

UPF Melbourne, Australia's seminars explore Australian family's challenges

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February 23, 2019



Melbourne, Australia -- Four seminars in UPF-Australia's planned 2019 series will explore challenges facing Australian families and look at opportunities for renewal.

Kicking off the first seminar this year, Bill Pontikis, founder of Café Care and a former city councilor for the City of Monash, presented "My Experience in Healing Families." Mr. Pontikis spoke about his 20 years of experience running Café Care and working with people dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, family violence, youth depression, and so forth. He gave a powerful interview with Venessa, who shared about her own addiction with drugs from the age of 12, which led her into prostitution. Venessa mentioned how the lack of love coming from her parents made her feel of little worth. Her victory came when she was feeling at the very bottom and gave her life to Christ. This brought about fundamental changes in her life.

John Adamedes's keynote address focused on "Essential Values and Principles." As an educator in the fields of science and computing, Mr. Adamedes has taught for over 25 years at the university and secondary levels. He reflected on life's essential principles and highlighted the challenge of maintaining a moral and ethical perspective amidst today's technological advancements. His second presentation focused on the fundamental relationships formed and grounded within the family. He shared how one's heart and love grow and are expressed to others as our character. He stressed, therefore, that the family is the key social unit upon which all other social institutions depend.

Dr. John Bellavance introduced a new family renewal initiative, Extended Family Network (EFN). He shared that EFN can start anywhere in Australia when three families get together to support each other. The network is community based; individuals and families mutually support each other through friendship and practical assistance. With families helping families, each family group becomes part of an 'Extended Family Network'. The guiding principles to the network are mutual prosperity, interdependence and universally shared values.

Interfaith, Intercultural Marriage Rededication

A marriage rededication took place during the seminar. Regardless of our national origins, worldviews, or faiths, most people recognize the importance that marriage and family give to the wellbeing of the individual and the nation. Rev John Izvernariu gave a Christian blessing, Adel Gaballa shared Muslim

wisdom with respect to marriage, and Ven. Bodhicitta gave a Buddhist blessing.



Ambassador for Peace Awards

Ambassador for Peace awards were presented to community leaders for their voluntary work. Awards were given to Nizar Ashkar, principal of Al Kamal Arabic School and Vice-President of the Unitarian Druze Community of Victoria; Taniya K Jayasinghe, Vice-President of the South Asian Community Link Group, coordinator for Miss Africa Victoria Australia/ Miss Africa Australia, and Multicultural Community Ambassador GC2018 Commonwealth Games; Dr. Moses G. Adepoju, founder/chairperson of Care Africa International, Secretary of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, Ambassador for White Ribbon Australia, and founder/CEO Miss Africa Australia; and, Jeffrey Lawrence Osayande, director of the African Community Development Network of Australia and president of Pad An African Girl

