

Your Holiness, Pope Francis

We have learned that the process of beatification is being considered in the case of Professor Jerome Lejeune who died in 1994. There is no doubt that Professor Lejeune was a medical scientist of some distinction, and that he was a devout Christian of the Roman Catholic Faith. We write to you to draw attention to some of his actions which we believe should be taken into account when consideration is being given to his beatification. He and his colleagues, Marthe Gautier and Raymond Turpin, were involved in the study of mentally retarded children with what was then known as mongolism, but is now referred to as Down Syndrome. They discovered that, in children with Down Syndrome, there is an extra chromosome in all the cells of the body. Quite independently, the same observation was made by one of us (Patricia Jacobs). The tissue culture and microscopic observations of the French were carried out by Marthe Gautier. However, when Professor Lejeune first spoke of "his" findings at a conference in Montreal he did not mention the part that Madam Gautier had played, and claimed all the credit for himself. Furthermore, when he was presented with the Kennedy Prize in 1962, he again failed to acknowledge the crucial role that Madame Gautier had played in this important scientific discovery, thus again claiming all the credit for himself. We believe that to make such an error on at least two separate occasions suggests that the omissions were deliberate and had the sole purpose of enhancing his own reputation.

In 2009 Madame Gautier was asked to write an article to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the additional chromosome 21 in Down Syndrome, to which Professor Peter Harper wrote a commentary. We have enclosed a copy of these articles for your information.

We are two scientists who played a part in the early studies of human chromosomes and who wish to ensure that Madam Gautier's crucial role in these studies is recognised, and equally importantly, that Professor Lejeune's distortion of the truth is given serious consideration in any discussion of his possible beatification.

Sincerely,