

**December 2, 2010 Ethics, Aging and the Coming Healthcare Challenge Conference, Pontifical Lateran University, Rome**

**9:00AM WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

**Rev. Robert A. Sirico, *President and Co-Founder, Acton Institute***

Distinguished Guests, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning. My name is Father Robert Sirico and I am President and Co-founder of the Acton Institute. I would like to welcome you to this conference on “Ethics, Aging and the Coming Healthcare Challenge”. Before I begin my brief introductory remarks, I would to ask Archbishop Enrico dal Covolo, the rector of the Pontifical Lateran University, to offer a few words of welcome.

Since this is the first time we are holding a conference at the Pontifical Lateran University under his administration, permit me to say that it is a great honor and privilege to continue the Acton Institute’s collaboration with “the Pope’s University”. God willing, this is the beginning of many years of cooperation between us and I hope the Acton Institute will be able to assist this Pontifical University in the very important spiritual and intellectual formation of future leaders of the Church in Italy and throughout the world.

I give Your Excellency the floor.

## **ARCHBISHOP DAL COVOLO SPEAKS**

Thank you for those kind and gracious words and for your hospitality, Your Excellency.

The subject matter of this conference, how to care for the elderly in both morally and scientifically adequate ways, is one of growing importance in our time. It involves first and foremost the family, but also neighbors, health care providers, pharmaceutical companies, assisted living centers and retirement homes, and of course the centralized modern state, which often presumes to provide “cradle to grave” social services for us. The vast number of groups and people affected by this topic explains why we have involved different partners in this project, and I am grateful to all of them for recognizing its importance and participating with us today.

Nearly every country on the planet is faced with declining fertility rates, a serious phenomenon in its own right that has resulted in the “empty cradle” described by demographer Philip Longman.

At the same time, we see increasing life expectancy, due to a great decline in maternal and infant mortality rates and rising living standards brought on by wealth creation and economic growth. This demographic situation results in aging societies, with fewer and fewer younger people to support more and more elderly people.

In previous ages, before the prevalence of the concept of the “nuclear” family, several generations would often live together

or nearby, and care for the older members of the family. This situation, however, is becoming rarer and rarer.

As Prof. Philip Booth will explain in his lecture, many of these changes are the result of government intervention in family life, health care and other areas of our social and economic life. When the State becomes the provider of “cradle to grave” social services, it assumes roles previously played by families, churches, voluntary organizations, and a host of other local, more personalized organizations. As a result, there is a “crowding-out” effect of government intervention which reduces or eliminates the role of civil society in providing these services, with all kinds of negative consequences. This expansion of the modern state at the expense of more humane, decentralized associations has been marvelously described in Pope Benedict’s first encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*.

So as the reach of the State grows, we are facing with new and different problems. Those of us who vigorously promote limited government and the role of subsidiarity recognize that we are also faced with a more immediate crisis when it comes to providing ethical care for the elderly. The general unwillingness of our societies to confront the problems caused by the welfare state and the entitlement society will only delay and deepen the coming challenges.

Nearly everyone who has studied the financing of the modern welfare state knows that it is unsustainable, and especially so in light of current demographic trends. Healthcare costs, especially where care is most advanced, are rising seemingly beyond control. When faced with problems of a fiscal nature, many will

be tempted to solve problems by cutting costs, which may often mean providing less advanced care, perhaps none at all, or even taking the life of those deemed less “productive” or useful to society.

So how are we to face these challenges in a way that makes both economic and moral sense? That is what we want to discuss here today, and we are blessed to have many experts in their respective fields. We have four sessions, with breaks in between each to allow you to digest all the intellectual food you have consumed.

Our first session is entitled “Demographic Decline and Impact on Healthcare for the Elderly” and our first speaker is His Excellency Bishop Jean Laffitte, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Family, who will speak on the ethical and anthropological significance of demographic decline.

**9:30AM BISHOP LAFFITTE SPEAKS (30 minutes max.)**

Thank you Bishop Laffitte.

I now call upon our second speaker, Dr. Michael Hodin, Executive Director of the Global Coalition on Ageing and Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Dr. Hodin has been one of the principal figures working with the Acton Institute in planning this event and we are very pleased to have him here. He will address the need to have an aging populations strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

(He has a powerpoint presentation that needs to be started up.)

**10:00 DR. HODIN SPEAKS (30 minutes max.)**

Thank you Dr. Hodin.

Our third and final speaker for this first session is Professor Philip Booth, Editorial and Program Director at the Institute of Economic Affairs in London. He is a long-time friend and collaborator of the Acton Institute and we are very pleased to work with him again.

**10:30AM PROF. BOOTH SPEAKS (30 minutes max.)**

**11:00AM** Thank you Professor Booth.

[IF IT IS NOT YET 11AM, TAKE SOME QUESTIONS. OTHERWISE CONCLUDE FIRST SESSION.]

Please join me in thanking our speakers. We will now take a 15-minute break before we start our second session on the moral and technical challenges of providing healthcare for the elderly. We have some coffee and pastries just outside the room for you, which is our way of telling you not to stray too far. We will reconvene at 11:15AM.

**11:15AM SECOND SESSION BEGINS**

Welcome back for our second session for this conference on ethics, aging and the coming healthcare challenge. This session will address some of the moral as well as practical/technical challenges in providing institutional health care to the elderly.

Our three speakers all have much experience in providing this care, so we should benefit very much from their contributions. Their biographies can be found in the program.

Our first speaker is Dr. Martin Bednar, the head of clinical research at Pfizer. Dr. Bednar will talk to us about the particular challenges we face in the treatment of Alzheimer's Disease.

**11:15AM DR. BEDNAR SPEAKS (30 mins max)**

Thank you Dr. Bednar.

I will now give the floor to Brother Thomas Keusenkothen, CEO of the Alexian Brothers Health System. He is particularly well-suited to speak at this event because the Alexian Brothers Health System has an entire administrative division dedicated to providing holistic care to the elderly.

**11:45AM BR. KEUSENKOTHEN SPEAKS (30 min. max)**

Thank you Br. Keusenkothen.

Our third speaker this session is Dr. Daniel Sulmasy, who is the Kilbride-Clinton Professor of Medicine and Ethics at the University of Chicago. Dr. Sulmasy will talk about substituted interest and best judgment: re-thinking surrogate decision-making. Dr. Sulmasy, the floor is yours.

**12:15PM DR. SULMASY SPEAKS (30 min. max)**

**12:45PM** We now have some time for questions from the audience for any of our morning session speakers. We have some wireless microphones for the audience to address their questions, so please raise your hand and one will be brought to you. Please identify yourself, and make your questions or comments brief so that others have time to speak as well.

**1:00PM** We have now concluded our morning session and will break for lunch. You are all cordially invited to join us for a buffet lunch, which you will find to the right as you exit this hall, overlooking the main atrium.

It has been a particularly intense morning session, so please thank once again our speakers for their substantial contributions. It has also been taxing for you, so please enjoy the lunch and conversation. We will re-convene for the afternoon sessions at 2:30pm.

**[RAS IS FREE FOR INTERVIEWS ETC. DURING THIRD SESSION. KJ WILL MODERATE.]**

**4:15PM** Welcome back to our fourth and last session of this conference on ethics, aging and the coming healthcare challenge. The topic for this session is “Providing Professional Care for the Elderly in Assisted Living Centers”. Our speakers will address some of the issues facing caring for the elderly beyond that of finding a cure for their illness, as important as cures are, because we are all mortal human beings. In our society, the elderly are often forgotten once they are shuffled off to a retirement home or assisted living center, perhaps except for the occasional visit from their children and grandchildren.

This does not mean their lives are over or lacking in dignity in any way. If there is one thing we learned from watching the last days of Pope John Paul the Great, it is how to die like a disciple of Christ – close to the cross, grateful, indeed joyful, for all the Lord has given us and at the promise of seeing Him face-to-face. So how is the dignity to be recognized given the new social and economic circumstances we've discussed today?

Our first speaker, Mr. Greg Hadley, is another long-time friend and supporter of the Acton Institute. As you can see from his biography, he is a very accomplished man in a number of fields, including business start-ups and consulting, prayer, and sports officiating. He is the author of a book entitled *Aging – The Autumn Phase of Life*. We're very pleased to hear him to speak today about his book and his experiences of living with his wife in a retirement home run by a religious order in the state of Oregon in the United States.

**4:15PM MR. GREG HADLYE SPEAKS (30 min max)**

Thank you very much, Mr. Hadley.

I would now like to present our second speaker, Alessandro Falez, who is president of Health Care Italia, which runs the Rome American Hospital as well as an Alzheimer's hospice, so he is imminently qualified to be here. He will tell us about the very important role of private enterprise in providing ethical care for the elderly.

**4:45PM MR. FALEZ SPEAKS (30 min max)**

Thank you Mr. Falez. Our third and final speaker for this session, and for this conference, is Mr. Paul Rigby, who is the medical affairs manager for Nutricia/Danone Medical Nutrition in Amsterdam. He will speak to us about the role of proper nutrition in dealing with sarcopenia, which is the loss of muscle mass, a vital but often neglected aspect of caring for the elderly. Mr. Rigby, I give you the floor.

**5:15PM MR. RIGBY SPEAKS (30 mins max)**

**5:45PM** We now have a few minutes for questions from the audience. There are wireless microphones that will be brought to you if you raise your hand. Please identify yourself and keep your questions or comments brief so others may have a chance to speak as well.

**6:00PM** We have now reached the conclusion of our conference on ethics, aging and the coming healthcare challenge.

I wish to thank once again all of our speakers for their excellent presentations on the many diverse aspects of providing ethical care for the elderly [**applause**].

I also wish to thank all those who made this conference possible, including our many co-sponsors, and especially Alessandro Falez and Health Care Italia [**applause**], the staff of Istituto Acton, our small Rome office, who put all this together [**applause**], the Pontifical Lateran University for providing the venue [**applause**] and finally the interpreters for their hidden but important work [**applause**].

Before adjourning, I would like to make an announcement of our upcoming Acton Institute events.

The first announcement is we are currently in the middle of a conference series on poverty, development and integral development, with the next conference scheduled to be held in March 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya, on the theme of *Economic and Cultural Transformation: Breaking the Shackles of Poverty*. The conference following that one will be here in Rome in May 2011. Please visit the Acton Institute website for more information about these events.

The second announcement concerns the Acton Institute's premier event, Acton University, which will take place June 14-17, 2011, in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Acton University is a unique, four-day exploration of the intellectual foundations of a free and virtuous society. Guided by a distinguished international faculty, Acton University consists of a demanding academic program that integrates rigorous philosophy, Christian theology and sound economics. We've had nearly 500 participants from 50 countries attend Acton University, so I encourage you to apply for this June 2011 event.

That is it for my announcements. I wish to thank you all for coming and participating in this intense day and I hope to see you at our future Acton events, here, in Nairobi, or wherever else we may be.

Thank you and good night.