

**Message of Pope Benedict XVI to the  
6th Assembly of the International Catholic Action Forum  
taking place from 22<sup>nd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> August in Iasi, Romania**

*(The International Forum promotes lay involvement in parish and community life,  
particularly through studying and acting on the principles of Catholic social teaching.)*

**CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, 24<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2012**

To the Venerable Brother Msgr. Domenico Sigalini  
General Assistant of the *International Catholic Action Forum*

On the occasion of the Sixth Ordinary Assembly of this the *International Catholic Action Forum*, I wish to extend my cordial greetings to you, and to all those who are participating in this meaningful gathering, especially the Coordinator of the Secretariat, Emilio Inzaurraga, the National Presidents and Spiritual Assistants. A special thought goes to the Bishop of Iasi, Monsignor Petru Gherghel and to his diocese, which is hosting this ecclesial event during which you are being called upon to reflect on “ecclesial and social co-responsibility”. It is highly significant and timely subject for the laity on the eve of the approaching Year of Faith and Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization.

Co-responsibility requires a change in mentality, particularly with regard to the role of the laity in the Church, who should be considered not as “collaborators” with the clergy, but as persons truly “co-responsible” for the being and activity of the Church. It is important, therefore, that a mature and committed laity be united, who are able to make their own specific contribution to the Church’s mission, in accordance with the ministries and tasks each one has in the life of the Church, and always in cordial communion with the bishops.

In this regard, the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* describes the nature of the relationships between laity and Pastors with the adjective “familiar”: “A great many wonderful things are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their spiritual leaders: in the laity a strengthened sense of personal responsibility; a renewed enthusiasm; a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their spiritual leaders. The latter, on the other hand, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more incisively come to decisions regarding both spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, may more effectively fulfil its mission for the life of the world” (n. 37).

Dear friends, it is important to deepen and to live out this spirit of profound communion in the Church, which characterized the early Christian community, as the book of the Acts of the Apostles attests: “Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (4:32). Feel the commitment to work for the Church’s mission to be your own: through prayer, through study, through active participation in ecclesial life, through an attentive and positive gaze at the world, in the continual search for the signs of the times.

Never tire of becoming more and more refined, through a serious and daily commitment to formation, through the aspects of your particular vocation as lay faithful, who are called to be courageous and credible witnesses in every sphere of society, so that the Gospel might be the light that brings hope in difficult situations, in troubles and in the darkness that men today so often find along the path of life.

To guide others to an encounter with Christ by announcing his message of salvation with language and ways understandable in our own day marked by rapidly transforming social and cultural advances, is the great challenge of the new evangelization. I encourage you to continue generously in your service to the Church, by fully living out your charism, whose fundamental feature is that of adopting the apostolic goal of the Church as a whole, in a fruitful balance between the universal and local Church, and in a spirit of intimate union with the Successor of Peter and of active co-responsibility with one's own Pastors (cf. Vatican II decree on the lay apostolate *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 20). At this stage in history, work in the light of the Church's social teaching to become a laboratory of "globalization of solidarity and charity", in order to grow with the entire Church in the co-responsibility of offering a future of hope to humanity, by having the courage to make even demanding proposals.

Your Catholic Action Associations boast a long and fruitful history, written by courageous witnesses of Christ and the Gospel, some of whom were recognized by the Church as blessed and saints. In their train, you are called today to renew your commitment to walk along the path of holiness, by preserving an intense life of prayer, encouraging and respecting personal paths of faith and by esteeming the riches of each person, with the accompaniment of the priests who assist you and of leaders who are capable of educating you in ecclesial and social co-responsibility. May your lives be "transparent"; may they be guided by the Gospel and enlightened by an encounter with Christ, whom you love and follow without fear. Adopt and share the pastoral decisions of the dioceses and parishes, by promoting occasions to meet and sincere collaboration with the other elements of the ecclesial community, by building relationships of esteem and communion with priests, for the sake of a living, ministerial and missionary community. Cultivate authentic personal relationships with everyone, beginning with families, and offer your availability to participate at all levels of social, cultural and political life, by always setting your sights on the common good.

With these brief thoughts, while I assure you of my affectionate remembrance of you, your families and your associations in prayer, from my heart I send to all the participants in the Assembly the Apostolic Blessing, which I willingly extend to all whom you meet in your daily apostolate.

From Castel Gandolfo,  
10 August 2012  
Benedictus PP. XVI