

# Fighting the Culture of Death, One Katie At a Time

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**As Belgium and other countries embrace euthanasia for children, Catholics must stand up for the most vulnerable among us.**

Michael Coren



Belgium is a troubled country on any number of levels. Its unity has been tenuous for decades, it is increasingly challenged by an Islamic immigrant community that rejects European virtues, and just like its neighbor, Holland, it is clumsily eager to embrace the latest in eugenics and social engineering. Only last month the Belgian Federal Parliament seriously considered legalizing euthanasia for children and **it now appears** it is “about to expand its controversial ‘right to die’ policies to include access to euthanasia for some gravely ill children.”

Don’t be shocked. I have debated “assisted suicide” zealots who believe that if depressed teenagers want to take their own lives—and, tragically, many teens travel that bumpy road of despair at some troubled point—they should be empowered by the state to do so. Poor old Belgium, once so faithful and brave.

I mention this because I have, I suppose, a particular insight into how terrifying euthanasia can be and into the vulnerability of those who it especially horrifies.

Let me introduce you to Katie, who is what society describes as “handicapped”. She was born several months premature and spent a long time in hospital. She came home accompanied by a nursing team, to a house wired for oxygen. It’s ironic, in that the same

hospital advised Katie's mother to abort her because there were likely, they said, to be "complications."

I know all this because her mother is my sister, and Katie is my niece.

Katie had two strokes when she was tiny and is now classified as being autistic. Which means many things to different people. I'll offer one example. My dad lies in bed, in a large hospital in England, having also suffered a serious stroke, but he is at the other end of life. We all sit around and do the usual hospital things: make jokes that aren't funny, pretend that everything is okay, be abnormally normal. Katie walks in. No inhibitions, none of our silly preconceptions and prejudices. She climbs on the bed, gets under the blanket, puts her arms around her grandpa and cuddles up to him. And for the very first time since he was hit by fate's cruelty, my father shows emotion. Emotion as wide and grand as the world itself.

Katie achieved that, because that is what Katies do. What the physically and mentally challenged do every day. They cut through the nonsense and the fear. They are in the frontline of the battle for civilization, teaching those of us who are without disability what honesty and simplicity are all about. They are also pretty much the last people who still have to fight for their civil rights. As much as we congratulate ourselves on our liberal attitude towards those who are different, we regularly discriminate against the Katies of the world. Goodness me, her mum and dad have witnessed it for years. They even had to change churches because their daughter was not accepted. "Of course you are welcome here, as long as you don't get in the way, speak too loudly or make any of us, the lucky ones, feel in any way uncomfortable. There's a ramp out there so you can get in, but once inside you better conform and shut up. We'll fine people if they leave their cars in handicapped parking spots but won't turn a hair if they talk to handicapped people as if they were dumb animals."

Katie can do jigsaws like Super Girl. She starts not from the outside but from the middle. The complex shapes that so baffle us take form in her beautiful mind. Wonderful pictures come alive and speak; they speak in a way Katie cannot. No, not *like* Super Girl. She *is* Super Girl. She doesn't have an extensive vocabulary, even though her parents have added speech therapist to their many other roles. But sometimes words aren't so important. When I arrived in England from Canada not so long ago she walked straight up to me, grabbed my hand and took me to a chair. She crawled all over me, showing me total and unconditional trust and love. It's as though I'd never left the country, but I emigrated before Katie was born!

It's true that she doesn't always look you in the eye and that her attention seems to wander

and that she appears to be distracted. Unlike, of course, those people who always look you straight in the eye and seem to take in every word you say. And then forget your name and care not a fig for your life and anything in it.

I sat down and chatted to my sister. Has it been difficult? “Yes, but also joyous beyond belief. A new adventure every day and a new path of discovery. Wouldn’t change it for the world. Katie has made us all grow so much, taught us things we didn’t know about ourselves, about what it really means to be human. Yes, we cry, but yes we laugh. Actually being a mum to Katie is about saying ‘yes’ to things. Yes to life, yes to love. Yes.”

At which point Katie trots her way into our conversation, into our world. She wants to watch the DVD of *The Jungle Book*. She’s seen it hundreds of times but that doesn’t matter. It pleases her and she learns from it. Katie doesn’t need expensive toys or fashionable luxuries. She’s so much more than that. Perhaps so much more than us.

I increasingly believe that the handicapped are God’s gift to us, to act as a catalyst to produce and provoke love in hearts that are sometimes hard and cold. I know Katie is that, along with so many other holy and godly things. But Katie and so many others just like her are under such threat. They are already slaughtered in the womb to a genocidal level, and now euthanasia seeks to have its gruesome way with them. All in the name of progress and putting them out of their misery.

No, not out their misery but out of yours. To make you feel easier about life, to satisfy your perverse perception of what normal and healthy and meaningful are now supposed to mean.

An unborn baby with the gene indicating the likelihood of Down Syndrome, for example, has around a 15% chance of being allowed to be born, and once alive is treated with a discrimination that if applied to a fashionable sexual minority group would lead to a criminal persecution. The handicapped have so few champions other than their parents and family, and they are usually so busy being mums and dads and brothers and sisters that they have no time for politics or pressure. It’s up to the rest of us, and up to the Catholic Church, to fight this crusade for goodness and kindness.

Fly Super Girl, fly Katie; fly you who are mocked and marginalized, those who are singled out by the abortion obsessives and the euthanasia monomaniacs for death. Fly as high as you want, and never care about those who would clip your wings.