
Truffelli (Catholic Action): “The power of friendship, the ability to surprise”

“Our present times are unprecedented and uncertain, but all of us at CA plan to live this time with these 'people' and in this 'city', engaging in this phase of human history, letting ourselves be challenged by it with a hopeful outlook, taking courageous and innovative decisions to initiate long-term transformations in society and in the ecclesial community.” These are intense days of activity for Catholic Action groups, spread across 5,400 parishes throughout the country. From Sunday April 25 to Sunday May 2, 800 delegates - gathered online - will be animating the 17th National Assembly representing its over 270 thousand members, including 53 thousand educators, accompanied by 7 thousand assistant priests. “I have so many people that belong to me in this city” is the theme of the Assembly. On Friday morning, April 30, the National Council of CA will be received in audience by Pope Francis. SIR interviewed CA President **Matteo Truffelli**, 51, from Parma, (Italy), history professor, now at the end of his mandate after taking office in 2014. In fact, the Assembly is called to elect the new National Council.



We look forward to experiencing this week with the same enthusiasm and sense of responsibility for the Association. Naturally, we will miss not being able to meet in person, to embrace each other again, to be together, all of which consistently characterised the National Assemblies. However, we will be exploring the opportunities offered by digital tools, thanks to which this important moment of reflection, verification, planning and democratic decision-making can take place, including the election of the new National Council. *The desire to look ahead as we participate in our meeting is based on the current situation, resulting in the realisation that change is a necessary step:* the pandemic that is afflicting the world and our country is, in this respect, an accelerator of change. The programme for the coming days has also been adapted to suit digital communication, while preserving all the essential elements of our meeting: prayer, presentations, deliberations, and voting session.



Immagine non disponibile

For us, as a people's association, reflecting on the subject of the people is paramount. We form part of the people, and we believe that the Lord dwells in them. We want to walk with the people to discover in them the presence of the Risen Jesus. Our intention is to reflect on the inherent dimension of the people, on its specific features, which includes the wish to contribute to a reconsideration of living together in the "city", where the people live. Pursuant to the recommendations of the encyclical "Fratelli tutti" (Brothers all), we are called to envision a new, different humanity, sharing its struggles, questions, hopes and paths. **The pandemic has confined us inside our homes for over a year. It is affecting economic, social and ecclesial activities.** What is CA's present state of health? Catholic Action is a vibrant reality, and I believe this is partly due to its plurality, to its many aspects, choices, and activities that constitute the essence of Catholic Action, rooted throughout Italian dioceses and at local level. Ours is an association that is strongly anchored in the reality in which its life and activity unfolds: *at national level, initiatives and activities are tailored to the social and ecclesial context in which we live and operate.* Having said this, we are also aware of the difficulties and limitations, in many cases identical to those experienced by the whole ecclesial community. But CA nonetheless retains its ability to surprise, to spark enthusiasm, to build friendships, accompanying children, young people and adults on their journey of faith. I wish to emphasise one further point. **Please do...** In my opinion, the Association has proved to be incredibly resilient in the past year during which our activities could not be carried out as usual. Throughout Italy, CA made a major effort to reinvent itself, with creativity and passion on the part of our members and leaders of all ages, nurturing those ties which, at a time of compulsory distancing, turned out to be indispensable in people's lives. We navigated through the pandemic with tremendous strength, with the determination to stay close, to support each other, and at the same time making ourselves available to our parish and diocesan communities. This is a truly positive sign of vitality! **Which recommendations could emerge from the Assembly?** Every National Assembly in the history of CA has identified new avenues to pursue for keeping pace with the changing times. The purpose of this Assembly is to interpret the difficult season we are experiencing, extending our gaze towards the post-pandemic stage. *Which association, which Church, which society do we want to represent? Which kind of future do we envisage? How can we become the agents of our future?* These are key questions that will be addressed throughout our community discernment and which I believe are also prompting deep reflections at ecclesial level and in civil society.



The relationship, the interaction, the close cooperation with our bishops and the Bishops' Conference offered me the opportunity to experience a strong passion for the Church and for Italy. Moreover, I am aware that I was blessed with an extraordinary grace, as I served as the national president of CA also thanks to the fatherliness and guidance of Pope Francis; I saw his tireless efforts to disseminate the Gospel and his ability to motivate CA. In this respect we felt we were entrusted with a specific responsibility. In fact, the programme we set out over the years was already enshrined in Evangelii gaudium. More than once I told the friends of the Association that our task at this time is to contribute to edifying the Evangelii Gaudium Church.



First of all I must express my and my wife Francesca's immense gratitude to the Association. During these years of intensive activity we have been constantly supported, accompanied and guided by Catholic Action! We are grateful for the love and trust we have felt around us. I must also mention what I have seen and experienced: in every part of the country there is something extraordinarily beautiful: stories of solidarity and service; educational and cultural opportunities; experiences of sharing; ingenious creativity; Christian communities with the genuine style of the Gospel. *I have encountered CA groups sharing an intense life of faith, I have witnessed first-hand heartwarming ecclesial realities and inspiring initiatives in civil society.* Not to mention the fact that everywhere in Italy there are beautiful things to see, good food to taste... At times I think that we fail to notice this rich heritage, which deserves to be enhanced. And this is where we can restart with confidence.

Gianni Borsa