



# SEMINARIANS FOR LIFE INTERNATIONAL™

Vol. XXIV, No. 1  
Fall 2017

Dear Priests and Seminarians,

One of the most enduring myths of the modern era is the urgent need for population control or family planning. Many reasons to reduce childbearing have been put forward since the 1960s. The world was first told that there is not enough food to feed everyone or enough natural resources, then that high fertility countries are at risk for Communist revolutions, that women are forced to have large families by unjust Patriarchal societies, etc. etc. The latest in this series of population alarms is that Global Warming can only be lessened by forcing the poor and everyone else to stop having large families and thus save our planet...

It would be bad enough if such propaganda remained at the level of words, but the zealots who really believe that all of humanities problems come from surplus population have power and influence. Hundreds of millions of flesh and blood human beings have been killed or mutilated in the implementation of population control programs. The vast majority of these victims were aborted.

The Communist Government of China “boasts” that they have prevented the births of 400 million children since 1979.<sup>1</sup> They did this with an infamous “One Child Policy” that featured forced contraception, sterilization and abortions. India, Peru, and many other countries have had sterilization campaigns that left women and men maimed and even dead. Billions and Billions are spent each year by the governments of rich countries and the United Nations Population Fund to fund “family planning”.

We must be thankful that the Church has stood strongly for the human right of parents to have children in the face of Totalitarian regimes, dictators, and sophisticated propaganda campaigns. There has also been tremendous pressure on the Church to reverse herself and accept contraception, sterilization and abortion. We will be celebrating in 2018 the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, and the firm stance of Catholicism that children are a blessing and not a curse.

Thanks to demographer and university professor Fr. Mika Mfitzsche this edition of the SFLI newsletter contains a very interesting article on the terrible consequences of accepting the myth of world overpopulation. Over half of humanity already live in countries without enough births to keep their populations from aging and, in the long term, dying out.<sup>2</sup> THIS, and not overpopulation, is the challenge facing most of the world in the near future. It is important to know this and to help families in their ancient mission of going forth and multiplying...

Yours in the Lord of Life!

Joseph Meaney PhD

Director of HLI Seminarians and Priests for Life International



Dr. Joseph Meaney

1 <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34666440>

2 <http://www.economist.com/node/14743589>

# THE CHALLENGE OF AGING SOCIETIES

The explosion of the “population bomb”, announced by several UN projections, called an “apocalyptic deluge”, or a “cancer” by P. R. Ehrlich and others,<sup>1</sup> did not take place. On the contrary, everywhere, the rate of population growth is decreasing. The predictions of the neo-Malthusians that scared many and were used to justify funding population control and abortion around the world have proved false. The big question now is rather if many countries with below replacement fertility will dwindle and then disappear? The modern challenge in most countries is not one of rapid population growth, but of an aging population.

Demographic aging is a contemporary “societal challenge”. To quantify the medical, social, political and economic consequences of this for the next decades, we must first define the concept and its inevitable and irreversible character when childbearing remains very low.

On the one hand, there is the state of a population in which the number of people over the age of 65 is large and on the other the process by which the proportion of the elderly increases *vis-à-vis* those under 20 years of age. Demographers use three indicators: - the proportion of people aged 65 years and over in the total population, - the average age at death in the population as a whole, and the proportion of those under 20 years old in the total population. Of these three criteria, the first is the most commonly used. This focuses on

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<sup>1</sup> M. Schooyans, *Le crash démographique*, Paris, Fayard/Le Sarmant, 1999 ; R. Mika Mfítzsche, *Ethique et démographie*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2008, p. 11-17.

the top of the age pyramid or the proportion of people over 65 in the total population. On the other hand, if we want to measure the socio-economic consequences of demographic aging and calculate the aging or dependency coefficient, we must consider the other two indicators.

An aging population is simply one with a steady increase in the percentage of people aged 65 and over in the total population, when the proportion of young people under the age of 20 decreases and the average age of the population rises. It is not only the fact of the sustained, significant and continuous decline in fertility, but also increasing life expectancy or lengthening average lifespans.

While the global rate of aging of the world's population is unprecedented, not all countries are or will face it at the same time because of the different intensities of the demographic transition, that is, differences in fertility and mortality trends, in separate countries.

China, Japan and European countries will be among the first nations, followed shortly by the USA and Latin America, to face

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the colossal challenges of aging populations. In 2050, for example, the proportion of people aged 60 and over in the European population will be 32%, as against 21% in 2005. Germany and Italy, followed later by the Eastern European countries, will be severely affected. Japan's population over age 65 will have doubled, making Japan the oldest country in the world. Other nations in Asia, which have completed their demographic transition, including Thailand, Taiwan and South Korea, are following suit. Many of these countries will by 2025 double the share of their population over 65 years of age. By 2050,

for example, Thailand and 15 small island countries will have more senior citizens than young people. The United States will inexorably follow this trend, although currently, according to the American National Institute of Aging (NIA), the rate of aging of the US population is slower than in Asia and Europe, largely due to strong immigration.

In any case, demographic aging will become a fact of life since people everywhere are living longer. In Belgium, for example, around 2050, "people between the ages of 60 and 99 are expected to increase by 45% ..., the over



*Caspar David Friedrich - Winter – Night – Old Age and Death (from the times of day and ages of man cycle of 1803). From Wikimedia Commons.*

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90s will be 33 times more numerous than in 1950”.<sup>2</sup> This aging, and above all the lack of young people under 20 years of age, is a common problem, with the exception of most African countries where the aging of the population is slow, as the birth rate is still high and the population’s age structure is still young. If we believe the projections, population aging will only become a major challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa in the long term.

Demographic aging is a major challenge. Even if fertility rose slightly in the various countries currently facing demographic aging, the progression of the proportion of people aged 65 and over would continue to rise thanks to declining mortality at older ages, geriatric medical research and the successes of applied genetics in countering individual biological aging. Several academic writers leave no doubt about this. I will mention the most prominent ones, in particular “The Demographic Crash” of M. Schooyans,<sup>3</sup> “The Twilight of the West. Demography and Politics” by the French demographer Jean-Claude Chesnais, the numerous colloquia or congresses, articles and government reports on aging. For example, the OECD and Eurostat reports on the challenges of demographic aging (1996), the White Paper on demographic aging published by the Japanese government in 2013, issue 5 of the journal Bioscience from November-January 2001, entirely devoted to the challenges of aging, etc. Not only do all stress the inevitability of demographic aging but also its direct impact on population structures, health, the world of work and retirement pensions, housing and transportation, not to mention the geopolitical, economic, cultural and religious consequences, linked to the demographic decline of some countries by 2050. Let us confine ourselves to an analysis of the impact on population structures, health, the world of work and retirement pensions:

- At the level of population structure, if the number of youth is less than seniors and fertility is below the replacement level, (2.1 children per woman in most cases), countries face a choice between attracting immigrants or a shrinking population. We can thus understand the words of mercantilist Jean Bodin: “One should never fear that there are too many citizens since humans are the only real wealth and power”. (1576);

- In terms of health, the number of people losing autonomy and therefore becoming dependent, and those suffering from chronic and degenerative diseases linked to old age (Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, etc.), is growing fast. The OECD’s projections from 1998 were, by 2020 40% of people aged 65 and over will need at some dependency type care, whose individual cost is very high: about one to one and a half times the average income.<sup>4</sup> As a result, daunting questions will be raised concerning the limits to the care of an increasing number of very elderly and physically and psychologically fragile persons.

- In view of the significant decline in the ratio of workers / pensioners, and therefore contributors, it will no longer be possible to finance retirement pensions.

In conclusion, it is clear that the looming danger in the future is not “overpopulation”, but rather a shortage of “human capital”. That is why it is imperative for Western countries not only to move away from their terribly low birthrates, allowing abortion and promoting homosexuality, but also to stop imposing population control on African and other high fertility countries.

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<sup>2</sup> M. Brandeleer, « Pensions impayables ? », Trends, n°45, 2000, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.michel-schooyans.org/images/publications/BooksEN/2001DemographicCrash.pdf>

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<sup>4</sup> OCDE, Préserver la prospérité dans une société vieillissante, Paris, OCDE, 1998.