

AJANews 78 - April 2009

Holy See: Sharing responsibility for giving care Way of the Cross with my friend

Blessed Anuarite Nengapeta is a young Sister of the Holy Family of Kisangani. She worked at Wamba as a teacher. She was murdered resisting the sexual demands of a rebel leader in the Congo in 1964. St Aloysius Gonzaga is a young Jesuit who selflessly gave his life caring for victims of the deadly plague in Rome in 1591. We entrust the African Jesuit AIDS Network to their prayer and protection.

HOLY SEE: SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR GIVING CARE

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN Economic and Social Council, made the following statement on men and women sharing responsibilities during the 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on 9 March 2009.

Mr Chairman,

My delegation applauds the choice of such an important and timely topic for this discussion: the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS.

To consider care as a fundamental aspect of human life has profound implications. Care-giving involves programmes, policies and budgetary decisions, as well as personal attitude and commitment for the wellbeing of others. The interrelatedness between activity and personal attitude is self-evident but not always to be presupposed.

Human beings are not only autonomous and equal but also interdependent creatures who, regardless of their social status and stage of life, may need care.

Focusing on care and sharing responsibility between women and men in coping with pressing issues such as prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, child-rearing, housework and support for older family members, leads us to think of the relationship between man and woman in society as interdependent.

The overcoming of the dilemma between autonomy and dependence also favours a new vision of the work of care that can no longer be attributed only to certain groups, such as women and immigrants, but must also be shared between all women and men, in households as well as in the public sector.

In particular, it is more and more untenable that there continue to be attitudes and places - even in health care - where women are discriminated against and their contribution to society is undervalued simply because they are women. Recourse to social and cultural pressure in order to maintain the inequality of the sexes is unacceptable.

Mr Chairman, since our debate mainly focuses on sharing responsibilities and care-giving between women and men in the context of HIV/AIDS, the very first thought goes to the primary and best meaning of care, namely taking care, protecting and promoting the wellbeing of others. In this context, HIV/AIDS calls into question the values by which we live our lives and how we treat, or fail to treat, one another.

Community-based care and worldwide support for those suffering from this disease remain essential. Home-based care is the preferred means of care in many social and cultural settings, and is often more sustainable and successful over the long term when based within communities. In fact, when many members of a community are involved in care and support, there is less likely to be stigma associated with the disease.

Unfortunately, community- and home-based care is largely unrecognized, and many caregivers face precarious financial situations. Very little of the funds spent every year on providing assistance to those who are suffering as well as on much needed research to combat the disease goes to supporting them. Studies have shown that community- and home-based caregivers actually experience more stress than medical personnel; so better support must be provided for these persons, particularly women and older persons who are caregivers.

My delegation would also like to focus on some aspects of the globalization of care-giving which are affecting in particular poor and immigrant women. In societies characterized by important demographic transformations, familial and occupational and inadequate welfare systems, immigrant women respond to the demand to care for children, the sick, severely disabled people and the elderly. In many parts of the world, a true market has emerged in the area of home-based care-giving, in which women above all are found in situations of vulnerability due to non-regularization, social isolation, difficult working conditions and at times exploitation of every kind.

Governments should properly recognize that the budget and organization of public institutions are somewhat relieved by family-based care-giving and should thus adopt migration laws aimed at creating social integration and full protection of immigrant caregivers and fostering social integration. Likewise, supporting an appropriate professional formation that offers to home-based care-givers basic knowledge of health and psychology would upgrade their invaluable activity and eventually shield them from easy and reprehensible types of exploitation.

Developing countries are suffering from brain drain, as many of their educated, talented and skilled human capital - especially in the health sector - leave their places for better economic opportunities in rich countries. Market-forces get the blame for this, but this is an area where countries of origin, transit and destination need to work together to help developing countries retain, or at least readmit, these skilled members of their workforce, providing suitable incentives to recognize and better remunerate them so that caregivers may more easily be able to stay at home.

Finally, Mr Chairman, too many cultures hold that care is to be restricted to the private sphere and presupposes that it is provided in the domestic realm.

Care in itself must become a topic of public debate and take on an importance capable of shaping political life and giving men and women the ability to be more concerned for the needs of others, more empathetic and able to focus on others.

Care, in this sense, has the capacity to create a process of democratization of society and to foster a public awareness aimed at social and effective justice and solidarity for all women and men.

WAY OF THE CROSS WITH MY BELOVED AIDS-STRICKEN FRIEND

This *Way of the Cross* was written by Thierry Manirambona SJ, a Burundian scholastic who uses poetry and prose to draw attention to people with HIV, and translated by Mr Robert Czerny, Ottawa. It is dedicated to Jean d'Amour, a boy whom Thierry befriended at the Noël Orphanage at Nyundo. *We lived together for two months*, writes Thierry. *He did gymnastics with me; we went scouting together, a few days. I knew he was HIV-positive. One day, he passed away, without leaving any trace. He was young, no more than 12.* Now, in the sixth line of every Station, Thierry offers his friend Jean d'Amour to Jesus on the way to Calvary.

1st Station: Jesus before Pilate

Jesus, you stand before Pilate
Innocent, silent
Justice is dead among us
But you - you know why you are there
To restore justice to society
I offer you my little friend
He is dazed by the suffering facing him
Too young to understand
And heaven is silent
Remember him, help him

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

2nd Station: Jesus carries the Cross

All is decided: you must carry the cross
To the place of execution
You have not fled
You did not try to escape the cross
To make us stronger
I offer you the sick child
Who must bear isolation and abandonment
May he realize that it is not a curse
Rather, you are with him
Give him strength, hold his hand

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

3rd Station: Jesus falls on the way

The cross is heavy, you fall on the way
You tumble to the ground
Like a great tree dying
In the silence of the night
And though falling you do not give up
I offer you my little chum
Who sometimes gets depressed
At the first fall, the first memory

Give him your arm, look at him
May he rise again: the way is very long

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

4th Station: Mary the sorrowing Mother

It is too hard for your mother
Who suffered so much when fleeing
When hearing Simeon's words
And in more than one unhappy incident
And you carry her in your heart, Mary
I offer you my buddy, Jesus
May he realize that we are with him
That it is hard for us too
And may he carry us in his suffering
As we carry him and love him

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

5th Station: Simon of Cyrene

Along the road, a stranger is forced
No one in particular to assist you
He takes part in your passion
And he will go on, later he will leave
You - you will complete the Passion
I offer you my companion, Lord Jesus
Make me his river Ferryman
So that one day I may help him to alight
Even if I must abandon him one day
Make me compassionate for one night

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

6th Station: The suffering face of Christ

Veronica steps out of the crowd, fragile
And silent, wipes your face
You allow it, you let yourself be loved
You welcome our help
You who have all, who are all
Lord, I offer you my friend
Though scarcely aware of me, allow me to love him always
At least to smile at him
To draw him a butterfly, a flower
Make me an Instrument of resilience

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

7th Station: Jesus falls again

The sun is hot, the way goes on
You walk with fists raining down on you
Exhausted, you fall again
On the sharp, cruel stones
And yet, you will not give up
Lord, I offer you my companion
The sorrow is immense
His hope is fading away and he collapses again
He was hopeful but has reached the end of his rope
Reach out and lift him again

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

8th Station: The women of Jerusalem

These un-named, forgotten women
Who feel assaulted in their mother-love
And who know the value of life
They pity you, these poor women
And you - you speak a word of love to them
I offer you my comrade
May he accept the friendship
Of spontaneous, unknown friends
May he experience pure unselfish giving
Open your heart to him

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

9th Station: Jesus falls for a third time

What strength remained is gone
You are almost at the end of the way
The clock stops
It begins to count backwards
And you do not hide. You stay
I offer you my sick friend
When he is blocked on all sides
When the way seems barred
Call him, may he see you pinned to the ground
And may he remain brave like you

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

10th Station: The garment

There will always be thieves, scoundrels
Who snatch what belongs to others
There will always be profiteers
Who even strip an orphan
And you, you allow it
I pray to you for my sick friend
In his suffering, in his pain
May he let go of his fleeting belongings
But bind himself to you
Hope that does not betray

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

11th Station: Jesus on the Cross

Nothing remained but this: nails
And blood spurting everywhere
The tears, the gasping cries
The sorrow that tears the sky
And the Christ who endures all
I offer you my buddy, Jesus
When AIDS appears victorious
May he lift his eyes towards you
Patiently, in his suffering, and believe
I beg you, Jesus, look at him

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

12th Station: Jesus dies

The skies open, the curtain is torn
Door frames crumble
And God comes closer
When we understand nothing at all
It is then that Jesus conquers death
Jesus, I offer you my buddy who is dying
Without understanding anything
Eyes bathed with tears
May he feel the tears of God
Stream over his face and wipe it clean

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

13th Station: The side of Jesus is pierced

With one thrust a soldier opens his side

And a river of grace pours out
From the sacred, bleeding heart
Jesus dies while giving life
The precious blood of Jesus waters lives
Do not die, Lord Jesus
Before leaving drops of blood
Drops of life like rain
To fall on the story of the dying
To renew his life before his Leaving

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

14th Station: The burial

The large stone would have us believe that all is finished
Believe that the curtain has fallen
And that the wind will never whistle again
And without it, believe in overwhelming silence
And yet Jesus is ALIVE
I pray to you for my friend, Jesus
When the fog seems thicker
When the night is darker
May the scent of the lily in my hand
Awaken his soul to the Adventure

Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, pray for us
Blessed Anuarite, pray for us

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