

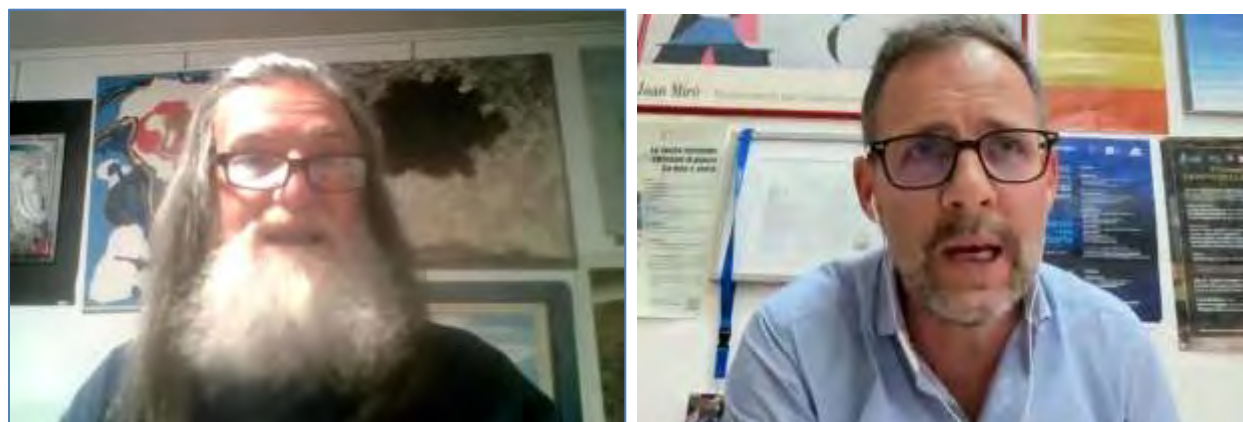
## UPF and IMAP Italy: Italian Webinar Examines Digital Media Impacts on the Family

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**Rome, Italy** – To mark both the International Day of Families and World Press Freedom Day, UPF-Italy joined the International Media Association for Peace (IMAP Italy) in organizing a webinar on May 15, 2025, on the theme "Mass Media and Family: Between Consumption and Representation."

The webinar examined the profound changes that the daily consumption of mass media has brought to the family. The panel was made up of **Mr. Vittorio Patanella**, coordinator of IMAP Italy; **Ms. Maria Pia Rossignaud**, director of Media Duemila and vice president of the TuttiMedia Observatory; **Mr. Marco Respinti**, journalist, essayist, lecturer, and editor-in-chief of Bitter Winter; **Mr. Marco Lombardi**, director of the School of Journalism at the Catholic University of Milan; **Prof. Luciano Sesta**, professor of moral philosophy at the University of Palermo; and **Mr. Carlo Zonato**, president of UPF-Italy.



After welcoming remarks by **Mr. Patanella**, who explained the aims of the host organizations, Mrs. Rossignaud introduced the first speaker, Mr. Marco Respinti. The journalist began by highlighting how, since the 1960s, the family has become a controversial topic and even a "target" as a result of significant social and legislative changes.

According to **Mr. Respinti**, the media has contributed to portraying the family as "an environment of backwardness and oppression," and "a dangerous place where heinous crimes are committed." Mr. Respinti observed that the family, traditionally considered a protected place for personal development, is instead often described as a kind of "prison." He then pointed out that the media is merely an instrument and that attention should focus on the subjects and the objects of communication, stating that "the decline of standards in the use of means of communication reflects the deeper crisis of humanity, which has lost its sense of truth and responsibility."

**Mr. Marco Lombardi** spoke about the growing influence of digital media, highlighting its "pervasiveness, impact, and ability to change our daily lives, now in a far greater way than that of traditional analog media." He presented data on the structural changes of Italian families: an increase in the number of households, a decrease in the number of members per family, a rise in single parenthood and single parent families, while extended families remain residual.

Advertising, in this context, has both reflected and, in a sense, legitimized these new forms of family. Mr. Lombardi stressed how "the introduction of digital technologies has changed family dynamics, creating a divide between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants.'" In conclusion, he emphasized the fundamental importance of media literacy, which families must acquire, and the responsibility of communicators to provide accurate information.

According to **Prof. Luciano Sesta**, digital media should not be considered merely as a tool but as an immersive environment that is changing the human being at an anthropological level. The success of the digital dimension, he noted, "lies in its ability to respond to deep human needs, such as the passion for the 'elsewhere' and the search for a better world, a role once fulfilled by religion."



Digital immersion, with phenomena such as the fear of missing out on what happens online, can lead to the perception of virtual experience being more "real" than physical life. "Today, people doubt whether they have truly had an experience if they have not shared it on social media," the speaker elaborated. In conclusion, Prof. Sesta pointed out that the search for online visibility is linked to the human desire to be recognized, adding that "the impact of virtual experience on the sphere of sexual intimacy, as in pornography, can replace or reshape real-life intimacy."

During the debate, the phenomenon of "traditional wives" on TikTok was addressed – wives who believe in and practice traditional gender roles in their marriages. This was interpreted as an "identity claim" in reaction to the widespread experimentation with non-traditional lifestyles promoted in the "digital ecosystem," and as an example of the polarization on the internet, accentuated by algorithms for economic purposes.

The speakers also emphasized that the internet and artificial intelligence are responding to human needs that were once met by religion. A purely physical reality now appears limited. The growing fascination with the digital world – the "religion" of likes and continuously expanding connections – is gradually replacing traditional religion.

In closing, Mr. Zonato, Mr. Patanella, and the other participants expressed their interest in organizing further meetings to better understand the complexity of the digital world, noting that greater media competence could bring significant benefits to families and communities.