



Who discovered the cause of Down Syndrome?

You might be surprised to learn that it was one of the Catholic Church's newest *venerables*.

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Dr. Lejeune was heartbroken, however, when his discoveries were being used for the prenatal diagnosis and abortion of babies with Down Syndrome. He lobbied against the pro-abortion laws that were making their way through the legal system at the time and defended the sanctity of human life when such a position was unpopular in the medical community.

In his own words:

"The enemies of life know that to destroy Christian civilization, they must first destroy the family at its weakest point—the child. And among the weakest, they must choose the least protected of all—the child who has never been seen; the child who is not yet

known or loved in the usual meaning of the word; who has not yet seen the light of day; who cannot even cry out in distress.”

When receiving the William Allan Award in 1969, he gave a speech to his colleagues in which he fearlessly defended the humanity of the unborn. He knew that such a speech would displease many people and told his wife afterwards, “Today, I lost my Nobel Prize in medicine.”

Dr. Lejeune continued to speak for the most vulnerable among us throughout his life.

Pope Paul VI named him to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1974. Pope John Paul II appointed him the first president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, though he only served a short time before his death from lung cancer in 1994. Pope Francis declared him “venerable” on January 21 of this year.

Let us pray to Dr. Lejeune to protect the unborn, particularly those who were so dear to his heart: babies with prenatal diagnoses that are in the gravest danger of abortion.

Dr. Lejeune is one of many Catholics throughout history who have contributed vastly to scientific fields, disproving the false idea that faith and science are in conflict with one another. If you have a science-loving child (or adult!) in your life, we recommend teaching them about the brilliant Catholics who have helped us discover and understand God’s incredible creation. The book [Brilliant! 25 Catholic Scientists, Mathematicians, and Supersmart People](#) is a wonderful introduction to these faith-filled scientists. You’ll love it, too! Get your copy [here](#).