

UPF Rome, Italy Forum Explores Legal and Social Family Issues

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Rome, Italy – "Woe to us if we lose the sense of family!" **Mr. Eugenio Bisceglia**, vice president of the Tivoli Children and Family Chamber, pointed out that families today have changed and are under great societal pressure, yet families remain central to social harmony. He quoted Pope John XXIII, "God has entrusted the family with the task of making the world domestic, so that all may come to feel every human being as a brother."

Mr. Bisceglia was addressing a conference on the theme: "Family as an Instrument of Peace: a Challenge of Our Time," held at Palazzo Valentini, Sala Fregosi, in Rome, on May 24, 2024. To celebrate the International Day of Families, it was organized by UPF-Italy and the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Italy, with the sponsorship and collaboration of Roma Capitale.



The program was moderated by **Mr. Pino Nazio**, a sociologist and journalist for Rai Italia TV.

Monsignor Francesco Ibba, an official of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, a court of the Holy See, explained he often defended the marriage bond because "it is revealed from above." The term bond comes from rural peasant culture, he said; "It is binding, embracing, protecting vines." He likened young people and children to saplings who grow through patience and love.

Mr. Pierluigi Sanna, deputy mayor of Rome, highlighted "the deep bewilderment and great loneliness of people," which is related to the decline of the family. He said the family is the foundation of all institutions.



"Peace," remarked **Ms. Ada Marseglia**, representative of the International Federation of Women Jurists, "eludes us, especially in this time, when it is challenged by the spread of violence and war." For the speaker, "The family represents a fundamental educating community, an active protagonist that promises and witnesses to the values of respect and dignity of the person, an irreplaceable school of peace."



For **Mr. Carlo Zonato**, president of UPF-Italy, the family and family ethics are the common denominators that can harmonize cultures and faiths, and be an instrument of peace. "The family unit," he pointed out, "is the environment where we learn to mature through the four kingdoms of the heart." He said that children develop a sense of respect and filial piety; siblings learn equality and fraternity; husband and wife practice fidelity and mutual dedication; and parents care for the family with unconditional devotion and a great sense of responsibility. Through these levels of heart, he explained, our character grows increasingly altruistic and responsible. Mr. Zonato's presentation included a film highlighting UPF's international activities.

Ms. Marisa Manzini, deputy attorney general of Catanzaro, described the nature of crime families. "The mafia family is, by its very nature, violent," she explained. "The woman takes on an essential role because she raises her children according to the values inherent in the clan, perpetuating the criminal organization. I am convinced that mafia can change if women become more aware that their sons will end up in prison or even be killed."

Dr. Giovanni Galeota, a lawyer and member of the House of Representatives Justice Committee, quoted one of Mother Teresa's most famous phrases: "What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and

love your family." He described the recent metamorphosis of the family institution, from a cohesive nucleus united through marriage, essentially ecclesiastical, to civil unions and same-sex unions. Dr. Galeota spoke of the legal challenge of our times, "represented by the need to adapt the law to these changes that are often also very sudden and different from those of centuries of antecedent history."



According to **Dr. Marina Meucci**, a lawyer and expert in family and children's law, "Juvenile law has been undervalued over the centuries, but it is worth dealing with because children represent our future." She praised the recent reform of Italian family law, but said there are still unresolved issues regarding child custody, which should be addressed.

Ms. Maria Pia Turiello, a forensic criminologist, noted that "The family, which has always been considered a protected territory, a place of solidarity and respect, should represent the social group least assaulted by conflict." But she added that intrafamilial violence exists across ages, genders, socioeconomic conditions and cultures. She said it is crucial that those who decide to establish a family are aware of the commitment and responsibilities it entails.

The president of WFWP-Italy, **Ms. Elisabetta Nistri**, spoke of the "valuable contribution of women in the family and in society," and noted how the educational role of mothers is not appreciated enough. She agreed with Pope Francis that women should not be forced to decide between motherhood and the workplace. For Ms. Nistri, "Motherhood and parenting are not only important for children, but also for parents, because they develop the attitude of paying attention to each other's needs."

Dr. Liana Doro, a lawyer and expert in family law, said that in her more than 20 years of practice, "the priority has always been to put the child and his or her welfare at the center." She recalled a case involving a young couple who, after a long divorce process, had decided on joint custody for their little girl, to which the psychologist agreed. She said this option was used very little in Italy, but could be the most suitable solution for the child.

A writer, Vatican Radio journalist and peace worker, **Mr. Filomeno Lopez** wanted to "share a perspective on African culture where the intergenerational and educational problem is of paramount importance." For Mr. Lopez, "The best way to pay tribute to the family is to make sure that the departure of our elders is not a burning library." He said young people need to listen, watch and learn from their elders, to inherit all their knowledge. In closing he remarked, "If it simply takes two parents to make a child, it takes a village, which is a universe in miniature, to educate it."

Ms. Elisabetta Scala, national vice president and head of the Moige Media Observatory, said, "In recent years, the image of the family and in particular of motherhood has been increasingly negative." People believe that women's emancipation only occurs when women escape motherhood. Her appeal is to "Start talking again in a positive way, not only to society, but especially to our young people, about how investing in motherhood and fatherhood is not giving up, but is growing as people and is also good for society as a whole." A community that has no children, she warned, has no future and no hope, whereas "the more children there are, the more growth there will be."

Mr. Marco Respinti, former director of International Family News, explained that the family is "the place perfectly suited to the human being. It is the place where life is given and welcomed, and it is the place where life becomes conscious, consciousness itself, a person."

During a reception hosted by UPF, three Ambassador for Peace certificates were awarded to the lawyers Dr. Marina Meucci, Dr. Ada Marseglia, and Dr. Angelo Lucarella.