

EDITORIAL

Bringing the social bond to life

This period of pandemic, which imposes a generalized lockdown and which is already being followed, throughout the world, by an economic and social crisis of very large scale, is undermining the social link between individuals and human groups.

Faced with this situation, many people have given their know-how, their energy, their time as professionals or as volunteers with a will to serve the most affected, the most deprived.

In the article opposite you will find the report of actions carried out by the Little Sisters, their staff and their residents, by the volunteers of AIC as well as the reflections of members of MIAMSI.

This is important, but cannot be enough. We need to work for a post-virus world.

Pope Francis invites us to do so. Through the Dicastery for the Integral Development of Man, he has decided on a *Laudato Si'* year, five years after the publication of the Encyclical. The Encyclical offers us "a moral and spiritual compass to guide us on this common journey, aimed at creating a more fraternal, peaceful and sustainable world, ... a new way of life, united in love, compassion, solidarity and a more harmonious relationship with the earth, our common home".

The Crescendo Network cannot work alone. It needs to engage in dialogue with other organisations in order better to discern together, how to recreate, maintain, strengthen and develop a real social link for the elderly wherever they are. Concretely: how can we help the elderly person to define a project that will keep them connected, that will (re)connect them with society, with others?

Such a meeting is planned for October 1st, if the health situation allows it.

Dominique Lemau de Talancé

POST

Support and mutual aid during periods of lockdown

Little Sisters of the Poor:

In these weeks of isolation for the residents of Care Homes, it seems a challenge to speak of "social bond"! However, the ordeal has provoked, in all countries, a great surge of solidarity and focus on the elderly. We are amazed by it.

In each "My House", the **Little Sisters and staff** sought all means to maintain a link with the family: telephone, e-mail, Skype etc. "It's the best day I've had in a long time," said one lady. "I used Skype and visited my family in Germany! "In REUS, Spain, a correspondence network was created with schools that visited the Home every week. The children wrote poems, stories, made videos. A resident asks every day: *"Is there any mail from the children?"* »

There have been initiatives sponsored by people of all ages, which will, we hope, create new links when people return to "normal" life:

- Two young people volunteered to run errands for the residents of a Care Home in LYON. They plan to come back after the pandemic to visit them and share tea-time with them.

- In BORDEAUX, members of the Opera gave a concert in the garden, enjoyed by the elderly from their balconies. Joy on the faces, constraints forgotten! 'See you soon' says the person in charge as he leaves. Oh, how we are transported by this!

Older people themselves show their openness and creativity:

- Two residents of BRISTOL (England), aged 100 and 93, decided to go to the chapel to sing hymns that would be broadcast to the rooms via the sound system!
- In ST PAUL (USA), the able-bodied wrote cards to the handicapped to tell them that they are thinking of them, while a resident of KANSAS CITY, trained in grief and loss counselling, is helping others through the ordeal of the pandemic by offering two sessions a week broadcast from the chapel.
- One day, an amazing sight in ABERDEEN (Hong Kong): while the care-taker was in isolation, a 102-year-old woman in her wheelchair, which she moved forward with her feet, was leaning to the side and sweeping the corridor!
- In ORAN (Algeria), seeing that only 5 employees could come, the able-bodied elderly people offered their services: cleaning, washing up, helping to feed the infirm...

Thus, in the midst of so much suffering, mourning, and more, a loving attention to the Seniors seems to be born or reborn, along with a concern to keep them at the heart of the human community. May this hope be realized!

AIC (International Association of Charities) :

While some AIC projects have had to be temporarily suspended due to the containment measures imposed by governments around the world, in many regions AIC volunteers have shown their creativity in adapting their services, to continue accompanying people in precarious situations who are more affected by the current crisis.



News AIC April 2020 Madagascar

In Madagascar: Distribution of food parcels to beneficiaries in ten localities after Easter. "It was really great to see the mothers so happy to see that the volunteers had not forgotten them!" says Rose de Lima Ramanankavana, our new international president. She visited to encourage the volunteers at a time when people didn't want to leave their homes.



News AIC April 2020 Madagascar

Elsewhere too, AIC volunteers continue to support the destitute.

In Italy, some AIC canteens are still operating, while scrupulously respecting prevention measures. Other groups distribute food parcels or vouchers. Volunteer teachers help vulnerable students online.

In the United States, volunteers provide psychological support over the phone to beneficiaries and send them vouchers and vegetable or flower seeds to give them hope.

In Syria and Brazil, too, volunteers distribute food and basic necessities to those most in need.

In the Philippines, volunteers support disadvantaged people and frontline workers by providing food and masks.

In France, volunteers continued their food bank work with families,

adapting their way of working. They also make masks for those who need them. They were careful to keep in touch by phone to take news, to be able to explain the barrier precautions...



AIC volunteers try to improve the quality of life of families, living out the maxim of founder St Vincent de Paul, 'Love is infinitely inventive'

MIAMSI:

In India: "Workers usually move from state to state. At present, because of the lockdown, they are blocked far from their States of origin and are in a precarious situation without shelter, without food, living with many forms of violence".

In Italy: "In the unusual silence we are forced to stop and look within ourselves. We are living in a difficult time, health concerns, preoccupations, sadness for those who suffer and for those who are no longer here".

"How will we live in the future? »

"Our faith is a gift, we know that the Lord is in us and prayer gives us courage and comfort.

In Africa: The situation is currently less alarming than in the rest of the world. "But how can one live in long-term lockdown and support one's family because in most cases the heads of families have to work to bring in money every day to feed their family? "How can we accompany our organisations in the face of all these crises?"

In Brazil: We are living this pandemic as a world war against an invisible and powerful enemy. We have already been in a terrible economic crisis for months. We must therefore support and encourage solidarity, cooperation and not competition.

■ INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The NGO Committee on Ageing congratulates Claudia Mahler of Austria from the German National Institute for Human Rights on her recent appointment as the new independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older people. She was

appointed at the end of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council on 13 March 2020.

Claudia Mahler is a long-time advocate for the rights of the elderly and works closely with the Committee.

Claudia began her mandate in May, when the current independent expert ended her six-year term. On this occasion, the Committee wishes to thank Rosita Kornfeld-Matte for her dedication and excellent work as the first United Nations independent expert on the rights of older people. (Communiqué of the NGO Committee on Ageing).

■ NEWS OF THE CHURCH

The Dicastery for the Integral Development of Man: Launch of the 'Laudato Si' Year.

...The message of Laudato Si' today is as prophetic as it was in 2015. The encyclical, in fact, offers us a moral and spiritual compass to guide us in this common journey, aiming at creating a more fraternal, peaceful and durable new way of life, united in love, compassion, solidarity and a more harmonious relationship with the earth, our common home. COVID-19 has clearly highlighted the deep interconnection and interdependence that exists between us all. To begin to imagine a post-pandemic world, we must first take an integral approach, "for everything is intimately connected. Today's problems require a view that takes into account all aspects of the global crisis" (LS, 137).

The Dicastery for the Integral Development of Man is pleased to announce that from May 24, 2020 to May 24, 2021, a special year will be set

aside for the celebration of the anniversary of Laudato Si'. ... We invite everyone to join us. The urgency of the situation is such that it requires immediate, global and unified responses at all levels, local and regional, national and international. In particular, it is necessary to create a "popular movement" from the roots up, and an alliance among all men of good will. As Pope Francis reminds us, "we can all work together as God's instruments for the care of creation, each with his own culture and experience, his own initiatives and skills". (LS, 14)

■ NEWS OF MEMBER

FIAMC : "Our website (<https://www.fiamc.org/tag/coronavirus/>) has three special pages listing the activities of Catholic doctors during the pandemic (in English, French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese) :

- Speech by Prof. Bernard Ars, President of the FIAMC: The Post-Covid-19 Pandemic - New Socio-Medical Future
- Pentecostal Message of Bishop Jacques Suaudeau, Ecclesiastical Assistant
- UNESCO and COVID-19
- ...

In addition, last March, to compensate for the lack of meetings during the pandemic, the FEAMC created a multi-lingual WhatsApp group, which is monitored daily."

■ CRESCENDO : NEW WEBSITE

The Crescendo Worldwide Network has a new site under the address:
www.reseaucrescendo.org

■ AGENDA

Meeting in Paris on 1 October 2020

Our aim, during this meeting, is to share our experiences and concerns - certainly varied according to the character of our organisations – concerning the **inclusion of Elders in society**: How to recreate, maintain, comfort and develop a **real social link** between these people wherever they are?

In practice, how do we help the elderly person to come up with a plan that keeps them connected to society, that puts them in touch with society, in connection with others?

During the Congress "The Richness of Years" organized in the Vatican by the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life (29-31 January 2020), the leaders of the Dicastery emphasized: "Valuing the gifts and charisms of older people; supporting families and being present beside them; nurturing the spirituality of older people: There is no need for strategies, but for human relationships from which networks of collaboration and solidarity can emerge. »

The following organizations have agreed to participate in the October meeting:

The Daughters of Charity
The FAFCE (Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe)
The Deaconesses of Reuilly
ATD Fourth World
The Brothers of Charity of Ghent
Hope and life

We hope to receive more of these positive responses in the future.