

- 1) **CCC 2271** Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law:  
You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish. God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes.
- 2) **CCC 2272** Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life. "A person who procures a completed abortion incurs excommunication *latae sententiae*," "by the very commission of the offense," and subject to the conditions provided by Canon Law. The Church does not thereby intend to restrict the scope of mercy. Rather, she makes clear the gravity of the crime committed, the irreparable harm done to the innocent who is put to death, as well as to the parents and the whole of society.
- 3) **CCC 2322** From its conception, the child has the right to life. Direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, is a "criminal" practice (*GS 27 § 3*), gravely contrary to the moral law. The Church imposes the canonical penalty of excommunication for this crime against human life.
- 4) **CCC 2274** Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being.  
*Prenatal diagnosis* is morally licit, "if it respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed toward its safe guarding or healing as an individual. . . . It is gravely opposed to the moral law when this is done with the thought of possibly inducing an abortion, depending upon the results: a diagnosis must not be the equivalent of a death sentence."
- 5) *The Supreme Pontiff Pope Paul VI, in an audience granted to the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on June 28, 1974*
  - a. Thus in showing the unity of the Church, it will confirm by the authority proper to the Holy See what the bishops have opportunely undertaken. It hopes that all the faithful, including those who might have been unsettled by the controversies and new opinions, will understand that it is not a question of opposing one opinion to another, but of transmitting to the faithful a constant teaching of the supreme Magisterium, which teaches moral norms in the light of faith.[3] **It is therefore clear that this declaration necessarily entails a grave obligation for Christian consciences.**[4] In the Didache it is clearly said: "You shall not kill by abortion

the fruit of the womb and you shall not murder the infant already born." [6] Athenagoras emphasizes that Christians consider as murderers those women who take medicines to procure an abortion; he condemns the killers of children, including those still living in their mother's womb, "where they are already the object of the care of divine Providence." Tertullian did not always perhaps use the same language; he nevertheless clearly affirms the essential principle: "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 a man is already one." [8]

- b. The tradition of the Church has always held that human life must be protected and favored from the beginning, just as at the various stages of its development.
- c. **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.**
- d. These debates would be less grave were it not a question of human life, a primordial value, which must be protected and promoted. Everyone understands this
- e. In the course of history, the Fathers of the Church, her Pastors and her Doctors have taught the same doctrine - the various opinions on the infusion of the spiritual soul did not introduce any doubt about the illicitness of abortion. It is true that in the Middle Ages, when the opinion was generally held that the spiritual soul was not present until after the first few weeks, a distinction was made in the evaluation of the sin and the gravity of penal sanctions. Excellent authors allowed for this first period more lenient case solutions which they rejected for following periods. But it was never denied at that time that procured abortion, even during the first days, was objectively grave fault. This condemnation was in fact unanimous. Among the many documents it is sufficient to recall certain ones. The first Council of Mainz in 847 reconsidered the penalties against abortion which had been established by preceding Councils. It decided that the most rigorous penance would be imposed "on women who procure the elimination of the fruit conceived in their womb." [9] The Decree of Gratian reported the following words of Pope Stephen V: "That person is a murderer who causes to perish by abortion what has been conceived." [10] St. Thomas, the Common Doctor of the Church, teaches that abortion is a grave sin against the natural law." At the time of the Renaissance Pope Sixtus V condemned abortion with the greatest severity. [12] A century later, Innocent XI rejected the propositions of certain lax canonists who sought to excuse an abortion procured before the moment accepted by some as the moment of the spiritual animation of the new being. [13] In our days the recent Roman Pontiffs have proclaimed the same doctrine with the greatest clarity. Pius XI explicitly answered the most serious objections. [14] Pius XII clearly excluded all direct abortion, that is, abortion which is either an end or a means. [15] John XXIII recalled the teaching of the Fathers on the sacred character of life "which from its beginning demands the action of God the Creator." [16] Most recently, the Second Vatican Council, presided over by Paul VI, has most severely condemned abortion: "Life must be safeguarded with extreme care from conception; abortion and infanticide are

abominable crimes." [17] The same Paul VI, speaking on this subject on many occasions, has not been afraid to declare that this teaching of the Church "has not changed and is unchangeable." [18]

- f. **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.**
- g. **To this perpetual evidence - perfectly independent of the discussions on the moment of animation [19] - modern genetic science brings valuable confirmation. It has demonstrated that, from the first instant, there is established the program of what this living being will be: a man, this individual man with his characteristic aspects already well determined.**
- h. **From a moral point of view this is certain: even if a doubt existed concerning whether the fruit of conception is already a human person, it is objectively a grave sin to dare to risk murder. "The one who will be a man is already one."** Tertullian, "*Apologeticum*" (IX. 8 PL. 1, 371-372: Corp. Christ. 1, p. 103, 1, 31-36).
- i. The gravity of the problem comes from the fact that in certain cases, perhaps in quite a considerable number of cases, by denying abortion one endangers important values to which it is normal to attach great value, and which may sometimes even seem to have priority. We do not deny these very great difficulties. It may be a serious question of health, sometimes of life or death, for the mother; it may be the burden represented by an additional child, especially if there are good reasons to fear that the child will be abnormal or retarded; it may be the importance attributed in different classes of society to considerations of honor or dishonor, of loss of social standing, and so forth. We proclaim only that none of these reasons can ever objectively confer the right to dispose of another's life, even when that life is only beginning. With regard to the future unhappiness of the child, no one, not even the father or mother, can act as its substitute- even if it is still in the embryonic stage- to choose in the child's name, life or death. The child itself, when grown up, will never have the right to choose suicide; no more may his parents choose death for the child while it is not of an age to decide for itself. Life is too fundamental a value to be weighed against even very serious disadvantages.
- j. **The movement for the emancipation of women, insofar as it seeks essentially to free them from all unjust discrimination, is on perfectly sound ground. [22] In the different forms of cultural background there is a great deal to be done in this regard. But one cannot change nature. Nor can one exempt women, any more than men, from what nature demands of them. Furthermore, all publicly recognized freedom is always limited by the certain rights of others.**
- k. Scientific progress is opening to technology - and will open still more - the possibility of delicate interventions, the consequences of which can be very serious, for good as well as for evil. These are achievements of the human spirit which in themselves are admirable. But technology can never be independent of the criterion of morality, since technology exists for man and must respect his finality. Just as there is no right to use nuclear energy for every possible purpose, so there is no right to manipulate human life in every possible direction.

Technology must be at the service of man, so as better to ensure the functioning of his normal abilities, to prevent or to cure his illnesses, and to contribute to his better human development. It is true that the evolution of technology makes early abortion more and more easy, but the moral evaluation is in no way modified because of this.

- l. That is why the last Council and subsequently the encyclical "*Humanae vitae*" of July 25, 1968, spoke of "responsible parenthood." [24] What we wish to say again with emphasis, as was pointed out in the conciliar constitution "*Gaudium et spes*," in the encyclical "*Populorum progressio*" and in other papal documents, is that never, under any pretext, may abortion be resorted to, either by a family **or by the political authority**, as a legitimate means of regulating births. [25] **The damage to moral values is always a greater evil for the common good than any disadvantage in the economic or demographic order.**
- m. **It must in any case be clearly understood that whatever may be laid down by civil law in this matter, man can never obey a law which is in itself immoral, and such is the case of a law which would admit in principle the liceity of abortion. Nor can he take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or vote for it.** Moreover, he may not collaborate in its application. It is, for instance, inadmissible that doctors or nurses should find themselves obliged to cooperate closely in abortions and have to choose between the law of God and their professional situation.
- n. To measure happiness by the absence of sorrow and misery in this world is to turn one's back on the Gospel.
- o. 22. It must in any case be clearly understood that whatever may be laid down by civil law in this matter, man can never obey a law which is in itself immoral, and such is the case of a law which would admit in principle the liceity of abortion. **Nor can he take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or vote for it. Moreover, he may not collaborate in its application. It is, for instance, inadmissible that doctors or nurses should find themselves obliged to cooperate closely in abortions and have to choose between the law of God and their professional situation.**
- p. **Paragraph 26. But this does not mean that one can remain indifferent to these sorrows and miseries. Every man and woman with feeling, and certainly every Christian, must be ready to do what he can to remedy them. This is the law of charity, of which the first preoccupation must always be the establishment of justice. One can never approve of abortion; but it is above all necessary to combat its causes. This includes political action, which will be in particular the task of the law.**

*The Supreme Pontiff Pope Paul VI, in an audience granted to the undersigned Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on June 28, 1974, has ratified this Declaration on Procured Abortion and has confirmed it and ordered it to be promulgated. Given in Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on November 18, the Commemoration of the Dedication of the Basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul, in the year 1974. Franciscus Card. SEPER Prefect*

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19741118\\_declaration-abortion\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19741118_declaration-abortion_en.html)

6) *The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, in the Audience of November 21, 2002, approved the present Note, adopted in the Plenary Session of this Congregation, and ordered its publication.*

a. **John Paul II, continuing the constant teaching of the Church, has reiterated many times that those who are directly involved in lawmaking bodies have a «grave and clear obligation to oppose» any law that attacks human life. For them, as for every Catholic, it is impossible to promote such laws or to vote for them.**<sup>[19]</sup> As John Paul II has taught in his Encyclical Letter *Evangelium vitae* regarding the situation in which it is not possible to overturn or completely repeal a law allowing abortion which is already in force or coming up for a vote, «an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed at *limiting the harm* done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality».<sup>[20]</sup>

7) 38. Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture— is false and illusory if *the right to life*, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination. If, indeed, everyone has the mission and responsibility of acknowledging the personal dignity of every human being and of defending the right to life, some lay faithful are given a particular title to this task: such as *parents, teachers, healthworkers and the many who hold economic and political power*. It is the responsibility of the lay faithful, who more directly through their vocation or their profession are involved in accepting life, to make the Church's "Yes" to human life concrete and efficacious.

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20021124\\_politica\\_en.html#\\_ftn19](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20021124_politica_en.html#_ftn19)