

Sex Selection

Few people are aware how common is the practice of attempting to select the sex of one's child. Parents may want to prevent the transmission of a genetic disease, they may want a male child to carry on the family name or to meet the requirements of their religion, or to achieve some balance within the family. Nearly all of the methods for doing sex selection involve immoral practices; infanticide is a common practice in some countries, such as China; selective abortion or killing of the baby of the "wrong sex" within the womb; creating many embryos and implanting only those of the desired sex; and "sperm sorting" which also involves artificial insemination or IVF.

If sex selection could be done naturally, that is, not involving any of the reproductive technologies that involve killing embryonic or fetal human beings, or harming children, the Church would not consider it to be intrinsically evil. That is, there could be good reasons for seeking a child of one sex or another, as long as the parents accept whatever child they conceive as an inestimable gift from God. That is, parents who have a number of children of one sex may try then to have one or several of the other. Practitioners of NFP have various as of yet unverified theories on how to time intercourse to increase the possibility of conceiving the desired sex. Still, were such natural methods available, we as a society may wish to forego them for prudential reasons. For what might be moral for the individual, has serious repercussions for sexual demographics.

Let me explain. Nature seems to produce about 105 males for every 100 females. This natural imbalance evens out when a cohort reaches marriage age because more boys tend to die from reckless behavior, disease, etc. The practice of sex selection has greatly disturbed that balance. Nearly 90 per cent of the sex selection that is done world wide aims at producing male children. There are reports that in India in some hospitals, 90% of the babies aborted are female. Some countries have a gross imbalance between males and females – as high as 120 males for every 100 females. Without the domesticating possibility of marriage, these cultures may be facing greatly increased crime rates, greater incidence of prostitution and problems with addiction among males who will never marry.

While most bioethicists and professional organizations speak disapprovingly of sex selection, there has been little public discussion of the issue. Here is another issue that can be traced back to abortion. Pro-abortion feminists who should be raising a clarion call of outrage are willing to accept the slaughter of unborn females in preference to male babies because they fear any restriction on sex selection since restriction of any abortion threatens all abortions. The logic is on the side of the pro-abortion crowd – if it is all right for a woman to kill her baby through abortion for any reason whatsoever, why would it be wrong for her to kill her girl babies if she, her husband, or her culture prefers a boy? Legalized abortion has unleashed a Pandora's box of evils and until we make it illegal, its pernicious effects will continue to proliferate.