

## EDITORIAL

### Rights and Value of Older Persons

For several years, the Human Rights Council has been working to promote the idea of a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. Even though more and more states are committing themselves, there is still a long way to go to achieve the creation of a legally binding international instrument. Beyond this regulatory aspect, we all have to work, wherever we are, for the rights of the elderly to be respected.

At the beginning of his catechesis (February/March 2022) on old age, the Pope said: "Old age is among the most urgent issues that the human family is called to face at this time. What is at stake is the recognition of the unity of the ages of life: that is, the real point of reference for the understanding and appreciation of human life in its entirety. We ask ourselves: is there friendship, is there covenant between the various ages of life, or do separation and rejection prevail?" (23 February).

It is in this sense that Pope Francis, in establishing the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly last year, was keen to emphasise the value and gift of grandparents and the elderly for both society and ecclesial communities.

The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life states that "the experience of life and faith of older people can help to build societies that are aware of their roots and capable of dreaming of a world of greater solidarity".

The Crescendo Global Network is 21 years old. A good age for a network. The Covid pandemic has, for the past two years, hampered its reflection and disrupted its actions. Next autumn should allow us to take stock and redefine the modalities of its reason for being attentive to the social link and its presence within the pastoral care of the elderly. The Little Sisters give us a beautiful example of pastoral care.

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## POST

### Rights of older persons: Substantive resolution adopted by UN Council (from AGE Platform)

The Human rights Council (HRC) of the United Nations adopted its first-ever substantive resolution last 7th October 2021 (A/HRC/RES/48/3). This adoption marks an important step forward in advancing older people's rights and the fight against ageism and age-based discrimination worldwide.

By [this resolution](#), the Human Rights Council requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on international legal standards and obligations in relation to the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons ahead of its forty-ninth session in March 2022.

The HRC resolution reaffirms the obligation of all States to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of older people. It also provides strong agreed language that governments and other stakeholders can refer to and draw upon when considering these issues in their future work on human rights.

This resolution was adopted by consensus and was co-sponsored by a large number of EU member states. Civil society organisations are encouraged to appeal to the commitment of governments and encourage them to act on the resolution.

AGE Platform welcome this resolution as it mentions for the first-time ageism and age discrimination as important human rights issues and calls for specific action by states to eliminate ageism in all its forms.

In addition, the resolution :

- calls upon all stakeholders, including States, the entities of the UN system, civil society, national human rights institutions, and the private sector to adopt a human-rights based approach in all programmes, campaigns and activities relating to ageing and older persons.
- asks the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to prepare a report on normative standards and obligations under international law in relation to the promotion and protection of the human rights of older persons, to be submitted to the HRC at its 49th session in March 2022, and to make the report available in the six UN official languages and accessible formats.
- asks the OHCHR to convene a multi-stakeholder meeting, including older persons, to discuss the report and present the conclusions of the meeting to the HRC 51st session in September 2022.

May 2022: Despite massive mobilisation from civil society for the 12th session of the United Nations Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, governments showed little commitment towards the creation of an international legally binding instrument. However, some advancements marked this year's edition: the stronger call by some EU member states in favour of a United Nations' Convention on older people's rights and Argentina's proposal of a cross-regional group to prepare the 13th session.

### ■ NEWS OF THE CHURCH

On Sunday 24 July 2022, the **11th World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly will** be celebrated throughout the universal Church. The theme chosen by the Holy Father for the occasion is "They still bear fruit in old age" (Ps 92:15) and is intended to underline how grandparents and the elderly are a value and a gift both for society and for ecclesial communities.

The Holy Father addresses those of his generation to remind them that older people have an important mission: to be "artisans of the revolution of tenderness" and "to free the world together from the shadow of loneliness and the demon of war".

The Pope also invites them to discover this period as "the gift of a long life".

Pope Francis does not hide the difficulties of old age, both in personal and social life. However, he invites the elderly to "continue to hope" and emphasises that a long life is a gift for the whole of society: "Blessed is the home that keeps an elderly person! Blessed be the family that honours its grandparents! The

Pope reminds us that the witness of the elderly is relevant and significant, and invites them to remain "masters of a peaceful way of life and attentive to the weakest. This mission begins in one's own family, but does not end there, and includes "those many frightened grandchildren whom we do not yet know and who, perhaps, are fleeing war or suffering because of it.

The Year of the Family will be concluded with the 10th World Meeting of Families, which is being held in Rome from 22 to 26 June 2022.

Crescendo has participated in every previous World Meeting of Families. This will not be the case this year...

### ■ NEWS OF MEMBER

**AIC : AIC responds to the Pope's call to prepare the 2023 synod:**

Many AIC associations responded to the questionnaire on the synod. They expressed their gratitude to the Pope for the opportunity to express their opinions and their feelings about the Church's position within their communities. Most felt, however, that lay people (and especially women) are not generally involved in decision-making in the Church.

Most, however, felt that in general, the laity (and in particular women) are not involved in decision-making in the Church. Their voice is not respected. Many indicated that in their parish, the pastor makes all decisions without the input or consideration of the laity. This is what one group proposed: *"Because the church is the whole people of God, authority and power reside in the community as a whole,*

*though exercised in various ways by various people for the good of the whole; authority and power are exercised and should be exercised in the manner of Jesus Christ who is among us and who always serves.*

Another reflection from the USA: *While many feel that in general the church is welcoming, they also feel that sometimes the focus is on one or two specific groups in the parish, i.e. school children and the elderly in the community, sometimes ignoring the needs of the marginalised and disenfranchised.*

Training in listening and discernment was suggested several times.

Even the most sceptical about the method expressed a certain expectation of good results, as they all considered that so many minds, so many ideas, so many hearts, if listened to, will probably lead to new and unprecedented paths, to a push of creativeness.

Several times the reference to the Holy Spirit was noted; *"to move towards a Church of people who 'walk together', let us have absolute confidence in the Power of the Holy Spirit, who will transform this earth and unite us in prayer"*.

In conclusion, three key words inspire us to act to achieve this "walking together": COMMUNION - PARTICIPATION - MISSION

**CICIAMS** : The CICIAMS World Congress will be held at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa, in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, USA. This will take place on August 2, 3, and 4 of this year.

**MIAMSI** : We had a very particular General Assembly in Rome, largely because of Covid, which meant that only one African and four Latin Americans were present.

For the first time, the Board did not include any French or Italian member and was chaired by a Beninese. It is a small board of 5 people: one for each of the 5 regions: a Beninese, a Brazilian, a Portuguese, a Mauritian and an Indian accompanied by a Uruguayan chaplain. The final message: How can we witness and commit ourselves in today's world for a more inclusive society?

**Little Sisters of the Poor**: In preparation for the General Chapter of the Congregation to be held next September, each community was invited to revisit our Rule of Life. Among other things, we have rekindled awareness that our "pastoral mission" must be one of our priorities. It is lived out in collaboration, of course, with

the chaplain - when there is one - but also with the residents, who are not only recipients of evangelisation, but also protagonists, as was emphasised at the Pastoral Care Congress of the P.A., in Rome in January 2019.

We wish to accompany each resident on his or her life journey, respecting who he or she is, his or her history, and his or her convictions. With residents of other religions, it is above all through the witness of charity and disinterested service that they can open up to the tenderness of the Creator, and sometimes discover Christ and his message of salvation.

In our countries of long-standing Christianity, we see a strong need for a "re-evangelisation": to help discover and taste the Word of God, to enlighten knowledge that has sometimes remained at the stage of childhood catechism, to rediscover a sacramental practice that had withered away in the course of life with all its difficulties...

Maybe by Gospel-sharing groups, use of online proposals such as the MOOCs of the Bernardins, and praying the rosary, which still plays an important role, often led by the elderly themselves. Various initiatives that promote "popular piety": for the Year dedicated to him, a statue of Saint Joseph "progressed" through all our houses in France and Belgium, giving rise everywhere to activities, times of personal or communal prayer, quizzes to learn more about this Saint and his place in the history of the Church and the Congregation. These were very powerful moments which aroused enthusiasm, inventiveness and joyful collaboration, and which left a deep impression on the residents and even

on the friends and employees. Paths of grace known only to God... We are convinced that "Pastoral Care" is first and foremost a matter of closeness and personal listening. It is often during an informal exchange, a word of faith in response to a reflection heard in passing, a visit to the room, that confidences and deep questions arise.

In a house in the USA, on Holy Thursday, after a sermon, as a Little Sister was taking an elderly person back to her room, the latter asked her to explain to her how to confess. This had not happened to her for so long! The Little Sister sat down in her room and simply explained the sacrament of reconciliation, adding that the Father could help her. *"Later that day, I passed this resident in the hallway, and she said, 'Oh, thank you, Sister, I feel so free!'"*

Protagonists, yes, many Elders challenge us with the fervour of their Faith, their apostolic sense. For example, a lady from Lisbon had to spend Christmas in hospital with a heart problem. In the middle of Christmas night, hearing the groans of her fellow patients, she could not contain herself and said out loud, *"My friends, I don't know if you are believers or not, but do you know what happened on that Christmas night? In Bethlehem was born my Saviour who is also yours. I believe. You must believe. Let us ask him to help us to overcome these difficult moments. Let us have faith and hope in Him. Soon we will get out of here, and much better!"* There was a great silence and the moaning fell silent...

Or this gentleman, aged 101, who had a great evangelising idea: *"As Lent approaches," he said, "I would like all the staff, the elderly and also the Little Sisters, to receive a Sunday leaflet, which my son will print, so that the Word can reach everyone in this house."* This was done, and he put up signs next to the pamphlets that said, *"We invite you to take one and read it. - "Take it home with you." - "It doesn't matter if you're not interested, just take it, read it and pass it on to someone else. It will be worth something!"* In the same house, another resident bought a one-litre bottle to have the water blessed. *"I pray every night for the children who are not baptised,"* he explained.

The Gospel lived-out is translated into charity: In Lima (Peru) a deaf and dumb resident has difficulty in making her wishes understood, which sometimes makes her aggressive. After speaking with a Little Sister, she went by herself to find the one she had offended and hugged her and with a gesture of her hands asked her forgiveness. This is only one example among many others, known or not...

We are also struck by the openness of mind and heart to world events of the residents, in all countries, whatever their religion.

In CHICAGO, for example, five elderly people from the Ukraine started a collection in the early days of the war, and the other residents were immediately very generous. In GALLUP, New Mexico, a lady offered, *"I don't have any money, but I have a patchwork bedspread I made for my grandson, if you want to raffle it off for Ukraine."* Boxes for offerings were placed in all the houses; residents, staff members, visitors, respond without hesitation to this call to share.

Material solidarity, but also spiritual solidarity. For example, a resident of MADRID was anxious to undergo chemotherapy and her first day of treatment was very difficult to bear. On the second day, when the war in Ukraine had just broken out, she said to the Little Sister who welcomed her back from the hospital: *"When I entered the ward, I could only think of one thing: 'Lord, for Ukraine, Lord, for Ukraine. I am much calmer. We are all in God's hands."*

Hosting refugees in a number of our homes has resulted in much kindness, sharing, smiles and hugs overcoming the language barrier.

Sri Lanka is currently experiencing severe shortages. In HONG KONG, not only did the residents promise to pray for Sri Lanka, but as the government had given each citizen HK\$10,000 because of Covid-19, some offered part of this money for that country. To the surprise of the Little Sisters, once the money was changed, the amount was about 6,690.00 US dollars.

So many beautiful things could be recounted. They tie in so well with the theme of the next World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, *"In old age they will bear fruit!"* (Ps 91)