I am not a big fan of reality TV. My tastes run instead to EWTN, FOX News and—because I travel a lot and have a farm—The Weather Channel. But the news that D-Health reality-show stars Jim Bob and Michelle Duggar are expecting their 19th child somehow reached me through the Internet anyway.

I cheered the news, as you might have expected. My wife and I have a large family—albeit only half the size of the Duggars—and at PRI we encourage others to do the same. One of my talks is entitled “Ten Great Reasons to have Another Child.” There is plenty of room on God’s green earth for all of us, I tell audiences. The Left predictably responded to the new arrival with jeers. Don’t you know that babies cause global warming, Al Gore was heard to mutter, while David Letterman spewed his usual ration of dirty jokes. For the population controllers at Planned Parenthood it was no laughing matter, however. They have a particular animus towards those couples who are generous in welcoming children into their families. “Breeders,” they sneeringly call us.

Looking at America today, one would have to say that these anti-natalists have won. American women average only 2.09 children. But this average hides vast disparities in the birth rate, from the latte-sipping singles who selfishly forswear children (and marriage) altogether, to the Duggars at the other extreme who believe that children are gifts from God.

At the time of America’s founding, there were lots of families like the Duggars. Even today, those of us in the pro-life movement average three children, and most of us probably know at least one couple who has ten or more. (The Moshers, through no fault of their own, fell one short of double digits.) Who are we, these generous-minded couples say with the Duggars, to reject any of God’s gifts?

Such generosity, however, comes at a heavy price. The Department of Agriculture now estimates that it costs $207,800 to raise a child from birth to age 18. Add to this the fact that the government now takes more than 40% of the average family’s money, in part to pay the cost of Social Security and Medicare for those who have no children.

To those who look at this purely as a question of dollars and cents, the Duggars are fools. They are spending a small fortune to raise a passel of children. Yet they will not personally benefit from the millions of dollars in taxes that their grown children will one day pay to the government. This money will instead go in part to make Social Security and Medicaid payments to those who had few children, or none at all.

In 1940 there were 160 workers supporting each person on Social Security. By 2006 this number had fallen to 3.3 workers per pensioner. By 2034, there will be only 2.1 workers for each person collecting a government retirement check. Instead of mocking the Duggars for having so many children, the barren Left ought to thank them—and all pro-lifers—for helping to subsidize its retirement. (Don’t hold your breathe waiting for an expression of gratitude, however. It could be fatal.)
As for the Duggars, if they are anything like the Moshers, they don’t really care how the numbers work out. For they understand that, in the Divine calculus, Love doesn’t divide, it multiplies. And that it goes on multiplying forever.

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