



SYNOD FATHERS AT A CROSS ROADS

Despite the fact that the Catholic Church has many staunch supporters when upholding its idealistic and traditional views on marriage with such basic elements as life-long fidelity and openness to the reception of children, there is a growing number in the Catholic community who voice the concern that the Church is at odds with realities.

The Church teaches chastity before marriage; it forbids artificial birth control, homosexual relations and excludes divorcees from the Holy Communion. But in many countries cohabitation before marriage is the rule rather than the exception, birth control is part of the public education, half of the marriages end in divorce and legislation accepts both cohabitation and same sex marriages.

The Catholic Church preaches charity and compassion, yet at the same time leans on its Canon Law with its commands and prohibitions. As the gap between the teaching of the Church and the secular world widens, more and more people find that they do not “fit in” or they feel excluded. Others may look for guidance but are disappointed in the answers that they receive which they do not find relevant to everyday modern life. Their questions are many:

A person who was divorced against her will from an unfaithful partner, may wonder why she will have to stay single for the rest of her life if she wants to receive communion... A woman, finding herself pregnant after rape, may ask why abortion cannot sometimes be considered an act of self-

defense... Young people who defend the Church’s stand on the sanctity of life may find it to be a contradiction to be against birth control when hoping to reduce the number of abortions... A lesbian may feel that there is no place for her in the Church...

Unlike some other religious communities the Catholic Church – does not want to be an “à la carte” church – or a church where popular opinion is what gives guidance. The Church is often admired for its firm structure and its commitment to the Tradition handed down through centuries. At the same time it is important to see the difference between the essence of the basic Tradition and the many traditions that may be changing with the times. Down through the centuries the Catholic Church has been governed by celibate men, and many of the questions that are haunting the Church today are questions that have been and will be answered without the experience gained through everyday family life. At the same time we know – laymen and scholars – that no-one possesses the Truth. As Christians we are underway towards a greater understanding and have to search constantly for what is true and good.



The late Cardinal Martini was among those who criticised the Church for its lack of will to renew itself, claiming in an interview a couple of years ago that the Church was “200 years behind its times.” Today the present Pope Francis is trying to do something about this. The focus of his papacy has been compassion, wanting to confront injustice and exploitation. Although upholding strong ideals, he is stretching out a hand to those who have ended up in difficult situations in life rather than appearing as judgmental. The ongoing Synod on the Family is an expression of such an attitude. The leaders of the Church have been asked to listen to the voices of various groups and to take in what people find difficult and challenging in their lives and in their vocation as Christians. After a process of two years of reflections, discussions and dialogue, conclusions are soon ready to be drawn.

People both within and outside of the Church are awaiting the result with both hope and anxiety. Some are concerned that the Church will deviate from its ideals and choose the convenient answers. Others fear that the Bishops will stick to old ways, being content with traditional and well-meaning advice that will change nothing. The bishops carry a heavy burden. In many of the countries where the Church used to uphold ethical standards, people are drifting away from the Christian community. Except for major holidays and important events young people often choose to be else-

where than in church on Sundays. The faithful may explain this as a growing materialism and a superficial modern culture, and this is probably part of the truth. But the fact that the Church has lost its relevance in areas where it used to have a great impact, also tells something about a need for reflection, reorientation and reengagement on part of the Christian community. When people turn away because they no longer feel that they “fit in” or because the answers they get are not relevant, they will generally try to find compensations and fill the void elsewhere. It is a challenge today to turn the *exit* sign to a *welcome back!*

St. Augustine insisted: “Lord! My heart is restless until it finds rest in You!” pointing at the fact that human existence is linked to a search for truth and meaning in life – a search for another dimension. As a spiritual and religious body the Church is opening up to such a dimension giving its faithful a reason for and a direction to their lives. At the same time existence is material as well as spiritual, and reflective people require reasonable and logical guidance to match their everyday lives and experience. People who have ended up in difficult dilemmas or who have stumbled in life, also look for the outstretched hand and a new beginning. In a world full of misery, both spiritual and material, there is a great need for ideals and moral direction, but just as much a need for compassion and understanding. One of the great tasks of the Church is now and always to convey a HOPE - to the world and in particular to those who do not see much hope where they are.

May the upcoming synod become such a beacon of hope!

Mette Bruusgaard, Sept. 2015



SYNOD ON THE FAMILY 2015

Several of our member organisations have answered questions and written statements to the Bishops' Synod in Rome. A letter from kfd was published in our Magazine of 1 April, 2014. Here are some others: (excerpts)

STATEMENT ON INSTRUMENTUM LABORIS

„The vocation and mission of the family in the Church and the contemporary world“



The German Catholic Women's League (KDFB) follows with great interest the preparations of the coming World Bishops' Synod.... KDFB is grateful for the comprehensive information in „Instrumentum laboris“, published 23 June 2015 in the Vatican. It is the basis for the deliberations.

KDFB is pleased that some comments to the previous preliminary documents are integrated into the current „Instrumentum laboris“. This means an appreciation of women's perspectives, which has to be integrated into the discussions on family, marriage and partnership. The KDFB also appreciates the vocation of women as counsellors to the Bishops' Synod.

Comments from KDFB on particular topics

Generally:

In the new document KDFB perceives a more realistic and nuanced view on different situations in the life of families where old age, impairment, illness and

death, widowhood, poverty and migration are named as challenges for the pastoral care. More than in the past, a family is seen in an intergenerational context and the solidarity between generations is valued. As a women's organisation we truly welcome this.

The role of Women (no 30):

We are a Catholic women's organisation which is rooted in the Church as an active partner.

Therefore we value as especially positive the statements from the Church that recognize its function as an example and that it is committed to integrate women in decision making, management positions and the education of priests,

thereby contributing to a greater recognition of women worldwide. A greater involvement of women into responsible positions contributes to a co-operation of men and women in the Church, based on partnership, and this contributes to the credibility of the Church.

Contraception – relevance of conscience (no 137):

In „Instrumentum laboris“ we see a re-evaluation of the encyclical „*Humanae vitae*“. As in „Königsteiner Erklärung“ (The Declaration of Koenigstein), adopted in 1968 by the German bishops, the significance of the conscience in choosing methods of contraception is accentuated. This new point of view is seeking a balance between two opposites - the responsibility of the conscience of the married couples on the one side and the moral teaching of the Church on the other. This should be explored further.

Remarried divorcees (no 121, 129):

With regard to remarried divorcees we appreciate the statements that reassess banning these people from committees in the liturgical-pastoral, educational and charitable field.

Here we appeal to you as participants of the Synod, to coerce a search for and an uncompromising implementation of already possible pastoral ways. This in order that concerned women and men, who still feel at home in the Church, are allowed to receive the sacraments, work within the Church bodies or be employed in ecclesiastical institutions. It is of great concern to us that the Church will open up to remarried divorcees who beg for God's blessing for their partnership. Therefore we appreciate that the new „Instrumentum laboris“ remembers the principle of graduality and the tradition of the Orthodox Church.

Infant and maternal mortality

In our previous statements to the preliminary documents of the Bishops' Synod we pleaded as a women's organisation to consider the complexity of the problems of infant and maternal mortality in the discussions concerning dropping birth-rates and contraception. The reduction of maternal mortality, also a consequence of pregnancies at a too early age or too rapidly following upon one another, is one of the millenium goals not yet achieved.

Therefore we hope for a suggestion from the Synod that also women need to have a minimum age of 16 when they marry, wherever the custom of the country or previous regulations of the Bishops' Conference do not already codify a higher minimum age. Likewise the reduction of infant mortality has to be among the preferential efforts in the transmission of life. We hope that this topic will not be forgotten at the proceedings of the Bishops' Synod.

Gender:

Fortunately an across-the-board condemnation of an alleged „gender ideology“ in Lineamenta is omitted. If the Synod, as announced, will deliberate for instance on arranged marriages, absent fathers or genital mutilations, then gender roles will inevitably be on the agenda.

With our recently published brochure „Gender, Gender Mainstreaming und Frauenverbandsarbeit“ (Gender, Gender Mainstreaming and the Work of Women's Organisations) we try to contribute to keeping the debate objective.

Resolution of the Federal Board of KDFB

16 July 2015

OPEN LETTER TO THE SYNOD FATHERS

Dear Synod Fathers,

At the initiative of Pope Francis, two questionnaires were sent to Catholics regarding the Synod on the family. So we have come together, faithful to Christ and the Synod Fathers, in a process of dialogue and an exchange of views that honors the entire Church.

We, members of various French-speaking movements that are active in various fields, have first considered the responses to the two questionnaires.

To start out, we wondered why a similar approach was repeated from one year to the next, considering that the Christian people had already clearly expressed themselves. Then, reading these questionnaires, we could not but notice the large gap between putting a too strong emphasis on Ancient Greek and Scholastic thinking and the life of the followers of Christ: Natural Law, anthropological considerations, often literal reading of the Scriptures...

As for the contents of the answers, here are the essential elements collected. They all converge:

If the faithful see in the family a core value, they stress that there is not "one" family but "families".

The exclusion of the Eucharist of the divorced and remarried is incomprehensible. No one understands that the worst murderers are treated better than them. No one understands that the Lord's Altar is not open to those who need it, because after all, it was for the sick (and who is not sick?) that Jesus came.

As for the extension of nullity procedures for divorced and remarried, it is widely rejected, as it offends people's consciences.

Since the Church recognises that the enlightened conscience is able to discern between right and wrong, she should entrust to men and women the exercise of responsible parenthood, in terms of choice of contraception, number of children and help for marital infertility when needed.

Finally, people who responded asked that the sexual orientation of each should not be subject to any discrimination, let alone a conviction.

At this point it is important for us to stress what these answers signify. We are collaborators in the name of the Gospel, animated by a sincere faith and hoping to reanimate our Church. We see in the answers a return of the Christian people to the public ecclesiastical scene. This is good news! The return to the words of the faithful expressing faith, the *sensus fidei*, is a true tradition of the Church, although it has sometimes been forgotten. The Holy Spirit blows where it wants,

no one can fence it in. Hence the Church betrays its living Tradition if it deals with the Christian people as if they were minors. Tomorrow, she will need the strength of all her baptised members. It is therefore important that we all listen to each other in order to make our church authentic and alive.

Respecting the heavy responsibility that you carry, we accompany this letter with our most fraternal wishes. May this Synod honor the Gospel and may everyone talk from the heart of his faith! And may our prayers and our support be with you!

The letter was signed by Acf and 20 other organisations



Sept. 10, 2015

COMMENTS FROM THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEAGUE OF NORWAY (NKKF) to the questionnaire sent out by Oslo Catholic Diocese



Without relating to a specific question that can be answered by referring to the concerns voiced by the League, we want to call on the Church to promote women's dignity and equal value as a fundamental condition that must be present in a marriage in order that it will fulfil the criteria that are the hallmark of a sacramental marriage: permanence, fidelity, openness for children and giving oneself for the good of the spouse.

We will also call on the Church to express clearly and unambiguously that violence towards women and children is unacceptable. In the final document of the Synod of Bishops it is said: « Not to be overlooked is the increasing violence against women, where they become victims, unfortunately, often within families... » (n. 8). NKKF asks that the Church must state more clearly that violence cannot be tolerated, whether within the four walls of the family home or in other relations.

To question no. 38. With regard to the divorced and remarried, pastoral practice concerning the sacraments needs to be further studied, including assessment of the Orthodox practice and taking into account “the distinction between an objective sinful situation and extenuating circumstances” (n. 52). What are the prospects in such a case? What is possible? What suggestions can be offered to resolve forms of undue or unnecessary impediments?

The Church must be conscious of the deep pain caused by denying the sacraments to persons who find themselves in this situation and have struggled with a broken marriage that the person concerned may not have wanted or is guilty of causing, but has been forced to accept. A possibility to look more closely at the criteria for an annulment of Catholic marriages should be considered. In a nullity case in accordance with the regulations in force today, the focus is on finding evidence showing the intentions of the couple at the time of entering into the marriage and possible weaknesses then. This will often seem heartless for a party that has been abandoned and betrayed, but where everything was “in perfect order” on the wedding day.

With the divorce rate that we see also in Catholic marriages today, a possibility that the Church in some situations may remove the obstacle for people to receive the basic gifts of grace, estab-



lished by Jesus himself, will hopefully become compelling. Communion and the sacrament of penance should not be reserved only for those who have everything in perfect order, but they should also be available for those who struggle and fail.

In such cases it may also be a help for the individuals who find themselves in such circumstances to be attended to with special pastoral care that may be established in the parishes where lay people could be used as mentioned in the final synod document as specialized “listening centres” or as companions on the journey. This might be established soon, without waiting for the Church’s rules on sacrament practise possibly to be changed.

To question no. 42.How can adoption and foster-parenting be encouraged as a powerful sign of fruitful generosity?

NKKF wants to stress that the most important consideration when adoption and/or fostering is contemplated, must be the consideration of what is best for the child. It is unclear what is meant by «sign of fruitful generosity», but in all cases the weight must be on what is the best for the child, not on the parents’ wishes for a child.



To question no. 44. How does the Church combat the scourge of abortion and foster an effective culture of life?

The Church is called on to reassess the attitude to contraception as a means to prevent pregnancies that may be terminated by an abortion.

Another aspect of abortion is pregnancies that are the result of rape, especially rapes that are carried out as a part of waging war. The Church must condemn rape in all cases and especially rapes in the course of a war, which is often a means in a so-called ethnic cleansing.

27 March, 2015





WHY BIOETHICS?

BIOETHICAL ISSUES FACING PEOPLE TODAY

Andante Summer School, 12-16 August 2015 in Vienna

FACILITATOR'S REPORT

Fifty-five women from fourteen different countries, among them sixteen women from central and eastern Europe, gathered to learn about and consider one of the most challenging issues of our time: how to make good ethical decisions about medical and technological interventions in matters of life and death, and the shaping of human life and human persons. This is bioethics.

Dr Sigrid Sterckx, professor at the University of Ghent, Belgium, invited us to consider what ethics is all about. She encouraged us to consider, question, and engage in dialogue, pointing out that when people give up on argument we are left without any means of development or progress. Ethics demands dialogue and debate. To illustrate this, she led us through a series of 'thought experiments' involving runaway railway carriages. It became clear that even we, a group of committed Catholic women, could not agree on the best course of action to take in each specific case. Dr Sterckx showed us how habit, emotion, reason, fear, even proximity, may contribute to what we decide to do; and of course, what we don't do, for deciding to do nothing is also an ethical decision.

Dr Myriam Wijlens, a canon lawyer, professor at the University of Erfurt, Germany, spoke about canon law as the place where the pastoral concerns of the Church and the doctrines are brought into dialogue. She worked through a number of cases with us, noting that in order to breach canon law an act must be deliberate, and free. Imputability [moral responsibility] is assumed by canon law, but no-one can be penalised for an action that was not free, acting with both 'internal' and 'external' freedom. It is quite difficult to be excommunicated!

In her second talk, Dr Sigrid Sterckx explored ethical issues at the end of life. She pointed out that legal rulings influence ethical arguments, often determining the 'direction of travel' of the debate. Dr Sterckx examined a number of legal cases, mainly from the USA and Canada, in which judges had come to varying conclusions about end of life challenges:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vacco_v._Quill

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carter_v._Canada_\(AG\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carter_v._Canada_(AG))

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cruzan_v._Director,_Missouri_Department_of_Health



The cases show that judges may draw different conclusions in different circumstances. As in her previous talk, Dr Sterckx showed us that ethical decisions are rarely simple, and that care and attention are necessary in every case.

Dr Sigrid Muller introduced us to current thinking on the relationship between ethics, faith and spirituality. She began by noting that traditional families and personal networks are breaking down, and that as a result a new set of values is emerging: individualism, the privatisation of ethics, a fear of taking sides on ethical matters, or of questioning the decisions of others. The Christian argument that life is good, created by God, redeemed in Christ and intended for eternal glory is simply not understood. Faith in technology replaces natural law, and technology is evaluated in positive terms. Christians must engage and argue for what we believe: for a universal perspective, concern for value as such, not 'value for me'.

Dr Mary McHugh introduced us to the practitioner's perspective, speaking about ethical decision making as a working doctor.

A common framework for contemporary medical ethics uses four basic principles:

1. *Autonomy* - the patient has the right to refuse or choose their treatment;
2. *Beneficence* - a medical practitioner should act in the best interest of the patient;
3. *Non-maleficence* - "First, do no harm": the practitioner should always be aware of risk, and should do nothing that will harm the patient;
4. *Justice* – so far as possible, resources should be shared fairly and the practitioner should act without fear or favour, focusing on the needs of the patient.

These principles, and especially the principles of autonomy and justice, require the practitioner to communicate honestly with the patient, and make sure that the patient has, and understands, all the information relevant to any decision that has to be made. Dr McHugh's presentation emphasised what we had learned from Dr Sterckx's thought experiments: often there is no 'right' answer to an ethical dilemma, and we have to struggle to find the best course of action under the circumstances.

Dr Regula Ott, and Dr Sigrid Muller in her second talk, dealt with developments in technology that are already creating ethical dilemmas, and will create more in future. Technologies are becoming available that will enable parents to have embryos screened for genetic defects, or specific traits, before implantation or during pregnancy. Genetic engineering to correct defects may soon become genetic engineering to produce 'designer babies'. These technologies are creating new moral horizons. How should we, as women in the Church respond? Is it enough simply to say 'No'?

PLENARY: WHAT CAN WE DO?

An important role for Andante is to be a space for critical reflection, where women from across Europe can come together and consider these questions in an atmosphere of friendship and openness. In 2014 the International Theological Commission wrote in *The Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*:

“...What is less well known ... is the role played by the laity with regard to the development of the moral teaching of the Church. It is therefore important to reflect also on the function played by the laity in discerning the Christian understanding of appropriate human behaviour in accordance with the Gospel. In certain areas, the teaching of the



Church has developed as a result of lay people discovering the imperatives arising from new situations. The reflection of theologians, and then the judgment of the episcopal magisterium, was based on the Christian experience already clarified by the faithful intuition of lay people....” [See the full text on the Vatican website: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html]

It is important that we contribute to this conversation from our distinctive experiences. In order to do this, we must first raise awareness, and then encourage informed debate, and when we are ready, speak to the Church Hierarchy out of our experience.

As a community we can share information and understanding, and counter poor and inaccurate advice and information. We can try to ensure that counselling is informed, and offered by people who have practical experience and insight into, for example, bringing up a child with Downs Syndrome and the impact of a Downs child on family life. We can identify the support that women might need in a variety of morally complex situations, and see how it might be offered.

Andante has the opportunity to be a voice for Catholic women in Europe, by asking questions, seeking information, critically evaluating information from a Catholic perspective, and sharing what we learn with each other. We have the opportunity to challenge the assumptions of secular legal and social thought by giving due weight to the gospel values of human dignity, solidarity, care for life, justice, and responsibility.

All Andante member organisations should work towards annual meetings with their Bishops’ Conference, as happens already in Germany, in England and Wales, and in some other countries. We noted how important it is that we, through our organisations, are able to study and understand Church documents. We can then address the fear of new technologies that seems to underlie some negative attitudes within the Church Hierarchy, and participate in the development of Church teaching in the complex world of bioethics.

In this context we noted the importance of having documents, including the important Vatican II texts, translated into all European languages so that they can be read, studied and put into practice.

COMECE, the Commission of the Bishops’ Conferences in the countries of the European Union, works on bioethics: how can Andante contribute? www.comece.eu

The Council of Europe has a Committee that works on bioethics: www.coe.int/bioethics

As members of Andante and of our national Catholic women’s organisations we can help one another to listen to the Church Hierarchy, and also to be listened to by them, and be heard. In secular contexts we can promote the value of life and the importance of protecting life from beginning to end.

We can be a voice for the voiceless: most especially for women who are vulnerable, excluded or marginalised in our competitive consumer societies.

We can help to identify the causes of negative and anti-life decisions and so contribute to the growth of a moral community informed by Christian values and directed to the common good.

For this reason it is important that we meet in different countries and cities and that our friendships and deliberations join East and West, North and South and bring the Catholic women of Europe together.

Patricia Stoa



DONATION

A collection was made during the closing mass at the Summer School.

This donation was given to the Martinshaus in Latvia as a follow-up of Andante's presence in Riga in Oct. 2014.

*Dear Participants of the Andante Summer School in Vienna,
I would like to thank you for the grant given to the women's "Martinshaus" in Latvia. We used*

the EUR 1050 grant to buy schoolbags, shoes, clothes, writing material for kids of poor families in order they could start school on 1st of September. On behalf of these families I would like to thank you very much! We are praying for you!

*Sincerely yours,
Iveta Jansone*

Leader of the "Martinshaus" in Liepaja, Latvia

ENCYCLICAL LETTER LAUDATO SI'

OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

1. "LAUDATO SI', mi' Signore" – "Praise be to you, my Lord". In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs".[1]

2. This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The vio-

lence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters.

Read more: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/de/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html



The release of Laudato Si' is a historic event, as Pope Francis issues a powerful message on our moral responsibility to care for creation. This encyclical is a wake-up call for Catholics around the world to help protect our planet and those people most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

The Cantic of Brother Sun

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor, and
all blessing.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your
creatures, especially Sir Brother Sun, who is the
day and through whom You give us light, and
he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor;
and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars, in heaven You formed them clear
and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother
Wind, and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which You
give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious
and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night and he is
beautiful and playful and robust and strong

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister
Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us,
and who produces varied fruits with colored
flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord, through those who
give pardon for Your love and bear infirmity and
tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister
Bodily Death, from whom no living man can
escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will find in Your
most holy will, for the second death shall do
them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.

Amen

CREATION

In July 2015 the Coordinating Committee of Andante sent the following letter to its member organisations: (excerpts)

As members of the Coordinating Committee of Andante, we are very pleased to learn about the publication of the new encyclical from our Pope Francis: *Laudato si'* – On care for our common home. In this encyclical the Pope calls for a greater attentiveness and a more comprehensive ecology.

Ever since the Summer School in Augsburg (2012) a responsibility for Creation has been one of the main themes of Andante. At that time we made clear that our 1.2 mill. European Andante women would participate in an ecological caretaking of our common planet. Consequently, we are very pleased that Pope Francis has put weight to this theme through his new encyclical.

Together we can achieve something in many places in Europe if we all decide about positive changes. Having in mind the UN climate conference in Paris in December 2015, we as women will pray for courageous steps – or maybe organize an event in our community or our country. Then we can pray or sing the two prayers from the last section of the encyclical or the Canticle of the Sun by St. Francis.

In addition, the ecumenical Creation time (between the 1 Sept. and the 4 Oct. every year) is a relevant time to focus on the new encyclical and the theme of Creation. As women we are determined to leave behind a livable planet for future generations.

COLLECTION OF CREATION-PRAYERS

Andante would like to send you a European collection of Creation-prayers and songs by December, enabling us to pray for courageous and ecological decisions in Paris. Please, send us Creation-prayers and songs that you may have by November – to:

secretariat@andante-europa.net

Thanking you in advance, we send our best wishes!

FROM PSALM 104

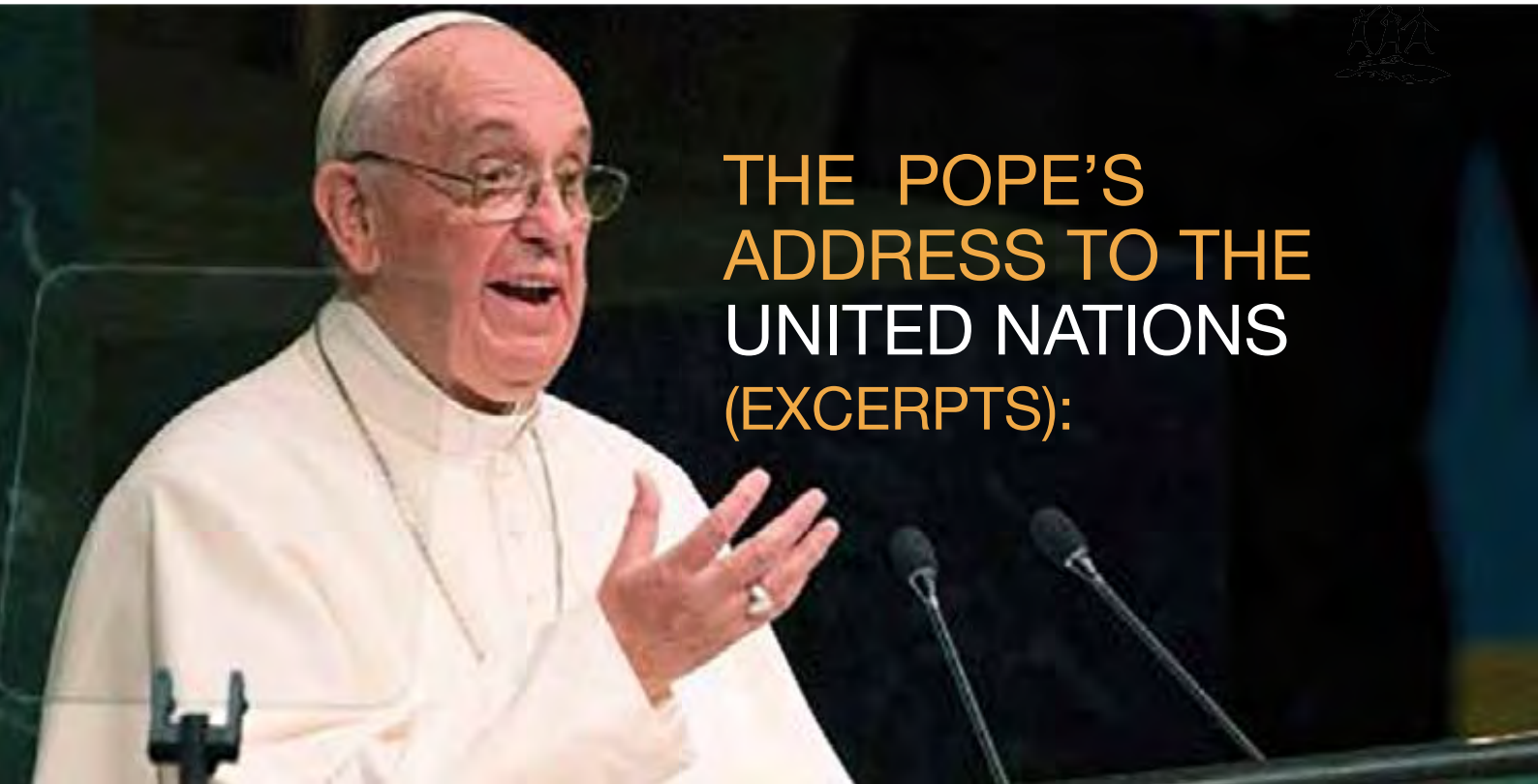
O Lord my God, you are very great!

You are clothed with splendor and majesty,

2 covering yourself with light
as with a garment, stretching
out the heavens like a tent.
3 He lays the beams of his cham-
bers on the waters; he makes the
clouds his chariot;
he rides on the wings
of the wind;
4 he makes his messengers winds,
his ministers a flaming fire.
5 He set the earth on its
foundations, so that it
should never be moved.
6 You covered it with the deep
as with a garment; the waters
stood above the mountains.
7 At your rebuke they fled;
at the sound of your thun-
der they took to flight.
8 The mountains rose, the val-
leys sank down to the place
that you appointed for them.
9 You set a boundary that they
may not pass, so that they might
not again cover the earth.
10 You make springs gush
forth in the valleys; they
flow between the hills;
11 they give drink to every beast
of the field; the wild don-
keys quench their thirst.
12 Beside them the birds of
the heavens dwell; they sing
among the branches.
13 From your lofty abode
you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with
the fruit of your work.

14 You cause the grass to grow
for the livestock and plants for
man to cultivate; that he may
bring forth food from the earth
and wine to gladden the
heart of man, oil to make
his face shine and bread to
strengthen man's heart.
15 O Lord, how manifold are
your works! In wisdom have
you made them all; the earth
is full of your creatures.
24 Here is the sea, great and
wide, which teems with crea-
tures innumerable, living
things both small and great.
25 There go the ships and Le-
viathan, which you formed
to play in it, These all look
to you, to give them their
food in due season.
26 When you give it to them,
they gather it up; when you
open your hand, they are
filled with good things.
28 When you send forth
your Spirit, they are cre-
ated, and you renew the
face of the ground.
30 May the glory of the Lord
endure forever; may the
Lord rejoice in his works,
31 who looks on the earth and
it trembles, who touches the
mountains and they smoke!
32 I will sing to the Lord as long
as I live; I will sing praise to
my God while I have being.
33 May my meditation be
pleasing to him, for I re-
joice in the Lord.
34





THE POPE'S ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS (EXCERPTS):

First, it must be stated that a true “right of the environment” does exist, for two reasons. First, because we human beings are part of the environment. We live in communion with it, since the environment itself entails ethical limits which human activity must acknowledge and respect. Man, for all his remarkable gifts, which “are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology” (*Laudato Si'*, 81), is at the same time a part of these spheres. He possesses a body shaped by physical, chemical and biological elements, and can only survive and develop if the ecological environment is favourable. Any harm done to the environment, therefore, is harm done to humanity. Second, because every creature, particularly a living creature, has an intrinsic value, in its existence, its life, its beauty and its interdependence with other creatures. We Christians, together with the other monotheistic religions, believe that the universe is the fruit of a loving decision by the Creator, who permits man respectfully to use creation for the good of his fellow men and for the glory of

the Creator; he is not authorized to abuse it, much less to destroy it. In all religions, the environment is a fundamental good (cf. *ibid.*).

The misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion. In effect, a selfish and boundless thirst for power and material prosperity leads both to the misuse of available natural resources and to the exclusion of the weak and disadvantaged, either because they are differently abled (handicapped), or because they lack adequate information and technical expertise, or are incapable of decisive political action. Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights and the environment. The poorest are those who suffer most from such offenses, for three serious reasons: they are cast off by society, forced to live off what is discarded and suffer unjustly from the abuse of the environment. They are part of today's widespread and quietly growing “culture of waste”.

The dramatic reality this whole situa-

tion of exclusion and inequality, with its evident effects, has led me, in union with the entire Christian people and many others, to take stock of my grave responsibility in this regard and to speak out, together with all those who are seeking urgently-needed and effective solutions. The adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* at the World Summit, which opens today, is an important sign of hope. I am similarly confident that the *Paris Conference on Climatic Change* will secure fundamental and effective agreements....

The ecological crisis, and the large-scale destruction of biodiversity, can threaten the very existence of the

human species. The baneful consequences of an irresponsible mismanagement of the global economy, guided only by ambition for wealth and power, must serve as a summons to a forthright reflection on man: “man is not only a freedom which he creates for himself. Man does not create himself. He is spirit and will, but also nature” (BENEDICT XVI cited in *Laudato Si'*, 6). Creation is compromised “where we ourselves have the final word... The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any instance above ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves.”

25 Sept. 2015



CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION



2015 is a historical year for climate change action. First, Pope Francis published the *Laudato Si'* encyclical, making a dramatic call to take action to protect our common home. Second, world leaders will meet during the Paris Climate Summit (called COP21) in late November to sign a treaty to tackle climate change. - See more at:

<https://catholicclimatemovement.global/take-action/>

THE GLOBAL CATHOLIC CLIMATE MOVEMENT

Concerned about human-made climate change and united by our Catholic faith, we came together as a movement of almost 100 Catholic organizations to care for God’s creation, for the poor—who are the most vulnera-

ble to climate disruption—and for our children, who will face the worst impacts in the coming years. We encourage Catholics to renew our relationship with creation and with our brothers and sisters in poverty, and we urge our political leaders to commit to ambitious climate action to solve this urgent crisis and keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degree Celsius.

OUR OBJECTIVES

1. To raise awareness within the Church about the urgency of climate action in light of Catholic social and environmental teachings
2. To support global solidarity on the current ecological crisis and to restore our relationship with all species
3. To advocate with our brothers and sisters in poverty who are on the frontline in bearing the brunt of the effects of climate change
4. To promote ecological conversion through personal and organisational change to reduce our emissions and transition to a low carbon world
5. To advance the Catholic relationship between faith and reason, especially as it relates to adaptive decision making in areas of climate change policy
6. To urge political, business and social leaders to commit to ambitious climate action to solve this urgent crisis and keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degree Celsius (relative to pre-industrial levels)

INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE OUR OBJECTIVES

Praying and Fasting in solidarity with those who are most affected by the changing global climate

Educating about the climate crisis and how it impacts all peoples and species, the Church's social and environmental teachings, and how to reduce our carbon footprint

Advocating for the world's policy makers and all Catholics to act in ways appropriate to their spheres of influence to protect the common good through mitigation and adaptation policies which promote social and environmental resilience to climate change

Mobilizing Catholics on an individual, community and regional level, at scale ahead of the 2015 Paris COP 21 – along with the global climate movement

Sharing Catholic actions, best practices and case studies on climate change

Promoting interfaith dialogue and action on climate change and with all people of good will

SIGN THE CATHOLIC CLIMATE PETITION

Through this petition we urge our political leaders to commit to ambitious climate action and solve this urgent crisis. Petition signatures will be delivered in an event at the Paris Climate Summit.

SIGN THE PETITION

After you've signed it, help promote it in your parish, school, community or personal networks, using the Climate Petition Toolkit.

#PRAY4COP21

Through the #Pray4cop21 prayer chain we are praying for world leaders to have courage at COP21 and put into practice the Pope's Laudato Si message.

JOIN THE GLOBAL CLIMATE MARCH

On **November 29**, hours before the COP21, we'll take the streets together with the wider climate movement to show that we really care about climate change and ask governments for bold action.

See more at:

<https://catholicclimatemovement>

PLEA TO THE FRENCH CHURCH

ACF:

To mark the official launch of its plea to the bishops of France, the Catholic Action of Women convened a press conference on September 17, 2015 in Paris.

Advocating for the proper place of women in decision-making bodies of the Church.

While women are an ultra majority among practicing Catholics and committed lay people, they become a minority in the decision-making of the Church. Consequently, focusing on the inequalities between men and women – has the time not come for the Catholic Church to open its governance and operations to women?

With this in mind, this paper of advocacy from the Acf – a truly ecclesial document - containing the words of the women from the association, offers through a root cause analysis solutions to the low representation of women in the Church.

Our vision

Our vision is of a world where the role of women in the Church would be fully recognised. We want to work with third parties to jointly seek and discern how to evolve the Church's guidelines for the recognition of women's role, on the conditions mentioned below:

- to create possibilities for reflection about concerns related to the issue of women in decision-making of the church.
- to offer meeting-grounds where people can participate on a general level and where both those groups concerned and ecclesiastical authorities can reflect and write proposals promoting an opening to women.
- to participate in the reflections

of the bishops of France on women in the Church, and more generally on all matters relating to mankind in general.

With the willingness to listen and in a spirit of brotherhood, kindness and humility, and guided by our great love for the Church, we have as our aim to initiate a constructive dialogue with Church authorities for a more just Church based on the respect for the dignity of women.

Like our elders in the League, pioneers in many areas, we want to bring our reflection, our experience and our contribution to our church leaders.

We believe that the various pleas noted above, based on our reflections and on surveys could give new impulses and a prophetic drive to the Catholic Church. This way it could be the beginning of new and creative initiatives, ensuring and continuing the mission of the Church and the spread of the Gospel. It is a question of calling women to follow Jesus Christ – He who dared to count on women in regard to the alliance between men and women in their service to God and the world.

Thus – for one thing: why not imagine a woman cardinal in the future? Being a cardinal is primarily a function of being an advisor to the Pope. It is not related to the ordained ministry, why would it not therefore be conferred on women? Would not that be a complete and symbolic manifestation of welcoming women into decision-making bodies of the Church? On this subject as on all other points raised, let us consider them together within the Church.

Read more:

www.actioncatholiquedesfemmes.org



SETTING AN EXAMPLE

For a church with women



The theme is: "We put 1,000 km of road under our feet - for a church with women!" A group of three women and one man from the Diocese of St. Gallen, Switzerland, will go on a pilgrimage through Siena - Perugia - Assisi - Greccio to Rome. They do this for equality in Faith and Action. Their key concern is that the men of the Church should no longer think in terms of a future without women in positions, roles and functions, and no longer decide without women about matters that concern them. This is the hope that brings this pilgrimage group to Rome. They want to convey this to Pope Francis personally hoping that on July 2, 2016 hundreds or even thousands of men and women will be at the St. Peter's Square to give this demand even more weight through their presence.

The pilgrimage has been prepared and supported by bishops, religious orders and lay groups since the autumn of 2013. A project description and inputs for each day can be found at www.kirche-mit.ch in German, and partly also in French, English and Italian.

This project focuses on the important concern of the participation of women in the Church – a concern that has been also present since the establishment of Andante. Women's associations, or men and women - individually or

in groups - can be of support in various ways and thereby give the concern more weight.

Here are some suggestions about opportunities to participate in the project:

- The SKF organises a trip with spiritual guidance to Rome from 27 June to 3 July for those of its women who are interested. This group will take part in the programme designed by the core group for 2 July in Rome and at St. Peter's Square. Other organisations may offer a similar programme to its members.
- Andante women may walk a stretch of way together on foot. They can then participate during the days in Rome.

Those interested who wish to take part in the pilgrimage, are asked to report back to Claire Reggli at claire.renggli@bluewin.ch as soon as possible. A programme can then be worked out in cooperation.

You can also find other proposals for participation in the project at www.kirche-mit.ch.

Please report back to us if you plan any event, so that the core group can be informed.

Claire Renggli

Earlier this year, a letter was sent from Andante to the EU regarding the refugees crossing the Mediterranean. Since then the crisis have increased greatly in volume, and the immigration of refugees to various European countries will undoubtedly be on the agenda – also for Andante – in the time to come.



Mr Jean Claude Juncker
President
European Commission

April 26. 2015

Dear Mr Juncker

I am writing on behalf of the members of Andante – the European Alliance of Catholic women's organisations, to express our concern about the plight of the thousands of asylum-seekers, who are trying to seek refuge in Europe, fleeing violence and persecution in their homelands.

Andante is an organisation which represents Catholic women in 24 member organisations in 15 countries of Europe, mostly within the European Union. Its membership covers approximately 1.2 million Catholic women. One of our aims is to build a living, just and people-friendly Europe.

We see that in many countries, violence and conflict has led to massive displacement of people. These women and men turn to Europe as a place of safety and we should recognise that the protection of refugees is one of the core values of a society which claims to hold dear the values of respect, dignity, justice and peace.

One of the founding principles of the European Union is that of solidarity, and we feel that the European response to the emergency, which currently has been manifest in the Mediterranean, should demonstrate the commitment of all the countries of the EU to participate in finding just solutions that recognise the rights, dignity and protection of refugees and migrants.

We welcome and support the approach you suggested for the resettlement across Europe of refugees, and for a Europe-wide approach to legal migration. Such measures should also include a positive commitment by countries to policies that facilitate the integration of migrants into the mainstream of society.

Although the majority of refugees in the current situation seem to be men, we would ask that you also look at the position of women refugees, who are particularly vulnerable to the risks of trafficking.

In our various countries, Catholic women are engaged in supporting the poorest and most marginalised in society. Without effective European wide policies and frameworks for delivery, we can see that refugees and undocumented migrants will find themselves most vulnerable to the extremes of poverty and abuse.

Sincerely yours
Mary McHugh
Chair Andante



Munich 23rd Sept. 2015:

WELCOME, YOU BRAVE REFUGEE WOMEN!

Press release of Bayerischer Landesverband des Katholischen Deutschen Frauenbundes (The Bavarian Branch of the German Catholic Women's League, KDFB)

KDFB appeals: Special protection and learning about everyday culture are essential!

In the words of Elfriede Schießleder, chair of the Bavarian Branch of the German Catholic Women's League: "We are deeply impressed by refugee women; we admire their courage, their staying power, their responsibility, their ability to endure". The Women's League supports to take into consideration special requirement for the protection of women during all steps of the asylum process. "At the moment it is still not enough to make political demands for an improvement of processes and general conditions", Schießleder argues. "As Christians, as human beings, we have to act immediately".

For many decades KDFB has been acting pragmatically in situations of distress and has in particular been focused on finding solutions. Schießleder describes the present efforts of KDFB-women: "Our members and local organisations are already busy helping refugees locally. They act as companions and are working well for the newly arrived by organising their everyday life. Bavaria's largest women's organisation supports the weakest - women and children".

At present KDFB and the Consumers' Service Bavaria in KDFB are working at empowering the newly arrived as consumers. They are informing about the regional range of goods, food and its identification labels. The appropriate use of appliances is a further important field. "The companions convey to the women, that the dramatic situation of migration can change into a regular everyday life, which provides stability. As persons of confidence they pave the way to our society and its everyday culture", says Schießleder.

The KDFB considers that many communities have already achieved a best practice in accommodating refugee women. But everywhere Police, Welfare Organisations and Security Services need to get intercultural and gender sensitive training. A great concern of KDFB is: Women need special shelter. Their intimacy and self-determination need to be guaranteed absolutely. "By all means, the experiences of violence during the flight must not be repeated in Germany", Schießleder insists. "Psychological consultation must be available everywhere in Bavaria, within a short distance and with as little latency as possible." KDFB asks the Federal Government to take seriously the specific reasons for women's migration. When increasing the staff of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees it is necessary to employ a majority of women.

Ulrike Müller-Münch

THE FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The fifth General Assembly of Andante will take place in High Leigh / Hoddesdon, **Great Britain** between **April 14th and April 17th, 2016.**

As before it will include both Study Days and a Statutory Assembly. It will also mark the 10th anniversary of Andante.

We ask member organisations to keep the dates free and will follow up with information in the months to come.

The member organisations will be asked to nominate candidates to serve on the Board for the next term (2016-2019) and to bring forth suggestions and proposals – if any – in due time.



Please, send any feed-back, comments, texts that you may want to share to the Editor of the Andante Magazine:

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