
EU FAMILY VALUES AWARD 2016

Dear President Kearon, Madam Kearon, Madam Zaborska, Mr Peterle, Distinguished guests,

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the **Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints** for its tangible engagement in defence of Family and its values. I would also like to thank the Church for this award that I receive with my colleague Madam Zaborska, and yet I do not deserve, as her tireless work in the Parliament has been much more important than mine in these past years!

An undeserved award - I say this again, without false modesty - as I consider that defending and promoting Family Values, whichever our role in society, should be "normal", almost "obvious"; something each person does for the simple reason each person is, as each person has had the concrete experience of the family in which he or she is born and that he or she has - in turn - built.

Even if different life experiences give it different nuances, that of Family is a *natural* experience we all share, equally. It is part of us, and as simple as that, no one can deny the fundamental role of Family - and of a Good Family! - in building a person, his or her character.

On top of that, for those who, like myself and many of the honourable colleagues that are here tonight, have received the gift of Faith, Family is something more: it is a gift of God.

In creating man and woman, God instituted the human family and endowed it with its fundamental constitution.

It has already been said: Family is a privileged community; it is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life.

It is within the Family that the foundation of our being are laid, it is a fundamental "gym of life", an irreplaceable reference point, an emotional and physical place to learn, since the earliest childhood years, love: between parents, between them and children, and the love of God; but also the sense of sacrifice, commitment, moral values, the respect of the Other, responsibility toward children and elders, the good use of one's own freedom... experiences that lead to the full and peaceful development of the person.

It is, therefore, fundamental that we are fully aware, both at national and European level, of the key role of Family and that we set up policies in support and promotion of Family.

Unfortunately, never as much as in the latest years, particularly in those Institutions legislating on the European level, not only we witness a lack of attention towards Family as I described it, a model that is still the primary model for the vast majority of citizens, but we witness an increasing attention towards a relativist thought which, in effect, proposes to de-structure/weaken this model of Family, by classifying it as - in an almost derogatory manner - "traditional", if not outright "outdated".

This notwithstanding, the President of Italian Bishops' Conference, Angelo Bagnasco, now also President of the CCEE (Council of European Bishops' Conferences), wisely said: "Family is an anthropological fact, not an ideological fact!"

My engagement in the European Parliament, together with my colleague Madam Zaborska, is thus to try and consistently bear testimony to this simple and fundamental truth, through the means that are our own - resolutions, amendments, questions - in an attempt to hold against this moral, cultural and legal counter-tide.

It certainly isn't an easy duty, and therein lies the importance of attaining "critical mass" with those who - albeit coming from different experiences and sensitivities - share these same values.

In conclusion, I wish to dedicate this important award to my wife Bertilla, model spouse and mother, stalwart of the happy Family that I couldn't have built if not through Her, and with the help of God. She is unfortunately not able to join us tonight, although she would have wanted to... precisely for family engagements!