

EDITORIAL

Older people, the future of humanity

This Newsletter of the Crescendo Global Network reappears after a year's interruption, which was necessary for its managers to have time to redefine Crescendo's objectives. They were greatly helped by the content of the congress organised by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life (29-31 January 2020) on the pastoral care of the elderly and entitled "The richness of years".

During this congress, it was very clearly underlined by those responsible for this dicastery that

- In all continents, the demographic balance is changing. There is a revolution in longevity that cannot be ignored. The laity of the future will increasingly be made up of older people. How can this large percentage of the population be included in society? "(Cardinal Farrell)

- It is of great importance to value the gifts and charisms of the elderly, to support families and be present with them, to care for the spirituality of the elderly. For this there is no need for strategies, but for human relationships from which networks of collaboration and solidarity can emerge. "(Mrs. Gabriella Gambino)

These are strong elements on which Crescendo will rely to continue its actions.

Monique Bodhuin, president of VMI, spoke about evangelisation of the elderly and retired people. Part of her presentation follows this editorial.

Pope Francis, during his address to the congress participants, said: "The Lord can and wants to write new pages with the elderly too, pages of holiness, of service, of prayer... Today I would like to tell you that the elderly also are the present and the future of the Church. Yes, they are also the future of a Church which, together with the young, prophesies and dreams! »

(Full speech at www.reseaucrescendo.org)

Dominique Lemau de Talancé

POST

The older generation: a generation to accompany spiritually.

Presentation at the congress
"Richness of Years" by Monique
Bodhuin, President of VMI

What I experience: I am in contact with friends of my age, many of whom have moved away from the Church. I am a grandmother; I am confronted with the question of old age (my mother is 94 years old). When I retired, my commitment as a Christian led me to preside over the Christian Movement for Retired People (MCR), the French branch of Vie Montante Internationale (VMI), and of which I currently have the presidency.

To accompany spiritually the older generation is to respond to a pastoral mission; that of evangelising.

- It is "to proclaim the Gospel to the people of our time" (Evangelii nuntiandi of Paul VI).

- It is to translate into concrete actions the Christian commitment in society and in the Church;

- It is to give the elderly tools that will help them bear concrete witness to their faith in the places where they live, tools that will make of each one of us, a "disciple-missionary";



Maria Voce (Focolaris) and Monique Bodhuin (VMI)
Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life

-It is to make humanity new, which is to say, to let the love of Christ, and the

joy born of this gift of love, make us new beings capable of communicating that which helps us to live and gives us hope; make us new beings capable of contributing to the transformation of the world.

The Third World Retirement Days organized by the MCR gathered 4000 people in Lourdes in June 2018 and were inspired by *Laudato Si'*. This event addressed societal questions whose challenges are fundamental for the future of society: what answers can we bring as Christians, with reference to the values of the Gospel?

-On the question of living together: "we are condemned to live together". What resources necessary for the construction of the common good does each believer find in his or her faith?

-On the question of the family: in what way does it remain a place for the transmission of values, rich in potential despite a classic family model that has been shaken up?

-In the field of health: how, as a Christian, can we react to a new anthropology born of the excesses generated by the progress of science which deny the sanctity of the human person and the limits of all life?

The challenge of ecology: how can we renounce economic models that deplete the planet's resources, how can we change our mentalities and adopt other behaviours?

This gathering is for me in itself an act of evangelisation, because we want to demonstrate an awareness which engages our responsibility as Christians.

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 102, regrets that there is "no real commitment to the implementation of the Gospel in view of the transformation of society" and in the same paragraph he invites us to work "for the penetration of Christian values in the social, economic and political world". He urges us to be actors in the transformation of the world, in order to make it little by little more in conformity with God's plan, which is the expression of our hope for which we have to give an account. To be "active in hope", was the slogan of the 3rd World Retirement Days. I conclude by quoting Pope Francis again: "This world is the first miracle that God has done and God has placed in our hands the blessing of new wonders".

Monique Bodhuin ended the first part of her talk by speaking about the transmission of the faith to grandchildren and young people. Termed enlighteners and passers-on, this can be a beautiful grandparental specificity. Perhaps we have to create places,

instances where we will learn to make this initiation into the faith, where we will be offered ad hoc "tools".

The second part of her presentation concerned the changing of hearts by reflecting on the period of aging; on the meaning and significance of age: Seniors need to deepen their faith; Old age as a spiritual path; learning to know oneself to be mortal, learning to bear the disadvantages of one's present life, learning to strip away the superfluous, learning to live the joy of the present, learning to hope.

The third part concerned going to the "peripheries", the older recipients of evangelization.

The de-Christianized elders: some older people, each in his own way, according to culture and sensitivity, are at one time or another confronted with existential questions. This can be the starting point of a journey that the Church must accompany.

Those in extreme old age who need our presence and attention.

We will be the face of the Church if we are concerned to be a generator of life for the very old.

The fourth part of her presentation focused on prospects for the future. This evangelistic mission is not an option. We are invited to be creative, to set up a pastoral ministry for the journey.

Monique Bodhuin's talk is, in its entirety, on the Crescendo website: www.reseaucrecendo.org

■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Exercise by the elderly of all human rights

Report of the Independent Expert, **Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte**, responsible for promoting the enjoyment by all elderly people of all human rights (Sep 2019) (A / HRC / 42/43)

In this report, the Independent Expert, who is completing her mandate, reports on all of her activities since her appointment in 2014.

It examines, in particular, the question of the protection of the human rights of the elderly in emergency situations, which it considers extremely important. It provides an overview of the challenges faced by older adults in emergencies, and analyses inclusive assistance and relief measures to be taken to meet their specific needs, while leveraging their roles and skills.

■ NEWS OF THE CHURCH

Pope Francis launches the Educational Pact "Towards a more fraternal humanity"

"Rebuilding the global educational pact": this is the theme of the global event which will take place in Rome between 11 and 18 October 2020, aimed at young people and all stakeholders in the world of education. It is an initiative of the Holy Father, which is rooted in the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical and the document signed between François and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi, on February 4.

Four years after the publication of his Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reiterates his invitation "to discuss the way in which we are building the future of the planet and the need to invest the talents of each person", focusing on the field of education.

■ NEWS OF MEMBER

AIC : The XXI International Assembly of AIC Delegates was to take place from 17 to 20 March 2020 in Bogotá, Colombia, on the theme "Peace and Freedom in a Sustainable World": an opportunity to train and exchange experiences on the possible Vincentian responses to current poverty (migration, human trafficking, homelessness), as well as to evaluate our projects based on integral ecology.

Given the situation created by the coronavirus, the AIC Board of Directors has had to cancel the assembly. This is obviously a very big disappointment for everyone. We are thinking about how to

continue to be present alongside our most deprived, and therefore most vulnerable, brothers and sisters, in this period when containment is hitting many countries.

CICIAMS : Less than two weeks after the International Congress on the Pastoral Care of the Elderly: "The Richness of Years", where the Undersecretary of the Dicastery of the Laity, Family and Life, Mrs Gabriella Gambino, referred to the Elderly who are victims of perfectionism and the narcissism of their relatives, because of the weakening of their strength. The Pope had these words: "There are the afflicted to be consoled, but sometimes there are also those who are consoled to be afflicted, to be awakened, who have a heart of stone and have forgotten how to cry. We must also awaken people who do not know how to be moved by the pain of others." (General Audience of Pope Francis, February 12, 2020. "Blessed are those who weep").

Little Sisters of the Poor: Numerous and diverse are the initiatives of our communities to create links between residents and young people. Thus, on February 2, in Versailles, 35 senior scouts and guides experienced "a missionary day". After Mass, animated by their songs and instruments, to the great joy of the older people present, the young people helped to serve lunch, which was enlivened by good conversation. In the afternoon, there were two workshops: one to meet the residents in their rooms and another to watch a video on Jeanne Jugan, followed by testimonies from Little Sisters. A time of adoration in the chapel brought young and old together again. These "missionary days" were initiated at the request of the young people themselves.

Another country, another style! In a care home in the USA, a dance evening was organised by students. Each resident had received a personalised invitation from the young person who would be linked with them for the evening. Happy Irish tunes led the dancers, even in wheelchairs!

In our Province of Rennes, a proposal entitled "Embark with an older person" was mooted. (cf. *Christus Vivit* n°201). Young people are invited to make contact with a care home and each one will be entrusted with an older person for the year, to spend agreeable time together according to each person's wishes. This is a project that has already had a positive response in several cities.

MIAMSI : In recent months, the whole world has been shaken up by the coronavirus covid19 , which is wreaking havoc in many countries, and is leading to various kinds of measures taken by our governments and churches to deal with the situation: bans on gatherings, border closures, confinement to the home and cancellation of meetings and other events.

It is in this context, and in an atmosphere of psychosis of the virus, with cases already reported in Northern Italy, that our last BI/MIAMSI meeting was held in Rome on 24-28 February 2020. We worked hard to discuss all the items on the agenda, but some of us, at the request of our relatives, had to return home earlier than expected. We are pleased that everyone has got home now and we have resumed our activities.

We remain united in thought and prayer in the hope that the important meetings ahead of us, especially our next General Assembly scheduled for October 24-29, 2020 in Lebanon, for which we have been preparing for a long time, will not be disrupted.

We bear witness to our closeness to all, and we implore the Almighty and Merciful Father to bring about a speedy mastery of illness, healing for the sick, eternal life for the dead and consolation for the grieving and affected families.

Together we are on the move in the following of Christ.

VMI : During the last months of 2019 VMI devoted itself especially to the preparation of the "Richness of Years" congress organized by the Dicastery of the Laity, the Family and Life. In fact, the participation of the Movement was requested by the Dicastery, which wanted a contribution from our President, Mrs. Monique Bodhuin (included in this bulletin).

The presence of the members of VMI at this event was significant: out of the 500 to 600 people, a hundred represented our movement. The majority came from Spain and European countries, but also from Africa, North America (Canada) and Latin America and Asia (Japan).

At the end of the congress, the Movement's Steering Committee was convened, bringing together the members of the Executive Committee, representatives of the various continents and their ecclesiastical assistants, to whom some national officials were added.

The purpose of this meeting was to take stock 'on the spot' of the Congress and to begin to reflect on how to put into practice the "road map" given by the Holy Father during the audience on January 31.

The participants said that they particularly appreciated the Dicastery's concern for dialogue with the laity and its willingness to bring together all the movements concerned with the elderly.

They liked the demographic studies showing the growth of this population not only in the developed countries but also in the rest of the world and the challenges this represents for society and the Church.

They were struck by the Pope's speech which evoked the values of old age and urged bishops and laity to act ever more collaboratively to transmit the Gospel. This is an admirable programme of action for all movements working for and with older people.

■ CRESCENDO : NEW WEBSITE

www.reseaucrescendo.org