

## Catholic Organizing in the Anthropocene

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## (re)Discovering a Spirituality of Action



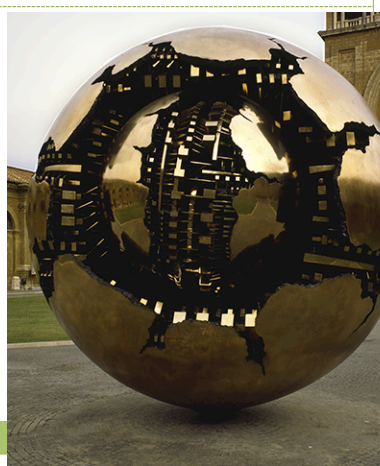
Victoire Cappe (1886-1927)



Joseph Cardijn with Pat Keegan and Bartolo Perez, both former Young Christian Worker presidents and lay auditors at Vatican II

## I. Truth of Life: Crisis of the Anthropocene

**Catholicism  
offers an  
Incarnational  
spirituality that  
sees the world  
and God's work  
in it**

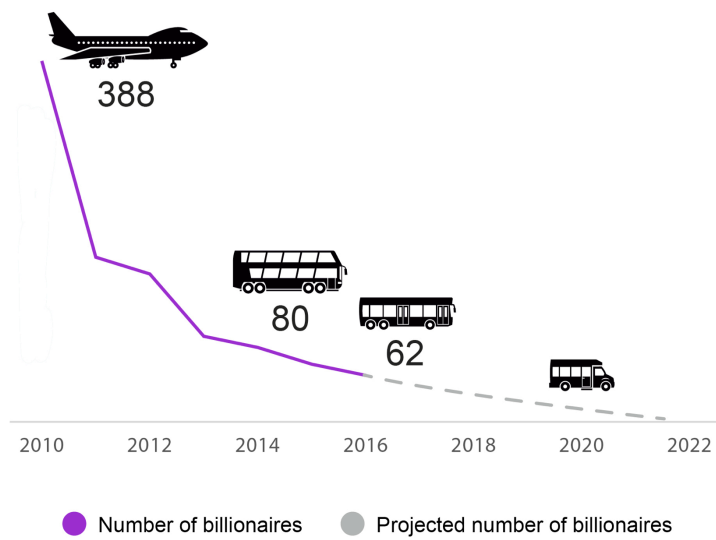




## Something is Wrong: 4 Dimensions



### A. Economy of Exclusion



## 8 men who hold the same wealth as 50% of the global population

- Bill Gates (American, founder of Microsoft),
- Amancio Ortega (Spanish, founder of Inditex),
- Warren Buffett (American, CEO of Berkshire Hathaway),
- Carlos Slim Helu (Mexican, owner of Grupo Carso),
- Jeff Bezos (American, Chairman of Amazon),
- Mark Zuckerberg (American, CEO of Facebook),
- Larry Ellison (American, CEO of Oracle)
- Michael Bloomberg (American, CEO of Bloomberg LP).

## A. Economy of Exclusion

### Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 53

Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say **“thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality**. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.

## B. Ecological Crisis / Throwaway Culture

- If everyone in the world lived like Americans (5% of the world), it would take five Earths.
- More than a million species face potential extinction as a result of disappearing habitats, changing ecosystems, and acidifying oceans.
- 2016 was the world's hottest year on record  
Average **sea level** is expected to rise **7 - 23 inches** before the end of this century

## B. Ecological Crisis / Throwaway Culture

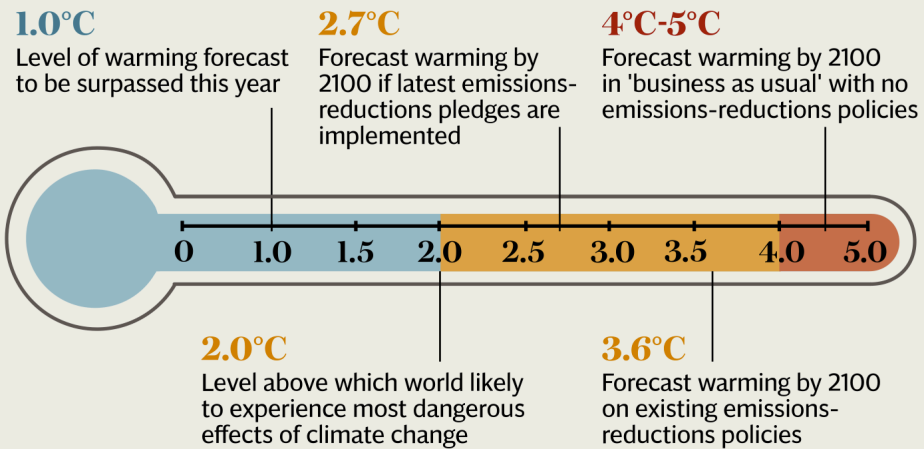
Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 53

- “Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a **“throw away” culture** which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the “exploited” but the outcast, the “leftovers”.



## B. Ecological Crisis / Throwaway Culture

### Global warming above pre-industrial levels



Sources: Climate Action Tracker, Met Office, UNFCCC

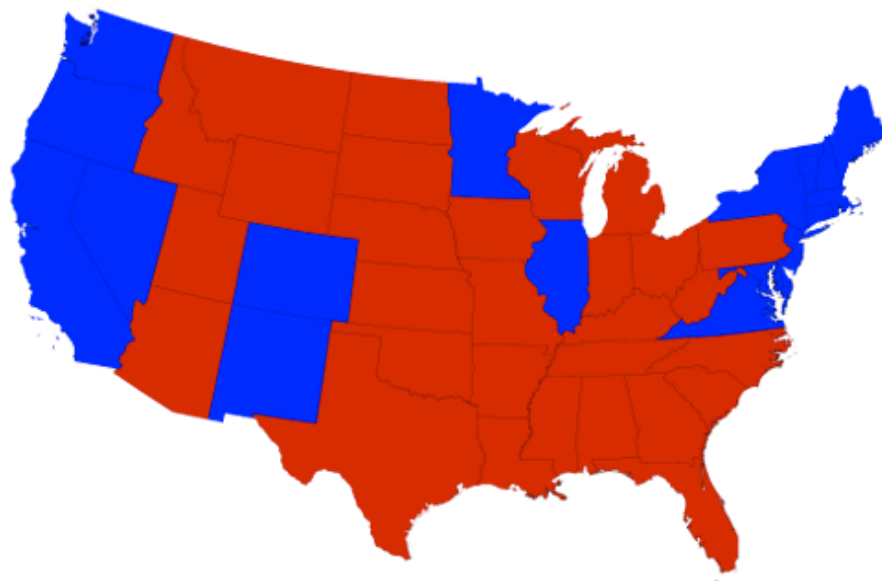
## Natural Disasters? Acts of God?



### C. The Political Crisis



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. (LS, 54)



## C. Political Crisis

“...But there is another temptation which we must especially guard against: **the simplistic reductionism which sees only good or evil**; or, if you will, the righteous and sinners. The contemporary world...**demands that we confront every form of polarization** which would divide it into these two camps....We must move forward together, as one, in a renewed spirit of fraternity and solidarity, cooperating generously for the common good.” (Pope Francis to Congress)

## C. Political Crisis





## D. Ecclesial Crisis

- Partisan / economic polarizations (Ecclesial sort)
- cyber - inquisitions
- Sectarian Catholics (Benedict Option)
- **A tomb psychology** thus develops and slowly transforms Christians **into mummies in a museum..** (EG, 83)



## D. Ecclesial Crisis Pastoral Relativism

“consists in acting as if God did not exist, making decisions as if the poor did not exist, setting goals as if others did not exist, working as if people who have not received the Gospel did not exist. It is striking that even some who clearly have solid doctrinal and spiritual convictions frequently fall into a lifestyle which leads to an attachment to financial security, or to a desire for power or human glory at all cost, rather than giving their lives to others in mission. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary enthusiasm!” (EG, 80)

How do we understand this theologically?

“The third meaning of **social sin** refers to the relationships between the various human communities. **These relationships are not always in accordance with the plan of God, who intends that there be justice in the world and freedom and peace between individuals, groups and peoples.**”

(Saint John Paul II, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 16)

## II. Truth of Faith: The Call of God's Kingdom [Judge]

A Kingdom spirituality calls us to look deeper and see the world as God calls us be.



## The Gospel is about the Kingdom

**“The Gospel is about the kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 4:43); it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that God reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace and dignity.” (EG 180)**



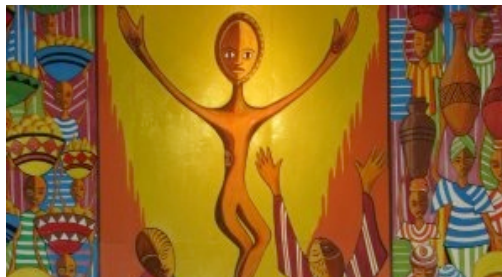
One family of God (Genesis 1 -4)



Peaceable Kingdom (Isaiah 2; 4)



Banquet Table (Lk 14; Mt 22)



Body of Christ (Gal 3. 28)



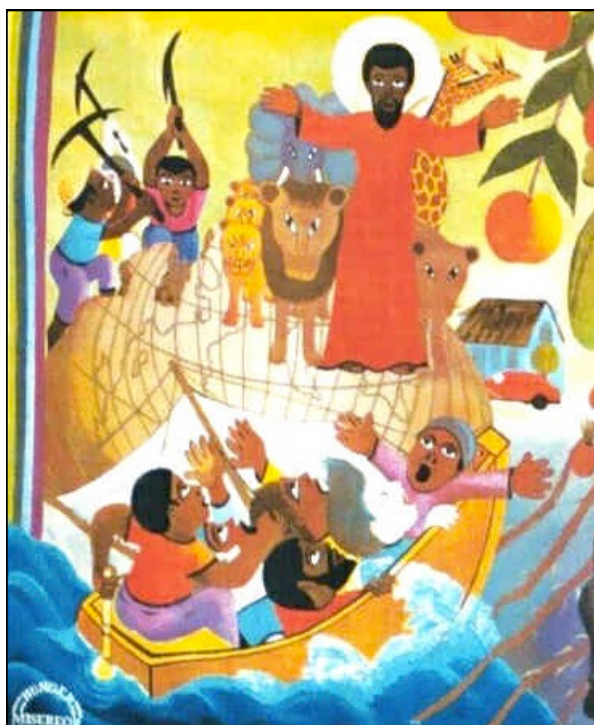
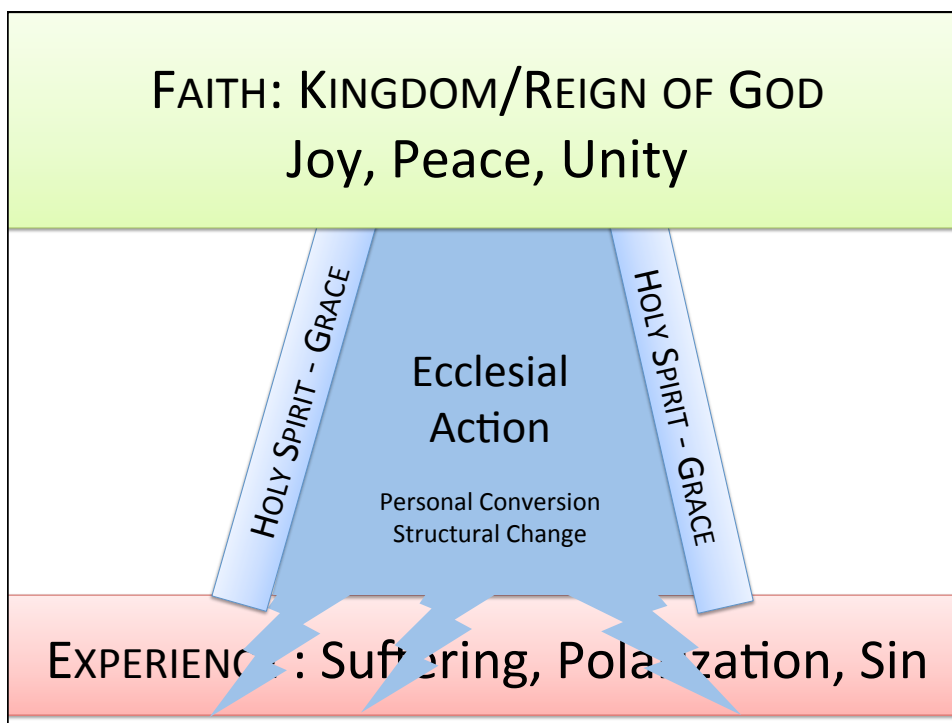
## It's not about us

“**We are not God.** The earth was here before us and it has been given to us... Although it is true that we Christians have at times incorrectly interpreted the Scriptures, nowadays **we must forcefully reject** the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.... Clearly, the Bible has no place for a **tyrannical anthropocentrism** unconcerned for other creatures. (*Laudato Si'*, 67 - 68)

## III. Truth of Action: The Apostolic Task [ACT]

A missionary spirituality calls us to transform the world





The  
Gospel  
Demands  
Action  
(handout)

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

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.

### What type of action?

“let us not be afraid to say it: we want change, real change, **structural change**. This system is by now intolerable... We want **change in our lives**, in our neighborhoods, in our everyday reality. We want a change which can affect the entire world, since global interdependence calls for global answers to local problems.” *Francis’s Address to Popular Movements (9 July 2015)*

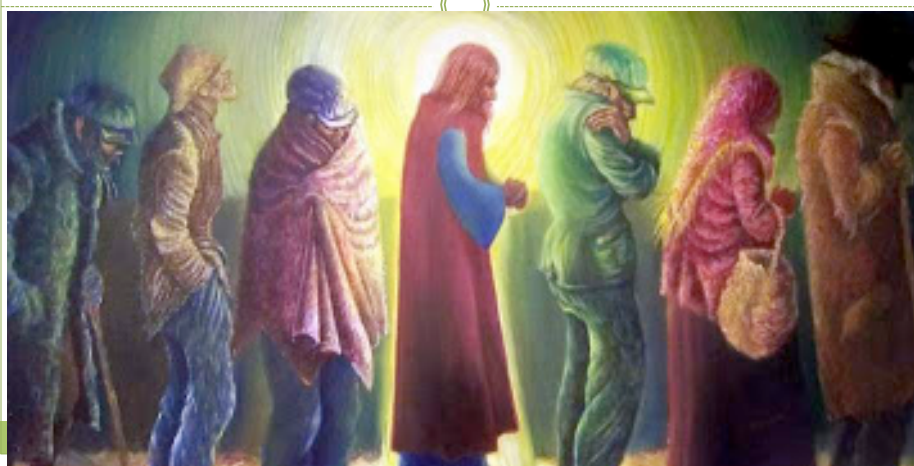


## Change at two levels but how?





What's Preventing This  
Spirituality from Taking Root?



## A. Clericalism

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 [the] responsibility of the laity...does not appear in the same way in all places...due to an excessive clericalism which keeps them away from decision-making. 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...The formation of the laity and the evangelization of professional and intellectual life represent a significant pastoral challenge. (Francis, EG, 102)

## B. Consumerism

commodification of ministry



CONSUMERism

## C. Slactivism

Look Daddy, we're changing the world one tweet at a time.



## D. Globalization of Indifference

“The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us **live in soap bubbles** which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others... In this globalized world, we have fallen **into globalized indifference**. We have become used to the suffering of others: it doesn't affect me;.. it's none of my business!”

*Pope at Lampedusa, July, 2013 and*





How can we overcome these forces  
for personal and structural change?



With the help of God – With Grace

- **Grace is a gift** – freely given
- **Gifts for the community:** God grants Christians specific gifts or graces for the building up of the community (1 Cor. 12:7).
- **Grace plays two roles** – it serves to *heal us* from sin and also *elevates and empowers* us to go forth and transform others (think of the power of Pentecost)



## Grace Calls us to Organize (forming structures of grace)

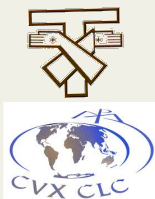


### A Call to Collective Action

Let each one examine himself, to see what he has done up to now, and what he ought to do. 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 in this regard too that Christian organizations, under their different forms, have a responsibility for collective action.  
*Octogesima adveniens (1971, 48, 51)*

## Different Models

### Associates/ 3<sup>rd</sup> Orders, etc



### Specialized Catholic Action



### Church Reform Movements



### Social Issue Groups



### New Ecclesial Movements New Monastic Communities



### Workers

- International Young Christian Workers (JOCI) 1957
- International Coordination of the Young Christian Workers (CIJOC) 1987
- World Movement of Christian Workers (MMTC) 1966

### Farmers

- International Movement of Catholic Agricultural and Rural Youth (MIJARC) 1954
- International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements (FIMARC) 1964

### Middle Class

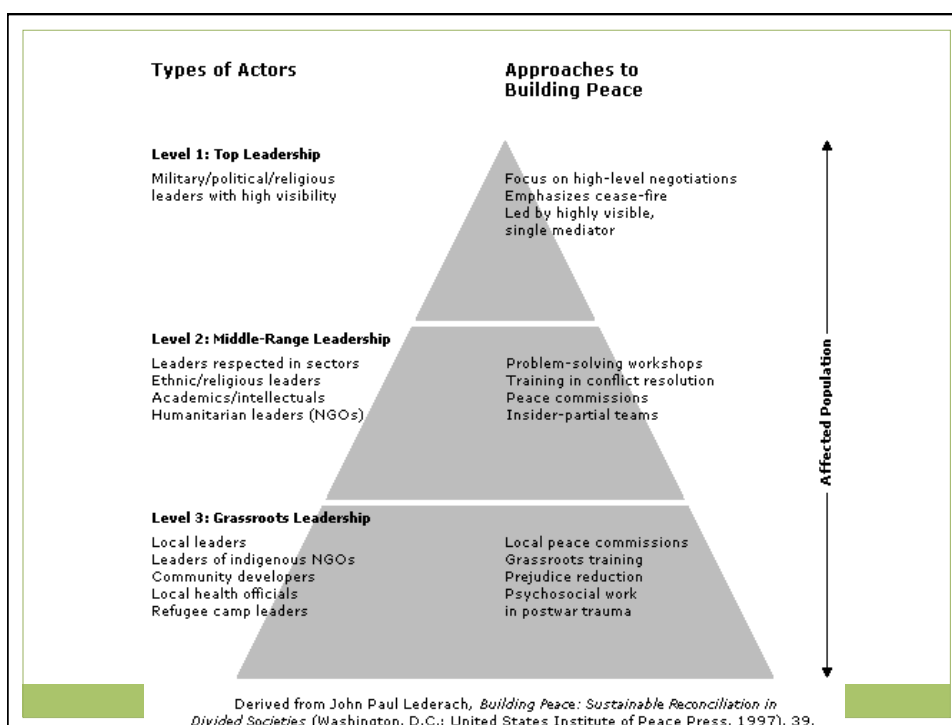
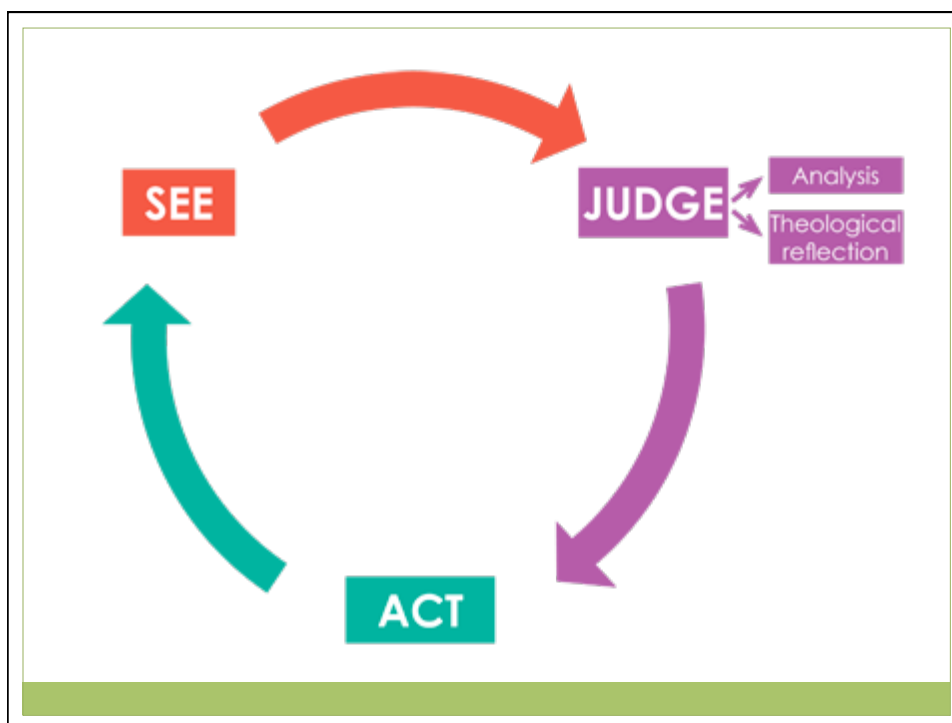
- International Independent Christian Youth (JIIC) 1931
- International Movement of Apostolate in the Independent Social Milieus (MIAMSI) 1963

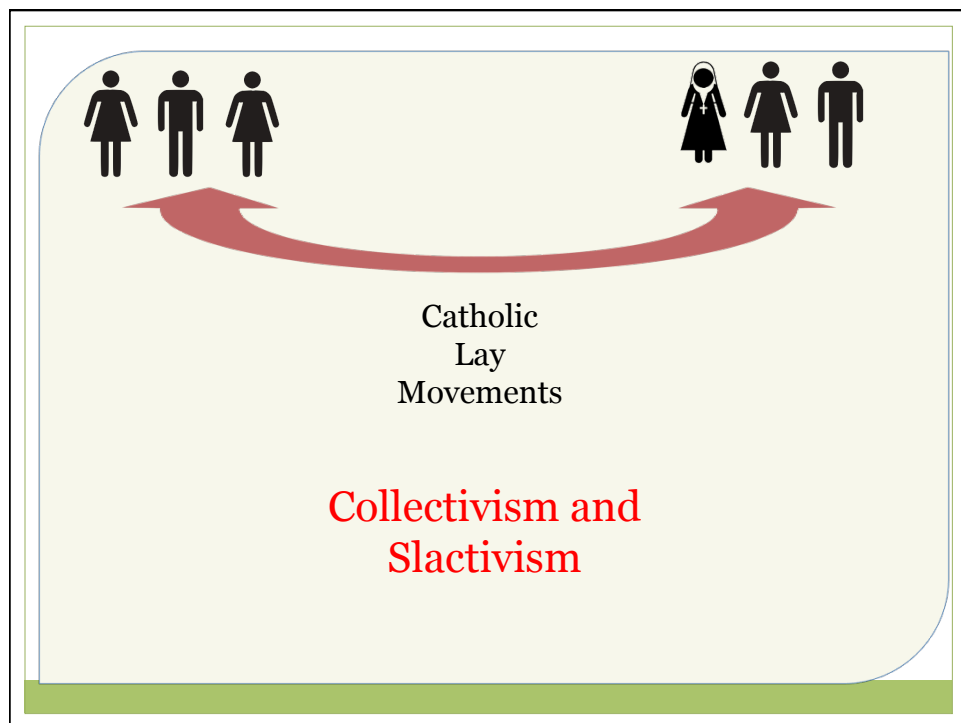
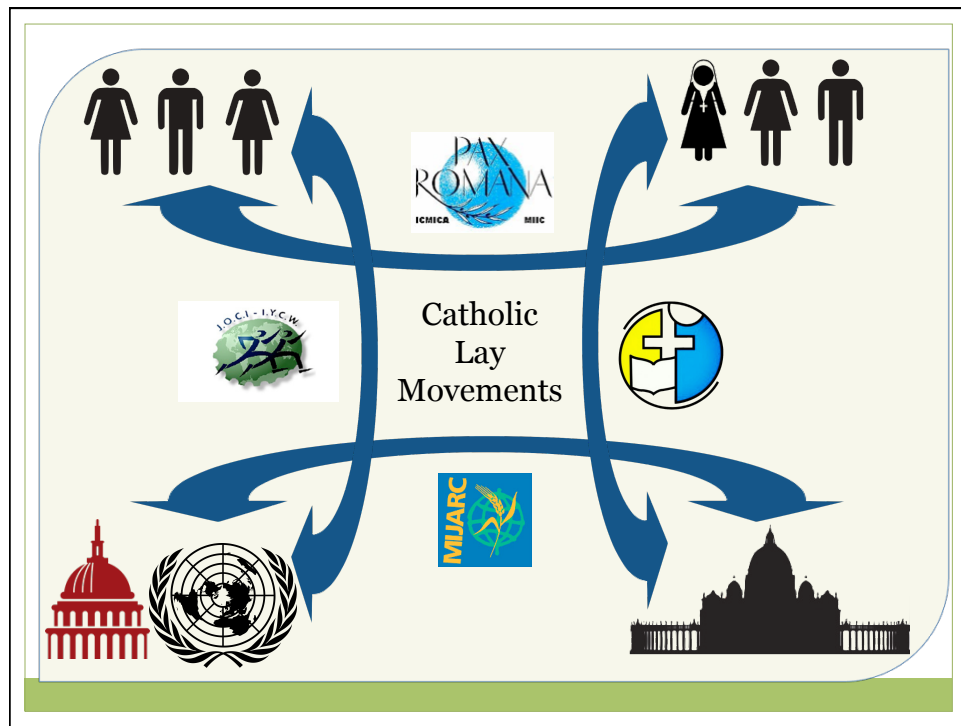
### Children

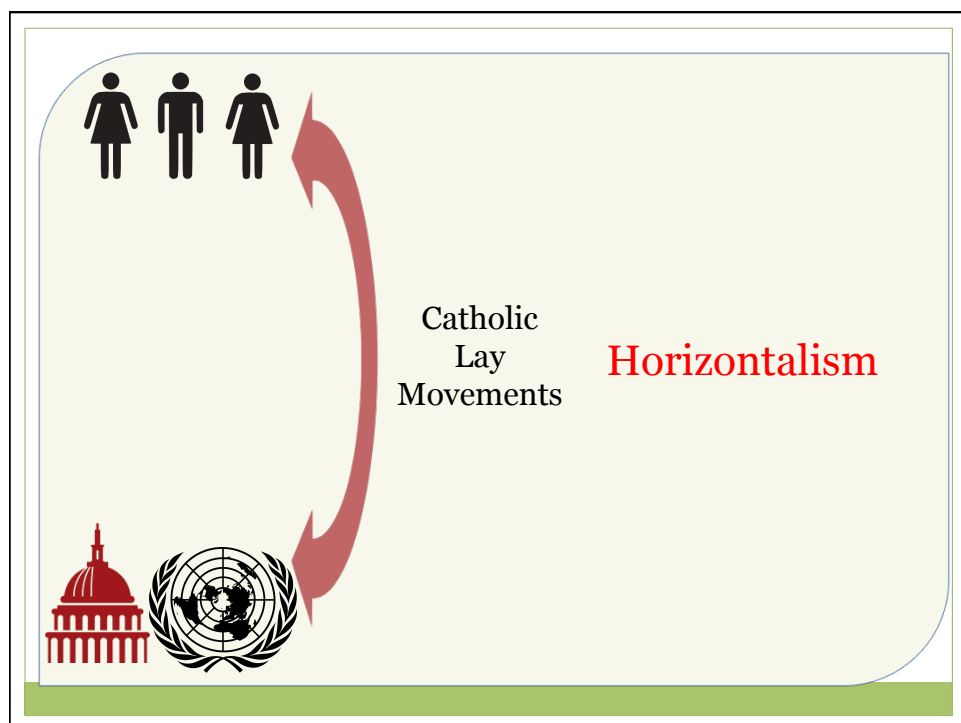
- International Movement of Apostolate of Children (MIDADE) 1966

### Students / Intellectuals

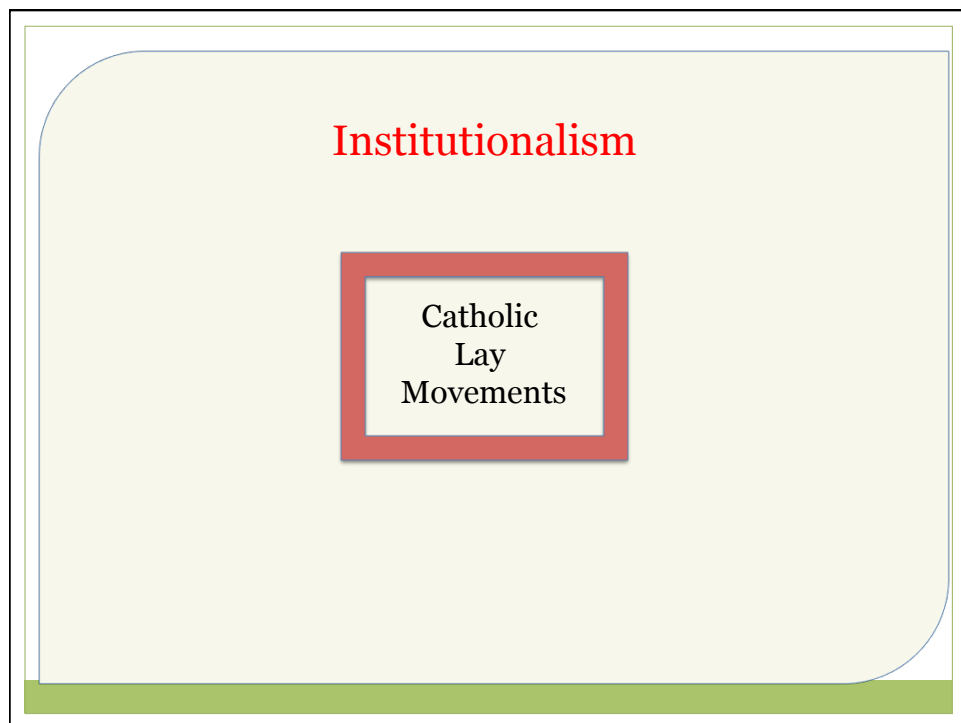
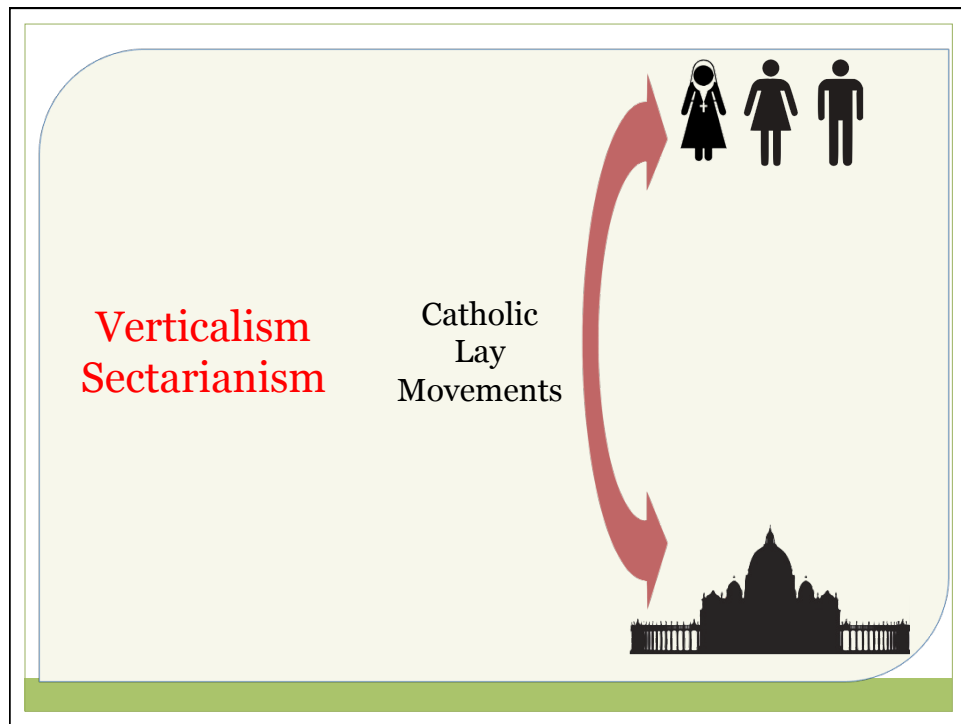
- International Young Catholic Students (JECI) 1946
- International Movement of Catholic Students (MIEC-Pax Romana) 1921
- International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs (MIIC-Pax Romana) 1947

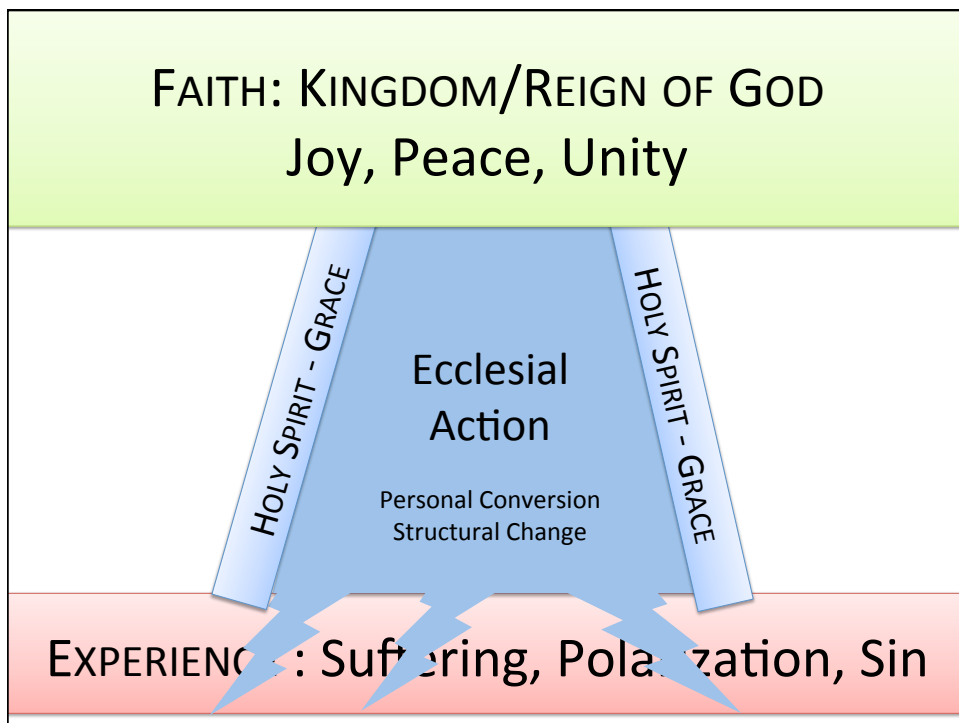
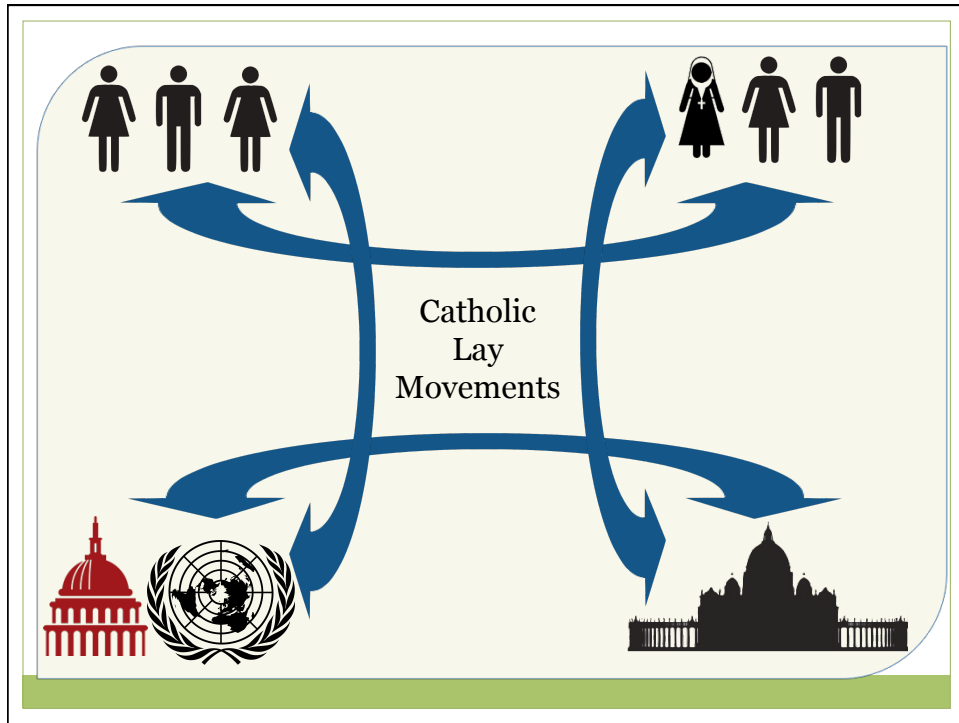








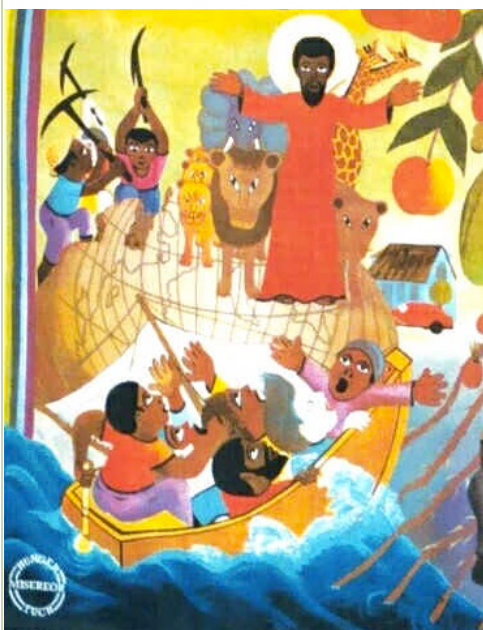




## Personal Conversion and Structural Change

“I would like to repeat: the future of The Parish 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)



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## I. Need a Renewed Understanding of the Liturgical - Sacramental Life



## Eucharist as Source of Lay Spirituality

### Vatican II

- “*source* and summit of Christian life” (LG, 11)
- Full, conscience and active *participation* (SC, 14)

### Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati

- “Jesus comes to me every morning in Holy Communion: I repay him in my very small way by visiting the poor.”



### III. Need a Renewed Theology of the Holy Spirit (Social Grace)

