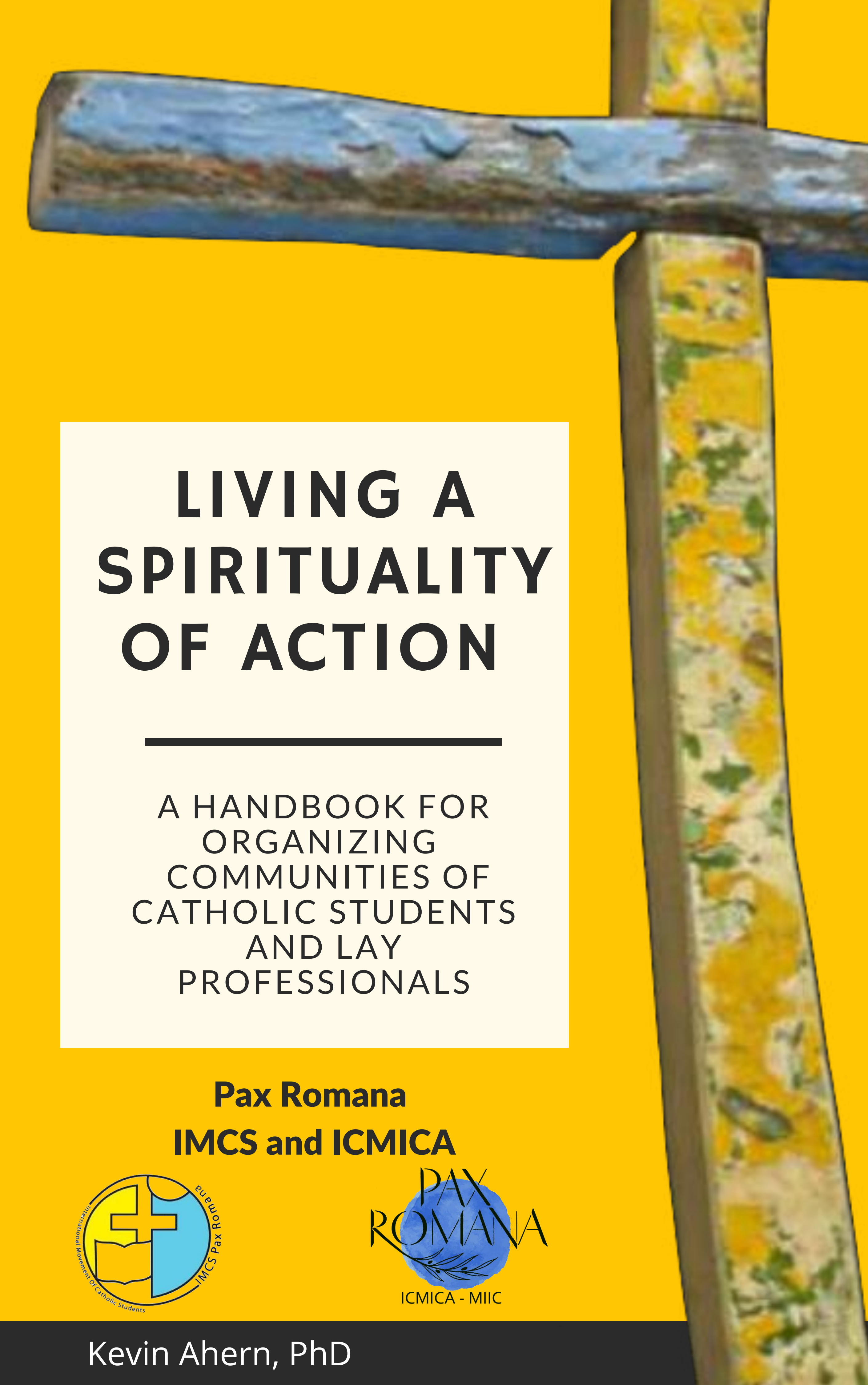




LIVING A SPIRITUALITY OF ACTION

A HANDBOOK FOR
ORGANIZING
COMMUNITIES OF
CATHOLIC STUDENTS
AND LAY
PROFESSIONALS

Pax Romana
IMCS and ICMICA



Kevin Ahern, PhD

Pax Romana

IMCS / MIEC

for college and university students



International Movement of
Catholic Students

Mouvement International des
Etudiants Catholiques

Movimiento Internacional de
Estudiantes Católicos

ICMICA / MIIC

for intellectuals and professionals



International Catholic Movement for
Intellectual and Cultural Affairs

Mouvement International des
Intellectuels Catholiques

Movimiento Internacional de
Intelectuales Católicos

Gratitude

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Introduction: Growing our Branches and Deepening our Roots

Dear friends,

2021 marks the centenary of the Pax Romana movement. A centenary is an important time for any movement or group to reflect on our roots and to see where we are called to go into the future.



In preparing the way ahead, the leadership of the two “branches” of Pax Romana, IMCS and ICMICA, have heard requests to more clearly articulate our common mission and to offer resources for the growth and development of our community. While much has changed in the church and the world over the past century, we firmly believe that our movements still have much to offer the present moment.

In order to continue to grow as movements, we need to look more closely at our distinctive spirituality. In other words, like many trees, we must deepen our roots in order to branch out.

With this booklet, we hope to more clearly articulate the identity and spiritual bases of Pax Romana by:

- **strengthening our existing movements** with a deeper reflection on the spirituality and mission of the Pax Romana family of movements;
- **providing a resource** for the growth and development of new IMCS and ICMICA groups, particularly local communities, and by
- **offering elements for reflection and training** for our movements and the wider church on our spirituality of action;

This booklet draws from several sources. Within our movements, many would be familiar with the book published by Fr. Buenaventura Pelegri by our Latin American Secretariat, *Su Opcion Su Pedagogia* (Lima, 1978) and later published in English as *IMCS-IYCS: Their Option Their Pedagogy* by the IMCS Asian Secretariat (Hong Kong, 1979). This booklet draws from this resource and many more recent reflections by some of our national movements including a booklet by the ICMICA movement in France, the *Mouvement Chrétien des Cadres et dirigeants*.¹ The recent teachings by Pope Francis have complemented and enriched our sense of mission and our vocation as movements in the church and in the world.

We sincerely hope that this small publication will deepen our sense of mission as one Pax Romana family.

Ravi Tissera, IMCS President
Kevin Ahern, ICMICA President
2020

¹ 1er Livret – “Découvrir le MCC”, 2018. The full text of this booklet can be found at www.mcc.asso.fr.

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Part I: About Pax Romana

A. Two Movements: One “Pax Romana”

Pax Romana is the name for a family of Catholic lay movements engaging students, intellectuals and professionals since 1921. The two main international lay movements are:

The International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS-Pax Romana)

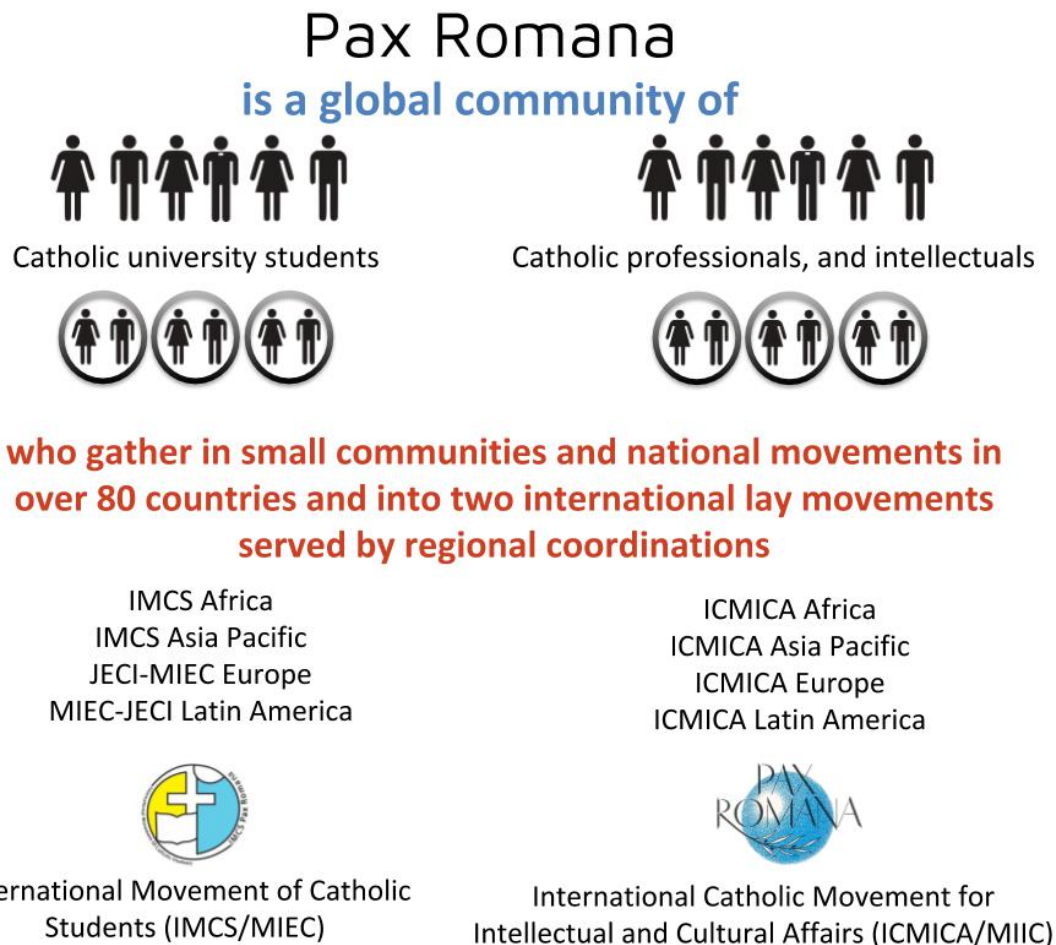


Founded in 1921, the International Movement of Catholic Students brings together Catholic university students and national student movements with a shared mission of mobilizing for faith and action. As a youth-led youth movement, IMCS promotes student leadership and responsibility in life, the Church's mission and in the world. While the name and structure of each national movement within IMCS often differs from country to country, IMCS members are united by our spirituality of action and a shared commitment to the option for the poor, the marginalized and creation, our common home. Currently IMCS has more than 88 national member movements and federations coordinated by six regional secretariats and the international office based in Paris, France. IMCS has regional offices in four continents: IMCS Africa (Nairobi, Kenya); IMCS Asia Pacific (Manila, Philippines); JEI-MIEC Europe (Brussels, Belgium); and MIEC-JEI Latin America (Quito, Ecuador). www.imcs-miec.com



The International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs

(ICMICA-Pax Romana) is a global community of Catholic intellectuals and professionals engaged in the world with a spirituality of action. Since 1947, ICMICA has united a wide range of individuals, small communities, national movements, and international networks with a shared commitment to support one another across borders and to integrate faith and action for a more just world. Inspired by the Gospel and the Catholic social tradition, ICMICA members are committed to the option for the poor, integral human development, interreligious dialogue, and the empowerment of women and young professionals. In Africa, Europe, and Latin America, the movement is served by regional teams. ICMICA includes several networks of specific professions, including The International Secretariat of the Catholic Lawyers (MIJC); The International Secretariat of the Catholic Engineers, Agronomists and Industrialists (SIIAEC); and The International Secretariat of Catholic High School Teachers (SIESC). www.icmica-miic.org



Two autonomous international associations of the faithful united by a common history and a shared spirituality of action.

The Name “Pax Romana”

In the 1920s the students and intellectuals who met after the First World War chose “Pax Romana” as a symbolic reference to a supposed ideal time when there was no war at the time of Jesus Christ’s birth. For years, the movement used the motto, “*Pax Christi in regno Christi*” (Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ). From our home city of Fribourg, at the border of French and German cultures, the Pax Romana charism seeks to build a universal vision by crossing borders and divisions, from the political, economic and cultural borders that exclude people to the false divisions between faith and reason, spirituality and social justice, church and world. Over the past few decades a more critical and historical evaluation has revealed important problems with the peace brought about by the Roman Empire. As movements, we recognize this, but we choose to keep this common name with a reference to our past and a sincere hope for future without conflict, injustice, and divisions between people.

PAX ROMANA : KEY MOMENTS



July, 1921

With the support of Pope Benedict XV, students from Switzerland, Holland, and Spain gathered students from twenty-three countries (including Argentina, the United States and Java, Indonesia) in Fribourg, Switzerland. In the wake of the First World War, the students decided to (re)create an international union of students under the name "Pax Romana" to work across borders for peace based in their shared Catholic faith



1887 - 1891

"International Union of Catholic Students"

1920s - 1930s

After the foundational meeting a secretariat is established in Fribourg to coordinate "Catholic action" of student federations, organize relief projects for students displaced by the war, and advocate for peace at the League of Nations.

Some Key Regional Events

- **1939:** First World Congress Outside of Europe (Washington and NY)
- **1941:** First Inter-American Assembly (Bogotá, Colombia)
- **1954:** First Pan Asian Seminar in (Madras /Chennai, India)
- **1957:** First Pan African Seminar (Accra, Ghana)
- **1959:** Series of Asian regional meetings including a joint Pax Romana - UNESCO meeting on the "great religions" in Asia. The first interfaith meeting supported by the Vatican.(Manila, Philippines)



1949
Pax Romana is granted NGO consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council and joins with others in founding the Conference of International Catholic Organizations

1946 and 1947

Following World War II, Pax Romana celebrates 25 years. With the support and participation of Giovanni Battista Montini (later Saint Paul VI) Pax Romana is reorganized into IMCS and ICMICA. Specialized secretariats for graduates with specific professions (doctors, engineers, lawyers, artists, teachers) are established.

1930s

Launch of special secretariats on specific themes professions: press, law, medicine, and missions



1940s - 1950s

With a War-time office in Washington, DC, Pax Romana organizes relief efforts for refugee students and prisoners of war. The movement spreads throughout Latin America and later Asia and Africa. In the 1950s, Pax Romana raises awareness to role of lay people in the church as a main organizer of the World Congresses of the Lay Apostolate.



1962-1965

Pax Romana plays significant roles at the Second Vatican Council. Key members are chosen to be among the small group of lay auditors, including Rosemary Goldie, Ramon Sugranyes de Franch, Vittorino Veronese, Silvio Golzio, Mieczyslaw de Habitch and Joaquín Ruiz-Giménez. St. Paul VI, a former chaplain of the movement, serves as Pope (1963 - 1978) and Bishop Émile Guano, former IMCS international chaplain helps to draft key texts of the council



2004

IMCS co-founds of the International Coordination Meeting of Youth Organizations (ICMYO)

1990s

In the lead up to the 1995 UN Conference on Women, ICMICA launches a women's project to study the role of women in the church and society



1987

Etienne Bisimwa, IMCS Secretary General participates as a lay auditor at the 1987 Synod on the Laity. Just before the Synod, ICMICA holds its 25th Plenary Assembly in Rome with an Audience with St. John Paul II

1971

Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Pax Romana. 27th IMCS Interfederal Assembly meets on the theme, "Liberation – How?"

Steps towards a renewed mission for Pax Romana

- **2015:** 2nd IMCS World Assembly: "Salt of the Earth, Light of the World – Students Building the Kingdom of God" (Tagaytay City Philippines)
- **2016:** ICMICA Plenary Assembly (Barcelona) "From Indifference to Mercy: Our Commitment?"
- **2018:** IMCS develops the book, *God's Quad, Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* and launches a series of events in New York, Nairobi, and Rome leading up to the 2018 Synod on "Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment"
- **2019:** 3rd IMCS World Assembly: Good Governance and Youth Participation for Sustainability (Lusaka, Zambia)

Project 2021

A series of joint projects between IMCS and ICMICA aimed at renewing our shared Spirituality of Action and ensuing the sustainability of the movements for the future

1960s - 1970s

Pax Romana embraces Vatican II's call for a renewed theology of the laity. Members and chaplains, including Gustavo Gutiérrez, Albert Nolan, OP, and Tissa Balasuriya, OMI help in the formation of "liberation theology" in response to the "signs of the times."

1980s - 2000s

IMCS moves office to a joint secretariat in Paris with IYCS. At the UN, ICMICA prioritizes human rights advocacy and develops an internship training program for human rights defenders. IMCS take a lead on advocacy on youth policy in several UN forums.

2010s - 2021

Over the past decade IMCS and ICMICA have adopted a renewed approach to the Pax Romana mission in response to the missionary challenge of Pope Francis and the realities of our members.

C. Some Faces of Pax Romana

In many ways, the spirituality and mission of Pax Romana can be found in the faces of some of key members and chaplains who have accompanied our movements over the past century. Here are just a small number of the many inspiring faces from our family album:



Saint Pope Paul VI
National Chaplain of the
Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana from 1925 to 1931.
Founding patron of ICMICA in 1947



Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati
(Italy) Member of *Federazione Universitaria Cattolica Italiana* and
Participant in Pax Romana Study
Days in 1921



Rosemary Goldie
(Australia) Member of Pax Romana
Fribourg Secretariat from 1946 to
1952. Lay Auditor of Vatican II, First
Lay Woman in Vatican Curia



Pierre Werner
(Luxembourg) Prime
Minister of Luxembourg.
Pax Romana Vice
President in 1937



Mary Mwingira
(Tanzania) African Civil
Society Leader. ICMICA
President from 1992 to
2000



Gustavo Gutiérrez, OP
(Peru) Theologian,
chaplain for *Unión Nacional de Estudiantes Católicos* and *Movimiento de Profesionales Católicos*



Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo
(Portugal) Prime Minister
of Portugal. IMCS
President from 1956 to
1958



Javier María Iguñiz
(Peru) Economist, ICMICA
President from 2008 to
2016



Jean Baptiste Ndundu
(DR Congo) Civil society
leader, democratic
reformer. National Leader
in IMCS and ICMICA



Manuela Silva (Portugal),
Economist,
ICMICA President from
1983 to 1987



Anselmo Lee
(Korea) Asian Civil Society
Leader. IMCS Asia Pacific
Coordinator from 1988 to
1991. ICMICA Secretary
General from 1997 to 2004.



Anne Hope
(South Africa)
Anti-apartheid activist
IMCS Vice President in
1951



**María Patricia Arbeláez
Montoya, MD, MSP, PhD**
(Colombia) Doctor and
ICMICA member in
Colombia



Marcel Akpovo
(DR Congo) Human Rights
Advocate, IMCS Pan
African coordinator from
1993 to 1999



Nichole M. Flores
(USA) Lay Theologian,
Past national leader of
the National Catholic
Student Coalition



Tissa Balasooriya, OMI
(Sri Lanka) Theologian,
IMCS Asia Pacific Chaplain
from 1969 to 1976.



Budi Tjahjono
(Indonesia) Human Rights
Advocate, IMCS President
from 1999 - 2003.



Mike Deeb, OP
(South Africa) Delegate of
the Dominican Order to
the UN, IMCS
International Chaplain
from 1999 to 2007.



Abbé Joseph Gremaud
Founding member,
President (1923-1924);
Secretary General (1925
-1946); IMCS Chaplain
(1947 -1950)

D. Transition from IMCS to ICMICA

ICMICA was created to help continue the Pax Romana experience after graduation. Rather than becoming totally independent, the two movements have intentionally decided to create a dynamic relationship with a shared identity. Both movements are autonomous, but not independent. In this way IMCS as a movement remains student led (graduates should not dominate after they are no longer students) and ICMICA has a partner to recruit new members and gain new energy. At the same time, ICMICA members can provide invaluable support and guidance to their younger brothers and sisters.



This process is not always easy. Generational differences can make forming a community difficult. On the one hand, older generations may have difficulty in making room for new leaders and the new ideas of younger groups. At the same time, younger professionals may find it challenging to integrate into an established group. Here are some ideas to make the transition easier:

- Make sure IMCS members know about ICMICA before they graduate.
- Encourage spaces of intergenerational dialogue between members of IMCS and ICMICA.
- Create specific groups for young professionals to allow recent graduates to form their own spaces.
- Invite young professionals into leadership roles of ICMICA.



Part II: Our Distinctive Approach to Evangelization: The Mission and Spirituality of IMCS and ICMICA

A. What is evangelization?

“An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn* 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. ...An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others.” (Pope Francis *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 24)

Like all Christian movements, **Pax Romana’s fundamental mission is one of evangelization.** But what is evangelization? True to the Greek etymology of the word, evangelization means to share the Good News, or the “*evangelion*,” of Jesus Christ. Of course, this can mean different things to different people. Some key questions arise for Christian communities in this task. For example, what is the content of this “Good News” that we wish to share? Who is our audience? And how does one do this in our pluralistic world today?

To avoid misunderstandings let us first say **what evangelization is not**. It is not proselytism, coercion, or an attempt to get more “followers”. It is not a speech. It is not a forced transformation that we impose on others based on one perspective or culture.

Rather, evangelization is sharing the Good News of God’s Kingdom and God’s profound love for humanity, a reality that breaks through into history in the person of Jesus Christ and the Paschal mystery of his suffering, death and resurrection. The Second Vatican Council importantly reminded us of the vocation of all Christians. All the baptized are called to share this Good News. But what do we really mean by Good News?

In the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus defines some of the key contours of this gospel that by reading from the prophet of Isaiah:

“When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’ (Luke 4: 16-19)

Here, we can see that there are, as St. Pope Paul VI taught, “profound links” between evangelization and humanization, or what Catholic social teaching calls “integral human development” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 29). In words and action, Jesus Christ reveals the deepest of human values, including love, mercy, spirituality, forgiveness, and the option for the poor. The Sermon on the Mount, and in particular the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-22), as Pope Francis points out, lay out the path for both a true humanity and a true holiness. (Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 63). In other words, evangelization involves a deep humanism enlightened by the Gospel.

So what does this mean for our movements of students, intellectuals and professionals: How do we evangelize? How do we share the good news?



B. How do we Evangelize? The Spirituality of Action

The church is blessed with a number of rich spiritual traditions with different approaches to evangelization. Over the past century, Pax Romana has developed a certain approach to evangelization based on what we describe as a ***Spirituality of Action***. The approach is complemented and supported by the insights of official church texts. In particular, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, the 1975 Apostolic Exhortation of St. Paul VI - a friend and chaplain to our movement - and *Evangelii Gaudium*, the 2013 Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis. Both texts offer excellent summary of the meaning of evangelization today.

Pax Romana's distinctive approach to evangelization is summarized well by our former chaplain, Fr. Buenaventura Pelegri, who wrote:

“Evangelizing is understood rather *to do* than *to tell*, although it is necessary to talk. Words without deeds are seen as hypocritical and sound empty. Therefore, to be faithful to Jesus Christ will mean *to do* whatever is possible to make the promised Kingdom of God a reality by building up the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of all people. All efforts made for socio-political and economic liberation are related to the full liberation made possible by and in Christ....”²

In other words, our approach is lived in action and in particular action for all those in need of Good News, with a particular viewpoint to people who are poor and marginalized in our society. This is something made clear throughout the Bible. Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, for example, urges his followers to be like houses built on rock by being doers of the word and not simply passive recipients. St. James in his epistle clearly articulates this same message, which we can also see in the lives of the great saints. Christian faith calls us to action or in other words, to “practice what we preach” and to “walk the walk.”

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

Matthew 7: 24-27

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no action, is dead.”

James 2: 14-17

² Buenaventura Pelegri, *IMCS-IYCS: Their Option Their Pedagogy* (IMCS Asia Secretariat, 1979).

C. Who are the agents of evangelization?

For Pax Romana, the agents and the targets of evangelization are clear and this is a distinctive feature of our approach. For IMCS, the student movement, the agency ought to rest in the hands of students and young people. While chaplains and graduates play an important role, we believe that the leadership and direction of IMCS should come from students themselves. This is why we have two autonomous movements within Pax Romana. As students graduate and become professionals, room must be given for new student leaders to emerge.

For ICMICA the target population and agents of evangelization are intellectuals and professionals, generally those who have had the privilege of university education. Speaking about the experience of our movements and others in the tradition of Specialized Catholic Action (including with references to our movement in the footnotes), the Second Vatican Council's *Apostolicam Actuositatem (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity)* described this type of evangelization as the "apostolate of like towards like" (no. 13).

"The apostolate in the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which one lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others. In this area the laity can exercise the apostolate of like toward like. It is here that they complement the testimony of life with the testimony of the word. It is here where they work or practice their profession or study or reside or spend their leisure time or have their companionship that they are more capable of helping their brethren."

In this way, IMCS and ICMICA are considered movements in the tradition of **specialized Catholic action**. This speaks to our commitment to work a specific milieu (students, professionals, intellectuals). We are joined in this by a small group of other movements, for example IYCW for young workers, MIJARC for young agricultural workers. These in turn have counter parts for those who are no longer young, MMTC for older workers and FIMARC for agricultural workers.³

For IMCS and other youth-led movements, this approach is very radical and deeply transformative. Again, here Vatican II's *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* also affirms this by pointing to young people as having an apostolic responsibility:

³ Along with IMCS and ICMICA, the other specialized Catholic action movements are: International Young Christian Workers (IYCW / JOCI); International Coordination of the Young Christian Workers (ICYCW / CIJOC); World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW/ MMTC); International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC) ; International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements (FIMARC); International Independent Christian Youth (JICI); International Movement of Apostolate in the Independent Social Milieus (MIAMSI); International Movement of Apostolate of Children; (IMAC/MIDADE); International Young Catholic Students (IYCS / JECI) and the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements (ICCMF / CIMFC).

“Young people should become the first to carry on the apostolate directly to other young persons, concentrating their apostolic efforts within their own circle, according to the needs of the social environment in which they live.” (no. 12).

In his recent apostolic exhortation on young people, *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis reinforces this point where he urges young people to be:

“protagonists of change...I ask you to build the future, to work for a better world. Dear young people, please, do not be bystanders in life. Get involved! Jesus was not a bystander. He got involved. Don’t stand aloof, but immerse yourselves in the reality of life, as Jesus did”. Above all, in one way or another, fight for the common good, serve the poor, be protagonists of the revolution of charity and service, capable of resisting the pathologies of consumerism and superficial individualism.” (no. 174)

This sense that all of us no matter age or status are called to be evangelizers or protagonists for a better world has deeply shaped both movements of Pax Romana, IMCS and ICMICA. This is also an idea that runs counter to many cultural forces that want to reduce lay people, and in particular ways, women, the poor and young people to passive roles. These include clericalism, consumerism, sexism, racism, and classism. **A spirituality of action moves us beyond passivity to action and to confront these structures of sin which marginalize and exclude.**

D. What do we mean by action?

In his February 15, 2015 homily to cardinals during the consistory, Pope Francis reflected on the how Jesus lived a life of action in the Gospel accounts of Jesus healing miracles:

“The compassion of Jesus! That *com-passion* which made him draw near to every person in pain! Jesus does not hold back; instead, he gets involved in people’s pain and their need... for the simple reason that he knows and wants to show *com-passion*, because he has a heart unashamed to have “*compassion*”... *Compassion* leads Jesus to concrete action: *he reinstates the marginalized!*”

If evangelization, in the spirituality of Pax Romana, finds fruit in such action, what do we mean by action?

Even for the most committed Christians, the idea of action may seem overwhelming. Some students and professionals, many with professional, academic and personal commitments, may feel unable to take on another project or effort. For others, the problems facing the world or the church may seem too big for any one person to change and this can often lead to an indifference. Still others may feel they lack the capacity, experiences or credentials to do something worthy of note.

Here, it may be helpful to **distinguish between actions and activities**. Activities are those things that we do without much reflection or analysis. These can be very necessary: reminding members about the time and location of the next meeting; preparing food for an event; or advertising upcoming speakers.

Actions, by contrast, are those things done with intentionality and come from reflection, prayer and discernment with others. Actions do not always mean doing more. Sometimes actions may even call us to do less, but in a more intentional way. Actions go beyond the “clicktivism” and shallow self-gratifying behavior we find on social media. Simply liking a page, joining a group or sharing a story is not an action.

In preparing for an action, attention must be paid to the deeper social and structural dynamics at play. The Review of Life method that we detail at the end of this booklet is one way to help bring in this social analysis in our evaluation of experience. For example, in order to respond to an experience of injustice, the planning of an action may need to consider deeper social and structural violence or what the Catholic social teaching tradition calls structures of sin. We need to look for and try to dismantle these deeper issues, including racism, classism, greed, xenophobia, and sexism that are at play often behind the scenes.

In this type of analysis, the role of university students and those with university degrees (as intellectuals) becomes increasingly important. At the foundational meeting of ICMICA in 1947, the French philosopher, Étienne Gilson, defined the mission of the Catholic intellectual as someone who “puts their intelligence at the service of God.” As IMCS and ICMICA we know that

faith is not opposed to reason and we know that we are called to use our privileged access to education to serve God and God's kingdom.

Actions, from the perspective of Christian faith, aim to cooperate with God's grace at moving towards the advancement of God's Kingdom in the world. In this way, actions are always gestures of faith and hope. We have faith and we hope, to modify slightly the slogan of the World Social Forum, that *"a better world is possible."*

Actions take place at different levels depending on the need. At the personal level, actions can include committing oneself to consume less after reflecting on environmental concerns, deepening one's personal and prayer life, or being more attentive to the needs of a friend who is suffering. Local groups may choose actions such as organizing a formation program at the parish on a needed topic or advocating for change in their university or city. At the national or international level, groups may mobilize education campaigns on issues, facilitate dialogues between groups in a crisis, or work for changes in national and international governmental policies.

Actions can be big, but they need not be large scale projects. Indeed, true actions will always try to be realistic and strategic in what they can accomplish but always done with an eye towards the new reality embodied by the Good News of God's Kingdom. Like the mustard seed in the Gospel of Matthew, even small actions can grow to great things (Matthew 13:31-32).



E. Why do we need a *spirituality* to do action?

With all the challenges facing our world, it can be easy to just organize for social change and neglect the spiritual dimensions of our identity as movements and human beings. This is a risk for many Christian activists, especially as we join together with others for common campaigns or if we experience disappointment and frustration with some church officials.

Such a danger can take the form of a “horizontalism,” whereby the Christian mission is reduced only to social concerns, where the church becomes as Pope Francis frequently warns just another NGO. In *Gaudete et Exultate*, Pope Francis spells out the danger of neglecting spirituality in our social action:

“there is the error of those Christians who separate these Gospel demands from their personal relationship with the Lord, from their interior union with him, from openness to his grace. Christianity thus becomes a sort of NGO stripped of the luminous mysticism so evident in the lives of Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, and many others. For these great saints, mental prayer, the love of God and the reading of the Gospel in no way detracted from their passionate and effective commitment to their neighbours; quite the opposite.” (no. 100).

This relates to the ancient danger of Pelagianism, wherein we pridefully forget that everything we do and the value of any social action depends on God and God’s Grace. (*Rom 9:16*). If our actions are truly transformative, it is not a result of our own abilities, but thanks to God and God’s grace which is at work in our lives. As Pax Romana celebrates 100 years, we give thanks to the many times grace has guided our community.

An authentic Spirituality of Action will always recognize that it is God who takes the first step and recalls that God accompanies us throughout despite the success or failure (*Gaudete et Exultate*, no. 56). This demands humility to recognize that it’s not all about me or us. Prayer, the sacraments, discernment in local groups, and time for retreat and reflection are important spaces to offer this humble perspective and to discern where God is calling us to act. Spirituality and spiritual practices can be an enormous resource for social movements and social activists to promote holistic self-care.

This insight can also be liberating. If we recognize that it is God who is the ultimate mover in our actions, that helps us to see beyond all social, economic, and even ecclesial borders. It also reminds us that we don’t know everything and it’s not our job to do and fix everything.

Part III: A Call to Community: Why join or form Pax Romana groups?

A. Why do we need communities?

As with any Christian spirituality, a Spirituality of Action is always communal. Evangelization, as St. Paul VI pointed out, is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is always outgoing; never self-referential. It is “deeply ecclesial” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 60), that is communal. Each of us have been created by God as a social being. We are meant to be in community with others and we are called by God to go out to serve Christ by “reinstating the marginalized.” While sin always seeks to divide, God’s grace and the salvific actions of Jesus Christ always seek to unite to bring us together into one body (John 17:21; 1 Cor. 12:27).

Communities and movements offer many practical resources as we seek to transform ourselves, our church, and our world. Small faith communities can do things that large parishes or large scale youth gathering cannot. They provide spaces for capacity building, especially for students and young professionals. At their best, communities offer safe spaces conducive to reflect, share our hopes and sorrows, get support, and gain perspective. Small communities of students and professionals/ intellectuals offer profound spaces for us to share our life together. Communities as Fr. Tony Vadell points out, can be vibrant “ecosystems” for the spiritual development of their members.⁴



For the same reasons why we think it is important for students and professionals to join together in local communities, it becomes also important for local communities to join together in national and international communities. The Second Vatican Council affirms this in its teaching about the group apostolate:

“The group apostolate is very important also because the apostolate must often be performed by way of common activity both the Church communities and the various spheres. For the associations established for carrying on the apostolate in common sustain their members, form them for the apostolate, and rightly organize and regulate

⁴ Tony Vadell, “The provocative community, key for the new evangelization,” reprinted on ICMICA website. 2020.

their apostolic work so that much better results can be expected than if each member were to act on his own.” (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, no. 18)

IMCS and ICMICA at the international level serve as “**communities of communities.**” The global, cross-cultural connections can deepen the local reflection, get us out of cultural ghettos, and create possibilities for global action on shared problems (such as the advocacy work of Pax Romana in the United Nations system). There is always power in numbers as this humorous image of fish demonstrates.

In 1971, St. Paul VI made this point in his letter, *Octogesima adveniens*:

“It is in this regard too that Christian organizations, under their different forms, have a responsibility for collective action. Without putting themselves in the place of the institutions of civil society, they have to express, in their own way and rising above their particular nature, the concrete demands of the Christian faith for a just, and consequently necessary, transformation of society” (no. 51).



In other words, Christians are called to join together in communities, movements, and groups to witness to the Gospel in our world today. If we seek to live out the Christian obligation to attend to the needs of the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned, and the migrants (Matthew 25: 31-46), then we cannot act alone. The problems facing people and the planet today, as Pope Francis points out in *Laudato Si'*, are so complex and embedded in social structures that we need both collective responses and personal transformation. Pax Romana helps to do this at three levels: local communities; national groups; and international movements.

B. Why local communities and small groups?

While both IMCS and ICMICA have individual members, local groups of students, professionals and intellectuals are at the heart of the Pax Romana vision. This is where most of our members experience the movement and find support in their vocations as students or graduates. These local groups take on a range of names, structures, and methods from groups of Catholic students who meet weekly in their universities to communities of Catholic professionals who meet monthly in the home of a member. Most often, our local groups consist of 10-15 members. But what do they do? Why should we join or form a small group?

Local Communities Help us to Live as Church

We like to meet as a community once a week or once a month. As a community (even as one that meets virtually), we learn to welcome one another in all our diversity: diversity in terms of areas of study, professional life, faith journey, age, temperaments, life experiences, and politics. We recognize that it is Christ who brings us together and sends us into a mission and this demands a type of humility and openness to others.

Local Communities Reveal the Presence of God in Our Lives and in the World

While they take on different forms, IMCS and ICMICA groups seek to bridge faith and life in transformative ways. By listening to the Word of God (Scripture), by listening attentively to each member of the team, we become more and more receptive to the way God speaks to us in our daily life, in every encounter and by what we do. God's Word is the light of our steps, it lights our eyes, transforms our hearts and guides our decisions.

Local Communities Foster Support in the Path of Christian Discipleship

It is not easy to live as a Christian in the world. Small communities provide safe spaces for students and professionals to discover their baptismal vocation. They offer us spaces to reflect on some of life's deepest questions, including:

- Where is God calling me to go in my personal and professional life?
- How can we be more faithful to the Gospel in our daily choices, how can we truly be disciples of Christ?
- Where am I being called to grow in holiness?

Community life helps us to discern and make choices in the sometimes frightening situations in which our responsibilities are placed. Community life enables us to see that Christian discipleship is not an isolated task but a shared vocation as we join with others to take decisions.

Local Communities Foster Support in the Service of Neighbor and in the Promotion of Justice

Communities offer spaces to live our responsibilities in a spirit of service to others. Community life gives us the courage to commit ourselves to the poor, the marginalized and the outcast. It helps us to orient our lives in the service of the common good and the promotion of integral human development as articulated by Catholic social teaching. This prompts us to act on structures where we can, from our local university and town council to the United Nations (through the consultative status that Pax Romana enjoys there). Each team member is invited to be a sign of the Kingdom of God for our world in the spirit of the Beatitudes.

Local Communities Root us in the Life of the Church

Both IMCS and ICMICA are recognized International Associations of the Faithful and our various national associations are recognized by their local churches. We encourage our members to be integrated into the local church, by participating in diocesan and parish life and by supporting the work of the Pope and our local and international church leaders. We do not seek to become sects, broken off from the local church. We rejoice in the communion brought to us from our Catholic identity. Our lives as committed Christians in the world are nourished by the Word of God and the sacraments.

Online communities

While in person meetings remain the most effective way to create a community, online spaces can also be fruitful. Our movements have discovered this after the experience of COVID 19. .

C. Why organize nationally?

For many of the same reasons, individuals need to gather in local communities, so too, local communities are called to gather in national and international movements.

Communities are Called to Join and Support Other Communities

For IMCS and ICMICA, many of our local groups have formed national structures. Legally, these national structures are the main voting entities within Pax Romana assemblies. They are often known by a variety of names depending on the local context, including associations, movements, and federations. This gives our movements a flexibility and diversity not found in other church structures. Pax Romana seeks an inductive (bottom up) approach to organizing. At its best, this approach fosters participation and equality across members of the movement around the world. However, carries risks where local and national members may not understand if and how they are connected to the global movement.

National movements play a number of important roles as a voice in advocacy at the national levels of the church and civil society, as culturally specific resources, and as a connector among local groups and between them and the movement in other countries.

D. Why global communities?

For the same reasons individuals join together in local communities, and local communities join together nationally, national groups are called to join in broader movements, like IMCS and ICMICA.

International Movements Witness to the Gospel in a World Marked by Division

This is in many ways the foundational mission of Pax Romana. After the horrors of the First World War, students from multiple countries (including those who were recently at war) overcame political and cultural divisions rooted in a shared faith. This witness to universality and peace was repeated after the Second World War and again at many international and regional meetings in the decades since.



Within our movement, the attention to universality appreciates and welcomes different models, cultures, and approaches. Since our foundation in 1921, for example, we have included members from different Catholic Churches (Latin, Ukrainian, Greek-Catholic) each adding their voices and cultures to our family.

At first, Pax Romana was described as a “federation of federations.” Today, Pax Romana might better describe itself as a “community of communities in mission.” Just as individuals can fall into the trap of self referentiality, so too can local and national groups. The national and international communities fostered by Pax Romana enable groups to go beyond themselves and to go forth into the world and to see others from different countries and continents as brothers and sisters.

In strengthening and building the sense of global solidarity within our movements, local groups should reflect on how they can better support and engage other members beyond their local community. This includes social media platforms, supporting the movements through membership dues, and supporting the development of leaders for our movement at the international level.

The formation of Pax Romana as a global community is an important sign of communion and unity in a divided world. It is a sign of the spirit of Pentecost, a day we celebrate as Pax Romana Day. This universality is also a mark of how authentic Christian community can be recognized, a fruit of the spirit (*Galatians* 5: 22-26).

International Movements Offer a Space to Connect With Others on Common Interests

Within the global Pax Romana community, we have long facilitated thematic subgroups based on profession / area of study and common interests.

- *Professional Networks:* In the 1930s, students created international groups on shared areas of study (law, medicine, press). With the restructuration of Pax Romana in the 1940s, cross-movement networks of Catholic professionals were created as “specialized secretariats.” While some of these, (e.g, doctors, journalists) spun off to become their own NGOs, several continue to operate as autonomous networks within the Pax Romana community, including the International Secretariat of the Catholic Lawyers (MIJC); The International Secretariat of the Catholic Engineers, Agronomists and Industrialists (SIIAEC); and The International Secretariat of Catholic High School Teachers (SIESC).
- Shared commitment groups: More recently, we have created shared commitment groups to gather people who share a common local commitment, in action or in reflection. For IMCS, there is an advocacy team to help coordinate UN advocacy work. For its part, ICMICA has created a number of subgroups on democracy, reform of the Church, refugees and migrants, Dialogue in crisis contexts, and peace. A new group can easily be created as soon as few people have a common commitment and are willing to share their experiences and reflection about it.

International Movements Offer a Voice to Members in the Church and in the United Nations

Both IMCS and ICMICA are recognized as International Associations of the Faithful by the Holy See. As two of only a few dozen international lay-led lay movements, we are able to be a voice for our members and by extension the needs and experiences of students, professionals and intellectuals in the universal church.

In a similar way, our movements have developed our advocacy work in the United Nations system. Since 1949, IMCS and ICMICA have shared a common accreditation as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations System (Economic and Social Council, Department of Global Communications, United Nations Environmental Program, Council of Europe, and UNESCO) under the common name, “Pax Romana (ICMICA-IMCS).” In our advocacy work in these inter-governmental spaces, Pax Romana seeks to advance issues consistent with the Christian values at the heart of our mission.

E. Key Principles for Organizing our Communities

Communities Need Leadership

Leadership is key at all levels of the movements. Leadership in our movements is an act of Christian service. It can be an invitation to a deeper commitment of discipleship. It is not a way to boost a resume or to exercise power over others.

In many local communities, leaders will rotate yearly to give others the chance to facilitate the group. Some will select new leaders to animate different group meetings. At the international level, the leaders of IMCS and ICMICA are elected by regional and global assemblies that meet every few years. At all levels, leaders should be discerned through a process of dialogue and reflection among the whole community. For our student movement, maintaining student leadership at all levels of the movement is an important part of the IMCS identity as a student-led student movement.



Communities Need Effective Organization and Planning

Decisions must be taken at different levels of Pax Romana, regional or international. These are not individual decisions of the leader, but a work done in the community. Important decisions must always be taken by a group with an openness to prayer and spirituality. Plans of action to prepare for the year and annual reports are helpful tools for planning and accountability.

Communities Need Accompaniment

As a lay movement, Pax Romana prioritizes the leadership of lay women and men, including students. What then could be the role of the chaplain in this context?

The traditional understanding of the Chaplain or the Ecclesiastical Assistant in a Catholic community was often reserved only to ordained priests and sometimes to religious sisters or brothers. Over the past fifty years, with more lay women and men entering formal ministry, this traditional role has expanded. In both our student and professional communities, lay women and men have taken on the role of chaplain, campus minister or assistant.

For student communities, with high turnover in membership, critical developmental stages in life, and a lack of resources, the role of the chaplain becomes even more fundamental. It can often be the chaplain, for instance, who initiates, sustains, and financially supports the life of the movement as leaders transition from one generation of students to another.

For lay professional groups, chaplains can take a step back and focus on attending to the spiritual and sacramental life of the group. Priest chaplains provide a great gift to our movements in offering Mass.

For both IMCS and ICMICA, the role of the chaplain is fundamentally a “mission of accompaniment.” To *accompany*, which comes from the idea of sharing bread with someone, is not to dominate or control. Rather it involves supporting and journeying with students and lay professionals in their lives. Chaplains, both lay and ordained, can also be invaluable to our movement in helping us maintain and strengthen our relationships and communion with the local church.

We encourage all levels of our movements to seek out a chaplain or a team of chaplains to support the local, national and international life of the movement. These chaplains may need support and formation in the life of the movement and our spirituality. Priests and others with degrees in ministry may need specific training on how to work with young people or lay professional groups. We hope this booklet can be helpful in this task.

At the regional and global level, chaplains play important roles. They attend to the spiritual life of team leaders, who often give much of themselves to their work, they often serve as memories for how decisions were made in the past, and they can play a strategic role. For the student movement, regional and international chaplains may also be called to play a role in advising on technical administrative questions. We, as lay movements, are most grateful to all priests, religious and lay people who play such a role.

Part IV: Models for Collective Action

A. The Review of Life⁵

One of the most common forms of organizing IMCS and ICMICA local groups is the method called the review of life (or RoL). This method is used also as the basis for many of our national and international meetings and formation sessions. But what is the Review of life and how can we practice it?

The Review of Life seeks to offer an integrated Christian response to a world marked by sin, injustice, and division.

So often in the church and the world today there are temptations to compartmentalize and divide. What is religious is divided from what is “secular,” what happens on Sunday morning in church is seen as irrelevant from what happens Monday morning in the classroom, office or voting booth. Social action, intellectual reflection and prayer are so often placed in their own boxes that we ultimately end up dividiving out innerselves, separating our head, our hearts and our hands. In contrast, the Review of Life seeks to bring together prayer, reflection and action. In the words of Fr. Buenaventura Pelegri, “the Review of Life tries to avoid an intellectual formation without influence upon reality and life and an activism without reflection.” (P. 155)



Often the Review of Life (RoL) is lived through the methodology known as the see, judge, act. This approach first emerged in the context of the Young Christian Worker movement and the in the writings of their chaplain, Fr. Joseph Cardijn, who was involved in Pax Romana in the 1930s. The RoL has been developed and refined by many movements, including IMCS, ICMICA and our friends in IYCS and under St. John XXIII, it became the official methodology of Catholic Social Teaching (*Mater et Magistra*, no. 236). For some of our movements, the RoL is expressed in the traditional see, judge, act method. For others, it is a process described as action-reflection-action, discernment, the pastoral circle, or even “reflaction” (reflection and action). While the Review of Life takes on different forms, there should be the following key elements:

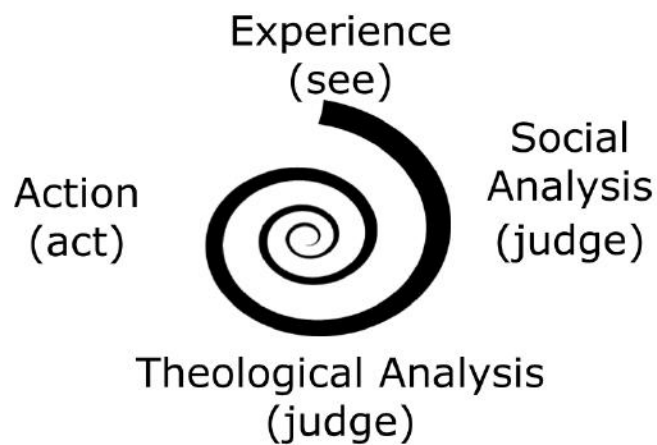
- Prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit,
- participatory sharing based on concrete experiences and past reflections of the group,

⁵ Parts of this section are adapted from Kevin Ahern and Christopher Derige Malano, eds., *God’s Quad: Small Faith Communities on Campus and Beyond* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018).

- reflection through the eyes of faith (the Gospel, Catholic social teaching, teachings of saints),
- commitments to action.

The Review of Life Helps us to “go deeper” in faith and life

As a Rol group meets, a community will be created as people “go deeper” in faith, in life, and in a common journey together. This process is sometimes described as a pastoral circle or a spiral as groups deepen their analysis, shared commitments, and common life.



B. Model I: The See, Judge, Act Meeting

The following is a sample outline for a Review of Life group based on the see, judge, act method. Ideally, the method is best lived in a small community that meets regularly. Each small group should adapt this method to their different realities and contexts. After living this method a few times, the rhythm of the Review of Life will gradually become clear.

Preparing the Meeting • Identify others to join your online community (friend groups, your local parish, university, etc). • Identify a moderator, timekeeper. • Set a regular time to meet. • Share with participants the method being used (like this Review of Life method). • If online: ask participants to mute microphones when not speaking and practice the technology. • Be flexible.	II. Going Deeper (Judge) 20 Minutes With an open and humble spirit, participants are invited to go deeper and examine our realities in the lens of faith. We should be ready to be challenged by the Gospel. • One participant might be ready to bring to the table a reading, such as a scripture passage, a text of a Pope, or another theological text. • How do the experiences shared before relate to the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God that he preached? • How are sin and grace visible in this context? In our own acts of omission or commission?
Introductions (5 minutes) <i>Begin with introduces if members don't know each other very well. Give some time to "catch up."</i> Opening Prayer (5 Minutes) <i>Ask one participant to begin the meeting with an opening prayer. This could be the reading from that Sunday's Gospel or something more creative (songs, poetry, prayer of a saint).</i>	III. Transforming Reality (Act) (10) Here, participants are invited to reflect on some concrete actions to take in the face of the experiences. • What is God calling us to do? As persons? As a group? As a movement? • How might we link up with others locally and globally to respond?
I. Sharing Experience (See) (20 minutes) <i>Participants are invited to begin by sharing their own experience.</i> • What new realities are happening in your life and community (personal, social, political, church)? • What brings you joy and hope (consolation)? • What most brings you grief and anxiety (desolation)? • Who are most vulnerable?	Closing Prayer (5 minutes) • Participants are invited to bring their hopes and sorrows before God in prayers of petition. • Follow each prayer with a response, such as Lord Hear our Prayer). • When it is clear the group is ready to close, the leader invites the group to conclude with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

C. Model II: Organize a Meeting or Study Session Based on a Theme

For many IMCS and ICMICA groups, the Review of Life approach is expressed more thematically. This can happen in small group meetings and in longer “study sessions” (training programs where this method is spread out over a day or several days).

Our movement approaches a theme in a specific way that seeks to connect experience and action through the lens of Christian faith. This approach is sometimes described as “Praxis.” A praxis approach reveals itself as both an effective way to bring about social transformation as well as an effective pedagogical method for leadership formation.



i. Preparing for the meeting

When the subject is chosen for the meeting, one or two community members are responsible for presenting and planning. This would involve the collection of facts on the experience being addressed, the selection of appropriate passages from Scripture and Catholic teaching, and the preparation of handouts or other materials if desired.

Chaplains, especially in student groups, can help in this process to select a theme and offer resources. Some communities or groups may decide to bring in external speakers or experts to better understand the topic. However, attention must be paid that the “experts,” topic leaders, and the chaplains, do not take away the voice and perspective of all the members. This, in other words, is not a class or a lecture.

ii. Selecting a theme

Selecting a theme often comes naturally out of the passion and interests of members on pressing topics or recent events in the world and in the community. In selecting a theme, some points are worth considering:

- Is the topic relevant to the lives of community members?
- Can the topic be presented without dividing the group? (This is not to say a group should stay away from controversial or political topics. Rather, group leadership needs to be aware of the sensitivities of the members. Not all issues can be addressed in one meeting.)
- Are there ways group members, individually and collectively, can act in response to the theme?

iii. Opening the Meeting with Prayer (10 minutes)

Meetings can be linked to meals or other social gatherings. For student groups, food can be a way to attract new members and fill empty stomachs. For groups of professionals and intellectuals, food can provide a sense of fellowship and shared life, particularly when shared in the home of a member. Some of our groups meet around coffee, wine or beer. IMCS and

ICMICA meetings facilitate community and should be marked by some sense of joy. The meeting or community organizer invites the community to gather at the right time and with any brief announcements. As a Christian movement, we begin all our gatherings with some form of prayer. This prayer should be linked in some way to the theme presented. When possible, a relevant selection from Scripture should be used.

iv. Presentation of Reality (10 minutes)

The theme is briefly introduced by the members who prepared it. This presentation of the experience should whenever possible, reflect on how the issue impacts the poor and the marginalized. There are several excellent resources online to help unpack some key social realities, including websites of the United Nations.

- What is happening?
- Why is it happening?
- Who is most negatively impacted by it?
- Who most benefits?
- What deeper social structural issues are at play?
- How do we (as members of the group) benefit or suffer from the issue?

As much as possible, these themes should be related to the local experience of the members.

v. Presentation of Church Teaching (10 minutes)

The presenters should offer a perspective of the church, when possible. Catholic social teaching has much to offer. Most social issues can be illuminated by selections from the key documents of Catholic social teaching. Theologians, scripture scholars, and Catholic activists can also help illuminate dynamics. Group members could be asked to read a text before the meeting to help prepare for the discussion. Scripture is another rich source of analysis that should be developed.

vi. Group Sharing (15 - 20 minutes)

After presenting the experience and the perspective of the church, each member of the group should be given time to share their experiences and where God is speaking to them. A facilitator is chosen to oversee the management of time and speaking. The quality of the animation is essential to the smooth running of the meeting. If the meeting was prepared by two people, only one of them ensures the animation.

vii. Action Planning (15 minutes)

This is the moment to place faith into action. Here, the group is invited to identify concrete actions that can be taken to address the experience in light of Christian faith. These actions should be both practical and prophetic. They should also consider both the local dynamics and the global dynamics. In other words, they should be able to be accomplished but also be challenging and transformative. For example, “we will end homelessness” is not an achievable goal, but finding a room for a specific family in a local parish or setting up a meeting with the city council to discuss housing policy or working with Pax Romana in advocating an issue at an upcoming United Nations meeting could be.

- What are we being called to do? As persons? As a group?
- Who is going to do what, when, where and how?

- In light of this experience, what do we need to change in ourselves and our relationships with others to better embody the values of God's Kingdom?
- How will we evaluate our action at the next meeting?

The leaders of the meeting might come prepared with some ideas of what can be done but it is important for all members to have a voice to be able to better discern God's voice in our midst.

viii. Closing Prayer (5 min)

The group facilitator should be attentive to time. As the group winds down, it is time to end the meeting with prayer. These prayers should be done in a spirit of thanksgiving for God's presence in the meeting and in our lives. Many groups conclude with open prayers of petition for members to bring their hopes and sorrows before God, followed by a recitation of the Lord's Prayer and a sign of peace.



D. Exposure Programs

Within Pax Romana we have a long tradition of exposure programs. These are programs that are dedicated to broadening our experience of other realities (cultural, economic, political, religious). In many national and international meetings, exposure programs are included as part of the process of learning the facts and deepening our sense of the reality (the see part).

For example, if the theme of a meeting is migration, participants may visit an organization working with migrants and spend time listening directly to the voices of migrants. If it is Christian-Muslim dialogue, visiting a mosque and speaking with members of the community would be invaluable. If the theme is ecological justice, the group may spend some time working with a local organization in cleaning up a park.

We take seriously the critiques of groups who do charity without attending to either voices of people on the margins or the deeper structural issues. Exposure programs are not “service” programs designed to make us feel better about ourselves. Nor are they voluntourism (tourism that objectifies or dehumanizes of the marginalized). We will not solve any problems in just a few hours or days. Exposure programs, organized with a proposer sense of Christian humility and openness to the other, can help us break down barriers. We are there to learn, not to solve problems. Such experiences can help us to understand the experiences of others and the deeper social and cultural dynamics at work around us.

E. Other Models for Organizing Local Pax Romana Groups

The Review of Life Method and Thematic meeting method can be adapted in many different ways. The Pax Romana way has always been to celebrate the diversity of expressions of our shared movement. Groups can choose to “mix up” the formats to keep the meetings fresh.

Other methods can include the following:

- Watching a documentary or film with a discussion.
- Spending an evening in prayer or visiting a spiritual community (such as a Taizé prayer group, a community of religious sisters, brothers or priests nearby),
- Going deeper into a specific scriptural text, perhaps during the season of Advent, Lent and Easter,.
- Spending a day with the poor in the local community,
- Having a discussion on faith and action at a local bar, coffee shop, or restaurant and open it up to others;
- Meeting with another community in the movement (Here local IMCS and ICMICA groups could benefit from occasionally meeting together).

No matter what the format, all groups should be encouraged to be flexible. We do not hesitate to leave aside a theme prepared to devote our entire meeting to listening to a team member who is going through a difficult time or to discuss a serious event in the news.

F. Annual Meetings

At all levels of the movements, we encourage groups to take time each year to reflect and celebrate what happened and to look ahead to the future. These provide ideal spaces for discernment and accountability. They can also be used to share reports about the state of the movement nationally and internationally. Some communities may make a small annual report and plan for the next year. Annual meetings are ideal times to select new leadership, make sure the community has paid membership dues to the national and/or international movements, and address any deeper issues at play. They are also ideal times to celebrate! Meetings at the end of the year may even be linked to Christmas celebrations. Some groups may even do this over a weekend retreat or full day.

Our French MCC movement suggests some of the following set of questions to choose from for annual meetings:⁶

- How did we choose the themes or issues addressed?
- Did we start from concrete, lived experiences?
- Did the preparations for meetings allow us to reflect and share in depth?
- Did we find our place in the team? What was our participation in the smooth running of it? What was the engine or brake?
- What was the place of listening to the Word of God and prayer in team life? What fruits have we been able to perceive?
- What links have we had with the Movement beyond our local group (national and international). What did we get from this experience?
- Is our team ready to welcome new people?
- How has our community engaged the realities of the poor and the marginalized?
- How have we engaged church structures?
- (for student movements): How can we support those members as they graduate and move to professional life? Can they join or create an ICMICA group?
- (for professional/ intellectual movements): How can we better support student groups and young professionals? Are we open to new members, new voices and younger generations?
- At the end, everyone confirms their desire to remain in the team or not, within the Movement. We can take this opportunity to talk about the functioning of our team (at what time to start the meeting and finish it, who will host the meeting and when to share the meal?). Should we establish rules of the game to better frame the discussion?
- What themes and methods do we want to cover in the following year? Are there priority themes of the national or international movement we should address?
- It is also time to renew the mandate of team leader(s) (for 1-3 years). We must help the team members who would like to become responsible by giving them clues to help them make their choice.

⁶ Adapted with permission from 1er Livret – “Découvrir le MCC”, 2018. www.mcc.asso.fr.

LIVING A SPIRITUALITY OF ACTION

A HANDBOOK FOR ORGANIZING COMMUNITIES OF CATHOLIC STUDENTS AND LAY PROFESSIONALS

Since 1921, the family of movements known as Pax Romana has been organizing Catholic university students, intellectuals and professionals with a Spirituality of Action. This booklet explains this spirituality and offers resources for existing communities and those seeking to create new ones.

Pax Romana IMCS / MIEC

International Movement of Catholic Students
Mouvement International des Etudiants Catholiques
Movimiento Internacional de Estudiantes Católicos



Pax Romana ICMICA / MIIC

International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs
Mouvement International des Intellectuels Catholiques
Movimiento Internacional de Intelectuales Católicos

