

UPF Upper Austria's Program to Observed International Day of Families

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Linz, Austria—To commemorate the UN International Day of Families, the Upper Austrian chapter of UPF held a discussion on the topic “What Value Does the Family Have?”

Promoting the family as “the school of love” and the foundation for a peaceful society is one of the key focuses in UPF’s global peace efforts. Mag. Maria Pammer of UPF moderated the discussion, which took place on May 15, 2017.

The main speaker, Dr. Gudrun Kugler, a member of parliament from Vienna, made a powerful plea for family-friendly politics and outlined five concrete political questions in reference to the event’s title.

First Dr. Kugler asked whether children under the age of 3 should be put in the care of strangers. According to Dr. Kugler, parents should be supported, whether they leave their children in daycare or take care of their children themselves. She referred to the town of Berndorf by Salzburg, whose government gives financial support to parents who care for their infants at home.

Next she raised the question, is the family worth being supported? Many politicians, motivated by their political ideology, see the family as an instrument of oppression. Dr. Kugler stated that the government should free the family from external pressures, thereby enabling the family to perform better internally. First and foremost, she said, the government should provide tax equality for families and pension allowance for children’s education.

Having earned master’s degrees in both theology and gender studies, in addition to her law education, Dr. Kugler brought an ideological argument into her presentation with three further questions which dealt with current social challenges and political decision processes.

Do I experience the fundamental difference between men and women as good or not?

Is the education of stable relationships valuable, and is it meaningful to be in control for something greater?

Is it a value that we expect something of ourselves and allow ourselves to be used by others for something greater?

Dr. Kugler addressed in particular what she called the ideologically one-sided sexual education in Vienna schools.

Theologian and author Heinrich Krcek began his presentation with a quotation from the book True Family Values, which develops a great synthesis of Judeo-Christian and Confucian family ethics.

He spoke about the Family Pledge, which is the credo of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization. Mr. Krcek emphasized the seventh point in particular, which referred to the realization of a world of the culture of heart and living for the sake of others. The family is the germ cell of society and cornerstone for a peaceful world family, he said.

At the same time Mr. Krcek highlighted the tension between the ideal and failure, which practically every family experiences. He described the historical development of the term “family” and the different models of cohabitation besides the nuclear family. He emphasized how important it is for children’s development that the father and mother are mature in character and how enriching the existence of grandparents is for all family members.

In the family, values are passed on and special occasions are celebrated, he said. Through the experience with parents the image of God is impressed on the children. The family is a place of freedom that cannot be experienced in nurseries or daycare, he said. In the family, the child learns that freedom also has its laws and the child learns to deal with boundaries. What leads people to give up the single life and take on the responsibility of a family? It is the love and communion with a “thou” by which we arrive at the purpose of life.

The final discussion, prompted by Mr. Johann Brunnbauer, the Upper Austria leader of FFWPU, touched upon the role that the religious council of the Upper Austrian government can play in promoting the family.

Other points of discussion mentioned the importance of healing injuries in family relationships and supporting parental education in language use. The participants asked how parental education can be supported and if, for example, it can be integrated into Austria’s Mother-Child (health) Passport. An ideologically broad selection of sources of support, including churches and religious communities, were mentioned.

Mr. Paul Ettl (Peace Academy Linz) raised the topic of an economy for the common good and unconditional basic income as approaches to freeing the family from “outside pressure.” An Upper Austrian councilor present at the event also suggested the establishment of family representatives on the municipal level.

The lively and thought-provoking discussion ended with the call to take the family as a future theme and with the encouragement that every letter and public effort would contribute to the health of the family.



About the speakers

The Vienna parliamentarian and councilor Dr. Gudrun Kugler is married and is the mother of four strong personalities (11, 9, 7, 3) and is a postdoctoral lawyer. She holds a master’s degree in theological studies (marriage and family) and a second master’s degree in gender studies.

She is the Austrian People’s Party representative for Integration, Europe and Human Rights, the Austrian representative of the European citizens’ initiative One of Us, and the initiator of the parliamentarian citizens’ initiative By the Hand.

Furthermore, she is the co-founder of the Youth Academy of the Dr. Karl-Kummer-Institute and led the World Youth Alliance Europe in Brussels from 2001 to 2004.

Mr. Heinrich Krcek, a theologian, author and translator, is married and is the father of two daughters. He translated the book True Family Values into German and is, in the German-speaking area, a lecturer on the themes of peace, relationships and family. A selection of his lectures, talks and sermons has been published under the title How Does One Get to Paradise from Here?