

BLOGS

Pro-Lifers, the Tide Just Turned

BY Jennifer Fulwiler

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As you've probably heard by now, the Duggar family lost their precious daughter Jubilee Shalom on December 8th at 20 weeks gestation. They held a memorial service for her last Wednesday, which has generated even more discussion than the original announcement that they were expecting their 20th child. At the service, the Duggars **chose to display some professional photographs** of the baby's hands and feet. Someone leaked the pictures to the media, and the blog world has exploded with conversations about it.



As I made my usual rounds on the internet this weekend, it seemed that I everywhere I clicked there was someone writing about this. The secular blog world seemed particularly interested in the issue: **TMZ posted the leaked pictures**, and was flooded with hundreds of comments. Posts at **Babble**, **the Stir**, the **Daily Beast** and **Jezebel** also generated a ton of responses. [Note: Click through at your own risk, since some of those posts and comments have not-safe-for-work language]. At first I moved on from these posts with nothing more than a glance; I didn't want to dampen the Christmas spirit by reading the inevitable vitriol about those wacky pro-lifers and their obsession with "fetuses." But then I noticed something shocking:

Wait a sec...nobody is denying that this is a baby!

I went back and read each of the posts, then scanned through comment after comment, hardly able to believe my eyes. The debate that all of these people were having was whether or not the Duggars had disrespected their child by showing pictures of her deceased body at the funeral. Of the hundreds of comments I read, nobody suggested that this was not a full-fledged child. The cause of contention was the issue of whether they had respected their daughter's dignity, not whether she had dignity in the first place. Her worthiness of respect was taken for granted.

I have been reading sites like this since I first got online. I have been following this kind of subject for years, both **when I was pro-choice** and now that I'm pro-life. And I can say with certainty: This would not have been the tenor of the conversation 10 years ago—or even five. Even as recently as 2006, there would have been a flood of "it's just a fetus, who cares?" remarks, and the debate would have centered around whether the child was even worthy of a funeral.

The old myth about unborn life being "just a clump of tissue" has been under attack since the advent of the ultrasound machine, and now it would seem that it's finally been relegated to the dustbin of history. And, after reading all of these internet discussions, I know that more than a few people are going to be thinking hard about the fact that abortions at this point of gestation are all too common. (As for the myth that abortions at this age are extremely rare: **Here's a video in which an abortion doctor casually mentions** women having abortions at 20 weeks because their boyfriends left, or at 24 weeks because it took them a while to collect the money. Also, a quick Google search of **second trimester abortion** certainly doesn't seem to indicate that this is a rare or inaccessible procedure. And, if my math is correct, according to **this Guttmacher data**, over 60,000 babies were killed after 16 weeks gestation in 2008.)

I've thought for a long time that the pro-life position will be the default position in the future. I fully believe that 100 years from now, the vast majority of people will consider abortion morally wrong—modern technology has made it too hard to deny the dignity of human life within the womb. The only question was *when* the shift would finally happen, when society would finally stop clinging to the antiquated, unscientific ideas about unborn children. Survey data **has been looking promising** for a while, but the internet reaction to

the Duggar photos seals it. There is no question that our society has far more respect for unborn human life than it used to.

Ten years ago, the average person would have felt uncomfortable admitting it if she thought abortion were wrong; in the future, I think that public opinion will have shifted to the extent that it will not be socially acceptable to be in favor of abortion. And I believe that history will point to 2011 as the year the balance of public opinion tipped, and the momentum began moving in a pro-life direction.

I believe that we have just witnessed the tide turn.

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