

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 230214b

Tuesday 14.02.2023

Press Conference to present the International Conference for the Presidents and Representatives of Episcopal Commissions for Lay Faithful entitled “Pastors and lay faithful called to walk together”

At 11.30 this morning, a press conference was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office, Saint Pius X Hall, Via dell’Ospedale 1, to present the International Conference for the Presidents and Representatives of the Episcopal Commissions for the Lay Faithful entitled “Pastors and lay faithful called to walk together” (New Synod Hall, 16-18 February 2023), organized by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life.

The speakers were: His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life; Dr. Linda Ghisoni, undersecretary of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life,

His Eminence Cardinal Gérald C. Lacroix, archbishop of Québec, Canada, member of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life; and Dr. Andrea Poretti, layperson and head of the Sant’Egidio Community in Argentina.

The following are the interventions by His Eminence Cardinal Farrell, Dr. Ghisoni, and Dr. Poretti:

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Kevin Farrell

A cordial greeting to you all, and I thank you for wishing to participate in this press conference. To present the conference that will take place in the coming days, and which has taken a long time to prepare, I think it is useful to consider primarily its origin and its aims.

First of all, the origin. This conference is the fruit of the Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life, which took place in November 2019. From the reflections and the dialogue of those days, there emerged clearly the need to examine and emphasize the responsibility of every baptized person in the Church. All the members of the People of God, pastors and lay faithful alike, share fully the responsibility for the life, the mission, the care, the stewardship and growth of this People that Christ himself raised up. The need was felt to overcome the logic of “delegation”, which we can express in these terms: if pastors need some kind of “service”, they “delegate” it to certain laypeople, among the most reliable they know and who are available. In this way, the

participation of the lay faithful in the life of the Church remains sporadic, functional to some circumscribed activity delegated “from above”. In the same way, the need was felt to overcome the simple logic of “replacement”; according to this view, to improve the situation in the Church, it would suffice to simply “replace” clerics with lay faithful in various areas, especially in key positions of government or pastoral activity, and thus every problem would be solved.

All this appeared reductive. In the days of the Plenary we seemed to perceive, instead, a renewed call from the Lord to “walk together”, each one in accordance with his or her proper vocation, without attitudes of superiority, joining forces, sharing the aims of the mission, assuming the same responsibility for the good of the Christian community. Thus, the title of the Conference: “Pastors and lay faithful called to walk together”.

Let us now turn to the aims of the conference. The purpose is to raise awareness, among both pastors and lay faithful, of the sense of responsibility that stems from baptism and unites us all. It is commonly felt by both pastors and laity that it has not yet become normal to work side by side, each according to their own charisms and abilities. In all spheres of the life of the Church, there would be great fruits if each one brought his or her own point of view, spiritual gifts, professional skills, availability of time, knowledge, and life experiences. In the discernment and planning phase of pastoral activities and their implementation, in catechesis and liturgy, in activities of evangelization and first proclamation, in the pastoral care of environments, in charitable activities, in governance and administrative structures, everywhere, pastors and laity should be together and act in a spirit of communion and collaboration.

Therefore, since 2019 the central theme of this conference has emerged, namely the joint responsibility among pastors and lay faithful in the life of the Church, but only now, after the disruption caused by the pandemic, has its realization become possible. Providentially, the synodal path that began in the meantime has strengthened our intention, placing our conference in the context of the universal Church that wishes to “walk together”.

The promotion of the lay faithful, and everything that helps to live the dimension of the Church as People of God more deeply, are very close to the heart of the Holy Father.

For this reason, he expressed the desire to be present at the end of the Conference to bring his word and also to listen to the voices of the participants.

We hope that this ecclesial event may have tangible effects in the particular Churches, and give a valid contribution to living fully the joint responsibility between ordained ministers and lay faithful, continuing on the path indicated prophetically by Vatican Council II.

Thank you.

Intervention of Dr. Linda Ghisoni

With this second intervention, we wish to make known some details regarding the Conference programme, and some and some coordinates with regard to the participants: speakers and guests.

1. At the outset, let me recall an article of the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* dedicated to one of the many competencies entrusted to the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. This is Article 132, which states: “The Dicastery studies issues relating to cooperation between the laity and ordained ministers in virtue of their baptism and the diversity of charisms and ministries, in order to foster in both an awareness of co-responsibility for the life and mission of the Church”.

The International Conference that we are presenting to the press today is an expression and concrete application of this article of the new Apostolic Constitution that has reformed the Roman Curia. The task

entrusted to us today of fostering not only in the laity, but also in the ordained ministers, the awareness of the co-responsibility of each baptized person for the mission of the Church, places us in what is a genuinely ecclesial interpretation of the mandate that the Lord gave to the apostles. In this sense the Convention is very appropriately situated, as Cardinal Farrell said, in the heart of the synodal journey underway in the universal Church.

2. The Conference is divided into three days, the first of which is dedicated to the nature and foundation of the co-responsibility of the laity as well as the spheres and methods for exercising this co-responsibility. The second day is focused on formation, indispensable for achieving effective cooperation of the laity. Emphasis will be placed on the role of pastors – bishops and clerics – for whom equally adequate formation is required to foster a service implemented together, as a Church, without any form of sectarianism, albeit according to the specific nature of each one. The third day is dedicated primarily to the audience the Holy Father has granted to the participants: Pope Francis will join us in the New Synod Hall, where the three-day Conference is being held, to listen to the participants and to address his message and his blessing to all.

The Conference will include four main lectures, given respectively by Professor Don Luis Navarro, rector of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross; Professor Carmen Peña García, of the Faculty of Canon Law of the Pontifical Comillas University in Madrid, both consultors of our Dicastery; Professor Hosffman Ospino, of the School of Theology and Ministry of Boston College; and Cardinal Gérald Ciprien Lacroix, archbishop of Québec, member of the Dicastery. We will also have among us Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, President of the Italian Bishops' Conference, who will moderate a panel discussion. In addition to the lectures themselves, there will be sixteen short interventions aimed at sharing already existing experiences of co-responsibility between lay people and pastors and with regard to formation. These experiences are representative of all the continents in which the Church is present, as well as the spheres of action and cooperation of the laity: from ecclesiastical tribunals to formation teams in seminaries, from commitment in political and social life to catechesis, just as we will hear from Papua New Guinea to Mexico, from Madagascar to India, from Brazil to Poland, from Guatemala to France.

These experiences, which convey good practices, likewise express incompletions and expectations of an ever-growing ecclesial co-responsibility of all. They will facilitate dialogue and free interventions on the part of all the participants in the room, a dialogue to which the greater part of the afternoon of each day is reserved, with the aim of benefitting from such a composite, rich and representative assembly.

3. There are 210 participants in the conference, including 107 lay people, 36 priests and 67 bishops. Among the participants there are 29 delegates of ecclesial movements recognized by the Dicastery: it is well known that such associative realities, with their charismatic richness inspiring effective educational itineraries, help numerous lay faithful to live their Christian identity with great responsibility and to participate actively in the life and mission of the Church.

Let us now review the various continents from which the delegates come: Africa will be represented by 20 countries, 13 will be from Asia, 7 from North and Central America, 7 from South America and 24 from Europe: the composite, rich and representative assembly I mentioned is also evident from the number, type and origin of the participants.

Finally, I am pleased to highlight that, to facilitate the listening and contribution of the participants, we have asked them to respond to a brief questionnaire, that will enable us to know better – as on the privileged occasions of the *ad Limina* visits – the real data, the specificities, and the expectations of the men and women of the different regions of the world with regard to their participation in promoting together, laity and clerics, the mission entrusted to all of us as a Church, as the holy and faithful journeying People of God.

Intervention of Dr. Andrea Poretti.

Good morning,

I thank the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life for the opportunity to offer my testimony at the conference “Pastors and lay faithful called to walk together”.

In the experience of the *Sant'Egidio* Community, which has existed in Rome for more than half a century, we can recognize the signs of the co-responsibility of the laity in the life of the Church in a concrete way, through the reading of the Word of God and service to the poorest. I will mention some brief aspects that confirm this.

Sant'Egidio was born among the students of a Roman high school and in the human and urban peripheries of Rome in the aftermath of Vatican Council II. Those were times when the Word of God was being restored to the sympathy and the reading of the people. This prompted a new listening to the Word, and - as Cardinal Martini said - to live and think biblically.

At that time the dream of John XXIII resonated: A “Church of all and especially of the poor”. To take seriously this dream, which springs from the pages of the Gospel, is not an ideological construct, but a matter of meeting the poor in person, becoming brothers and sisters with them, listening to them as friends and relatives. *Sant'Egidio*, in Italy, in Europe, in Africa and in many other places, has a history of bonds, friendship and service with the poor of the most varied peripheries and conditions: from the elderly in need (and there are many everywhere), to those who suffer from marginalization, to the disabled, to AIDS patients in Africa, to invisible children without citizenship or on the streets, to those who are homeless, alone, wounded by life. It is not a question of listing initiatives, but to point out the spirit in which the *Sant'Egidio* Communities walk in the history of our days: starting from the friendship with the poor, one discovers that it is possible to set out and to take one's own responsibilities in order to change situations. Being close to the poor is - for all Christians - a way of being close to the Lord, of touching the flesh of Christ, as Pope Francis would say. But in particular, for us lay people, listening to their cries and needs for change is a way of being faithful to the mandate of the Council which invites us to become leaven (cf. *LG* 31) in our societies.

Pope Francis, meeting the *Sant'Egidio* Community in 2014, said: “Go forth on this path: *prayer*, the *poor* and *peace*. And as you walk this path, you help compassion grow in the heart of society — which is the true revolution, that of compassion and tenderness — to cultivate friendship in place of the ghosts of animosity and indifference”.

Friendship with the poor and the encounter with their needs encourages us to take responsibility and to take initiatives without looking at the limits of what we are capable of doing, but to ask ourselves what needs to be done. This is what happens, for example, with peace work, as in 1992 with the pacification of Mozambique, and today, in the search for peace in South Sudan. Because war, as Andrea Riccardi, founder of the *Sant'Egidio* Community, reminds us, is the mother of all poverty.

Each Community works for peace wherever it is, in dialogue with others: with Muslims where Christians are a minority, as in Pakistan. Dialogue between religions, between leaders but also with the people, has gained strength in the Community since the prayer for peace, started by John Paul II in Assisi in 1986. A journey of peace that continues to this day and is multiplied in each community with a monthly prayer for peace.

With the responsibility of the laity, *Sant'Egidio* wants, in every circumstance, to be a place where it finds an answer, from the poor person in need of a blanket to the place that begs for peace because it is immersed in war. It is a spectrum where the small contains the large.
