

Annual meeting with Moderators of Associations of the Faithful,  
Ecclesial Movements and New Communities

***"Working conditions in the Associations.***

***A service in Justice and Charity"***

*Hall of the Congregation of the General Curia of the Jesuits*

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***WORKING EXPERIENCES WITHIN ASSOCIATIONS***

***(Abstract)***

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For many years now, the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life has been receiving requests for help, appeals and petitions from former members of associations of the faithful who, on the verge of reaching the age of retirement, find themselves unable to access their pension benefits because of the associations' failure to pay their social security contributions. Faced with the requests from men and women who find themselves deprived of even the essentials after having given themselves completely, the Dicastery intends to verify that the instruments used within the associations of the faithful for the protection of each members' right to a dignified life, access to health services and the necessary means of subsistence at the end of their working lives are fair.

The inadequacy, unfortunately frequent, of these systems invites all to take on a renewed responsibility which entails, first of all, that the exclusive and continuous service rendered by members within associations be considered as a genuine form of work. Only in this way will it be possible to recognize the dignity and rights that stem from it: the right to welfare, to just and satisfactory working and living conditions, as well as to a life in conformity with human dignity. The responsibility and duties that associations of the faithful take on towards their members certainly include the protection of these rights.

We were asked to examine the requests forwarded to the Dicastery on behalf of five former members of various associations who were asking for financial compensation for the omitted payment of

pension contributions after having spent part of their lives working exclusively in the community. We were able to conclude that the criteria adopted to resolve these cases was fundamentally one of justice. It entails recognizing the right of these members - which belongs to them by virtue of their work and their condition - to find the means to respectably provide for their needs for the rest of their lives. To voluntarily adhere to a charism, which implies total dedication to the mission, can never imply, in fact, the compromise of certain rights granted to all men and women.

Ultimately, in preparing the necessary resources to protect the rights of their members, associations of the faithful will have to adopt an outlook that always leads them to put individuals before the structures, activities and institutions, as well as concretely expressing love for others according to what Pope Francis has called the "culture of care," as a common, supportive and participatory commitment to protect and promote the dignity and good of all.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. POPE FRANCIS, Message for the Celebration of the 54th World Day of Peace, n. 6, 1 January 2021.