

UPF Prague, Czech Republic: Family and the Media - Why We Need the Family

Juraj Lajda
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Prague, Czech Republic -- UPF held a conference examining "Family and the Media" and "Why We Need the Family."

The Czech UPF chapter organizes a special event every year on the occasion of International Day of Families. On May 30, 2019, together with the Civic Institute, UPF convened a half-day conference in the CEVRO Institute, a private university.

In the first panel, "Family and the Media," two well-known journalists described how the family and family values are depicted in the media.

Jan Gregor, the vice president of the Alliance for the Family and a media expert, offered a detailed analysis of how the mainstream media have described the family and family values during the last several years, based on about 20 of the most important printed, electronic and private media.

According to the research, the majority of articles on the family in the mainstream media are negative (about 60 percent); the rest are positive or neutral. The media often present the traditional family as a social issue. Statistically this is not true. In reality, traditional families are wealthier, more stable and better educated. This negative media picture destroys the ideal of a harmonized family and leads to doubts about marriage and redefinition of the family, the speaker concluded.

Matyáš Zrno, editor in chief of Conservative Newspapers and also the Psychology Today monthly, spoke from his experience. He said that journalists usually stand politically apart from the majority of people. As an example, he said that in Germany 40 percent of journalists are for the Green Party, even though the reality among the population is around 20 percent. Concerning the family in the conservative media, he said that it is more important to write about the family positively -- large families, etc. -- than to focus on and criticize the negative aspects of the family.

The second panel, "Why We Need the Family," was opened by Dr. Juraj Lajda, the president of the Czech chapter of UPF. He introduced the family as the primary social environment for human beings. The problems of the family influence society, he said. All world religions support and honor the family and family values, he added.

He introduced the vertical and horizontal structure of the family, as far as the relationships are concerned, and compared the family structure with the structure and order of the universe. The family's external structure needs internal content, which is the love that we can experience in the family.

The four great realms of love and heart are the core, and each family should develop them, Dr. Lajda said. We need a new view of the family. In order to build up good families and prevent undesired results, we need to start in the home. Next the educational system should support the strengthening of healthy families, and the social policy of the state should create a good environment for families. Finally the culture, the arts and the media can contribute to establishing good families.

The next speaker, Dr. Roman Joch, the director of the Civic Institute and a political scientist, said that the family has become a political question. Only a few years ago, nobody in the United States would have considered the family to be anything other than a man and a woman.

According to Dr. Joch, democracy has three ideals: freedom, equality and authority. The best unit that corresponds to this political system is the family, because it demonstrates freedom (a man and a woman marry out of free will), equality (the husband and wife are equal to each other) and authority (children are equal among themselves but are expected to respect the parents' authority).



A family that functions well is independent of the state and is the best prevention against dictatorship and totalitarianism, Dr. Joch said. Family breakdown strengthens the role of the state, because then people become more dependent on the state. That's why the state should give the family more autonomy, Dr. Joch concluded.

The last speaker was H.E. Nina Nováková, a former member of parliament and chair of the Central European Inspiration. To love somebody unconditionally is very difficult, she said. Only the saints were able to love their enemies, but in the family it is possible, she said. In the family we love each other, even though somebody is ugly. The education of children is the right of the parents. Parents very often give up on the education of their own children and surrender this role to the state. School should teach the ideals. Today's battle for the family is the battle between good and evil, Mrs. Nováková said in conclusion.

In the discussion that followed, many questions were raised concerning family policy and trends that endanger the family. Among the people in the audience were academicians, religious representatives and the general public.

