

Dr Life 2006

beyond physical appearance

instances of late abortions being carried out on babies suffering from problems such as club foot or even webbed fingers, which are readily and routinely treatable.

So too is cleft palate, and after hearing about the abortion of a baby at 28 weeks into pregnancy after it was diagnosed with the condition, 29-year-old Anglican curate Joanna Jepson, who has herself had surgery for a jaw defect, mounted a legal challenge questioning the motives of the surgeons responsible for the operation.

"We need to stand up for those without a voice," she said. "We say we're being very tolerant, but then we screen babies for any sort of abnormality. How we treat babies in the womb affects how we treat people outside of the womb.

"We are creating a savage, ruthless society. We're not acknowledging people as being made in the image of God, honouring the nature of their humanity, whatever the

nature of their physical well being, whether they are impaired or not.

"We are saying that some people are worthy of life and some are not," said Joanna, whose younger brother Alastair has Down's syndrome.

"Abortion is always destructive, it always takes a life and affects the mother as well. At the moment I think the law has been abused - you shouldn't be allowed to abort a baby just because it has Down's Syndrome.

"Having Alastair as my brother has given me a greater sense of compassion for those who are vulnerable. Life doesn't always work out the way we want or expect. You have to rise to the challenge. On the one hand we want to be an inclusive society, regardless of impairment or disability, but then at the same time we put pressure on mothers to screen their babies during pregnancy, which is nurturing this culture of perfection."

There is, agree UK bish-

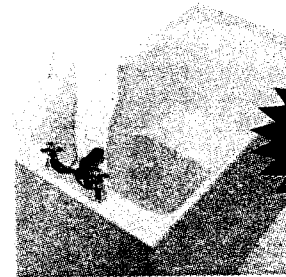
ops, something "tyrannical about a society which seeks to remove suffering by denying life to the people who are perceived to suffer.

"Our society needs a new vision in which the gift of human life is always cherished and respected: those who suffer are treated and cared for: and each person is enabled to play his or her unique part in our common life together.

"As Catholics we are committed to advocating the right to life of everyone. Day for Life is an opportunity to renew our commitment to do everything we can in our own parishes to create more inclusive and welcoming communities as an effective sign of what our society can be."

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Start dates September, 2006