

EDITORIAL

The rights of the elderly

The population of our planet is aging. In 2050, the number of elderly persons will reach almost 2 billion. This affects each and every continent. At the state level, it is necessary to take measures to establish policies that will allow persons who are aging to live as well as possible in the full respect of their rights, even if there is oftentimes a real discrepancy between principles that are accepted and reality.

In recent years, the emphasis was mainly put on the economic, social and medical aspects of the elderly. In her first report, the independent expert in charge of promoting the full exercise by the elderly of all human rights campaigned for the change of focus towards a new approach: one "based on the imperatives of human rights that consider elderly persons not only as simple beneficiaries but as persons by right, endowed with specific rights not only economic, social and cultural rights but also civil and political ones that must be guaranteed by the States."

Pope John Paul II said, in 2002: *"It certainly helps to solve the problems connected with ageing if older people are effectively made part of society, by providing space for their experience, knowledge and wisdom. The elderly should never be considered a burden on society, but a resource which can contribute to society's well-being. Not only do they show that there are aspects of life – human, cultural, moral and social values – which cannot be judged in terms of economic efficiency, but they can also make an effective contribution in the work-place and in leadership roles."*

The Worldwide Crescendo Network is and will remain vigilant in this domain.

Dominique Lemau de Talancé

1 : Report by the independent expert in charge of promoting the exercise by elderly persons of all human rights, UN 08/07/2016

2: Letter by John Paul II to the Second Assembly of the United Nations on Ageing (Madrid 8-12 April 2002)

POST

The IAC celebrates 400 years

In March 2017, the International Association of Charities will celebrate its 400th birthday. Its story begins on a Sunday in August 1617 in the little town of Chatillon in the east of France where St Vincent of Paul has just arrived. From the pulpit he appeals for help for a family in the parish who is in great need and the response to this request is overwhelming. The devotion of the parishioners but the total lack of organization gave St Vincent the idea to establish a Brotherhood of Charity. Meeting a few years later with Louise de Marillac will make them the promoters of an extraordinary culture of solidarity enlightened by the Gospel.

St Vincent is at the origin of an organized charity

Witnessing a situation of poverty, he takes the necessary measures to remedy to the situation. Facing the mobilization of volunteers, there was a lack of organization of the assistance provided. Establishing the brotherhoods, he sets forth a detailed set of rules, planned for a director, aided by two assistants, a treasurer, a regular time and way to visit the poor. This set of rules is still applied today.

He sets up a rich and efficient collaboration

These brotherhoods are a great innovation. St. Vincent bestows responsibility to lay women working in teams who receive a spiritual education to live their mission in solidarity within the light of the Gospel. Directing his attention towards the poorest, Vincent and Louise gave birth to modern social institutions. Feeling that it was necessary in this ministry to the

destitute to have persons who were dedicated to them by vocation, they found the Order of the Sister of Charity.



Internet

Internet

He develops a spirituality of the poor

St. Vincent said: “serving the poor, we serve Christ.” This is why he would insist particularly that humility, simplicity and charity become the pillars of the Daughters of Charity. We must take into account the profound aspirations of the person and assist the needy “materially and spiritually.”

And a broader pastoral vision

Impressed by the great response and the generosity of his parishioners, St. Vincent had the revelation of the important place of laymen in the Church. John Paul II, in addressing lay persons in Paris in May 1980, confirmed this: “The Church, and the Pope in her name, counts on your discipleship as lay persons.”

Today

Having become an international NGO, with over 150 000 volunteers in 53 countries around the World, the IAC focusses on the most destitute, especially women and their children, by actions adapted to each situation. The NGO will celebrate 400 years of service during its international assembly that will bring together 400 volunteers and will be held in Chatillon, where it all began....

Aliette de Maredsous
Vice-President AIC

NEWS OF THE CHURCH

During the mass celebrated in presence of those cardinals actually present in Rome on the morning of his 80th birthday, and after having shared his breakfast with some homeless persons, Pope Francis declared : “Old age is a word that seems not only ugly but frightens. However old age is thirst of wisdom.

Old age is quiet and religious, as well as fertile. Pray so that mines so be, quiet, religious, fertile as well as joyful.” (December 16, 2016)

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

7th UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing encourages more dialogue on content of new convention. New York, 12 – 15 December 2016 [AGE Platform, January 2017]

The UN OEWG held its 7th meeting at the UN headquarters in New York from 12 to 15 December 2016, in which governments as well as approximately 80 representatives of civil society took part.



AGE PLATFORM

Key outcomes :

1-Involvement of National Human Rights Institutions in the OEWG as from 2017 – It is a ground-breaking decision. NHRIs so far were not able to directly contribute to the debate, despite being some of the most competent and experienced human rights entities. It is also hoped that participation to human rights institutions will be extended to both the international and regional coordinating committees of NHRIs, such as the European Network (ENNHRI), with which AGE Platform closely collaborates on a number of occasions.

2-Move towards discussing key elements of a new instrument –

During its next session (July 2017) the Working Group agreed on gearing towards a more substantive focus on the particular issues faced by older people in order to make an informed decision about the elaboration of further human rights instruments. This political shift is in line with a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2012 and will allow the OEWG to fulfil its mandate.

Support for a convention by UN human rights experts – The comprehensible report of the UN Independent Expert, Ms. Kornfeld-Matte presented was probably one of the most influential in terms of moving forward. The IE noted with concern existing gaps in addressing the particular challenges faced by older people and called on the UN Member States to consider the elaboration of a new UN instrument.

She declared that due to the lack of binding effect and dedicated implementation and monitoring mechanisms, MIPAA failed to trigger sufficient policy change. These conclusions were in line with those of AGE Platform.

The Chair of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) clarified that if there was a convention on older persons, it could strengthen and improve the implementation of the CRPD with regard to older people with Disabilities.

These statements illustrate an increasing understanding within the UN human rights system of the failure of existing mechanisms to adequately address the concerns of older people. They also converge with the views of civil society and an increasing number of Member States about the need for a new UN convention.

What is the way forward?

Key human rights challenges were proposed by the Chair of the Working Group for the group to continue discussion in 2017: equality and non-discrimination; autonomy and independence; neglect, violence and abuse. Among these areas, two will be the focus of the 8th OEWG session in July 2017

This is a good moment to take stock of the good practices and protection gaps identified so far by the OEWG and the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and the start of a reflection on how these points could be included in a new international instrument, such as a convention.

FromAge Platform Europe- 16 January 2017

NEWS OF MEMBERS

AIC: On December 8, 2016 was opened our Jubilee Year during which shall be celebrated the 400th anniversary of the foundation of our association and the birth of the Vincentian charisma.

CICIAMS: The new Bureau has been settled on December 6th, 2016. There will be no meetings in 2017 due to a lack of finance. All correspondence is now being conducted by e-mail only. For the moment it works perfectly as all Bureau members express their opinions and react very well.

Our President has been invited by the Pontifical Council for Health Care to participate in the celebration of the 25th World Day of the Sick in Lourdes from the 10th to the 13th February 2017.

FIAMC: The 13th Congress of the European Federation of Catholic Medical Associations took place in Porto (Portugal) from 29th September to 2nd October 2016 on the theme : “Doctors, the Church and Europe to-day”. The Congress brought together about 250 doctors from some twenty countries in a very cheerful atmosphere.

The 16th Congress of the Asian Federation of Catholic Medical Associations took place in Kyoto (Japan) from 10 to 13 November 2016 on the theme : “What should we do for the least among us”(Mat.25, 40). Somme 300 doctors from about 15 countries attended the meeting in a colourful atmosphere.

The FIAMC Bureau met in Kyoto on November 11, 2016. 15 participants took part in that meeting during which has been celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the World Federation of the Catholic Medical Associations.

From 10th to 13 February 2017 will be celebrated in Lourdes the 25th Anniversary of World Day of the Sick in the theme: "The Magnificat, canticle of Hope". The following persons will attend that meeting: Card. Parolin, Card. Tuckson, Mgrd'Ornelas, Mgr Forte including the FIAMC President so as a certain number of representatives of Catholic doctors from Europe and France.

Little Sisters of the Poor: An original artistic and spiritual event was born out of the Holy Year of Mercy. This beautiful plastic art exhibition on the theme of Mercy has been presented in "Ma Maison" in Agen from 23rd to 30th October 2016. It showed a selection of works by professionals and non-professionals artists among whom strongly concerned older persons living in houses of the LSP in Lyon, Montpellier, Toulon, Toulouse; each artist presented its work: oil painting, mosaic, photography. The months of preparation have been the occasion of rich exchanges between the residents on what Mercy means for them. Here are some examples

Mercy is a link from heart to heart between persons
Mercy means leaving the "door open" allowing coming in and out

Mercy means greeting without judging

Reflections in line with pope Francis's words: "*In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action*".

(Misericordiae Vultus 12)

SIGNIS :50th World Communication Day: « Communication and Mercy : A Fruitful Encounter ».

« *How beautiful it is when people select their words and actions with care, in the effort to avoid misunderstandings, to heal wounded memories and to build peace and harmony* » Pope Francis

The Pope has invited us to reflect on the many ways in which communication can contribute to reconciliation, compassion, and the healing of wounds between individuals, social groups and peoples. His message has a particular resonance today when we see how communication is so often misused to foster hatred, intolerance and division. Gustavo Andújar, President of SIGNIS.

VMI : During its meeting on 11 and 12 January 2017, the Executive Council worked at the preparation of the next Board Meeting to take place from 4 to 8 September 2017 in KATOWICE in Poland (nearby Krakow).

The Council also fixed the place and the theme of the next international meeting to take place in Santo Domingo

(Dominican Republic) on the following theme: "*The elderly actors of evangelisation in a multigenerational and multicultural society*"

■ AGENDA

27/2 to 24/3 2017 in Geneva - 34th ordinary session of the Human Rights Council

27 to 29 April 2017 in Rome - Congress of the International Forum of Catholic Action

22 to 31 May 2017 in Geneva - 70th World Health Assembly

5 to 16 June 2017 in Geneva - 106th International Labour Conference

21 to 22 September 2017 in Lisbon - 4th UN/ECE Ministerial Conference on Ageing - "A sustainable society for All Age: Realizing the potential of living longer"

October 2018 in Rome - XVth General Assembly of the Ordinary Synod of Bishops will take place on the theme: "Young people, Faith and vocational Discernment"

Early 2019 - 34th World Youth Days will take place in Panama

■ CRESCENDO : WEBSITE

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