



COLUMBIA

Online Edition

A HISTORIC MILESTONE

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by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson

AS WE CELEBRATE THE PLACEMENT OF 1,000 ULTRASOUND MACHINES, OUR WORK TO BUILD A CULTURE OF LIFE CONTINUES



THIS MONTH in Columbia, we celebrate a remarkable milestone in the history of the Knights of Columbus: the placement of the 1,000th ultrasound machine in a pro-life pregnancy center. We began this initiative with the placement of two ultrasound machines in Iowa and Florida in 2009.

This program is saving hundreds of thousands of lives and I am sure that one day soon, because of the efforts of thousands of brother Knights and countless pro-life volunteers we will save the lives of 1 million unborn

children — the greatest humanitarian achievement in the history of the Knights of Columbus.

Although our program formally began in 2009, its genesis was really decades earlier in a conversation with Dr. Jérôme Lejeune one afternoon in my home. I had arranged for Dr. Lejeune to come to Washington, D.C., to testify before Congress on the humanity of the unborn child.

He was the world-famous geneticist who had discovered that the most common form of Down syndrome, also known as trisomy 21, resulted from a condition in which a person has 47 chromosomes in each cell rather than 46. After this discovery, Dr. Lejeune spent the rest of his life working to make the lives of those with Down syndrome better.

This is what he told Congress: “At two months of age, the human being is less than one thumb’s length from the head to the rump. He would fit neatly into a nutshell, but everything is there — hands, feet, head, organs, brain — all are in place. If you look very closely, you would see the palm creases, and if you were a fortune-teller, you could read the good adventure of that person. Looking still closer with a microscope, you could detect the fingerprints — every document is available to give him his national identity card!

“With the extreme sophistication of technology we have invaded his privacy. ... We now know what he feels, we have listened to what he hears, smelled what he tastes and we have really seen him dancing full of grace and youth. Science has turned the fairy-tale of Tom Thumb into a true story.

“The incredible Tom Thumb really does exist. Not the one of the fairy tale, but the one each of us has been. For it is from this true story that the fairy tales were invented. If Tom Thumb’s adventures have always enchanted children, if they can still evoke emotion in grownups, it is because all the children of the world, all the grown-ups they have turned into, were one day a Tom Thumb in their mother’s womb.”

As an advisor to Pope John Paul II, Dr. Lejeune proposed the establishment of a new Vatican entity — the Pontifical Academy for Life. We discussed possible initiatives for the future academy, and he confided that the pope had asked him to serve as its first president. But Dr. Lejeune would die of cancer in 1994, the same year that it was established. Later, I had the honor of being appointed a member of the academy by Pope John Paul II and re-appointed by Pope Francis in 2017.

Dr. Lejeune and I had also discussed ways in which we could help those considering abortion to better perceive this reality.

Decades later, when advances in 3D ultrasound technology made this truly possible, the Knights of Columbus Ultrasound Initiative was a natural response — and the response of so many brother Knights since then has been truly inspiring.

Building a culture of life requires all of us to strive for the just treatment of innocent unborn children and to accompany with compassionate concern women facing crisis pregnancies.

This month, we celebrate a historic milestone, but there are still many more milestones ahead of us in the lives of thousands of vulnerable unborn children. Our Ultrasound Initiative must continue to expand into every community where it is needed.

Sometimes, those of us in the pro-life movement may feel like the poet who stopped by woods on “the darkest evening of the year.” But like that poet, we too should resolve that although “the woods are lovely, dark and deep” we have promises to keep and miles to go before we sleep. Many lives depend upon our continued determination.

Vivat Jesus!

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