



Easter 2020, Rio de Janeiro.

The pandemic and the crisis of participation:

a challenge to lay mobilizing

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I. Pandemics in the pandemic



“A pandemic in a pandemic” (Errin Haines) in an ecological disaster

COVID reveals and deepens inequalities

“The impact (of COVID) will be profound [...] with increased inequality leading to economic and social upheaval: a lost generation in the 2020s whose after-effects will be felt for decades to come.”

– Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the IMF

Oxfam’s survey of economists on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on inequality found that:



87%

of respondents think that coronavirus will lead to an increase or a major increase in **INCOME INEQUALITY** in their country.



56%

of respondents think that coronavirus will likely or very likely lead to an increase in **GENDER INEQUALITY** in their country.

For more on the sources and methodology for these figures, see P. Espinoza Revollo. (2021).

The Inequality Virus: Methodology note. Oxfam

“Inequality Kills” (P. Francis)



In Brazil, as of June 2020

**OVER 9,200
AFRO-
DESCENDANTS
WOULD HAVE
STILL BEEN ALIVE**



In the US, as of December 2020

**CLOSE TO 22,000
LATINX AND
BLACK PEOPLE
WOULD HAVE
STILL BEEN ALIVE**

if these communities' COVID-19 mortality rates were the same as their White counterparts'.

Oxfam, The Inequality Virus, 2021

Crisis of Democracy, Multilateralism and Civic Engagement



A Crisis of Democracy



“It is remarkable how weak international political responses have been. The failure of global summits on the environment make it plain that our politics are subject to technology and finance. **There are too many special interests, and economic interests easily end up trumping the common good and manipulating information** so that their own plans will not be affected.” (Laudato Si’, 54)

(Fake News /Post-Truth)

An Ecclesial Crisis



- Legacy of **sexual abuse** scandal
- **Partisan polarizations** (Ecclesial sort / culture war)
- **Sectarian** Catholics (Benedict Option)
- Experiences of **marginalization** (especially minorities and women)
- “A **tomb psychology** thus develops and slowly transforms Christians into mummies in a museum.. (EG, 83)
- Increasing rates of **disaffiliation** (rise of “Nones”) (first time church membership has dropped below 50% - new Gallup poll)
- In US, number of Catholics belonging to a parish dropped from 76% in 2000 to 58% in 2020.

Obstacles to Communal Commitment (EG, 50)



- Racism / sexism / ageism (patriarchy)
- Consumerism
- Clericalism
- “Slactivism”



Lay people are, put simply, the vast majority of the people of God. The minority – ordained ministers – are at their service. ... a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity, grounded in their baptism and confirmation, does not appear in the same way in all places....**excessive clericalism**...Even if many are now involved in the lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to tasks within the Church, without a real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society. **The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge. (EG 102)**

Some Signs of Hope.....



COVID: Contrast Moment

- What really matters?
- How do we relate to others, to God, to creation, to our deeper selves?
- What is our responsibility in the church and in society?



II. Gospel Call to Action

Jesus Christ offers a radical call to action and agency at three levels:

- to reinstate the marginalized (Beatitudes, Matthew 25)
- to go out in mission (Pentecost)
- to be active agents in mission and in the Body of Christ (St. Paul)



artist Timothy Schmalz

James 2:14-16, 26



What good is it...if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day and one of you says to them “Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? ...For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without action is dead.

Apostolicam actuositatem (1965), Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity



No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, in the body of Christ...Indeed, the organic union in this body and the structure of the members are so compact that the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself.

Octogesima adveniens (1971), 48



“It is not enough to recall principles, state intentions, point to crying injustice and utter prophetic denunciations; these words will lack real weight unless they are accompanied for each individual by a livelier awareness of personal responsibility and **by effective action**. It is too easy to throw back on others responsibility for injustice...”

Justice in the World (1971)

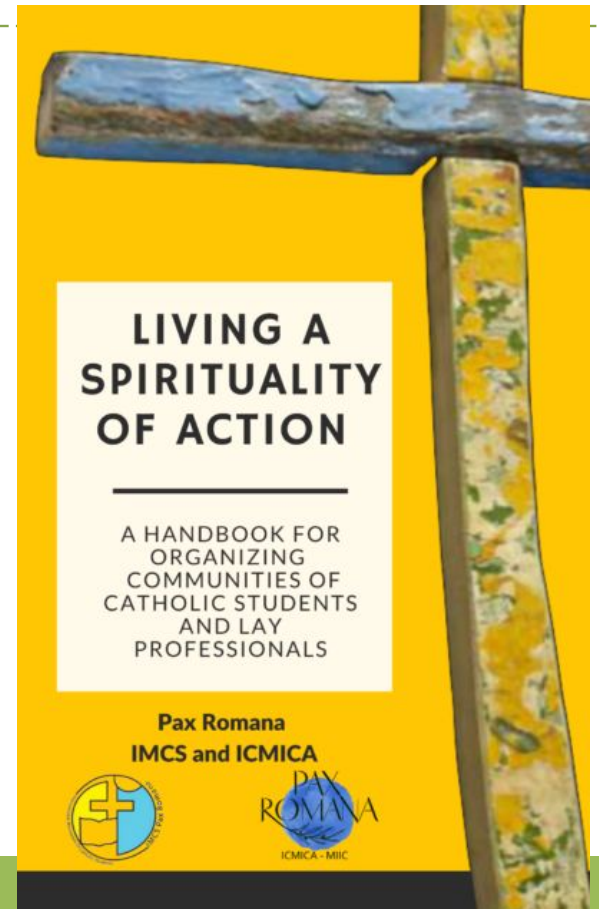


Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

III. How can we live this spirituality of action today?

Actions vs.

Activities



1. Based on Experience



The SoA is an incarnational spirituality, it takes experience seriously (inductive)

- What is happening?
- What realities are happening in your life and community (personal, social, political, church)?
- Who are most vulnerable?

“Listening church” Pope Francis



2. With a universal (Catholic) view



- Looking beyond borders to the universal
- Getting out our self-referential bubbles - “Pax Romana”
- Good Samaritan (Fratelli Tutti)



3. Oriented towards personal and social transformation (integral liberation)



“God is working an integral revolution, a revolution at every level of human (and nonhuman) being: personal (and impersonal), interpersonal, social, economic, political and ecclesial.” - Dean Brackley, SJ

The Reign of God challenges us to transform our relationships with others, with ourselves, with creation, and with God.

4. Transformation based on discernment



Étienne Gilson, defined the mission of the Pax Romana “to organize in the world a fraternity of minds who put their intelligence to the service of God.”

“Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” Romans 12:2

Action vs. activities (transformation vs. shallow activism)

5. This discernment happens in community



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

Personal Conversion

Integral Liberation
liberation of the
whole person and
all people
(Evangelization,
humanization)

Structural Change



ICMICA - MIIC



Key Elements



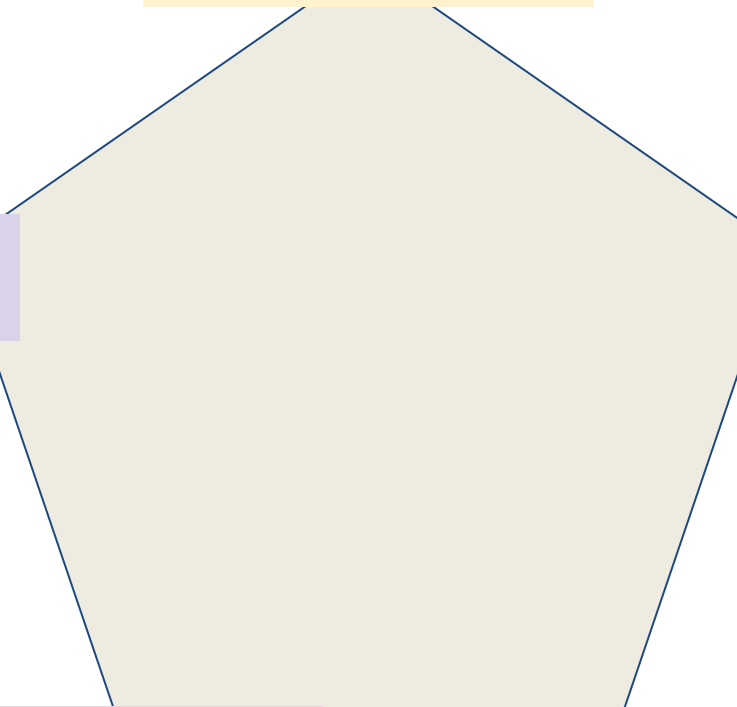
experience

discernment

Integral
liberation

community

universality



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Pers. Conversion and Structural Change



“I would like to repeat: the future of
CHURCH does not lie solely in the hands
of great leaders, the great powers and the
elites. It is fundamentally in the
hands of peoples and in their
ability to organize. It is in their hands,
which can guide with humility and
conviction this process of change.”

(Pope Francis to Popular Movements)

Pers. Conversion and Structural Change



“I would like to repeat: the future of
PAX ROMANA does not lie solely in the hands
of great leaders, the great powers and the
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