

The family of today between uncertainty and expectancy

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The two days of the Forum on the Family opened the reflection on the path of the synod by engaging the “grass-roots”. Numerous families took part in the two days of reflection facilitated by a helpful babysitting service

On April 4-5 2014, the Department of Moral Theology of the Pontifical Gregorian University organized the Forum, which took its direction from its title *Listening to the Family – Uncertainty and Expectancy*. This involved listening to real experiences of marital and family life, in order to initiate reflection at the “grass-roots” level and so to provide the means for theoretical and inter-disciplinary reflection, which will be continued in successive events and projects. In fact, it is deemed necessary for the ordinary faithful to also have a voice in the academic world and not just in the everyday realm of the pastoral.

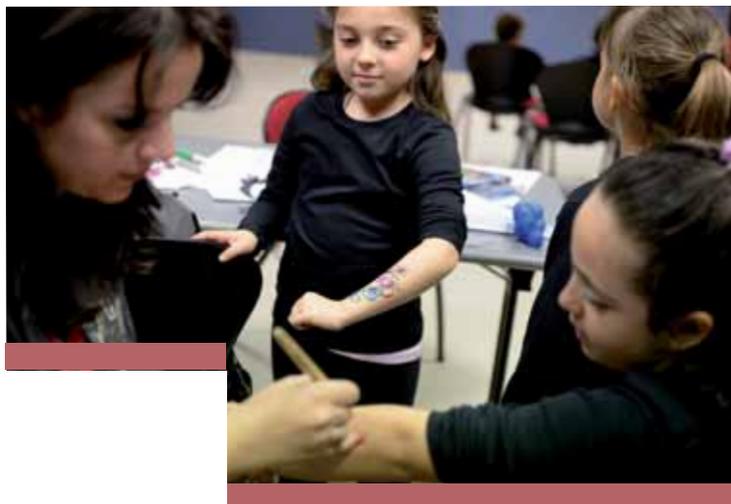
The Second Vatican Council recognizes the *supernaturalis sensu fidei* (LG 12) without which the reflection of moral theology runs the risk of being mere theorizing (cp. EG 119; EG 133). Under the Chairmanship of H.E. Rev. Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, General Secretary of the Episcopal Synod, the Forum on the Family was opened with the greetings from the *Rector Magnificus* and Cardinal Baldisseri’s inaugural discourse.



The family, seen from the outside and the inside

On the first day, Professor Ivo Stefano Germano opened the activities by presenting a report on familial relationships in the present day, underlining as a central theme that we must be fully aware of the structural and cultural transformations of the institution of the family.

In order to express the extreme complexity of relationships within the family clearly, Dr. Palladino chose to use an analogy starting out from an explanation of Heisenberg’s indeterminacy principle, which derives from quantum mechanics, and its consequences.



A few images from the forum "Listening to the Family". Different aged couples participated, sharing their experiences. A babysitting service was provided inside the University. The choir «CinqueCinquanta+» performed at the end of the activities.

Photo by BARBARA ANDOLFI

The analogy's value lies in the fact that it can be argued that relationships within the family are like those among the elements within an atomic particle in which, *each person observes and participates in the existence and life of the other family members, and so provides the orientation for the others*, through the complex and indissoluble ties that operate more or less explicitly throughout a person's whole life and even beyond.

At the end of this first day, Professor Salonia discussed the idea of "co-parenting" with respect to the formative function of the family, showing how one is a parent in so far as one is able to be a "co-parent" to a child, i.e. if one is able to be "parents-with" the other. One must always start out from love for one's children in order to develop this co-parenting mentality and for it to

grow into a proper sense of humanity. Extensive debate and group work brought a close to the first day and prepared the over 190 participants for the listening stage of the second day of the conference.

The problems of undeveloped love

The second day opened with a preliminary report on marital love, presented by Maria Cruciani, a married, lay theologian. She related expertly past experiences and theoretical considerations, to trace marital sentiments back to the realm of virtue, reinterpreted in the sphere of relational anthropology. However, such a positive presentation of the beauty and potential of marital love inevitably had to be compared with the problems faced by those who are unable to fully develop these qualities. A family therapist with vast experience in the field, Giorgio Bartolomei, was asked to elaborate on



this aspect, which he did by illustrating the difficulties surrounding the figure of the father in contemporary culture, where the role of the father seems to be undergoing a kind of “evaporation”. Don Sergio Nicolli’s address, with his experience in the field of family spirituality, was a meeting point between the two reports.

Each of the three reports was concluded with an account by one of the married couples among those participating in the Forum. With these they described their experiences of married life and parenthood in stories abounding in emotion that served as starting points for further reflection. At the end of the activities, the «CinqueCinquanta+» family choir (parents, children and grandparents) performed a representation of family life, in which everyone “sings” about their everyday life in their own tonality to produce a harmony of voices. ▶