
The family: The best thing that has ever been invented!

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The International Day of the Family is held every May 15th and everything is allowed in this space/refuge, even to dream.

A simple glimpse into our lives, memories, what we have done or achieved, always leads us to the family; essential core that generally, guides, supports, boasts aspirations and the aims of those who make it up.

Little could be achieved without its support, so maybe it's acknowledged that behind a successful outcome—in whatever sphere or sector of life—there are almost always husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, siblings and even children. Often, the latter, aware of the important work their parents do, take over daily responsibilities at home, among others.

The family is something unique, unequalled. It's true that it cannot be chosen, and it is a real "fortune" when such an institution fulfills the aforementioned attributes. If it is not so, then it's hard to figure out that victories can come true or be possible.

Having it—in all what that implies—is to have support (economic and spiritual), relief on many occasions, refuge of love and affection. Counting on it is just to have and enjoy a home.

Family, education and wellbeing

I approach this issue on the occasion of this May 15, when the world—since 1994—celebrates the World Family Day. The date was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1993, taking into account the importance granted by the international community.

This year's commemoration highlights the performance of families and the policies directed at them in the promotion of the education and wellbeing of all their members, particularly, early childhood education and continuous education for children and youngsters.

It also remarks the importance of family members devoted to the care of others, either parents, grandparents or siblings.

Moreover, it aims to highlight good practices in family and work life; to assist parents in their role as educators and caregivers, and to support working mothers

and fathers.

The celebration seeks to foster debate on the importance of theoretical and practical knowledge needed to promote sustainable development, among other things, through education and the adoption of sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, and promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and assessment of cultural diversity.

“Attached” to the “family”

After searching the internet about the subject I found some criteria from PhD in Psychological Sciences Patricia Arés that I would like to share with you on a date like today.

Devoted throughout several decades to investigate on this issue, the professor commented in the article “A look at Cuba’s model of wellbeing” that the Cuban family is interwoven in social networks of interchange with neighbours, organizations, schools and relatives, including emigrants.

“The characteristic thing of the way of life of Cubans are the socialization spaces or the social network that neither excludes nor unnames anybody”.

According to the expert that “social networking” represents one of the major and invisible strengths of the Cuban model of wellbeing. It’s here where the main achievement of our social process lies, taking the forms of solidarity, social containment and permanent social interchange. “That capital is only perceptible to those who lose it and begin to live another lifestyle outside the country”.

She acknowledged that although we have economic difficulties and unresolved problems, Cuban families exist and begin to live intensively after their children, teenagers and young people return from school.

Here, family life —the expert commented— does not take place behind closed doors, because they are frequently knocked at by fumigation agents, neighbours, family nurses, grassroots leaders, or self-employed vendors. People need to leave home daily, to go to the store, visit their neighbours to pick some food items, take out the garbage, go to the pharmacy and fetch the kids from school.

So she assured that family life in Cuba is multigenerational, where all ages interact, and most senior people do not live in old people’s homes, but in their own community.

Contrary to that situation, Patricia commented —from her experience as a professor— that many realities from other Latin American nations have left her “puzzled”, because of the burden of accumulated social problems, not just in poor families, but of any social class.

“From what I hear I realize that we are light years apart, because the issue is not about economy, but about ignorance, accumulated mental poverty, social stigmas, class, gender and race prejudices, violence against women, magic solutions to problems without scientific basis, child sex abuse, polygamy, genetic defects due to irresponsible sexuality or incestuous relationships, these are all daily problems. They are problems associated to social neglect, the lack of social prevention programs. What is daily life for them is exception for Cubans.

Regarding its functions, an essential one

A lot has been said in recent times about what the family should fulfill. The specialized bibliography states they are aimed at meeting important needs of its members, including the sexual-affectionate ones, but not as isolated individuals but in tight interdependence.

It's not the same to do something on the street, such as eating or listening to favorite music, or talking about a problem, for self-satisfaction, than doing it at home accompanied by a relative.

Among its functions highlights go to the educational, economic, biosocial and cultural-spiritual ones.*

Let's focus on the latter, which is related to the activities linked to the cultural and recreational likes and interests of every person and the family as a whole; the wellbeing caused by their satisfaction or the frustration for being unable to achieve them, as well as the spirituality of its members.

The biosocial function is linked to procreation and children's upbringing, as well as sex and affectionate relationships of the couple. Meanwhile, the economic function, as its name implies, has to do with home supply tasks, consumption, satisfaction of a series of individual material needs, expense budget based on the income of its members, among others.

For its part, the educational function has a key importance and is closely linked to other functions previously mentioned.

Today, it is necessary to go deeper into it, because parents are the ones, so to speak, who build a family educational curriculum and have a decisive influence on the creation of the family educational scenario.

Likewise, the family participates in the full development of children's personality, as well as the adaptation of children to social and school life.

At present, when countless distorting tendencies prevail and a crisis of values is acknowledged, family education plays a very important role.

Scholars on the subject talk about an overvaluation of the family's economic function, from the financial situations that are lived worldwide and the fight for

survival inside the homes. However, education must be at the forefront.

Communication with children, direct and systematic surveillance of their behaviour, concern for their problems and conflicts should not be overlooked. In addition, it's essential to take into account that girls and boys, teenagers and young people do more what they see their parents doing than what they are told. Family education cannot be left aside; we must grab it by the hand and walk with it.

*Thus included in the leading book of UNFPA-MINED Project, by a group of authors.

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