

UPF Office of the Family Attends World Congress of Families XIV in Mexico City

Lynn Walsh
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Mexico City, Mexico -- The World Congress of Families XIV (WCFXIV) was held in Mexico City, Mexico from September 30 to October 2, 2022. The WCF is an international, interreligious and intercultural conference for celebrating, promoting and defending the family, organized by the International Organization for the Family (IOF). Representing UPFI, Lynn Walsh attended, renewing old relationships with presenters and participants, building new ones, and absorbing a wealth of information related to strengthening the family.

Over 80 speakers coming from all over the world presented during the three-day conference. **Brian Brown**, president of IOF, announced that the in-person attendance was 8,377 with another 2,392 virtual attendees. This was a big record breaker. With so many excellent speakers during plenary and breakout sessions, it is impossible in this report to cover all the presentations. The following are only a few examples of content from the three days.



Manuel Campero, president of the Family Network Council, opened with a message of humility, saying, "It is we adults who, with our poor example, infect young people with fear and discouragement to take the risk of living in love. It is urgent to give them reasons to believe and to hope." **Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes** read a message to WCF from Pope Francis who asked that attention and affection be given especially to families who had to flee their homes, who are homeless, without employment, or for many reasons are suffering due to widespread crises in the world. Cardinal Retes then addressed the need for economic incentives to encourage new and more marriages as well as to increase the number of children

in families through government and business policies, generous financial incentives, childcare provisions, and housing allotment.

Dr. Christopher West, president of the Theology of the Body Institute, gave a dynamic presentation exposing how the sexualized culture destroys our fundamental well-being. Based on Pope John Paul II's writings, West described today's crisis of love due to being unaligned with God and God's purpose for our bodies. Separated from our divine identity, our desires and physical urges are channeled into unfulfilling and even abusive acts against our self and others. West said we are seen as sexual objects and not truly "seen" by anyone. This rampant and insidious sexualizing culture sucks all spirit and security out of us. With his contagious enthusiasm, West directed us to God's exquisite "better than we can imagine" purpose of our bodies in Heavenly Eros. He affirmed the tangible possibility of attaining deep love and fulfillment in our communion with God and spiritual, emotional, sexual oneness with our spouse.

Elder Wilford W. Andersen, general authority seventy emeritus, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, began his talk by quoting the UN General Assembly: "The family provides the primary source for personal identity, self-esteem and support for children." He said that the total of a "nation's values and strengths are the values and strengths created in the family" and therefore the family must be protected as the key source for a countries' flourishing. As we learn from our loving family about our ancestral roots, we grasp more deeply our value and who we are. Governments and schools make effort to teach proper conduct by rules, rewards and punishments which can be fine. However, Andersen pointed out that only a loving family can teach children a penetrating sense of identity, honor, social obligations and integrity because in the family children learn with their heart and conscience. He reminded us that families know they are not perfect, but a loving family never gives up. With that humility, parents seek self-improvement for the sake of each family member. In closing, Anderson referred to Michael Novak's observation that nations can survive the desolation of wars and calamities but can never endure without mothers and fathers. Top of Form



Dr. Cecilia Blanchet Pezet spoke on how families' communication and time together has been destroyed by technology. She stressed that parents need to be vigilant to manage technology wisely in order to keep ongoing connection and interaction with their family members. **Christoph Machard**, president of the French Riviera Institute, addressed the rising attack on religious and political freedom around the world. He spoke of the alarming violence against Christians, stating, "Every five minutes a Christian is killed; this must stop." **Tarek Shaban** spoke of Islam's fight against all forms of extremism and addressed Islam's strong and consistent support of the family, saying, "Islam preserves the family; it does not want it to fragment."

Nicky and Sila Lee, creators of the very successful marriage enrichment program, The Marriage Course, spoke of the trials and challenges that all marriages bear. Learning through their program how to be open to conflict as an opportunity for deeper understanding has resulted in thousands of couples around the world having more vibrant and happier relationships.

One striking element of the atmosphere during WCFXIV was not only the number of young families with their children and babies but also over a thousand young adults in attendance. The presence of so many young people enthusiastically taking in all of the presentations and the occasional chortle or babble of babies was very encouraging. Clearly, the next generation can have healthier and happier marriages and families than ever, and our culture and nations can protect, promote and celebrate the family as the fundamental source of societal and human flourishing that it is. There is much reason to believe this and to work towards it.