

Statement on Abortion

All persons, not just Catholics, can know from the scientific and medical evidence that what grows in a mother's womb is a new, distinct human being. All persons can understand that each human being -- without discrimination -- merits respect.

At the very least, respecting human life excludes the deliberate and direct destruction of life -- and that is exactly what abortion is.

Among important issues involving the dignity of human life with which the Church is concerned, abortion necessarily plays a central role. Abortion, the direct killing of an innocent human being, **is *always gravely immoral*** (*The Gospel of Life*, no. 57); its victims are the most vulnerable and defenseless members of the human family.

It is imperative that those who are called to serve the least among us give urgent attention and priority to this issue of justice.

Since its beginnings, Christianity has maintained a firm and clear teaching on the sacredness of human life. Jesus Christ emphasized this in his teaching and ministry. Abortion was rejected in the earliest known Christian manual of discipline, the *Didache*, a compendium of Church teachings, written in the first century.

The first right of the human person is his life. He has other goods and some are more precious, but this one is fundamental - the condition of all the others. Hence it must be protected above all others. It does not belong to society, nor does it belong to public authority in any form to recognize this right for some and not for others: all

discrimination is evil, whether it is founded on race, sex, color or religion. It is not recognition by another that constitutes this right. This right is antecedent to its recognition; it demands recognition and it is strictly unjust to refuse it.

It is true that the decision to have an abortion is often tragic and painful for the mother, insofar as the decision to rid herself of the fruit of conception is not made for purely selfish reasons or out of convenience, but out of a desire to protect certain important values such as her own health or a decent standard of living for the other members of the family. Sometimes it is feared that the child to be born would live in such conditions that it would be better if the birth did not take place.

Nevertheless, these reasons and others like them, however serious and tragic, can never justify the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.

“Laws which legitimize the direct killing of innocent human beings through abortion or euthanasia are in complete opposition to the inviolable right to life proper to every individual; they thus deny the equality of everyone before the law.”

Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (1995)

Taken from USCCB statement: “The Catholic Church is a Pro Life Church” and Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Procured Abortion (1974), no. 11 and *Evangelium Vitae*