

IYCS DECLARATION OF IDENTITY

1. Evolution of IYCS

The International Young Catholic Students (IYCS), also known as the Young Christian Students, has its roots in the development of several YCS national movements in the late 1920's, which grew in the spirit of the Specialised Catholic Action movements that were inspired by Joseph Cardijn (the founder of the Young Christian Workers). The International Coordination was established in 1946 in the wake of the Second World War, with the following objectives, which still remain today:

- a) to evangelize the student milieu and promote the student apostolate among students, at both secondary and tertiary levels, by responding to their needs and by stressing their responsibility in all aspects of their lives (school, university, family etc) in the Church's mission and in the world;
- b) to bring together students seeking community, formation and action, in the framework of the Catholic Church, at the local, national, continental and global levels;
- c) to promote global solidarity, freedom, justice and peace and to work with all concerned women and men for joint reflection and action leading to a more just and equitable social order;
- d) to give students resources, pedagogies and methodologies to help them integrate their Christian faith in their lives at all levels and in their efforts to build a more just society.
- e) To be a voice for its student members by representing them in regional and international forums.

The IYCS has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Commission (ECOSOC) of the United Nations and Operational Status with UNESCO. It is also recognised as an International Catholic Organisation (ICO) by the Holy See.

Since the international coordination was established, a relationship has existed with the International Movement of Catholic Students – Pax Romana (IMCS-Pax Romana). From the late 1960's, this relationship was strengthened, and led to the creation of joint regional coordinations in Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East, as well as the move in 1977 of the International Secretariat of IMCS-Pax Romana from Fribourg, Switzerland, to Paris, France, to share the offices of the IYCS International Secretariat.

Since the beginning of the movement the identity of IYCS at the international, regional, national, and local levels has evolved and grown to meet the challenges of the world and the local context in which it has been active.

2. Mission statement

IYCS aims to evangelise and transform the student milieu (both secondary and tertiary), through forming students and encouraging them to look at the world from the perspective of the poor, with a commitment to global solidarity, freedom, justice and peace. We understand ourselves as the presence of the Church in and at the service of the student milieu. The movement seeks to overcome the dualism between faith and life, and hence emphasises a pedagogy (an educative methodology) based on transforming action, which always starts from a deep analysis and faith reflection on the reality.

3. Present Identity of IYCS

3.1 A Student Movement of Formation with a Spirituality of Action and Reflection

As a student movement for, among, and led by secondary and tertiary students, accompanied by adult animators and chaplains, IYCS is concerned with the issues facing students and the role of education as a whole. This concern is not limited to the classroom but includes all dimensions of student life (including the social, spiritual, physical and familial). However, we are not only concerned with student issues but seek to raise awareness and action among students to broader issues of social justice, in solidarity with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised. In this reality we recognize that we are not apart from society and are not just

the future of society but we are an active part of it today with a special responsibility as students to question and analyze the problems of society.

In order to do this effectively we primarily organise students to lead themselves in different forms of small groups at a local level such as: review of life groups, groups that are connected to broader catholic action families, groups that are inspired by the mission of YCS and that are at the service of students, as well as parish student groups inspired by our mission.

In these groups, a spirituality of reflection and action is promoted to integrate our faith and our life through a diversity of methodologies including: Review of Life: See-Judge-Act, Action/Reflection/Action, discernment, pastoral circle etc.

As a Catholic Action movement focused on concrete experiences and action in the school, family, community, and the world at large, IYCS has always maintained a spirituality inspired by the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching, to work to transform these realities from the perspective of the poor, and to build peace based on justice and freedom. Inspired by the example of Jesus Christ, we are committed to having a "Spirituality of Action," which calls us to live our faith with action in our daily lives, recognizing that "faith without action is dead" (James 2:26).

It is this spirituality that enables us to discover God more deeply, to overcome the dualism between faith and life, and to prepare ourselves to be active citizens and agents for change in our world. This process of action and reflection provides a rich formation, which enables us to grow in our faith with a deep Christian vision and a sense of moral integrity, and to develop our skills as leaders in our communities. Over the past eight decades, numerous former and present members of YCS have played and are playing leading roles in all sectors of society (government, non-governmental organisations, civil society) and in the Church.

3.2 Lay Church Movement

A second element of the identity of IYCS is the understanding of its role as a Lay Church Movement which is the presence of the Church in and at the service of the student milieu at the local, national and international levels.

At the local level, IYCS movements are recognized by their local bishop, and at the national level by their national bishops' conference. At the regional level, most of the IYCS regions have developed strong relationships with the regional Church bodies. At the international level IYCS is recognized by the Pontifical Council for the Laity and by the Secretariat of State of the Holy See and as an International Catholic Organization, it is able to have a strong voice for its members within the global Church.

As a lay church movement at the service of students IYCS promotes active participation of students in the life of the Church. A fundamental element of our mission as IYCS is to emphasise our baptismal responsibilities and role as members of the Church community. In order to achieve this we strongly believe in the formation of the laity.

While being rooted in the Catholic Church, IYCS is always open to people of other faiths. IYCS thus believes that the promotion of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue among students and student groups is a central part of its mission.

3.3 Global Movement

IYCS is present in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, North America and the Pacific. The movement is coordinated at the local, diocesan, national, regional and international levels.

The international dimension of our movement is vital to helping local YCS groups to go beyond themselves to discover their global or universal identity in Jesus Christ (Mark 3: 31-35; Luke 10: 29-37; Luke 14: 2-27). This calls us to promote global solidarity, and to celebrate our

global diversity and communion through sharing our joys, concerns and vision, and by undertaking significant common actions with other YCS movements throughout the world.

From its student and Catholic perspective, IYCS has used its international identity to speak out on behalf of its members and in solidarity with the oppressed in many important forums including the United Nations and UNESCO and other global events such as the World Social Forum and World Youth Day.

The diverse regional structures of IYCS which have developed in recent decades provide an invaluable space for the national movements to connect with one another at the regional levels and to reflect and take action on common issues. At the same time, they promote the global reality and identity of IYCS as a whole. The International Team is based in Paris, France, and coordinates the movement in close collaboration with the regional coordinations.