

EDITORIAL

Crescendo Network : its universal mission for families in the Church
Father J. Joblin

In the course of the coming months the family will be the center of attention. A *World Encounter of Families* is being held in Philadelphia on the initiative of the Pontifical Council for the Family and the second part of the *Synod on families* will take place in Rome this autumn. The first objective of these two events is not to serve as a reminder of the doctrinal positions of the Church but to invite Christians to a strategic reflection on the manner for remedying the present drifting of the contemporary thought and politics which in fact threaten to be diffused to the rest of the world in favor of a philosophy and an unrecognizable ethic that runs counter to the existential reality of the family. While all civilizations, from as far back as one can remount, have looked on the family as the basic cell around which is built social relations, that is, reciprocal obligations which members of a group have towards one another, certain persons today pretend that no rule of nature can be invoked to prevent an individual from acting as he wishes in society, as long as "he does not trouble the public order established by law". Such a philosophy runs contrary to the common conscience like the message of Christ on the solidarity and the love that men should witness to one another. Faced with this anti-family revolution and the absence of attention to the elderly that too often follows, the Crescendo network finds its importance and meaning. By establishing a bond between the associations or congregations that care for families and the elderly, it allows each one of them to take note that their particular activities, even on a local level, are a link in an undertaking that unfolds on a global plan; in addition, the universal character of the Church gives them significance for the whole of society. The Church is thus perceived as a rallying sign for all peoples, beyond their different philosophies and cultures, since she presents herself as being effective in the service of the common good; she offers to human aspirations, notably regarding the family, the means of inscribing them in reality, as much on a doctrinal level since its reflection is not bound to a particular philosophy, as to that of effectiveness since she gives a universal echo to capillary actions, and all too often ignored undertakings on a local level. The contributions of this bulletin show that the reflection on the family is going forward, giving right to the multicultural reality of which this age is conscious.

POST

The Pope and the Elderly
D. Lemau de Talancé, H. Ballivet

"Our elders are men and women, fathers and mothers, who came before us on our own road, in our own house, in our daily battle for a worthy life. They are men and women from whom we have received so much. The elder is not an alien. We are the elder: in the near or far future, but inevitably, even if we don't think it."¹

The World Encounter of Families will gather in Philadelphia from the 22nd to the 27th of September, 2015, in the presence of Pope Francis for the two last days. A multitude of Christian families coming from across the world will have for a common objective, as recalled the Rev. Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia, "the reengagement in a more profound sacrificial service to the other members of the family."²

This is why, in the course of this year, our Holy Father by his catechesis on the family at the time of the General Audiences and on diverse other occasions, has accompanied the common advancement of the People of God toward this great gathering because, by this reengagement, each family is invited "to a strategic

¹ Pope Francis: General audience of March 4, 2015

² The Reverend Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia, June 29, 2015 in Rome: "We must work so that this gathering 'be a truly positive moment and a generator for individuals and families, so that their family life be really improved and reengages itself to a more profound sacrificial love in the service of other members of the family. Such is my hope and such is our objective'."

reflection on the manner for remedying the present drifting of the contemporary thought and politics” as writes Fr. Joseph Joblin in the editorial of this issue of the Bulletin.

Toward this end the Committee of Crescendo has hoped that this Bulletin which will appear between the 8th World Encounter of Families and the Synod on the Family witness to the reflections of special tenderness regarding the elderly and grandparents, truly “signs of rallying for all peoples beyond their philosophical and cultural differences...”:

Homily of March 11, 2015

When I was in the Philippines, the Filipino people greeted me saying “Lolo Kiko” – meaning Grandpa Francis – “Lolo Kiko” they said! The first important thing to stress: it is true that society tends to discard us, but the Lord definitely does not! The Lord never discards us! He calls us to follow him in every age of life and old age has a grace and a mission too, a true vocation from the Lord. Old age is a vocation. It is not yet the time to “pull in the oars”. This period of life is different from those before, there is no doubt; we even had to somewhat “invent it ourselves”, because our societies are not ready, spiritually and morally, to appreciate the true value of this stage of life. Indeed, it was once not so normal to have time available; it is much more so today. Christian spirituality has also been caught somewhat by surprise, with regard to outlining a kind of spirituality of the elderly. But thanks be to God there is no shortage of the testimony of elderly saints, both men and women!

The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the contemporary world. Instrumentum laboris Ch III/18

Special attention needs to be given to grandparents in the family. They are the link between the generations, ensuring the transmission of traditions and customs in which those who are very young can trace their roots. Furthermore, they often guarantee, in a discreet manner without financial compensation, a valuable economic support to young couples and assist in caring for their grandchildren, even passing on their faith. Many people, especially in these times, can acknowledge that they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents. This demonstrates how the faith is communicated and safeguarded within the family, in the succession of generations, thereby becoming an irreplaceable legacy for newer families. Consequently, the elderly deserve genuine recognition, appreciation and a cordial reception by young people, families and society.

The Blessing of a Long Life, 28 September 2014

But there is also the reality of the abandonment of the elderly: how many times we discard older people with attitudes that



Reuters

are akin to a hidden form of euthanasia! The culture of discarding human beings hurts our world. We discard children, young people and older people under the pretext of maintaining a “balanced”, economic system the centre of which is no longer the human person, but money. We are all called to counter this culture of poisonous waste!

We Christians, together with all people of good will, are called to patiently build a more diverse, more welcoming, more humane, more inclusive society that does not need to discard the weak in body and mind. On the contrary we need a society which measures its success on how the weak are cared for.

As Christians and as citizens, we are called to envision, with imagination and wisdom, ways of dealing with this challenge. A people who do not take care for grandparents, does not treat them well has no future: such a people loses its memory and its roots. But beware: you too have the responsibility to keep alive these roots in yourself with prayer, the reading of the Gospel and the works of mercy. It is only in such a manner that we will remain as living trees, that even in old age will not stop bearing fruit. One of the most beautiful things of family life, of our human family life is to hug a child and to let oneself be hugged by a grandfather or a grandmother. Thank you!

We react to these words of Pope Francis:

“For us grandparents are always the assurance of our life, our point of reference and without whom we are lost. They are our strength, our wisdom, our joy and the memory of a family. We cannot allow any violence in their regard because old age is a time of Grace; they are the ones who transmit life’s experiences. We cannot put them aside, nor forget them or leave them alone. To have an elderly person in the family (grandparents, aunt, uncle) is a wealth for us. I agree with our Holy Father when he says that we have a role: to give them back their place”.

Rose de Lima (Madagascar), AIC

“This period of life (old age) is certainly different from preceding ones. That is why we, us, must in some way invent our mission, because our societies are not ready, spiritually and morally, to give it (old age) its full and entire value.” (Pope Francis)

Is not a well lived old age a reminder of the MEANING of life? Is not this reminder an essential mission of every aging person? Among others, it is undoubtedly from there that the importance of supporting the aged comes... For, indeed, the elderly person who manages to welcome and encourage, pray with confidence and often, suffer with patience, witnesses to faith in a Life which refuses to die. This faith which rushes forth from the resurrected Christ!

There is no age limit for the gestures of vigilance and tenderness. Of course, in the Congregation our elderly sisters are treated with competence, respect and love wherever they are welcomed, the time having come... Elsewhere, several Daughters of Wisdom from Canada are involved also with their fellow citizens, elderly fellow citizens. Thanks to the openness of those in charge, several among us give time and care to members of their own families... sometimes right up to the final goodbye! Several among us live in retirement homes and through a thousand and one services accompany and support the lay neighbors. Several elderly immigrants have also joined and are helped by the Sisters in less favored quarters. Is it not Jesus who passes through centers under repair, unhealthy apartments, basements of churches, etc. in search of the isolated and/or marginalized neighbor? Following the example of our Pope Francis, we must keep our eyes and heart open, fixed on the logic of Love...

A logic that immensely surpasses those of balanced budgets!

Lucille Deschênes, Daughter of Wisdom



Vatican

■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

UNITED NATIONS - GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Sixth Open-ended Working Group on Ageing for the Purpose of Strengthening the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons (OEWG) took place in New York on 14-16 July 2015. Report of the meeting, agenda, statements and all documentation can be found (A/AC.278/2015/1 and 2).

United Nations Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda will be held from 25 to 27 September 2015, in New York and convened as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly. Pope Francis shall address the GA on 25th September in the morning. Read more in the UN DESA Newsletter Volume 19, No.09 - September 2015]

70th Ordinary Session of the General Assembly (UNGA 70). It will start on Tuesday 15th September 2015. The General Debate will take place from 28th September to 6th October 2015 [See UN/DESA Newsletter Volume 19, No.09 - September 2015]

19-28 September 2015 - Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Cuba, the United States of America and visit to the United Nations Organization Headquarters on the occasion of his participation

at the Eighth World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (HRC) - 30th session 14-09/2-10 2015

15/09 - The Austrian Mission has organised a side event on "Good practices in promoting the rights of older persons" with the participation of the Independent Expert, Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, and following her visit to Austria.

16/09 The Independent Expert (IE) has presented her intermediate "Report on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons" [A/HRC/30/43] to the Human Rights Council followed by an Interactive Dialogue (ID)

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO) - WHO seeks for comments on the "Draft zero of the *Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health*" Consultation period: 28 August – 30 October 2015. [On-line consultation on the WHO web site [www.WHO.int] which is now open to public consultation from individuals and institutions on the WHO web site

ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES - *The Inter-American Convention On Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons*. The Americas has become the first region in the world to have an instrument for the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons. Read the full press release of 15 June and the link to the text of the Convention.

INTERNATIONAL LONGEVITY CENTRE BRAZIL – Active ageing : a policy framework in response to the longevity revolution - A new report with a broad scope and a focus on the determinants of active ageing : this report examines ageing in the context of major contemporary trends. It also revisits the Active Ageing framework within the context of the evolving international momentum toward recognition and reinforcement of the specific human rights of older persons. [Read more on the organization's web site]

ASIA-EUROPE MEETING (ASEM) - Conference on Global Ageing and Human Rights of Older Persons – Seoul, October 2015

With the approval of 10th ASEM Summit in 2014, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (NHRCK) is planning to hold the "2015 ASEM Conference on Global Ageing and Human Rights of Older Persons" in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The conference aims to share best practices of legislation and policy of nations and efforts of governments for promotion and protection of human rights of older persons, identify key elements of the legislation and policy to protect human rights of older persons, and consider measures for cooperation among

countries in Asia and Europe and international institutions for promotion of human rights of older persons. See the official website of the conference. [2015ASEMHR.KR]

■ **NEWS OF THE CHURCH**

The VIIIth World Meeting of Families will take place in Philadelphia from September 22nd to 27th, 2015. All information can be found on the internet site of the Diocese of Philadelphia: <http://archphila.org/>

Eleventh meeting of the Council of Cardinals - Vatican City, 16-09-2015

The director of the Holy See Press Office, Fr. Federico Lombardi, S.J., held a briefing this morning on the results of the eleventh meeting of the Council of Cardinals with the Holy Father. "The proposal for a new Congregation, provisionally entitled "*Laity, Family and Life*", was again taken into consideration", said Fr. Lombardi. "In this regard Cardinal Dionigi Tettamanzi, designated by the Holy Father in recent months to prepare a study on the feasibility of the project, was heard. At the end of their reflections the Council presented to the Pope a proposal orientated towards the implementation of the project.

Consideration of the proposal for a new Congregation dedicated to "*Charity, Justice and Peace*" was resumed and further reflections were made without yet reaching, however, a conclusive proposal by the Council. [VIS September 16 2015]

■ **NEWS OF MEMBERS**

AIC : From the 23rd to the 26th of March, 2015, 130 delegates from 25 different countries gathered in Ciudad Guatemala. During the meeting a new international president, Alicia Dunhe, a Mexican, was elected.

In the presence of Alicia Dunhe, Spain's AIC recently celebrated on June 1st the first centennial of its implantation in Spain. Lawrence de La Brosse visited AIC Egypt, a new group of very pleasant and committed professors, from a school of the Daughters of Charity; Christian life there is not easy.

CICIAMS: The congress to be held in Swaziland in June 2016 is in full preparation.

FIAMC: The most important continental meeting over the past year has undoubtedly been that of the FEAMC which reunited some 60 persons at Montmartre on the theme: "The end of life in Europe" in mid-April 2015. The next reunion of the Executive Committee of FIAMC was held in Rome August 31, 2015, in close proximity to the Vatican.

Little Sisters of the Poor: September 8, 2015: Today, the Little Sisters of the Poor elected Sr. Maria del Monte RUIZ GARCIA (Spain) their new superior general. She replaces Sr. Celine RABER (U.S.A.) who completed her 3rd mandate.

Following the election of six members of the General Council, representing different countries and their principal languages, the work of the General Chapter will continue through the beginning of October and will study different aspects of the life of a Little Sisters, in particular that of the apostolate: reception of the elderly poor and our desire to fulfill the wish of our Foundress, St. Jeanne Jugan, "Making the elderly happy is what counts." (St. Jeanne Jugan)

MIAMSI: The European Relay is organizing a colloquium from November 20th to the 22nd, 2015 in Pozzallo, Sicily, "Mediterranean: a Road in the Ocean", a migration of people, cultures and religions.

SIGNIS : The SIGNIS Board of Directors, meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in the last week of May, has decided to accept the invitation from the President of SIGNIS North America, Pierre Murray, to hold the next World Congress at Laval University in Québec City, Canada in June 2017. Planning for the Congress will begin shortly.

Members also reflected on how to link the SIGNIS theme, Promoting Stories of Hope, with concrete actions and identified priorities and key activities for the SIGNIS Desks over the next two years. The Board also took the significant decision to approve the proposal that the recently beatified Archbishop Romero be nominated as a co-patron of SIGNIS.

The President of SIGNIS, Gustavo Andújar explained that Archbishop Romero is an example to Christian communicators

for the ways in which he spoke out in defence of the poor and for justice and reconciliation.

■ AGENDA

14-09/2-10 2015 Human Rights Council (HRC) : 30th session

22-27 September 2015: Philadelphia:
8th World Meeting of the Families

1st October 2015 in Geneva - International Day of Older Persons.
Special event and exhibition organized by UNECE in cooperation with the NGO Committee on Ageing and other organizations.

4 – 25 October 2015 – XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family (2015): *The Vocation and Mission of the Family in the Church and Contemporary World*”.

3 –18 November 2015, Paris – UNESCO 38th session of the General Conference

19-20 November 2015, Geneva – UNECE Eighth Meeting of the Working Group on Ageing

CRESCENDO NETWORK WEBSITE

www.reseau-crescendo.org

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