

Pro-life Basics

Does the preborn child have his or her own DNA from the very beginning of his or her life?

Dr. Jerome Lejeune spent his career as a scientist studying human chromosomes, and it was he who discovered that an extra copy of the 21st chromosome causes Down syndrome. In 2002, American

Life League published one of his articles, in which he wrote,

Each of us has a very precise starting moment, which is the time at which the whole necessary and sufficient genetic information is gathered inside one cell... and this moment is... [our biological beginning].

There is not the slightest doubt about that.

We know that this information is written on a kind of ribbon that we call DNA. It's a long molecule on which, under a specific code, all the qualities of the future person are defined. It measures exactly one meter in length inside the sperm, split into 23 little bits inside the chromosomes, and one meter inside the ovum; so that at the beginning of our life, we have two meters of ribbon, so to speak, on which everything is coded. To help you under-

“This information is written on... DNA. It's a long molecule on which ... all the qualities of the future person are defined.”

stand the miniaturization of these tablets of the law of life, this meter-long molecule is coiled so tightly that it fits easily on the point of a needle. Life is written in a fantastically miniaturized language.

Referring to this remarkable strand of DNA that exists at the instant a human being begins, he explained,

The symphony of life... is written in a very special code on DNA, and the first cell is the first part of the magnetic reading machine, so that it will decipher the code on DNA, and play human life. If the information that is inside the tape recorder, which is that first cell, is human information, then this being is a human being. We know that at the beginning there is a message, and this message, if it is

spelled out in the human way, makes what is a human.

Judie Brown is president of American Life League and a member of the Pontifical Academy for Life. Ask Judie questions at her www.all.org column.

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