



25th March, 2010

37/2010

EXPERIENCING CHILDHOOD IN MALTA

'Experiencing Childhood in Malta' is DISCERN Institute for Research on the Signs of the Times, latest publication authored by Rev Dr Joe Inguanez and Ms Rebecca Gatt. This study on the Maltese children's thoughts and attitudes was commissioned by The Children's Foundation of the Malta Financial and Services Authority.

Several studies indicate that children's attitudes and behaviour are continuously being influenced by dynamic societal processes. On their part, while interacting with such environment, children react to these influences. As a result, children and young people are constantly roaming among various evolving phenomena, acting and reacting to different social stimuli. Indeed, children are generally considered as a marginalised category. They started acquiring recognition within society contemporaneously with groups sharing the same predicament. Thus children's movement came on the public sphere in the 1960s and 1970s. The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) ushered a widespread interest in the rights of young people among both public policy and civil society.

It is evident that in their own manner and with their specific objectives, politicians, civil society, academics and media people, have all gone up on the bandwagon of this ongoing debate on childhood. Locally, as soon as a study mentioning the situation of young children on these islands is published, its discussion goes at the top of the country's agenda. This notwithstanding, however, that quite often there is a tendency for this discussion to find itself on the back-burner.

This study has revealed new facts or confirmed existing ones. For instance, the younger participants have considered quality time with their parents as a chief concern. However, with respect to their willingness to express freely their feelings and thoughts with the members of their family, a significant number of the respondents have stated that they neither feel the need nor do they have suitable time to express themselves within their family, particularly with their parents.

This research also brought to light specific issues that tend to negatively affect the the psychological wellbeing of children and their relationships with others. Such factors as the parents' atypical work schedules and the limited availability of resources at home, potentially do influence the emotional and social wellbeing of children.

One ought to note, that although this research focused children, valuable information was uncovered about their parents. Indeed, parenthood emerged a strongly recurrent theme in this study. Children were very open in their responses where they asserted that the parents' love and care are unique and very difficult to substitute.

Ms Sonia Camilleri, the Chairperson of The Children's Foundation of the Malta Financial and Services Authority described this publication as "a qualitative study of the myriad of factors that make up childhood in Malta today. It has helped us as a Foundation to widen our definition of 'well-being' and 'under privileged' and has shown the necessity of the constant monitoring of childhood in this rapidly changing scene."

This publication is being sold for the price of €10.00 from DISCERN's office which may be reached on 21 241 924 or by email on discern@maltadiocese.org