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ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE 1953 SPANISH ORIGINAL



BURO DE INFORMACION Y PROPAGANDA

Agrupación Católica Universitaria

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BOOKLET ABOUT THE AGRUPACION CATOLICA UNIVERSITARIA

(With Ecclesial Approval)

Author of booklet: DR. JOSE IGNASIO LASAGA ACU You may acquire these booklets in quantity or by annual subscription (\$1.50), 10 issues per year.

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What is the ACU

Many readers of the BIP have repeatedly asked about the Institution that is responsible for these publication, the Agrupación Católica Universitaria.

Striving to address those requests and believing that the functioning of this Association may be of general interest, we are providing this report os what is the A.C.U.

What is the ACU

The ACU is a university Marian Sodality in Havana¹. It was founded in 1931 by a man of exceptional virtues and brilliant vision, Fr. Felipe Rey de Castro, SJ, who directed it ²until his death on December 12, 1952. The current Director of the Agrupación is Rev. Fr. Amando Llorente, SJ.

Today, the Agrupación has 495 sodalists composed of 280 professionals; 82 doctors; 104 attorneys; 94 engineers; 175 students; 40 religious vocations.

The ACU's patrons are the Most Holy Virgin Mary, under her Immaculate advocation, and St. Ignatius of Loyola.

A SODALITY OF PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS

One of the main characteristics of the ACU is its union of professionals and

¹ Cuba. Footnotes have been added by the editor.

² Fr. Llorente died in 2010.

students within a single Marian Sodality. Even though students have a special Board of Directors subordinated to the Board of the ACU and whose task is to identify works appropriate to students and to resolve challenges particular to them, the greatest portion of "agrupational3" activities are planned and executed at the margin of this distinction between students and professionals.

Usually, the typical time to request admission into the ACU is during ones student years, particularly during the very first university years. Nearly all ACU professionals became part of it as students. That is when the agrupational spirit is best imbued.

Fellowship amongst professionals and students yields enormous advantages as, on one hand it gives the sodality social and economic vigor and the experience and maturity of judgment of professionals, and on the other hand it cuts short, any possible tendency towards gentrification thanks to the idealistic and dynamic spirit of youth.

RIGOROUS SELECTION

Following rules of Marian Sodalities, a probationary period

³ A neologism taken from the Spanish word



should precede final admission into the sodality, and has two phases: postulancy and aspirancy.

Prior to the submission of an official application into the ACU, the interested must attend Sunday⁴ at the Agrupación for five consecutive weeks and properly inform himself on the ends, activities and basic tenets of the ACU, accomplished through a series of talks by the Instructor of aspirants or one of his assistants. The latter is the **postulancy** phase.

In the course of the first days of postulancy the Agrupación will attempt to inform itself as much as possible of the personality, aptitudes and conduct of the candidate, and if the reports so obtained fail to provide assurance that he will be a good fit for the ACU he will be cordially advised that it would not be advantageous to continue attending as he will not be accepted as a postulant.

The **aspirancy** generally lasts some nine months. During this time the aspirant should follow all the duties of an agrupado perfectly, included among them participation in an apostolic activity appropriate to his preferences and capacities. If his performance is not satisfactory or, being so, leaves something to be desired, whether in his personality or his

⁴ Today the meeting day and time varies by chapter.



conduct outside the Agrupación, he may not be accepted as a sodalist.

WHICH MEN ARE CUT OUT FOR THE ACU

A great majority of the constituency of the ACU comes primarily from **Jesuit**

secondary schools in Cuba, particularly Colegio de Belén5. But there are also plenty of sodalists that received their secondary education at other Catholic schools and many others at accredited Institutions offering a secular education. Among the latter, the main factor attracting them to the ACU is the personal recommendation of some professionals from said centers, men with prestigious academic credentials and excellent agrupados. Another source driving young men to the ACU, though on a smaller scale, vocational conferences offered annually to all students in their last years of secondary education at private accredited Institutions that desire to acquire a broad understanding of university career options — such as prerequisites, financing options, etc...

Twenty-five yeas ago, prior to the foundation of the Agrupación and the Cuban Catholic

⁵ Today, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School in Miami



Youth Federation, the number of good, Catholic secondary-school students that lost or abandoned the practice of their faith once they entered the University was truly alarming. Those figures have dropped significantly today thanks to diverse factors, among which must be included, most assuredly, the work of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria.

Religious Formation

WEEKLY PRACTICE SUNDAY MASS

The spiritual formation of members of the ACU revolves

around these two basic points: a) duty of Sunday Mass in community, considered the sodality's official weekly event and b) annual Spiritual Exercises in retreat.

Sunday Mass is the veritable center of the life of the sodality. Attendance is strictly mandatory for all agrupados that reside in Havana⁶ and are not impaired by serious cause. This leads to an average attendance to Sunday Mass of around 300. It is not about setting special days for obligatory

⁶ Today, in any ACU chapter on the assigned day.



Communion, for every Sunday is intended for "general Communion." Those receiving Communion make up 80 or 90% of all cocelebrants.

EXERCISES IN
RETREAT: SPECIAL
SESSIONS
EXCLUSIVELY FOR
THE ACU

Traditional norms of Marian Sodalities make Spiritual Exercises strictly mandatory, and from them

have sprung all the great apostolates of the ACU Every year the Agrupación organizes all the sessions of Exercises for its members, and only with special dispensation may they attend any other. These sessions are characterized by absolute internal and external silence of each and every one doing them. It many be said that the intense vitality of the ACU can be attributed, nearly exclusively, to the formidable engine of the Spiritual Exercises.

SATURNINE
"GUARDIA." MONTHLY
RETREAT AND DAILY
MASS

Additional acts of piety at the Agrupación are the saturnine



"guardias" and the monthly retreat. Around 100 sodalists attend the saturnine guardias (adoration, rosary and talk by the Fr. Director). It was instituted years ago for the sodalists' personal petitions, spiritual as well as material, and has been an abundant source of favors granted by the Blessed Virgin to all those attending.

The monthly retreat is mandatory and takes place every first Friday at 6 p.m., following the recent favor granted by the Holy See to celebrate Masses during the afternoon.

Mass is celebrated every day in ACU's chapel for sodalists that live in the Students' Residence and for all other agrupados that wish to participate in it. The daily attendance is around 50. Many others that practice daily Communion prefer to do so in churches closer to their home or place of work. Communion is also offered in the ACU chapel a few times during weekday mornings for those that were not able to attend Mass but desire to receive Communion that day.

⁷ Saturday honor guards for the Blessed Virgin Mary



IMMACULATE AND CHRIST THE KING VIGILS

Among the most popular acts of piety and most characteristic of agrupational life are

the Immaculate and Christ the King vigils. The consecration of aspirants who pass on to congregants takes place during the Immaculate vigil. Moments prior to Communion and in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. in an emotion-filled ceremony inspired by the renewal of vows of the Society of Jesus, the consecrated repeat in unison the consecration formula. The Feast of Christ the King is preceded by a procession during which the Blessed Sacrament is exposed atop different altars prepared for the purpose by the various professional groups of the ACU (doctors, attorneys, engineers,...). Generally, he altars of each circle display attributes particular to their group — Scale of Justice, Rod of Asclepius, etc.... At each of these stations an appropriate member of the circle reads the consecration of his group to Christ the King. These consecrations, always redacted in the language proper to each profession, are often most beautiful literary works, full of devotion towards the Teacher.



COMING TO THE A.C.U.. VISITING THE TEACHER

When the ACU erected its current social building, great care was taken in the

selection of the location for the small chapel, where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, so that it would abut the main entrance, and afford those entering and exiting the opportunity to make a brief visit to Christ in the Eucharist. This beautiful tradition is one of the most important unwritten rules of the Agrupación Católica Universitaria.

Even though members of the ACU may choose their Spiritual Director, the Director and Sub-Director are the spiritual directors of the greater portion of sodalists. The fact that they both live in the ACU house affords to all magnificent opportunities for regular and efficient spiritual direction.

BRIEF COURSES AND ASCETIC STUDY CIRCLES Religious formation of agrupados, from an intellectual point of view, is carried out primarily

through a) required brief courses, b) ascetic

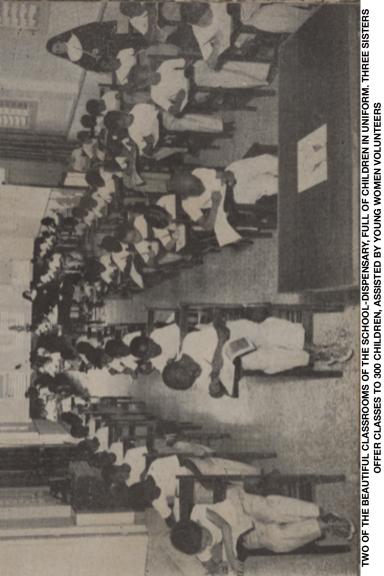


ONE OF THE LIBRARIES OF THE AGRUPACION study circles, for groups desiring more perfect nurturing.

Brief courses are usually offered once or twice per year, every other day, for four or six weeks. The professors are either the ACU's Fr. Director or Sub-Director, or professional congregants amply versed for the task. They are generally versed in philosophy or theology. The two most recent ones were on theology (Treatise on the Church and Treatise on Grace). An examination of each attendee is administered after each brief course, which fosters both seriousness about attendance at the conferences and study of the texts.

PARTICIPATION OF SPOUSES: FAMILY CANA GROUPS Most recently we have experimented with a new type of organization that may finally provide

resolution to the age-old problem of how to imbue wives with the spirit of the ACU. We refer to an organization analogous to that of the Teams of Our Lady, from France, that has also been copied in Cuba by some youth groups of Catholic Action. Some six couples that know each other get together



one night per week to read a book on Catholic formation and discuss it openly. The sessions take place in a different house each week and, once all houses have hosted one, a session with Fr. Director is scheduled to clarify any open questions that may have arisen during the previous sessions or to delve into needed topics, to address other subjects of general interest, etc. They are a very special way to strengthen friendships among group members, and wives become better integrated to the ACU. Indeed, many ACU apostolates have already experienced beneficial effects from this bonding.

Professional Formation

PRIORITY ONE FORMATION

Primary contributors to professional

formation of students: a) specialized study circles in each field, b) member benefits offered by the ACU through its library and study areas.

Indeed, students tend to group themselves according to their interests, in **study circles** where they can delve into



particular subjects or aspects of their chosen fields. Almost all of them can count on some professional to direct and assist the work of the young men. Doctors often have, for example, brief courses specialized in certain subjects in the field of particular importance to the future doctor or that, for one reason or another, are challenging. The Architects' Study Circle, on the other hand, rather than studying one or more subjects, has chosen to focus on global challenges that call on application of all basic knowledge from their field, such as group projects undertaken for the Basilica of Our Lady of Altagracia in the Dominican Republic or for the Cathedral of San Salvador.

ACU's building, as an example, was built to create an environment propitious for intellectual work. It has numerous rooms for study and various specialized libraries where one can work in air-conditioned confort and rigorous silence.

ACU's Apostolic Work

CUBAN CAPITAL'S POOREST NEIGH-BORHOOD The primary ACU-

wide apostolate is the School-Dispensary Fr. Rev de Castro, in the neighborhood of Las Yaquas8. It is an underdeveloped zone of some 7,000 inhabitants, located next to the main laborers' neighborhood of the Capital. Havana's poorest families live here. The ACU's social work in this neighborhood started in 1935 and has continued to expand year by year. More than 300 children receive their primary education in the School-Dispensary, which also offers breakfast prior to the morning session and snack during the afternoon session. Although the school is sustained and directed by the ACU, it is run by the religious Servants of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Poor, assisted by young people that work as volunteers. At night, in that very same School-Dispensary, a large number of members of the ACU looks after the night school for 110 young and adult students. There is also a School of Home Economics for young ladies, under the care of young female volunteers that instruct them in sewing, cooking and other similar activities that might allow them later find a

⁸ American Spanish, from indigenous Taino people; a local palm



more decorous way to earn a living.

Twenty ACU doctos and four dentists work at Las Yaguas Dispensary, assisted by a numerous contingent of medical students. In many instances the Dispensary provides complementary medicine to the neighborhood's infirm.

The Director and Sub-Director of the ACU, assisted by agrupados, offer religious services. Every year 80 to 100 baptisms take place and attendance to Sunday Mass is quite numerous, an average of 100 families attend. There are three congregations: one for grown women with 100 members; another with 40 young women; and another with 32 married couples.

IN SAN LORENZO WITH AUGUSTINIAN PRIESTS

Numerous agrupados collaborate at the San Lorenzo

dispensary, founded by Rev. Fr. Spirali of the Augustinian order, and the ACU as such takes care of the night school for 150 young and adult men. One of the sessions of the school is devoted to forming young laborers intellectually who aspire to enroll in the well known Electromechanical School



of Colegio Belen.

The National Leper Hospital, town of Rincón, is visited periodically by selfless groups from the ACU. These groups organize cultural and recreational activities for the infirm cloistered there, allowing them to forget, if only for a few hours, live's anxieties.

The interns at the National Reform School for Young Men that so desire attend religious conferences and classes offered there by members of the ACU. Some 100 young men attend and are also offered recreational activities, such as baseball, with agrupados that also play with them.

RELIGION CLASSES IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS

A number of private schools in Havana, not of religious orders,

wish to offer students a truly complete education and have ACU's collaboration on religious instruction for young men, primarily those coursing their secondary education. This has been underway for some time at three of the most prestigious private schools in the Capital of the Republic, with very satisfactory results.



GOOD FRIDAY'S VIA CRUCIS

The ACU has been organizing the grand Via-Crucis⁹ at Calvary for the

past three years, on Good Friday. It carries the name of the field where the Novitiate of the Society of Jesus is nestled. It is quite possibly the most important pious activity celebrated in Havana on Good Friday. Last year it was attended by 17,000 spectators that followed the 14 Stations of the Via-Crucis¹⁰ in perfect order and profound devotion. The activity took place at dusk under the light torches that were meted out among hundreds of participants.

THE WORK OF PROMOTING SPIRITUAL EXERCISES The great boom in Spiritual Exercises in Cuba during the past 20 years cannot be

attributed exclusively to the ACU, for part of the Society of Jesus (and in a special

⁹ Stations of the Cross

¹⁰ There is an, as of now, apocryphal story that a friend of the ACU offered to and, indeed, relocated the 14 life-sized, pedestaled, Stations of the Cross to a property in Alta, for safekeeping.



way the Novitiate on Calvary) and numerous other Catholic organizations have also contributed decisively. But it must not be forgotten that the primary engine of the work of Spiritual Exercises in retreat in Cuba was the founder of the ACU, Reverend Father Felipe Rev de Castro, SJ, and that the first Director of the House of Exercises was the current Director or the ACU, Reverend Father Amando Llorente, SJ. Moreover, it was the ACU that with their great sessions for students and professionals set the tone later followed by other Catholic institutions. The Sponsorship for the House of Exercises that helped so much to erect a most beautiful Calvario edifice, is the labored work of a few agrupados and friends of the ACU.

COLLABORATION WITH A BISHOP IN THE CREATION OF A MODEL PARISH The most recent apostolic activity of the ACU, and perhaps one of the most important ones in its entire history, is the

collaboration for the foundation of the first Model Parish of Cuba, work of the Most Reverend Bishop of the Dioceses of Matanzas, Monsignor Alberto Martín. The



typical Cuban parish organization has one priest, and to sustain itself financially it has to depend not only on almsgiving, but also on fees for baptisms and weddings. Monsignor Martín wishes, in contrast, to have three priests in each parish, not only to split the parish workload, but so they might encourage and assist each other. He also wishes to abolish baptismal fees, which according to careful social psychology research, conducted by the ACU, engenders bad feelings in the common man that opines that Sacraments are just "priests' business." Since a parish with three priests and a school run by nuns (all this is included in the Bishop's plan) requires vast financial resources to sustain itself, a means of reaching the most Catholic of families. especially the most affluent, for fixed contributions to allow the abolition of baptismal fees, is under study. The scientific study of this new organization and the work to promote and spread these ideas has been entrusted to the ACU by the Most Reverend Bishop of Matanzas.

THE BIP: NATIONAL CATHOLIC DOCUMENTATION AND OUTREACH INITIATIVE

A very special chapter in the apostolic works of the ACU must be consecrated to the BIP (Bureau of Information and

Outreach¹¹), of recent vintage but already most fruitful. The primarily activities of the BIP may be summarized by these three points: 1) compilation of topics of interest to Catholicism, b) conferences on controversial subjects, c) booklets of Catholic teaching.

CONFERENCES ON CHASTITY

The conference unit of the BIP has focused primarily on talks on the theme of chastity

wherever requested in the Republic. During this past year 40 conferences were held, attended by a total of ten thousand people.

The talks are generally directed to teenagers or young men and aim to show them how chastity norms proposed by the Church are perfectly compatible with what modern medical science teaches. The

¹¹ The word outreach is used instead of propaganda.

greatest portion of these conferences have been offered at Catholic Action venues, upon request of different groups from the Federation of Catholic Youth (one of the four main branches of Cuban Catholic Action).

RESEARCHING PUBLIC OPINION

The primary research conducted so far by the BIP has

been: the 1952 study on Protestantism in Cuba and the survey fielded in 1953 about religious ideas of Cuban people. This survey was inspired by a survey conducted by the North American The Catholic Digest, and followup in France by the French Institute of Public Opinion, More than 60 interviewers were dispatched throughout the national territory, each with the task of interviewing a certain number of persons of given age, race, sex and social-economic status in the town or towns they were assigned. Four thousand interviews were completed, a "representative sample" of the religious beliefs of the entire Cuban population. The questions in the survey covered from belief in the existence of God to opinions of the subject of Masonry and of divorce. An additional question attempted to identify things individuals "found wrong" with the Catholic Church. The results of the survey were made public in the "Apostolic Assembly" held in January 1954 in the conference halls of the ACU before numerous members of the Fourth InterAmerican Congress on Catholic Education. (We nave the name of "Apostolic Assembly" to yearly evening functions at the ACU, generally around the Feast of Christ the King and addressing some significant apostolate work of the ACU during the preceding months).

BOOKLET OF THE MONTH

The number of different booklets published monthly by the BIP reached 15 in July

1954. The total number of booklets published in one year and two months reached 155,000. The main topics addressed were: chastity, marriage, veracity of the Gospels, Catholicism and Protestantism, the social question, the theory of evolution, the sacrifice of the Mass.... The booklets were written by agrupados or by priests friends of the ACU. In various churches around the Republic

they have place booklets in stands where the faithful can simply deposit coins in a piggybank under it.

LUMEN MAGAZINE

The booklets today replace the former publication of

Catholic outreach of the ACU, Lumen Magazine. However, the medical Lumen edition continues to be published, oriented to divulging scientific works by ACU's doctors.

The Apostolate Work of Congregants

In order not to extend the length of this booklet, we cannot dwell on individual apostolates of congregants, which are direct consequence of the agrupational spirit. Let us simply note, for example, that the success of the Fourth InterAmerican Congress on Catholic Education previously mentioned, was the singular effort of an agrupado, the Secretary of the Confederation of Cuban Catholic Schools.

We should also mention two works started by agrupados, that while not depending on the doings of the Board of

THE MEDICAL STUDIES ACADEMY

Directors of the ACU, are nevertheless so associated with our sodality that they

could well be described as autonomous bodies of the ACU, and are: The Medical Studies Academy and the Catholic Psychiatric Institute.

The Medical Studies Academy is a private institution of university level learning, whose aim is to strengthen and broaden the scientific knowledge of students enrolled in the Medical School of the University of Havana. It is an institution open to all who wish to enroll in the courses it offers, but at the same time often serves as a gateway for the best students of the School of Medicine to become part of the ACU, thanks to the relationship established with agrupados that direct the Academy or offer classes in it.

THE CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY

The Catholic Institute of Psychiatry is made up of various agrupados

professionally devoted to the practice of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology. It meets once a month in the conference room of the ACU, where the latest scientific advances in an area or one of the moral issues that typically faces a psychiatrist in the practice of the profession are studied. The close collaboration between psychiatrist, priest and clinical psychologist is the most distinguished characteristic of this group.

24 UNIVESIRTY PROFESSORS

Even though relating to the personal activity of various agrupados

themselves and not to the ACU as such, we must mention here, very particularly, because of the enormous transcendence it embodies, the apostolate work realized by numerous agrupados in diverse university professorships, not only at the State-run University of Havana, but in Villanova, the Catholic University of Cuba, founded and directed by Augustines. Twenty-four members of the ACU today are professors in one or another university, and three of them fare as Deans or Directors of Schools at the Catholic University. The ACU has always strived to foment its members with ability to achieve it, the goal of becoming

professors at a university, and in the past few years has brought together all agrupado professors at one or another university to a special event at the start of the school year, so they might take the oath against modern errors prescribed to all Catholic professors by His Holiness Pius X.

In closing, and we have purposely left this for the end precisely because of its extraordinary significance, let us recall here that from the ACU have come, until now, no less than 40 priestly vocations, some for the Society of Jesus and other for secular clergy. Perhaps this is a small figure when viewed from the perspective of other countries. But is should be noted that just twenty years ago there were hardly any Cuban priests. The current flourishing of male religious vocations is due, among other reasons, to the boom in the institutions of Catholic Action, and in no small part to the generous and virile conception of human life the Agrupación Católica Universitaria has tried to imbue amongst the young men of Cuba.

Conclusion

This is how the ACU is and works.

We believe that it fully satisfies the ends of a Marian Sodality.

Looking into the secret of its vitality we might perhaps summarize it in these characteristics:

- Very strict selection.
- Intense spiritual formation, rooted in the Spiritual Exercises, continued and solidified through spiritual direction that demands the absolute and total dedication of the Frs. Director and Sub-Director to the sodalists.
- A deep and joyful family spirit that makes fellowship among all extremely agreeable.
- Optimism and horizons open to a future full of human possibilities for congregants, for the Country, and above all for the Church.

Appendix

HYMN OF THE ACU12

One alone is the Leader and Master One alone our thinking and will One alone be the goal we strive after Our motto only one: Esto Vir

Only Christ has a message life-giving For a world that is thirsty for God Our arms be His arms at forgiving Our voices His voice full of love

Our shield: the firmness to pray Our science: the invincible sword The most valuable honor: to serve Our rest: to live serving the Lord

One alone is the Leader and Master One alone our thinking and will One alone be the goal we strive after Our motto only one: Esto Vir

¹² Adapted unofficial translation by Emili Falero

BUREAU OF INFORMATION AND OUTREACH¹³

PUBLISHED BOOKLETS

Apologetics

Defend your faith I, II, II, IV Do Catholics adore graven images? ...it's God! Perpetual light. Pray for the dead. The bridge with ten arches. The ten commandments Seeking the true Church Confide my sins to others? Font this rock Christianity and communism The lessons of Fatima In whose image and likeness. On evolution The greatest question. Chastity Why does the Church rule? Church & State From St. Peter to Pius XII Catholic and Mason? Priests profiled The religion complex "Think things over, then decide..." Lourdes, yesterday and today

¹³ Literal trans: Bureau of Information and Propaganda The start of class struggle
Jesus Christ is risen!
...yet, there is a Hell
Catholicism, what they say about it and what it is
Why communism?

Dogma

The drama in which we all have a role Following the Mass Germ of eternal life The power of prayer God's gift The complete Christ The privileged woman Is the end of the world at hand?

Morals/Family

Pain...and how Fr. Enrique dealt with it Before you tie the knot
The "magic" word. Strategy for the fight in favor of continence
Will you be happy?
Divorce and psychology
The philosophy of sex. Is chastity humane, in the light of reason?
Male and female psychology in marriage How, sweet home!
That thing called love

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."
Liberty...and your education
Answers for our children
What God has joined together, let no man put asunder
What will your child be like? Emotional needs of children
"My house is a house of prayer"
Is it a sin?
I practice contraception...but desire

Other

The case for agrarian reform
Survey
Pius XII as I knew him
What is the ACU (1952)
What is the ACU (1953)
What is a sodalist of the Agrupación
Católica Universitaria
What you should know about the ACU
St. Joseph

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