



*Interconfessional association
of lay men and women
committed to the support
of ecumenism and dialogue,
starting from Christian-Jewish dialogue*

S.A.E.
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A SHORT HISTORY

S.A.E., a secular and interconfessional association, is a continuation of the activity of dialogue and ecumenical formation which was promoted by Maria Vingiani in Venice in 1947 and has been continuing ever since. It has gone through various stages of development; privately in Rome in 1959 (following the announcement of the Second Vatican Council) and then as a public association from 1964 onwards. In 1966 it was formally constituted under the chairmanship of its founder, Maria Vingiani.

Every year, since 1964, it has organized a summer meeting to encourage ecumenical dialogue; the minutes of which are published. A shorter meeting usually takes place in spring.

It was one of the promoters of the Judaism Day (1989) and of the document for interconfessional marriages between Roman Catholics and Waldesian-Methodists.(1998).

In 1996, on the election of Elena Milazzo Covini as the new national President, its headquarters was transferred from Rome to Milan. The founder, Maria Vingiani, was appointed President emeritus.

From 2004 to 2012, for two consecutive terms, was president Mario Gnocchi.

In 2012 Marianita Montresor was elected national President.

ORGANIZATION

.S.A.E. is organized democratically. Its board of directors (president, executive council, council of local groups) is elected by its members. Local groups share the aims and methods of the association and are autonomous with regard to the programming and the carrying out of their activities.

Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Orthodox and Jewish lay men and women constitute the members of the association; priests, ministers, monks and nuns join as friends.

Consultants and a standing committee of biblical scholars and theologians support the association. Members of both these groups come from different religious denominations.

Inside S.A.E. mixed groups have been constituted in order to work on theological research, ecumenical teaching and interconfessional marriages; the Theological Group, made up of Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox theologians, is still at work.

S.A.E is autonomous both in its organization and economically. Directors and collaborators are voluntary. S.A.E., for the most part, pays its way thanks to the yearly subscriptions of its members.

AIMS AND METHODS

The Christian members of S.A.E, even though they belong to different churches and denominations, refer to the same Lord Jesus Christ, to the same faith and to the same Gospel as proclaimed and witnessed by the Apostles.

They recognize that “the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable” (Rm 11,29), and consider it essential to engage in a fruitful dialogue with the Jewish people, because, as Paul states, “the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants and the promises” are theirs; from them, “according to the flesh, comes the Messiah” (Rm 9, 4-5).

They acknowledge that these divine gifts have been received by peoples with different traditional backgrounds and have been expressed through different cultures and theologies. As regards the churches and the different Christian denominations, they believe that the differences can be accepted within the fellowship of the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12).

They believe that the unity of the church is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and that it is the duty of every Christian community to bring it about through a spiritual awakening both individual and collective.

The spirit of dialogue, which is the distinguishing feature of SAE, precludes the acceptance of any form of extremism and fundamentalism, affords ample occasion for a verification of faith through constant reference to the Word of God and enables it to engage in fraternal dialogue, prayer and a positive cooperation.

ACTIVITY

Locally: Prayer, biblical and theological study; meetings to encourage dialogue, comparison, witness and service to the common good; support, cooperation and advice in diocesan initiatives and also in the initiatives of other Christian communities and those of civil society in general.

Nationally: Summer meetings to foster ecumenical dialogue, which are open to members and non-members of any age and any religious and cultural background.

Spring meetings organized yearly in different parts of the country.

Various initiatives, also in collaboration with other ecclesiastical and civil organizations, particularly those dealing with justice, peace and integrity of creation.

Regular publication of the minutes of meetings and of documents produced by the Theological Group. Publication of a quarterly newsletter reporting on recent ecumenical events and with information of interest to members.

S.A.E. is a body accredited/qualified by the Ministry of Public Instruction for the formation of the teaching staff (D.M. 177/2000 and D.M. 26/07/2007 Prot. n. 1532).