

## UPF and WFWP Italy's Family An Instrument of Peace - A Challenge of Our Time

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"Family Instrument of Peace: a Challenge of Our Time" was the theme of the conference held at Palazzo Valentini, Sala Fregosi, in Rome, on 24th May, 2024. Organised by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF Italy) and the Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP) Italy, an organisation affiliated with UPF, with the sponsorship and collaboration of Roma Capitale, the administrative body of the city of Rome, the meeting aimed to celebrate International Day of Families 2024.



"The title of the conference is very topical and will offer us a great many points of view." With these

words, Mr. Pino Nazio, RAI journalist, sociologist and moderator, opened the proceedings. He then gave the floor to Mr. Eugenio Bisceglia, vice president of the Tivoli Children and Family Chamber, for institutional greetings. According to Mr. Bisceglia, "there is no longer the family we used to have. There are many kinds of family." But the family is there, he noted, and "woe to us if we lose the sense of family!" He recalled the many ills that afflict the family institution, the importance of the school-family alliance for the education of children, and the words of 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."



Monsignor Francesco Ibba, Official of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, explained that "in this tribunal I defend first of all the marriage bond, which is particular because it is revealed from above." The term bond "comes from rural peasant culture: it is binding, embracing, protecting vines." Of course, it is also prison, he recalled, but the fruitful marital bond eventually loosens the bond of prison and restores freedom. He likened young people and children to saplings who grow through patience and the relationship of love, recalling that the liturgy speaks of the bond of charity, which is the highest word in the ecclesial context.

Mr. Pierluigi Sanna, deputy mayor of the Metropolitan City of Rome, Capital, highlighted "the deep bewilderment and great loneliness of people," which, for the speaker, can be overcome by "increasing knowledge, study and participating in moments like the present one." He went on to explain that when he celebrates civil marriages, in order to raise awareness among the bride and groom who are also citizens, he reminds them that at the foundation of the institutions, about which we often complain, is the family institution. Ending, he hoped that "the family will be placed at the centre of an ever broader and more complex study."

"Peace," remarked Ms. Ada Marseglia, representative of the International Federation of Women Jurists (FIFCJ), "questions 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. A value that can be built through an active, creative and nonviolent philosophy, capable of caring for human relations and the common home that is the world."

For Mr. Carlo Zonato, president of UPF Italy, the family and family ethics are the common denominator that can harmonise cultures and faiths, and be an instrument of peace. "The family unit," he pointed out, "is the environment where we learn to mature affectively through the 'four kingdoms of the heart': children develop a sense of respect and filial piety; equality and fraternity are learnt among siblings; conjugal love is based on fidelity and mutual dedication; and parents learn to live for their 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.

"The mafia family is, by its very nature, violent," explains Ms. Marisa Manzini, Deputy Attorney General of Catanzaro, and "the woman takes on an essential role because she raises her children according to the disvalues inherent in the clan, perpetuating the criminal organisation. I am convinced that the mafias can change if women become more and more aware that their sons will end up in prison or even be killed and that there is more outside their families imprinted with violence." For Ms. Manzini, society, and especially schools, have the task of enabling the youth of these gangs to realise the terrible future that awaits them and the difference between living in a mafia family and a normal one.



Dr. Giovanni Galeota, a lawyer and member of the House of Representatives' Justice Committee, taking the floor quoted one of Mother Teresa of Calcutta's most famous phrases, "What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family." He went on to point out the recent metamorphoses of the family institution: from a cohesive nucleus united in 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 too undervalued over the centuries, but it is worth dealing with because children represent our future." Speaking about the Cartabia Reform, she explained how the right to listen to the child regarding adoption resonates widely in it and makes it mandatory. "I must say that the reform of our family law by Ms. Marta Cartabia (former Italian Minister of Justice) is in essence a great reform, very positive." She pointed out, however, that for those who work within the legal system, there are still unresolved issues regarding child custody, which should be addressed as soon as possible.



Ms. Maria Pia Turiello, 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 intrafamilial violence exists, is daily and crosses ages, genders, socioeconomic conditions and different cultures. For her, it is crucial that those who decide to establish a family are aware of the commitment and responsibilities that this decision entails. Speaking about femicides, she mentioned the alarm bells that are highlighted in these situations from the very beginning and the importance of learning to listen and help, because indifference also leads to these tragedies.



The president of WFWP Italy, Ms. Elisabetta Nistri, spoke of the "valuable contribution of women in the family and in society", a deed which is not always recognised, and noted how the affective and educational role of mothers is not talked about enough. She then remarked that in our society, "the decision to stop and think about pregnancy is a very courageous choice", and as stated by Pope Francis, 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." A maturing and empowering experience that can be carried over into the world of work.



Dr. Liana Doro, a lawyer who is an expert in Family Law, after explaining 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 centre," recalled a case she had followed. It concerned a young couple who, after a long judicial process, had decided on joint custody for their little girl, supported by the positive opinion of the psychologist. Used very little in Italy because psychologists are of a different opinion and because with respect to parental leave the country is still far behind Europe, for the lawyer, "shared joint custody can be the most suitable form for the child in these times and should be considered."

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." Through the ethic of listening, watching and learning before their passing, young people have the opportunity to inherit all their knowledge, to say that they are always there and can be counted on. In closing he remarked that "if it simply takes two parents to make a child, it takes a village, which is a universe in miniature, to educate it."

For Ms. Elisabetta Scala, national vice president and head of the Moige Media Observatory, "in recent years, the image of the family and in particular of motherhood has been increasingly negative." It is believed that women's emancipation "can only happen if women get rid of their '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 warns, 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, explains 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 is accompanied to become a conscious life, consciousness itself, a person." For Mr. Respinti, "the family can only give life as the union of a male human being and a female human being, that is, of a male person and a female person." In conclusion, "this is the most important political delivery: that the family can be allowed to be itself, a crucial resource for the full development of the person and of that associated living consequent to the datum of the nature of persons that we call 'peace.'"

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