



NEWSLETTER

March 2021

Family Solidarity

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EDITORIAL

The continued lockdown due to the Pandemic is getting tedious for most of us, and while those of us who have smart phones or laptops may have been able to keep visual contact with our friends and clubs etc., and attend online webinars and meetings, Masses, funerals, I suspect that most of our older members have not this facility. For

them they have to rely on Mass on the TV (EWTN daily and RTE on Sundays) some of us can “attend” mass in our local churches where they installed webcams, all of us are suffering from Eucharistic starvation being unable to receive the Blessed Sacraments. Churches may be open for private prayer and we have to rely on Spiritual Communion to supplement our prayer life.

While we have an active web page again, I realise, only those of you who have access to the internet see it. So this Newsletter is for you. (However, for those who have, we do advertise some online activities which should be of interest to you).

Hopefully, most of our older members will have access shortly to vaccines against the Covid virus with the rest of us not too long after.

I noted recently that with a President that claims to be a Catholic and supportive of abortion, controversy in the American Catholic Press as whether procuring, providing and supporting abortion was the most serious sin, it set me thinking on the issue.

Always keeping in mind that serious sin (mortal sin) or any sin always requires full knowledge and full consent, and realising that there is much confusion on the matter spread by the media whether traditional print and radio and TV media or so-called social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, etc.) it occurred to me that the

fundamental root of sexual related sin is the lack of basic Chastity.

Lack of chastity and purity fuels the explosion of promiscuity of modern times, hook-up culture, sex outside marriage. (Dubbed by its proponents as the Sexual Revolution, sexual “freedom” etc.) This leads to the demand for artificial contraception and for abortion. Apart from moral issues, it has also led to the dramatic increase in sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. (It is interesting to note that in the statistics of the occurrence of STDs, vanishingly small numbers of nuns have suffered this disease.)

While greed and ill temper, violence and lack of temperance (in drink, narcotics and food) are regarded as socially unacceptable, chastity and modesty are scorned. So, if we wish to reduce the carnage of abortion (far greater number of fatalities than with any pandemic in modern times) we have to start with promoting chastity.

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.

In this edition of the newsletter we also have:

- The essence of the talk given by the President of FAFCE at our Webinar on 13th February *“The fundamental nucleus of society (the Family) and of the Church is the basis for a new future”*
- Copy of the letter we sent to RTE and the Broadcasting authority regarding the scurrilous section of the NYE Countdown Show.
- Submission on the “Dying with Dignity bill 2020” made to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice.
- FAFCE-NWFE White paper on “Protecting women from maternal mobbing”.
- COMECE-FAFCE reflection on the role of the elderly in times of demographic change.

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.

Pope Francis proclaims “Year of St Joseph”



With the Apostolic Letter “Patris corde” (“With a Father’s Heart”), Pope Francis recalls the 150th anniversary of the declaration of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church. To mark the occasion, the Holy Father has proclaimed a “Year of Saint Joseph” from today, 8 December 2020 to 8 December 2021.

The Apostolic letter may be downloaded at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco-lettera-ap_20201208_patris-corde.html

The Pope ends his letter with a Prayer to Saint Joseph

***Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.***

***Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil.***

Amen.

The Holy Father has designated the year from 8th December 2020 to 8th December 2021, as the Year of Saint Joseph.

We will host a second Webinar on the 13th March 2021 at 11 am, featuring Father Colm Mannion O.P. who will give a talk on Saint Joseph in his role in the family.

You may register to attend by sending an email to familysolidarityireland@gmail.com, and we will send you a link for Saturday 13th March.

Our Webinar with the President of FAFCE on 13th February was unfortunately not recorded but the essence of the President's talk is as he wrote for the L'Osservatore Romano last September. Below is a slightly edited version:

The fundamental nucleus of society (the Family) and of the Church is the basis for a new future



Restore the broken relationship with the family

by Vincenzo Bassi

During this health crisis, all of us have lived through our families to the full, and for many, it has been beautiful. In the same way, it was possible to meditate and reflect on the meaning of the commitment and function of Catholic family associations. In this regard, re-reading *Amoris letitia*, *Laudato si'* and *Familiaris consortio*, the invitation is always the same: the Church not only cannot lose contact with the "people" but must support and accompany them.

Starting precisely from these readings, as president of Catholic family associations in Europe (FAFCE), I asked myself a question: how can our service to families change after a health crisis, which leaves families with more uncertainties about the future and, often, in the general indifference?

Several times, in his teaching, Pope Francis invites us to be close to families, especially if they are fragile, also because in fragility it is easier to meet the Lord. Being close to families means concretely putting the family at the centre, and this because the family is the fundamental nucleus of every relationship. On 1 June 2017, receiving our Federation, he encouraged us a lot in this sense. Interpreting his thought and also that of his predecessors, perhaps we can borrow a Latin brocardo: *ubi familia, ibi ecclesia et communitas*.

Well, this direct connection between the family, on the one hand, and the Church and the communities on the other, was clear and indisputable in the period preceding the industrial revolution.

At that time, the family performed a main function at the service of the community, being its economic and productive nucleus. Not only was the work of the family necessary but also its ability to ensure, in an autonomous and subsidiary way, the survival of the entire community. The Church, through her shepherds, was at the service of the family, accompanying it and indicating the way to God.

The Church gave meaning to people's lives, in the proclamation of the Resurrection, teaching hope and charity. The concreteness of God was thus experienced by families, who became the place for the transmission of the faith and the Church themselves. But not only that, the very relationship of the Church with the sovereigns was also based on this role of service of the Church towards the family, so much so that many pastors also performed an important function of interpreting the needs of families towards the sovereign. .

However, it must be said that between families and the Church, now as then, help has always been mutual: families offer vocations to the Church, pastors, thanks to the accompaniment of families, are encouraged to renew, with new words , the teaching of the good news.

With the industrial revolution, the family lost its centrality. From being a productive centre, it began to perform an instrumental function. The centre of the production system was in fact not so much in the families as in the factories, to which the families provided workforce ensuring quality human capital.

In this context, the Church had to manage the ever more absolute power of the state. Where possible, it was, in fact, the Church which often suggested common sense to the rulers, on the one hand, and to keep the community of families together, on the other, thus guaranteeing social peace.

Despite the difficulties and contingencies, the families remained solid and also the Church never stopped carrying out her prophetic role of light in the world alongside the families, who could always count on holy pastors and capable of not making the families forget the presence of God, consoling them in hope.

In the recent past, this role of the Church has been more difficult to play.

The reason is simple, families have no longer only offered labour, and its members have become consumers, thus giving strength not only to the state but also to multinationals and financial power.

As a consequence of this, unfortunately, "consumerism" has infected our society. The "consumption" of goods, such as drugs, has thus confused people, who are increasingly finding it difficult to give meaning to their lives. Even the family has no longer been experienced as a place of realization of the person, a person who has thus become more individual.

Our families, even Catholic ones, have remained increasingly lonely and fragile.

Today, in the era of globalization, the situation has even worsened.

Capitalism no longer seeks labour from families. Thanks to mechanized manufacturing processes, the production system does not need that human capital formed only in the family. It moves and establishes itself, as long as

labour is cheap, in developing countries. In doing so, these countries will be increasingly exploited, while the families of others, lacking decent wages, recklessly resort to debt to maintain their standard of living.

Precisely because of this increasingly high indebtedness, in those countries, families today are not even needed to generate the consumers of tomorrow.

It is no coincidence that the demographic winter (further worsened by the current crisis) is jeopardizing the future of our society, precisely today when the family, having no social and economic role, is no longer considered "useful" to the system productive.

It is sad to say, but capitalism today regards the family as a dead branch, a terminally ill person.

Nowadays, big finance looks to the family only because it is interested in its savings, which in some countries (such as Italy) are huge, and are considered a treasure to be appropriated.

Once the savings have also been lost (by more or less legitimate means), the family will certainly not disappear; however, she will not be allowed to carry out any economic and social function in an autonomous and subsidiary manner, and she will be treated like any illegal immigrant, on the margins of society.

Before this moment arrives, we need to stop and reflect on our future and that of families.

However, it must be done now. Indeed, beyond sociological, political or economic analyzes, one thing is certain is that, in this context, the family suffers, among other things, above all from loneliness, and if the family suffers, the least, the marginalized suffer more. In fact, no other institution can help, as do families, the poor, orphans, immigrants in a continuous and non-emergency way.

But not only that, if the family suffers, the Church also suffers.

Without a family, the Church is without a flock, and without the Church, the family is without a shepherd.

This indissoluble bond is too often taken for granted, both by families and by the Church. The first has lost the spiritual dimension due to secularization, the second perhaps sometimes forgets the smell of the flock also due to objective difficulties (such as the scarcity of priests or the lack of availability of the families themselves), which make less easy contact with the people.

Here, precisely to recover this indissoluble bond between families and the Church, at the end of this long discussion and after much reflection, as president of Catholic family associations in Europe, I feel like raising the question of a new pact between families and their shepherds.

In 2015, in Florence, the Holy Father spoke clearly of a change of era, encouraging all of us to look to the future

without fear, remaining united as a people and trusting in the Lord who will lead us on the roads of the world.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to spend our life as baptized laity, striving to be creative and missionary, recovering, in an integral way, reciprocity and understanding with our pastors.

I think that Catholic families, after this period of health crisis, have acquired a new awareness of the necessary and irreplaceable role of pastors. Without pastors, without their guidance and their physical attendance, even the Eucharist risks becoming a virtual rite emptied of its reality and concreteness, as Pope Francis also underlined last Easter.

However, our pastors cannot be left alone in this very difficult service, but they must be helped to heal the discomfort of solitude, accompanying families in closeness, truth and hope.

This is why our associations will have to play a new role, without being afraid - as the president of the Forum of Italian family associations, Gianluigi De Palo, says - of "getting their hands dirty" and "washing the feet" of our families, also facilitating the maintenance of that indissoluble unity between families and the Church.

A PROTEST LETTER TO THE RTE COMPLAINTS DEPARTMENT

This is the text of the letter sent by our chairman to the RTE Complaints Department.



Dear Sir/Madam

We refer to the NYE Countdown Show fronted by Kathryn Thomas and Deirdre O’Kane broadcast on 31/12/2020 that contained two items described as ‘Waterford Whispers’ news reports, presented by former RTÉ News presenter Aengus MacGrianna. In one of these ‘Waterford Whispers’ news reports God is described as being ‘the latest figure to be implicated in ongoing sexual harassment scandals’ and uses further language that implies unlawful impregnation by God of a Middle Eastern woman etc. The offensive passage was broadcast between 45 mins 28 secs and 45 mins 50 secs into the programme as measured on the RTE Player recording that is still currently available.

We hereby complain and submit that what was broadcast in this particular piece is *prima facie*:

1. Deeply, grossly and unreasonably offensive to Christian citizens of the State among whom we the complainants

number ourselves. In its intentional ridicule of Almighty God in a manner that was known or should have been known to RTE to be grossly offensive to Christian believers as follows:

2. In its portrayal of Almighty God as a foolish and immoral elderly rapist caricature figure in the acted out part of the sketch that accompanied the so called news item that was deliberately made in a manner that Christians through the centuries have regarded as blasphemous.
3. In its obvious allusion to the events of the Virgin pregnancy and birth of Jesus Christ that is so central to the great Christian Feast of Christmas.
4. In the broadcasting of the same during the octave of Christmas that has only added to the act of offensiveness by RTE to Christian believers.
5. That such portrayal of Allah or the Prophet Muhammad or the Quran [that also includes the Virgin birth to Maryam the mother of Isa (Jesus)] would never have been broadcast by RTE with similar allusions that would have been offensive to Islam.
6. A clear breach by RTE of its statutory duty set out in the Broadcasting Act 2009 Section 39 (1) (d):
 - Every broadcaster shall ensure that anything which may reasonably be regarded as causing harm or offence is not unreasonably encroached upon.
 - In choosing to present the item as a news item (albeit satirical), RTE rendered itself subject to the particular

provisions of the Act applicable to the broadcasting of news items and this of itself constitutes further grounds for breach of duty by RTE.

Repugnant to the preamble of the Constitution of Ireland adopted by and in the Name of the Irish People and specifically the opening text thereof:

- In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and States must be referred, We, the people of Éire, Humbly acknowledging all our obligations to our Divine Lord, Jesus Christ, Who sustained our fathers through centuries of trial, Gratefully remembering their heroic and unremitting struggle to regain the rightful independence of our Nation, And seeking to promote the common good, with due observance of Prudence, Justice and Charity, so that the dignity and freedom of the individual may be assured, true social order attained, the unity of our country restored, and concord established with other nations, Do hereby adopt, enact, and give to ourselves this Constitution.

Repugnant to Article 44 .1 of the Constitution:

- The State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It shall hold His Name in reverence, and shall respect and honour religion.
- RTE in making the said broadcast failed to hold Almighty God's Name in reverence and did not respect and honour religion.

- RTE is an institution of the State and is in duty bound by the Constitution.

A clear breach of BAI Code of Programme Standards Section 42(2)(f) Section 42(2)(g) Section 42(2)(h): BROADCASTING CODES SHALL PROVIDE: a broadcaster does not, in the allocation of time for transmitting party political broadcasts, give an unfair preference to any political party, in respect of programme material broadcast by a broadcaster that audiences are protected from harmful or offensive material, in particular, that programme material in respect of the portrayal of violence and sexual conduct, shall be presented by a broadcaster —

(i) with due sensitivity to the convictions or feelings of the audience, and (ii) with due regard to the impact of such programming on the physical, mental or moral development of children,

A breach of its specific duty to children under the above BAI Code by including such material in a New Year's Eve broadcast that included children in its content knowing that this particular night was the one night of the year that many children stay up late to watch in the New Year with their parents.

We submit that notwithstanding public complaints about the above content, RTE has continued to make the said programme content available on RTE Player which itself is

a continuing act of broadcast subject to the aforementioned laws and codes.

We submit that RTE has *prima facie* a clear case to answer as to whether or not RTE has breached its statutory duty in law including constitutional law or compliance with the Broadcasting Codes on each of the foregoing points and is continuing that breach by having the programme content available on RTE Player.

SUBMISSION ON THE “DYING WITH DIGNITY BILL 2020”

Family Solidarity has presented a submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Justice with regard to the proposal to introduce euthanasia and assisted suicide. Here below you will find some extracts from our document, which can be read entirely on our website.

Executive summary:

- Euthanasia and assisted suicide should never be an option.
- The introduction of the direct or indirect killing of a patient transforms and betrays profoundly the purpose of the health system and the role of doctors and nurses.
- Lifting the absolute prohibition of killing is not a small step, it is a fundamental cultural shift.

- The legalisation of killing in a medical context has a detrimental impact on society in general and on medicine in particular.
- It is an illusion to think that assisted killing can be allowed only in limited circumstances.
- Once introduced, with time, laws permitting assisted killing become less restrictive and the number of people who die as a result grows, together with the number of abuses of the legislation.

The introduction of assisted suicide will institutionalise discrimination towards patients and people with disability. Dr Lucy Thomas wrote recently on the *British Medical Journal*: “Medically assisted dying creates a differential healthcare response to patients who express a desire to end their lives, depending on the presence or absence of an eligible medical condition. In the absence of such a condition, doctors are expected to address issues amenable to intervention; to support patients in their struggle to rediscover meaning, value, and purpose; and to do everything possible to prevent suicide. By contrast, for eligible patients with a chronic or terminal illness or disability doctors are expected to assist them in ending their lives, thus formally validating the patients’ assessment that their lives are no longer worth living. Advocates for disability rights have highlighted how this distinction institutionalises deeply discriminatory

attitudes about the relative value of different lives—in a context that equates dependence with burden and indignity and too often disempowers rather than enables people living with severe illness and disability.”¹

This week the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of the persons with disabilities, together with two other UN human rights experts, has denounced legislations enabling access to medically assisted dying based on disabling conditions, including old age. The UN experts said that “even when access to medical assistance in dying is restricted to those at the end of life or with a terminal illness, people with disabilities, older persons, and especially older persons with disabilities, may feel subtly pressured to end their lives prematurely due to attitudinal barriers as well as the lack of appropriate services and support.”² (...) With more patients dying, the costs for the national health system will likely decrease but the legislator should resist the cynical temptation of introducing euthanasia for financial reasons and reject this Bill.

The Irish Association for Palliative Care has stated: “The acceptance of euthanasia could ultimately be used to contain healthcare costs and, as such, could be considered an option for people with serious illnesses, disabilities or those judged to have a poor quality of life. This could

¹ Thomas H Lucy, “Demedicalisation: radically reframing the assisted dying debate”. *BMJ* 2020; 371 :m2919.

² <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26687&LangID=E>.

result in, not only a reduction in the resources available to treat and research these conditions, but, more importantly, a failure to protect some of the most vulnerable members of our society.”³ (...)

It is an illusion to think that assisted killing can be allowed only in limited circumstances. From a theoretical point of view, if there is a “right to die”, then why should it be limited by the State? If it depends on the level of suffering, there will always be someone who suffers a bit less than what the law provides for and who still wants to avail of the same law. If there is a “right to die”, why should it be limited to those who suffer physically? All sorts of suffering should count. Moreover, why it should depend on personal autonomy? A doctor’s duty of beneficence is contingent to the patient’s autonomy and so, if medical assisted killing is beneficial, then it should be extended to incompetent patients such as infants.

From a practical point of view, every country that has initially accepted assisted killing in limited circumstances has later expanded the limits of the law, once enough time has passed. This liberalisation happens not only through legislation but also with the permissive interpretation of the law by courts, review committees and professional bodies. (...)

³ Irish Association for Palliative Care *Voluntary Euthanasia Discussion Paper* (2017).

Medicine is based on the principle of doing no harm. The introduction of the direct or indirect killing of a patient transforms and betrays profoundly the purpose of the health system and the role of doctors. Lifting the absolute prohibition of killing is not a small step, it is a fundamental cultural shift. Everything else follows from such move and this is why it has to be **rejected without compromise**.

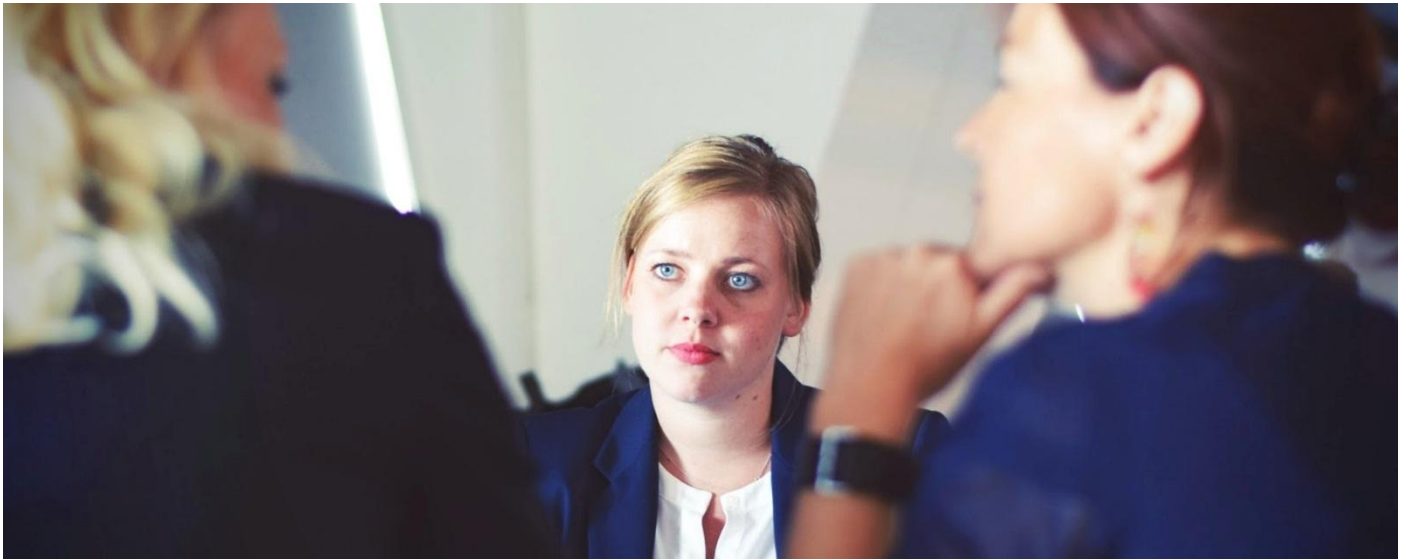
Once the threshold is passed, it is only a matter of time before the next restriction is removed and it becomes hard, if not impossible, to go back. (...)

We urge our representatives to reject this Bill entirely and affirm a culture of life that safeguard the most vulnerable. We ask our representatives to hear the pleas of the health professionals, particularly of those working in palliative care, and offer everything that make our final days more dignified.

Suicide and the killing of a patient offend human dignity. When offered by the State they become normalized and even an expectation from those who feel that they are a burden to others.

For all those reasons, the Bill has to be rejected.

FAFCE-NWFE WHITE PAPER ON “PROTECTING WOMEN FROM MATERNAL MOBBING”



The current pandemic puts a new light on the daily struggles experienced by parents when balancing their work and family time, and especially for mothers. Imposed lockdown on workers made suddenly more concrete the weight of unpaid work added to the professional workload. A question then arises: in a modern society proclaiming gender equality and protective social systems, can one speak of a satisfying situation when looking at the condition of working mothers?

To answer this question, FAFCE is happy to present, in cooperation with the umbrella association of women

NGOs *New Women for Europe*, a White Paper on “Protecting women from maternal mobbing”.

This paper addresses the phenomenon of “maternal mobbing”, i.e. health-harming abusive conducts at work targeting women wishing to have children, pregnant women and mothers. It undertakes the initiative to explain the extent of motherhood discrimination and how to best tackle it at the level of the European Union and of its Member-States.

In order to meet work and family aspirations, women rely also on the flexibility of their employers and on the support of public policies. It is therefore crucial for the labour market to adapt to the needs of mothers, and not the contrary, both through a flexible labour policy and a comprehensive family policy, which includes to:

1. Increase the eligibility to maternal and parental leave;
2. Legally recognise the value of unpaid family work as a particular category of work;
3. Grant access to accessible, affordable and quality childcare services;
4. Promote new forms of work for mothers through teleworking and flexible working hours and arrangements;
5. Address the motherhood pay gap and pension pay gap by considering family work and breaks due to

- motherhood in the calculation of pay and pension entitlements;
6. Ease lending facilities for families as an economic investment;
 7. Erase the value-added taxes on basic products of consumptions of families;
 8. Focus on ways to support mothers in challenging situations (low-income women, self-employed women, single mothers, mothers of large families and mothers with children with disabilities);
 9. Promote financial, mental and cultural freedom of choice for women regarding the configuration of their family work-life balance.
 - 10.

COMECE-FAFCE REFLECTION ON THE ROLE OF THE ELDERLY IN TIMES OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

“Elderly people are a gift and a resource, [...] they cannot be seen as separated from communities”, states FAFCE, together with the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union (COMECE) in the reflection paper “The Elderly and the Future of Europe”, jointly published on Thursday 3 December 2020. FAFCE and COMECE General Secretaries: “Let’s transform the Covid-19 crisis into an opportunity for a shift of paradigm and for regenerating our way of thinking on the elderly”.

Entitled “The Elderly and the Future of Europe: Intergenerational solidarity and care in times of demographic change”, the document calls on EU and national policy makers to develop a change of paradigm and for regenerating our way of thinking in times of demographic change and in the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The COMECE-FAFCE reflection paper comes following the publication of European Commission’s “Report on the Impact of Demographic Change” and as a contribution to the upcoming “Green Paper on Aging”, whose publication is foreseen for 2021.

“The elderly are an integral part of the family, a source of support and encouragement for the younger generations. They cannot be separated from society and relational networks” – reads the COMECE-FAFCE document, highlighting that elderly people are not only vulnerable persons, but also dynamic actors of social life.

The current Covid-19 pandemic revealed hidden vulnerabilities in our societies, with the elderly often in the periphery of daily life. According to FAFCE and COMECE, it is time to recognize the crucial role of the elderly, protecting, promoting and including them, ensuring their full participation in our communities.

The reflection paper recommends national governments to make use of the resources of the proposed EU Recovery Plan for investing in intergenerational relations

and in new structures of solidarity – including informal care, volunteering and age-friendly urban environments – and in demographic and family policies.

The publication has been elaborated in collaboration with the COMECE-FAFCE ad-hoc working group of experts on the situation of the elderly in EU societies. The document serves as a starting point for a deeper discussion on the topic, which will also include a webinar to be held on the 1st March 2021.



COMECE AND FAFCE ARE HAPPY TO INVITE YOU TO A JOINT WEBINAR ON

**THE ELDERLY AND THE
FUTURE OF EUROPE**

**MARCH
1
2021**

**15.00 - 16.15
(CET)**

COMECE & FAFCE JOINT WEBINAR
"THE ELDERLY AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPE"

PROGRAM

OPENING ADDRESS

15.00-15.10

Mr Vincenzo Bassi,
FAFCE President

PERSPECTIVES ON THE COMECE-FAFCE JOINT REFLECTION PAPER

15.10-15.40

Mrs Gabriella Gambino,
Under-Secretary of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life

MEP Romana Tomc,
Co-chair of the EP Intergroup on Demographic Challenges,
Family-Work Life Balance and Youth Transitions

Mr Ettore Marchetti,
Policy Officer - Pensions, Active Ageing, European
Commission

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS

15.40-16.00

FINAL REMARKS

16.00-16.15

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ,
COMECE President

MARCH
1
2021

MODERATOR: MR ANDREA GAGLIARDUCCI,
VATICAN ANALYST

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

15.00 - 16.15
(CET)

WHEN CHRISTIAN FAMILY LIFE FLOURISHES, THE CIVILISED WORLD BENEFITS