



NEWSLETTER

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Family Solidarity

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EDITORIAL

For those of us who are computer literate and have a good stable internet connection or a Smart Phone with a cheap package for data, the Covid lockdown periods have enabled us to keep in touch with various groups on line. Some have become expert at the game of Bridge or Chess on line, others to source Catholic sermons, homilies, talks

and religious discussions, and even getting to attend Masses at anytime of the day.

Family Solidarity have hosted Webinars and have participated in Webinars including those organised by FAFCE. Maria Steen spoke on our behalf at a FAFCE Webinar on "The Family antidote to loneliness, beyond the pandemic", organised under the Patronage of the Patriarchal Vicar for Jordan, H. E. Msgr. William Shomali. The speakers were:

Mr Vincenzo Bassi, FAFCE President, on Families with Families; Mrs Marcela Szymanski, EU Officer, Aid to the Church in Need, who spoke on solidarity and hope; Mrs Maria Steen, Representative of Family Solidarity, who gave the Irish Perspective; Deac. Jubran Salameh, Responsible of Equipes Notre Dame, Jordan, gave the Jordan Perspective; Mr Kalman Daboczi, President of the 72 Disciples Movement gave the Hungarian Perspective;



Mgr William Hanna Shomali, Auxiliary Bishop of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Vicar for

Jordan made the final remarks.

The moderator was Ms Valeria Guarino, Secretary General, Family International Monitor in the Vatican.

(Again for those who missed it and who can access our website can listen back to it.)

In the Autumn Family Solidarity hope to run a series of live public meetings in September, October and November on **“What should we expect from the Synod of the Family?”**.

Nearly 7,000 unborn humans are murdered each year under what is incorrectly called in the media and the liberal press “Reproductive Rights” rights which is taken as thumping the right to life of the unborn. But while reproductive rights as defined by the World Health Organisation as *“Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence.”*

While there are many natural ways in which couples or individuals might freely and responsibly decide *the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health*, this is widely interpreted by those who do not accept the right to life of the unborn as giving a right to

abortion. (see further discussion on the matter on page ____).

This edition also includes articles by Angelo Bottone on

- Covid-19 caused a bigger decline in catholic weddings than civil ones. Why?
- Major new Irish study finds family structure matters
- Catholic students now been bullied at school
- Ireland's abortion rate increased last year
- More Irish opting for eugenic abortion
- All Irish MEPs vote in favour of declaring abortion a 'right'

Other items are:

- An Appeal for contributions to FAFCE (the Federation of European Catholic Family Associations)
- Amoris laetitia: the conclusions of the forum
- Why Europe needs a common day of rest

Pope Francis on Thursday 24th June 2021 released a video message accompanying his prayer intention for July, which this month is "Integrity of Justice".

The decisions made by judges influence the rights and property of citizens.

Their independence should keep them safe from favoritism and from pressures that could contaminate the decisions they have to make.

Judges must follow the example of Jesus, who never negotiates the truth.

Let us pray that those who administer justice may work with integrity, and that the injustice which prevails in the world may not have the last word.

The link to the Pope's Video is **https://youtu.be/MWwnP_3DFZw**

COVID-19 CAUSED A BIGGER DECLINE IN CATHOLIC WEDDINGS THAN CIVIL ONES. WHY?



What effect did Covid-19 have on the number of weddings that took place in Ireland last year compared with 2019? As you can imagine, a very big effect. In fact, the figure halved, but the reduction in the amount of Catholic weddings was bigger than in the number of civil weddings. Why might that have been?

2020 has been an exceptional year because of the pandemic, and it would be pointless to compare the 2020 statistics with the previous year to infer some sort of trend, but it is interesting to analyse in details what has happened to avoid rush conclusions.

There were 9,209 opposite-sex marriages in Ireland in 2020, about half the number for 2019 (19,673) and 2018

(20,389), according to the recently released figures from the CSO, 53pc less, to be more precise. Same-sex marriages also halved from 640 in 2019 to 314 in 2020, which represents a 51pc decline.

The 2020 opposite-sex marriage rate for 1,000 population was a mere 1.9. This figure was 4.7 in 2015 and 4.0 in 2019, and it means that less people are getting married. The rate has been constantly declining since the 1980s, particularly so in recent years, and it has now reached approximately the same level as in the UK.

While a general drop in the number of weddings was easily predictable, the fact that the number of civil weddings surpassed Catholic weddings for the first time certainly stood out. While religious marriages overall were still slightly more frequent (50.2pc) than non-religious ones (49.8pc), civil ceremonies (3,779) were more popular than Catholic weddings (3,295) in the year of the pandemic. *Atheist Ireland* claimed that these figures show that Ireland is no longer a Catholic country, but I am afraid they may be disappointed to discover that most likely not the case.

The reason for this temporary decline seems quite simple: of all weddings, civil ones are the least likely to be postponed. A closer look at the statistics will prove my point. When we compare the distribution of marriages

through the year, we see a sharp decline in April, May and June 2020, and another decline in November. December, instead of the traditional August, was the month with most weddings in 2020.



Many marriages were postponed last year but, if we look at the statistics, it is clear that civil marriages were postponed less than other marriages. For instance, compared to the previous year, civil marriages saw a 43pc decline, while all marriages went down 53pc and Catholic marriages dropped 63pc. This is not because Ireland has suddenly become far less Catholic but because the couples who marry in a church are more likely to want a big day and so they are more likely to be postponed in a

period of uncertainty, while civil ceremonies in a registry office are likely to be smaller affairs.

If we look, for instance, at same-sex marriages we discover that in 2020 civil ceremonies represented 72.6pc of the overall number, while they were 62.2pc the previous years. Humanist and Spiritualist ceremonies for same-sex marriages went from 29.7pc combined in 2019 to 20.7pc in 2020.

If we look at non-religious ceremonies, civil weddings went up from 31.6pc in 2019 to 42.1pc in 2020 while Humanist ceremonies went down from 9.4pc to 7.8 pc. The explanation is the same as above: civil marriages are the least likely to be postponed. Spiritualist marriages also went down from 8pc of the total in 2019, to 6.7pc last year. These often take place in hotels and involve couples who don't marry in a church but want a religious element to their wedding.

There is another important factor to consider. First marriages went down 55.4pc in 2020, compared to the previous year. But marriages involving at least one divorced person went down by 'only' 41.8pc. This shows that those who are marrying for the first time were more likely to postpone their big day compared to those who were remarrying. And given that Catholic marriages generally do not involve someone who is divorced, this

factor also contributed to the temporary decline of Catholic ceremonies in 2020. In 2020 marriages were postponed for very practical reasons and, the more complex the ceremony, the more likely this happened. This is not to say religious marriages are not declining in number anyway overall, but last year was unique for the reasons given above. 2021 is still an exceptional year but, as we will be back to normality, some anomalies that we saw in the 2020 figures will likely also disappear.

MAJOR NEW IRISH STUDY FINDS FAMILY STRUCTURE MATTERS



One of the great taboos in modern Irish debate is pointing out that family structure matters, and makes a difference to the lives of children. Such a declaration is considered to be offensive and

judgemental. But suppose it is true, and suppose certain family structures do, on average, benefit children more? Does it really serve the interests of children to suppress this truth?

The question takes on particular relevance when we consider what Catholic and other faith-based schools may or may not be allowed to teach about the family. If we are to simply ‘celebrate family diversity’, can those schools declare that being raised by a mother and a father together (assuming they are fit parents), can confer certain advantages on children, or at least minimise disadvantages, compared with other family structures?

Well, a major new study from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) has said family structure does, indeed, matter. The finding is more or less tucked away and you have to go looking for it.

The relevant study is called ‘Risk and Protective Factors in Adolescent Behaviour’. The most pertinent quote says: “Family structure emerged as having a significant and consistent relationship with adolescent behaviour, with poorer behaviour across all domains for those in lone parent families or families that experienced separation during the young person’s adolescence. This pattern held even taking account of the socio-economic characteristics of these households and was not fully explained by other factors”.

The report doesn’t straight-forwardly say having two parents helps to protect adolescents from certain risks, but it is the only possible conclusion to draw. Perhaps the

authors don't explicitly say it, or draw much attention to their finding because of the prevailing taboo against ever appearing 'judgemental'?

Obviously, there is a great need for sensitivity when discussing issues like family and family structure, but at the same time the truth that family structure makes a difference to children (one way or another) should not be obscured and should be part of public debate. Ironically, the same week the report came out, Tanaiste Leo Varadkar declared in the Dail that the current definition of the family found in the Constitution is 'out-of-date'.

Responding to a question from Labour leader, Alan Kelly, about the welfare entitlements of cohabitating couples, Leo Varadkar said that as far as he was concerned, "the definition of family in Bunreacht na hÉireann, the 1937 Constitution, is out of date".

He added: "It is based on a traditional, more Christian or Catholic view of a family, which is not wrong. It is a man and a woman, although that was changed to allow two men and two women. However, it is based on two married people, as it were, with children. That is what constitutes a family under the Constitution. If that were ever true, we all know it is not true anymore. There are many different forms of families in our society, and there

is great diversity in what family means. I believe we should update, modernise and change that definition”.

In other words, he wants ‘family equality’, and this logically means we must have another marriage referendum, this time to remove the special status of marriage completely from the Constitution. But if family structure matters, and having two parents is advantageous, then the Tanaiste is flying in the face of the facts.

This wouldn’t be the first time Irish politicians have ignored basic facts about the family. The only question remaining seems to be; when will we hold the relevant referendum?

CATHOLIC STUDENTS NOW BEEN BULLIED AT SCHOOL



Children who are practising Catholics are being targeted for bullying in school, according to the director of Dublin City University’s Anti-Bullying Centre. They are now a minority to be

protected.

Professor James O’Higgins Norman was speaking last week at the Oireachtas Committee on Education, about

the topic of school bullying and the impact on mental health.

Addressing the issue of Catholic children being bullied in mainly Catholic schools, he said: “We are in a particular place in our society now, we have become pluralist, things have changed, and it is no surprise that people who practice religion, and maybe practice Catholic religion, are increasingly in the minority, particularly young children and teenagers in school. So, one of the studies we have done recently has shown a concern among religion teachers for what they are observing among students who are practicing Catholics, being targeted for that, more than they [are] concerned about kids not practicing their religion.”

Professor O’Higgins Norman was referring to a study, to be published at the end of the summer, and authored by two members of the DCU’s Anty-Bullying Centre: Amalee Meehan and Derek Laffan.

The research, entitled “Inclusive Religious Education: The Voices of Religious Education Teachers in Post-Primary Schools in Ireland: Identity, bullying, and inclusion”, focuses on students aged from 11 to 16 and found that religion teachers have concerns about those who practice religion, as they would be targeted for bullying more than those who do not practice.

“15 or 20 years ago we were talking about homophobic bullying and that was a focus of bullying in school, it was a concern for anyone, and today here we are talking about the possibility that children who practice religion might be the ones who have been targeted for bullying”, Professor O’Higgins Norman told the Oireachtas Committee.

He explained that the outcome of the study agrees with similar research conducted internationally. This research suggests that when a particular worldview loses its dominant position, those who are still following that worldview would be seen as old-fashioned, as out of the mainstream culture and they would be targeted more by others. This is happening in Ireland with regard to the Catholic religion, according to Prof. O’Higgins Norman. Those who are still practising, a minority, stand out and are bullied for being different.

During the hearing, Senator Ronan Mullen asked Prof. O’Higgins Norman whether a hegemonic media culture hostile to religion could be part of the problem. Prof. O’Higgins Norman agreed with this suggestion. He said: “The predominant peer culture among children and adolescents in schools is influenced by their family, their parents, wider media so on, and in our current context, those who are going against the grain or standing out, they will of course then more likely to be targets for

bullying, so well if that's for religious reasons or for other reasons."

DCU's Anti-Bullying Centre recommended raising awareness "of the vulnerability of students based on identity, for example Catholics, LGBTQ+, Ethnicity, etc." This is surely the first time that practising Catholics are considered a minority to be protected. A sign of how much the mainstream culture has changed in Ireland, and not for the better.

IRELAND'S ABORTION RATE INCREASED LAST YEAR



A total of 6,577 women had an abortion in Ireland in 2020, according to a report presented by the Department of Health. That is slightly down on the figure of 6,666 in 2019, but the ratio (number of abortions per live births) is

up, because fewer women became pregnant last year, so it is very bad news.

As 194 women with an Irish address also had an abortion in England in 2020, the total recorded number for last year is 6,771.

In terms of absolute numbers there was no substantial difference (-1.3%) compared to 2019, when 6,666 women had an abortion in Ireland and 375 went England, but if we look at the number of recorded pregnancies, in 2020 the number of them that ended in abortion was higher than the previous year.

As there were 55,959 live births in Ireland in 2020, the abortion ratio, which is calculated per 1,000 live births, is 120.9. It was 117.7 in 2019. We would have hoped that lockdown might have caused a substantial fall in both the number and rate of abortions, but that did not happen.

The abortion rate, calculated per 1,000 women aged 15-44, was 6.6 in 2020 and 6.9 in 2019.

It is interesting to understand how the lockdown influenced conceptions, abortions and births. Between January and April 2020, 2,554 abortions were performed in Ireland. This is a 20% increase compared to the same period in 2019 (2,161). Those babies were all conceived before the lockdown. From May to December 2020, 3,965

terminations of life were carried out, 10.6% less than the previous year.

So, the number of abortions grew until the pandemic began and then declined during the lockdown. Part of this is surely due to the fact that fewer casual and unplanned pregnancies happened during these months.

MORE IRISH OPTING FOR EUGENIC ABORTION



The number of abortions in England and Wales hit a record high last year, and the number of Irish women travelling there to abort unborn children with Down Syndrome and other

abnormalities has also increased, in line with growing acceptance of eugenics across the Western world.

In 2020, 209,917 women had an abortion in England and Wales. This was despite the extended lockdown. This is the highest number since the Abortion Act was introduced and it also represents the highest rate ever (18.2 per

1,000 women of fertile age). Scotland also registered the highest historical rate last year.

The number of aborted babies is even higher than those figures as some women were expecting more than one baby.

194 women listed as resident in Ireland had an abortion in England in 2020, a 48pc drop from 2019, when Ireland's liberal abortion law went into operation. Many went to England because the foetus had non-fatal disabilities and, after 12 weeks of gestation, it cannot be legally killed in Ireland for this reason. Many diagnoses of disabilities are made after 12 weeks.

In spite of the decline in numbers travelling to England, the number of Irish babies with Down Syndrome aborted there went from 17 in 2018, to 27 in 2019 reaching 35 last year. Other conditions included three babies with spina bifida, one with cleft lip and palate. The IFPA, together with other campaigners, want abortion for non-fatal abnormalities to happen in Ireland too.

The increasing number of Irish women opting to abort children with Down Syndrome could be due to more women availing of screening programmes and also greater social acceptability for what amounts to eugenics.

The number of English women opting to abort babies with Down Syndrome also increased to 693, a rise of 6pc from 2019, although this may be an underestimate.

The abortion rate in England and Wales continues to decline for girls age under 18, going from 16.5 to 6.9 per 1,000 between 2010 and 2020. This is a general trend in Western countries. But the rate for all other age groups has increased in the last 10 years.

In 2020, more than half of women over 30 undergoing abortion had one or more terminations before. Repeat abortions are now more and more common in the UK.

81pc of women who had terminations in England and Wales in 2020 were single. 51pc were single with a partner. This proportion has remained fairly constant in the last decade.

The report gives an idea of how the Covid pandemic impacted on the phenomenon of abortion. In the first three months of 2020, before lockdown, the number of women undergoing abortion in England and Wales rose by 4.1pc compared to the first quarter of the previous year. After a spike in April (+28.7pc), just after lockdown was imposed, the rest of the year saw no substantial difference when compared to the previous one.

With regard to the 194 Irish women who travelled to England for abortions in 2020, 101 did so in the first half of the year and 93 in the second half when it was much more difficult to travel.

Another result of Covid restrictions can be seen in selective terminations, which is when only one child in a multiple pregnancy is killed. In England they decreased from 126 in 2019 to 65 in 2020. They generally happen after an IVF treatment, when multiple embryos are produced artificially, then moved into the womb and eventually selected if the couple do not want as many as have survived. This decline in 2020 is due to fewer IVF treatments happening during the pandemic.

ALL IRISH MEPs VOTE IN FAVOUR OF DECLARING ABORTION A 'RIGHT'



A new report that presents abortion as a 'human right' and would undermine conscientious objection was approved by the European Parliament last week. Every Irish MEP voted in favour of it.

The report does not have the force of law behind it, but it is all part of an effort to shift the EU in an ever more pro-

abortion direction, to make a 'right' to abortion a 'European value'.

The Matić report is a long document covering sexual health and so-called "reproductive rights", which include abortion, sterilisation, prenatal screening, etc. It is named after the Croatian MEP Predrag Fred Matić, from the Socialists and Democrats Group, who acted as a Rapporteur.

The report falsely presents abortion as a right but no international treaty recognises a "right to abortion" and the European Court of Human Rights has held that a woman's right to privacy does not imply a right to abortion.

The resolution approved by the European Parliament last week calls for the removal of all barriers to access abortion, and these barriers would include conscientious objection of healthcare professionals. It deceitfully claims that the denial of abortion on grounds of religion or conscience "endangers women's lives and rights" and it also "hinders access to prenatal screening". We know that prenatal screening is often used to select and abort children carrying a disability, such as Down Syndrome.

The typical language and concepts of the most radical activists appears in the Matić report. Conscientious objection, which is recognised and protected by the

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, is presented in the Matic report as “refusal of medical care”. Another example of its radical ideology is in the use of ambiguous expressions such as “pregnant people” or “pregnant person”, rather than “pregnant women”. This attempt to employ so-called “inclusive language” as a matter of fact erases women and their absolutely unique role in bringing a child into the world.

Critics of this extremely ideological document have highlighted that it is an affront to the sovereignty of the EU Member States. The fields of health and education belong to the Member States and this document overreaches the competences of the European Union.

Several European bodies have acknowledged that the power to legislate on abortion and health matters lie with the different States. The European Union cannot impose the “right to abortion” on its members and this is particularly significant as Malta, for instance, is an EU state and has resisted international pressure to liberalise its abortion laws so far.



The Matic report has no binding legal value but such resolutions are often used by member states to introduce and legitimise changes in their national

legislation. They are also used by activists to strengthen their positions in court cases or in political campaigns. While lacking legal authority, such documents can still have a profound impact in national and international parliaments and courts. A similar report was rejected in 2013. This time it has found support from all the left parties in the EU parliament, but also from significant sectors of the centrist European Popular Party, of which Fine Gael is a member, and from the Renew group, which includes Fianna Fail.

Bishop Kevin Doran has commented on Twitter: “Very disappointing to see the every Irish MEP voted today against the right to freedom of conscience which is recognised in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in favour of the non-existent human right to abortion. God bless our healthcare professionals.”

On the same day when the Matic report was approved, an attempt to discredit pro-life organisations was rejected. To mark the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development in Nairobi, a resolution was approved by the EU parliament. An amendment to this resolution, presented by the Left Group but rejected by the parliament, expressed concern that important international pro-life organisations were included in the EU transparency register and “authorised to work openly with public institutions for the decline of

women's rights, and sexual and reproductive health rights". FAFCE was among the organisations mentioned in the rejected amendment.

An Appeal for contributions to FAFCE (the Federation of European Catholic Family Associations)

(Family Solidarity is a founder member of FAFCE.)

Since 2009, FAFCE's office in Brussels has been serving the family at the European level, giving a voice to so many parents and children that do not always recognise themselves in last years' political developments, nor at the country level as well.

Our Federation has a twofold mission:

- to represent families at the European Union and at the Council of Europe, amplifying their voice from the perspective of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church.
- to inspire the development of family associations in Europe and beyond, a vocation that goes beyond Europe's borders, as evidenced by FAFCE's 28 Member associations from 18 countries in Europe.

Participants in the FAFCE Webinar on “The Family: Antidote to Loneliness, Beyond the Pandemic”



Together with some other volunteers, we travelled and we have worked a lot, completely for free, devoting personal time and energies to this mission.

We must say that we are always supported by our office in Brussels and that together with our team, we are happy to do this work.

We are not used to writing this kind of messages. Yet we are now facing an unprecedented financial difficulty that demands attention.

In order to maintain our current level of activities, we need to keep a professional team in Brussels. This means that, to balance our budget this year, we still need €25.000.

Due to the many financial difficulties that our own Member Family Associations are having, next year we will have an outstanding balance of €75.000. **If every person who reads this could give as little as 1, 5, or 10 euros, we can easily fill this gap.**

Despite this difficulty, we feel honoured that you have entrusted to us this huge responsibility, both towards the family and the Church. Now, we are sure that you would be happy to share our responsibility of ensuring families' support and growth.

Our yearly budget is published on the transparency register of the European Institutions and it serves exclusively to finance the daily work of our office (two full time employees, one intern, and occasional travel costs). Would you like to see what we can do with our Brussels team? Please visit our website or do not hesitate to contact us. Do you have more questions about the way we finance ourselves and how to better support our work?

Without your help, FAFCE's voice will grow fainter and

fainter until all the voices of Europe's concerned families are silenced.

Over the years we have testified to the beauty of the family, with calm and a sense of responsibility to the Common Good. In fact, we are aware that precariousness is an integral part of our mission and so we never get discouraged. No amount is too little, just as no obstacle is too great.

Thank you very much,
Vincenzo Bassi, President, Antoine Renard, Honorary President; Cornel Barbut, Vice-President
Alfred Trendl, Treasurer.

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.

AMORIS LAETITIA: THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE FORUM



The second and final session of the final day of the Forum “Where are we with *Amoris Laetitia*? Strategies for the pastoral application of Pope Francis’ Exhortation” began with a presentation of the various initiatives for the *Amoris Laetitia* Family Year. One of the most interesting features introduced is the *First World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly*, established on 31 January by Pope Francis.

Vittorio Scelzo, who manages the Dicastery Office for the Elderly, pointed out how the pandemic has shown us the Holy Father's farsightedness on the issues of our throwaway culture, of coming together and of relationships.

It is for this reason that the focus of this World Day is on the coming together of grandparents and grandchildren, of young and old. Given that many parts of the world will still have measures in place in July that will exclude the possibility of older people being able to participate, we ask young people to go and visit them, where possible, or to organise to meet them on social media or internet”.



With regard to the Eucharistic celebrations to mark the World Day, the Dicastery suggests that on Sunday 25 July in every community there should be a Mass dedicated to grandparents and the elderly; that the bishops should celebrate in the cathedral or in a significant place; and that every parish should dedicate at least one of its liturgies to this World Day. Mr Scelzo concluded by saying

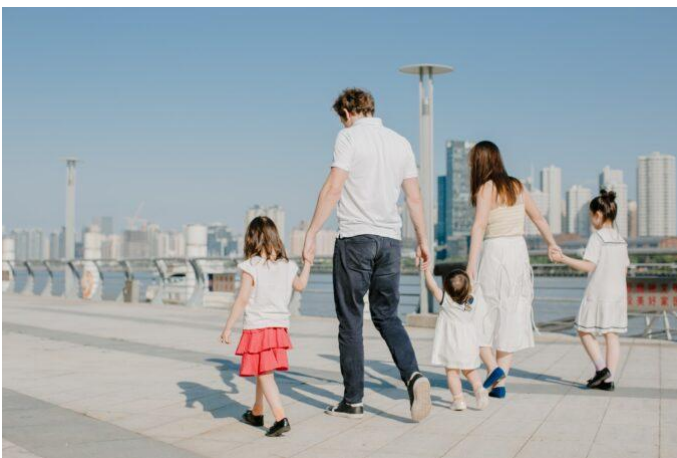
that we would like grandparents and grandchildren, young and old together, to participate wherever possible. Lastly, Cardinal Farrell presented the conclusions of the Forum. In these, he identified a number of points that sum up the work of the Forum over the past few days.

Families today need to be aware that the sacrament of marriage has given them a **mission** that **pastors also share**; the main contribution to family ministry is offered by the **parish** as it is a **family of families** in which small communities, ecclesial movements and associations live in harmony; there is a need for **more effective training** for priests, deacons, religious, catechists and other pastoral workers, and **lay people must take part in training courses**; the **training of people who will accompany couples in their preparation for marriage must be a priority**: spouses who have taken these courses can help to instruct other families, and so create a chain of instructors that can run courses for more and more families; **family pastoral ministry** must be basically **missionary and reach out to people wherever they are**; special attention must be given to families undergoing a marital crisis or having other difficulties: pastoral care of those who are separated, divorced or abandoned, with particular regard to children, the disabled and the elderly; we must also **reach out to families who are estranged from the Church**.

Then Cardinal Farrell took up the participants' request to continue working together through a network of relations between the Holy See and the bishops' conferences, movements and associations in a spirit of true communion and mutual esteem.

As a final round of questions and answers showed, a network of working together will allow ideas and projects to be shared. This will help us to work more effectively together on a practical level so that we can reach the very heart of pastoral care, which is, families all over the world.

WHY EUROPE NEEDS A COMMON DAY OF REST



Once upon a time, not so long ago, Sunday was considered a day of rest. But now, like every other day of the week, it has basically been captured by the demands of commerce. So

there is no longer a communal day of rest in a lot of countries. This needs to change. There needs to be a European weekly common day of rest, together with the right to disconnect from work, according to a campaign group called the European Sunday Alliance.

The group held an online conference last week, which saw the participation of MEPs from different European parties, and also a representative of the European Commission.

A healthy balance between private life and working time is essential for families, particularly during these difficult times, says the Alliance.

They argue that a work-free Sunday has become even more relevant during the pandemic, when most people work remotely. With more time spent in the house working hours have also extended and now it is more and more difficult to separate work duties from family time. Many employers expect job commitment during the evenings and even the weekends.

A recent report of the Committee On Employment and Social Affairs of the European Parliament notes that “digitalisation has brought many advantages to employers and workers, but also disadvantages, because it can intensify work, extend working hours and increase the unpredictability of working hours, blurring the boundaries between work and private life”

All the politicians taking part agreed with the need to have a common weekly day of rest but had different opinions though on what is the best policy to implement this.

In January, the European Parliament called on the European Commission “to propose a law that enables those who work digitally to disconnect outside their working hours. It should also establish minimum requirements for remote working and clarify working conditions, hours and rest periods”.

A right to disconnect means the possibility to separate, on a regular basis, family or leisure time from working hours. This is beneficial not only to the workers but, ultimately, also to society at large. During a day of rest we can spend more time with others, engaging in social activities, volunteering, sport, faith-related activities, travels, holidays, etc.

In most European countries, Sunday is traditionally the day of rest from work. This is the heritage of the Christian tradition. Precisely 1,700 years ago, the Emperor Constantine decreed Sunday to be a day of rest protected by law. Nonetheless, many countries, including Ireland, allow businesses to run seven days a week. This has a profound impact on workers and their families.

The European Sunday Alliance is a network of trade unions, religious bodies and civil society organisations that want to raise awareness of the importance and value of a weekly day free from work. They also, ask for legislation at EU and Member States levels to be “more protective of

the health, safety, dignity of everyone and should more attentively promote the reconciliation of professional and family life". FAFCE is a member of the Alliance.

Notably, there were no speakers for the Irish. This is simply not an issue in Ireland. It should be.

Reproductive Rights

The [World Health Organization](#) defines reproductive rights as follows:^[2]

Reproductive rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence.

While there are many natural ways in which couples or individuals might freely and responsibly decide *the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health*, this is widely interpreted by those who do not

accept the right to life of the unborn as giving a right to abortion.

The **right** to life and to the physical and mental integrity of the person. The law should protect the life of the **unborn**.

... Every human being shall have the **right** to life and human dignity; the life of the foetus shall be protected from the moment of conception.

However since the Constitution was amended in 2018 (with the replacement of the 8th Amendment with *"Provision may be made by law for the regulation of termination of pregnancy"*)

The 8th Amendment stated "The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.

This subsection shall not limit freedom to travel between the State and another state.

This subsection shall not limit freedom to obtain or make available, in the State, subject to such conditions as may be laid down by law, information relating to services lawfully available in another state.")

The law now ([Health \(Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy\) Act 2018](#)) allows for a termination:

- under section 9, where there is a serious risk to the life or of serious harm to the health of a pregnant woman, after examination by 2 medical practitioners;
- under section 10, in cases of emergency, where there is an immediate serious risk to the life or of serious harm to the health of a pregnant woman, after an examination by one medical practitioner;
- under section 11, where two medical practitioners are of the opinion formed in good faith that there is present a condition affecting the foetus that is likely to lead to the death of the foetus either before, or within 28 days of, birth; and
- under section 12, where there has been a certification that the pregnancy has not exceeded 12 weeks, and after a period of 3 days after this certification.

Under section 23, it is an offence punishable by a fine or imprisonment of up to 14 years to intentionally end the life of a foetus outside the provisions of the Act. This offence does not apply in the case of a woman ending her own pregnancy.

***Pray for the misguided legislators who gave us
this law and for the misguided electors who
voted for murder of the unborn!***