

Australian Cardijn Institute - Media Release - 18 November 2025

Pax Romana academics and professionals elect new international council



Pax Romana ICMICA leaders at a Sunday Mass celebration on 16 December, 2025, World Day of the Poor and the 60th anniversary of the Pact of the Catacombs.

Pax Romana ICMICA, an international lay movement of Catholic academics and professionals, elected Catalan poet and human rights activist, Dr Carles Torner, as its new president, and Italian lawyer, Gabriella Serra, as secretary-general. Vice-president for Asia and the Pacific is Korean human rights specialist, Anselmo Lee. The election took place at the movement's quadrennial General Assembly in Lisbon, Portugal on 15-16 November 2025.

"This is a very special moment for Pax Romana in which we are engaged in a practical exercise of synodality that defines our way of being a Church," Dr Torner commented while presenting his candidacy. "I am convinced that Pax Romana's international dimension is essential for the life of our federations," he continued. "We are resisting a world that is suffering under a variety of authoritarian powers that aim to undermine this conception of the world," he noted.

"I am really grateful to the whole the Pax Romana community that has entrusted me with such an important duty," Ms Serra said. "At a difficult moment for the whole world, I am sure that our movement can make its contribution to the Church and society, both locally and internationally."

In his homily at the closing Mass, international chaplain, Fr Luis María Goicoechea Buruchaga, who will continue in his role, also recalled that on 16 November 1965, 39 bishops led by Brazilian Archbishop Helder Camara committed themselves to the

development of a Servant Church of the Poor. The influence of the Pact has spread throughout the Church and is reflected in Pope Leo's apostolic exhortation, *Dilexi Te* and continues to inspire Pax Romana, he observed.

Australian Cardijn Institute secretary, Stefan Gigacz, who took part in the Assembly, welcomed the new international council.

"As a corresponding member of Pax Romana ICMICA, we hope to further develop our involvement with the movement, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

Carles Torner



Based in Barcelona, Carles Torner served from 1986-1991 as president of the International Movement of Catholic Students, the original branch of the Pax Romana movement founded in 1921.

He earned his doctorate from the University of Paris 8 with a thesis on "Shoah, a Pedagogy of Memory," later published in French, Catalan and Spanish. In 2002, he wrote a biography of the Mexican bishop of San Cristóbal de las Casas in Chiapas, Samuel Ruiz. He has also published several novels as well as six books of poetry.

From 2014-2021, he served as director of PEN International, the association that supports and defends writers around the world, especially those who have been imprisoned for their work. Currently, he lectures at and is preparing a 2026 course of the poetry of the Nicaraguan priest, Ernesto Cardenal.

Gabriella Serra



As a law student, Ms Serra was president from 2017-2019 of the Italian Catholic university students movement (FUCI), the movement to which the recently canonised St Pier Giorgio Frassati belonged.

She was also a founding member of Italy's National Youth Council, a consultative body representing young people in dialogue with political institutions in relation to youth policy.

Anselmo Lee, Vice-President for Asia



Anselmo Lee is an adjunct professor at several universities in South Korea, where he lectures on global governance, civil society, international development, and human rights. He is the founding co-president of Pax Christi Korea and sits on the Ecology and Environment Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea. He was previously secretary general of ICMICA from 1997-2004 and is a founding member of the Woori Theology Institute in Seoul.

In the public sphere and civil society, he promoted human rights and democracy in his roles as Executive Director of the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) in Bangkok (2005–2008) and the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) (2008–2010).

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