

ACI webinar

FROM THE PERIPHERY TO THE CENTRE

Cardijn, Pius XI and the YCW:
A prophetic encounter



Joseph Cardijn

YCW founder



Pius XI

Pope of Catholic Action

Stefan Gigacz recalls the March 1925 meeting between Cardijn & Pius XI, who approved the YCW in what Yves Congar described as a prophetic encounter between periphery and centre.



11 March, 2025



Via Zoom



7:00pm AEDT

YCW Centenary 1925 – 2025



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Australian Cardijn Institute Webinar: Cardijn, Pius XI and the YCW 1925 – 2025 - Tue 11 March 2025

This month's ACI webinar with Stefan Gigacz on 11 March 2025 marks the centenary of Cardijn's landmark first meeting with Pope Pius XI when the pontiff gave his enthusiastic approval to the emerging movement of the Young Christian Workers (YCW).

Picturesquely, Cardijn often spoke of it as an almost accidental meeting in which a series of Vatican officials led him "into successive rooms, each one smaller than the last" until "they opened the last door (the only one which was closed)" and he found himself in the library of the Pope.

But the way that first encounter came to take place was in fact much controversial and well-prepared.

The YCW under threat

The truth is that Cardijn's superior, Cardinal Mercier, had already all but officially ruled that the YCW, which was already spreading quickly throughout Belgium, was to be closed down as a divisive, class-based movement that threatened the unity of the visible Body of Christ in Belgium.

Yet, against all apparent odds, Cardijn succeeded in gaining an audience with Pius XI, who immediately endorsed the work of the YCW, exclaiming that "at last someone has come to me speaking about the masses."

It was a meeting that proved so decisive that the famous French theologian, Yves Congar, later described it as "a prophetic encounter of the periphery and the centre," placing it on the same level as the thirteenth century meetings between Pope Innocent III with St Francis of Assisi and St Dominic that led to the founding of the Franciscans and Dominicans.

A model for a synodal Church

It is a remarkable story that is much more complex than often appreciated – and also surprisingly relevant to the development of a synodal Church today.

ACI Secretary and researcher, Stefan Gigacz, will share the intriguing back story in this month's ACI webinar on Tuesday 11 March.

Webinar details

Tuesday 11 March 2025, 7.00pm AEDT

Register

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/GqwAabqISp6Wai_cIFX0Ww#/
/](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/GqwAabqISp6Wai_cIFX0Ww#/)

Speaker



Stefan Gigacz

Originally from Melbourne, Stefan worked for a short time as a personal injuries lawyer. While at university, he became involved in a local parish YCW group. In 1978, he became a fulltime worker for the movement, working in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney and later for the International YCW.

Later, he completed master's degrees in canon law and legal theory. From 1997-2000, he coordinated an international project to document the history of the YCW before taking up a position as a project officer with the French Catholic development agency, CCFD-Terre Solidaire. From 2006-2008, he worked as a pastoral worker in a Melbourne Catholic parish. Since then, he has worked as an editor and journalist for a series of Catholic online publications.

From 2012-2018, he worked on his PhD thesis on the role of Joseph Cardijn at the Second Vatican Council, now published under the title "[The Leaven in the Council: Joseph Cardijn and the Jocist Network at Vatican II](#)." He now resides in Perth, Western Australia, where he devotes his time to the development of the Australian Cardijn Institute. In 2024, he published his second book, "[Joseph Cardijn Rediscovered](#)."