



# Life Matters

The Newsletter of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockford  
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## Are the Kids All Right?

by Mitch Striedl

What do the recent Hollywood movies *The Kids Are All Right*, *The Backup Plan*, and *The Switch* all have in common? All of these movies deal with unmarried women who have a desire for a biological child, yet face situations that do not allow them to fulfill this desire with a spouse. All of the women in these movies end up conceiving children through artificial insemination (AI) by an anonymous sperm donor. There are many in the real world, including married couples, who face difficulties in conceiving a biological child. There has been a large increase in recent decades of couples who bear the cross of infertility and who often turn to reproductive technologies like artificial insemination (AI), or the more common In Vitro Fertilization (IVF).

The sadness of infertility can be a very difficult cross to bear, for the desire to share life by bringing a child into the world is a natural one. For the many couples who bear this cross, the Church's message is one of both compassion and understanding. Yet the Church also calls us to be compassionate and considerate of the rights and dignity of the child yet to be conceived. In discussing infertility, we rarely think about how the manner a child is conceived affects the dignity and rights accorded to him/her by God..

A recent Associated Press article took a unique look at this topic. The article follows two young women in their 20s, Lindsay Greenawalt and Katrina Clark, who are both children of anonymous sperm donors. Both express the emotional trauma that being donor-conceived has had on their lives. Since 2008 Lindsay has been chronicling the search for her biological father on a blog. The AP article points to an entry in her blog around Thanksgiving that speaks to the hurt she has endured. Lindsay stated, "If I had to choose between being

conceived with half of my identity and half of my kinship deliberately denied from me for eternity — or never being born — I'd choose never being born." Katrina also discusses her emotions and expresses similar sentiments of the emotional trauma being donor-conceived has had. The article also highlights a donor-conceived child who connected with her biological father. The article states, "Though grateful they connected, Walker and Linden have publicly criticized donor-conception, saying it too often impinges on the rights of the children it produces."

When talking about IVF or AI, it is important to take time to think about the rights and dignity of the child being conceived. In fact, this omission is one of the central problems with reproductive technologies that replace rather than assist the conjugal love act (sexual intercourse) of husband and wife. Our dignity comes from being created in God's image and this dignity and certain rights are given to us from the very moment of our conception. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

*A child may not be considered a piece of property, an idea to which an alleged "right to a child" would lead. In this area only the child possesses genuine rights: the right "to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents," and "the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his conception".*  
(CCC 2378)

### Sacrificial Love!

It is understandable that couples seeking out these reproductive technologies have a strong desire to bring new life into this world, for God gave each and every one of us the gift of life, and we desire to share this gift. However, we must be careful that this desire does not lead us inward, but just like the love of God, it should lead us out of ourselves into sacrifice for others. It can be easy for any of us to be drawn into

ourselves, only thinking about what we feel is rightfully ours, rather than that to which God calls us. Only by the grace of God can we learn to grow in sacrificial love, a more perfect love for it more closely imitates the love of God Himself. Sacrificial love enables us to overcome the crosses in our lives. Encountering these crosses is an opportunity to grow closer to Christ and deeper in holiness. If we unite our suffering with Christ we will bear fruit and give life to those around us, even if that means not bearing the gift of a child.

When children are conceived in a Petri dish through IVF or by an anonymous sperm donor who is not known to them (or even a sperm donor who is known to them), it betrays the dignity accorded to them by God and infringes on their right to be the fruit of a specific act of generous love and self-donation between their parents. Technologies like IVF or AI, even when used with the best of intentions, treat children like products. In the case of IVF, we are left to ask what about the dignity of the children lost or killed during the treatment? It is common to create multiple embryos/children and implant them all in the woman with the hope that one child will survive and come to full-term. If multiple survive implantation, some may be selectively reduced, which is just another word for killed or aborted. With IVF there are also many of our brothers and sisters who literally sit frozen, suspended in time. How does this uphold their dignity and rights?

Even though their dignity was not upheld at the moment of conception, children conceived through IVF or AI do not have any less dignity than children conceived naturally. God is able to write straight with crooked lines. However, the Church calls all of us to consider that which upholds a person's dignity as a sacred gift from God. We are called to recognize and uphold this dignity from the very moment of conception until natural death. For those who have conceived a child through IVF or AI, it is

important to understand how that decision did not uphold the child's dignity at the moment of their conception. Admitting this does not mean admitting that your child was a mistake or that you are a horrible person. All humans at different moments in life fall short of loving as God loves. The most important thing is to seek God's mercy and forgiveness. By seeking His forgiveness, we are admitting that we are not God which allows us to be more closely united to Him so we can love our spouse, our children, and all those who God puts in our lives as He loves us.

For those that are struggling with infertility, it is important to know that there are resources to aid in conceiving a child that upholds the child's dignity and rights. NaProtechnology is a growing field created by the Pope Paul VI Institute that holds much promise for infertile couples, and it is cheaper and more successful than IVF or AI. If you would like more information regarding these alternatives you can contact the Respect Life Office at 815-399-4300 or go to our website at [www.rockforddiocese.org/respectlife](http://www.rockforddiocese.org/respectlife). In the end, let us take time to think whether the kids are indeed all right, if their dignity is being respected from the moment of conception. Let us do what is best for the child yet to be conceived, loving them sacrificially.

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

***Have you considered donating to the Respect Life Office?***

Only with your generous support can the Respect Life Office continue to promote the Gospel of Life. The Office needs your help through donations to the Annual Diocesan Stewardship and also through private donations directly to the Office. You may also want to consider making a lasting gift to the Respect Life Office by remembering us in your will.

**If you are interested in donating to the Respect Life Office, please contact us at 815-399-4300 x 435 or email [mitchstriedl@rockforddiocese.org](mailto:mitchstriedl@rockforddiocese.org)**