



## WORLDWIDE NETWORK CRESCENDO

For a more Human and Christian Ageing

<http://www.rcrescendo.net/>

ELECTRONIC BULLETIN

*Christmas*



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### **EDITORIAL**

Here we are again at Christmas, lights in abundance and what agitation! Happiness above all to be reunited in family, from the littlest to the grandparents, with the sweet memory of past celebrations, waiting for presents, etc. But all this cannot overshadow the unbelievable event, which is at the origin of this celebration, the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. To help us, a meditation by our spiritual advisor, Fr. Joblin, SJ, reminds us and invites us to welcome this light and this joy.

Many elderly people spend Christmas alone, whether in their homes, in homes for the elderly or in hospitals. How much misery and suffering still exist in the world, which is also known by the elderly!

“The best defense of God and of man,” Benedict XVI tells us in *Deus Caritas Est*, “consists exactly in love. The task of charitable organizations of

the Church is to strengthen a deep awareness of this in their members, so that by their actions – as by their words, their silence, their examples – they become credible witnesses of Christ.” Words of Benedict XVI which equally challenge the elderly.

This Christmas was particularly generous in gifts for Crescendo. At the General Assembly last November 13 a new president was elected, H el ene Durand–Ballivet. Well known by the heads of the Catholic ONG, H el ene collaborates at the International Catholic Center of Geneva and in the working group of the Forum.

This general assembly welcomed the adhesion of two new members; the Congregation of the Oblates of Saint Joseph and Fondacio, international and intergenerational Christian Community, recognized by the catholic Church; Fondacio is working with seniors and older persons, trying to follow a human and spiritual approach and to transmit their faith. The central committee (Administrative Organ) was slightly modified; the representative of MIAMSI, Simone Gebs was replaced by Dominique Lemeau de Talanc e (two ex-presidents of the Conference of the OIC) and the representative of Fondacio, Charles Ypersele has been also elected. Bernadette Cantenot, president of Vie Montante Internationale, the Mouvement Chr etien des retrait es et personnes  ag ees and one of the first organizations to join Crescendo, was elected vice-president and also made part of the “bureau”. A large information on these news will be given in the following issues of this bulletin.

Personally I received a magnificent gift, the title of Honorary President, of which I am very happy and grateful. As outgoing president, I have a great desire to thank all those who have collaborated with me at Crescendo during these years; those who assume the institutional functions and those who are simply animated by the spirit, the charism of Crescendo, which is the essential.

I profoundly believe that the Crescendo network, inspired by love for the elderly, is a work of God and will continue to build bridges among the organizations that work for them and with them, in a new awakening.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all! Alberto



## **CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2009**

**J.Joblin sj , spiritual Counselor of Crescendo**

The religious significance of the celebration of Christmas escapes us more and more. The commercial celebration which has taken its place certainly reinforces the relations of “good neighborliness” among people but it risks to obscure the spirit from which this precedes in the heart of believers. The latter was previously the fruit of a communion of faith in the event of the birth of Christ among the members of the Christian communities; many no longer see anything more than an occasion to manifest their good will to those around them.

Certainly the date in which we celebrate the birth of Christ was chosen to replace the secular feasts which accompanied the arrival of the winter solstice. The return of the light was celebrated as the Light of Life and this new beginning was seen as a sign of his victory over death. This symbolism is not easily perceived in human societies submitted to the law of modernity, and perception of it tends to disappear, since believers are influenced by the environment in which they live. It is thus important to be reminded of the extraordinary and unbelievable in the event which gave birth to this feast. It necessitates a return to the human condition. All human beings are in search of happiness, for which they seek to satisfy their immediate needs like nourishment or lodging, or more elevated aspirations like the discoveries made by researchers of nature, or the understanding that it is necessary to extend the circle of their relations; all attempts to surpass oneself and ameliorate our condition obliges us to search for a help outside of self; what our nature offers isn't sufficient. Science isn't the ultimate explanation of reality and it is not enough to proclaim in 1906, to have “extinguished in the sky some lights than cannot be relit,” to have made disappear all the attempts of a final word on our condition, in hopes of submitting the forces which escape our control through magic or superstition. All creation is subjected to rules that it hasn't fixed and one of these is that of death. No force seems to permit us to escape it. Christmas is the announcement of a way to overcome it. Christianity claims to be the deposit of a revelation which leads to victory over death. Its message gives substance to hope. Although the efforts to escape the law of degradation written in nature and

which affect all beings have always failed, it explains the cause and offers a new way to transform death into a victory; but no one can set out on this way without accepting, at least confusedly, a new ladder of values, abandoning those that exercise a fascination on men (pride, power, riches) to adopt that which we discover in the child of Bethlehem. It is necessary for us to adore God made man in the infant in the manger; as St. Paul says: he humbled himself, taking the condition of a slave and made himself obedient to the death. Lesson of humility, of forgetfulness of self and of one's own judgment and confiding oneself to another. He made himself man, by love, to teach each one how they can, if they want, achieve the destiny written in them as a desire to be freed from death.

The welcome of this message is made in faith. The believer is the one who recognizes in Christ the one who holds the last word on the sense of life. *Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of eternal life*, St. Peter would say, conforming his sentiments to those of Christ. That is to say, as the Christian philosopher Maurice Blondel put it, to make the beauty of God shine forth on those who do not see it, in hopes that they will warm themselves at this source before recognizing the luminous hearth from which it emanates.

The elderly today have a special responsibility to help younger generations discover the religious sense of the celebration of Christmas. The experience of life makes them understand how illusory is the search of a salvation which limits itself to earthly horizons and which each one constructs according to his tastes. They must transmit this experience; in order to do this they must act with the necessary tact to help those around them discover that Christmas is the source of peace if we recognize the need to live it in a religious perspective.