



Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

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Psalm 139:13-14, CSB



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Erasing Our Humanity: Facing a Silent Genocide

by Josh Wester

A CBS News¹ story that recently gained national attention featured seven-year-old Agusta. Agusta has Down syndrome. But surprisingly, she is one of the few children in Iceland with the genetic disorder. According to the article's subtitle, in Iceland, "Down syndrome is disappearing."

At first this seems to be an achievement worthy of celebration. There is no question that people with Down syndrome face challenges and limitations. Were this a medical innovation, we might deem it miraculous. But as the article reports, the precipitous decline in Down syndrome births can be attributed to no such innovation. Instead, it is the result of sympathetic barbarism.

With the advent of prenatal screening, a mother can elect to have her child tested for genetic defects while still in utero. As a consequence, a positive result indicating the presence of such a defect usually ends in abortion—67 percent of the time in the United States, and a nearly 100 percent "termination" rate in Iceland. Yet the practice is defended on humanitarian grounds as an act of compassion. But contrary to the article's claims, this is nothing less than the systematic extermination of an entire group of people. It's a silent genocide.

Having Down syndrome doesn't make a person less than human. Western society has determined to sanction the deaths of innocent people because we do not believe they deserve to live, despite the fact that it is not uncommon for people born with Down syndrome to "live full, healthy lives, with an average lifespan of around 60 years." The truth is, this isn't about alleviating their suffering; it's about our idolatry and self-interest.

A chromosome abnormality is hardly cause to deny a person's humanity—regardless of its effects. Christians recognize that every person bears the image of God and that abortion is violence against the innocent. If our culture is willing to subject people with Down syndrome or other genetic defects to such cruelty and excuse it in the name of compassion, Christians must have the courage to speak for those who have no voice and commit to being the people who protect the vulnerable, shelter the unwanted, and care for the least of these. In the name of Christ, we will fight against this evil because we have another message. Jesus loves the little children, including those like Agusta. Every single one of them are precious in his sight—and they should be in ours, as well.

¹ <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/down-syndrome-iceland/?linkId=40953194>

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