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The Family Presented as Antidote to Economic Crisis

Meeting at Italian Parliament Considers Prospects for Development

By Salvatore Cernuzio

ROME, JAN. 19, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- A rabbi who spoke of the family, an economist who spoke of morality, a priest who spoke of conjugal love.

All this took place during the meeting "The Family as an Engine of Economic Growth: Values and Prospects," which took place Tuesday afternoon in the Regina Room of the lower house of the Italian Parliament, the Chamber of Deputies.

The meeting, organized by AISES, the International Academy for Economic and Social Development, examined what is one of the most debated topics in this new year: the family. The symposium was introduced by Maurizio Lupi, vice president of the Chamber of Deputies, who described the family as the "first social shock absorber of the economic crisis."

"The family must become not an element but the element of economic development, and on this we have found more agreement than opposition," said Lupi. This is reflected in the recent government budget package that for the first time includes an increase in exemptions for families.

"Judaism and Christianity are the only two religions that put the person, the family and children at the center," said the director of ZENIT, Antonio Gaspari, moderator of the symposium, before introducing Valerio De Luca, president of AISES.

"A united family leads to a more cohesive and supportive society and the economy and politics must protect this fundamental cell," De Luca said.

"In face of the crisis that breaks up the family, what role do we entrust to the man/woman, parents/children relationship," wondered the president of AISES, adding that "children, who are the real hope for the future, are now seen only as a threat and limitation of the present. This leads persons to favor abortion, sterilization, in vitro fertilization and all those other techniques that render him an experiment of himself and impoverish life."

"[O]penness to life is the principal way for the development of a more human and cohesive society," concluded De Luca.

Edith Arbib Anav, the AISES director of interreligious dialogue, referred to an "individualism" which has made us entrust to others the services that before were useful for the family and the needs of the community, limiting us to a "cold coordination that leads to a not very lasting economic development."

Failure

Riccardo Di Segni, chief rabbi of the Jewish community of Rome, described the family as a "failed institution," given what is presented in the first pages of the Bible.

"It is a paradox, but right from the Book of Genesis we are shown negative family situations: Cain and Abel, Joseph sold by his brothers; Esau and Jacob, and so on. This shows, however, that the family is the place of life, where mistakes are made, there are errors on the part of parents, but without it one cannot live," he said.

He continued on, addressing the current family crisis, which according to Di Segni, in reality is nothing other than "transformation" of a "system that from the start was based on the family" to another "modern" system according to which "the patriarchal family has become the mononuclear family; the rate of feminine fertility has been reduced to 1.3%; women give birth after 30 years of age and there are no longer marriages, but in the best of cases cohabitation."

A crisis of the family that has led to an economic crisis, hence, it is an economic crisis that "has put the couple and conjugal love itself under pressure," observed Monsignor Lorenzo Leuzzi, chaplain of the Chamber of Deputies.

"Economic law has taken the upper hand over the whole of the life of society and has become its 'soul,' neglecting its identity of 'body,' of something, that is, instrumental."

"If they wish to give back to the economy its true role, if they wish to overcome the idea that society does not grow just by producing more, we must recover conjugal love, the first community where people learn not only to produce, but to build," said Monsignor Leuzzi in conclusion to the conference.

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