



## Respect Life Sunday Talk “The Value of the Vulnerable” 5:00 minutes

Today, I want to share about a woman whose story may help us understand more deeply the answer to the question, “Why is the Church pro-life?”

In early 2016, Courtney Baker was living with her husband and three children in the town of Sanford, Florida. You might say she lived an “ordinary life.” But Courtney Baker had a burden on her heart—and was wondering what to do about it.

When Courtney was pregnant with her third child, she visited a prenatal specialist. Some tests were run. The results, at least from the doctor’s point of view, were not good. Courtney was informed that her unborn child likely had Down Syndrome. The doctor repeatedly advised her to abort the baby. But Courtney refused to end the life of her precious child. She became the proud mother of Emersyn Faith, a beautiful young girl.

In May of 2016, Courtney mailed a letter to her doctor, telling him that her child was “perfect.” Her hope was that the doctor would see the beauty and love in every baby with Down Syndrome. Courtney’s letter was posted on Facebook, and as they say in the jargon of social media, it “went viral.” It’s been shared over a million times.

The social media explosion attracted the attention of the news media, and Courtney found herself being interviewed by Fox News, ABC, CNN, the National Review, Cosmopolitan, The Today Show, Newsday, and literally hundreds of other news sources. In all of these encounters with the news media, Courtney shared the powerful message that every single human life is precious, no matter what.

I want to share with you a portion of the letter that Courtney sent to her doctor:

“Dear Doctor,

“I came to you during the most difficult time in my life. I was terrified, anxious and in complete despair. I didn’t know the truth yet about my baby, and that’s what I desperately needed from you.

“But instead of support and encouragement, you suggested we terminate our child. I told you her name, and you asked us again if we understood how low our quality of life would be with a child with Down Syndrome. You suggested we reconsider our decision to continue the pregnancy.

“I’m not angry. I’m not bitter. I’m really just sad. I’m sad the tiny beating hearts you see every day don’t fill you with a perpetual awe. I’m sad the intricate details and the miracle of those sweet little fingers and toes, lungs and eyes and ears don’t always give you pause. I’m sad you were so very wrong to say a baby with Down Syndrome would decrease our quality of life. And I’m heartbroken you might have said that to a mommy even today. But I’m mostly sad you’ll never have the privilege of knowing my daughter, Emersyn.

“Because, you see, Emersyn has not only added to our quality of life, she’s touched the hearts of thousands. She’s given us a purpose and a joy that is impossible to express. She’s given us bigger smiles, more laughter and sweeter kisses than we’ve ever known. She’s opened our eyes to true beauty and pure love.

“So my prayer is that no other mommy will have to go through what I did. My prayer is that you, too, will now see true beauty and pure love with every sonogram.”

I think you can see why Courtney’s letter touched the hearts of so many. Yet she is just one of millions of Americans who have shown great courage and love in the face of life’s difficult challenges.

*[Here, share a few sentences about someone you know who, like Courtney Baker, has witnessed to the dignity of human life.]*

We are called to see the dignity of each and every human person. We are called to never lose sight of the fact that each person is created in the

image of God. But if we're honest with ourselves, it's sometimes MOST difficult to do that when we're confronted with the MOST vulnerable, or with people who are so needy that they seem to pose a threat to our own happiness.

Pope St. John Paul II warned us about this, in his prophetic encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. He described what he called a "culture of death."

The Holy Father wrote,

"...it is possible to speak in a certain sense of a war of the powerful against the weak: a life which would require greater acceptance, love and care is considered useless, or held to be an intolerable burden, and is therefore rejected in one way or another. A person who, because of illness, handicap or, more simply, just by existing, compromises the well-being or life-style of those who are more favored tends to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated."

The Church calls all of the faithful to be engaged in this struggle between the "Culture of Life" and the "Culture of Death."

You may ask, "what can I do, how can I make a difference?" And my response is, "What are your gifts? What are you good at?"

Think about Courtney Baker – what was she good at? She knew how to write. She wrote one, powerful letter and it touched the hearts of millions. Don't underestimate your ability to change the culture around you. You have the power within you to do it, a power that comes from God. Don't be afraid to use it.

Use your talents to advance the cause of life among the people where you have influence: in your family, in your school, in your workplace, in your local media, in your local government.

If you have downloaded the pew cards to place in all the pews, include the following text. Pew cards can be downloaded here: [www.healingtheculture.com/programs/respect-life-sunday/](http://www.healingtheculture.com/programs/respect-life-sunday/)

At the ends of all the pews, you will find little cards that look like this [hold up a sample]. Please take a moment right now to pass along

the cards in your pew. When you fill out and mail this card, Healing the Culture will send you a free pro-life resource to help teach your family, friends, and others about the sanctity of all human life. Healing the Culture is a nonprofit pro-life educational organization that offers positive and inspiring tools to help you do this. You don't have to pay anything for this resource – it's completely free, including the shipping. You can either fill out your card now and put it in the box at the exits on your way out the door or mail it in later. This is just one way you can advance the cause of life.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a plea that Pope St. John Paul II made to all people of good will:

“... in the name of God: respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life! Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness.”

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