

EDITORIAL

**Church, family and the elderly**

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Interventions by the Holy See on behalf of families and the elderly have become so frequent that some see in them something of a chorus. For them, Christians would keep singing it without realizing that they are prisoners of *a priori* that render them incapable of adapting to the present; they see themselves being reproached, among other things, of defending a single model for a family, stable and homogenous whereas the civilization of liberty in which we have entered allows each and every one the right to invent the model for a family that they feel is best for them; the infinite possibilities that medicine [entrevoir] illness and death are then presented as a “confirmatur” of this view point. This mind frame is so wide spread today in Western countries that the most conservative societies can be seen opening up to new ideas without even noticing the threat that they present for the survival of the values to which they are the most attached. There is here a conflict that will surely affect all civilizations; each and every group of people will see themselves confronted to the changes that the West is experiencing and will have to respond to the question: what represents a family?

For the Church, the family system such as it has developed in the West is the best one adapted to help men and women to « build the peace » toward which they strive; indeed, it calls for mutual love and love in the service of all men. Aware that the doctrines and practices today go against this model, Father Lebreton asked himself back in 1958 in a book that bore the title: “suicide or survival of the West?”; ten years later, Don Helder Camara echoed his thoughts by opposing the love that God requires us to show others to “the danger that humanity faces of running towards suicide” due to its selfishness.

The institution of the family is, for the Church, the place of daily encounters where each person, overcoming impulsions, leans to live with others; its doctrine then comes to offer a rational explication of the selfless devotion that are exemplified by the Christian communities that are devoted to the practice of mercy; for them, this is essential to build peace and happy societies.

POST

**A major thrust forward for the rights of older persons.  
Report of the Independent Expert.**

In her report presented to the Human Rights Council on July 8, 2016, the Independent Expert in charge of promoting the full exercise of human rights for older persons, Mrs. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte wrote:

“Older persons represent a large, and the fastest growing, segment of the global population. By 2050, for the first time, there will be more older persons than children under the age of 15 worldwide, and it is projected that the number of older persons will more than double from 900 million currently to nearly 2 billion. A demographic transformation of such magnitude has far-reaching implications for society at all levels.”

“The population is ageing in all regions of the world. While Western Europe continues to have the oldest population, 67 per cent of older persons currently live in developing countries. In the years to come, most of the projected growth will take place in the global South, as some countries and regions entered the demographic transition only recently.”



The older population itself is also ageing. The group of persons aged 80 or over, which currently accounts for 14 per cent of older persons, will grow to 21 per cent in 2050.

In her report, she gave her assessment not only on good practices that have been put into place in some countries, legislatives or organizational advances but also on the shortcomings, shortcomings that weigh on the older persons in essential areas.

The Holy See, through the voice of Mgr. Jurkovic, permanent Observer of the Holy See in Geneva, highlights the work undertaken by the Independent Expert et supports her action:

“In a world that is living a critical demographic transformation the elderly face a number of particular challenges in the enjoyment of their human rights that need to be addressed urgently.”

He also adds:

“Older persons enrich society and their positive and constructive presence in society is valued. The elderly are a source of wisdom and a great resource. The quality of a society, of a civilization, may also be judged by how it treats its elderly and by the place reserved for them in communal life.”

Mrs. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, in the conclusion of her report, hails the efforts that have been accomplished and the shortcomings that have been highlighted:

Older persons face a number of particular challenges in the enjoyment of their human rights that need to be addressed urgently. Several good or promising practices in the implementation of existing laws have been reported on issues such as the development of national strategies or action plans on ageing, and in the area of care, the right to work, social protection, equality and non-discrimination, access to justice, violence and abuse, education, training and lifelong learning, the participation of older persons, accessibility and awareness-raising.”

None of those areas has however been covered extensively and little or no information has been received on some crucial issues such as legal capacity, quality of care, long-term care, palliative care, assistance to victims of violence and abuse, available remedies, independence and autonomy, or the right to an adequate standard of living, particularly housing. Each of the aforementioned areas raises a set of issues and protection concerns that deserve in-depth analysis. The information provided also demonstrates the need for South- South cooperation and the sharing of good practices at the regional level to guide national-level implementation taking into account regional specificities.



Mgr. Jurkovic (internet)

The Human Rights Council has just decided to renew for a period of three years the mandate of the Independent Expert and to extend it to the full enjoyment by older persons of all their human rights until the eventual drafting of a multilateral legal instrument. This would constitute a major legal thrust forward towards the affirmation of the human rights of older persons.

Dominique Lemau de Talancé

## ■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

### **Human Rights Council – 33rd Session – 13 to 30 September 2016 - Human Rights of Older Persons**

On 15 September 2016, the Human Rights Council had before it the thematic Report of **Rosa Kornfeld Matte**, the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons ([A/HRC/33/44](#) et Add.1).

The independent expert began by pointing out that considering her mandate is a global one, her report deals with several aspects of the rights of the older persons: the report highlights on the one hand the deficiencies in putting into practice existing laws, presents the situation of older persons while at the same time it does not purport to be exhaustive and finally also lists the

“good practices” or the “practices that hold promises” that are described in the responses to the questionnaire that she received from the States.

She underlined the exponential growth of the number of older persons in all countries and continents, the majority of them living in developing countries, indicating that such a dramatic demographic change shall have profound effects on societies, including in a human rights perspective. By 2050, there would be two billion older persons, up from the current 900 million.

The report offered a general view of the situation of older persons and the assessment of the level of enjoyment of their human rights, in accordance with the 2002 Madrid International Action Plan on Ageing. It was clear that further measures were necessary to protect the rights of the elderly who encountered a certain number of specific difficulties which needed to be urgently addressed. The report also cited some promising practices in this regard, such as the adoption of national policies and strategies on ageing, which addressed the right to work, social protection, equality and non-discrimination, access to justice, and protection from violence and harassment, among others.

The Independent Expert stressed that, although the 2002 Madrid International Action Plan on Ageing made references to human rights, it was not as such a human rights instrument as it only addressed issues of ageing under the angle of development. In this respect, the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, established by the General Assembly in 2010, was working on developing new instruments and measures such as either a new Convention addressing specifically these objectives or an Optional Protocol to an existing Convention. The necessity of reinforcing the protection of older persons' fundamental rights being unanimously recognised, the existing [discrepancies](#) must be overcome without delay so as to respond to the expectations of millions of older persons, did she add.

She urged States to double their efforts in ensuring the enjoyment of human rights by older persons. The creation of this mandate by the Human Rights Council in 2013 represented a conceptual shift in the approach to ageing from the one centred mainly on economy and development to an approach focused on the imperative of human rights which saw the elderly as rights holders and not just beneficiaries .

In her view, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing though not strictly speaking a human rights instrument, may have positive incidences on the exercise of certain fundamental rights of older persons. However, taking into account the unequal implementation of this Plan, and because of the gaps between the political will and the concrete practices, an

international legally binding instrument should be considered, did she felt, adding that the existing divergences on this topic should be overcome without delay.

#### **Interactive dialogue**

The debate that followed this presentation highlighted the will of all the delegations who expressed themselves (55 states among which the Holy See, 14 organizations representing civil society, 6 spokespersons for geographical groups) to promote and defend the rights of the older persons. Whereas many delegation were content to present the measures taken by their respective governments to this end, others declared that this was the opportunity, according to them, to put forward or not a new international instrument that would be legally binding as the independent expert has advocated.

#### **RESOLUTION (A/HRC/RES/33/5) 29** **September 2016**

In a resolution on the **human rights of older persons**, adopted without a vote, the Council decides to extend the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons for a period of three years, to continue to assess the implementation of national, regional and international standards relevant to the rights of older persons and to identify, exchange and promote best practices relating to the promotion and protection of these rights. The Human Rights Council also requests the Independent Expert to integrate a gender and disability perspective throughout the work of the mandate, and to address multiple, intersecting and aggravated forms of discrimination faced by older persons.

Introducing the project of Resolution L.9 on the human rights of the older persons, Brazil thanked the co-authors and explained that after two rounds of informal negotiations and several bilateral consultations, the co-authors drafted a text that will receive the approval of the Council. In 2050, for the first time in the world there will be more older persons than children under the age of 15. A demographic transformation of this magnitude will have a significant impact at all levels of society. Considering this visible aging of the world population, the aspect of the human rights is a task that must be tackled at the international level, stated Brazil.

Argentina, co-author of the draft Resolution L.9, indicated that in 2013 along with Brazil it had spearheaded the mandate on the rights of the older persons and that the two countries wished that the independent expert focus on the challenges and on the evaluation of setting up national, regional and international norms on the rights of the older persons. The draft resolution is based on the best manner to protect the rights of these people, including through the elaboration of an international instrument.

## ■ NEWS OF THE CHURCH

In an apostolic letter dated 15 August 2016, Pope Francis established a new dicastery for laity, family and life. The competencies of the pontifical councils for laity and the family were transferred to this new dicastery on September 1, 2016. The Pope named bishop Kevin Farrell who was bishop in Dallas as prefect of this Dicastery

The statutes of the new Dicastery: "The dicastery is presided by the prefect who is assisted by a secretary who may be laity and by three under-secretaries also from laity... The dicastery is divided in three sections: one for faithful lay persons, one for family and one for life, each one presided by an under-secretary."

This demonstrated the will of Pope Francis to give to lay persons their full place in matters which concern them.

## ■ NEWS OF MEMBERS

### **AIC : An example of the valuation of the elderly : Sow life**

In Columbia, at Ibagué, since the 1980s, a group of AIC volunteers work in home for older persons called the "Association Garden of the Elderly". They take care of about one hundred residents most of whom are of peasant origin, without resources, poorly educated, often abandoned by their families and many of whom suffer from depression.

In 2013, volunteers began work on the first part of the project: the construction of a greenhouse for organic products where residents are encouraged to work in order to give them a feeling of being useful again.

In 2015 volunteers undertook the second part of the project: the restructuring the gardens at the home as well as the creation of an ecologic path lined with flowers. This path has a triple objective:

-To allow the elderly to walk in pleasant environment and thus recover the joy of going out and getting some exercise;

-To grow flowers that can be sold to visitors, and, just as for the vegetables, generate a small source of income.

-After having followed a training as a guide, the older persons will be able to show the path in order to raise awareness among the population of Ibagué of organic agriculture and also on the problems of ageing. Indeed, in 2020, a quarter of the population of the city will be older than 60.



Bishop Kevin J. Farrell (internet)

**CICIAMS** : During the CICIAMS Congress in Swaziland, the General Council elected Miss Geraldine Mc Sweeney as new CICIAMS International President

For many years Geraldine has been active within CICIAMS. In Ireland she was President of the Irish Catholic

Nurses Guild, Secretary-General, Treasurer,... Within the International Bureau, she has been the President a.i. of the Technical Committee, Secretary General, President of the Committee on Statutes, etc...

The Congress in Swaziland as well as its organisation have been very successful. Some 300 participants attended the Congress. The content of the presentations were profound, diverse and professional.

The next World congress will take place in Malaysia from 4 to 8 September 2018.

**FIAMC : World Federation of Catholic Medical Associations and its continental divisions' next meetings :**

15-18 September in Sarajevo (Bosnia-Herzegovina) : Meeting with the CCEE (*Consilium Conferentiarum Episcoporum Europae*), a European meeting on "the Works of Mercy". A summary of our activities show the relation between the Works of Mercy and Evangelization, and that the care of patients should always be understood as paying attention to the whole person (body and spirit)

28th September – 2<sup>nd</sup> October in Porto (Portugal) : Congress of the European Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (FEAMC : [www.feamc.eu](http://www.feamc.eu)-[www.feamc.pt](http://www.feamc.pt)) on : "**Doctors, the Church, and Europe today**" will provide an assessment on the recent transformations in the Church and in Europe and of the medical aspects

8-17 November in Kyoto (Japan) : Congress of the Asian Federation of Catholic Medical Associations (AFCMA : [www.afcma2016.org](http://www.afcma2016.org)) on the theme "What Should We Do for the Least of Our Brethren?"

21-23 November , Rome Pontifical Academy of Sciences : Workshop on Narcotics: Problems and Solutions of Cannabis addiction

**Little Sisters of the Poor:** The very day 86 year old Father Jacques Hamel was murdered in St Etienne du Rouvray as he was celebrating Eucharist, a Muslim lady presented herself at the reception of the House of the Little Sisters of the Poores in SAINT DENIS, a difficult suburb of Paris. She came from far away, but, as she had lived in Saint Denis, she knew that there were Sisters there. Very moved, she embraced the Little Sisters. She held a rose in her hand that she wanted to deposit in our "place

of prayer". A short message was attached to the rose . "My most sincere condolences. We have been hurt by the barbaric act. Our hearts are with you. » After a few minutes of silent prayer, together in the chapel, the lady went away, leaving the Little Sisters moved by such a sincere gesture

**MIAMSI :** MIAMSI will hold its general assembly in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) from October 28 through November 1, 2016. The theme of the study session is: "Dialogue, peace and reconciliation: families, religions, citizenship, culture and peoples in dialogue."

**VMI :** The managing committee of VMI met in Lisieux, city of Saint Theresa of the Christ Child (?) from May 22 to 28, 2016.

Attending this meeting where the members of the executive committee and representatives of the continents. Bernadette Cantenot, former VMI president, had been invited and participated in the first days of the meeting.

The work began with an in-depth analysis of the encyclical "Laudato Si" and the apostolic exhortation "The joy of love." This reflection showed us how these documents are relevant to the elderly and the bearing on our movement.

This was followed by an exchange on the mission of the Movement and on the particular role of the coordinators and spiritual counselors in each continent.

Continental coordinators presented the report of their activities since the international meeting held in Namur in October 2014 and shared their ideas for (future? on-going?) projects.

We also began to think about the place and them of the international meeting that is to be held in 2018.

On the occasion of the managing committee meeting, placed under the auspices of Saint Theresa, the Rector of the Basilica gave a talk on the spirituality of the Saint with great clarity of thought and enthusiasm.

■ **CRESCENDO : WEBSITE**

[www.reseau-crescendo.org](http://www.reseau-crescendo.org)

Visit it regularly!

■ **AGENDA**

**October**

**3-5 - Social Forum** : Through its [resolution 29/19](#) the Human Rights Council decided that the 2016 Meeting of the Social Forum “should focus on the **promotion and full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities** in the context of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD.)”

**4 October** : Side event : Improving Access to Palliative care for Persons with Disabilities, including children and older persons : a human rights perspective. Palliative care can help countries to protect, respect, and fulfill health and social rights stipulated in the CRPD. The absence of integrated palliative care services often results in routine hospital practices creating and aggravating existing disability, contravening Article 25(b) of the Convention, which explicitly requests parties “*to provide those health services needed by persons with disabilities [...] and services designed to minimise and prevent further disabilities, including among children and older persons.*”

**5 October** : World Mental Health Day. International campaign : breaking the chains of stigma in mental health; restoring human DIGNITY FOR PERONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS – FRACARITA INTERNATIONAL, WHO, WCC, Fondation d’Harcourt, Royaume de Belgique

**November**

**21-22** - 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting UNECE WG on Ageing

**2017 - UNECE** - Ministerial Conference on Ageing. Portugal will host the Conference

**December**

**12-15 : United Nation/New York** – 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons