



## NEWSLETTER

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Family Solidarity

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## EDITORIAL

In these days of restricted travel due to the pandemic, it will not be possible to have an Annual General Meeting of Family Solidarity, except on line! The notice for the online AGM on the 19<sup>th</sup> December is below and you will see that if you have a computer, laptop or smart phone, and are

connected to the internet, you can request a link to join the meeting on ZOOM by emailing us at [familysolidarityireland@gmail.com](mailto:familysolidarityireland@gmail.com) You may also send motions or items for discussion to us at the same address or by letter post.

Just now, we are all hoping and praying for the end of the pandemic and the availability of an effective but ethical vaccine against Covid-19. Fortunately, there are two vaccine front-runners at the moment - namely the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and the Moderna vaccine, which are not derived from biological materials harvested from voluntarily aborted human materials but that is not the case with the vaccine being developed by British pharma group AstraZeneca and Oxford University

The Vatican addressed the issue in the context of other vaccines (against Rubella and Measles) in a document from 2005 “Moral reflections on vaccines prepared from cells derived from aborted human fetuses”. It concluded

*To summarize, it must be confirmed that:*

- there is a grave responsibility to use alternative vaccines and to make a conscientious objection with regard to those which have moral problems;*
- as regards the vaccines without an alternative, the need to contest so that others may be prepared must*

*be reaffirmed, as should be the lawfulness of using the former in the meantime insomuch as is necessary in order to avoid a serious risk not only for one's own children but also, and perhaps more specifically, for the health conditions of the population as a whole - especially for pregnant women;*

- the lawfulness of the use of these vaccines should not be misinterpreted as a declaration of the lawfulness of their production, marketing and use, but is to be understood as being a passive material cooperation and, in its mildest and remotest sense, also active, morally justified as an extrema ratio due to the necessity to provide for the good of one's children and of the people who come in contact with the children (pregnant women);*
- such cooperation occurs in a context of moral coercion of the conscience of parents, who are forced to choose to act against their conscience or otherwise, to put the health of their children and of the population as a whole at risk. This is an unjust alternative choice, which must be eliminated as soon as possible.*

We should campaign that only ethical vaccines are used in Ireland.

Recently we have had two webinars on the subject of the so called **Dying with Dignity Bill** (see the last Newsletter

No. 88) and we are to have another on Tuesday 1st of December at 7.30 pm. Details of the speaker Léopold Vanbellinghen are below, with a outline of the talk (again if you wish to participate send an email for the link to [familysolidarityireland@gmail.com](mailto:familysolidarityireland@gmail.com) You may also invite others who might be interested to request a link.)

The talk given by Vincent Kemme at the last webinar is below.

In this edition of the newsletter we also have:

- the resolution adopted at the meeting of FAFCE board, which we attended on line on 10<sup>th</sup> November, regarding “The Family is the heart of the post pandemic recovery”;
- an article by Dr Angelo Bottone of the Iona Institute, and also member of Family Solidarity, on “How ‘science’ was used to victimise unmarried mothers”;
- a talk by Cardinal Charles Maung Bo., SDB, Archbishop Yangon (one time Rangoon) Myanmar, on “November 16th – The international day of Tolerance”;
- Another article by Dr Angelo Bottone: “A new campaign to expand the grounds for abortion in Ireland”

We were very fortunate to receive a considerable bequest for the residue of the estate of the late Eileen Curtin, may she rest in Peace, which enabled us to provide support to the World Meeting of Families in 2018, and various ProLife Campaign initiatives, LifeWorks, Gianna Care, Gript.ie, Faith on Fire, the Iona Institute, Family and Media Association, the Catholic Central Library (family related activities), Citizen Go (towards Legal Defence of Caroline Farrow who had to appear in a court of law to defend her right to freedom of expression and to protect children from the radical transgender ideology), Family and Life, Doctors for Life, Doctors for Freedom of Conscience, ADFAM.

We also donated to the Peter McVerry Trust and the Newman Trust.

We were assisted in this as a consequence of your subscriptions, donations and of the generous bequests.

**Can I suggest that our present members might also include Family Solidarity in their wills?**

Family Solidarity will host an on line ZOOM webinar on

## **ASSISTED SUICIDE, EUTHANASIA AND DYING WITH DIGNITY**

**On Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 at 19.30 (Irish time)**

Léopold Vanbellinghen will present a paper on the above topic and it will be followed by a discussion with a panel which will include David Quinn of the Iona Institute.

It will be necessary to preregister for the Webinar by email to [familysolidarityireland@gmail.com](mailto:familysolidarityireland@gmail.com)

A link to the Zoom webinar will be sent only to those registered.

Léopold Vanbellinghen works as Research officer at the European Institute of Bioethics (IEB) in Brussels. Founded in 2001, the IEB has set itself the goal of contributing to the elaboration of bioethics based on the respect for and protection of each human being, from conception until natural death. The IEB seeks to inform, enlighten and raise the awareness of the general public and political decision makers on bioethical risks and related social issues. It focuses on the situation on Belgium and, more broadly, in

Europe, regarding abortion, assisted reproduction, end of life, biomedical research and freedom of conscience.

Léopold Vanbellinghen is also currently completing a PhD thesis in Law and Religion at the Université catholique de Louvain. His thesis focuses on religious diversity in the workplace, including the issue of conscientious objection by employees.

## **Abstract of the communication**

*Euthanasia in Belgium and Netherlands: How the slippery slope is turning into reality*

In this presentation, we will first come back to the initial objectives and promises of the euthanasia laws in Belgium and in the Netherlands, and then compare its alleged safeguards against abuses with the current reality of euthanasia today. First, we will see how these initial safeguards are actually applied in practice by physicians and have been interpreted by the control commission. We will also look at the gradual extension of the euthanasia laws to new types of cases that were considered unconceivable at the outset.

**Thank you all who have paid their subscriptions and made donations to further our aims. We have put a return envelope with a subscription slip with all copies of the Newsletter as it is simpler than selecting those from whom we have not heard. If you have contributed in the last year, ignore this.**

## FAFCE BOARD RESOLUTION

### THE FAMILY IS THE HEART OF THE POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY

Online Board Meeting, 10 November 2020



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FAFCE

FÉDÉRATION DES ASSOCIATIONS  
FAMILIALES CATHOLIQUES EN EUROPE

FÖDERATION DER KATHOLISCHEN  
FAMILIENVERBÄNDE IN EUROPA

FÉDERATION OF CATHOLIC FAMILY  
ASSOCIATIONS IN EUROPE

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**The future is only possible with children, and the post-pandemic recovery will only be possible with the family. The Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe calls all European Union Member States to urgently include demographic and family policies in the EU recovery plan to ensure a sustainable future for Europe after the pandemic.**

Considering that families have been in the front line of the pandemic and have demonstrated their crucial function of basic natural cell of society;

Considering the significant unpaid work carried out by families in these times of pandemic;

Considering that families suffer from greater economic difficulties and face numerous obstacles while ensuring their role;

Recalling FAFCE's Board Resolution "for a Demographic Spring" (Vienna, 13 April 2018), asking to "*consider that a*



*true family policy is not just a mere social support, but represents a forward-looking policy for the common good for an ageing society”;*

Recalling its Board Resolution on “Rebuilding Europe Restarting from the Family” (Malta, 15 May 2019), inviting all European families to *“be protagonists of innovative family policies, considering the family as the generative nucleus which gives life to all sectors of the society, in relation to education, economy and employment”;*

Recalling its Board Resolution on a “Call for a European Natality Pact” (Brussels, 9 October 2019), calling governments *“to improve their family and demographic policies, which must be considered as social and economic investments for the future of Europe”;*

Recalling its Board Resolution on *Families are the front line in the pandemic* (Online Board Meeting, 6 May 2020) inviting all European decision-makers to *“effectively invest in the family and in its human and social capital to move away from the crisis and creating a new starting point for Europe”;*

Recalling the European Commission Report on the *Impact of the Demographic Change* (17 June 2020), which acknowledges that *“over the last weeks and months, the link between demographic structures and the impact and recovery potential has been sharply and often painfully exposed”* and that *“the need for solidarity between*

*generations is one of the driving forces of Europe's recovery".*

Recalling its Open Letter to the Members of the European Council on "Sustainable development only possible through demographic and family policies" (30 July 2020) asking *"for the pragmatism of those who know that our Europe today needs future generations, more than ever before; and this means, concretely, demographic policies"*.

**The Board of FAFCE calls the EU and all EU Member States, in the respect of the subsidiarity principle, to put demographic and family policies at the centre of the European Union Recovery Plan, which will:**

- Provide support to families with children as a top priority in the implementation of the Next Generation EU: emergency policies are crucial to prevent the impoverishment of families and constituting the fair recognition of their commitment during the pandemic;
- Adopt a new paradigm to put the family and family associations at the centre of long-term policies in Europe: family policies should not be considered as a cost but rather as an investment in the formation of human capital for the future of Europe;
- Include the demographic transition in the "twin transition" of the green and digital transitions and promote a triple transition for a sustainable Europe: no

sustainable development being possible without a next generation to uphold it, namely children;

- Implement urgent pro-family policies targeting the reversal of the demographic birth trends as families face uncertainties and financial hardships. Fiscal incentives need to be in place to support pregnant women, and families with children. Support must be such that the likelihood of abortion becomes unthinkable.
- Recognise and support family associations, who create effective activities of solidarity, education and training: they improve and stabilise interpersonal relationships within couples, families and for every person. These networks interpret and represent families, and on the basis of real needs can provide innovative and concrete community solutions to the demographic challenges;
- Promote the intergenerational solidarity: all generations are interdependent and care for each other. In this perspective also healthcare assistance at home and palliative care should be promoted. The elderly are a treasure for our communities and their wisdom should be recognised and valued, children protected and accompanied to grow up in a safe environment, and parents supported in their responsibility of care.

## LIVING WITH DIGNITY IN A SECULARISED WORLD



(This is the text of the webinar given by Dr Vincent Kemme to Family Solidarity on 7<sup>th</sup> November. A video recording is available on our website.)

Dear ladies and gentlemen, members of 'Family Solidarity Ireland', Thank you very much for the kind invitation to deliver my humble contribution to your reflection on the 'Dying with dignity' bill that is moving Ireland closer towards the legalisation of assisted dying. I will briefly present myself and the situation in Belgium and the Netherlands. Then, I want to share some thoughts on the effects of secularisation in our part of the world (of Europe), how to cope with defeat, as Catholics and how - if possible - to turn the tide...

About myself: I am married, father of six and grandfather of two and one in the making, from the Netherlands but living and working in Belgium since 2000. I am a biologist, former teacher in secondary education in The Netherlands and Flanders, the Dutch speaking part of Belgium and a so called 'revert to the faith'. In 2009, I founded 'Biofides', an

apostolate on the relationship between biology and faith, bioethics included.

In that capacity, I am also editor in chief of the Belgian Catholic Medical bulletin 'Acta Medica Catholica', and assistant to the presidency of the World Federation of



Catholic Associations (FIAMC). My wife and I are also co-founders for the Netherlands of the Catholic international Emmanuel-community, and today responsible for its Flemish region.

I have entitled my reflection '*Living with Dignity in a secularised world*'. Let me first give you some geographical and socio-cultural background about The Netherlands and Belgium. Belgium and the Netherlands are together known as 'the Low Countries' in Europe. Belgium is a country with two major languages: Dutch (or Flemish) in the North, French in the South, the capitol, Brussels, being bilingual on paper, but French-speaking in

reality. This is significant because of the linguistic reality of the Dutch speaking world and the interactions between Flanders and the Netherlands, for instance on bio-ethical issues like abortion and euthanasia. Brussels and Wallonia are far more connected to France because of the linguistic and cultural bonds. In ethical issues, Francophone Belgium (Brussels & Wallonia), characterised by a richer catholic heritage from France, has been more reluctant to embrace certain liberal principles, that The Netherlands has adopted in the sixties and seventies, immediately followed by Flanders, although there are also strong liberal forces in French speaking Belgium.

The Netherlands and Belgium were the first two countries in the world to legalise euthanasia and medically assisted suicide, both in 2002. It followed upon the legalisation of abortion in 1981 and 1990 respectively. And the legalisation of abortion was preceded by the widely use of hormonal contraception since the introduction of 'the pill' or hormonal birth control, in the sixties, provoking a real sexual revolution in the whole western world.

I think that it is important to notice that these Low Countries have a strong protestant presence in the north, and a strong secularist (*laïcité*) presence from the south (France). The first being *less clear*, the latter even almost

*without* any morality in the culture. Maybe for that reason, the United Kingdom and France even preceded the Low Countries in legalising abortion. But regarding the end of life, the Low Countries took the lead in the secularisation process. It is also important to know that The Netherlands is a country, strongly tainted by Calvinist Protestantism, whereas Belgium remains predominantly catholic in so far it was and is still a Christian country. The problem with Protestantism, be it Anglican, Calvinist or Lutheran, is that it is more vulnerable for moral relativism than Catholicism, because of the clear teaching of the latter, and the unity in its teaching that is assured by the papacy. This has consequences for the society, in its resistance against secularist tendencies. The problem with French secularism (*laïcité*) is that there is no moral law at all.

The process of secularisation through moral relativism leads to a loss of respect for human life. The legislation of euthanasia is preceded by abortion, which is the bitter fruit of a contraceptive mentality. So in the end, all of Europe appears to fall under the tide wave of secularisation. We still had hopes for Ireland, Poland, Hungary, but nothing is certain. Europe as a whole, not even willing to mention God in its constitution, falls for

the temptation of a materialistic, secular world view, where God does not exist nor objective moral truth, so that everything becomes permissible (Dostoyevsky).

I do not have to explain to you that the acceptance of hormonal contraception does not only inhibit ovulation, but can also prevent the fertilised egg after sexual intercourse from implanting itself in the lining of the uterus, which makes the method not only counter-natural (it deprives willingly the sexual act from its natural finality which is fertility), but also abortifacient: it deliberately takes the life of the human embryo by making its 'survival' and natural development impossible. At that point, abortion, in a very early stage of human life, becomes already a widely accepted fact, long before any legislation has been passed: the so called 'right' to end a human life is 'implanted' in the minds of the citizens, Catholics included: who has listened to the teaching of Paul VI (*Humane vitae*, 1968) and John Paul II (*Theology of the Body*, 1979-1984)? Almost nobody. Even bishops tend to be silent on the matter.

By the acceptance of contraception in our culture, the 'image of God' that husband and wife are as 'a life-giving community of love' is gravely damaged if not destroyed:



the end of the 'real presence' of God in society by the sacrament of marriage. A new world order without God is established where everything is permitted. When 'putting an end to the life of a human being' becomes acceptable, why not in the case of unbearable and hopeless suffering at the end of life, not only for somatic but also for psychiatric patients and even in the case of children. So when euthanasia and assisted suicide become permissible in the minds of the people, it is a matter of time for the legislative process to come to a full legalisation of so called 'mercy killing', in the end in every stage of human life, under more and more circumstances. It is impossible not to see the slippery slope on which we have put our societies. (Card. Willem Eijk of Utrecht).

Are we able to turn the tide? And how?

With the experience of the rest of Europe in mind, to be honest with you, I have little hope that the legalisation of euthanasia in Ireland still can be stopped. If you can, you have to. That's an obvious moral obligation. If not: we still can not remain silent, even if we know that it will not lead to a better result. But without false hope. As Christians, we must be hopeful *and realistic* in the same time. People could accuse us of naivety. Reason is also a gift of God and

it is better to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation, than to be frustrated when our actions do not bear fruit in the short term. Sometimes, we must take our loss. But that is no reason to lose hope for the long term. We are called to keep the faith. Therefore, I want to give you some keys for living in a completely secularised 'modern' society.

## Faith

The first key is the faith itself. How do we live our faith in a hostile secular environment? As members of the Emmanuel Community, we try to develop a deep personal prayer life, rooted in God's presence in the sacraments, especially the sacrament of the eucharist and confession. We want to do that as an individual, as a couple, and as a family. In our prayer, we experience his presence in our everyday life. We learn to have confidence in God in very concrete situations. If God allows our country to go against His laws, Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas would remind us our lack of wisdom that would allow us to understand His plan, but that it is certain that a greater good will come out of this situation. And it is not up to us to decide when and how. So, we try not to say in our prayers: "Be silent, God, your servant is speaking to you",

but “Speak Lord, your servant is listening to you”, like Samuel had to learn many centuries ago.

## Reason

One of the big problems we experience in The Netherlands and Belgium is a gigantic lack of knowledge of the faith and the understanding of the teaching of the Church, having no answers to the ‘big questions’ that the modern world confronts us with: in our couples, families with children. To counter the oftentimes aggressive post-modern philosophies of our times, we need to have some understanding of how the Church has answered these questions in the recent past or even centuries ago. Or we must know the way to obtain this knowledge. In this way, we can provide answers to these questions that are raised by our contemporaries: a way of giving answers through apologetics that is characterised by gentleness: no truth without love. It seems to me also very important for our contemporaries, to understand the reasonability of our beliefs and principles. Faith and morals of the Catholic Church are reasonable, in accordance to science, and therefore accessible for any thinking being that has an open mind. And when we are active in a particular field of expertise, be it: law, politics, science, medicine, family,

society, church: that we excel in our knowledge of that field.

## Practice

Being filled with the personal love of God for us, through our prayer, we receive the love and compassion for our neighbour, our enemies included, even our lawmakers. Do we pray for our lawmakers and influencers as much as we criticise them? Are we willing to have a respectful conversation with them? Through our understanding of faith and morality, we are able to face the challenge of the encounter with the modern mentality, always distinguishing between the person and his or her convictions. As truth is always accompanied by love, we always try to remain respectful with the person, with whom we may vehemently disagree.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to evangelisation, always prepared to bear witness of our beliefs. This is a call to be witnesses. I think that witness should first and foremost be a testimony by example, rather than by words. People look at us how we *are*, not only what we *say*. Our words must be in accordance with our attitudes. A real Christian is recognisable by his

*reactions*, rather than his *actions*. We must also respect the free will of every human being, because God does so. That means that I prefer to *witness* of my convictions in practice, rather than trying to *convince* other people. Changing someone's opinion and way of life involves an *act of the free will* and that is not *our* domain: it is the sacred space inside every human being, Christian or not. We have to respect that, if we believe in God. There is a moment that we have to accept that the other person stays the way he is. Let us change the world primarily by changing ourselves, rather than the other person. In our dialogue, we should always distinguish between the person and his/her beliefs and acts. The other person must always feel respected, even when you vehemently disagree with him or her.

That does not mean that we should be passive or silent; on the contrary: a Christian is proactive in doing the will of God: we are apostles, missionaries, sent by Jesus to evangelise the world. The seeds of the truth that we spread around us will bear fruit, but we may never know how and when. As lay people, we can spread the gospel of life in every place where God calls us: the family, the workplace, in society, in politics, within and outside the Church, ... but always with kindness, understanding,

compassion, in dialogue rather than in fights and disputes. No truth without love, but also: no love without truth. We will also have to be patient. It may take decades or more before the Western society returns to its Christian roots. See the signals of the times and use the opportunities that Providence provides. Maybe, the Covid pandemic is a sign of the times: it forces people to return to what is essential in life, to basic truths, and maybe... to prayer, to God. But it took Christianity three centuries to Christianise the Roman Empire and America 2,5 centuries to abolish slavery. So be patient and do not count on seeing the results in your lifetime (that would be egoistic): for God, a thousand years is like one day. Maybe our children or even grandchildren will pick up the fruits of what we do today.

A Christian also accepts persecution, suffering, exclusion, even 'martyrdom'. That is in the end what *bearing witness* means. It may also be helpful to realise that "our kingdom is not of this earth", as Jesus says in the Gospel. Of course, we are called to do good and, in this way, improve the world, but our world, our country, our society, may not become an idol, as if nothing else counts than restoring Christianity. The early Christians did not try to change the world, but lived the Christian faith in a heroic way, and

that changed the word. In the end, our destiny is not here but elsewhere, which is a reason for hope, even if our country chooses the wrong way. We do what is good, because we are children of God, not only in order to make the world a better place.

And please let us always be joyful! Sad and frustrated Catholics are such a bad testimony to the faith. The same is true for Catholics that place themselves above other people because of them knowing the truth of God. Everything we receive is grace, a gift from God, so humility is the attitude that should characterise us. We are at the service of other people, not placed above them. So, rejoice always, also when things turn bad, politically. Let nothing disturb us, God suffices (Theresia of Avila).

## Conclusion

Is everything lost, if euthanasia and assisted suicide are legalised in Ireland? It seems to go in that direction. No, nothing is lost. Maybe for now, but not for ever... So, try to get over it as soon as possible (although disappointment is a natural reaction) and renew your trust in God. Ignatius taught us his 'holy indifference': it does not really matter whether things go well in my life or

not, because I am with God. So be a witness of truth, love, hope and joy, whatever becomes of our western society. Let us be witnesses of the dignity of human life, where our society misunderstands completely what dignity means. “It's not about how much you do, but how much love you put into what you do that counts”, as Mother Teresa said. So, in stead of the proposed ‘Dying with dignity’, we try to live with dignity in a a secular world, which means nothing less than being a Saint. The importance of catholic movements for the family can not be underestimated. They can help us to adopt the right attitude in face of the secularisation that is taking place. “May the Irish people always support marriage through personal commitment and through positive social and legal action”, a quotation I found on your website. I can only wish you Gods blessings and help in your strivings.

Thank you very much! Vincent Kemme

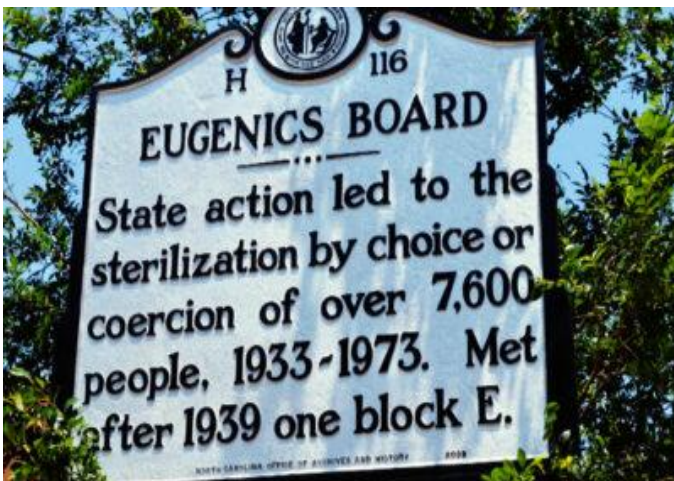
Dr Vincent Kemme is a biologist from the Netherlands, former teacher at – amongst others – the European Schools in Brussels, trained in the relationship science and faith, with supplementary studies in theology, philosophy and bioethics). Eleven years ago he founded ‘Biofides’, an apostolate on biology, faith and ethics ([www.biofides.eu](http://www.biofides.eu)). In that capacity, he is the editor in chief of the Belgian Catholic



Medical Magazine, *Acta Medica Catolica*, of the Belgian Catholic Medical Association St. Luke: [www.cathmed.be](http://www.cathmed.be), and assistant to the presidency of the World Federation of Catholic Medical Associations, based in the Vatican: [www.fiamc.org](http://www.fiamc.org).

Dr Kemme and his wife are members of the international Catholic Emmanuel Community, founded in 1972 in Paris, France: [www.emmanuel.info](http://www.emmanuel.info), and are co-founders of its branch in the Netherlands, and – today – responsible for the Flemish branch of the community. The Emmanuel Community is a non-residential community that reunites young adults, lay people celibate or married, consecrated celibate brothers and sisters in the apostolate for the kingdom of God, and priests, and we are recognised as an international association of the faithful of Pontifical Right.

## HOW ‘SCIENCE’ WAS USED TO VICTIMISE UNMARRIED MOTHERS



In Ireland in the past, unmarried mothers and their children were harshly treated as a result of a potent brew of Victorian values and a strict application of Catholic morality. But as we will see,

in other countries such as Britain and Sweden, the ‘science’ of eugenics was often applied instead, with fearsome results.

This emerges, for instance, when we consider the debate around the Mental Deficiency Act that in 1913 created the legal categories of “feeble-minded person” and “moral imbecile” in the UK. Those categories related more to the ability to behave according to social expectations, particularly with regard to sexuality, than to abnormal psychological traits. This law was not repealed until 1959. Alfred Frank Tredgold was the most influential ‘mental deficiency’ specialist of the time. A leading member of the Eugenics Society, he wrote the ‘Text-book of Mental Deficiency (Amentia)’, the “generally accepted standard work”, according to the *British Medical Journal*.

In this book Tredgold presents a number of working-class young women as case studies for the diagnosis of mental deficiency. This diagnosis is clearly related, in most of the case studies, to sex and pregnancy outside marriage.

Under the Mental Deficiency Act, thousands of young women who had children outside marriage were incarcerated or put in institutions because of fears that they would otherwise become pregnant again.

As Carolyn Oldfield explains in her PhD thesis entitled, ‘Growing up Good? Medical, Social Hygiene and Youth Work Perspectives on Young Women, 1918-1939’: “While this incarceration could extend throughout women’s

fertile years and after, authorities directed their efforts towards identifying and segregating adolescent and young adult women, in order to prevent what was expected to be a cycle of repeated pregnancies and short-term recourse to the workhouse”.

Josiah Wedgwood, the main opponent of the Act in the British Parliament, maintained that the legislation purposely targeted women who went into workhouses to have children. (The workhouses were often the alternative to mother and baby homes in Britain as well as Ireland).

Outside the Parliament, one of the few opponents was G. K. Chesterton, who also fought eugenics (human selection) throughout his life. He seized on the subjectivity and almost infinite elasticity of terms like ‘defective’ or ‘lunacy’.

He called the Bill “a scheme to impose all the segregation, ‘control,’ and loss of citizenship which are the tragic consequences of lunacy on a very large class of people who are not lunatics. ... the new Bill will enable officials to treat as defective infants a vast and vague multitude of grown-up people who have suffered from any one of a million unnamed accidents of daily life; a number not only indefinite but infinite. They can be seized upon any excuse or none.”

In early twentieth century, proponents of eugenics were particularly focused in identifying the “defectives” as they

believed that mental deficiency could be passed from one generation to another, and consequently deteriorate the quality of the overall population.

In the UK, the eugenicists failed to secure the sterilisation of mental defectives – which Winston Churchill had advocated – due to the opposition coming from sectors of the medical profession, the Catholic Church, and the labour movement.

They succeeded instead in the Nordic countries, particularly in Sweden, and in some American states. About 170,000 forced sterilisations were performed between the 1920s and the late 1970s in Scandinavian countries. For this purpose, the Swedish Institute for Racial Biology was set up at Uppsala University in 1922. Together with sterilisation, the Nordic governments enacted marriage limitation, castration and abortion laws. Cambridge historian Professor Véronique Mottier writes that among the victims of these policies were “socially deviant groups such as unmarried mothers”.

Tellingly, she says that while “feminists were to be found on both sides of the debate – supporting and opposing eugenics – most opposition came from liberals, who rejected state intervention in private life, and Churches, particularly the Catholic Church.”

She points out: “Social democrat reformers were amongst the pioneers of eugenic ‘science’ as well as policy practices in Europe. A number of eugenic policies such as

forced sterilisation of ‘degenerates’ were strongly promoted by the Left and were first applied in countries such as Switzerland and Sweden.”

Eugenic policies also included “education programmes, non-voluntary incarceration in psychiatric clinics, removal of children from parental homes, prohibition to marry, as well as measures that specifically targeted vagrants, ‘gypsies’, and, more generally, socially deviant groups such as unmarried mothers, ‘sexual deviants’, or people with physical or mental impairments”, Prof. Mottier says.

In Canada, in 1928 the province of Alberta created a Eugenic Board that approved more than 5,000 procedures of involuntary sterilisations on people classified as “mentally deficient”, mostly women. This happened with the participation of leading scientists of the time.

In the United States, compulsory sterilisation laws were adopted by over 30 states and affected more than 60,000 individuals who were mentally disabled or belonged to socially disadvantaged groups.

As mentioned, sterilisation was never legislated for in the UK. Following the Mental Deficiency Act, detention in institutions was the chosen road.

Once a clear association between young women’s sexual activity and their identification as ‘mentally defective’ was established, they would be practically incarcerated without any trial or recourse to the adult penal system.

The marriage of pregnant ‘mentally defective’ girls was also discouraged because it would make them more likely to bring up their children themselves, rather than giving them for adoption. But also, because the stability of marriage would encourage them to have more children and, in this way, to pass on them their “defective genes”. We imagine that once religion was removed from the picture, unmarried mothers would be treated humanely but when ‘science’ was applied instead, we got eugenics and huge levels of cruelty.

Angelo Bottone

### **Extract from COMECE Statement - 18/11/20**

In the light of the recently published Pope Francis’ letter on Europe, the message “*Regaining hope and solidarity*” written by the Presidents of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union addresses mostly the fight against Covid-19 and the common efforts we are all called to make to ensure a fair, just and person-centred recovery.

Through this message, the Catholic Church in the European Union restates its full commitment to the construction of Europe. Together with its founding values of “*solidarity, freedom, inviolability of the human dignity,*

*democracy, rule of law, equality and defence and promotion of human rights – state the Bishops – [the European project] has brought peace and prosperity to our continent”.*

*“Together with other sister Churches and ecclesial communities, with members of other religious traditions and people of good will – continue the message - the Catholic Church in Europe strives to build a universal fraternity that leaves no one out”.*

In this difficult and painful moment, the Catholic Church calls on all of us, including the EU institutions and the national governments, to act in solidarity and hope, unity and dialogue, trust and responsibility. *“Faith – the Presidents state - calls us to go out of ourselves and see in the other, especially in those who suffer and stand on the margins of our streets, a brother and sister and also to be willing to give our lives for them”.*

The Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union

## **NOVEMBER 16<sup>th</sup> - THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF TOLERANCE**

*by Cardinal Charles Maung Bo., SDB, Archbishop of Yangon, Myanmar.*

It is the day we remember the great apostle of non violence, Mahatma Gandhi. It is he who said: An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind. In memory of his

birthday, the UN has declared this day as the tolerance day.

This year this day comes amidst tears: tears of nearly 1.2 million people who died to Covid. Many of them were left to die in their last moment in depressing loneliness and buried unwept and unsung. They went away without saying a good bye. Their dear ones are left back with tears. This year's Tolerance day painfully reminds us: adore the unquenchable tears of the families of Covid victims. Avoid intolerance. We are all one in this.

Covid spared none: it infected leaders of Super powers. It killed all races. The virus reminds us: united we stand, divided we fall. In many ways the virus is the prophet of doom. Hatred, Xenophobia, intolerance will wound the whole humanity. Stand together, save humanity. Celebrate dignity in diversity. Compassion for the suffering is the only vaccine against the global war against the merciless virus. We shall win only when we treat our brothers and sisters tears as our own. Adore them. Tears have no color, no religion, no race. We are all one in this challenge to our own existence.

Even the very simple act of wearing a mask, is not only to protect us, but to think of the other. The time of treating others as my enemies is gone; if I save my brother, whoever it is, whatever religion he belongs to; I save myself. There is no salvation without my brothers and



sisters. Covid has united us in our sorrow, in our brokenness. Every tear is my tear, every death diminishes me. I am my brother's keeper. Jesus showed a great example, preaching tolerance, urging his followers to "pray for your enemies, for those who persecute you." He had the great courage to forgive even from the cross those who tortured him. Lord Buddha urged all to feel one not only with living beings, but even with trees and all living things. We are inter dependent, inter being, connected at the core.



More than ever we are reminded of our human fragility, vulnerable mortality. Life is short; it is useless to spend it

in mutual hatred. We are taught a great lesson in these days by the extra ordinary poignant witness of the frontline health professionals; the sacred generosity of volunteers in quarantine centres. Service is their religion. In the world thousands of doctors and nurses have died, becoming martyrs for human fellowship, compassion and mercy. Karuna and Metta (Compassion and loving

kindness in Buddhism) have become the two eyes of human family. Let the moving sacrifice of these men and women inspire us to treat one another with great dignity.

Diversity is dignity. Unity in Diversity. Myanmar is a colourful country of 8 major tribes and 135 sub tribes. We belong to various spiritual traditions, all teaching love and tolerance. It is a joyous display of colours, mellifluous confluence of varied tones. We are a beautiful people, because we are different, not some carbon copy of the nauseating uniformity. We are not lifeless robots. We are human beings; our unpredictability brings joy, our difference in skin colour, our language, our race makes humanity a huge canvas of scintillating beauty.

We have seen the wounds of intolerance. In the 20th century alone human beings killed nearly 135 million in intolerance. It fought two world wars; killed millions and brought misery on more millions. The wounds of intolerance have not healed. It is festering. This century saw more cultural wars.

More than ever our existence as human race is threatened. Climate change can kill millions, explosions of Pandemic can threaten human civilization. Without unity an invisible virus can wipe out. Fall in love, stay in love, save humanity.

Love is the supreme virtue. Love is the identity card of every human being. Christianity teaches: Love one another, that is the greatest law of life. Our enemies are our best teachers. Respect them. They have exposed our prejudices.

Myanmar stands at the cross roads of history. Yet another peaceful election is over. Democracy is a plant growing slowly. The heat of intolerance can scorch that tender plant. We all can be plunged into dark recess of hatred. We have suffered for six long decades because we fought with our differences; time has come to unite with our similarities. The dream of the Golden land is possible, if we can forgive and make all our wars and conflicts history.

Once again I plead with all: Look at the tragedy and tears of the pandemic. It spared none. It discriminated none. All fell victims. The tears are the same, urging us to forget our differences. Never tolerate intolerance.

We are one, because our tears are same. Adore our tears, avoid intolerance. Thank you, God bless you all.

## **A NEW CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND THE GROUNDS FOR ABORTION IN IRELAND**

The Irish abortion law is to be reviewed next year and the campaign to expand its grounds has already started. A recent newspaper article presented the tragic story of an

unborn baby who had received a diagnosis of a chromosome abnormality. As this diagnosis fell outside the terms of the Irish abortion law, the parents of the baby went to England to have a termination. The tone of the article and the comments that it received from pro-abortion activists, indicate that they desire to include, as grounds for abortion, also cases of serious but not-fatal disabilities. Two more articles, written by three medical researchers based in Cork, go into the same directions.

Before the abortion referendum, cases of what are improperly called “fatal foetal abnormalities” (FFA) were often presented during public debates, even if these cases count as a tiny percentage of the overall number abortions. (1.5pc according to the official Irish 2019 report) What is considered a FFA is not clear, as it is not a medical definition, and so the strategy of the pro-choice side has been to constantly enlarged this concept.

In December 2017, the Oireachtas Committee on the Eighth Amendment recommended abortion “without gestational limit where the unborn child has a foetal abnormality that is likely to result in death before or shortly after birth.”(2.13) In February 2018, Minister Simon Harris presented a drafted legislation that would allow abortion without any time limit if “there is present a condition affecting the foetus that is likely to lead to the death of the foetus either before birth or shortly after

birth". It should be noted the first change from "result to death", as per the Committee report, to "lead to death", as per the drafted legislation.

As we will see, at every step the concept of what condition should be considered "fatal" expands and becomes more flexible.

Many believed that that drafted legislation would become the law and they voted accordingly. But, Together for Yes, the umbrella organization that campaigned to remove the constitutional protection of the unborn, supported abortion also for abnormalities that are not fatal, and this continues to be their target. After the referendum, Minister Simon Harris changed the definition of FFA once again. In the legislation approved in December 2018, abortion is permitted even when the foetus can survive up to 28 days. "Fatal condition", which in the draft legislation meant a death expected "before or shortly after birth", now applies also to a death expected to occur within 28 days from birth. Nonetheless, the pro-choice side was not satisfied with this limit at the time and now they are trying to change it again.

In February this year, three medical researchers from UCC published a paper lamenting the fact that the current legislation does not include a list of fatal conditions, and sometimes there is a combination of anomalies that could have fatal outcomes, even if they when considered individually would not qualify for an abortion. The same

researchers published a paper in September in which they interviewed ten doctors who perform abortions in Ireland. Those doctors said that they are afraid of being prosecuted if the FFA diagnosis is incorrect. (This happened, for instance, in the Holles Street Maternity Hospital).

A diagnosis being fatal “depends on an individual definition of what is fatal. Relating to prognosis, participants identified that ‘there is never any certainty’ when death will occur, that there is always an ‘outliner’ (a baby that will live longer than expected). A couple of doctors commented on the relief experienced when the baby dies, confirming their diagnosis was ‘right’.”

This is shocking and disturbing, even if limited to a small number of abortionist doctors. Those doctors, and also the authors of the study, want to remove the 28-day time limit of the current legislation, so that abortion would be permitted for a broader series of conditions that are serious but not always fatal.

As there is no gestational limit in the legislation for those abortions, they could take place quite late in the pregnancy, with the concrete possibility that the baby survives the termination and is born alive. Then, what should be done if this happens? Should the baby be killed after birth or should it be cared until natural death occur? Bear in mind that they could survive way beyond 28 days.

This is a dilemma that the abortionist doctors are already facing, according to the UCC study. Half of them experienced conflict with neonatologists as it is “unclear as to who will look after those babies if a baby is born alive following a termination by induction and without feticide, resulting them (the abortionists) begging people to help them in providing palliative care. .... Some expressed that feticide needed to be mandatory for late gestations because it was in the best interest of the baby not to be born alive. A couple of doctors advocated that feticide should be a parental choice.”

This is the grim reality of late term abortions. It is unbelievable that some want to expand the current statutory limits but, as we have seen, the slippery slope is real. The next step, after removing the 28-day time limit, will be euthanasia for the newborns. When the legislation will be revised next year, will politicians have the courage to resist the endless requests of the pro-choice lobby and stop this deadly barbarity?

Angelo Bottone

### **Pope Francis Prayer Intentions December 2020**

For a life of prayer. We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

## **Notice of AGM 2020**

### **Agenda of AGM 19<sup>th</sup> December 2020 (on Zoom)**

**From 2pm**

**Informal gathering and greetings before start of the formal meeting to allow participants to join**

**2.30 pm Formal Welcome and Opening Prayer  
Minutes of the last AGM (9<sup>th</sup> November 2019)**

**Activity Report 2020**

**Approval of the Financial Report for 2019**

**Appointment of Auditors**

**Address Speaker to be announced**

**Any other business**

**Informal discussion of other relevant topics.**

Reminder: We would be pleased to hear any records of our early days of Family Solidarity that you might have, and if considered sufficiently important or an only copy, permission to borrow it and copy it for return to you as you wish.

We may be advised of any materials or recollections you may have by email or by post.