



LIFE MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockford
Mitch Striedl, Director ♦ Rev. David A. Peck, Spiritual Director
555 Colman Center Drive ♦ Rockford, Illinois ♦ 61108 ♦ 815.399.4300
mitchstriedl@rockforddiocese.org

September 2011

vol. x • no. 12

Life is not a math equation, part I of II

By Mitch Striedl

I recently read *The New York Times Magazine* article titled “The Two-Minus-One Pregnancy” by Ruth Padawer. This article was not about babies in the womb who are destined to be math geniuses because their mothers were reading algebra books aloud to them. An article about math geniuses in the womb would be heartwarming in comparison. Unfortunately, this article chronicles the “selective reduction” of fetuses in the womb when a couple is expecting twins through artificial reproductive technologies like In-Vitro Fertilization (IVF). “Selective reduction” is a gentler way of describing the killing of a baby, and this article highlighted it as if it was not big deal.

The Times looked at how more IVF doctors and OB/GYNs are okay with killing one of the two lives inside the mother’s womb simply because the woman or couple would rather not have twins, but merely desires one child. IVF doctors at one time were hesitant to cross this threshold and only sought to “reduce” (i.e. kill) if in their mind there was a serious health risk to the mother or severe fetal anomaly. Not that killing an innocent human life is ever okay, but should it be any surprise to us that doctors who create human life outside of God’s design and without His involvement would come to the point of being okay with killing a human life for the mere “convenience” of the couple?

Towards the beginning of the article a female patient is interviewed as to why she and her partner chose to “reduce” their pregnancy after getting pregnant through IVF. The female states,

“If I had conceived these twins naturally, I wouldn’t have reduced this pregnancy, because you feel like there’s a natural order... but we created this child in

such an artificial manner... somehow, making a decision about how many to carry seemed to be just another choice.” The female goes on to say, “The pregnancy was all so consumerish to begin with, and this became yet another thing we could control.” These quotes perfectly highlight one of the many problems with IVF, it is the creation of human life outside of God’s design and outside the union of husband and wife.

Without God’s involvement in the creation of that precious human life it is easy to reduce the value of that life to a mere “product”. Instead of relying on and turning to God, we think about what we want and what will be most “convenient” for us. In-Vitro takes human life and treats it like a consumer choice, allowing one to choose if they want a boy or girl, green eyes or blue eyes. It is the creation of life in an assembly line or factory. It should not surprise us that human life has become mere “product” when technologies like IVF are readily available.

The *Times* article also looks at several doctors, the first is a male doctor who was uneasy at first about “reducing” a twin pregnancy for the “convenience” of the couple. He indicates that society’s acceptance of abortion has led him to rethink “selectively reducing” twins for “convenience” sake, because as he puts it, “In a society where women can terminate a single pregnancy for any reason... if we have a way to reduce a twin pregnancy with very little risk, isn’t it legitimate to offer that service to women...?” The doctor unknowingly highlights how abortion has led to the cheapening and devaluing of human life. Many in our society have thought that abortion and contraception would lead to less “unwanted” pregnancies, thus increasing the value of those allowed to be born into this world. In fact, the exact opposite is true.

The article also highlights a female doctor who rethought her position on this subject based on the fact that many couples have no issue with “terminating” (i.e. killing) a pregnancy when there is a non-life threatening fetal anomaly. To her it doesn’t seem too different from “reducing” a twin pregnancy

for “convenience” sake. The doctor doesn’t see this as selfish or immoral in any way.

While I disagree with the doctor that this practice isn’t immoral or selfish, I do agree that there isn’t much of a difference between killing a child for mere “convenience” sake or killing a child that has a non-life threatening anomaly. In a society where over 85% of Down Syndrome babies are killed in the womb, how is it any different to kill a baby merely because it is an “inconvenience” to the couple? In each instance the killing is happening because people don’t want to sacrifice for that precious life. This is not something that should be accepted, but rather something that needs to be fought against.

We can look around the world and see senseless acts of violence, war, bloodshed, mob action, and it may cause us to pause and wonder how we got here. However, much of it stems from abortion on demand and artificial reproductive technologies that push God out of His creative role. We have become a society that doesn’t respect God’s role, rather, we think we are the ultimate arbitrator of who lives and dies and for what reason. As a society we have begun to think that we can take a human life because it is “inconvenient” or that we can create a life in a test-tube because we desire it.

We are shutting out God’s procreative love and substituting our own self-centered desires and passions. We are a selfish society and we continually feed that selfishness more and more with the acceptance of abortion and technologies like IVF. These immoral practices have led many in our world to view human life as a “product” rather than a precious gift from God. Until we let God back in as a society, we will continue to see this destructive attitude permeate.

The *New York Times* article, and what it represents, stands in stark contrast to a recent article in *The*

Washington Post about the Kilmer family, a large Catholic family of 13. *The Washington Post* article

chronicles the joy and love that surrounds the Kilmer family as they navigate their way in a world that seems increasingly hostile to large families. I will highlight this uplifting article in next month’s Life Matters as part two of this topic.

For additional commentary on life issues, check out “Life Lines” on the first Friday of each month in *The Observer*.

How can you help the Respect Life Office?

1) The Respect Life Office is supported through the Annual Diocesan Stewardship Appeal. Your generous support of the annual appeal is crucial to helping the Respect Life Office fulfill its mission of building a culture of life.

2) Support the Respect Life Office by using GoodSearch, a cost-free internet search engine, at www.goodsearch.com and by selecting “Diocese of Rockford-Respect Life” as your charity to support. Every time you search the internet or shop online at your favorite online retailers through the website’s GoodShop section, you will help raise money for the Respect Life Office, and it will cost you nothing extra!

3) Please consider making a lasting gift to the Respect Life Office by remembering the office in your will, naming it as a beneficiary of a Charitable Gift Annuity, and/or making a donation to the Respect Life Office Endowment. If you are interested in more information, you can contact Dave Hougan at 815-399-4300 or learn more at www.foundationrockford.org and clicking on the folder titled Planned Gifts.

4) Volunteer your time and talent with the Respect Life Office.

If you have any questions concerning all the ways you can support the Respect Life Office please contact us at 815-399-4300 or email us at mitchstriedl@rockforddiocese.org

LIFE MATTERS is published monthly by the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockford. It is sent to all priests, seminarians, religious sisters, prayer team members, and parish respect life coordinators. Individual subscriptions may be obtained for a donation of \$15.00 per year. This publication may be copied so long as it is done in full. It may be quoted so long as proper citation is provided with the quotation.