

EDITORIAL

Pope Francis' catecheses on old age -Suite_

We continue to explore Pope Francis' catecheses on old age, as the Human Rights Council in Geneva has just commissioned a report on "violence, abuse and neglect of older persons", for its 54th session. The Church and civil society agree on the need to pay special attention to the elderly.

A few days ago, I had the opportunity to visit 2 unusual institutions near Dax: the Maison Saint Jean - a shared intergenerational home - and the Alzheimer Village. Each responds to a different problem:

La maison Saint Jean, a house for living and sharing, with 18 apartments, brings together families, elderly people living alone or as a couple, young professionals, students, people of all ages who find themselves alone owing to the vagaries of life; all eager to live together, inspired by Christian values and Vincentian spirituality.

The Village Landais Alzheimer welcomes 120 residents in small houses built in a green setting; the Village develops a person-centered support and non-medicinal approaches, supported by an attitude and therapeutic activities to best preserve the cognitive and practical abilities of residents. All staff must have a mindset and a culture of support, in particular by paying attention to the extent to which the ill person is still able to cope, so as not to set him or her up for failure.

These humane achievements are proof that solutions do exist: we can only dream of seeing them multiply.

Laurence de la Brosse (AIC)

POST

THE FAMILY

His Holiness Pope Francis, in his catecheses on old age, speaks many times about the elderly person's entourage, in particular the family.

"Honour thy father and thy mother": love for life lived (Catechesis 6)

In some parts of the world, the response to the fragility of old age is to give children the opportunity to take power. This domination is not done in broad daylight, but is covered up by so-called filial love, which saves the children's reputation.

Curative treatments are prevented. "Operate, take vitamins, physiotherapy, oh Mother, what a fuss!" And we sign a declaration requesting palliative care and no resuscitation in spite of the Elderly Person's wishes.

"Health workers are naive" said an old notary, "they don't check whether a deed of Full Powers is in the family's possession". Older people who notice this play along under threat of blackmail: "Otherwise, they won't come any more". In many societies, being abandoned by the family means becoming an outcast. And the nurses have no opportunity to act as advocates for the fragile person. When the situation can no longer be put right, it ends in tears and : "I'm stuck".

The most effective means of torture is to generate fatigue. Then the elderly ask for euthanasia or pray to God to come and get them.

But there is also this magnificent scene, which occurred a few months ago in a Brussels hospital: a very old man, receiving intensive care, arrived in a wheelchair. A 9-month-old baby was placed on his lap and I could see his face beaming with joy and happiness. The grandmother explains: "We had to travel 4 hours by plane (from Lebanon) for Grandpa to see the little one".

And there's also the fact that young Dutch intensive care doctors are calling for a review of treatment guidelines. This after elderly Covid patients were referred to palliative care. The families organised transport for the patients out of Europe, and they have all recovered.

On 13 April, Pope Francis condemned the grip of the economy. He said that "Not giving medicines is a hidden and progressive euthanasia". Also, in his 6th catechesis, the Holy Father, basing himself on God's commandment, speaks of :

- honouring those who have gone before us,
- dignity other than that of "above all, do not disturb",
- delicacy and affection, tenderness and respect that cannot be transformed into rigidity and prevarication.
- covering up the weaknesses of the Elderly, as Noah's sons did, instead of exposing them in order to gain power over them.

The Pope sees the horror of what can happen. This is a great consolation for the Elderly.

The pressures of certain societies, where short-term economics prevail, on young people are so strong that parents are unable to provide a proper education. These children are interested in a life of quality rather than quantity. They commit suicide as soon as life no longer appeals to them. It's a view that belongs in the animal kingdom. Choosing a way out instead of the happiness that Christ offers us. The Church is helping us to prevent this mentality from spreading from one country to another before climbing back up from the abyss of decadence. In the meantime, the (very) Elderly suffer and die before God's time. Unlike the medical profession, carers have no business dealing with disabilities. Their proper role is to see to the prevention and consequences of disabilities for the lives of people, including the elderly.

Thank you to the Holy Father for helping and supporting us in this.

Béatrice van Dorsser, Reg. Nurse CICIAMS Netherlands

■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Report on violence, abuse and neglect of older persons :

To inform the Independent Expert's forthcoming report to the 54th session of the Human Rights Council



Claudia Malher

internet

Objectives of the report:

The Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Dr. Claudia Mahler, will focus her next thematic report to the Human Rights Council in 2023 on violence, abuse and neglect of older persons. In this report, the Independent Expert will aim at examining the existing international and regional legal protection standards applicable to the issue of violence against older persons, as well as, at analysing the manifestations and forms of violence, abuse and neglect faced by older persons. It will also identify and analyse good practices in combating violence and abuse of older persons to be able to fully enjoy their human rights. Furthermore, the Independent Expert will analyse the issue from an intersectional perspective, in exploring the interactions with other social factors such as gender, sex, race, ethnicity, indigenous identity, disabi-

lity, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, social status, place of origin and immigration status. Finally, the Independent Expert will provide recommendations on ways to protect older persons from violence while upholding their human rights, and in ensuring victims, access to justice, remedies and reparations.

■ NEWS OF THE CHURCH

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR THE THIRD WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY 23 JULY 2023

Dear brothers and sisters! “His mercy is from age to age” (Lk 1:50). This is the theme of the Third World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, and it takes us back to the joyful meeting between the young Mary and her elderly relative Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-56). Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth addressed the Mother of God with words that, millennia later, continue to echo in our daily prayer: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (v. 42). The Holy Spirit, who had earlier descended upon Mary, prompted her to respond with the Magnificat, in which she proclaimed that the Lord’s mercy is from generation to generation. That same Spirit blesses and accompanies every fruitful encounter between different generations: between grandparents and grandchildren, between young and old. God wants young people to bring joy to the hearts of the elderly, as Mary did to Elizabeth, and gain wisdom from their experiences. Yet, above all, the Lord wants us not to abandon the elderly or to push them to the margins of life, as tragically happens all too often in our time.



Photo La Croix

This year, the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly takes place close to World Youth Day. Both celebrations remind us of the “haste” (cf. v. 39) with which Mary set out to visit Elizabeth. In this way, they invite us to reflect on the bond that unites young and old. The Lord trusts that young people, through their

relationships with the elderly, will realize that they are called to cultivate memory and recognize the beauty of being part of a much larger history. Friendship with an older person can help the young to see life not only in terms of the present and realize that not everything depends on them and their abilities. For the elderly, the presence of a young person in their lives can give them hope that their experience will not be lost and that their dreams can find fulfilment. Mary’s visit to Elizabeth and their shared awareness that the Lord’s mercy is from generation to generation remind us that, alone, we cannot move forward, much less save ourselves, and that God’s presence and activity are always part of something greater, the history of a people. Mary herself said this in the Magnificat, as she rejoiced in God, who, in fidelity to the promise he had made to Abraham, had worked new and unexpected wonders (cf. vv. 51-55).

To better appreciate God’s way of acting, let us remember that our life is meant to be lived to the full, and that our greatest hopes and dreams are not achieved instantly but through a process of growth and maturation, in dialogue and in relationship with others. Those who focus only on the here and now, on money and possessions, on “having it all now”, are blind to the way God works. His loving plan spans past, present and future; it embraces and connects the generations. It is greater than we are, yet includes each of us and calls us at every moment to keep pressing forward. For the young, this means being ready to

break free from the fleeting present in which virtual reality can entrap us, preventing us from doing something productive. For the elderly, it means not dwelling on the loss of physical strength and thinking with regret about missed opportunities. Let us all look ahead! And allow ourselves to be shaped by God's grace, which from generation to generation frees us from inertia and from dwelling on the past!

In the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth, between young and old, God points us towards the future that he is opening up before us. Indeed, Mary's visit and Elizabeth's greeting open our eyes to the dawn of salvation: in their embrace, God's mercy quietly breaks into human history amid abundant joy. I encourage everyone to reflect on that meeting, to picture, like a snapshot, that embrace between the young Mother of God and the elderly mother of Saint John the Baptist, and to frame it in their minds and hearts as a radiant icon.

Next, I would invite you to make a concrete gesture that would include grandparents and the elderly. Let us not abandon them. Their presence in families and communities is a precious one, for it reminds us that we share the same heritage and are part of a people committed to preserving its roots. From the elderly we received the gift of belonging to God's holy people. The Church, as well as society, needs them, for they entrust to the present the past that is needed to build the future. Let us honour them, neither depriving ourselves of their company nor depriving them of ours. May we never allow the elderly to be cast aside!

The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly is meant to be a small but precious sign of hope for them and for the whole Church. I renew my invitation to everyone – dioceses, parishes, associations and communities – to celebrate this Day and to make it the occasion of a joyful and renewed encounter between young and old. To you, the young who are preparing to meet in Lisbon or to celebrate World Youth Day in your own countries, I would ask: before you set out on your journey, visit your grandparents or an elderly person who lives alone! Their prayers will protect you and you will carry in your heart the blessing of that encounter. I ask you, the elderly among us, to accompany by your prayers the young people about to celebrate World Youth Day. Those young people are God's answer to your prayers, the fruits of all that you have sown, the sign that God does not abandon his people, but always rejuvenates them with the creativity of the Holy Spirit.

Dear grandparents, dear elderly brothers and sisters, may the blessing of the embrace between Mary and Elizabeth come upon you and fill your hearts with peace. With great affection, I give you my blessing. And I ask you, please, to pray for me.

■ NEWS OF MEMBER

AIC : The AIC International Assembly was held in Rome last March on the theme:

"Citizens of the world on a journey, united in hope";

What a blessing to have been able to meet at last, so many of us (160 participants) from 34 countries on every continent, to share our experiences, our cultures, our challenges, our dreams and above all our charisma, our giftings, in a spirit of fraternity and communion!

Throughout the Assembly, volunteers were invited to "walk together", in the spirit of the synod, a great opportunity to strengthen the feeling of belonging to our great international AIC family and to re-energise volunteers after this period of pandemic.

The much-appreciated lectures by Fr. Naranjo, cm, alternated with the presentation of numerous AIC actions in the field and several testimonies confirming the richness of 'networking' at different levels. Time was also set aside for reflection and sharing in groups on each of the themes addressed, enabling the Priority Lines of

Action for 2023-2026 to be defined together:

- 1. Rooted in the Vincentian charism**
- 2. Journeying together**
- 3. Be open to and embrace the change that is essential if we are to get through crisis situations.**

A new President, Tayde de CALLATAÿ, and a new Board of Directors have been elected. This new team is off to a flying start.

Little Sisters of the Poor: Now that Covid is less dominant - although we must remain vigilant - life is returning to normal in our houses. Entertainment, games, visits from families or youth groups, parties, all bring back the joy and pleasure of living... During the summer, short holiday breaks are organised for the residents in some of the "Ma Maison" located in a particularly attractive region, offering a different pace of life, new relationships, the discovery of the beauties of nature or art, visits to sanctuaries... Something that some had never experienced during a long and hard-working life. Whenever possible, we appreciate the participation of young girls to accompany these "holidays", an opportunity for intergenerational living together that is greatly appreciated by both sides.

In implementing the guidelines of the recent General Chapter, attention is being paid to the pastoral dimension: teams are being set up, including lay volunteers, with time for training, to visit regularly and in a personal way any resident who wishes to do so. In this regard, our Little Sisters of Malta have informed us that their Archbishop, Mgr Charles Scicluna, following Pope Francis' Catecheses on the Elderly, has appointed a priest to coordinate the spiritual animation of the retirement homes in the diocese. The Little Sisters have been given a questionnaire to find out how spirituality is lived in their homes, so that they can encourage and help each other. Crescendo is delighted with this initiative!

However, there is a major challenge to be met everywhere, while confidently relying on Providence! We must continue to offer the elderly, especially the poor, conditions conducive to a peaceful and fulfilling end to life, despite the reduction in the number of Little Sisters and the difficulty of recruiting staff...

A sign of this confidence, a beacon of hope: a 3rd foundation has started in the Philippines, in a precarious but joyful situation!

"First we had to wage war on the ants and spiders. Apart from tap water, nothing worked... After a few days, life began to take shape; when the meal was ready, we were called by a whistle instead of a bell. The little house for the future elderly is clean and tidy "thanks to the help of our two other houses (Manila and Bolinao). One miserable old person has already been taken in. We entrust this little seed to your prayers.

MIAMSI : SIX DECADES OF APOSTOLATE IN INDEPENDENT COMMUNITIES: MIAMSI CELEBRATES ITS 60TH ANNIVERSARY

The aim of the Crescendo network is to work on the social links between older people and their pastoral care. Creating links and building connections is the foundation of our society. Older people who have worked all their lives, with varying degrees of difficulty depending on the economic climate, are often happy to pass on their experience and do not forget to make way for younger people. This commitment by the Crescendo network is in harmony with MIAMSI, one of its member organisations, which works to evangelise the Independent Milieus through the sharing of experiences.

The Mouvement International d'Apostolat des Milieux Sociaux Indépendants (MIAMSI), founded by Marie Louise Monnet, was recognised by the Holy See on 3 October 1963. Present on every continent, MIAMSI's members are committed to transfor-

ming society's mentalities and structures in line with the Gospel values to which they refer.

This year, as the movement celebrates its 60th anniversary, a collection of testimonies and reflections has been produced entitled "The apostolate within independent circles throughout the world". This book, the contents of which we share with the Crescendo network, tells the story of MIAMSI's life in the Church over the last 60 years, its progress and its past and present vitality. It provides an opportunity to revisit the history of the movement, and to gather the testimonies, convictions, commitments and hopes of those who have made and are still making MIAMSI what it is today. By taking a look at our past, talking about our present and examining the challenges that lie ahead as well as the hope that drives us, we are meeting those whose lives are intimately linked to the movement. It will certainly be a pleasure for current and future generations to read and re-read these pages well beyond our 60th anniversary.

This book, produced on the occasion of MIAMSI's sixtieth anniversary, is intended not only as a collection of testimonies from those involved, but also as a compass for those who want *"to remain constantly on the move, responding to the impulse of the Holy Spirit, to the challenges and changes of today's world"*.