



INTRODUCTION 26.11.22

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Dear brothers and sisters of Catholic Action, you are all welcome.

It is with great joy that we meet today to share in a fraternal spirit this international conference of member country representatives and observers, during which our 8th Ordinary IFCA Assembly will take place.

For reasons of force majeure, as Secretariat, we have decided to hold this meeting electronically and have it coincide with the last meeting of the period in Rome.

The International Forum of Catholic Action was born in the light of the post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, inspired by responsible who have sought to respond to the signs of the times envisaged by our Mother Church, and with the support and encouragement of our dear Cardinal Eduardo Francisco Pironio, now venerable by the grace of God.

It is a space of solidarity for meeting, accompanying and working together, a path of reflection and commitment on the great problems that contemporary society poses to the Church and Catholic Action.

The IFCA is a community of leadership that works to foster mutual understanding, promote initiatives aimed to support and develop the service of Catholic Action respecting the cultural, social and ecclesial context in which each member or observer country operates, deepen the study of the problems that affect the life and mission of the Church at a universal, continental or regional level, to maintain relations of dialogue and collaboration with the organisations of the international lay apostolate, to represent members at the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life and at other bodies of the Holy See, and always in fidelity to the four essential notes entrusted to us by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council 60 years ago in the Decree Apostolicam Actuositatem on the Apostolate of the Laity: Ecclesiality, Laity, Organicity and Union with Pastors.

Today, more than 30 years after the establishment of the International Forum, we come together under a strong idea that challenges us: **Catholic Action Passion for a renewed humanity in Christ**; ... in this synodal time, ... in this wounded world, ... and committed to a mission with all and for all.

Together with Pope Francis and our bishops, we seek to address the great challenges of the present time: **the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth; the need for a new model of integral human development that responds to the crisis of meaning, of faith, the ecological crisis and the crisis of sustainability that**

wounds the human pilgrimage, wounding its relationship with God, between brothers and sisters, and with nature, giving rise to an enormous contrast between conquests and possibilities on the one hand, and on the other, damage and new slavery that shape a culture of indifference and discard.

Still plagued by the effects of the COVID'19 pandemic, which has left us with enormous damage in terms of loss of life, disease, emotional exhaustion and economic needs, **some rulers have led the entire world into an unimaginable crisis** - World War III, in the words of the Pope - a fratricidal, devastating, cruel war that has plunged the whole of humanity into the madness of death and the worsening of the world's food and energy deficit.

Among other war scenarios, the invasion of Ukraine cries out the pain of destruction, the displacement of millions of migrants with uncertain destinations; the fracturing of families and communities, and while fraternal bonds between nations are opening, there is also enormous insecurity, exploitation, human trafficking, enslavement..... **All manifestations of an unacceptable culture of death. So many brothers and sisters are suffering all over the world: No more wars! No more persecution! Billions of suffering people need bread and decent work! Billions of people want peace!**

Catholic Action is and wants to be more effectively a clear witness of fraternity and social friendship in this wounded world. Missionary disciples of Jesus Christ so that the world may believe. Missionary disciples for a renewed humanity in Christ, He who makes us one. He who calls us to return to the Father, walking in indissoluble Love for God, for our brothers and sisters, and for the nature we are part of.

...

Today we will have moments of prayer, listening and reflection, dialogue and proposals. We are guided by the Synodal Spirit, a spirit of encounter, listening and discernment, a spirit of communion, participation and mission with all men and women of good will, seeking to reach out to all the geographical and existential peripheries, families, the world of education and work, justice and politics, art and science, living in our parishes and communities of Catholic Action as true '**gyms of synodality**'.

In this way we will act in communion and concordance with the request of the Synodal Working Document for the continental phase (DEC 104) in which we are invited to take a further step in this spiritual journey... "Just as the experience of the disciples of Emmaus was only the beginning of their new mission, our synodal process is only a first step" (EC Russian Federation). The continental context constitutes an opportunity to live synodality, which we are still learning to grasp and which we are now invited to practise concretely. 105. ...What has been gathered in the first year of the Synod is meant to guide us and allow us to deepen our discernment, keeping in mind the basic question that animates the entire process: "How is this 'journey together' taking place today, at the various levels (from the local to the universal), that enables the Church to proclaim the Gospel, according to the mission entrusted to it, and what steps the Spirit is inviting us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?"

Thank you to all the leaders participating through Zoom from each member country and to the observers. We need the commitment of your presence during the 3 hours of work today and tomorrow. Thank you to those who logged on to YouTube to participate in the exhibition moments. Thanks to WUCWO and Unum Omnes, always present and in fraternal cooperation.

Thanks to the heads of the Pontifical Dicasteries, Bishops and Assistant Priests who will accompany these days. **Thanks to Pope Francis,** who with paternal love accompanies and encourages the journey of Catholic Action incarnated in every community and in every environment. **Thanks for his total dedication, let us pray for him and remember what he asked us in November last year on the occasion of IFCA 30th anniversary .**

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- May the forum deeply feel the urgency to work for fraternity and social friendship as a means to rebuild a wounded world.

- May we sow in the hearts of all that authentic Christian spirituality is the one rooted in the desire for holiness, and that it is a path that starts from the beatitudes and is fulfilled from Matthew 25, loving and working for our most suffering brothers and sisters.

- May the spirit that animates all your projects and works be that of being an outgoing Church that lives the sweet and comforting joy of evangelisation; and may it be noticed.

May the Holy Spirit encourage us and may the Virgin Mother and the choir of Saints and Faithful Witnesses of Catholic Action protect the entire Church and our members and families, so that we may be instruments at the service of His Kingdom of truth and life, of holiness and grace, of justice, of love, of peace and mercy.

Let us begin the work, praised be Jesus Christ!