founded in 1962 and has since grown to include members from over 100 countries. The forum provides a platform for Catholic Action groups to share their experiences and work together to address common challenges. The forum is a global organization of Catholic Action groups. It was founded in 1962 and has since grown to include members from over 100 countries. The forum provides a platform for Catholic Action groups to share their experiences and work together to address common challenges.

Presentation

The presentation of the IFCA is a testament to the power of Catholic Action. It is a global organization of Catholic Action groups that has grown to include members from over 100 countries. The forum provides a platform for Catholic Action groups to share their experiences and work together to address common challenges. The presentation of the IFCA is a testament to the power of Catholic Action. It is a global organization of Catholic Action groups that has grown to include members from over 100 countries. The forum provides a platform for Catholic Action groups to share their experiences and work together to address common challenges.

International Forum of Catholic Action (IFCA)

Unum Omnes - (UO/ICCM)

World Union of Catholic Women Organizations (WUCWO)

International Forum of Catholic Action

(IFCA)

Stages

Rome, October 15-18th 1987

First meeting on the occasion of the Bishops' Synod upon "Vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world"

Rome, October 19-21st 1990

After the publication of the Post-synodal apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* with the view of setting IFCA up

Rome, November 7-10th 1991

Constituent Assembly

Caracas, February 1994

First meeting of the CA associations of Latin America

Wien, October 30th-November 1st 1994

First Ordinary Assembly

Vatican City, June 29th 1995

Decree of acknowledgment by the PCL

Asunción - November 1996

Second meeting of Latin America

Malta, April 1997

First European-Mediterranean meeting

Buenos Aires, September 11-14th 1997

Second Ordinary Assembly

Iasi, July 31st - August 2nd 1998

Second European-Mediterranean meeting

Rome, September 2nd-4th 1998

IFCA, WUCWO, ICCM meeting

Mexico City, April 4th-11th 1999

Third American meeting

Countries

MEMBERS

Argentina - Austria - Italy - Malta - Mexico - Spain (Founder countries - Secretariat 92-94/94-97) - Romania (Greek-Byzantine rite) - Romania Latin rite (Iasi) - Italian Switzerland (Lugano) - Myanmar (Loikaw - Taunggyi) - Burundi (Bururi) - Colombia - Venezuela - Paraguay (Asunción) - Luxemburg - Albania - Peru.

OBSERVERS

Poland - Bolivia - Slovakia - Cuba - Antille - Salvador - Panama - Ecuador - Hungary.

Identity

Associations, Federations of Movements of AC (under this or another name)

This particular form of group apostolate, whose identity and mission have been re-proposed 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 Synod of Bishops in October 1987.

Goals

- 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.

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.

World Union of Catholic Women Organizations

(WUCWO)

Founded in 1910, WUCWO numbers today 90 organizations in all continents and includes 5 international organizations.

WUCWO is an international organization open to all Catholic women's organizations:

- recognised by the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy;
- which are independent of political parties;
- whose objectives are in conformity with those of WUCWO.

WUCWO aims to promote the contribution of the catholic women to the ecclesial and human community.

Objectives

To achieve this goal WUCWO:

- studies and animates the participation of the woman in the evangelizing mission of the Church;
- studies, according to the christian spirit, the topics which have an interest on the world level;
- strives to promote an action which allows the woman to accomplish her role in the Church and in the society as better as possible;
- represents the opinion of catholic women in the international organizations;
- coordinates, on the international level, the activities of the catholic women's organizations and serves as a union among them.

WUCWO is recognized by the Holy See as Catholic International Organization (OIC).

It keeps relations with the following decasteriums:

- the State Secretary;
- the Congregation for the Evangelization of all peoples;
- the Pontifical Councils which deal with

- * laity
- * family
- * culture
- * promotion of Christian unity;
- * Justice and Peace;
- * interreligious dialogue.

WUCWO as an International Non-Governmental Organization has consultative status with the following United Nations' Agencies: ECO-SOC, UNESCO, UNICEF, FAO, ILO.

WUCWO, at regional level, as ONG, has consultative status:

- in the Organizations of American States;
 - in the Council of Europe;
- as member of:
- the Forum of European Women;
 - the European Forum of the National Council of Lay People.

Countries

MEMBERS

Argentina, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, New Zealand, Australia, Germany, Great Britain, Austria, Belgium, Czech Rep., Denmark, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Holland, Switzerland, South Africa, Camerun, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritius, Nigeria.

ASSOCIATED

Cuba, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Papua NG, Fiji, Madagascar, Ghana, Finland, Hungary, Greece, Poland, Swaziland, Zaire.

The international Council of Catholic Men

(ICCM)

The International Council of Catholic Men (ICCM) was founded in 1948 under the name of UNUM OMNES. This name expresses Christ's wish, that all people be one in God. The head office of the Council is in Rome.

The International Council of Catholic Men has as its aims:

- a) to group National Organizations of catholic Men committed with the lay apostolate as proposed by the Catholic Church;
- b) to foster contact between the affiliated associations so as to enable them, in a spirit of fraternal charity and mutual respect, to help one another and to collaborate with each other by active participation in the effort of evangelization from the grass roots level to the top in an international perspective;
- c) to foster and facilitate the establishment of organizations of catholic men in countries where they do not yet exist;
- d) to establish and maintain relations with international organizations as far as the objects of the Council allow it so to do;
- e) to inform public opinion and official and private international organizations about the attitude of catholic men, their hopes and expectations, on all questions of general interest;
- f) to promote the teachings of the Church.

Member countries

Argentina - Austria - France - Germany - Ghana - Great Britain - India - Ireland - Italy - Kenya - Luxemburg - Madagascar - Malta - Mexico - Nigeria - Philippines - Poland - Portugal - Slovakia - Spain - Sri Lanka - Switzerland - United States.

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September 1999