

FAMILY OF ASIA AND AUSTRALIA - WORLD CONGRESS

1986

FAMILY AND CULTURE

MADRAS - INDIA

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November 1st - 7th, 1986



PRO-LIFE AND FAMILY MOVEMENTS

THE SITUATION IN BELGIUM

BY

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# PRO-LIFE AND FAMILY MOVEMENTS

## THE SITUATION IN BELGIUM

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Belgium is not insensitive to the problems of the family and respect for life. Here, we will take up some of the many movements - of christian inspiration for the most part - that have emerged from the many questions raised concerning the couple, abortion and contraception. Our presentation of these movements is based on information they themselves have made available to us.

1. LA FEDERATION MONDIALE DES MEDECINS POUR LE RESPECT DE LA VIE HUMAINE (The World Federation of Physicians who Respect of Human Life) brings together medical groups and regional associations as well as individual members. Widespread in forty countries, it has a membership of more than 210.000. Its primary concerns include the oath of Hippocrates (WMA, Geneva, 1949), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948), especially the third article. The goal aimed for : the unconditional respect for every human being, from conception until death.

Address : Ph. Schepens MD  
H. Serruyslaan, 76  
B. - 8400 - Ostend

2. VOX VITAE, a monthly bulletin, has a large readership in Belgium. It is put out by the PRO VITA movement which also sponsors the SOS MERES EN DETRESSE (SOS Mothers in Distress). This sometimes incisive monthly publication strives to inform public opinion about all problems concerning the respect for life.

Address : Europa Pro Vita et Pro Vita International  
Rue du Trône, 89  
B. - 1050 - Bruxelles

3. GEZIN EN LEVEN (Family and Life) is a monthly information bulletin devoted to respect for the family and for life. It is especially attentive to juridical questions. The PRO VITA movement in the Dutch-speaking part of the country, that publishes it, likewise organizes formation programs devoted to family education for students on the secondary school level.

Address : Gezin en Leven  
 Albert Geudensstraat , 19  
 B. - 2800 - Mechelen

Other initiatives, sometimes on a smaller scale, go beyond consciousness-raising efforts by offering assistance to persons in difficulty.

4. The C.E.R.F. (Centre d'Etude et de Recherche pour la Famille/The Center of Study and Research for the Family) strives to help all young people and adults - both believers and non-believers - to live out their sexuality in a better way, in view of greater spiritual and human fulfilment. The C.E.R.F. considers love, the couple, and the child to be essential values. Its activities include conferences, weekends of formation, and personalized counseling. The C.E.R.F. also offers a specialized formation program over a three-year period.

Address : C.E.R.F.  
 Place Xavier Neujean, 38  
 B. - 4000 - Liège

5. AMOUR ET VERITE (Love and Truth) is a catholic association for the promotion - both human and spiritual - of the couple and the family. It strives to further the renewal of the couple and the family in the modern world, for a more profoundly christian life. It assembles priests, physicians, psychologists, educators, and christian couples.

Address : F. et P. Lambert  
 Rue des Annettes, 17  
 B. - 1348 - Louvain-la-Neuve

6. LE CENTRE D'ETUDES FAMILIALES (The Center for Family Studies) brings together people from the academic world especially, as well as doctors, jurists, magistrates, etc. ... committed to fighting for respect for life. This center has published two documents: one on abortion,

"L'avortement devant le Parlement." (Abortion before the Parliament), and another on the "Veil law and its consequences" (La loi Veil et ses conséquences). This movement is very active in the realm of personal relations. It has some influence on parliament members, journalists, and on doctors in general. It likewise organizes days of study, series of conferences, etc.

Address : Avenue des Fleurs, 6  
B. - 1150 - Bruxelles

7. COUPLE - AMOUR - FECONDITE (Couple - Love - Fertility) is a center of information on natural methods of birth control. Founded in 1981, the goal of this organization is to introduce these methods in Belgium, where knowledge of them is still rather limited. Its work includes helping people on an individual level by interpreting natural birth control charts. It also provides presentations, discussion groups in schools, youth groups, parent groups, conferences, education sessions on natural family planning, continuing education for teachers of natural family planning methods, and the distribution of information.

Address : Couple - Amour - Fécondité  
c/o Epistola  
Rue des Taxandres, 5  
B. - 1040 - Bruxelles

8. The COUPLE TO COUPLE LEAGUE is also preoccupied, for the most part, with natural family planning. The "Couple to Couple League" is an interconfessional organization designed to help couples successfully practice natural methods of birth control. The league organizes courses and publishes a manual called The Art of Natural Family Planning (L'art du planning familial naturel). This kind of planning calls for the simultaneous use of three methods : the temperature method, the ovulation method, and the sympto-thermic method.

Address : The Couple to Couple League in Belgium  
Abdijlaan, 76  
B. - 3111 - Rotselaar

9. SOS FUTURES MERES (SOS Future Mothers) sponsored by "LE FRONT COMMUN POUR LA DEFENSE DE LA VIE ET DE SA QUALITE" (The Common Front for the Defense of Life and its Quality), is another movement that gives support

to mothers in difficulty. This organization offers a telephone "hot line", and can also suggest and help find various homes that welcomes mothers in difficulty.

Address : Avenue de l'Escrime, 33

B. - 1150 - Bruxelles

10. FAMILLES UNIES (Families United) is an association of parents which has, in accordance with Pope John-Paul's appeal, the following goals : to affirm the family, to offer support to parents, helping them create a balanced family environment, to gain strength by bringing families together, to create a movement of public opinion that defends family values, to reach all those who can act for the good of the family. They have also sent a petition to government officials and members of parliament concerning the right to life, in order to sensitize them to the problems of euthanasia. They also offer help to mothers in distress.

Address : Rue Eggerickx, 8

B. - 1150 - Bruxelles

From an over-all point of view, the objectives of these centers is to inform the public, as well as listen to and give assistance to individuals or couples in difficulty. They offer information about birth-control methods, but also about respect for life.

Other associations have reacted in different ways by directly addressing young women in difficulty. A number of reception centers and lodging facilities have been created for young unwed mothers, so that they can look forward to the birth of their child with peace of mind, and stay on until they feel strong enough to once again take charge of things for themselves.

11. LE CHANT D'OISEAU (Birdsong) welcomes unwed mothers in difficulty only during the time of their pregnancy. Those with children under six may stay for up to two years.

Address : Maison Maternelle Le Chant d'Oiseau

Avenue du Chant d'Oiseau, 42

B. - 1150 - Bruxelles

12. LE CHEVREFEUILLE (The Honeysuckle) welcomes young unwed mothers who are not well accepted at home, battered women, those in the process of getting a divorce, as well as women with financial problems; and this for a period of six to nine months.

Address : Le Chèvrefeuille  
Rue Lesbroussart, 104-106  
B. - 1050 - Bruxelles

13. L'ACCUEIL (Welcome) helps the woman in difficulty to once again find her social, economical, or psycho-emotional autonomy. It is open to all women, with or without children, as long as they are over fifteen years of age.

Address : Thier Mère Dieu, 18  
B. - 4800 - Verviers

14. LE KANGOUROU (The Kangaroo) welcomes mothers or future mothers in difficulty, regardless of their religious beliefs or nationality. They may be accompanied by children under six. They are welcome for whatever reason : problems of a material nature, conjugal problems, moral or psychological difficulties.

Address : Rue Jules Escoyez, 28  
B. - 7420 - Saint-Ghislain (Baudour)

There are two other sources of information to keep in mind. On the one hand, there is a pamphlet called

15. "ENCEINTE ?" (Pregnant ?) put together by Marie Hendrickx, Assistant professor at the Catholic University of Louvain, intended for all pregnant young women. It informs them of their rights, and includes a series of addresses where they can find assistance or someone to talk to in the case of difficulties.

Address : Faculté de Théologie de l'UCL  
Grand-Place, 45  
B. - I348 - Louvain-la-Neuve

On the other hand, there is

16. EMMANUEL - SOS ADOPTION, an adoption service for handicapped children. In the perspective of love and respect for the dignity of

every human person, from the moment of conception until death, the vocation of this work is to take in, as soon as possible, abandoned children, children considered to be maladjusted because of mental or physical disabilities, or because of chronic illness. In it's work, "Emmanuel - SOS Aduption" tries to detect such children in Belgium and elsewhere, to find homes willing to accept them, to be of assistance to their families, to collaborate with all services and adoption agencies, both in Bâlgium and elsewhere, to make the welcoming of these children a priority, and to inform public opinion in order to sensitize it to the situation of these children.

Address : P.M. et Ch. Boldo

Chemin de la Corniche, 25

B. - 4880 - Spa

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