



HAVING KIDS™

Child-first Advocacy

HavingKids.org

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Dear Fr. Rennier,

We read your recent article, "Why I Ended Up With Too Many Children", and you make a few points to which we feel the need to respond.

Firstly, we are disheartened by your position that, "No matter how many children you have, the number is always just right." Your perspective is surprisingly disconnected from the harsh realities we witness every day. Even [Pope Francis has said that parents should not have more than they can properly bring up](#). Nearly [40% of American kids spend at least 1 year in poverty before they turn 18.](#), and [one in four U.S. children depend on SNAP benefits](#) in a typical month. Your position shows an approval for a lack of responsible family planning by parents and communities, and demonstrates the need for privileged people, like yourself, to work to ensure ALL kids a fair start in life. As a community leader, you should encourage parents to work together to plan families in a way that benefits children.

Would you tell Nadya Sulemon (the "Octomom"), that her decision is just right, despite the fact that she struggles to feed, house, care and give attention to them? Would you tell her the decision was just right, despite the fact that she [now says having 14 children was 'very foolish, immature and selfish'](#), and despite the impact that her actions, and other massive families, have had on our social safety nets as well as God's beloved creation?

You also seem to be of the understanding that pregnancy just happens, expressing that some are blessed with many or a few, while others may not be lucky enough to have any. But today, for most women in the developed world, children are a choice. The VAST majority of the practitioners of religions opposed to artificial birth control, including Catholics, obviously use some form of birth control. These parents (as well as Pope Francis) understand that they cannot create good lives for their children if they have more than their resources (time & money) can bear.

You have a large family and are able to provide for them. However, given your resources and will, it is disappointing that one in a leadership position such as yours does not consider the option of opening your home to a child in need.

We also would like to point out that although we are in a reduced fertility cycle, the U.S. still holds one of the highest fertility rates in the developed world, and global trends project world population to exceed 10 billion by 2100.

These facts, and at the very least, the impact on our climate and future environmental security cannot be ignored. Can you disregard [the Vatican's position on sustainable development](#) and the [moral obligation to protect our planet](#) from further species extinction and famine?

The increasingly crowded society that flows from poorly planned families also means greater social instability and less of a voice for each of us in our democracies. Respectfully, Father, your and others' choice to have a large brood is a legitimate concern for your neighbors and the world at large. As a man of god and one who contemplates spiritual questions daily, how do you not see past yourself and the children whom you see as versions of yourself?

It is important that all of us cast our gaze not only lovingly on the children we have, but also more broadly to those around us and further forward to future generations. To do so, we ask that you encourage child-first, Fair Start family planning. Learn more here: <https://havingkids.org/the-fair-start-model-draft/>

Sincerely,

Ashley Berke
Representative, Having Kids

Having Kids is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to reforming family planning by replacing parent-centered family planning models with the human rights-based and child-first Fair Start model