

A Great Decision: Adoption or Abortion
ReCatechism 5
Chrysostom Makropoulos

Last time we were together during Recatechism night, we spoke about marriage. Continuing our "Family" theme tonight, I would like to discuss with you a very important subject in the family today, abortion Vs adoption.

The subject is so important that we could be talking for hours if not days, but I will try to be very brief in order to give you time and opportunity to express your opinion and ask questions.

Let us start with abortion. A subject that has divided the society in two groups: **prolife** and **prochoice**. Prolife are those who are against abortion and prochoice are those who support it.

Abortion is the termination, either surgical or medical, of pregnancy before birth. By aborting the fetus or embryo, we terminate the pregnancy and at the same time we terminate the life of the fetus or embryo. The prochoice people will tell you that fetus is not a person and therefore you are not doing anything wrong. The prolife people will tell you the fetus is a person therefore, you are committing a crime.

The prochoice woman will tell you that it is their body and no one can tell her what to do with it. The Bible however has a different opinion. Paul writing to the Corinthians says: **"...or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (A' Corinthians 6:19).**

Even if we believe that the women's body is their own and therefore they can do what they want with it, the question is if the fetus is part of their body, or, is it a separate person?

In order to answer the question, we have to ask ourselves: When does the fetus obtain life? We orthodox believe that life starts at conception. The Bible is very clear on this. When Joseph found out that Panagia was pregnant and knowing that it could not be his own, he decided to send her away, **but while he thought about these things, behold an angel of the Lord**

appeared to him in a dream, saying. “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:20) The original Greek text however says: “το γαρ εν αυτη γεννηθεν εκ Πνεύματος εστιν Αγίου “ which literally means the one that is born. From the time of conception therefore, the fetus is a person. In fact, the baby’s heart starts beating 18-24 days after conception; some times before the woman even knows that she is pregnant.

There was never any doubt whether the fetus was a person. Starting with the Old Testament we see clearly that the fetus is considered a person and not a part of women’s body.

Jeremiah 1:5 Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.

Deuteronomy 12:23 “Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life”. We have already established that the fetus has a blood stream 18-24 days after conception. Therefore the fetus has life of its own and it is not part of women’s body. By the way, did you know that the baby usually has a different type blood than the mother? One more proof that the fetus is not part of women’s body but a different person.

I was listening to the YouTube the other day and some one that had abortion said: **If I have the right to get rid of cancerous tumor in my body, I sure have the right to have abortion.** In her mind therefore the fetus is the same as an unwanted cancerous tumor.

The question is: Who is the one that gives life? In order to understand it, we need to look again in the Bible.

Genesis 4:1 now Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain, and she said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord”. Yes, Adam was the father of the child but it was God that gave life to Cain.

Genesis 29:31-32 “When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He (God) opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reubin for she said, The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore my husband will love me.

You can find similar verses in **Psalm 22:10, Psalm 139:13, Psalm 139:16, Isaiah 49:1**, which I will not quote due to lack of time.

So, God is the one that gives life, therefore, He is the only one that has the right to take it away.

Continuing in the path of the fetus being a separate person than the mother let us look again into the Bible.

Exodus 21: 22-23 If men fight and hurt a woman with a child so that she gives birth prematurely yet no harm follows (in other words the baby did not die), he will be punished, but, if any harm follows (if the baby dies) then he shall give life for life. It clearly shows that if the baby dies during the premature birth, which is a sort of abortion, it is considered a murder; therefore, you have to pay with your own life.

If we believe that the Bible is inspired by God, we see that God makes no distinction between an unborn and a born baby. He is using the same word for both.

When Gabriel explained to Panagia how it is possible to conceive a child although she had no relation with a man said to her: **Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son. Luke 1:36**

Later on when Elizabeth gives birth to John the Baptist, Luke writes: **Elizabeth brought forth a son. Luke 1:57.** The same word "son" is used when Elizabeth conceived and she gave birth. No difference between a fetus and a baby that is born.

The woman is considered to be a mother even before she gives birth.

When Panagia conceived Christ she went to see her cousin Elizabeth. When the two women met Elizabeth said: **Luke 1:43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** Elizabeth is calling Panagia mother although she has not as yet given birth to Christ.

Abortion was condemned from the early times of Christianity. The Apostolic tradition known as Didache states: "**You shall not procure abortion, nor destroy a newborn child**".

The Epistle of Barnabas – First Century: You shall not slay the child by abortion. You shall not kill that which has been generated

Saint Hippolytus (around 217 AD) calls it a murder. **Saint Basil the Great (330-379AD)** also states: *“A woman who deliberately destroys a fetus is answerable for murder.”* *“Those who give potions for the destruction of the child conceived in the womb are murderers, as are those who take potions which kill the child.”* (a potion from the Greek *poton*, is medicine or poison) and he continues. *“... We do not have a precise distinction between a fetus which has been formed and one which has not yet been formed.”* *“... Any hairsplitting distinction as to its being formed or unformed is inadmissible with us.”*

St. John Chrysostom (345-407): **“Why do you sow where the field is eager to destroy the fruit? Where there are medicines of sterility? Where there is murder before birth? Indeed, it is something worse than murder and I do not know what to call it; for she does not kill what is formed but prevents its formation. What then? Do you condemn the gifts of God, and fight with His laws? What is a curse you seek as though it were a blessing? Do you make the anteroom of slaughter? Do you teach the women who are given to you for a procreation of offspring to perpetuate killing?”**

(First Canonical letter 188:2). "those also who give drugs causing abortions are murderers themselves, as well as those who receive the poison which kills the fetus"

We have clearly established that the fetus is a living person; therefore, when we perform abortion we commit a first degree murder.

I will not go to the gruesome details of how they perform abortions; I believe most of you have a good idea. Regardless of what excuse they use, or how far the pregnancy has gone, the fact remains the same. They kill an innocent individual. Some one that did nothing wrong but they pay the ultimate price.

Almost all of us consider Herod being a murderer because he killed 14,000 innocent babies under two years old when Christ was born. Yet, we see nothing wrong when the mother kills her own baby. The one that suppose to protect them and nourish them, the one that is co-

creator with God, the one that is trusted by God to bring up and raise them according to His will, is the one that becomes the killer.

During the First World War, eight and an half million soldiers died. During the Second World War we have approximately twenty five million soldiers killed. Some people estimate seventeen million Jewish people killed during the Holocaust. Although we feel sorry for every life that was lost, in today's society they don't even come close to the number of babies killed due to abortion.

According to the latest statistics 42,000,000, abortions performed every year around the world; more than the people died in both world wars. More than the population of Canada and that is every year. In United States alone, 4,000 babies are aborted every day. That makes 1,460,000 every year. Here in Canada there are 30 abortions for 100 live births.

Abortion was illegal in Greece up to 1986 but, as it happened in all so called "developed countries", Greece voted a law and made it legal and, if that is not bad enough, the procedure is paid by the government. Today, twenty five years later, Greece comes first per capita in abortion in Europe and third in the world. A country that has a little more than 11,000,000 population has 250,000 abortion per year. It becomes even more staggering when there are only 100,000 births per year. Meaning, the abortions are two and a half times more than the live births. For some it is even more. They estimate the abortions are close to 500,000 per year and that is because equally to the surgical abortions we have abortions induced by medication, abortions that are going by different names in order to qualify for extra coverage by the insurance companies, not to mention of abortions that are never reported. Last month I heard on the Greek news that the latest figures show that Greece has 40,000 abortions every year, age 18 years old and under.

Knowing what we now know, you are probably wondering why someone has an abortion. Here are some of the reasons, or at least what they consider as reasons.

- **When the baby is conceived outside of wedlock, or if a woman has conceived and she is not even married.**
- **The mother is too young.**

- **The baby will interfere with the professional life of the mother.**
- **The parents are incapable to care for the baby.**
- **The baby will have inferior quality life.**
- **A form of birth control. The mother, or both parents, does not want to have any babies at all, or, not at this point in life.**
- **Some cultures use abortion as a sex selection. Meaning, if they want a boy and they found out that the woman is carrying a girl they force her to have an abortion.**
- **The baby is conceived as a result of rape.**
- **They have found out that the baby will be deformed, or, retarded.**
- **If the life of the mother is in danger due to serious sickness e.g. cancer, which threatens the life of both the baby and the mother.**

The Orthodox Church deals with each individual case and tries to find an alternative solution. In almost all cases adoption will be preferable. The life style of the individual plays the biggest roll in all cases. Unfortunately our society today feels that they can have **“good time”** without any consideration of the results. With the exemption of the last three cases/excuses, the unwanted pregnancies are the result of irresponsible life style. Very few couple come to marriage pure. It is considered being old fashion. For that matter, it is not unusual for someone to have sexual relations with multiple partners before they decide to get married. When you play with fire, you get burned. Unfortunately, the one that pays the price is the innocent baby who did nothing wrong.

A large number of the mothers having abortions are young, sometimes still in school. Unfortunately, the governments today, using the confidentiality of the individual as an excuse, perform abortions on teenagers, sometimes as young as fifteen years old, without the approval or, even worse, without the knowledge of the parents of the teenage mom.

Whether the baby is conceived outside of wedlock, or, if the mother is not married, or, if she thinks that she cannot raise the baby, or the baby will not have a quality life, or if the baby will

interfere with the professional life of the mother, or, whatever excuse they use, they have no right to kill the innocent child. If they made a mistake does not mean that they can terminate the pregnancy. You do not correct one mistake with another one. **Two wrongs don't necessary make one right.** There are thousands of people that are willing to adopt the baby and care for it and have it as their own. For that matter, because there are not enough babies for adoption here in Canada, a lot of Canadians are going overseas and adopt children from China, Ethiopia, and other countries. There are a lot of couples that cannot have their own kids for one reason or another. They will be more than happy to adopt any of these unwanted babies.

I will not even discuss the option of using abortion as a method to pick the sex of the child, or, as a form of birth control. Frankly, the idea alone makes me sick.

Let us discuss the last three scenarios that seem to have some merits:

- **The baby is conceived as a result of rape.**

I understand the frustration and I feel sorry for the mother that got pregnant due to rape. It is not an easy thing to have a child remind you of what happened. I need to remind you though, that the baby is the result of rape, not responsible for it. It is like cutting off your arm because you hurt your finger.

Adoption will spare the life of the innocent child and the child will not be there to remind the mother of the unfortunate mishap.

- **They found out that the baby will be deformed, or, retarded.**

The Orthodox Church believes that every person is made in the image of God and that includes the ones that are deformed or retarded. It will be better if the mother decided to go through and give birth to the child. I understand however that it is not an easy thing to leave with that type of a child. There are organizations however that are willing to help these parents bring up the children. As difficult as it is, it does not allow the mother to kill her child. After all, how many times doctors have been wrong and the child is born normal. In today's technology we have cases of doctors been able to correct some problems before the baby is born and allow

the mother to give birth to a normal child. One of these cases was published some ten years ago and I am giving you the story as I read it on the internet:

Theme: **Tiny Hand of Hope**

The picture is that of a 21-week-ancient unborn baby named Samuel Alexander Armas, who is life operated on by general practitioner named Joseph Bruner.

The baby was diagnosed with spina bifida and would not survive if removed from his mother's womb. Small Samuel's mother, Julie Armas, is an obstetrics nurse in Atlanta. She knew of Dr. Bruner's remarkable surgical course of action. Practicing at Vanderbilt Academe Health check Center in Nashville, he performed these unique operations while the baby was subdued in the womb.

During the course of action, the doctor removes the uterus via C-part and makes a tiny incision to operate on the baby. As Dr. Bruner concluded the surgery on Samuel, the small guy reached his tiny, but fully developed hand owing to the incision and securely grasped the general practitioner's finger. Dr. Bruner was reported as saying that when his finger was grasped, it was the most emotional following of his life, and that for a following during the course of action he was just frozen, really immobile.

The photograph captures this incredible consequence with perfect clarity. The editors titled the picture, "Hand of Hope". The text amplification the picture starts, "The tiny hand of 21-week-ancient fetus Samuel Alexander Armas emerges from the mother's uterus to grasp the finger of Dr. Joseph Bruner as if thanking the doctor for the gift of life."

Small Samuel's mother said they "wept for days" when they saw the picture. She said, "the photo reminds us pregnancy isn't in this area disability or an illness, it's in this area a small person". Samuel was born in perfect health, the operation 100 percent flourishing.

And the last excuse which sounds like the best reason for a mother to have an abortion.

- **If the life of the mother is in danger due to serious sickness e.g. cancer, which threatens the life of both the baby and the mother.**

No one will argue that the life of the mother is important. That however doesn't mean that she **has** to have an abortion. If the mother discovers that she needs to get treatment due to her own illness, e.g. chemo therapy, then she will have to go through the treatment. If the baby happens to die due to the treatment, the Orthodox Church does not consider it as an abortion. The main reason of the treatment is to save the life of the mother, not to kill the unborn baby.

I was told the other day that one of our neighbors was pregnant with twins when she was told that she had cancer and she had to have chemotherapy. They offered her to abort the children and she refused. She went through with chemo, and today the twins are ten years old and the mother is doing fine.

And finally the last question. What happens if someone had an abortion without knowing all the facts, meaning, without knowing that they are actually committing a crime. Have they committed the unforgivable sin? Are they condemned forever? The answer is no. As serious as it is, it can be forgiven if the individual or individuals go for a confession. There is not a sin that has been repented and confessed that is not forgiven. We are all sinners and abortion is the same as any other sin. All we need to do is sincerely repent and confess it.

I mentioned individuals because the people that have an abortion, as well the individuals who advise the mothers to have an abortion, are equal responsible as the mother herself. In some cases even more responsible, if the mother is willing to keep the baby and they persuade her to have an abortion.

I would say the doctors that perform abortions are more responsible than anyone else, since the oath of Hippocrates which they have taken when they became doctors, states: **I will not aid a woman to procure abortion**

I do hope that everyone here tonight had a clear understanding of what abortion is, and I will urge each and every one of you to educate your friends and relatives about the subject. If we manage to save even one life it is a big deal because everyone is made in the image and likeness of God.