

**INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC MOVEMENT FOR INTELLECTUAL AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS
ICMICA PAX ROMANA**



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

PREFACE

After seventy years of existence, the movement stands at a crossroads, calling for a profound renewal. Members are living through a historical turning point marked by an unprecedented technological revolution and an ecological crisis of alarming magnitude. Both are deeply rooted in centuries of colonization, industrialization, and a neoliberal model of development that has fostered inequality and widespread impoverishment across much of the world. The technological transformations mirror those of the prior industrial revolution, defined by the free market and focused on financial profit rather than the common good, thus leading to one of the most significant concentrations of wealth in a few private hands in all human history, creating a new class of the immensely wealthy. As an aging movement, we now face the challenge of navigating an era of boundless information and rampant disinformation, growing individualism, and a deep erosion of shared values and ethical foundations. These dynamics have contributed to institutional fragility, the weakening of democracies, the crisis of international law, and the erosion of the very institutions that once upheld them.

In light of the rapid transformations shaping both local and international contexts, and inspired by Pope Francis's vision of a synodal Church, the movement recognizes an urgent call to renew and reorganize itself with courage to address these new realities. Central to this reflection are key questions: What challenges do Catholic professionals face today? How can we embody our Christian faith in daily life and within our professional, social, and political environments? And in what ways does the movement accompany and sustain us in these commitments?

This report highlights that, despite the challenges posed by emerging realities, members across the world continue to uphold their mission while seeking innovative ways to witness and promote Christian values. It presents the activities carried out in 2024 at the global, regional, and national levels, reflecting the movement's current condition—with its strengths and struggles—and offering valuable insights in preparation for the upcoming Plenary Assembly.

Table of Contents

I. ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS	4
II. VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MOVEMENTS	12
III. INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIONS.....	15
IV. NEWS FROM THE REGIONS	22
V. NEWS FROM OUR NATIONAL MOVEMENTS	37
VI. NEWS FROM OUR NETWORK.....	49

I. ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

1.1.WEBINAR ON SATURDAY 27TH APRIL 2024

“The Lay Movements in a Synodal Church in Light of the Ecclesiology of the People of God”

In October 2021, Our Holy Father Pope Francis launched the two-year synod on synodality; he invited the entire Church to reflect on the theme “***For a synodal Church: communion, participation, and mission***”. The process comprises a global consultation process, which started at the local level with the consultation of the people of God, followed by the discernment of the pastors, and the implementation of a Synodal Church. The entire three-year process focused on the process of renewal of the Church within the framework of Vatican Council II.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, emphasized that synodality is lived both within the Church and outside the Church (its mission in the world)". In line with this, Pax Romana recognizes that its mission and spiritual journey are enlightened by Lumen Gentium and the synodal process is crucial to the movement and the Church. It believes that lay men and women should assume with great audacity their role, according to their gifts and abilities to act both in the search for the common good and respect for the dignity of persons both in society and in the Church. Lay action movements, being the face of the Church in society, have a big role in building a synodal Church; the synodal process would be incomplete without their involvement and input. Therefore, Pax Romana held another webinar on April 27, 2024, to enable members of Pax Romana to give feedback on the outcomes of the October 2023 Synod in Rome, provide guidelines on the roles of the laypeople in the implementation of the synodal recommendations, and propose recommendations for the upcoming synod in October 2024.

The event was moderated by Dr. Jules Zannou, ICMICA International Vice President for Africa, and saw the participation of the following panelists:

1. Dr. Rafael Luciani from Venezuela
2. Dr. Stefan Gigacz from Australia
3. Dr. Mauricio López from Mexico
4. Sheila Pires from Mozambique.

1.2. ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MODERATORS OF ASSOCIATIONS OF FAITHFUL AND ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS

The Annual Meeting with Moderators of Associations of the Faithful, Ecclesial Movements, and New Communities organized by the Dicastery of Laity, Family, and Life was held on Thursday 13th June 2024 in the New Synod Hall in Vatican City.

The theme of the event was: “*The Challenge of Synodality for the Mission*”.



The event started with the Holy Mass, which took place at the Altar of the Chair – St. Peter’s Basilica, presided by Card. Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery.



After the mass, participants received the welcome words and the Audience with the Holy Father. Holy Father Pope Francis addressed the participants. The full speech can be found [here](#).

After the Holy Father, Card. Kevin Farrell, Prefect of the Dicastery for laity Family and Life gave the Introductory Remark followed by the conferences on:

- **Mission as the Goal of Synodality** by Prof. Rafael Luciani, Catholic University Andrés Bello, Venezuela. You can find the Abstract of the presentation of Prof. Luciani here: [LUCIANI Abstract & mini Bio – ENGLISH](#)

And

- **Synodality and the Experience of the Movements** by Dr. Elisa Lisiero from the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

The afternoon session was marked by the testimonies, experiences, and concerns sharing by the ecclesial movements.



Photo of Pax Romana Family at the Annual Meeting of the Dicastery.

From ICMICA:

- Father Luis Maria, Chaplain (7th position from the left on the photo)
- Antonio Paulino, Vice Président for Europe (1st position from the left on the photo)
- Olive Maria, Secretary General (2nd position from the left on the photo)

From IMCS:

- William Norkek, International President (6th position from the left on the photo)
- Fasika Lachore, Secretary General (4th position from the left on the photo)
- Frederica Demattè, Team assistant. (5th position from the left on the photo)
- The coordinator MIEC – JECI Europe (from JECI). (3rd position from the left on the photo)

The meeting was fruitful. Pax Romana is grateful to the Dicastery for this opportunity.

To know more about this event, please go through [the full report](#)

1.3.JOINING THE INVITATION OF IMCS

IMCS -MIEC held a series of events between September 12 -20, 2024 at La Roche sur le Foron, to which the members of the International Council of ICMICA- MIIC were invited. They were:

- The Empowerment Summit (September 12-15),
- The International Council, (September 16 – 17),
- The Peace Forum in Rome (September 19), and
- The Audience with the Holy Father in Rome (September 20).



Ana Maria Bidegain, ICMICA President at the Pax Catholica Forum

- **September 12 -15, 2024: Empowerment Summit**

The summit gathered regional leaders to provide elements that will allow them to make a strategic plan for each region and know how to prepare, present, and implement projects according to the established timelines and schedules, as well as report to the funding agencies, both the results of the

work and a balance of the financial resources received, strengthen ethical values to assume such an important task.

At the same time, participants tried to design strategies to carry out, and strengthen continental and global projects on intercultural dialogue, and local and international leadership. A list of work commissions similar to ICMICA's specialized secretariats was proposed and the two movements acknowledged the need to work together on these issues. The international team requested the former leaders of both movements IMCS and ICMICA, at the regional and international level, to support this work by either giving presentations or leading workshops.

On behalf of ICMICA MIIC, Sylvia Cáceres-Vice President for Latin America and Ana María Bidegain International President accompanied this effort. The event took place at the Centennial Center in La Roche-sur-Foron, France.

- **September 16 and 17: International council of IMCS**

The International Council approved the work plan proposed by the new international team for the period 2024- 2027.

The strategic plan was developed in line with the agenda of the United Nations for Peace, the Youth Jubilee of 2025, and the World Youth Day in Seoul 2027. IMCS plans to hold its World Assembly in Seoul in 2027.

The sale of apartments in Paris was approved to enable IMCS to purchase the house where the Centennial Center is currently located.

- **September 19, 2024: Pax Catholica Forum**

The need to work with other lay movements with similar objectives, vision, and mission was realized, thus the union of PAX ROMANA & PAX CRISTI. This experience already begun in Latin America with the Alliance for Disarmament and in Asia with the Anti-Nuclear Weapons Day in Nagasaki, Japan.

The Pax Catholica Forum was held at Il Carmelo in Ciampino near Rome, thanks to the work of FUCI (IMCS Italy). The theme of the event was “*Youth for a just and sustainable culture of peace in non-violence and care for creation.*”

This event is part of the two-year actions for peace and nonviolence and care of the common home (21st September Peace Day to 21st September 2027 World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea).

In this event, ICMICA was represented by Sylvia Cáceres, Vice President for Latin America, Paulinus Prasetyo Nurhardjanto - Vice President of Asia-Pacific-South Region, and International President Ana Maria Bidegain.

- **20th September 2024: Private Audience with the Pope.**

The last day saw the audience with the Holy Father Pope Francis. The Holy Father called for the “promotion of social justice and integral human development”, encouraged by “the Catholic faith and its vision of a world ever more in conformity with God's loving design for the human family.”

He stated that the presence and activity of Pax Romana in academia, in the workplace, or on the streets of cities pursue this end, working to build a more compassionate, harmonious, and fraternal world.

He called on the Pax Romana movements to strengthen education and training for citizen participation locally and globally. In this way, “Pax Romana” stands as a prelude to a deepening understanding of “the most pressing social issues of our time”, enabling young people to “promote effective change in their own communities, thus serving as a Gospel leaven.”

The Pope urged the members of Pax Romana to be involved in the synodal process “a shared path of listening, of participation and commitment in a dialogue open to discernment, and also to be attentive to the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit.

In the same way, the Pope also encouraged participants to welcome the upcoming celebration of the Holy Year 2025 as a special occasion for personal renewal and spiritual enrichment in union with the whole Church. “The Holy Door, the symbol of the Jubilee, reminds us that we are all pilgrims, called together to a deeper union with the Lord Jesus and to availability to the power of his grace, which transforms our lives and the world in which we live,” Francis explained.

He concluded with a call to work for peace, justice, and care for the common home, to work for the development of peace, harmony, justice, human rights, and mercy, and thus for the spread of the Kingdom of God in this world.

In this private audience, ICMICA was represented by Sylvia Cáceres, vice-president for Latin America, Paulinus Prasetyo Nurhardjanto, vice-president of the Asia-Pacific-South Asia region, and International President Ana María Bidegain.



Left to right: Paulinus Prasetyo (Vice President for Asia), Ana Maria Bidegain (International President), Sylvia Caceres (Vice President for Latina America).

II. VISIT TO THE NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

In order to strengthen the bonds between the international coordination and the local movements, some visits, both virtual and in-person were conducted. The team tried to make use of all opportunities to meet members and leaders to strengthen the movement.

2.1. Virtual Visit to CPNZ Zimbabwe

The virtual visit was in participation of the International President Ana Maria Bidegain, Olive Maria HAJAMIARISOA, Secretary General, and Albert Dhafana, National Chairperson of Catholic Professional Network of Zimbabwe. The meeting was around the life of the movement in Zimbabwe.

The movement in Zimbabwe is present in 08 dioceses with 02 metropolitan. They have a national chaplain who is a diocesan priest. Generally, their relationship with the church leaders is good. They also work closely with Arrupe University.

The movement is affected by the economic hardship in the country. Many people migrate abroad, particularly to Europe and take less qualified jobs to get income. They leave their children behind.

Linked to this situation, they are struggling to support local activities and most of them are concentrated in Harare. Members are unable to pay their dues. They admitted that their willingness to support the movement financially is there but the capacity is very tight.

2.2. In-person visit to MEIC Italy

On June 14, 2024, a few members of the team, Father Luis Maria, Antonio Paulino and Olive Maria HAJAMIHARISOA met Professor Roberto Cipriani and the Secretary at the office of MEIC in Rome.

The meeting focused on exchanging news between MEIC, the region and the international office. MEIC Team informed the visitors about upcoming council meeting (22nd June 2024) and election of leaders (members of the council, representative of Pax Romana, Person in charge of journal publication) and their plans to hold events to mark the World Day for Education, which will take place from 30th October to 02nd November 2025. They also shared about their campaign of collecting 5000 signatures to pay taxes. They hope that the association get some income from this campaign.

At the moment of the visit, they admitted that MEIC does not have a contact person for Pax Romana yet.

The international team shared about the intention to work on ICMICA's archives with the University of Fribourg. The team shared about upcoming webinars and the international council meeting, which is taking place in Lima Peru in November 2024.

2.3. In-person Visit to CPT Tanzania

The Secretary General, Olive Maria HAJAMIHARISOA, and the Deputy Vice President for Africa, Atranus Method, met the National Chairperson of the Christian Professionals of Tanzania (CPT), Thomas Brash and the National Coordinator, Patrick Tegemeo on 16th July 2024. The meeting was about exchanging news from the three offices (CPT National, ICMICA Africa and International).

CPT started in 1982 and was recognized by the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference (TEC). They are present in 15 out of 35 dioceses in Tanzania. Their focuses are:

- Helping the Church in the evangelization mission,
- Relieving the social challenges through health services, legal support, etc.
- Working with the government at microeconomic level,
- Promoting Development from the grassroot level by collecting the voices of the citizens on the development they want.

CPT has two permanent Coordinators. Every year, they publish books collecting the reflections of Catholic Professionals on different issues (social and political). They also invite the inputs of other religions. She holds her general meeting every year and each chapter sends representatives.

Despite the big coverage, they observed that only a few professionals participate actively in the Church, and most of them are concentrated in the cities. Only teachers are present everywhere. As a result, some bishops know the movement and are interested in her activities while many more still struggle to understand. CPT has good relationship with the Tanzanian Movement of Catholic Students (TMCS); they participate in their annual meeting and vice versa.

Atranus Mathod shared the updates from the African office, and the ongoing projects on Laudato Si in Tanzania. They also discussed the ownership and registration of the land that Pax Romana ICMICA Africa bought to sustain the community project in Haneti Dodoma.

Olive Maria shared about the situation of the international office, the challenges of collecting fees from the affiliated movements, the ongoing and upcoming activities. The meeting ended with a plan to continue strengthening the collaboration forward.

Olive Maria also managed to visit the Mbeya and Dodoma chapter of CPT. In Mbeya, the movement is quite active and received a lot of support from the archdiocese. The leader, Malima Sabinus is a retiree and has a lot of time to dedicate to the movement and attend meetings. Members are supportive and make the work of the leader easier.

Dodoma chapter was a bit dormant but now in the process of redynamizing it. The Vice Chairperson and Secretary stated that they have started visiting parishes and resumed their monthly meeting. Finance and time remain the big challenges in maintaining the movement active.

2.4. In-person visit to the Portuguese movement

Ana Maria managed to visit two chapters of the Metanoia movement in Portugal (Barcelona and xx).

III. INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIONS

Pax Romana unites Catholic Students, Professionals, and Intellectuals with a shared commitment to integrate faith and action. Inspired by the Catholic social tradition, our members are committed to integral human development, peace, youth empowerment, and good governance.

Pax Romana's contribution to the UN is primarily in four areas:

1. Youth (university student) participation in decision making, including as an active engagement with the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY);
2. Human rights, including participation in the UPR process,
3. Active participation in the NGOs' committees at the UN; and
4. Global governance by mobilizing support for the UN and the SDG agenda among Catholics.

3.1. UNITED NATIONS IN VIENNA

In Vienna, Pax Romana, through her representatives, had been active members of the NGO Committees:

- Pax Romana's representative (Annemarie) has been a committed member of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (CSW): Vice-Treasurer (2020 -2024), and Treasurer for 2024 & 2025 (www.ngocswvienna.org).
- Pax Romana's representative (Helga Kerschbaum) has been a committed member of the NGO Committee on Peace: Chair of the Committee on Peace (CoP) 2018-2022, 2nd Vice Chair Committee on Peace 2022-2024, 1st Vice Chair Committee on Peace 2024-2026. (<https://ngocongo.org/ngo-committees-in-vienna/>).

They participated in the preparation and realization of events organised by the Committee on the Status of Women at the United Nations in Vienna, particularly in the presentation of the situation of women's groups (e.g. advancements and setbacks), in sharing updates and reports on the gender-based violence, Beijing+30 issues and other topics connected with our mission as CSW.

1. Participation in meetings of the United Nations

In 2024, Pax Romana Representatives participated in the following events:

- Meeting of NGO CSW Vienna and NGO CSD Vienna: “Perspectives on the second meeting of States Parties to the Treaty of Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and Future Activities” - February 22, 2024.
- CSW68: Consultation Day under the Commission on the Status of Women - webinar: “Empowering Pastoralist Women in Mountain Regions: Navigating Environmental & Gender Challenges.” March 12, 2024.
- Side Event at CCPCJ 33rd: “Access to Justice for Victims after Nuclear Disastrous Accidents: Who is responsible? What are the consequences on Health and the Environment?” May 16, 2024.
- “Making sure that firearms do not end up being used in gender-based violence” - October 15, 2024.
- A Round Table Discussion: “Stop Non-State Torture: Enforcing Human Rights for Everyone.” Analyzing international, regional, and national legal frameworks, emphasizing a paradigm shift to address the complexities of torture definition.
- Participation of Pax Romana delegates in the United Nations Environmental Assembly (UNEA 6) in Nairobi. February 19 – march 1, 2024.

2. Presentation of Statements with the Commission on the Status of Women:

Pax Romana is a signatory of several statements issued by Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). In 2024, During the CSW 68, Pax Romana joined the group in issuing a written Statement on the Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”. The statement can be accessed via this [link](#).

3.2. PAX ROMANA AT THE UNEA 6 AT UNEP NAIROBI

UNEA, which is held every two years, sets the global environmental agenda; provides overarching policy guidance and defines policy responses to address emerging environmental challenges; undertakes policy review, dialogue, and the exchange of experiences; sets the strategic guidance on the future direction of UNEP; and fosters partnerships for achieving environmental goals and resource mobilization. UNEA-6 was attended by over 5,000 delegates and Pax Romana was present.

The event saw the participation of Olive Maria HAJAMIHARISOA and Hilary Muthui. It focused on how multilateralism can help tackle the triple planetary crises of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss, and pollution and waste. Backed by strong science, political resolve, and engagement with society, the Assembly was an opportunity for governments around the world, civil society groups, the scientific community, and the private sector to shape the global environmental policy.

Select Lessons Learnt in UNEA Events

Hilary Muthui was one of the participants; here is a selection of lessons learnt therein.

1. It was noted that Africa has been a source of cheap raw materials and has been a dumping ground for obsolete industries. The meeting was made aware that Africa today is faced with high external debt, energy and food and manufacturing deficits. Further, it was remarked that, to achieve sustainable development, Africa must decarbonize, de-colonize and de-dollarize.
2. If Africa is to escape from the current economic crisis, it must adopt urgent, bold and radical solutions. There has to be an overhaul of the global economic architecture, which is colonial by design and which has a vacuum effect of financial resources vacuum effect. Africa must endeavor to achieve food sovereignty and agroecology. It has to encourage strategic investment in energy sovereignty and aim for high-value-added industrial policies and green transportation. Macrodestruction of ecosystems has to be criminalized.
3. The world ought to exercise resource justice where there is value addition within the countries that produce industrial raw materials. It is time for sustainable and just levels of raw material resource use.
4. Considering that mining is a threat to communities, climate, and ecosystems, there is a need for intergenerational climate justice as relates to mining.
5. There is a need for sustainable use of soil resources. To achieve this, there is a need for soil mapping to enable customized fertilizer application for soil-suited fertilizer, leaving the soil healthy.
6. NGOs should be involved in multilateral actions in tackling the triple planetary crisis.
7. It was resolved that there is a need to review our production and consumption patterns and to embrace regenerative agriculture.

8. There is need for an integrated approach to tackling the triple global crises by fostering multilateral corporation and combined forces through the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs).
9. UNEA 6 emphasized the use of digital science to accelerate the attainment of a sustainable future.
10. There was a call for the global west to free the global south from financial burden to enable them to invest in nature-based solutions, which are nature positive.
11. Initiatives to address the triple global crises ought to be people-centered. It was stressed that direct involvement of a wide section of stakeholders in decision-making.

Recommended Way Forward for Pax Romana following Participation at UNEA-6

In light of its engagement at the Sixth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-6), it is recommended that **Pax Romana** adopt the following strategic actions:

1. Strengthen Representation at UNEP

Enhance the movement's visibility and influence by actively participating in year-round activities and initiatives organized by UNEP that are open to civil society organizations (CSOs).

2. Disseminate Outcomes and Resolutions

Organize regular fora, including virtual platforms, to share the outcomes, resolutions, and key lessons from UNEA. This will help raise awareness, build capacity, and inspire environmental protection initiatives across member movements.

3. Develop Climate-Focused Programmes

Design and implement programmes on climate change, drawing from UNEA insights, to be carried out by national movements. These should promote grassroots action and contextualized responses to environmental challenges.

By Hilary Muthui – KMCP ICMICA Kenya

3.3. COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Begoña Ocio, Pax Romana Representative at the Council of Europe (2021 -2025)

In 2024, COING's activity was defined by the renewal of representation within the Standing Committee, the election of new Committee Presidencies, and the launch of the 2024–2027 projects. Pax Romana supported the candidacy of the current President, Gérard Ermischer, and contributed to the revitalization of several committees, including Inclusive Territories, Health and Environment, Interreligious Dialogue, Human Rights, Sport, and Migration Issues.

In the Inclusive Territories, Environment and Health Committee, Pax Romana is represented by Alice Cardoso (Portugal), Rosaria Capone (Italy), and Begoña Ocio (Basque Country). A meeting during COP29 with the Latin American group explored possible joint initiatives, such as a reflection on circular economy. The main commitment now is the preparation of a webinar on Energy Transition to be held before COP30 in Brazil (2025), in collaboration with Committee President Anne Marie Chavanon.

In the Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue Committee, Pax Romana is represented by Alfreda Fonseca (Portugal), Mathieu Toulougousou (France), and Begoña Ocio. In February 2024, a webinar on “Migration and Interreligious Dialogue” addressed school integration challenges and highlighted the work of Portugal's Interreligious Council for Migration. Pax Romana has since contributed to the design of a Permanent Platform with the Parliamentary Assembly and is

collaborating on the Committee’s website to showcase best practices, with an invitation for members to share experiences.

In the **Human Rights and Sport Committee**, Pax Romana is represented by Adei Ibeas from the Bask Country (BKA). A good practice experience on inclusive sport was presented, and discussions are ongoing regarding the development of an Athlete’s Charter to promote ethical values in sport.

The **Migration Issue Committee** counts with the participation of Mathieu Toulougousou (MCC, Paris) and Begoña Ocio (BKA), working closely with Daniel Guery (MIAMSI). Contributions included: a February 2024 webinar on Migration and Health led by Metanoia (Portugal); a March collaboration in drafting a Recommendation supporting the Fridez Report (PACE) for a migration-friendly discourse in the European elections; a September report on emergency accommodation in Bilbao; and a November data collection exercise on housing for unaccompanied minors. In 2025, Pax Romana is contributing to the Committee Chair’s visit to Poland and preparing a webinar on Education, showcasing cooperation between NGOs, schools, and administrations to support migrant youth in vocational training.

At the **Committee for the Monitoring and Defense of the Social Charter**, Pax Romana (through Begoña Ocio) contributed to a Declaration addressed to the European Commission on poverty eradication. Greater participation from other national movements is encouraged to broaden representation.

In the **Education Committee**, the representation is held by Alfreda Fonseca (Portugal), though participation remains low. A proposal is being studied by Daniel Guery (MIAMSI) and Begoña Ocio to launch a project promoting a “Threshold Level” for Scientific-Technological Competencies, aimed at enhancing equal opportunities and labour mobility across Europe.

Beyond the Conference, Pax Romana jurists contributed to the **Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)** by reviewing legal frameworks on civil society protection, linked to Recommendation CM/Rec (2028)¹¹. Additionally, steps have been taken to apply for **observer status on the Steering Committee for Democracy**, for which Pax Romana invites contributions from movements worldwide on governance, democracy, and peacebuilding initiatives.

Epilogue

In the course of 2025, Pax Romana will proceed to carry out the replacement of its Permanent Delegation at the Council of Europe. The change will allow the organization to incorporate a new person who is more available and dedicated. This will lead to better coordination and expansion of the network of collaborators. All members of Pax Romana are invited!

Begoña OCIO (BKA- Pax Romana)

bego.ocio@gmail.com

IV. NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

4.1. AFRICA REGION

Since 2021, the African Coordination of Pax Romana ICMICA has embarked on a journey to look after the vulnerable group in the society in the face of climate change and food insecurity. Smallholder farmers are the most affected by climate change due to their heavy dependence on natural resources. Pax Romana has been reflective in nature but the local situation is forcing the organization to embark on concrete action that will directly impact the lives of our brothers and sisters. The intervention has touched 04 countries so far: Cote d'Ivoire, Burundi, Tanzania, and Mali. Below are the details of the interventions and the impacts they have on the lives of the beneficiaries.

Promoting Food Security and Improving Livelihood

Hunger remains a major daily problem for around 795 million people worldwide, of whom 780 million live in developing regions (FAO, 2015). Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment. To contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to explore the appropriate strategies to fight against poverty and food insecurity in Africa, PAX ROMANA ICMICA launched a project entitled “**Promoting food security and poverty reduction in Africa**” and engaged its partners and members from different countries to find strategic responses to address issues. The project intervention was designed to support the mission of Pax Romana to serve the less privileged in the community and live through action the motto “Preferential Option for the poor” (prioritizing meeting their needs). The intervention focused on strengthening community capacities, improving food productivity, diversifying food sources, and improving income.

This project benefited a total of 110 families: 30 from IRFA Azaguié Cote d'Ivoire, 30 from Bubanza Province Burundi, and 50 from Tanzania.

➤ **Capacity building and climate mitigation**

Beneficiaries were trained in climate-smart and organic farming techniques such as composting, adoption of biopesticides, balanced food and food hygiene, and vegetable gardening (horticulture). They also learned about the technical itineraries of their respective crops. Beneficiaries from Cote

d'Ivoire cultivated chili, eggplant, bananas, and cassava. For Burundi, they did green vegetables (lenga lenga), tomatoes, watermelon, rice, and soya beans. For Tanzania, they focused on horticulture including vegetables and fruits.



Lenga Lenga and Rice farming activities by the beneficiaries of Burundi

➤ Equipment support

Sometimes, a lack of farm equipment and inputs prevented the poor farmers from performing and building their livelihoods. Pax Romana ICMICA Africa supported them with basic farming tools such as water cans, hoes, sprayers, and pumps.



Beneficiaries in Cote d'Ivoire



Beneficiaries in Burundi receiving material supports

➤ **Installation of a demonstration farm of Pax Romana**

In Tanzania, Pax Romana ICMICA Africa with its partners (Rikolto, Simusolar, and Minor Seminary of Mbalizi) set up a solar-powered demo site to train small-scale farmers on climate-smart horticulture. The project also supports the minor seminary in supplying water to the school that has around 200 pupils.



Solar pump installed at the Minor Seminary Mbalizi Mbeya Tanzania.



Pose photo of students after planting tomatoes

“Community Actors Coming Together to Address Climate Change.”

Climate change is disproportionately affecting the poor than the rich and those who depend mostly on natural resources are the ones the most affected. In the face of growing malnutrition and land degradation caused by global warming, ICMICA, together with its members came up with concrete interventions. Since 2022, the project on “community actors coming together to address climate change has reached around 290 families from Tanzania and Mali. The intervention focused on building the capacities of smallholder rural people (youth and households) to mitigate, adapt, and reduce the effect of climate change in their respective communities; tree planting, and introduction of clean water and new technology such as solar irrigation.



Community Youth of Haneti Dodoma



Households of Mpuguso Mbeya Tanzania



Mobile solar pump for the youth in KISA Mbeya Tanzania.



Solar pump of Mpuguso Mbeya Tanzania (left) – Solar pump of the borehole in Prakuy village Mali (right)



Clean water project for Mwiwendaji village Haneti Dodoma Tanzania



Clean water project for Prakuy village, San District, Mali

Through these projects, Pax Romana ICMICA was able to touch the lives of 400 families, plant a total of 8,000 trees, establish a strong relationship with the church leaders in the respective dioceses, and show a concrete example of living the spirituality of action. Many of the beneficiaries have affirmed that through the project, their confidence in the Church has improved. Some said that they now see the synodal Church they want, a Church that puts the words into action. The project also brought togetherness and solidarity among the community members. Pax Romana ICMICA Africa hopes to continue its mission of evangelization, through action in many countries and build strong partnerships with like-minded organizations for better policy implementation.

4.2. LATINA AMERICA REGION



I. Introduction

The Movement of Catholic Professionals of Latin America and the Caribbean began a process of reflection and discernment between March and October 2024, which culminated in a meeting held on November 1-3, 2024. The communities reflected on the mission of the movement in the contemporary world by answering the question: *“How are we trying to follow Jesus today?”* The responses received during the preparatory phase made it possible to identify key challenges. Among them, the crisis of democratic institutions in polarized societies, where power is understood as privilege and individualistic and consumerist values are reinforced. At the same time, they reflected the tensions present in the Church, marked by clericalism, lack of dialogue and opposition to the spirit of conversion which Pope Francis encourages us to address. Other disturbing aspects were highlighted, such as the lack of participation of the laity, youth and women in ecclesial movements

and environments; the lack of recognition of diversity; as well as the lack of intergenerational encounters, which limits the connection of communities with new generations.

The communities highlighted the importance of professional and pastoral commitment in everyday spaces such as the family, the periphery and the world of work, where following of Jesus is manifested in small ways. Challenges were raised such as assuming the evangelizing task of the movement based on horizontality, fraternity and forgiveness in an increasingly dehumanized society; some lines of action were also raised, such as building community and living the Gospel while being faithful to reality and recovering the humanity of Jesus by promoting a humbler, synodal and close way of being Church.

II. Discernment about the following of Jesus today

- a) The meeting was held in Lima a few days after the death of Gustavo Gutiérrez, theologian and advisor of the Movement. Gustavo's Easter, the memory of his theological work and his evangelizing and human witness were very present and impregnated the discernment about the following of Jesus in this time, as well as the challenges of our Movement.
- b) In this context, the objectives of the meeting focused on trying to understand with honesty the changes that have occurred in society, the Church and the institutions in order to propose a coherent following of Jesus with the proclamation of the Good News today. Likewise, it is also about finding conditions that sustain our hope in a time of uncertainty and to be able to outline concrete actions from the preferential option for the poor, in a context marked by diverse crises, thus recovering the sense of the spirituality of the Movement.



III. Being honest with the reality

Our reflections alluded to three axes, indistinctly: State, Civil Society and Church in which crisis situations of different intensity that affect the lives of the poor that challenge the commitment of the members of our Movement are translucent. Among the clearest signs of denunciation were:

- The reality lived by our native peoples whose habitat is seriously affected by the extractive activities developed by transnational or local companies that obtain from natural resources the maximum economic profit without caring about what will be the fate of the communities that inhabit the territories that are exploited.
- The institutional deterioration that affects the human rights protection system and opens the door to mechanisms of abuse, criminality and corruption that are increasingly widespread at different levels of the States. This is detrimental to the most vulnerable populations and their environment, especially in the Amazon, because either by action or omission, the States do

not respond to their most basic demands such as education, health, security, or care for the environment.

- Individualism, discrimination, and the return to the past that pro-conservative groups seek, accentuate the distance between citizens by building barriers to dialogue and to the recognition of diversity in its broadest sense. Good politics, oriented towards the common good, appears increasingly distant in the face of the dismantling of guarantees for the defense of human rights and the favoring of power groups linked to criminality. All of this reflects a truncated, even authoritarian modernity that permeates the different levels of society.
- Although some of these signs are also present in the ecclesial sphere, in this field the lack of connection and dialogue with young people stands out. Many interventions pointed out the central importance and the urgent and crucial need to work with them. The ever-decreasing participation of young people in ecclesial spaces can be explained, among other causes, by the absence of spaces for intergenerational encounter and dialogue. We should also take into account a cultural change marked by consumerism and the profit motive that distances young people from the values of the Gospel, all of which challenges us significantly because the members of our Movement began the journey of faith in our communities when we were still students.
- Another sign is the neglect of women, distanced from the important decisions made in the Church, an aspect that remains unaddressed in the synodal process.

All this challenges our responsibility in the care of the little ones and the care of creation and places us in an attitude of searching for codes, elements and discernment to better understand reality. Never as now, in these extreme circumstances that our countries and the global space are going through, have the difficulties to see in perspective been so present. And at the same time, we feel the urgency to do things against the current and explore new possibilities, signs of hope. We have to renew our way of seeing reality, we have to work on our understanding of society, of politics and the State and, of course, of our Church and of ourselves. As was said in the meeting, we need to reinvent ourselves, to reinvent our vision and our concepts in order to fulfill our evangelizing mission today.

c) A Movement involved in the care of creation

One of the aspects that occupies considerable energy of several of the members of the movement and that is seen as one of the challenging themes to be taken up with greater determination is the

theme of Creation and the Earth. Integral ecology constitutes a central theme that goes hand in hand with that of the preferential option for the poor. It is essential to understand the close link between the two and their centrality for our action. From the perspective of the encyclical *Laudato Si*, and the incorporation of the concept of integral ecology, we see that those most harmed by the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources are the poor. The native peoples have had to organize themselves, especially women, to defend their lands and resist projects of annihilation of their habitats, peoples and cultures.

As a result of this reflection, the Movement and the Church in general have to promote the care of the common home through personal commitment, as well as to commit ourselves to the causes of those who feel in their own flesh the loss of quality of life, of their lands and their culture.

d) Called to cultivate bonds of friendship

As a Movement we have drawn from the committed experience of what it means to fight for the values of the Kingdom, translating this into the struggle for justice and fraternity, generating the encounter with every person of good will who directs efforts for the transformation of our society towards a more humane and just reality. We strengthen ourselves in the task of building bonds of friendship and solidarity, which we live with those who suffer from the throwaway culture. We must remember, what Gustavo Gutiérrez said, and the Aparecida document also reminds us, that it is not enough to be friends among ourselves, that we share many things in common, but above all, we must “be friends of the poor”, who today are indigenous people, women, youth, children, members of the LGBTIQ+ communities, whose clamor summons us to eradicate the condition of dependence and humiliation they suffer.

Thus, we see that the following of Jesus requires us to build fraternity by having the poor at the center of our commitment. The task will be richer and more effective when, as a Movement, we provide more opportunities for intergenerational encounters, when we are capable of transmitting the memory and building together our own story for this time between the older and younger generations. Without denying the efforts of joint work between communities and local Movements, we have reflected on the importance of taking on the challenge of fostering encounters and offering support to the initiatives of young students. We will have to promote accurate and effective actions in this regard.

It seems important to us that this willingness to meet should also be expressed in the effort that the Movement must make to find points of convergence with other related movements, with which it is necessary to join efforts to mark this line of transformation and find mutual support.

e) The challenge of looking far ahead

This has implications of perspective. It is key to change the way we see, the way we talk, the way we communicate, particularly communication with and through young people. In particular, communication with and through young people, how do we understand reality, at a short distance or is it a matter of looking far away? The prologue of the second edition of Gustavo's Theology of Liberation is called "Looking far away" and invites us not to lose sight of the deep social and economic inequalities that structure our society in the transforming action of our commitments. And yet, in this perspective, there is much to be done from the small, the close. This "today" demands to be present also in the small battles, with the little ones and, to sharpen our sensitivity and our friendship with the simplest, to see from them how we are going, where we are going, being able to develop together a strategic look. To this end, we have insisted on an honest and profound understanding of reality. And from there to develop the power of love as opposed to the power of domination, from there to see the signs of the times, being attentive to how God is manifesting himself in the times, the facts and the current circumstances.

f) Signs of hope

Uncertainty can be at the same time an opportunity to build signs of hope. The testimonies presented at the meeting are revealing of hopeful changes that are being developed by members or communities of our Movement. Thus, we propose a minimum route for the following of Jesus today, as artisans of hope (Pope Francis):

- It is crucial to build alliances and articulations with other Catholic organizations for the prophetic denunciation and work on controversial issues with impact on the lives of the poor and society such as: integral ecology, the recognition of native peoples and their rights; environments of participation and free of violence for women, children and LGTBQ+ community.
- Within the framework of synodality, to which Pope Francis encourages us, we reaffirm the importance of community life and the equal participation of all members -young people,

women- by their mere condition of baptized in the mission of announcing the good news in our society.

- There is consensus on the priority of working with our young people, certainly because of their importance as protagonists of a history of exclusion and limited opportunities for development, but also because our movement has its origins in communities of students who embrace with greater conviction the challenge of building a just and fraternal world.
- We are called to rethink, to reinvent the movement. Historically, we have organized ourselves in communities and these are acquiring flexibility according to the context and the dynamics of everyday life. It is essential to create new communities so that the Gospel finds resonance and meaning in those who desire a world of justice with greater opportunities to live with dignity.
- In times of crisis, it is increasingly difficult to achieve structural changes, hence the importance of working from the micro, from the closest. Small projects that make sense in the big picture. Therefore, we should not underestimate, but rather encourage, what members of our communities have been able to achieve at this time and at these levels.



Left -Panama delegation presenting action plan- Right – Presenting petitions during the closing mass

V. NEWS FROM OUR NATIONAL MOVEMENTS

5.1.CPNZ LEADERSHIP MET THE APOSTOLIC NUNCIO OF ZIMBABWE



On 19 August 2024, the Catholic Professional Network of Zimbabwe CPNZ, paid a courtesy visit to the Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Janusz Stanislaw Urbanczyk at his official residence, which is also the Embassy of the Holy See in Zimbabwe.

The main purpose of the visit was to welcome the Nuncio by the lay professionals in Zimbabwe and also to assure him of their commitment to serve Church and Society as guided by the bishops. The Catholic Professionals also assured him of their support for the Holy Father Pope Francis as he guides the universal Church.

Archbishop Janusz also took time to share his experiences in the diplomatic service representing the Holy See. He has over twenty years active engagement in the diplomatic trenches in Africa, Europe

and USA. He shared on the transition from the Millenium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Agenda of the UN. On paper, the international institutions have very good objectives, which in many instances resonate with the Social Teachings of the Church. However, the implementation is always problematic. Funders tend to run with certain agendas or objectives. In fact, ideologies often are contrary to overall human dignity and the common good. For example, the Atomic Energy treaties which regulate the development of nuclear materials need the greater effort of the Global North. To raise the standard of living of the so-called Global South, the North should intentionally take a cut in definite and certain areas. He went further to highlight issues of disasters, food security, and inequalities in our midst and the commitment of the Catholic Church to collaborating with progressive forces to find solutions.

He also shared about his experiences when he attended the 17th August 2024, the 44th SADC Summit. The objectives and deliberations were quite good, in his assessment. There needs clear follow-up actions and commitment from all parties for the full realization of the objectives.

Archbishop Janusz expressed his deep commitment to walk and work with the local bishops' conference. They are his official contact and collaborative arm. He also emphasized that the success of his mission will be to the extent he is connected with all people of God in Zimbabwe – the laity, religious, clergy, and indeed the bishops. He assured us of his availability and presence for sharing on pertinent issues. Effective intervention requires facts, evidence, and effective communication.

The meeting also highlighted climate change in light of *Laudato si*, Child protection and the issue of the pervasive drug industry, financial sustainability in the contemporary times, food security, lay involvement in the Church (the Church is not only the hierarchy), immigration challenges, especially in light of introduced quotas for prospective university students in countries like Poland, family values and the need to protect and promote authentic values as guided by the Church.

The Zimbabwean team was accompanied by the Harare Chapter Spiritual Director Fr. Ashton Mugozhi SJ as well as Fr. Tanaka Mashiche SJ, based at St. Ignatius College in Lusaka, Zambia. The ICMICA Pax Romana Africa Region Secretary General Perlagia Tafadzwa Kapuya was also in attendance.

The team gave the Nuncio a small gift comprising some Zimbabwean artifacts.

It was indeed a fruitful encounter. They departed after a photo session, with promises for further engagement.

Albert Dhafana



5.2.MCCP MADAGASCAR CELEBRATES ITS 35-YEAR ANNIVERSARY IN 2024



The MCCP was celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2024!

After 35 years of service to the church, the MCCP has always lived the motto “Dunc in altum”. This is a call for lay managers seeking to better serve Christ, the Church, and Society in their daily lives.

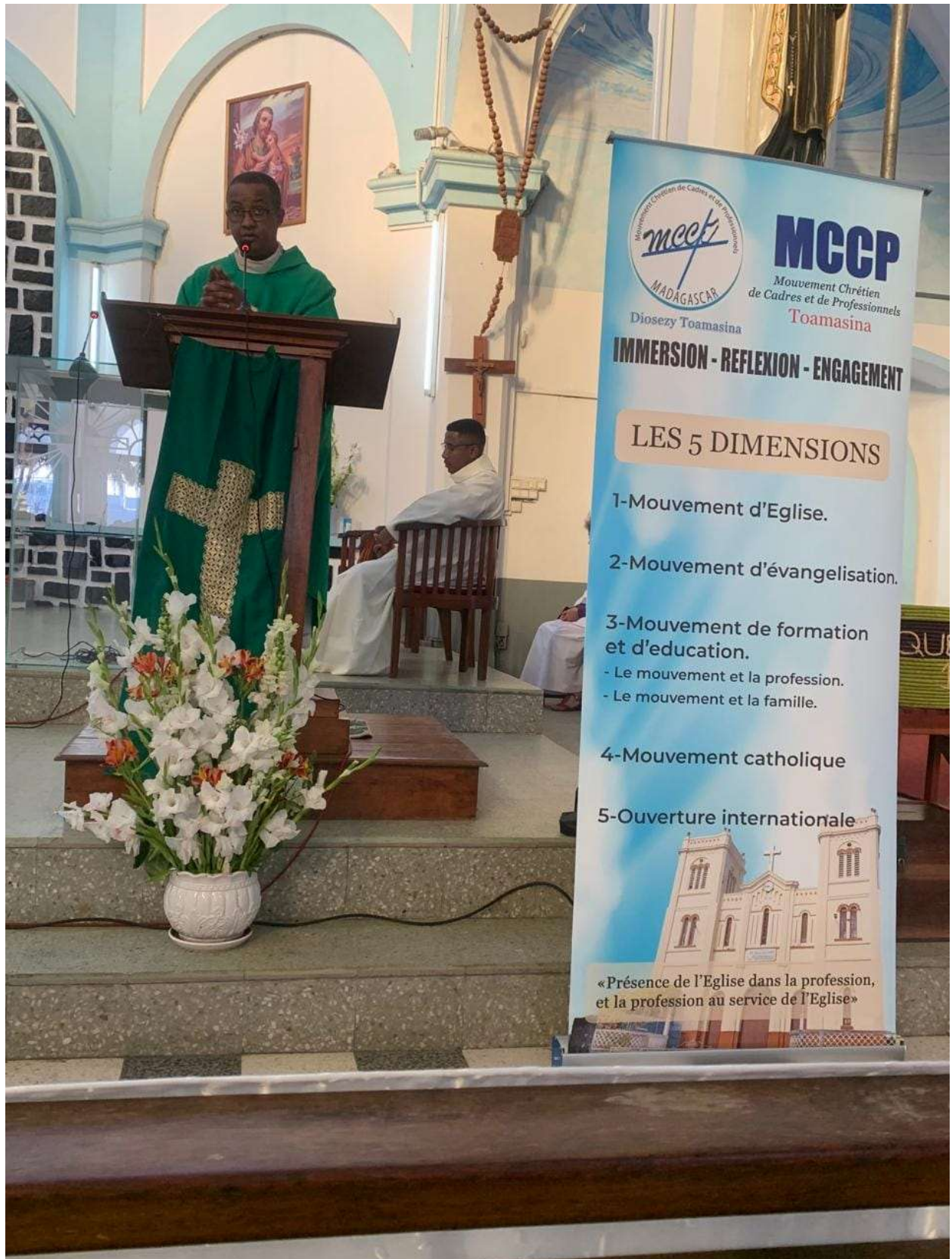
This celebration is milestone in the preparations for the 2025 Congress in Mahajanga. The celebration did not go unnoticed, for all the teams and chapters marked it in one way or another, according to their means and styles: a mass, free consultation services, or other activities.

Imbued with the team spirit after the 2022 national congress held in Fianarantsoa Madagascar, under the theme: ‘*Committed managers, on the march for the renewal of the Company*’, the board members and team chaplains met immediately afterward for the national coordination meeting, in April 2023 in Antananarivo, to draw up the implementation plan for the resolutions taken at this congress.

To communicate the message more effectively and implement what was decided at the congress and the national coordination meeting, inter-diocesan team meetings (RIDE) were organized from December 2023 to November 2024 in the North, Centre, South, and Eastern parts of the country. 2024 was also marked by the movement's official presence in the diocese of Taolagnaro. This brings things full presence of the MCCP in all 23 dioceses in Madagascar.

At a time when the nation is thirsting for committed lay people, the MCCP wants to be a leaven in the dough, by training leaders of integrity who will be accountable to their commitments. That is the reason why many active members have taken part in one way or another in successive elections in the country: presidential, legislative, and soon communal. A way of living baptism in their cities.







5.3.FREE SERVICE TO SOCIETY BY THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONALS OF TANZANIA



Every year, the Christian Professionals of Tanzania conducts social outreach activities in line with its professional nature. They organize these activities as a way of giving back to society and support to the poor who cannot afford professional services such as medical consultation and legal advices. In 2024, on Sunday 18th August 2024, they offered professional free legal and health consultation services at the Holy Family Parish in Dar es Salaam from 6 am to 2 pm. They were able to serve a total of 300 people.



5.4.SPIRITUAL FAMILY RECOLLECTION OF MIIC TOGO



On Sunday 4 August 2024, at the end of the 2023-2024 pastoral year, as part of its activities, and in order to strengthen relational capacities of its members, MIIC PAX ROMANA TOGO organised a recollection at the Centre Centre Léon XIII des Soeurs Canossiennes in Agoè-Légbassito, a suburb of Lomé Togo. The event saw the participation of around thirty people.

The aim of this family recollection was to get together, pray together and receive God's grace as a family to cultivate more personal fraternity with Christ and for CHRIST for the spiritual growth of each member and to better witness to JESUS CHRIST as a family; to allow themselves to be

enlightened by the Word of God and better face the challenges of the present day; to create and strengthen the bonds of fraternity between families (children and spouses) of MIIC PAX ROMANA TOGO.

This recollection was organised under the theme: ***‘Evangelisation in Africa in the face of our cultures: challenges and opportunities’.***

The day began with a community mass at 09:00 am to entrust to the Lord the activities of MIIC Pax Romana Togo, the lives of all its members, their families, and the deceased members of MIIC Pax Romana Togo.

After mass, the families moved into the conference room for the rest of the activities. The moderator, Mr Alexandre KABIEZIM, began by welcoming everyone and outlining the day’s programme. The President Dr Jules WAHARE, in his speech, said ***‘MIIC Pax ROMANA TOGO, faith through action’*** presented the objectives and interest of such an event within the movement.



This was followed by the teaching on the theme chosen led by Rev. Father Paul TAMEKLOE, vicar of the parish of Sainte Madelaine de KANOSSA de KOVE, in the archdiocese of Lomé. During the discussions, Father Paul spoke about the challenges and opportunities in relation to the chosen theme, so for a successful evangelization in relation to their cultures. Participants were invited to identify the elements of their cultures, the rites which convey social values, which can be incorporated into our faith, which deserve to be Christianized. For this, they need to understand their cultures. It is important that the Gospel is proclaimed in local languages. He also warned participants

to be careful not to confuse inculturation with syncretism. This meeting was very enriching for everyone.

This family reunion initiative, the second of its kind at Pax Romana TOGO, was mainly an opportunity to renew this family reunion framework, by getting to know each other beyond the members of MIIC and by better fraternizing between husbands, wives and children in the Pax Romana Togo family.



Lomé on Sunday 4 August 2024 at the Centre Spirituel Léon XIII des Soeurs Canossiennes à Agoè-Légbassito.

VI. NEWS FROM OUR NETWORK

6.1.SIESC ANNUAL MEETING IN STRÖMMA 24 TO 29 JULY 2024

From 24 to 29th July, the SIESC held its annual meeting in Strömma, near Sätilla and Göteborg in Sweden. It saw the participation of 63 people from 12 countries: Albania, Germany, Austria, France, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, and Ukraine. The theme of the meeting was **“Children’s Right to Spiritual Development”**.

Like in the previous years, this gathering gave members the opportunity to reunite with the big family of SIESC and welcome new people.

The opening evening was chaired by the President of the Swedish Association RKF (Riksförbundet Kristen Fostran), a Christian Organization for Parents and Teachers, Carl-Henrik Karlsson, and SIESC President, Alin Tat. His Eminence Cardinal Bishop Anders Arborelius did the opening and welcome remark. He spoke on children’s right to spiritual education and led the celebration of the Eucharist. Monsignor Mariano Crociata, President of the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community, joined him to say a word and present his wishes to the participants.

The three-day event began with a two-part talk on "The Perspective of the Child" by Per and Thérèse Ewert, blending political history, theology, and references to international documents. Discussions highlighted the spiritual and educational rights of children, with Anders Dunemyr providing an interactive session on "Children’s Right to Spiritual Development." Participants engaged in seminars focused on school secularization, noting that its effects differ by country, particularly between Sweden, Slovenia, and France. Ulrika Erlandsson from the Catholic Educational Committee introduced catechesis methods, which participants explored through practical exercises.

The program also included cultural excursions, such as visiting Gothenburg’s Catholic cathedral, where some received blessings from a newly ordained priest. Additional activities included a tour of a fabric factory and a traditional village, offering a glimpse into Swedish rural life. An optional trip to the Västergötland region provided a historical experience, featuring medieval frescoes, castle ruins, and the site of Olof Skötkonung,

During the meeting, they were thrilled to welcome three women from a Hungarian Protestant association, with whom they hope to establish lasting connections. They were also reunited with our

Ukrainian friends Oleksii and Natalia, who shared deeply moving insights into the daily struggles of Ukrainians, including constant alerts and the displacement of countless individuals due to the ongoing war. This was a profound and emotional highlight of the gathering, and their thoughts and prayers are with those enduring such hardships.

This meeting had a stronger ecumenical dimension than usual, as we participated in Protestant services and prayers in a country where Protestantism is the dominant faith.

The participants extend heartfelt thanks to the organizers Karin, UllaCarin, Annette, and Agnetha, as well as to the Swedish association for their invaluable support. Their home-cooked meals, thoughtful service, and overall hospitality made them feel exceptionally well-cared for.

The team of SIESC is deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to making this experience so special.

Catherine LeCoz