

Time to sound the alarm!

Fr. René Stockman, Superior General of the Brothers of Charity of Ghent

Rest and care homes have gone through embarrassing times. Political choices led to the fact that, in the case of Covid infections requiring hospitalisation, preference had to be given to "younger" people who would have a better chance of recovery. The reason given was that there might be a lack of medical equipment, especially respirators. In the meantime, the nursing staff of the rest and care homes were caught off-guard by situations never before experienced. We can and must clearly honour the generosity of our employees and at the same time we must grieve for those who, due to a lack of appropriate medical care, have not succeeded. It is a stain on our civilisation! We can do nothing other than express our concern about the mentality that was and is at the basis of this political decision-making process, which was supposedly based on ethical foundations. It becomes an ethic where the value of the human being is reduced to the usefulness that someone can still have for society. If this has never been so clearly expressed, it has now come to the surface through this crisis situation. With the total ban on visits on medical grounds, the fact that the human being is more than just a purely physical being, but also carries a social, psychic and existential dimension within him, was completely ignored. We will never know how many elderly people have died precisely because of this total loneliness and, above all, this hopelessness.

We can only express, with an eye to our neighbours to the north, our great concern about the bill that has been tabled according to which people over the age of 75 who are tired of life can resort to assisted suicide. This is a situation that makes one shudder with horror, and again is a sign that the ideology of absolute self-determination is gaining ground. At the same time we are also closing our ears to the question of why someone becomes tired of life, what can be done about it and especially how to prevent it.