

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Association of Catholic Bioethicists' colloquium to make recommendations on the ethical care of persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Rome, Italy June 7, 2013 - The 6th International Colloquium of the International Association of Catholic Bioethicists (IACB), organized with the support of the Order of Malta, will address the topic: **“Supporting and caring for persons with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD): Ethical Reflections and Practical Considerations”** at Villa Palazzola near Rome, Italy, from June 9-14, 2013.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) (Learning Disabilities in the U.K.) refer to a range of conditions in which lifelong limitations in intellectual functioning and conceptual, social and practical skills are noticeable before age 18 years. According to Dr. Hélène Ouellette-Kuntz, an epidemiologist and Associate Professor at Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, “between 1-3% of any country's population have IDD, such as Down syndrome, Autistic Spectrum Disorders or Fetal Alcohol syndrome.”

Dr. William F. Sullivan, director the IACB and Associate Professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at St. Michael's Hospital and Surrey Place Centre of the University of Toronto, Canada, notes that ‘this colloquium is the first of its kind to focus on ethical issues in the care of persons with IDD from an interdisciplinary Christian perspective. It brings together 67 internationally renowned experts in the field, with more joining through the Internet.’ Dr. Sullivan, who works extensively with persons with IDD, challenges us to consider the question, ‘What would it be like if we welcomed persons with IDD into our lives and communities with genuine respect for their freedom, insisting that they belong and are to be loved?’

Medical advances that make possible the detection of genetic disorders associated with IDD are routinely used to end the life of these human persons prior to birth. Broader issues of valuing and respecting people with IDD as free human beings and full members of the human family also need to be addressed. Dr. Brian Hennen, Professor of Family Medicine at Dalhousie University and former president of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, and a participant in the IACB colloquium, remarks that, ‘in our society, which emphasizes intelligence and productivity, too often people with IDD are ridiculed, regarded as merely burdens on society, excluded from full participation in their communities and from decision-making about their own lives, health care and supports. They are likely to receive inadequate and/or inappropriate health care.’ Another participant in the IACB colloquium, Professor John Heng of King's University

College at Western University, London, Canada adds that 'too often, the spiritual desires and capacities of persons with IDD are not recognized or nurtured.'

As Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, an international federation of communities for people with IDD and those who assist them, states in a video address to participants: 'What seems to me to be absolutely clear is the importance of seeing every person with a disability as an important person capable of freedom and of love.'

This 6th International Colloquium of the IACB will culminate in a consensus statement that is intended to

- advance thinking within and beyond the Christian tradition on emerging ethical, theological and pastoral questions relating to the support and care of persons living with IDD;
- provide helpful guidance to families and care providers; and
- propose recommendations to inform health care, pastoral practices, policies and laws, and future research

The consensus statement will be published along with background papers and presentations, all of which will be made freely available on the IACB's website.

Participants in the IACB Colloquium

Dr. Domenico Arduini, Italy

Dr. Robert Balogh, Canada

Dr. Robert Barnet, USA

Fr. Scott Borgman, France and Italy

Dr. Elspeth Bradley, Canada

Dr. Sarah Buckley, New Zealand and Australia

Dr. Ian Casson, Canada

Dr. Luigi Castagna, Canada

Marie Challita, Italy

Fr. Joseph Chandrakanthan, Sri Lanka and Canada

Fr. Paul Chummar, India and Germany

Antoinette Cole, UK

Bishop Peter Comensoli, Australia

Eoin Connolly, Canada

Prof. Pamela Cushing, Canada

Janette Davidson, Australia

Dr. Richard Denton, Canada

Dr. Paola Diadori, Canada

Kathleen Doyle, UK

Richard Egan, Australia

Kareem Elbard, Canada

Heather Elbard, Canada

Cristina Gangemi, UK
Dr. Meg Gemmill, Canada
Msgr. Dariusz Giers, Italy
Dr. Adriana Gini, Italy
Fr. Gerald Gleeson, Australia
Fr. Nigel Griffin, UK
Peter Gummere, USA
Dr. Andreas Hartmann, Austria
Prof. John Heng, Canada
Dr. Brian Hennen, Canada
Dr. Franziskus von Heereman, Germany
Dr. Tony Holland, UK
Prof. Christine Jamieson, Canada
David Joyce, Italy
Dr. Claudia Kaminski, Germany
Maureen Kelly, Canada
Prof. John Keown, UK and USA
Dr. Jaro Kotalik, Canada
Dr. Nick Lennox, Australia
Dr. Hazel Markwell, Canada
Dr. Pia Matthews, UK
Dr. Joseph Mfutso-Bengo, Malawi
Prof. Moira McQueen, Canada
Elizabeth O'Brien, UK
Louisa Pedri, Canada
Fr. Renzo Pegoraro, Italy
Dr. Joseph Raho, USA
Prof. Hans Reinders, Netherlands
Dr. Larry Reynolds, Canada
Dr. Marcia Riordan, Australia
Dr. Christoph von Ritter, Germany
Prof. Linda Scheirton, USA
Dr. Ursula Sottong, Germany
Dr. William Sullivan, Canada
Dr. Paulina Taboada, Chile
Leeping Tao, Canada
Fr. Joseph Tham, Hong Kong and Canada
Dr. Bernadette Tobin, Australia
Dr. Teresa Tomory, Canada
Dr. Dieuwertje deWaardt-Morsink, Netherlands
Dr. Neil Weir, UK
Prof. Jos Welie, USA
Dr. Katharina Westerhortsman, Germany
Dr. Ruth Wilson, Canada
Prof. Michael Yeo, Canada

Persons cited in the press release

John Heng, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, and Program in Thanatology, King's University College at Western University, London, ON, Canada

Brian Hennen, Department of Family Medicine, Dalhousie University; former head of the Departments of Family Medicine at Dalhousie University and Western University, London, ON; former Dean of Medicine, University of Manitoba, Canada; former president of the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

Hélène Ouellette-Kuntz, Departments of Community Health and Epidemiology and Psychiatry, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada; Director of the South-eastern Ontario Community-University Alliance in Intellectual Disabilities; Founding member of the Canadian Association for Research and Education in Intellectual Disabilities (CARE-ID).

William Sullivan, Department of Family and Community Health, University of Toronto; Family Physician at St. Michael's Hospital Family Practice Unit and Surrey Place Centre, Toronto; Director of the Developmental Disabilities Primary Care Initiative (DDPCI); Director of the International Association of Catholic Bioethicists (IACB); Chair of the Ethics Committee of the College of Family Physicians of Canada; Ordinary Member of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

Jean Vanier, Former Professor of philosophy; Founder of l'Arche International and Faith and Light; Companion of the Order of Canada; Legion of Honour, France.

The International Association of Catholic Bioethicists (IACB)

In 2005, the IACB was founded by a group of bioethicists from around the world with the support of various national associations of the Order of Malta. The IACB brings together bioethicists and health care professionals to address emerging ethical issues in health care research and practice to better serve those in need. The IACB convenes bi-annual international colloquia that have engaged some 350 participants from over 40 countries. Their purpose is to promote and foster cooperation among Catholic bioethicists, with a concern especially for those who are marginalized or vulnerable. In 2009, the IACB was recognized as the Order of Malta's tool to promote bioethics. This 6th colloquium, held on the occasion of the Order of Malta's 900th anniversary, is organized under the patronage of Frà Matthew Festing, Grand Master of the Order of Malta.

Contact:

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IACB website www.iacb.eu

Live webstreaming of the colloquium is available. Please consult the IACB website or write to: maureen.kelly@sympatico.ca.