

# CARITAS TRAINING MANUAL **Pastoral Training for Responding to HIV and AIDS**

Developed by **Robert J. Vitillo** Paulines Publications Africa

PASTORAL TRAINING FOR RESPONDING TO HIV AND AIDS  
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## **Introduction :**

The Church – and particularly local parishes and charitable organisations such as parish and diocesan Caritas and other groups including those for men, women, youth and families – can play a unique role in responding to the pandemic by offering pastoral care to those living with or affected by HIV and AIDS. The overall goal of the manual is to provide insights and guidelines to faith-filled people who are striving to develop a compassionate, effective and non-judgmental response to the pandemic. It is dedicated to the many faith leaders and ministers who reach out with acceptance and compassion to anyone touched, in whatever way, by the AIDS pandemic.

The major components of the training are as follows:

- The Basic Facts about HIV and AIDS**
- Preventing HIV Infection – Science and Ethics**
- The Global and National Spread of HIV and AIDS**
- The Impact of HIV and AIDS on Society and Development**
- Emotional Impact of HIV on those Infected and Affected**
- Response of the Church – Teaching, Service, Pastoral Care**
- HIV and AIDS Activities in Parishes and other Ministries**

The material can be adapted according to the learning needs of the participants, but all components of the training should be considered; otherwise, conclusions may be reached that are not well-founded in scientific facts or in religious and ethical values. Prayer should also be an integral part of this training process.

**The illustrations or slides on nearly every page are available in the PowerPoint presentation to be found on the CD-ROM which accompanies this manual. Under each slide are contained explanatory notes in order to supplement information and suggest additional resources. The CD also includes other documents** from the Holy Father and from various regional and national episcopal conference structures, such as: Message of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), December 2003; Message of the 15th Plenary Assembly of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences of Eastern Africa (AMECEA), June 2005; HIV/AIDS Policy of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, August 2005; Message of Pope Benedict XVI for World AIDS Day 2005; Pastoral Strategy on AIDS by the Council of Episcopal Conferences of Latin America and the Caribbean, December 2005.

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**Preface :**

This training manual and process are based on The Caritas Training Manual on the Pandemic of HIV-AIDS, co-edited by Sr Maura O’Donohue, MMM, and Rev. Robert J. Vitillo, and published by Pauline Publications Africa in 1997; on Many Threads, One Weave, a parish-based training manual produced by the National Catholic AIDS Network in the United States; on Rays of Hope: Managing HIV and AIDS in Africa, by Paternite-Auxence Mombé, S.J., co-sponsored by the African Jesuit AIDS Network and Caritas Internationalis and published by Paulines Publications Africa in 2004; and Hope and Healing: A Facilitator’s Manual for CRS Employees and Partners on HIV and AIDS, published by Catholic Relief Services in 2001. Many thanks to those who developed the many resources used and cited.

The author is most grateful to Caritas Internationalis, including past and present leadership and its member organisations, as well as to the many Bishops’ Conferences and other Catholic groups that have proposed this challenging but most rewarding global ministry to me and have encouraged me in its pursuit. Greatest thanks are due to those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS – both those still here and those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith, for they provide the passionate inspiration and the spiritual nourishment so necessary to sustain this ministry.

Sincere thanks are offered to the financial sponsors of this manual, especially the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (England and Wales), Catholic Relief Services (United States of America), Missio-Aachen (Germany), and the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN).

Warm thanks also need to be expressed to Paulines Publications Africa for enthusiastically taking up this project, despite many other commitments, and to the director of AJAN, Fr Michael Czerny, S.J., for his encouragement and for carefully reviewing and editing my work.

Rev. Robert J. Vitillo  
Special Advisor on HIV and AIDS, Caritas Internationalis  
Chairperson, Catholic HIV and AIDS Network (CHAN)

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**Foreword :**

The commitment of Caritas Internationalis to those living with and affected by HIV and AIDS goes back almost to the sad dawn of the virus. Fr Bob Vitillo was instrumental in persuading Caritas and indeed the wider Catholic Church to take the virus seriously. He helped to rid the pandemic of fearful and sinful connotations and insisted that it was a human phenomenon, not just a health or developmental one, and therefore came within the ambit of Caritas activity which is to spread social justice and solidarity throughout the world with the focus on promoting the dignity of the human person and restoring humanity to those being robbed of it.

Over the past twenty years, in collaboration with many other Catholic organisations, Caritas Internationalis has disseminated a huge amount of information about HIV/AIDS in order to combat ignorance and fear and show best practices. We have encouraged our members to fund HIV/AIDS programmes in the whole gamut of activities from training to care so that there is scarcely a Caritas in the world not involved in somehow combating the pandemic and its effect on people. We have promoted advocacy efforts on the global, national and local levels for better laws and policies to assure full access to care, treatment, support and education. We have been involved in trying to rid the pandemic of stigma and discrimination and ensure compassionate, non-judgmental care.

Caritas Internationalis is most grateful to Paulines Publications Africa for their willingness to issue this Caritas Training Manual in a second much-expanded and more pastorally-focused edition. This

complete and forthright publication is designed to provide easily comprehensible materials to church workers so that they can educate believers at the grassroots level to prevent the further spread of HIV, to comfort and care for those already living with HIV, and to support loved ones and those in the wider community affected by the pandemic.

Mr. Duncan MacLaren  
Secretary General, Caritas Internationalis

**Note about the Author :**

Rev. Fr Robert J. Vitillo is Special Advisor on HIV and AIDS for Caritas Internationalis, a Geneva-based post he has held since 2005. On behalf of Caritas and other international Catholic organisations, Fr. Vitillo spearheads advocacy that promotes a more just and practical response to the pandemic by governments, churches and international agencies. The aim of his advocacy work is to improve the plight of the poorest of the poor, who are most severely vulnerable to and affected by HIV.

Fr Vitillo first started to work on HIV and AIDS in 1987 when Caritas Internationalis selected the pandemic as a priority area of concern. For more than two decades, he has worked to develop, coordinate and highlight the Catholic response to the pandemic across the world. He sees his role as drawing attention to the real and tangible needs and perspectives of people living with the virus and of Church agencies responding to their needs in the field, which he visits on a regular basis.

Over the years, Fr Vitillo has engaged in planning regional consultations and meetings of theologians and ethicists; developing Church-based programmes worldwide; informing Catholic donor agencies about the funding needs of partners in the field; and providing background for bishops' pastoral statements and action plans, including that adopted in 2003 by the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM).

Fr Vitillo facilitates regional and national training sessions for bishops' conferences, groups of Caritas and others, including health-care and pastoral workers. He does everything to ensure the participation and witness of persons living with or affected by HIV, to ensure that the Church speaks with, and not just about, those experiencing the deepest impact of the pandemic.

Fr Vitillo, a priest of the Diocese of Paterson, New Jersey, in the United States, was ordained in 1972.