

Adverse Prenatal Diagnosis, a time of waiting

Fargo Diocese Respect Life Office ~ Life Issues Series ~ Number One

Caring for couples facing an adverse prenatal diagnosis...

Among the most devastating news parents can receive is that their unborn child has a serious condition which, in medical terms, will leave them either “incompatible with life” or that their life would be one of suffering. To often these parents are left with the recommendation by their physician to “terminate” the pregnancy. The doctor’s intent may be to offer a compassionate means to “let the baby die now” rather than suffer, or to prevent a risky delivery down the road.

But in reality a termination of pregnancy or early induction of labor because a child has a lethal anomaly is a direct abortion. The teaching of the Catholic Church should serve as a guide to parents who are at risk of aborting their unborn child after receiving an adverse prenatal diagnosis.

Each child, created by God, has a purpose and possesses a dignity by which his right to life is to be respected and protected. Parents should receive pastoral care from their churches in these difficult times of decision making to affirm them in choosing life for their unborn child and in preparing for the challenges of possibly caring for a severely handicapped child.

Some helpful responses to affirm parents to accepting their situation with trust in God:

✞ I hear your pain. God hears your pain. God loves you and calls all of his children to embrace the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death. He will be with you and never leave your side.

✞ God will give you every grace you need.

✞ You are united to Christ in your suffering. These special babies bring with them many spiritual gifts and grace.

✞ No matter how long your baby lives, he will be your child for all eternity.

(Taken from Project Rachel Ministry, A Post-Abortion Resource Manual for Priests and Project Rachel Leaders, USCCB, 2009)

The following organizations offer support and educational resources to couples facing an adverse prenatal diagnosis:

American Journal of Medical Genetics: Article touching on the dangers of prenatal diagnostics leading to eugenics. “Prenatal DNA test raises both hopes and worries” by Roger Collier. March 31, 2009 vol. 180 no. 7, copyright Canadian Medical Association.

Web: www.cmaj.ca/content/180/7/705.full

Be Not Afraid. Offers support to couples who have received news that their unborn baby has a congenital defect; from couples who have been there and decided to continue their pregnancy. Web: www.benotafraid.net



International Down Syndrome Coalition for Life. A group promoting awareness of the number of babies with Down syndrome who are aborted and offers help and support to families and friends of people with Down syndrome. Web: <http://theidsc.org/>

Living with Trisomy 13. Offers information about Trisomy 13 and support for women who are facing pressure to abort their child with Trisomy 13. Help is also available for those who have

aborted their child. Web: www.specialneeds.com/children-and-parents/general-special-needs/living-trisomy-13

National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC). Clergy and parent resource. Will provide phone consultation. Phone: 215.877.2660. Web: www.ncbcenter.org

Prenatal Partners for Life. Offers support, information, and encouragement for carrying to term with an adverse prenatal diagnosis, as well as support for raising a child with special needs after birth. Web: www.prenatalpartnersforlife.org

Directory of Perinatal Hospice Services: Providers Nationwide.

Web: www.perinatalhospice.org

Local provider: Essentia Health Care, Fargo:

<http://www.essentiahealth.org/fargo/birthing-center.aspx>, click on Caring Hearts Program.