

From the Pastor's Desk
November 6, 2011

On Halloween, there was an interesting article in the *Sacramento Bee*. The article reported on the world's population approaching 7 billion people. The article, which was originally published in the *Washington Post*, explained that in some countries the population is definitely growing older. This reality is, in turn, creating a "full-blown crisis" where countries are "suddenly desperate for babies. They need more workers to provide goods and services to huge numbers of pensioners." The fertility rate in countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, Greece, Japan and China, is well below the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. When the fertility rate is below the replacement rate, there are not enough workers in relation to retirees. In the United States, only on account of immigration, is the fertility rate slightly below the replacement rate.

The author spelled out the dangers of such a course: "The demographic transition (of populations in developed countries growing older) is a significant factor in the financial crisis in Europe and the ongoing debt debate in the United States. In both places, the number of workers will steadily and dramatically decrease in ratio to retirees. In the United States, the ratio of working-age people to retirement age people will go from about 5-to-1 to 3-to-1 in the next two decades, according to the Census Bureau."

How did we get to this point? The article does not answer this question. However, clearly abortion, sterilization and contraception have played a huge role in decreasing fertility over the last half century. This conclusion is easy to reach, for example, where the author reports on China's one-child policy began in the 1970s that "sent the nation's birthrate into free-fall." Since 1973, in the U.S. alone, there have been 53 million abortions. No one likes to talk about these kinds of things. Abortion, sterilization and contraception are difficult topics, to be sure. But until we start working towards a culture of life, we will not be able to stop the trend of our dying nations. We need to support mothers and fathers giving them other pro-life options so they don't feel trapped into the abortion corner. We need to raise our sons and daughters to respect their God-given fertility and to remain chaste before marriage. We need to educate and challenge married couples to space the births of their children naturally through Natural Family Planning and to generously allow God to continue to have a say in the number of children He desires for them. Are these tasks easy? Absolutely not! But with God's grace and help, together we can work to take them on.

Christ's peace,
Father Berg