

EDITORIAL

Discernment in the exhortation Amoris laetitia

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This text of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation on love in the family reveals, first and foremost, a change in the tone and the paradigm in the Church. Rather than keeping to the traditional teachings on the family, Pope Francis wants to avoid casting judgments or setting dogmatic positions that would be immutable. (<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/fr.html>) It is based on the realities that families live. His long term experience in the field allows for this positive and constructive pastoral engagement. All that is good must be encouraged, without any exclusion. Whatever the position of a person, that person must be able to be included as a full member of the community.

Attentive to unity within the Church and to the continuity of the teachings of his predecessors, the Pope affirms a deliberate will towards an opening to decentralization, so as to better take into consideration different cultural realities. Open up and make sure that everyone can find a place. Such is the middle way that has been chosen and put forward. Paying closer attention to the complexity of the diverse situations, it appears that doctrinal debates, be they moral or pastoral, should not all be decided based on interventions of the magisterium.

Changes within the Church are done while respecting that which already exists (here in "Familiaris consortio") Thus it is of those who were divorced and remarried who are called to a wider integration in the ecclesial community, without mentioning or excluding their admission to the sacraments. And while reaffirming the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage, he believes that the application of norms can vary depending on circumstances. He leaves the door open to the discernment of bishops, a discernment that invites forming consciences. On the question of the place of same sex couples in the Church, this exhortation cannot accept the concept of marriage. It does not express a moral judgment, but the respect of these persons to perceive the will of God in their lives and to accomplish it.

The Pope lavishes advice on the preparation to marriage in order to strengthen it. He asks for a more attentive postnuptial accompaniment and follow-up of all the difficulties encountered within a family. Pope Francis invites to rediscover the family work to build and perfect, in the light of God's word. He encourages training consciences without substituting to them and watches over the education of children, encouraging sexual education.

POST

A new age of life

The longevity of populations today is affecting every country and every region of the world; and this longevity becomes more noticeable in southern countries than in northern ones.

The number of people aged 65 and over will soon outnumber that of the children of less than five years for the first time in human history. We hear more and more about the influence that the elderly have on voting figures, on public spending (the cost of pensions and health care....) on the generation still at work.

Giving a direction to this new stage

This new stage certainly brings about changes in one's life. Stopping professional activities involve profound changes in the roles we play in family and social situations. The years of our retirement have become a long interval during which we can build and to which we need to give a meaning.

For some of us retirement is the start of a new life which will allow us to accomplish a dream, to do things they have never been able to do: travel, painting, music ... Some people use their remaining health doing useful voluntary work within their family or helping their community. For others on the other hand it can become a time for solitude, abandonment, boredom, dissatisfaction tied to lack of money, to poor health, to loneliness Between these two extremes we can find wide variations depending on one's sex, one's education and one's finances.

But to-day it is no longer just a time for rest and leisure. The invention of

the title “retired person” brought about the creation of a new social class. Alongside youth, the time for learning and training, alongside one’s working life in Farming, Industry or the Services – and before reaching old age, when strength and energy decline – we now have a period of life which can be full of various unpaid activities which are nonetheless useful within society. Imagine for a moment what would happen if retired people no longer took part in the various social, political, economic, cultural and ecclesiastical activities of the Church.

At the same time we mustn’t lose sight of that span of years we usually define as “old age”, accompanied by what Father Teilhard de Chardin calls our “diminishings”. Among life’s stages, this one of old age is a particularly important one for mankind. It is the time when one’s value is no longer estimated according to one’s capacity to produce. Unfortunately, elderly people are at risk of being ignored or marginalized, reduced to the statistic of how much they cost or, worse still, to the amount of money they might be worth as consumers.

This is why it’s important to recognise the true value of this quiet stage of our life, in a society becoming more and more intergenerational. In a world where money threatens to submerge all other human values, to dominate all the other ages and stages of life, isn’t protecting the elderly, like protecting children, fundamental to protecting the real value of all human life, the dignity of the individual created in the image of God, and called upon to share in His life.

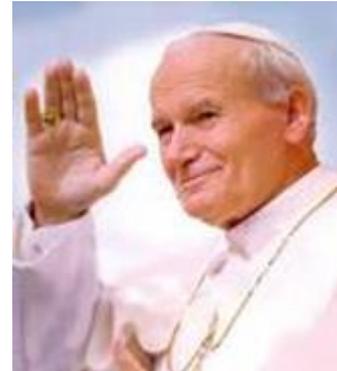
Charisms for a new stage of life **Experience of life**

John Paul II speaking about older people said that they have “*a view full of wisdom about matters and situations in the world, a clearer Vision of the requirements of love between men and the faithfulness of the divine love which guides each human existence and the history of the world.*”

We are reaching the age that could be called “the stage of transition». In order to get through it we can call on all we have learnt during these long years, which have brought us resources and talents. Each in his own way, in the light of his own experiences is the possessor of an important ‘science of life’. The joys and sufferings we have met, the successes and failures, the struggles between Yes or No, which are the very essence of the human condition, have allowed us to build up our own view of the criteria and value by which we judge ourselves and others.

A wisdom

In that way we are granted a wisdom which helps us to grasp the essential, and to let go of many bits and pieces which have imprisoned us. Age leads us to detachment, and through that to



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a gentler attitude towards ourselves and others, without distress or regrets. At peace with ourselves, we can try to be messengers of peace to our relationships with others. The availability that we enjoy allows us the time to meet others freely. We can pass on freely the love that we receive from God. Serenity springs from the certainty that the Lord is with us.

The Spirit who ‘*blows where he wishes*’ transforms our talents into charisms, ‘free gifts for the service of others’. It is through that we find the meaning of this stage of old age. We still have a part to play, and nobody can take our place.

John-Paul II was urging us on when he said: ‘*The world needs you*’. In truth the world does need witnesses, witnesses who are not afraid to share their training and to receive the messages of other generations. With our condition and circumstances we shall be transmitters of the true values, and participants in the family and the social circle. Together, especially with the young people, we want to work to build up a civilisation of love which will change this individualistic society into a society of solidarity.

(excerpt of the booklet of presentation of Life Ascending International)

■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

WHO

Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly closes – 28 May 2016

Towards a world in which everyone can live a long and healthy life : Delegates approved a resolution on the global strategy and action plan on ageing and health 2016-2020 following the request made in May 2014 by the World Health Assembly asking the Director-General to develop a comprehensive global strategy and plan of action, to address the world's rapidly ageing populations. [A/69/17, A69/A/Conf./8 24th May 2016]

The proportion of the world's population aged 60 years or over is predicted to double between 2000 and 2050, rising to 22%. A WHO report released on 1st October 2015 revealed little evidence that older people today are experiencing better health than their parents did at the same age. Moreover, good health in older age is unequally distributed, both within and between countries. Most health problems are linked to chronic conditions, particularly non-communicable diseases that can be prevented or delayed by healthy behaviours across the life-course.

The aim of the strategy is for every country to commit to action on healthy ageing. It calls for the development of age-friendly environments and the alignment of health systems to the needs of older populations. It envisages the development of sustainable and equitable systems of long-term care, and improved measurement, monitoring and research. It emphasizes equity and human rights, including the important role of involving older adults in all decisions that concern them.

[\[WHO - World Report on Ageing and Health\]](#)

Council of Europe

– **Conference of INGOs** – Committee democracy, social cohesion and global challenges - Summer session 21-24 June 2016.

23 June: Ageing and Health : a challenge to public health and social cohesion. A strong need for common action.

“The Committee will report on health care and medico-social care for the elderly in Europe. The situation is worrying. Although significant efforts have been made during the past few years, respect for human dignity, ethics and human rights are still largely ignored. The cohorts of baby boomers seem as affected as the over eighties.

How to prevent the elderly from becoming either a mere economic market or a healthcare budgetary adjustment variable? What projections can be made for the coming decades and what actors taken to promote ageing well in Europe? How to avoid common mistakes in eldercare? What preventive measures can be taken to preserve the most vulnerable ones' autonomy? How can we bring together all the relevant actors?

These are the questions to be addressed and on which we shall work with the help of high representatives of the Council of Europe, the European Union and the Commission, the WHO and the OECD, highly experienced geriatricians, sociologists and EHPAD (residential establishments for dependent elderly people in France) director engaged in pilot projects with local authorities. We will also hear journalists who have produced reference books and television reports. NGOs will be very present through many of these stakeholders”.

■ NEWS OF THE CHURCH

The new Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life (01 September 2016)

Pope invites Laity Council to look forward with hope as it's merged into new Dicastery
“Much remains to be done, broadening horizons and accepting the new challenges that reality presents to us”

“An outboard Church, an outbound laity,” was Pope Francis' proposal to the participants in the assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. He urged those present to raise their eyes and look outwards to the most distant reaches of our world, to the many families in difficulty and in need of mercy, to the many fields of the apostolate that have not yet been explored, to the many lay people with a good and generous heart who would willingly place their energies, time and abilities at the service of the Gospel if they were involved, valued and accompanied with affection and dedication by pastors and ecclesial institutions.

“We need well-formed lay people, inspired by a sincere and clear faith, whose life has been touched by the personal and merciful encounter with the love of Jesus Christ,” he said.

■ NEWS OF MEMBER

AIC : Meeting of the Executive Board in Chatillon sur Chalaronne (cradle of the Charities) from January 18 to 20. **The Celebration of our 400th Anniversary and the International Assembly that will take place in Chatillon from 12 to 15 March 2017**, have been the main themes of the meeting.

During their audience with Pope Francis, Alicia and Laurence, President and past President of AIC gave him an invitation to our International Assembly in 2017

Our Jubilee Year beginning on December 8, 2016 (anniversary date of the foundation of the first Charity) shall end on December 10, 2017.

CICIAMS : The program of CICIAMS's African Regional Congress to take place in Manzini, Swaziland, has been finalized. On August 22 : Executive Board meeting, and on August 23, General Council meeting. **"Scaling up Africa Health Services, through Nurses, the Merciful Carers of Humanity"** is the title of the Congress taking place from August 24 to 26. On the last day, participants will have an opportunity to choose among different excursions.

6th Edition of the Intensive Course on Foundational Approaches, Contemporary and Educational Issues in Nursing Ethics (Leuven, Belgium, 6-9 December 2016)

The Centre for Biomedical Ethics and Law of the KU Leuven is organizing the 6th edition of the *Intensive Course on Nursing Ethics*. The objective of the course is to foster exchanges on foundational and methodological approaches as well as on contemporary and educational issues in nursing ethics. This course works from an interdisciplinary – philosophical, theological, nursing, clinical-ethical – perspective.

Little Sisters of the Poor: While the Congregation celebrated the anniversary of its ten years of presence in TACNA (Peru) on April 19th, the second foundation in that country has just been set up. On May 9th, the founding Little Sisters moved into a house where they are going to live while waiting for the construction of a new building in CALLAO, town close to LIMA. Their wish is that it becomes, according to Pope Francis desire, *"an oasis of mercy"*, in the midst of the great misery of many older persons. During the Tenth Anniversary Feast in TACNA, a resident raised enthusiasm, as she danced the *"huayo"* with her son : it should be noted that this lady is 103 years old and her son 85; she was the one who corrected him when he did not follow the rhythm.

MIAMSI : The leaders of the Specialized Catholic Action Movements (among them VMI and MIAMSI) who met during 2 days at the end of April near Rome, shared on their ways to

evangelize, in particular looking at the link between testimony of life and the announcement of the Good News

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 heat wounded memories and to build peace and harmony » said 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 people. 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.

■ AGENDA

UN Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva)

-Ministerial Conference on Ageing (most probably in Geneva) end September-beg. October 2016
- 9th session of the WG on ageing 21-22 November 2016

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

16th Session : 15 August – 2 September 2016

The NGO Committee on Ageing has been asked by the UK mission to organise a side event during the September session of the HRC on Disabilities and Older Persons.

Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (New York)

7th session : 12-15 December 2016

NGO Working Group on Ageing

Next meetings : 8th June 2016, 7th July 2016, 9th November 2016

15th June – World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

1st October – International Day of Older Persons (IDOP)

The theme for the 2016 International Day of Older Persons would be **“Take a Stand Against Ageism”**. This theme was adopted after a wide consultation that included the NGO Committees in New York, Geneva and Vienna

IX World Meeting of Families

Dublin, 22-26 August 2018

“The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World.”

■ CRESCENDO : WEBSITE

www.reseau-crescendo.org

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