



Commemorating the International Day of the Family

ZOOM, Vienna, Austria, May 14, 2020

By Elisabeth Cook

On Thursday, May 14th, 2020 UPF Austria in cooperation with UPF Germany and the Family Federation organized a Zoom Online Conference commemorating the International Day of the Family, an official day of the United Nations.

Mr. Peter Haider, president of UPF Austria, explained in his opening statement the background of this UN Day: In 1993, International Family Day was adopted by the UN General Assembly through document RES/47/237 and celebrated for the first time on 15 May 1994. Since 1996 there has been a different motto every year, determined by the UN Secretary-General and the Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD). The respective motto always relates to current issues and events and represents a different facet of family life.

The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic brings into sharp focus the importance of investing in social policies protecting the most vulnerable individuals and families. It is the families who bear the brunt of the crisis, sheltering their members from harm, caring for out-of-school children and, at the same time, continuing their work responsibilities. Families have become the hub of intergenerational interactions that support us in this crisis. Under economic duress poverty deepens. In times of uncertainty stress increases - often resulting in growing violence against women and children. That is why the support for vulnerable families - those who have lost their income, those in inadequate housing, those with young children, older persons and persons with disabilities - is imperative now more than ever. See also:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-families>

Mag. Wolfgang Engelmaier, Kolping International, explained the work that is done within the Vienna Family Committee at the United Nations, which he is chairing. In 1985 this NGO committee was founded. By now its membership consists of 60 NGOs which operate internationally and 40 NGOs on the national level. A big portion of the committee's work is done online by providing information about the family. A quarterly journal is being published, and once a year an international forum takes place with guest speakers. Another focal point is the information the committee provides for parents about the dangers of the internet for children.

Dr. Dieter Schmidt, president of the Family Federation for World Peace in Germany, explained that just as the Corona virus can penetrate the walls of the cells and infect them, the family unit is

endangered by destructive ideas and behaviour of our society. As a medical doctor he can verify that a healthy family is the best precondition for physical health as well. The family is the most decisive factor in shaping the life of the children. The importance of the family is still not recognized enough in today's society. We can say with certainty that the family is the only institution which has been founded by God, our creator. His will is fulfilled once the family can settle down and live in peace. The most important aspect in creating peace is love which manifests itself in loving relationships within the family and within society.

If the family relationships don't reflect God's love, the family can be the birthplace of neuroses. Therefore it is essential to build successful families. Harmonious families are also the building blocks for a well-functioning society and a peaceful world. Also the United Nations goal of world peace can only be achieved by strengthening the families. Bi-national families play a special role in contributing to world peace, as they connect two nations by loving family ties. The recent Corona crisis is another example of how families can manage difficult societal situations.

Hedwig Freifrau von Beverförde, founder of the Family Protection Initiative and an organizer of the "Demo für Alle" rallies in Germany. "The Corona crisis brings to light what many politicians in particular have forgotten: Without the family our social system would collapse like a house of cards. The family is the most important factor in the system." This is one of Mrs. Beverförde's statements concerning the Corona crisis. She is the Chairwoman of the initiative "Family First". In June they wanted to have a big demonstration in favour of the families. In her speech she explained 5 points which they were going to present to the government. These points are:

1. They want to cause a change of policies concerning the family: Parents should be able to decide if they want to put their small children into a day care institution or if they want to care for them in their own homes. Politics should provide this possibility by an equal financial support.
2. Concerning children's rights: Parents are responsible for the caretaking of their children. Therefore the parents' rights need to be strengthened. "Children's Rights" means practically that the state makes the decisions.
 1. Parents should have a say in the sexual education of the children, which happens at school. Home schooling should become legal in Germany.
 2. The parents' educational and caretaking work should be honoured by the state. The consumption taxes discriminate the families financially.

3. She is against a re-defining the family. The family should mean “Father-Mother-Children”. Her initiative does not accept “Marriage for all”
4. The legislation should adjust its decisions to the well-being of the family. The ideological indoctrination of the children at school should be stopped.

People can sign an online petition: www.familie-geht-vor.com

Mag. Harald Janisch, sports scientist, life and social consultant and Chairman of the Section for Personal Counselling of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Commerce, explained in his statement: The Austrian government has created the job of the “life-and social consultant”, because they realized that positive psychology and sport science can support the mental and physical health of the people. It became a health care institution with special permission to provide psychological help as well. This institution exists in Austria since 30 years. 15 000 persons are working in this field. Apart from the life-and social consulting, so-called care workers are supporting people, substituting many times the missing family members or looking after aged people living at home. We speak about 100 000 care workers being active in Austria. Many of them come from Eastern European countries.

From his work experience Mr. Janisch can see that the best solution is always the strengthening of the original family of father, mother and children. But whatever state a family is in, his organisation strives to provide support in order to improve the situation of a

particular family. They work according to plan “A” – the original family is being strengthened. Plan “B”: A new partner replaces the original partner. Plan “C”: trying to stabilize whatever is possible. By studying all possible sources and by observing the reality, we can state that if the quality of the family diminishes, it becomes the source of all kinds of social problems.

Dr. Anneliese Fuchs wrote the book “Can the family still be saved?” Mr. Janisch’s answer is “Yes”, but we have to deal with its problems and make efforts to solve them. He recently started the initiative www.sos-corona.org, a platform of the Austrian Chamber of Commerce in order to assist people in these days of a pandemic.

After the presentations there was time for discussion. Mr. Christian Hausmann, UPF president of Germany, stated that we must have the will to change reality. In order to do that, we need a clear vision of a well-functioning family. Although the Corona crisis didn’t allow us to have a conference in the usual way, the organisers, the speakers and the participants appreciated this Zoom online conference, specially as it proved to be a fruitful cooperation between the Austrian and the German chapter of UPF.

<https://vimeo.com/user72289245>