

## UPF France's forum The Role of the Family in Education in Paris

Jacques Marion  
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Paris, France—"The Role of the Family in Education" was the theme of a forum attended by around 60 Ambassadors for Peace and guests.

The program, held on December 3, 2016, at the Catholic center Accueil Barouillère in Paris, was the concluding UPF-France forum of the year.

UPF's partners in hosting the event were the French chapter of Women's Federation for World Peace, an affiliated organization; the Association of Solidarity for Integration through Language, Education and Culture (ASILEC); the Circle of Reflection of Nations; the Forum of International Solidarity Organizations Issued from Migrations (FORIM); and the group Family and Values, located in the town of Orsay-Les Ulis.

The main speaker was Father Yannick Bonnet, a Catholic priest who is well-known for his book *The Nine Fundamentals of Education*. This book sheds profound light on adolescent education and the educational role of the family.

Father Bonnet speaks on the basis of a remarkable life experience. A graduate from Ecole Polytechnique, the highest scientific school in France, he started a professional career in the chemical industry, served ten years as director of the renowned Higher School of Chemistry of Lyon, became involved in politics and finally developed his own human resources consultancy firm. After raising seven children with his wife, who died of cancer in 1995, he decided to become a priest. Since then he has written several books and engaged many audiences based on his rich life experiences and keen insights into the realm of education.

Father Bonnet began his talk at the UPF forum by reflecting on the historical factors that, in his view, have been leading to the spiritual, moral and cultural crises in French society today. Pointing to the "sexual revolution" and the rise of leftism in the 1960s, he described developments in the education philosophy and methodology that gradually took place in France after World War II. These developments, in his view, weakened the spiritual dimension and lowered the educational standards of the school system.

Often referring to his own life experience, Father Bonnet insisted on the different natures and the complementary roles of paternal and maternal authority for a child's growth—contrary to today's tendency to make them equivalent. He emphasized the importance of labor as a component of education and as a provider of life's meaning. "We should give children a clear and rational—instead of emotional—vision of the future to stimulate their sense of responsibility," he said.

Concluding on a spiritual note, he recalled his encounter with the French Roman Catholic mystic Marthe Robin, who helped guide him on his path. He reminded the audience that an essential part of education should be to search for truth and to grapple with compelling questions such as God's existence and the origin of evil.



After brief comments from the three co-sponsors—Hanna Lotterie from Family and Values, Mohamed Haouat from ASILEC, and Michel Thao Chan from the Circle of Reflection of Nations—participants responded to Father Bonnet's presentation.

UPF-France President Jacques Marion then gave a presentation on UPF-sponsored educational programs on character and family education. He also reported on current UPF initiatives, such as the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace, which was inaugurated on the European level in London in September 2016.

He concluded by announcing the recently selected laureates of the 2017 Sunhak Peace Prize: Dr. Gino Strada, an Italian medical doctor and founder of the international humanitarian organization Emergency, which has served more than 6 million people in the Middle East and Africa at over 60 medical emergency centers; and Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, an Afghan educator who has developed educational programs in Afghan refugee camps, focusing particularly on education for girls and women.

