



Abrahamic Religions sign Declaration for the protection of the elderly

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August 28, 2023 - The document, ratified in Buenos Aires in the presence of Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life, represents a sign of civilization and rejection of "any temptation to 'discard' the weak and the helpless."

On Monday, August 28, at the headquarters of the Catholic University of Argentina in Buenos Aires, the "Declaration of the Abrahamic Religions: Elderly persons in contemporary society and their protection," was signed under the patronage of the Pontifical Academy for Life, represented by Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, the Academy's president.

The Declaration was formalized by Prof. Don Rubén Revello, Director of the Institute of Bioethics of the UCA Faculty of Medicine, Rabbi Prof. Fernando Fishel Szlajen on the Jewish side, and Sheikh Prof. Abdala Cerrilla on the Islamic side.

Change the paradigms

In a joint statement, the representatives from the Abrahamic Religions noted how the increasing aging of the world population could be seen as an opportunity for older people to "contribute significantly to social or community volunteering, education, and intergenerational knowledge transfer, among other activities that have not yet been properly sized in their positive potential for society."

By addressing the issue from a holistic and humanitarian perspective, the document read, "We may be facing an unbeatable opportunity to change the paradigm of conceiving the elderly as a negation and superfluous stage of life," transitioning to a phase "worthy of respect, care and participation, recognizing the value and experience of the elderly, providing them with the necessary support and building a more inclusive and supportive society for all ages and for the collective benefit."

Dignify elder people

This would be possible by dignifying the elderly, as "the physical wear and tear of the passage of time is compensated" by their "acquired wisdom."

Assisting and integrating

The joint statement stressed the importance of assisting older people not merely out of "mercy and kindness" but, most importantly, "out of justice."

Integration also plays a crucial role, as "Abrahamic cultures conceive old age as a stage of development and not a period of life condemned to social marginalization."

Interreligious dialogue

In a press release, the three signatories of the Declaration expressed their commitment and consideration in relation to the document.

Rabbi Prof. Szlajen highlighted how being united under the common intent to protect the elderly shows that "compassion and justice transcend differences and have a positive impact on society."

He quoted the homiletic Breishit Rabbah 42:3 from the fourth century A.D., which affirms that: "If there are no children there are no students, if there are no students there are no wise men, if there are no wise men there are no elders, if there are no elders there are no prophets, and if there are no prophets God cannot turn His Providence upon them all."

Sheikh Prof. Abdala Cerrilla underlined the respect that people professing the Islamic faith have of the elderly in society, recalling a passage from the Qur'an reading: "Your Lord has ordained that they worship Him alone and honor their parents. If one or both of them reach old age, do not despise them, but speak kind words to them" Holy Qur'an (17:23).

Protecting the most fragile

Prof. Fr. Rubén Revello recalled Pope Frances Catecheses on Third Age and the commitment shown by the Pontifical Academy for Life to the implementation of palliative care. "With this effort, we intend to raise awareness particularly among those who make public policy decisions, and create opinion in favor of respecting and protecting the weakest and most fragile in society."

Archbishop Paglia focused on the importance of religions to "come together, based on their tradition and spiritual heritage, to raise awareness in civil society on the issues of protection and respect for the elderly."

To read the full document, [see here...](#)

Source: [Vatican News](#).