

## EDITORIAL

### Christianity Faced with Humanitarian Catastrophes

J. Joblin

Current tragedies: armed conflicts, migrations, natural cataclysms, etc... put us in front of the precariousness and apparent inconsistency of the human condition. This is a fact, but a "moral fact" to use an expression of John Paul II, that is to say that causes us to make our vision of faith accessible to others.

The Cross and the Resurrection are the keys that we propose to unravel the mystery of the human condition. Yesterday, the weight of premodern mentalities made the human being appear as the manager of a world; redeemed by Christ, his mission was to conform to an ideal order that he said was ordained by God.

Today, this project must be re-evaluated, which does not mean giving up and too many Christians do not see that it keeps its relevance. Christian revelation brings rationality into our vision of the universe; not that it resolves the scientific problems facing the human being engaged in existence; that is not its goal. It does not eliminate the mystery of our condition, but faith integrates it into a global vision that gives it meaning, and a positive meaning in opposition to the pessimism of other attitudes.

While older persons often get discouraged by the changes taking place in society and the chaos of institutions, ideas and customs, those who claim to believe in the Christian faith must show that there is no reason to despair; they know by faith that the world is slowly coming out of a state of servitude through the sacrifice of Him who proclaimed: I have conquered the world.

Text of an intervention by Father Joblin (1920-2018) during a meeting of Crescendo leaders in 2010.

## POST

### VMI international meeting

The 9th international meeting of VMI was held from 18 to 24 November in Santo Domingo on the theme: elders, actors of evangelization in a multigenerational and multicultural society.

Around forty leaders of national movements and continental coordinators met with the members of the Executive Committee, with Monsignor Benito Fernandez representing the Archbishop of Santo Domingo and Dr. Vittorio Scelzo of the Dicastero of the Laity, Family and Life (Office of the elderly and young people.)

Among the highlights of this meeting, it should be noted:

- The intervention of Mgr Fernandez who spoke to us about the action of the Dominican Church in favor of seniors and evoked the wealth of the document of Aparecida that deserves to be better known at the world level.
- The report of Professor Minaya on preparatory work sent by the participating countries.
- The advocacy of our Ecclesiastical Assistant, Bishop Maupu, on the need to grow in faith to be an "actor of evangelization".
- The intervention of Dr. Scelzo, based on the thoughts of Pope Francis, has invited us to change the way our contemporaries look at old age. We must act so that the elderly have their full place in society and in the Church and become a moral and spiritual resource for them.

In particular, he stressed the need to create links between young people and the elderly (for example during the upcoming JMJ) (you will find some excerpts from his speech in this newsletter.)

The General Assembly of VMI was held at the close of this meeting. It has decided to plan a yearly (Vie Montante?) International Living Together Day common to all countries: it will be October 1st (which corresponds to World Seniors' Day.)

Then the continental coordinators chosen by the countries were ratified and the new Steering Committee elected, which is composed as follows:

President: Ms Monique BODHUIN (France),

Vice-President: Mr Jaime TAMARIT (Spain)

Treasurer: Mr Christian LIEBENGUTH (Belgium)

Secretary: Mrs Monika PTAK (France)

Ecclesiastical Assistant : Mgr François MAUPU (France)

Jean-Michel SIMEON

Note. The February issue of the VMI newsletter is devoted to this meeting;

It can be consulted on the website: <https://vmi-lai-vai.org>

Extracts from the intervention of Dr. Vittorio Scelzo  
at the international meeting of VMI in Santo Domingo

« Society needs to take a different look at the elderly and we need to be the actors of this change of mentality ..

In our societies, old age is scary and, because of its fragility and vulnerability, it is considered as a contagious disease that we must be protected from. Hence, this marginalization of the elderly reflected in certain observations: in Japan, thousands of elders commit suicide because of loneliness; in institutions or retirement homes, the elderly, cut off from their familiar environment no longer feel the urge to live and die at a faster rate than at home; in Africa, there are sometimes lynchings of elderly people accused of witchcraft, "to steal their years from the young" ...

Young people are not the future of the Church but the present, the elderly are the future of the Church, they are the ones who build the future ...

Our societies are not ready to recognize the full value of old age. There has been no real reflection on the meaning of age and our elders are marginalized. This can be the mission of a movement like VMI: to respond to the concerns of Pope Francis for whom "old age is a vocation", translate into action his speech by being, in each of your countries, active relays, invent and act to recognize that the elderly have a role to play in society and a

mission to accomplish in the Church, to give meaning to this phase of old age from a more stimulating perspective...

There is therefore a lot of thought to be given to the world of old age, the sense of age, aging and the vocation of the elderly within the Church; indeed, this time of old age brings something fundamentally new to society ...

We are in the best position to make this known; our demographic weight, our experience of life, the wisdom acquired through trials and tribulations are all assets that can make us leaders in the Church: The ball is in our court! "

Excerpts from the special February 2019 VMI bulletin

## ■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

### Activities of Intergovernmental Organisations since September 2018

#### UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, 73rd session (2018-2019)

In November 2018, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee discussed, as each year, the draft Resolution (A/C.3/73/L.18), on the follow up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid 8-12 April 2002) with more or less the same items every year. It has now included reference to the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, for which the date and the services depended on available services from by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee. This year's resolution asks the SG to provide all the necessary services and include the meeting in the UN Calendar (May this year). The draft also includes more language on human rights and quotes from

Independent Expert's reports. There was opposition from the US and Japan so there was risk of it not being adopted by consensus. The Resolution was adopted by consensus with some changes in text and date (A/RES/73/143)

**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 39th SESSION (10-28 September 2018)**  
**Resolution adopted on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2018.**

**39/18. Technical cooperation and capacity building – human rights of older persons A/HRC RES/39/18**

Silvia Perel-Levin participated in the informal negotiation and provided comments and texts to some Member States, such as Singapore, member of the core group of the resolution and to Slovenia and Austria, and through them to the EU, that adopted most of these comments. Chair of the core group was very open to comments from Civil Society, especially ours. Russia and Egypt contested some of the proposed language arguing that substantive issues related to the rights of older persons should be discussed in a substantive resolution.

This resolution includes a PBI (Program Budget implication) for a Report + Panel that will take place in June in Room XX. Question for OHCHR is a consultation planned for the Report?

**INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PEOPLE (IDOP 2018) – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018**

An event, with a reception and exhibition took place during the UNECE/ICPD event in the evening. Ursula was honoured as an older human rights champion.

**AGE PLATFORM** launched a campaign against ageism: « AGEING EQUAL » – which ran between IDOP, 1 October and 10 December, International Day on Human Rights – It had very good resources.

**WHO Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (5-6 November 2018)**

The president of the NGO Working Group on Ageing represented the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) at this meeting – it was the only NGO on ageing present. Other CSO: NCD Alliance, many professional associations but not so many patients' associations.

Led by WHO, the focus was not about the technical issues of NCDs; rather about the platforms of engaging and exchanging best practices in a multi-sectorial multi stakeholders' platform, i.e. States + CSO + Private Sector...

When Silvia Perel Levin recommended including older persons, Zimbabwe representative answered that in Zimbabwe older

persons were under the social Ministry – as they did not have a voice due to vulnerability, The question is how to make sure older persons are included in those discussions (since ageing is one of the main risk factors of NCDs and its prevalence is highest among older persons) and how to change the wrong perception that all older persons are frail and do not have a voice ?

Any organisation can register to WHO.int/KAP (Knowledge Action Portal) To exchange information and get invitations to these meetings.

**WHO –144<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board (EB) – 24<sup>th</sup> January – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019**

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) – Mental Health has been recognized as one of the 4 priorities in the WHO Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 following the conclusions of the General Assembly of the Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases-

**■ NEWS OF MEMBERS**

**CICIAMS :**

First beatification of a lay nurse. Hanna Chrzanowska, a Polish nurse from Krakow (1902-1973), was beatified on April 28, 2018. After a busy life serving the those suffering, after retirement in 1960, she organized nursing and social services for, among other things, the elderly. This was independent of the inefficient socialist health system.

**Little Sisters of the Poor:**

Unusual event one bearer of hope! Our headquarters at La Tour St Joseph, in St Pern, welcomed, nearly 250 young people for the "JMJ of Brittany" on January 26 and 27, 2019, in

connection with those held in Panama. Prepared by a team - students, priests responsible for Youth Ministries or vocations, and several Little Sisters of the Poor - these two days, festive and fervent at the same time, included teaching, sharing, prayer (Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament presented day and night, Vespers and Laudes with the community, Mass of sending off presided by the Archbishop of Rennes ...), a beautiful vigil with testimonies, songs in the style of Emmanuel or Taizé, silence ...; but also laughter, friendship and happy medleys! Many approached the Sacrament of Reconciliation, even until 1am for a few! Among the 10 workshops with various themes that were proposed, there was a meeting with residents of "My House" of St Pern. On both sides, it was a source of joy, a rewarding inter-generational discovery. Some young people then expressed the wish to volunteer with older people ... Small steps towards this "Alliance between young and old" that Pope Francis has been wishing for fervently!

- World Health Organisation, 72<sup>nd</sup> World Health Assembly - 20<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019
- International Labour Organisation, 108<sup>th</sup> session of the International Labour Conference, 10<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019
- Human Rights Council, 41<sup>st</sup> session – 24<sup>th</sup> June to 27<sup>th</sup> July 2019
- Human Rights Council, 42<sup>nd</sup> session – 09 September to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2019

## ■ AGENDA

- **28th February 2019 – HUMAN RIGHTS - Inter-Agency and Stakeholder meeting: Informal discussion on older persons in humanitarian and emergency situation with the Independent Expert's Office.**  
How humanitarian organisations can enhance the inclusion of older persons in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies as emergency situations are increasing worldwide and older persons remain one of the most seriously affected groups?  
The participants will have the opportunity to:
  - Discuss the roles and specific vulnerabilities of older persons in humanitarian crisis
  - Discuss obstacles and opportunities for the inclusive humanitarian assistance
  - Take stock of existing tools and policies and assess the potential of digital tools to ensure better inclusion of older persons
  - Share experiences and good practices on inclusive and effective humanitarian assistance policy and guidance
- Human Rights Council, 40th session – 25 February to 22 March 2019
- Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA), 10th session – 15 to 18 April 2019
- International Research Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) : 23-24 May 2019 in London