

#Fast for Life

The Choice is Love

There are some people only *you* can reach with this positive message. Find the answers to the questions and challenges to the Catholic Church's teaching about life.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- pg **4** Introduction
- pg **5** If a woman is pregnant and decides to have an abortion, shouldn't that be her right since it is her body?
- pg **7** If the fetus is so small that it can't survive apart from the mother, is it really even a human being at that point?
- pg **8** I'm against abortion except in cases of rape or incest. Why would you force a woman or a young girl to go through an unwanted pregnancy when she's already suffered a horrific ordeal?
- pg **10** If abortion became illegal, why would you want to send a frightened young girl to jail when she has no other option?
- pg **11** With all of the starvation and overpopulation in the world, why would the Church teach against using birth control?
- pg **12** If you're so pro-life, why don't you care about [select current social issue]?
- pg **13** Pray With Us



INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining in the #FastforLife! Over the past few years, Relevant Radio has hosted the #FastforLife initiative – this year it will take place on January 19th!

#FastforLife is a way to participate in the pro-life movement from wherever you are – home, work, and anywhere in between. Over the past few years, #FastforLife has grown into a worldwide initiative, with participants from all 50 states and many other countries!

YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND HOW THIS BOOKLET CAN HELP

Some people will hear the pro-life message only from you. There are some people only you can reach, some minds only you can change, some lives only you can save! And what they hear from you may be the only thing that makes a difference in saving a child.

This booklet contains some of the most common questions and challenges to the Catholic Church's teaching about life. These questions might be something you would hear brought up by a friend, a family member, or perhaps a coworker.

While this is by no means an exhaustive resource for discussion on life issues, it will hopefully be the tool that allows you to have a response ready for some of the most popularly used arguments – the tool by which you can save a life.

If you present these answers and thoughts in a loving and kind way, you will at least give the other person something to think about, and you'll be helping to change our society into a culture of life!

“If a woman is pregnant and decides to have an abortion, shouldn’t that be her right since it is her body?”

The pro-choice rhetoric often says that the woman is exercising her right to control her body or her personal freedom of choice. The first thing we have to keep in mind is that in reality, women don’t get abortions because of freedom of choice. They get them because they feel they do not have the freedom to make any other choice.

According to a 2014 study by the Guttmacher Institute, 75% of mothers who had abortions were below the federal poverty line or considered low-income. “Poor women were substantially overrepresented among abortion patients in 2008 and 2014, and had the highest abortion index of all subgroups examined in the latter year (2.5)” (Jerman, Jones, Onda, Guttmacher Institute, May 2016). The income level has an impact on the way women decide whether they can care for a child, and oftentimes, women in crisis pregnancies are pressured by abortion workers or family members to base their abortion decision entirely off of their financial situation. They are in despair.

The Church’s teaching on abortion is rooted in deep solidarity and concern for that woman and for her unborn baby. The Catholic Church does not look at people and see how we can take their rights away. The Church’s mission is to take their despair away and replace it with hope. We’re not there to point fingers of condemnation and tell people what they cannot do. We’re here to extend hands of strength and mercy to support them in doing what they already know is right.

According to current laws, when you stand up in a commercial airplane during taxi and takeoff, you’re breaking a federal regulation. You also can’t fill yourself with illegal drugs in public spaces or sit down in the middle of a busy city street and stop traffic. Why? Because these are all things that could harm you and other people. Everyone wants to be safe and not have to worry about someone in the road or standing during takeoff. We promote the safety of others when we follow rules, even if that means we can’t do whatever we might want to with our bodies. In Catholic Social Teaching, this falls under the principle of the Common Good; we don’t engage in our every whim because sometimes our whims could cause others harm, and we want others to show us the same courtesy.

Pregnancy is a unique situation of this courtesy: the body of a child being nurtured and growing within the mother. They, just like a driver on a busy street in the above example, are simply living and have a right to be safe in their own home – in this case, the womb of their mother.

The pro-choice mindset contradicts itself because while it claims to give rights of safety and control to a woman, it actually takes those same rights away from her baby – just like how we take safety and control from passengers on a plane when we break rules. In doing this, we act as though our rights are more important than everyone else's – but we all have the same ones!

Yes, we have our bodies, our rights, and our choices. The Church affirms that. But the world has forgotten why we have those things. We have these things precisely so that we can choose to give ourselves away in loving service of the God Who made us and of the people around us whose lives God has entrusted to our care, starting with the lives of these precious unborn children.

- **Women don't get abortions because of freedom of choice. They get them because they feel they do not have the freedom to make any other choice.**
- **The Church's teaching on abortion is rooted in deep solidarity and concern for that woman and for her unborn baby.**
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“If the fetus is so small that it can’t survive apart from the mother, is it really even a human being at that point?”

The child in the womb is fully human from the moment of fertilization. In a time when many are apparently concerned with the state of justice and its perpetuation, Pope St. John Paul II’s words are more relevant than ever. “If you want equal justice for all, and true freedom and lasting peace, then, America, defend life from conception until natural death!”

Aren’t all of us constantly in a state of development – developing new knowledge, developing new skills, new relationships, developing in so many ways? The fact that we’re all at different stages of development and that during our lives we’re different sizes and shapes doesn’t mean that at any point we cease being human. There are big human beings and there are tiny human beings. The children in the womb are the smallest of all.

Doctor Jerome Lejeune, known as the father of modern genetics, discovered the genetic source of Down Syndrome. In 1981, he gave testimony to a Senate subcommittee on the separation of powers that was looking into the question of when life begins. Here’s what he said to that committee: “To accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place, a new human has come into being, is no longer a matter of taste or opinion. It’s plain experimental evidence.”

Human life begins at conception and the recently overturned *Roe v. Wade* permitted the legal execution of a human being in all states. Some states still permit this, even when those who support abortion admit that it is human execution. Pro-choice author Naomi Wolf has criticized the efforts of abortion supporters to deny the humanity of the child. And Ronald Fitzsimmons, who headed up the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, admitted publicly in the *New York Times* that abortion ends a life.

- **The child in the womb is fully human from the moment of fertilization.**
- **We’re all at different stages of development during our lives - different sizes and shapes - that doesn’t mean that at any point we cease being human.**
- **Even though *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned, many states still permit, and even codify, the legal execution of a human being.**

“I’m against abortion except in cases of rape or incest. Why would you force a woman or a young girl to go through an unwanted pregnancy when she’s already suffered a horrific ordeal?”

When somebody asks this question, it often has roots in compassion. They’re asking, don’t these women deserve our compassion and our assistance? Don’t we care about their suffering and their person?

And of course, the answer of the Church and the pro-life community is a resounding yes! Of course we care about her! We are absolutely called to help her, which answers that question and raises a new one: will an abortion help the individual who has suffered sexual assault?

Here, we look at the voice of experience. Two major studies exclusively followed women who had conceived after being sexually assaulted – whether they chose to have an abortion or give their child a chance at life – to see what those decisions did with their psyche or other decisions. These studies, summed up in a book called *Victims and Victors*, illuminates a clear point: many of those who have abortions end up suffering and are often in counseling for years, not only for their assault but the abortion as well (Reardon and Sobie, 2000). In other words, having an abortion didn’t heal the trauma of their assault. It just created a new trauma of its own.

In its most basic sense, trauma from rape or incest is caused by somebody doing something horrible to another person innocent of a crime. The suffering that comes after abortion has the same root: someone harming another innocent person.

We have to listen to the voices of survivors themselves – which is a common point we have with many passionate pro-choice voices! At our deepest level, we want women to be heard, and we want to alleviate the pain of trauma and hurt. We simply have to ask, then, do survivors want abortion as a solution to the rape or incest? Or are they feeling pushed into a decision they aren’t sure about by friends, family, or their circumstances? More often than not, survivors in this situation want real solutions that will be helpful for them and their child.

Some people will follow this up with, “*well, isn’t the mother always going to be reminded of her attacker if she has her child?*” We can raise a similar question: don’t you think that she’s going to remember the child even after the abortion? From testimonies of those

who have had abortions, this is precisely one of the things that haunts them: who could that child have been? What happened to them?

The child is just as innocent as their mother – and both need love, compassion, and time to grow and heal. Love is the healing factor here, because the fact of the matter is the child is not just a product of rape, but a child, a human being capable of and made to give and receive love.

When the mother gives that love and the child returns that love, there is a chance for profound healing. Few human bonds are as powerful as a mother with her child.

It is out of our care for women who find themselves in this situation that we, as a Church, seek to provide solutions that are better than abortion. Let's love both the mother and her child. Let's have healing, loving solutions to heartbreaking problems. Live Action, one of the biggest pro-life organizations in the country, provides a myriad of resources on their site for pregnant women including the abortion pill reversal, 10 different crisis pregnancy resources, six different adoption centers, post-abortive healing options, health clinic information, housing help, and much more.

“If the right to life is not defended decisively as a condition for all other rights of the person, all other references to human rights remain deceitful and illusory.” (Pope St. John Paul II)

- **Many of those who have abortions end up suffering and are often in counseling for years, not only for their assault but the abortion as well.**
- **More often than not, survivors of assault in this situation want real solutions that will be helpful for them and for their child.**
- **The child is just as innocent in this crime as the victim of assault – and both need love, compassion, and time to grow and heal.**
- **It is out of our care for women who find themselves in this situation that we, as a Church, seek to provide solutions that are better than abortion.**

“If abortion became illegal, why would you want to send a frightened young girl to jail when she has no other option?”

The pro-life movement has no intention of punishing post-abortive mothers if they do so illegally. They're already imprisoned if they feel so trapped that abortion seems like the only way out.

We, as a Church made of human persons, aim to free all we encounter from despair and desperation, raising them up in hope and love. And as far as punishment for breaking the law when abortion becomes illegal, that guilt belongs to the abortionist.

The solution is very simple. We have to make abortion unthinkable, and the best way to do that is to surround women in crisis pregnancies with life-giving, compassionate, and supportive options. It is much easier to do the right thing when we have a community behind us, supporting us!

There are many organizations in the United States that seek to offer community spaces and resources to parents and families in need. Some examples are Women's Care Center, which provides free or low-cost testing, ultrasounds, classes and children's supplies shops; Hannah's House, a Midwest and faith-based home for pregnant women; Students for Life of America, which makes pro-life resources available to students of all backgrounds; or any local Right to Life or diocesan office – many have lists of resources in your area and may even have help available in-office!

- **The pro-life movement has no intention of punishing the mothers who end up getting abortions if they do so illegally.**
- **We have to make abortion unthinkable, and the best way to do that is to surround women in crisis pregnancies with life-giving, compassionate, and supportive options.**
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“With all of the starvation and overpopulation in the world, why would the Church teach against using birth control and abortion?”

Those who think that we have an overpopulation problem are often misled by media and out-of-date predictions. When it comes to overpopulation, the theoreticians of this idea have done a marvelous job at creating nightmare scenarios that never came to pass. The Reverend Thomas Malthus predicted in 1798 that by 1890 the world would have standing room only. In the 1970s, media reports cautioned that by 1990 we would need to build huge artificial islands in the middle of the ocean to handle Earth’s population. In 1972, Paul Ehrlich, the author of *The Population Bomb*, warned that 65 million Americans would die of starvation by 1985.

Overpopulation is a problem that has never come to pass. In fact, the world is experiencing what’s called a demographic implosion or a “winter” in which populations are falling steadily and there are not enough new births to balance out the decrease. Rather than having too many, we are finding that we may not have enough – and when it comes to hunger in the world, it comes from a variety of factors, from natural disasters to governmental inefficiency to greed – all outside of how many people are on the planet.

Birth control undermines the creation of human beings by separating that which creates them from their actual creation – it uncouples children with the sexual union that makes them, which reduces the meaning of both in today’s culture. We are still facing issues such as hunger and unfair distribution of resources because, as a culture, we do not find value in human life. And valuing human life starts as small as humans come: in the womb.

- **When it comes to overpopulation, the theoreticians of this idea have done a marvelous job at creating nightmare scenarios that never came to pass.**
- **The world is experiencing what’s called a demographic winter in which populations are falling steadily and there are not enough new births to balance out the decrease.**
- **When it comes to hunger in the world, it comes from a variety of factors, from natural disasters to governmental inefficiency to greed – all outside of how many people are on the planet.**

If you're so pro-life, why don't you care about [select current social issue]?

As members of the Church, we each recognize the inherent goodness and sanctity of every single human life, all made for a purpose to know, love, and serve God and one another. For centuries, Christians have been caring for the poor, the sick, the immigrant and the refugee – in fact, many of our most cherished resources in the United States, such as hospitals, schools, and shelters, were created by Catholic saints! We even have principles of our faith explained in social justice's context, called Catholic Social Teaching.

While Catholic Social Teaching is very extensive, its bottom line and that of the pro-life cause is simple: all humans experience vulnerability at some point. All humans need protection, nourishing, and service from another person or community. The first point is that we are vulnerable, and the place we are most vulnerable is as growing children in the womb. Protecting the unborn is our priority because our treatment of them lays ground rules for how we, as a world and as human beings, address issues like hunger, climate change, end-of-life care, illness, and poverty, to name a few. In the words of St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "Today, abortion is the worst evil and the greatest enemy of peace...because if a mother can kill her own child, what will prevent us from killing ourselves or one another? Nothing."

If we can recognize, value, and protect the littlest among us, we can truly make roots that will reach into all other issues regarding human life – and together, we can build up a culture, life by life, that will embrace every human soul and every human experience, free of worry about their life's worth.

This might seem like a big goal – but all things are possible through God, and it all starts with us. Because if we believe in the beauty of human life, from conception to natural death, the seeds of our love will spread and take root in new hearts!

- **Christians have been caring for the poor, the sick, the immigrant and the refugee – in fact, many of our most cherished resources in the United States, such as hospitals, schools, and shelters, were created by Catholic saints!**
- **Protecting the unborn is our priority because our treatment of them lays ground rules for how we, as a world and as human beings, address issues like hunger, climate change, end-of-life care, illness, and poverty, to name a few.**



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JOIN US IN PRAYER!

Please join Relevant Radio in praying Memorares for the end of abortion. This is a most powerful prayer, and “this kind can only be cast out by prayer and fasting” (Mt. 17:20).

You can pray the Memorares yourself, or with friends, family, or with your class at school. Once you’ve accumulated 100 Memorares, visit relevantradio.com/pray-the-memorare so together we can track on our Memorare Meter and encourage others to pray more.

May God bless you and may Our Lady of Guadalupe, Protectress of the Unborn, hear our prayers!

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thy intercession, was left unaided. Inspired with this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee do I come, before thee do I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

