



# *THE PARADOX OF CHOICE*

## *WHY WOMEN CHOOSE ABORTION*

*Tuesday, October 27, 2015*

**I**f you could be a superhero, what power would you choose? X-ray vision? Super speed? Super strength? Amazingly, you already have a power that is far greater than any of these. We all do—we have been given the ability to create a brand new human being, a unique and unrepeatable person who, once created, will live forever in this life and in the next. Move over, Ant Man!

That's just reproduction, you say. That's not very exciting. Squirrels can do that.

But squirrels don't live forever. They don't have immortal souls. They are not created in God's image, individually willed into existence by the Creator of the universe. So yes, a squirrel can reproduce, but in our ability to create life, we have been given the opportunity to participate with the Creator—and that's a real superpower.

This certainly puts sex in a whole different light. Why? Because sex is the way new human beings come into the world. We know this, of course, but do we actually think about what it means? Does knowing this shape our choices? Or has our culture so completely separated sex from children and the creation of new human life that we forget its true power?

Today's society certainly wants to send the message that sex is casual, and without consequences. But this is not the reality.

In every poll taken in the U.S., the majority of people agree that while they wouldn't choose to have an

abortion, they wouldn't stop someone else from choosing to have one. But very few people have ever stopped to wonder why they answer that way. What makes them so personally opposed to abortion?

When a woman gets pregnant unexpectedly, she has one of two choices. She can either continue with the pregnancy, and give birth to a baby, or have an abortion and terminate the pregnancy.

One in three women will have had an abortion in her lifetime, which means that over one million abortions are had every year in the U.S. alone. The number of lives lost is staggering, and it's important to understand what we're really dealing with here.

Abortion is the ending of a pregnancy; everyone agrees on that. But how exactly does this happen? Google defines *pregnancy* as "the period from conception to birth when a woman carries a developing fetus in her uterus." This is

fairly straightforward, not too much disagreement yet. An abortion ends the life of a developing fetus.

A few decades ago, actually even more recently than that, there was a great debate over whether that sentence was true. Science was not as advanced as it is today, and ultrasound images did not exist. It was possible for people to truly believe that an unborn baby was nothing but a mass of cells. Today, we know differently. We have not only ultrasound, but also high definition video from inside the uterus that shows the embryo and fetal development at all stages.

*Here's the complicated reality in which we live: All life is not equal.*

– Mary Elizabeth Williams, pro-choice advocate



Today's culture takes the trivial things and makes them important, and then takes the important things and makes them trivial. Start focusing on the important things. You are really not too young to start thinking about life's big questions.

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QUOTE TAKEN FROM DECISION POINT. THE DYNAMIC CATHOLIC CONFIRMATION

*“Here's the complicated reality in which we live: All life is not equal. That's a difficult thing for liberals like me to talk about, lest we wind up looking like death-panel-loving, kill-your-grandma-and-your-precious-baby storm troopers. Yet a fetus can be a human life without having the same rights as the woman in whose body it resides. She's the boss. Her life and what is right for her circumstances and her health should automatically trump the rights of the non-autonomous entity inside of her. Always.”*

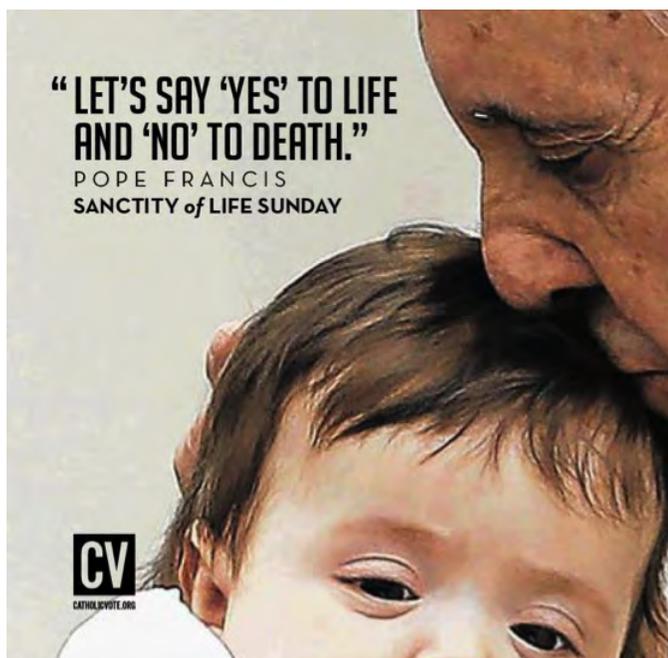
– Mary Elizabeth Williams, pro-choice advocate, in “So what if abortion ends life?”

Today, we know exactly when a baby's heart starts beating (about six weeks after conception, when the baby is the size of a sesame seed), when arms and legs grow (eight weeks, when the baby is the size of kidney bean), or when all the internal organs start functioning (10 weeks, when the baby is the size of a kumquat). During the first trimester (first 13 weeks), approximately 90% of all abortions occur. By 20 weeks, when the baby is the size of a banana, we know for sure that he or she can feel pain, although scientists believe this may occur even earlier.

Because we know so much about how babies grow and develop in the womb, it's reasonable to wonder why abortion is still legal at all. If fetuses are unborn humans with working organs, central nervous systems, and the ability to feel and dream (yes, unborn babies have dreams while they sleep!), why aren't they protected like all born human beings?

This is a complex question with a relatively simple answer. Our society views sex as casual, and doesn't provide adequate support for women to choose life, so abortion has been deemed necessary.

The debate over abortion has pitted the needs of the woman against the needs of her unborn baby. Many people believe that the life of the woman is more important, and in doing so, try not to think about what happens to the baby.



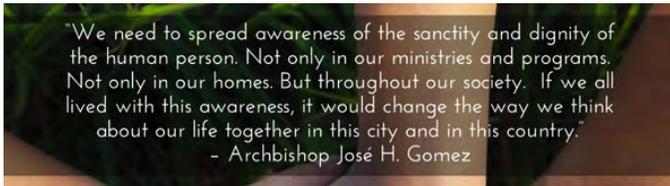
Women who choose abortion do so because they are desperate. Often, they are alone. They don't have support—financial, emotional, or physical—from the baby's father, or from their families and friends. They are concerned that having a baby will keep them from their dreams in life, like finishing school, or keeping a job, or maintaining a relationship. From the perspective of a woman facing an unexpected pregnancy, it can feel like the choice is between her own life or the life of her unborn child. Motivated by fear in this situation, the woman may determine that her life is more important.



It's important to remember two things in these situations:

1. The woman is not alone. She may look around and see no one to support her in her pregnancy. In fact, she may even be surrounded by people who are pressuring her to have an abortion. But she is not alone. There are communities of people around the world, in pregnancy clinics and adoption centers, who want to provide her with support and resources, not only during her pregnancy, but beyond. There will also be people in her life to walk with her and her child every day.
2. This woman does not want to choose abortion. Even when people are pro-choice in theory, it is often because they have not thought deeply about what abortion is. When a woman becomes pregnant, and realizes she is carrying her own child, the situation changes. In her heart, she wants nothing more than to protect that baby, but her fear often gets in the way, making her feel like her only choice is abortion. We need to support her in this reality so that she can make the choice for life.

This is the paradox of choice. When abortion is not a legal choice, society is forced to support women who get pregnant. When abortion is legal, society is free to tell her that they support her “choice” but are not compelled to make sure that she has the support to choose life. Abortion is always the fastest and cheapest solution, but it is not the solution that upholds the dignity of the woman and her unborn child.



The abortion laws in California allow a woman of any age to obtain an abortion for any reason at any time during her pregnancy. The law declares that this is her “choice,” and hers alone.

Let’s examine just what this choice entails. A woman who is pregnant knows in her heart that she carries her own unborn child. Intellectually, she also knows that the baby is living and growing, a human person with his own DNA who, from the moment of conception, is a developing, unique, and unrepeatable person.

It may be very difficult for her to be pregnant. Maybe she is young and still in school. Maybe she has other children and just can’t afford another one. She looks around her for help, and what does she find? People who tell her that they will support whatever “choice” she makes.

Imagine what it feels like to be the one person in the world to decide whether this unborn child lives or dies. How frightening and lonely it must feel to have to make that choice. What an immense burden! Who are any of us to have that kind of responsibility over the life of someone else?

You couldn’t possibly go up to someone in your class and decide that he is bothering you, inhibiting you from doing your best in life, and ask someone to kill him. Yet, that is the power that we give to women when abortion is legal.

Is this the superpower you want? Or would you rather have the power to help women in need, with real solutions that allow them to make the choice for life for both themselves and their unborn children?

## QUESTIONS

1. What do you think about Ms. Williams’ claim that all life is not equal? Have we heard those claims before? Do you agree?
2. What does “not-autonomous” mean? Do you agree with Ms. Williams that autonomy is what confers human rights to a person?
3. Is the right to life of a person, born or unborn, of greater or lesser importance than “what is right for [a woman’s] circumstances and her health”? Why?

## DISCUSSION

1. What is the true power of sex?
2. Why is sex separated from pregnancy and children in our culture? Who benefits from encouraging that separation?
3. With all of the public evidence that abortion directly kills unborn children, why do people continue to choose abortion or participate in abortion? What is the greater good that they appeal to that makes them feel abortion is acceptable?
4. Is it possible to come up with a logical argument for giving pregnant women the absolute right to determine whether an unborn person lives or dies? Why or why not?