

The world is on stage in its Sunday best when it comes to an event such as the Olympics, but in the waning light of the 2024 Games, one could wonder what these cultures really value when the spotlight has dimmed. Do they champion life or do they prioritize self-preservation? Let's look at a few examples.

China dramatically shifted their long-held one-child policy to a two-child policy in 2016, but it failed to produce a sustained increase in the Chinese birthrate. Now, the Chinese government allows 3 children per family after a census data continued to show a steep decline in birth rates, notably of female babies. Obviously, setting limits on the number of children one could have (and encouraging male offspring) was the cause of the low birthrate, but how was this policy enforced? Survey says...abortion. No surprise that this shortsighted plan did not produce the best results.

In contrast, the Jansankya Samadhan Foundation in **India** has renewed its years-long campaign for a nationwide two-child policy, despite the fact that the country's 2020 National Family Health Survey showed that India's Total Fertility Rate is now below 2.0 children per woman (*Population Research Institute*). So why, then, the push to limit birth numbers that already fall below the very rate being proposed? The cynical me would reason that creating this "need" to limit births would then create a "need" to terminate those pregnancies (and by golly, let's perpetuate this false narrative!). Or suffer the consequences—up to ten years in jail, termination of government positions, and the non-issuance of birth certificates to "surplus children." The underlying goal is clear—deny the value and existence of children deemed extraneous.

Yet **Poland** continues to reject legalized abortion—one of the few European countries that still does so. Four pro-abortion bills were defeated by parliamentary vote--two of which would legalize abortion through the 12th week, one which would decriminalize abortion for those who assist, and one which would expand legal abortion to instances of fetal abnormality. In opposition, President Andrzej Duda preemptively warned that he would veto all such bills if they were passed (LifeNews, 7/12/24), Poland's Catholic Bishops called for a day of prayer, and thousands of Polish pro-life advocates marched in protest. (Can you imagine if abortion up to 12 weeks was the worst of our worries?)

In other refreshing news, **Italy** has introduced the "Maternity Income Bill" as a means to combat the country's declining birth rates. This bill includes paying 1,000 Euros a month (for the first five years of the child's life) to women who reject abortion and keep their baby and earn less than 15,000 Euros a year. Prime minister Georgia Meloni made headlines in June when she managed to exclude abortion from the final declaration of the G7 summit, emphasizing the "prevention of abortion" as a priority (LifeNews 7/19/24). Italy's birthrate has fallen to 1.2 children per woman, significantly below the 2.1 necessary for a population to survive. The **United States** is not far behind. The American birth rate has dropped nearly 25% from 2008-2022 to about 1.6 children per women. Unfortunately, the arrogance of a liberal American culture paints us as impervious to extinction, while the twin idols of self-expression and self-preservation are leading us, as a nation, to its doorstep.

Hungary began addressing its declining birth rates in 2019, the lowest in the European Union at the time, by providing \$30,000 loans to newlyweds, which were forgiven if/when they had three children. Hungary's birthrate now exceeds the EU average (LifeNews, 7/19/24). Childbirth as a solution? Imagine that!

A recent article in The Week magazine (April 2024) addresses falling birthrates throughout the world with impressive statistics and a reasonable global perspective. However, it seems blind to the elephant in the room—the probable cause-and-effect relationship between falling birthrates and the worldwide abortion epidemic. One can cite a dozen reasons why people prefer not to have as many children, but it's abortion that turns these reasons into an easily accessible reality. Wake up World!

Linda Verhulst, MRL-WR