

主旨: Fw: suggestion to HKSAR Government
附件: Guild St Luke PEEPP 2013.doc

We are sending our proposal to HKSAR Government about population.

Guild of St Luke, St Cosmas and St Damian, Hong Kong LTD

The Guild of St Luke, St Cosmas and St Damian Hong Kong

Submission to the public engagement exercise on population policy 2013

The Guild of St Luke, St Cosmas and St Damian Hong Kong (the Guild) is an association of Catholic doctors formed in 1953, aimed at facilitating the intercourse between Catholic members of the medical profession of Hong Kong with a view to the study and discussion of bioethical issues, and of upholding the principles of Catholic morality.

Whilst there are many elements in population policy that would not concern the Guild, we would like to comment on those aspects which touch deeply on bioethical issues and the principles of Catholic morality. As a preamble we would like to remind the government that whilst we recognize the legitimacy of governments to intervene to orient the demography of the population in discharging its responsibility for its citizens' well-being, it should not do so with means contrary to the moral law, such as by authoritarian, coercive measures, which usurp the initiative of spouses, who have the primary responsibility for the procreation and education of their children.¹

The section which relates most to Catholic morality is Chapter 5, Fostering a Supportive Environment for our People to Form and Raise Families. In a sense, it could be argued that one of the root causes for our population woes include the reluctance of couples to have and raise children, borne out of a perception (real or otherwise) that the future of Hong Kong would not be a good one for their children as well as the great expense of having a child. This is evident in the low fertility rate of Hong Kong women which varied between the low of 0.9 to the high of 1.2 between the years 2001 to 2011. Hence we would support measures to build an environment which would encourage couples to have children.

Another point which we have noted before elaborating on some of the strategies suggested in the consultation document, is that in the last fourteen years for which we have government statistics, some 11,000 to 21,000 abortions were legally performed in the SAR yearly, representing a loss of over 215,000 future workers between 1999 and 2012. Strategies to conserve babies already conceived would contribute to halting the decline of the future workforce.

A number of suggestions were listed in box 5.2 of the consultation document and they both included direct subsidies or allowances and ways to reduce the opportunity cost of childbearing. We would agree that both can be useful but particularly that "policies that reduce the opportunity cost of having children seem to have a greater influence on fertility

¹ cf Catechism of the Catholic Church No.2372

than direct financial incentives.” (ibid) This is also reflected in the last question on p.41 about affordable housing, education and childcare. In addition to family-friendly practices in the workplace, the government should also be mindful that policies which undermine the traditional family would also increase the reluctance of couples to have and raise children, be it the first or the next one. Such policies include those which make for easier divorce, as well as those policy areas which promote homosexuality and LGBT rights.

The one area that we would disagree with in the suggestions to increase birth rate would be that of improved access to artificial reproductive technologies. We are opposed to such technologies which “ seem to be at the service of life and ... are frequently used with this intention,” but often they “actually open the door to new threats against life.”² As Catholic physicians, we hold the view that techniques which assist procreation “are not to be rejected on the grounds that they are artificial. As such, they bear witness to the possibilities of the art of medicine. But they must be given a moral evaluation in reference to the dignity of the human person, who is called to realize his vocation from God to the gift of love and the gift of life”.³ The principles which must be respected for infertility treatment to be acceptable to the Catholic Church are clearly listed in that document — respect for a) the right to life and to physical integrity of every human being from conception to natural death; b) the unity of marriage, which means reciprocal respect for the right within marriage to become a father or mother only together with the other spouse; c) the specifically human values of sexuality which require “that the procreation of a human person be brought about as the fruit of the conjugal act specific to the love between spouses”.³ We thus would urge the government not to promote or employ such methods to increase the local population’s birth rate.

Our preferred solution is to employ the techniques which satisfy the above requirements to help couples conceive. These include the use of techniques employing the concept of fertility awareness such as Natural Family Planning and Natural Procreation Technology (NaPro Technology). The latter combines fertility awareness with modern medicine with the aim of treating those barriers to natural conception preventing pregnancy in the first place and then using fertility awareness to improve the chances of conception by natural means. Pregnancy rates of up to 98% over 6 consecutive cycles had been reported.⁴ Of course the use of Traditional Chinese Medicine to improve the bodily functions of the parents to help them conceive would most likely also satisfy the requirements of the Church for licit techniques in help couples conceive.

² *Evangelium Vitae* (Acta Apostolica Sedes (AAS) 87(1995), pp401-522), No. 14

³ Instruction *Dignitas Personae* on Certain Bioethical Questions, AAS 100 (2008) 858-887, No.12

⁴ Hilgers TW, Daly KD, Prebil AM, et al: Cumulative Pregnancy Rates in Patients with Apparently Normal Fertility and Fertility-Focused Intercourse. *J Reprod Med* 1992 Oct;37(10):864-6

In conclusion, the Guild notes the various areas of concern regarding the question of the demographic challenges of present day Hong Kong. As an organization of Catholic physicians, we note that abortion has robbed society of some 11000 or more future workers yearly, so strategies that discourage abortion and aid adoption would help bring more people to the work force many years down the line. As for ways of promoting the population to have and raise children, we agree that in addition to solving the problems of affordable housing, education and childcare, the government should adopt policies to encourage and support traditional family values. As for helping those who have difficulty conceiving, we oppose artificial reproductive technologies which do not respect the dignity of marriage and of the human person. Rather than promoting IVF and the like, we urge the government to develop assisted procreation employing fertility awareness as their basis.

The Guild of St Luke, St Cosmas and St Damian Hong Kong
22nd February 2014