



NEWSLETTER

No 99

April 2023

Family Solidarity

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EDITORIAL

On the 21st March, World Down Syndrome Day, Anna Buday and her special family presented a touching account of what it means to care for others.

During this webinar, organised by Family Solidarity, we heard how the five Buday children all help each other, and their parents. The youngest girl, Esther, who is 2 and has Down Syndrome and AVSD, entertained us with her joyful smile and lively restlessness. The oldest girl, Sara, who is only 13, told us about the excitement of receiving the “Young family carer of the year” award for her support at home. She recently spoke in Leinster House on behalf of

young people who care for their parents, siblings, or relatives who have additional needs.

Anna and her husband George told us about the challenges of having a child diagnosed with Down Syndrome, their struggle to get proper help from the state, their fight against prejudice and ignorance, the important role of the Catholic faith in their lives.

A recording of this webinar with the special Buday family is available on our website and I warmly encourage everyone to watch it, as it gives strength and inspiration.

Our next webinar will take place on Thursday 20th April. Bénédicte Colin will talk about the attempt of the European Commission to impose a cross-border “certificate of parenthood” that, among other things, will circumvent the ban on commercial surrogacy.

In addition to numerous articles on family and pro-life issues, in this newsletter you will find a high-quality document on human sexuality by the Scandinavian bishops. You will also read the announcement of a get-together in June to celebrate 40 years from the first meeting of Family Solidarity. I hope to see you all there.

Angelo Bottone

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WEBINAR ON THE EUROPEAN CERTIFICATE OF PARENTHOOD

The European Commission is trying to circumvent the national legislation on parentage and create a cross-border “European Certificate of Parenthood” that would be valid in all the European Union state members. This means that those states that do not recognise surrogacy or same-sex “marriages” will be obliged to register parental links to children born in such situations.

For instance, a child born abroad to a same-sex couple, will be recognised as the child of the non-biological parent even if the national legislation bans such arrangements. The same will happen with children born abroad through surrogacy, which is illegal in most of the EU countries. This is a threat to the legal sovereignty of the member states, as family law is not among the competences of the EU.

Bénédicte Colin, who is policy manager of the European Federation of Catholic Family Associations (FAFCE), will present the dangers of the proposed cross-border “European Certificate of Parenthood” on Thursday 20th April at 4.00 pm, on Zoom.

If you are interested in attending the webinar, please register at **familysolidarityireland@gmail.com**

NCCA CONFIRMS WORST SUSPICIONS OF PARENTS ABOUT GENDER IDEOLOGY

Are they going to ignore the concerns of parents?



Many Parents have expressed serious concerns about proposed changes to the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) curriculum for junior cycle students (age 12-15). These

are stated in response to a consultation process initiated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Their primary issues identified in the responses are about how 'gender identity' and pornography will be taught in schools.

The revision of the junior cycle RSE programme is part of an overall review of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, which includes RSE.

Last year, the NCCA called for comments from the public through surveys, submissions and focus groups, and a report on this consultation has just been published.

Over 4,300 parents, 102 teachers and 142 students responded to the online survey. Others presented their views through letters or emails.

The report acknowledges that the most common cause of concern among parents was the reference to “gender identity” in the draft, which says that pupils should “appreciate that sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are core parts of human identity and that each is experienced along a spectrum”.

Proponents of ‘gender identity’ claim that being a boy, or a girl, is only one of countless variations of gender, which itself is independent of one’s bodily reality. Our ‘gender’ is based on self-identification, not our actual biology. We might be physically male but identify as something different.

Some parents objected that this radical philosophy should not be in the curriculum as “it may lead to questioning, confusion and even harm for some adolescents.”

These parents said “the NCCA is seeking to promote ‘gender ideology’ by refusing to acknowledge the binary nature of gender.”

The NCCA now seems to have confirmed those parents’ worst suspicions. The report claims that “these respondents are strongly of the view that we are born as either male or female and that sex is binary and immutable”, as if this is somehow a fringe belief.

This comment is quite astonishing. The report presents as a “view” what is a scientific truth. It is not an opinion but a fact that we are all born as male or female, and sex is binary and immutable. Being male or female is written in every single cell of our body and there is no way to change that. Only a very radical ideology would deny this fact, but it appears to be one the NCCA accepts, which is deeply worrying.

Another cause of concern for many parents is the reference to pornography in the draft curriculum. These parents, says the NCCA, “fear that students would be exposed to pornography as part of classroom teaching and learning.”

The parents believe that putting the topic in the RSE curriculum is not appropriate for pupils aged 12-15 and this would “result in sexualization and harm of children”.

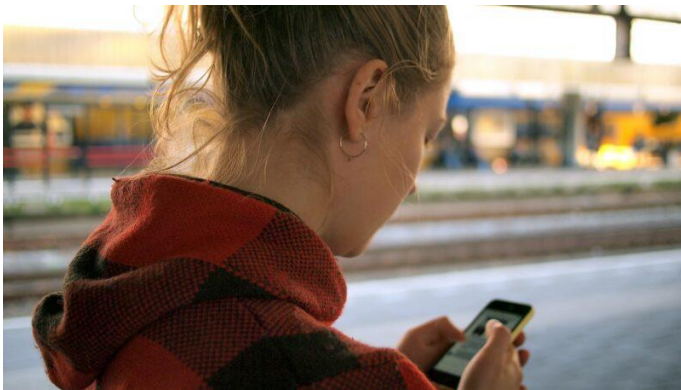
Parents also criticised “the lack of reference to morality, moral teachings or family values and would like to see the specification reflect a school’s right to teach topics in a manner that aligns with the school’s ethos and values.” Some even stated that they would withdraw their children from all SPHE classes if the proposed updates were accepted.

The NCCA might dismiss many of these parents as over-traditionalist in their outlook and not reflective of wider

public opinion, but even parents who no longer fully subscribe to Christian teaching on sexual morality are also likely to be annoyed at what is being considered.

For all these reasons, we encourage you to contact your TD and express your opposition to the RSE programme.

CHILDREN ARE LEFT UNPROTECTED AGAINST EXTREME PORNOGRAPHY



There is an urgent need to protect children from online pornography, according to a new report by the UK Children's Commissioner. To tackle

this problem, obligatory age verification to watch porn will be introduced soon in France. Ireland should consider something similar.

The UK Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, launched the new report which shows how pornography has become all-pervasive and reveals the destructive effects on young people's lives.

Based on focus groups and a survey of 1,000 teenagers and young people, it found that 13 is the average age at which children first see online pornographic material. By

age 9, 10pc have seen it. More than one out of four had seen it by age 11, and half of children have seen it by the age of 13.

The pictures or videos children have access to are not only obscene but also violent and degrading. “Depictions of degradation, sexual coercion, aggression and exploitation are commonplace, and disproportionately targeted against teenage girls”, says the report.

The age of first exposure is determined by when children first have their own device. Parents should be aware of such risks when letting their children use smartphones or tablets. Those who were exposed to porn at younger age were significantly more likely to become frequent users and develop dependency, the report found.

The document by the UK Children’s Commissioner also found that frequent users of porn are more likely to engage in physically aggressive sex acts. In terms of social media or websites, Twitter is where young people are more likely to have seen porn.

51pc of girls aged 16-21, and 33pc of boys, have seen or been sent obscene pictures and videos of people they know in real life. Other research has shown that “girls are overwhelmingly the recipients of unwanted explicit images of male peers”.

In the UK there is no legal requirement for websites hosting porn to verify the age of users, but this will change soon with the Online Safety Bill that is making its way through the British Parliament.

France has just announced that it will become the first country to introduce a “digital certificate” to prove the age of those who want to access online pornography.

This decision follows a shocking report on the pornographic industry, presented by the French Senate. The document states that the porn industry “contributed to an upsurge in increasingly violent content, without any control or consideration for the conditions in which this content is produced.”

One of the recommendations put forward by the French Senate report was precisely an age-verification mechanism to prevent children accessing obscene material.

Last year an RED C poll found that 71pc of Irish citizens believe pornography is causing serious harm to society and 81pc of young people believe porn leads to more demands for violent sex.

Ireland should follow France and adopt a similar procedure to keep children away from porn websites.

ANOTHER UN COMMITTEE PUSHES A RADICAL AGENDA ON IRELAND



Once again, a UN body is pushing a radical agenda on Ireland at the behest of Irish NGOs. This includes allowing 16 and 17 years olds to identify as a different gender to their biological sex, ensuring free access to abortion for adolescent girls, and further undermining the rights of faith-based schools.

This time the body in question is the UN Committee on the Right of the Child (CRC). The committee monitors the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child by the signatory States. It met in Geneva last month to assess a progress report from Ireland. The committee has now issued its report to Ireland and it is essentially a wishlist produced by left-leaning Irish NGOs.

For instance, on the issue of abortion, the report wants us to “Ensure access of adolescent girls to age-appropriate

reproductive health services, including free and safe abortion and post-abortion services;”.

The committee’s recommendations on religion and schools are almost copied and pasted from the Atheist Ireland submission.

It is not surprising, therefore, to see Atheist Ireland saying that “the committee has made all of the recommendations we asked for.” One of these is that all faith schools, including minority ones, be stripped of the right to admit children of their own faith first in the event of over-enrolment.

There are important issues missing from the set of recommendations, probably because no Irish NGO was advocating for them.

For instance, there is a growing international attempt to limit children’s access to pornography. This is a topic that we should expect to be at the core of the concerns of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, in the 16-page document only two vague lines are dedicated to the issue. It only says: “The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography”.

In making its recommendations, the CRC, like other UN bodies, goes well beyond its area of competence, basing their reports on highly questionable interpretations of the United Nations treaties and conventions.

For example, nowhere is a right to abortion mentioned in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, although the committee effectively pretends otherwise. Likewise with gender ideology.

UN committee experts cannot be familiar with the situation of every single country in the world they are asked to assess. Therefore, they rely heavily on what local NGOs tell them and have a very strong bias in favour of NGOs that reflect their ideological mindset.

A quick look at the list of the organisations that have contributed to the latest report will easily show that they have a highly 'progressivist' worldview.

Fortunately, the recommendations of these UN committees are not legally binding.

Unfortunately, even if not binding, these reports can and are used to drive particular agendas and the impression is often given that they have some legal force here. They are best ignored.

A SURPRISING REASON WHY FERTILITY RATES HAVE FALLEN SO MUCH



Fertility rates are declining almost everywhere, and we are not recognising the dramatic consequences for future generations, a [new documentary](#) highlights. But

the documentary comes up with a rarely recognised reason for what is taking place, namely that many women who want children find for various reasons that their wish is not fulfilled.

Over the past 70 years, there has been a global decline in fertility rates, with a total fall of 50pc. In most parts of the world, fertility rates are now well below the replacement level of 2.1 babies per woman. (Ireland's fertility rate is about 1.6, from a peak of 3.9 births per woman in the early 1960s).

Data scientist and filmmaker Stephen J. Shaw has travelled to 24 countries and analysed millions of data points in order to understand global fertility rates and predict the future population of the Earth. The results, presented in his documentary, "Birthgap", are alarming.

It is a common belief that there are too many people on this planet, but the truth is that there is a real risk that the overall population will collapse, with dramatic consequences. Shaw predicts a humanitarian crisis of lonely old people.

Even if the overall number of people is still growing, soon the trend will reverse, as it is already happening in many countries.

Seventy percent of countries worldwide are currently below the population tipping point. As the number of newborns continue to decline, there will be a greater responsibility for supporting a larger elderly population.

Significantly, Shaw shows that in 30 industrialised countries, the average family size in the mid-1980s was the same as today: 2.4 people. This being so, why have average fertility rates falling by so much? The answer is that far fewer people are becoming parents at all.

By way of illustration, he points out that Japan has one of the lowest fertility rates in the world at 1.34. In 1973, 6pc of Japanese mothers were having four or more children, but surprisingly this figure is exactly the same today. What has changed is the number of childless women. It was 6pc in 1973 and within four years it reached 30pc, causing a drastic drop in births.

The same can be seen in other countries with very low birth rates. In Italy, for instance, 40pc of women are now childless.

It is not that mothers are having fewer children, but instead, there are fewer mothers. So the real issue is childlessness, which is often not what childless women want, Shaw claims.

This trend can be attributed to many factors.

A meta-study by Dutch academic Prof. Renske Keizer, found that just 10pc of women without children are childless by choice, 10pc for medical reasons, and 80pc because of circumstances. The most common factor is that they cannot find a suitable relationship. Paradoxically, this happens more when they are more educated and have a good career, as the more professionally successful a woman is, the stronger her preference for successful men. The problem is that not enough of these men exist.

Another factor, Shaw says, is that the female 'fertility window' is often overestimated and having children is delayed, by choice or circumstances, until the chance is gone.

There is no simple solution to a complex problem and all attempts so far have only mitigated the trend that has

become global. Only in parts of Africa are fertility rates still above the replacement level.

Given that more women want children than is the case, society needs to urgently find legitimate ways of meeting their wishes.

DECLARATION OF CASABLANCA FOR THE UNIVERSAL ABOLITION OF SURROGACY

A group of 100 lawyers, doctors, psychologists, and other experts from five continents gathered in Casablanca, Morocco, at the beginning of March, to call for “the repeal of all laws allowing or tolerating surrogacy” around the world.

The group released a signed document titled “International Declaration for the Universal Abolition of Surrogacy” which aims to raise global awareness of what the group considers to be a practice that violates human dignity.

The following requests have been made by the signatories:

- To prohibit surrogacy on their territory
- To deny any legal validity to contracts bearing the undertaking from a woman to carry and deliver a child

- To punish individuals and corporations acting as intermediaries between the surrogacy mothers and those who have commissioned the child
- To prosecute individuals who have recourse to a surrogate mother on their territory
- To prosecute their nationals who have recourse to a surrogate mother outside their territory
- To act in favour of the implementation of a legal instrument bearing global prohibition of the surrogacy.

Along with the statement, a proposal for an international convention was made available to all organizations and governments that wish to ratify it.

Our chairman, Angelo Bottone, was one of the signatories.

FAFCE CALLS THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO INCLUDE SURROGACY IN THE REVIEW OF ITS EU DIRECTIVE ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

FAFCE welcomes the adoption by the European Commission of a proposal to review the EU rules when it comes to the fight against human trafficking. Our Federation acknowledges the relevance of an update of the 2011 Directive in light of the evolution of the forms of exploitation for the past decade.

As recalled by the Commission's proposal, "trafficking for sexual exploitation has continuously been the most prevalent form of exploitation in the EU accounting for over a half of all victims and affecting predominantly women and girls. Trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation has been the second most frequent form of trafficking in the EU, with the number of victims rapidly increasing and nearly doubling in the last five years. However, trafficking for other purposes has gained more prominence over time both as regards forms of exploitation already included in the Anti-trafficking Directive (begging, exploitation of criminal activities and the removal of organs) as well as forms not explicitly mentioned therein (including forced marriage and illegal adoption). The overall percentage of other purposes of exploitation represents more than 10% of all victims."

FAFCE calls for the additional inclusion of human trafficking for reproductive exploitation purposes, explicitly in the context of surrogacy. Surrogacy indeed entails the commodification of women's body for reproductive purposes and the selling of children.

Even when the surrogate mother consents to the commodification of her body and reproductive functions, the consent is biased and thus void. Indeed, according to the Article 2 of the 2011 Directive, human trafficking includes *"the recruitment [...] of persons,*

including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of [...] the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” In practice, surrogacy means the exploitation of poorer women for the purposes of providing a child to richer couples. Surrogate mothers are often in situations of vulnerability, facing economic difficulties, and come to sell their body and their reproductive functions in order to support themselves and their family. In addition, the procedure of surrogacy implies medical risks, such as the common lack of post-natal care and an increased risk of postpartum depression, risks that only surrogate women carry, including death. On the other hand, private surrogacy clinics generate huge benefits from the exploitation of these women.

In 2021, the European Parliament stated that the *“sexual exploitation for surrogacy and reproductive purposes [...] is unacceptable and a violation of human dignity and human rights.”*

The practice of surrogacy also violates the rights of the child, who becomes the object of a transaction, and thus a victim of human trafficking. Our Federation regrets a double-standard of the European Commission when it

comes to its fight against illegal adoption and human trafficking, as it currently promotes a regulation proposal on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition of decisions and acceptance of authentic instruments in matters of parenthood and on the creation of a European Certificate of Parenthood. Our Federation regrets the unfair asymmetry it will create when comparing with the processes of legal international adoption. Adoption is a rigorous and intensive process that prioritizes the child's wellbeing at the necessary cost of long wait times. Couples must pass an arduous process to be approved for adoption and confirmed in their capacity to execute the responsibilities of parenthood. By choosing adoption, couples demonstrate that they value the interests of their child over their own interests. In the situation of surrogacy, it is the opposite: no requirements have to be met by the so-called "intended" parents, who prioritize their wish for a child above his or her best interests. When applying the same framework as for international adoption, some surrogacy arrangements could clearly be defined as situations of illegal adoption.

Our Federation strongly calls the European Commission to include surrogacy as a situation of human trafficking in its review of the 2011 Directive.

FAMILIES AND BISHOPS TOGETHER IN EUROPE: COMECE AND FAFCE SIGN MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING TO ENHANCE COOPERATION ON FAMILY

Brussels, 20th March 2023

COMECE and FAFCE signed on Monday 20 March 2023 a memorandum of understanding to enhance their cooperation in the field of family policies at the EU level. Cardinal Hollerich: *“it is essential to support families and look at the problems they face”*

The agreement was signed by His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, President of the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences of the European Union (COMECE), and Vincenzo Bassi, President of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE).

With this understanding, both organisations will benefit from each other’s expertise. FAFCE will tighten its relationship with the representatives of the Catholic Church in the European Union, participating as observer member to the meetings of the COMECE Social Affairs Commission. The Bishops of the European Union will gain from the grassroot experience in the field of family policies offered by the many national organisations that are part of FAFCE.

“We are grateful for the service that FAFCE gives to the Church in Europe – stated Cardinal Hollerich. It is not by chance that this agreement has been reached during the synodal path. Together, in the context of a more fragmented and individualistic society, we wish to offer our contribution to the common good. It is essential to support families and look at the problems they face”, continued the President of COMECE.

“This memorandum is an example of how Pastors and Christian families and family associations can walk together and join their forces to find new ways of communicating the beauty of the family, as well as calling on the European institutions to consider the fundamental function of the family as the building block of the future” – stated the President of FAFCE, Vincenzo Bassi.

The memorandum institutionalises a lively collaboration that goes back many years and has already resulted in joint documents and events. The latest examples are the Reflection Paper on the role of the elderly in times of demographic change and the event on the European Care Strategy.

BISHOPS FROM THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES ISSUE LETTER ON HUMAN SEXUALITY



The Bishops' Conference of the Nordic Countries has issued the following pastoral letter affirming the Church's teaching on human sexuality.

CONFERENTIA EPISCOPALIS SCANDIÆ Pastoral Letter on Human Sexuality

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The forty days of Lent recall the forty days Christ fasted in the wilderness. But that is not all. In salvation history, forty-day periods mark stages in God's work of redemption, ongoing to this day. The first such intervention took place in the days of Noah. Having seen

the destruction man wrought¹, the Lord subjected earth to a cleansing baptism. 'Rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights'.² The result was a new beginning.

When Noah and his kin stepped back into a world washed clean, God made his first covenant with all flesh. He promised that a flood would never again destroy earth. Of humankind he asked for justice: to revere God, to construct peace, to be fruitful. We are called to live blessedly on earth, to find joy in one another. Our potential is wonderful as long as we remember who we are: 'for God made man in his own image'.³ We are called to realise this image by the life choices we make. To ratify his covenant, God set a sign in heaven: 'I set my bow in the cloud, it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When the bow is in the clouds, I will look upon it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth'.⁴

This covenantal sign, the rainbow, is claimed in our time as the symbol of a movement that is at once political and cultural. We recognise all that is noble in this movement's

¹ Genesis 6.5.

² Genesis 7.12.

³ Genesis 9.6.

⁴ Genesis 9.13, 16.

aspirations. In so far as these speak of the dignity of all human beings and of their longing to be seen, we share them. The Church condemns unjust discrimination of any kind, also on the basis of gender or orientation. We declare dissent, however, when the movement puts forward a view of human nature that abstracts from the embodied integrity of personhood, as if physical gender were accidental. And we protest when such a view is imposed on children as if it were not a daring hypothesis but a proven truth, imposed on minors as a heavy burden of self-determination for which they are not ready. It is curious: our intensely body-conscious society in fact takes the body lightly, refusing to see it as significant of identity, supposing that the only selfhood of consequence is the one produced by subjective self-perception, as we construct ourselves in our own image.

When we profess that God made us in his image, the image does not just refer to the soul. It is mysteriously lodged in the body, too. For us Christians the body is intrinsic to personhood. We believe in the resurrection of the body. Naturally, 'we shall all be changed'.⁵ What our bodies will be like in eternity we cannot yet imagine. But we believe on biblical authority, grounded in tradition, that the unity of mind, soul, and body is made to last forever. In eternity we shall be recognisable as who we

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15.51.

are now, but the conflicts that still prevent the harmonious unfolding of our true self will have been resolved.

‘By God’s grace I am what I am’.⁶ St Paul had to battle with himself to make this statement in faith. So, often enough, must we. We are conscious of all we are not; we focus on gifts we did not receive, on affection or affirmation lacking in our lives. These things sadden us. We want to make up for them. Sometimes this is reasonable. Often it is futile. The journey to self-acceptance passes through engagement with what is real. The reality of our lives embraces our contradictions and wounds. The Bible and the lives of saints show that our wounds can, by grace, become sources of healing for ourselves and for others.

The image of God in human nature manifests itself in the complementarity of male and female. Man and woman are created for one another: the commandment to be fruitful depends on this mutuality, sanctified in nuptial union. In Scripture, the marriage of man and wife becomes an image of God’s communion with mankind, to be perfected in the Lamb’s marriage feast at the end of history.⁷ This is not to say that such union, for us, is easy

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15.10.

⁷ Revelation 19.6.

or painless. For some it seems an impossible option. More intimately, the integration within ourselves of masculine and feminine characteristics can be hard. The Church recognises this. She wishes to embrace and console all who experience hardship.

As your bishops we stress this: we are here for everyone, to accompany all. The yearning for love and the search for sexual wholeness touch human beings intimately. In this area we are vulnerable. Patience is called for on the path towards wholeness, and joy in every forward step. A quantum leap is made, for example, in progress from promiscuity to fidelity, whether or not the faithful relationship fully corresponds to the objective order of a nuptial union sacramentally blessed. Every search for integrity is worthy of respect, deserving of encouragement. Growth in wisdom and virtue is organic. It happens gradually. At the same time growth, to be fruitful, must proceed towards a goal. Our mission and task as bishops is to point towards the peaceful, life-giving path of Christ's commandments, narrow at the outset but growing broader as we advance. We would let you down if we offered less; we were not ordained to preach little notions of our own.

In the Church's hospitable fellowship, there is room for all. The Church, says an ancient text, is 'the mercy of God

descending on mankind'.⁸ This mercy excludes no one. But it sets a high ideal. The ideal is spelt out in the commandments, which help us grow out of too narrow notions of self. We are called to become new women and men. In all of us there are elements of chaos that need to be ordered. Sacramental communion presupposes coherently lived consent to the terms of the covenant sealed in Christ's Blood. It may happen that circumstances make a Catholic unable, for a time, to receive the sacraments. He or she does not therefore cease to be a member of the Church. Experience of internal exile embraced in faith can lead to a deeper sense of belonging. Exiles often turn out that way in Scripture. Each of us has an exodus journey to make, but we do not walk alone.

At times of trial, too, the sign of God's first covenant surrounds us. It calls us to seek the sense of our existence, not in fragments of the rainbow's light, but in the divine source of the full, gorgeous spectrum, which is of God and calls us to be God-like. As disciples of Christ, who is God's Image⁹, we cannot reduce the sign of the rainbow to less than the life-giving compact between the Creator and creation. God has bestowed on us 'great and precious promises, so that through them [we] may share in the

⁸ From the fourth-century Syriac midrash *The Cave of Treasures*.

⁹ Colossians 1.15.

divine nature'.¹⁰ God's image imprinted on our being calls out for sanctification in Christ. Any account of human desire that sets the bar lower than this is inadequate from a Christian point of view.

Now, notions of what it is to be a human, and so a sexual, being are in flux. What is taken for granted today may be rejected tomorrow. Anyone who stakes much on passing theories risks being terribly hurt. We need deep roots. Let us, then, try to appropriate the fundamental principles of Christian anthropology while reaching out in friendship, with respect, to those who feel estranged by them. We owe it to the Lord, to ourselves, and to our world, to give an account of what we believe, and of why we believe it to be true.

Many are perplexed by traditional Christian teaching on sexuality. To such we offer a word of friendly counsel. First: try to acquaint yourself with Christ's call and promise, to know him better through the Scriptures and in prayer, through the liturgy and study of the Church's full teaching, not just of snippets here and there. Take part in the Church's life. The horizon of the questions with which you set out will be enlarged in this way, as will your mind and heart. Secondly, consider the limitations of a purely secular discourse on sexuality. It needs to be enriched.

¹⁰ 2 Peter 1.4.

We need adequate terms to speak of these important things. We shall have a precious contribution to make if we recover the sacramental nature of sexuality in God's plan, the beauty of Christian chastity, and the joy of friendship, which lets us see that great, freeing intimacy can be found also in non-sexual relationships.

The point of the Church's teaching is not to curtail love but to enable it. At the end of its prologue, our 1992 Catechism of the Catholic Church repeats a passage from The Roman Catechism of 1566: 'The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.'¹¹ By this love the world was made, our nature formed. This love was made manifest in Christ's example, teaching, saving passion, and death. It is vindicated in his glorious resurrection, which we shall celebrate with joy during the fifty days of Easter. May our Catholic community, so many-faceted and colourful, bear witness to this love in truth.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 25; cf. *Roman Catechism*, Preface 10; cf. 1 Corinthians 13.8.

40TH ANNIVERSARY GET-TOGETHER

The first public meeting of Family Solidarity took place in September 1983. To celebrate this anniversary, we are planning a get-together in Dublin on Saturday 10th June. We want to share memories and insights about the history of our organisation. Old members are particularly welcome, as we hope to reconnect with as many of the original generation of activists.

Please, contact us at **familysolidarityireland@gmail.com** if you are able to attend, and we will provide you with more details of the event.

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.

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.
