

UPF Warwick, Rhode Island's National Parents' Day Celebration of the Family

Maria Vargas

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Warwick, Rhode Island -- In observance of National Parents' Day (celebrated nationally on the fourth Sunday in July), UPF-USA held a program titled "Celebration of the Family" on July 6 at the Fairfield Inn. Mr. Peter Giossi was the key organizer and spirited emcee who warmed the audience with lively songs and guitar.

Ms. Maria Vargas, executive director of the Northeast region of UPF-USA, spoke about the universal value of marriage and the family. She stated, "The family -- marriage and parenthood -- is regarded as sacred by the world's religions." Ms. Vargas clarified that sexual abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage promotes the most secure base for adult fulfillment, conjugal love, creation of new life, and raising children. When the family breaks down, she pointed out, we witness multiple social problems such as alienation, mental illness, drug abuse, crime and suicide. Ms. Vargas encouraged us by describing UPF's worldwide interfaith activities and educational programs, which have multiplied into a successful global family movement for peace. With profound conviction and passion, she assured us that God is working through this interreligious effort to build a family-centered culture of faith and peace around the world. Her message was met with loud enthusiasm from the packed room.

Lynn Walsh, director of UPF-International's Office of the Family, quoted Article 16 of the UN Declaration on Human Rights: "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state." She asked if the family had a role in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and then presented multiple graphs showing research indicating that, regardless of race or educational levels, marriage has a direct impact on family stability. This in turn reduces the incidence of poverty, emotional problems, physical and sexual abuse of children and women, and stimulates emotional, social, and spiritual development.

Mrs. Walsh referred to the hormonal, morphological, neurological, and psychological differences in men and women that explain why mothers and fathers provide different, complementary, and invaluable contributions to their children's development. Mrs. Walsh mentioned some of the attitudes and challenges in today's sexualized culture that are discordant with successful family formation and marriage. She ended by suggesting ways that young people can develop habits of integrity, which, when practiced in marriage, ensure the happiness, stability, and love that everyone deserves.



Reverend Bismark of the American Clergy Leadership Conference (ACLC) was asked to briefly introduce his organization, founded by Reverend and Mrs. Moon. He gave a detailed description of the mission and activities in bringing together faith leaders in the United States to create new levels of understanding and peace. In his slide show, Reverend Bismark included much of the international achievements of UPF-International, as many ACLC clergy are enthusiastic participants and contributors.

Finally, the National Parents' Day Award was presented to the Aline Binyngu, Clement Shabani, and their six children. This amazing couple arrived in the United States from the Democratic Republic of Congo after a long and perilous journey, fleeing destitute situations and horrifying experiences. Once in Rhode Island with almost nothing, they worked very hard to build their capacities and gain education. Thereafter they quickly turned around to sacrifice and serve other needy immigrant families by creating the organization Women's Refuge Care. There was a joyful sense of communal pride as we publically recognized this family's uncommon strength in overcoming challenges followed by their dedication to serving others. The audience cheered on these dedicated parents as role models for everyone.