

UPF San Pietro in Casale, Italy discusses The Family: Education and Well-Being

Stefano Stefani
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San Pietro in Casale, Italy -- About thirty people took part in a discussion titled "The Family: Education and Well-Being."

The UPF-organized event took place in the town's Civic Cultural Center on October 5, 2019.

Acting as the moderator, Stefano Stefani, the president of UPF-Bologna, introduced the first speaker, Dr. Julia F. Clancy, a professor of English at the University of Bologna and the founder of the non-profit association Francesca Center, who spoke about her association's activities.

Psychologists, lawyers, judges, jurists assist people who have suffered physical or internal violence, protecting them so that they can recover their dignity, Dr. Clancy said. Every person is a carrier of values, and the family can bring joy as well as suffering. It is important that people feel their dignity, in peace and balance with themselves, she said. The family instills a sense of love and unity that allows one to be accepted and recognized for what one is. For parents, it is necessary to set priorities -- authority, respect, kindness, honesty, responsibility, autonomy -- and it is necessary to live according to these values, which are nourished by example and transmitted through practice.

The second speaker, Dr. Antonella Cioccarriello, who has been working for 15 years in family counseling at the Union of Italian Premarital and Matrimonial Consultants, began by presenting the history of family counseling. She explained that professionals in this field use attentive and participatory listening and an unconditional acceptance of any situation, leading people to open up so that they can be guided toward a "full" life.

Only when we are at peace with ourselves, can we be at peace with others, Dr. Cioccarriello said. In the counseling center people are encouraged to recognize their feelings and emotions, to be able to cope with their problems. There are also a number of professional figures who help the consultant: psychologists, psychiatrists, lawyers, speech therapists, holistic practitioners; this is the strength of the consulting room, she said.

Eighty percent of couples who visit the center due to disharmony do not separate, but for those couples who decide to separate and who have children, the center's family mediator works with them to prevent the children from becoming the instruments of the wife's or husband's anger.

Dr. Silvana Sandri, the third speaker, who works as a primary school teacher, an educational psychologist and a family counselor, spoke about communication.



Only 7 percent of human communication occurs by language, she said. Everything else -- behavior, attitude and tone of voice -- is very important. We therefore must make language harmonize with the way we convey the things we have to say. Communication is a continuous exchange, even when there is no talk. We must establish an effective communication base, without haste, at the right time, in an appropriate environment.

The foundation for good communication is an appropriate environment, Dr. Sandri said. It takes the right time and not a few seconds. Listening is important. It is good to ask questions: "Have you understood correctly? Have I explained myself well? How do you feel?"

The first place of effective communication is the family, but if there are problems, it is necessary to open up to the external community of psychologists, consultants, friends, work colleagues, and spiritual guides. By taking care of our communication, giving the opportunity to improve ourselves to find growth and giving this same possibility to the other, we can build the peace we need.

The fourth and last speaker, Mr. Carlo Zonato, the president of UPF-Italy, gave an introduction to the federation, in particular the passion and determination of the founders to build peace.

The family is the link between the individual and the whole; everyone needs relationships, Mr. Zonato said. For the building of peace, the family must be the central fulcrum of the construction of society. The central values of all people derive from the original parenting of the Creator, who built the universe in duality: masculinity and femininity, and internal nature and external form. This duality is an expression of parenting, he said.

We work together to build networks, he said, which is the purpose of the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP) and the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD), two initiatives recently inaugurated by the UPF.