

IN OLD AGE DON'T ABANDON ME
MEETING WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR PASTORAL CARE WITH THE ELDERS
OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCES
May 16, 2024



Chaired by those responsible for the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life: Gleison De Paula Souza, secretary of the Dicastery, Gabriella Gambino undersecretary of the Dicastery and Vittorio Scelzo, member of the Dicastery. Participation was large since there were more than 30 participants.

Gabriella Gambino commented on Pope Francis' letter addressed to the elderly on July 28. She emphasized the majority presence of the elderly in the churches and pointed out the need to give them spiritual accompaniment that allows them to recover their sense of dignity. It is also necessary to promote intergenerational meetings to meet the new generations. The elders are witnesses and transmitters and their mission must be promoted in the work of apostolate.

Vittorio Scelzo stressed that the best place of refuge for the elderly is the family, although he pointed out the crisis that the family is suffering. He pointed out the positive aspects in the relationship of the elderly, highlighting the intense love between grandparents and grandchildren and their fundamental role as transmitters. The negative aspect in this relationship is essentially that the elderly feel like a burden.

The elderly suffer from loneliness and a Pastoral Care of the Elderly is necessary, but it missed a structured thought of this pastoral care in which the elderly must occupy the active center. An example well received by the Dicastery is the document of the Spanish Episcopal Conference. It is necessary to launch a dedicated pastoral care with specific departments in the dioceses, which incorporates new elements and necessary resources in which the elderly have a priority role.

Dialogue

We highlight essential messages in this dialogue such as the following:

- The need for a pastoral care of the active elderly was discussed and the need for generational meetings was pointed out.
- The suffering of the elderly due to wars was highlighted; they need purification and consolation.
- The need for training agents for this pastoral ministry was highlighted through workshops that promote the availability of agents trained for this pastoral ministry.

The throwaway culture

Australian Bishops' Conference, Bishop Timothy Harris

The Monsignor highlighted the anomalous demographic evolution in Australia, which will lead to an aging population of 26% over 80 years of age in the year 2026. The situation of the elderly depends on their habitat: indigenous people stay with their families, natives are individualistic and end up in residences with frequently deficient care. Loneliness begins with the loss of a job where the person, whether elderly or not, feels useless and excluded.

Monsignor addressed the worrying problem of euthanasia, established as a right from the age of 18. The demand is motivated by the fear of being a burden, by the fear of racial exclusion, by the lack of resources and means, both human and physical, limited economic resources, etc.

Given this situation, euthanasia is proposed as a solution and referred to a Catholic hospital absorbed by the administration in which euthanasia was implemented and attempts to make the person who resorts to this false solution to their discarded situation reconsider.

It is necessary to recover the dignity of the elderly. There are many challenges, but we must continue with the Magisterium of Christ. The Monsignor thanked Pope Francis for his letter to the elderly.

Gabriela Gambino pointed out that this policy of extermination is spreading and this makes a transversal pastoral effort in defense of life necessary.

Paraguayan Episcopal Conference, Jorge Quintás

Jorge Quintás pointed out that a percentage of 17% of seniors lack a pension and find their home in the parish. Social aid in terms of health, housing and culture is limited, which is why the Pastoral Care of the Elderly is beginning to be implemented. Although the eldest is inserted into the family, he remains marginalized due to the attention that marriage and children require.

There are many prejudices about old age and no one feels old (the old are the others). Although there is a lack of resources, there is good volunteering. The elderly must reach old age with a quality of life, for which associations of older adults must be created.

The participation of the Elderly in the apostolate should be encouraged, foster communities and train pastoral agents with training.

Dialogue

We highlight essential messages in this dialogue such as the following:

- The panorama of euthanasia is shocking. You have to fight for life. We must make man aware that his final goal is in God.
- Preference must be given to home visits to older people who live alone in coordination with the Health Ministry.
- Loneliness aggravates the disease, a free and accompanied life is necessary.
- The greatest asset is necessary. The eldest needs to give to feel worthy and necessary.

Indonesian Episcopal Conference, Father Arisanto

Father Arisanto informed us of the demographic evolution, pointing out that in the year 2026 the population over 70 years of age will increase to 25% in the year 2026. Due to the scarcity of pensions, the elderly usually live in the family where three generations coexist.

The parish is a meeting place where the elderly help in the liturgy, pastoral care, anointing of the sick, bringing communion and visiting families and the sick. The parish and movements like Santa Mónica facilitate formation.

The parishes organize coexistence in the form of pilgrimages and generational meetings. Pastoral care is focused in a synodal manner in cooperation with other movements and NGOs.

The Elder is a gift, both for the family and for the Church.

Catholic Grandparents Association, Catherine Whiley

Being a grandfather is a vocation that requires special gifts, you can continue life with joy and solidarity. In the fight against individualism, the elderly is a connoisseur of life, transmits faith, hope and light. The elder is an excellent volunteer in the Elderly Pastoral who bears witness to life and listens. He is a fundamental help in the administration of the sacraments and preparation of the liturgy.

The eldest has a role in the future, he is a potential that God will never abandon

Dialogue

We highlight essential messages in this dialogue such as the following:

- The topic of Euthanasia continues to be present due to the appearance of the first steps in other countries. To combat it, the dignity of the person must be restored with support.
- Need to expand support for the elderly in nursing homes.
- The need to implement Pastoral Care for the Elderly at the national level is unanimously insisted.
- The emigration of young people with the intention of improving themselves impacts the situation of the elderly, who are left alone.

Conclusions

Gleison De Paula thanked those responsible for pastoral care for their participation and summarized the conclusions of the meeting in the following points:

- It is necessary to fight against euthanasia and restore the dignity of the elderly by training and educating them in the value of life.
- The Pastoral Care of the Elderly must be taken seriously in a synodal manner, with the movements that care for the elderly working together.
- It is necessary to invent new ways, abandoning old schemes (new wine should not be kept in old wineskins)
- Let's not get used to loneliness, it is a sin. The loneliness of the elderly is a waste.
- The spiritual dimension is vital in supporting the elderly.
- The Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life is involved in the Pastoral Care of the Elderly. Ask and you will be answered.

Notes of Jaime Tamarit