

## EDITORIAL

### 2015 debate on the family - a new dynamic

We have followed with great interest the conciliar spirit which prevailed for the 2014 session of the Synod. There was great openness relative to themes once considered taboo. We appreciate the shift in paradigm, taking into account the great diversity of situations as well as the fragilities of the family, such as, for example, the constructive elements of civil marriage and situations of cohabitation.

The Synod fathers perceived the urgency of opening pastoral ways that are less rigid and distinctly more creative. The universal church is rich in diversity. Seeing solutions which are unique or inspired by "all or nothing" is no longer acceptable. The Spirit which guides the Synod fathers is one of wisdom. The dialogue experienced in contact with the realities of life seems prophetic for understanding all the situations of fragility and suffering, including the capacity to welcome with respect those who are divorced and remarried, or homosexual persons.

At the end of the first part of the Synod on the Family, things began to change, leaving behind historical dogma. Pope Francis opened the discussion. The debate could only be pursued by the search for a consensus which is both an imposed spiritual exercise and a delicate art, if one takes into account the existence of a Church composed of more than one billion faithful of diverse cultures.

The *Lineamenta*, soon to be addressed to the Episcopal Conferences, have been formulated based on the final Report of the 2014 Synod. The Episcopal Conferences will then take up the relay, in order to further study the questions posed and to stimulate reflection on the family by the local churches. The editing of the syntheses allows for the drawing up of the working document – *Instrumentum Laboris* – in order to open up the second phase of the Synod beginning in the summer of 2015.

The second phase of the Synod has as its subject: "vocation and the mission of the family in the Church and in the contemporary world". For all the reasons cited above, it is our responsibility as Catholic citizens to participate in this dynamic by expressing our thoughts. The Church is all the People of God, not just the 200 Bishops who will be meeting there.

The media coverage of the debates has become an inescapable fact. It contributes to forming a stronger public opinion, as much inside the Church as outside. Let us participate in this free and dense debate.

Daniel Van Espen (SIGNIS)

*The Board of directors of the Network Crescendo wishes you and each one in your Organization a very happy and holy New Year 2015.*

## POST

### Family diversity and apostolate

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis writes: "The Church is herself a missionary disciple; she needs to grow in her interpretation of the revealed word and in her understanding of truth... Within the Church countless issues are being studied and reflected upon with great freedom..." (JG, 40).

The question of the family is an important issue for the Church. Pope Francis thus invited the **Synod of Bishops (October 2014)** to reflect on the defining and precious reality of the family (3). He desired that the participants be open to a sincere and fraternal discussion, which would lead them to carry with pastoral responsibility the questions that this epochal change brings with it. Laypersons engaged in the fields of family pastoral care, bioethics and human ecology spoke on the reality of the family. Representing the different continents, they brought their living testimony of family apostolate lived in everyday life.

**The Bishops spoke in an atmosphere of great liberty.** Their talks described family realities that are highly diversified according to regions and cultures: "I never heard so much about polygamy," said a Canadian. Others related how families feel the stress of unending conflict, widespread displacement, criminality, violence, pover-

ty, migration and poor governance. "The question of remarried divorced couples is overwhelmingly a European issue," observed an African. "How to deal with the issue of Catholic-Muslim couples?" The Bishops from the South denounced the introduction from the North of a vision concerning the family which is contrary to the Gospel and to the local culture.

### Diversity of families

In their report, the Synod Fathers wrote: "Within the family are joys and trials, deep love and relationships which, at times, can be wounded. The family is truly the 'school of humanity'... The family is uniquely important to the Church and in these times." (2). "We look to the reality of the family today in all its complexity, with both its lights and shadows." (5) These shadows are loneliness, increasing poverty, unemployment, feeling of abandonment, emotional imbalance and violence (6). After having listed all the types of partnership (polygamy, marriage in stages, mixed marriages, cohabitation, homosexuality) which pose challenges to the Church (7), and the difficulties of families (births outside of marriage, one parent families, divorce, absence of parents, non-recognition of the dignity of women, etc.) (8), the report mentions the importance of affectivity in life. "Seeking to live their affectivity in the best possible manner can lead to a desire to put greater effort into building relationships of self-giving and creative reciprocity, responsibility and solidarity" (9).

### What family pastoral?

"Through his Church, Christ bestows on marriage and the family the grace necessary to witness to the love of God and to live the life of communion." (16) "The Church is conscious of the weakness of many of her children (civil marriage, divorced and remarried, or simply living together) who are struggling in their journey of faith. They need to be accompanied with mercy and patience on the eventual stages of personal growth" (24), "recognizing that the grace of God works also in their lives." (25) "The synod fathers emphasized that Catholic families are called upon to be the active agents in every pastoral activity on behalf of the family: Without the joyous testimony of married people and families, proclamation risks being misunderstood." (30) "This necessitates offering programs of formation which nourish married life and the importance of the laity providing an accompaniment, which consists in a life of witness." (59) "This work calls for missionary conversion by everyone in the Church." (32) "Proclamation needs to create an experience whe-

re the Gospel of the Family responds to the deepest expectations of a person. This does not consist in merely presenting a set of rules but in espousing values, which respond to the needs of those who find themselves today, even in the most secularized of countries." (33) "At the same time, many synod fathers insisted on a more positive approach to the richness of various religious experiences." (35) "They equally highlighted the fact that evangelization needs to clearly denounce cultural, social, political and economic factors which prevent authentic family life." (38). The questions concerning divorced and remarried couples, and the welcome of homosexuals were discussed in depth, and the propositions made at the end of the Synod did not receive a two-thirds approval from the voters.

### Towards the Synod of 2015

From now until October 2015, the local Churches should reflect on these questions and clarify these perspectives. In addition to the final report of the Synod 2014, they have a guide drawn up by the Holy See to help them to continue and to deepen their reflection. Let us give our Bishop our proposals coming from our experience as Christians involved in the life of the city.

Dominique Lemau de Talancé



Numbers () correspond to the paragraphs of the final report of the Synod  
Sources : Urbi et Orbi (La Croix, la Documentation Catholique Groupe Bayard)

Osservatore Romano

## ■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

### United Nations – General Assembly: Open-ended Working Group on Ageing – 5th Session – July 30 – August 1 2014<sup>1</sup>

The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, established by the General Assembly<sup>2</sup> in December 2010, for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons, notably discrimination, right to health, violence and abuse, social protection, social exclusion, autonomous life, access to justice, access to jobs and to education, care to older persons and questions linked to end of life. This session has allowed the WG to deepen their knowledge of the various issues that they were working on in previous sessions, while also adding some new ones. Some delegations have maintained that greater protection of the human rights of older persons can be achieved through a better and more efficient implementation of already existing instruments and mechanisms, including action plans that have been adopted at the international level, such as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing<sup>3</sup>. For an increasing number of delegations, however, organizations of civil society and several panelists, the goal of greater protection can be reached only through a specific international legal instrument encompassing the particular human rights of older persons, so as to guarantee their full participation in society and combat stereotypes, discrimination, indifference, abuse and ill treatment. In spite of these differences, however, there are some positions common to all participants at this session, namely:

(a) The increase of the global population is irreversible and as result of the increase in life expectancy and the ageing of the world's population, require a change of paradigm, pursuant to which older persons should be considered not passive subjects who receive assistance from the State, but rather active subjects who should be able to fully exercise their human rights and demand that they be respected.

(b) That the existing mechanisms designed to guarantee the full exercise of the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of older people are not adequate, either because there are deficiencies in terms of their implementation as some States maintain, or because there is a normative gap at the international level which must be filled through the adoption of a legally binding instrument allowing work to be carried out specifically on ill treatment, exclusion, stigmatization, discrimination and the satisfaction of the basic needs of older persons.

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<sup>1</sup> The full report A/AC.278/2014/2 is on [www.reseau-crescendo.org](http://www.reseau-crescendo.org)

<sup>2</sup> Resolution 65/182 of December 21 2010

<sup>3</sup> A/CONF.197/9

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/27/46

<sup>5</sup> Several articles on [www.reseau-crescendo.org](http://www.reseau-crescendo.org) are related to the Independent Expert

In charge of the editing : Dominique Lemau de Talancé – The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors

**The mandate of the Independent Expert** is complementary to that of the Working Group: it neither carries more weight nor duplicates the Working Group's mandate. The Independent Expert is mandated to assess the existing international human rights instruments, and at the same time to determine best practices, including the implementation of legislation adopted to enforce the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons and the deficits in the implementation of that legislation, taking into consideration the opinion of the interested parties.

**The mandate of the Working Group** is more general, since it entails not only assessing the existing international framework and the identification of possible deficiencies, but also making recommendations on the best way to correct them, including through the consideration of proposals for a new international legal instrument. In no way does the mandate of the Independent Expert entail an alteration of the mandate of the Working Group or, in particular, consideration of proposals on an international instrument

**Human Rights Council – 27<sup>th</sup> Session September 8 2014 – Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert<sup>4</sup> on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.** Rosa Kornfeld-Matte presented her first annual report<sup>5</sup> since taking office on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014. She expresses her views about the foundations and context of the mandate, as well as some preliminary considerations that will inform her work during the mandate. During the ensuing inte-

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ractive dialogue representatives of Member States and other representatives took the floor to question and comment on the Independent Expert's report.

**UN Economic Commission for Europe – Geneva November 20-21 2014. 7<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Working Group on Ageing.**<sup>6</sup> The Vienna Ministerial Declaration (2012) has continued to provide an important framework of reference and to streamline activities in implementing and monitoring of MIPAA/RIS in the UNECE region. The key position of the Working Group on Ageing as the facilitator of MIPAA/RIS implementation in the region has been once more confirmed by the extension of its mandate to the end of 2017. WGA has produced substantive outputs and has provided a framework for networking among national focal points to exchange information and share experiences. Additional member States have adjusted their national policy frameworks in response to MIPAA/RIS.

**World Bank – Presentation of the Report “Golden Ageing in Emerging Europe and Central Asia** - The representative of the World Bank presented the insights of the regional report “Golden Ageing in Emerging Europe and Central Asia,” which is expected to be published by the World Bank in early 2015

**1<sup>st</sup> October – International Day of Older Persons** – on the theme : “Leaving No One Behind, Promoting a Society for All!” At UN/Geneva the WG on Ageing organized a panel discussion, a dance show with elderly women, a visit of Ban K Ki Moon, UN/SG



UNECE

## ■ NEWS OF THE CHURCH

The 7th World family meeting will take place from 22 to 27 September 2015 in Philadelphia and will be on the theme "love is our mission. Fully living family. The mission of the Christian family is to announce to the world, by the strength of the marriage sacrament, the love of God. From this ad was born and built a living family, which puts the home of love at the centre of all its human and spiritual dynamism.

It is "celebrate what God has given us", with "two thousand years of experience, we will not only look at the problems but find the joy, enthusiasm, new life, in the teaching of Jesus".



## ■ AGENDA

### 22 to January 24, 2015: Rome

The worldwide network Crescendo will participate in the Congress of the Pontifical Council for the family, preparatory to the ordinary Synod of bishops.

### 22-27 September 2015: Philadelphia 8th world meeting of families

### 4 to October 25, 2015: Rome Synod bishops on the family

## ■ NEW WEBSITE

[www.reseau-crescendo.org](http://www.reseau-crescendo.org)  
Visit it regularly!

<sup>6</sup> ECE/WG.1/2014/4 on [www.reseau-crescendo.org](http://www.reseau-crescendo.org)

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## ■ NEWS OF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

**AIC:** AIC Brazil celebrated its 160th anniversary.

*News from staff members in the Ukraine and in Syria.*

In spite of the war situation and the extremely precarious working conditions, the team in Kharkov, Ukraine, is continuing their "after school" program for the children who are neglected by their families and roam the streets: meals, educational assistance, creative workshops and various activities. They also receive autistic children. The staff in Damascus, Syria, helps numerous refugees fleeing from conflict areas.

*Participation of AIC in the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Turin, October 17)* The President of AIC-Ukraine, the only representative from Central and Eastern Europe at this encounter, gave her testimony. The President of AIC-Italy spoke in the workshop on the theme of the elderly and of families in difficulty.

*International Assembly in Guatemala (March 23-26, 2015)* "An education which brings out the best of each one's strengths."

**FIAMC:** Resolution of the Congress in Manila on "The Catholic Doctor in an Era of Secularization and Technology": to work together for what is right no matter what it costs; to promote human dignity and the rights of every human being; to defend freedom of conscience and religious conscientious objections; to protect life from the moment of conception; to be loyal and faithful to the teaching magisterium of the Church; to recognize that despite cultural differences, our approach to science is guided by ethics and faith; and, to promote the joy of service to God through caring about His poor.

**MIAMSI:** Importance of reflecting on and of being attentive to the **future of children in the world**. Many measures have already been carried out by the members of our staff who reflect, analyze and seek the keys to transform realities and act for the development of their respective countries.

Our movements participate and promote several projects:

- education of children, civic education of parents
- literacy
- transmission of faith
- awareness of the common good
- awareness of non violence
- protection of children against sex tourism.

### **Little Sisters of the Poor:**

The year 2015 will be particularly important for two reasons.

After the Year of the Family, the Year of Consecrated Life – from November 30, 2014 to February 2, 2016, invites all consecrated men and women, regardless of their specific charism (for us, hospitality towards the elderly poor) to revive this gift.

In September 2015, the General Chapter will be held. This assembly represents the whole Congregation, already in the midst of preparations on the local, provincial and general levels.

**SIGNIS:** The Holy See has officially recognized SIGNIS (the World Catholic Association for Communication) as an International Association of the Faithful through its approval of the **Canonical Statutes of SIGNIS**.

**VMI:** The main interventions during the international encounter of VMI in October, 2014, on the theme "**the elderly in a changing world: challenges and opening**" are available for consultation on the website of the French MCR: [www.mcr.asso.fr](http://www.mcr.asso.fr):

- Move forward with confidence into the unknown future by Mr. René Pujol: synthesis of the works preparatory received from 32 countries of 5 continents

- The point of view of a pastor on the changing world by Mgr. Jean-Luc Hudsyn: what to do with the concerns and the fear?

- Intervention by Mgr. François Maupu: reflections on the movement