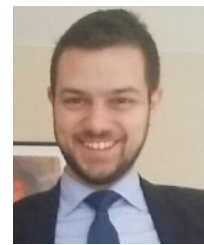


Canopy of Prayer

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Dear praying friends in Europe

"Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes; its leaves are always green, it has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." Jer. 17:7-8

What a difference it makes when we put our trust and confidence in the Lord! If we put our roots down into Him, we too will be fruitful, and fruitful in many different ways. Once we have a glimpse of God's plans to give us "a hope and a future" (Jer 29:11) we can face that future with optimism and dare to envisage a positive future for our children too. And if many are fruitful, what a difference this would make to our European society...

Jill Jeal

Importance of the Family

"The Demographic Winter is a silent emergency which concerns all European Countries". Starting with this thought, the Board of the Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE) issued a Resolution for a Demographic Spring, seeking to draw attention to this urgent matter, which should be considered at the core of many financial and social problems that the European institutions and public policies need to address. The Board stated: *"There are no excuses to make any more. We need to act, for the wellbeing of old people, for the rights of our youth, for the future of our children".*



Europe is really now the Old Continent, in all senses. For several decades now, it has been the continent the most affected by a global demographic trend. As revealed by Eurostat, *"more deaths than births were registered in the EU, meaning that the natural change of the EU population was negative".* Only net migration is partially compensating for this deficit. The evidence of data shows that there has been a reduction in fertility for several decades. Based on factual observations, we should raise

fundamental questions on the real motivations of this historical change.

The [European Commission](#) has scrutinized the effects of ageing populations on social expenditure. The financial problems are unavoidable. The EU has no direct competence on family policies, but major political decisions taken at a European level could impact demographics. And we urgently need a political and social environment that favours marriage and family. This question cannot be neglected in view of the forthcoming European elections, warning of the huge demographic challenges.

But a society that does not renew itself reveals something more about itself, far beyond economics. It's a question of souls. Looking for the roots of the so-called 'demographic winter', we cannot ignore the role of an individualistic culture strongly influencing personal life-style choices and social behaviours.

The light of the Gospel is the profound response to change the hearts of people and so to convert the corrupt systems of our societies. This is the true light capable of transforming the predominating culture of death into a culture of life. Then it will be natural to reassert the **"unique, fundamental and irreplaceable place of the family in society"**, as stated by the **FAFCE Resolution**, in order to promote the favourable development of peoples. Because, ultimately, "openness to life is at the centre of true development" (Pope Benedict XVI).

Prayer points:-

- For the family as the God given model for a healthy society and a heritage for the future.
- For our leaders as they face the growing challenges of an increasingly aging society.
- For the gospel message to be received by many and bring hope and confidence to future parents.



Bulgarian Parliament

Answers to prayer:

Bulgaria: After considering laws to halt training, foreign funding, and missionary outreach in minority churches, the government has listened to critics and is revising its approach.

Italy: After talks between Italian ministers and EU officials at the G20 summit, there could be compromises leading to a solution of the disagreement over the Italian budget.

Additional prayer points:-

1. **Ukraine:** tension remains after 3 ships were seized by Russia and the Ukrainian president warns of the threat of "full-scale war"
2. **France:** pray for order to be restored after the violent anti-government riots, which have left 3 people dead and many injured. Pray against the powers of chaos.

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