



Vaticaan zoekt naar verbeteringen pastorale zorg zieken en lijdenden

700 Health Representatives to Attend International Conference on Neuro-degenerative Pathologies

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Beginning on November 21, 700 people will meet at the Vatican to take part in the 28th International Conference of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers, on the theme “The Church at the Service of the Elderly Sick: The Care of Persons Affected by Neurodegenerative Pathologies.”

The Conference, which will be held from November 21-23, was presented this morning to journalists in the Holy See Press Office. On Saturday the 23rd, at the end of the two day event, participants will go to Paul VI Hall to attend a Meeting of Prayer and Reflection, which will precede their audience with the Holy Father. During his intervention, Archbishop Zygmunt Zimowski, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers, explained the four cardinal points of the Conference: “further reflection, dialogue-exchange of knowledge and experiences, reflection and prayer to improve health care in so far as possible from the point of view of the pastoral service to the sick and the suffering.”

More than 700 people have registered — including researchers, doctors, ecclesial and health personnel (professional and volunteer), all workers in the care of the elderly –, who have come from 57 countries around the world, “a plurality able to guarantee that variety of cultural, social and economic focuses that have always been one of the great riches offered by our International Conferences,” said Archbishop Zimowski.

The representatives of the apostolate of mercy, “as this pastoral realm was described by Blessed John Paul II, who founded this dicastery, are increasingly called — also as a consequence of globalization and migrations –, to give witness in multicultural and multi-religious realities,” said the prelate. Regarding the topic to be addressed at the Conference, Archbishop Zimowski explained that the forms of senile dementia – among which Alzheimer’s is the most widespread, with more than 50% of recorded incidences — affect more than 35 million people worldwide and is growing exponentially with 7 million new cases a day. “To evangelize the elderly means to discover its internal and original possibilities, its meaning, and those values ‘which can be applied only at that time,’” he stressed.

For his part, Monsignor Jean-Marie Mupendawatu said that the objective of medical science should be the person’s “integral health,” inseparable unit of body and spirit, respect for his dignity, his experience and his rights. Likewise, he called attention to the present situation that affects Europe, and Italy in particular, regarding the “demographic decline” and “diffusion of a culture that praises individualism and personal autonomy while excluding sickness, rejecting the dimension of old age and considers and regards it as a burden what does not provide income or immediate gratification.” He also pointed out the importance of a new pastoral attitude, with the initial involvement of hospital chaplains, followed by the intervention and presence of priests and of volunteers present at the parish level.

Fr. Augusto Chendi, M.I., under-secretary of the dicastery, stressed his belief “that the attitude in face of an elderly sick person, particularly those affected by degenerative pathologies, is for health representatives the hallmark of their professionalism and ethical responsibility.” Moreover, he added, “this is also true for those who



work in the field and with families themselves, called to build always and in every circumstance the natural course of the last part of life, in keeping with a generational pact that enriches young people with the equipment of wisdom and intelligence accumulated by our elderly people, although incapable of communicating it in normal ways: their very presence is a precious sign that must not be wasted," he said.

The presentation of the Conference ended with the participation of two members of the laity: Gabriela Salvini Porro, president of the Italian Alzheimer's Federation, and Gabriele Carbone, director of the Dementias Center of the Alzheimer's Unit, Italian hospital group of Guidonia, Rome, who shared their experiences regarding the difficulties and challenges that must be faced and the help that must be given to those suffering.