

UPF Latin America and the Caribbean Upholds Importance of Family Culture in Latin America

Mario Salinas
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South and Central America – On May 15, 2026, a group of professionals from South America, Central America, and the Caribbean joined a webinar to commemorate the United Nations International Day of Families, under the theme "The Family as a School of Love and Peace: Inequalities and Child Wellbeing."

The event was organized by UPF and three of its associations – the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP), International Association of Academicians for Peace (IAAP), and Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) – and moderated by **Mr. Mario Salinas**, regional secretary general of UPF for Latin America and the Caribbean.

UPF regional president **Mr. Eliecer Araya**, in his welcoming words, highlighted the importance of "remembering that the family is the first place where we learn to love, to serve, and to build peace. In every home, the seeds of the future society are planted; it is there that the values sustaining harmony among generations and peoples are born."

Participating from Brazil, continental president of FFWPU for Latin America and the Caribbean **Rev. David Dongwoo Kim** praised UPF's efforts in marking this important date. He recalled that the Christian family model served as a lifeline during the fall of the Roman Empire, a period marked by the moral and cultural decline of its people and, in particular, its leaders and rulers. In light of the challenges we face today, called for the restoration of family-centered values and principles.

Dr. Azucena Castillo de Solano, a former congresswoman and government minister from Nicaragua, stated: "Although the structure of the traditional family has historically been the natural and fundamental

element of society – and therefore has the right to the protection of society and the state – this protection has not been properly upheld, neither by the United Nations nor by many governments in Latin America. It has been the family's own resistance and resilience that have allowed it to survive." She voiced the need to resist "activists of new ideologies seeking to replace the role and purpose of the family with that of the state."

Mr. Edgardo Martinez Zimarioff, director of the Association of Human Potential Facilitators in Uruguay, said: "The family shapes the future of children. It is there that they learn their first values, principles, and basic notions of life ... Various studies show that we learn 20% when we read, 30% when we listen, 90% when we act. This confirms that the family, as a space of daily practice, becomes the most powerful school for character formation, the acquisition of values, and the emotional development of every human being."

Dr. Amavelia Morales Diaz, a psychotherapist, family mediator with Peru's Ministry of Justice, and founder of the Seeds of Love Program, explained, "When there is an environment of love, respect, and emotional stability, individuals develop greater psychological well-being and stronger social skills. Within the family, we receive unconditional love that allows us to feel safe and permanently cherished."

She pointed out that not all families have the same opportunities or conditions, adding, "Family well-being does not mean the absence of problems; it means having the emotional and relational resources needed to face difficulties in a healthy way. A family that promotes well-being is often characterized by assertive communication, emotional listening, healthy boundaries, mutual support, and respect for individuality."

Ms. Elisenia Sanchez de Pineda, a prominent community leader and member of the Family Federation in Panama, gave the final presentation. She stressed the need to support and bolster families, to ensure that every child receives love and care within the home. "When these experiences are absent or weak, emotional wounds arise that affect child well-being. Today we see profound inequalities that impact millions of children: poverty, lack of access to education, domestic violence, emotional neglect, and the absence of healthy role models. These inequalities are not only economic. Many times, there is an even deeper poverty: relational poverty, when a child has material resources but lacks attention, listening, affection, or moral guidance."

All panelists voiced their appreciation for this opportunity to share their views on a topic that deeply concerns them, and has vital implications for society.