

Given the revelation of the Old and New Testaments, with special emphasis on the mystery of the incarnation, the Roman Catholic Church has condemned the practice of abortion. Several examples of teaching which span the first three hundred years of our Church include the following: The "*Didache*" ("The Teachings of the Twelve Apostles," c. 80 A.D.) asserted, "*You shall not procure abortion. You shall not destroy the newborn child.*" The "Epistle of Barnabas" (138) also condemned abortion. Athenagoras (177) in his "A Plea on Behalf of Christians" (a defense against paganism) emphasized that Christians consider as murderers those women who take medicines to procure an abortion; he condemns the killer of children, including those still living in their mother's womb, "*where they are already the object of the care of divine providence.*" Tertullian, (197) in his "*Apologeticum*" likewise asserted, "*To prevent birth is anticipated murder; it makes little difference whether one destroys a life already born or does away with it in its nascent stage. The one who will be man is already one.*" In the year 300, the Council of Elvira, a local church council in Spain, passed specific legislation condemning abortion (Canon 63)

St. Basil in a letter to Bishop Amphilochius (374) clearly pronounces the Church's teaching: "*A woman who has deliberately destroyed a fetus must pay the penalty for murder*" and "*Those also who give drugs causing abortions are murderers themselves, as well as those who receive the poison which kills the fetus.*"

While many other examples could be offered, the key point is that the Roman Catholic

Church from the beginning has consistently upheld the sanctity of the life of the unborn child and condemned the act of direct abortion. To oppose this teaching contradicts the revelation of Sacred Scripture and Christian tradition. We as Catholic Christians must pray for a change of heart in all citizens and courageously teach and defend the sanctity of human life, particularly that of the defenseless, innocent unborn children.

Acknowledgement

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Seventh-Day Adventists and Abortion

“Seventh-day Adventists want to relate to the question of abortion in ways that reveal faith in God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life and in ways that reflect Christian responsibility and freedom. Though honest differences on the question of abortion exist among Seventh-day Adventists, the following represents an attempt to provide guidelines on a number of principles and issues. The guidelines are based on broad biblical principles that are presented for study at the end of the document.

“*The Church does not serve as conscience for individuals*; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the Church. Women, at times however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral or medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

“Abortion has moral consequences and should only be performed for the most serious reasons. The church acknowledges compelling reasons for a woman to choose abortion, e.g.,

threat to the life of the woman, rape/incest, extreme congenital abnormalities, etc. After counseling, the final decision is regarded as her own--she is not to be coerced or condemned."

(http://adventist.org.au/about_adventists/perspectives_on_social_issues/abortion)

The Catholic Church on Abortion

The Roman Catholic Church has consistently condemned abortion — the direct and purposeful taking of the life of the unborn child. In principle, Catholic Christians believe that all life is sacred from conception until natural death, and the taking of innocent human life, whether born or unborn, is morally wrong. The Church teaches, "Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being" ("*Donum vitae*," 5).

Proceeding from a purely, scientific approach, we know that when conception occurs, a new and unique human being is created. The DNA genetic code attests to this uniqueness. (Why else has DNA coding become so important in identifying criminals?) Moreover, from that moment of conception, the child continues to develop and to grow; the child is born, matures to adolescence and then adulthood and eventually dies. Note though that this is all the same person who was conceived: all that has been added is nourishment, time and

hopefully a lot of love. Therefore, our Church teaches, "From the time that the ovum is fertilized, a life is begun which is neither that of the father nor of the mother; it is rather the life of a new human being with his own growth. It would never be made human if it were not human already" (*Declaration on Procured Abortion*, no. 12, 1974).

We find in Sacred Scripture testimony to the sanctity of life in the womb: The Lord said to the mother of Sampson, "*As for the son you will conceive and bear, no razor shall touch his head, for this boy is to be consecrated to God from the womb!*" (Jgs 13:5). Job said, "*Did not he who made me in the womb make him? Did not the same One fashion us before our birth?*" (Jb 31:15). In Psalm 139:13, we pray, "*Truly you have formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb.*" The Lord spoke to Jeremiah, "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you*" (Jer 1:5).

Given that the heart of the choice involves an unique, human person, the choice of action becomes clear: to preserve and safeguard the life of this person in the womb or to destroy it. Since this is a person, the latter choice does not involve simply a termination of a pregnancy or the removal of a fetus; rather, the latter choice involves a direct killing of an innocent person, a deliberate murder. Therefore, the act of abortion is an intrinsically evil act. The Second Vatican Council asserted, "*Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are*

abominable crimes" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 51).

We do not have the right to choose evil, no matter what the circumstances are or even if some sort of "good" may arise. To purposefully choose to do evil is an affront to God Himself, in whose image and likeness we are made. In the "*pro-choice position*," one is not choosing between two good actions; instead, one is turning a blind eye to the objectively evil action of abortion and pretending that it is on the same moral standing as protecting the child in the womb. To say one is "*pro-choice*" in this matter is no different than saying one is "*pro-choice*" for apartheid, Nazi concentration camps, or Jim Crow segregation laws — "*I am personally against it, but everybody should choose.*" Of course, the person who does not get to choose in any of these cases in the one society has deemed dispensable, disposable and unworthy of life.

In those difficult, tragic situations — rape and incest (which result in conception at best 2% of the time depending upon which set of statistics one looks at), a young teenage pregnant mother, or a deformed or handicapped child — we must remember the child is still an innocent human being who through no fault of his own was conceived. Here sharing in the cross of our Lord becomes a reality without question. In these cases, we as members of the Church must support both the mother and the child through our prayers and by opening our hearts, homes and wallets to their needs. We must make the sacrifice to preserve human life.