

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

Abortion

While expressing its point of view on abortion, the Holy Church does it in accordance with her teaching on the appearance of life in general and of the human life in particular.

According to the Revelation and to the teaching of the Church, God created the world out of nothing (2 Maccabees 7:28). God created life in all its aspects, showing special care for the human life. Human life is not the product of the spontaneous becoming of the world, but God took special care for its appearance: man does not appear at command, but as a result of a piece of advice and of a special act of the Holy Trinity, an act expressed by the writer of the saints lives through the term of formation and breath of life. Human life is not determined only by the formation of the human on the earth, but (especially) by the life giving breath of God.

This fact proves that man is not a simple biological being (“living being” endowed with rational soul) but both a living soul (Genesis 2:7) and human living body (not anybody). This is how the first man appeared (Adam), and so appeared, appear and will appear – by God’s grace – the people in history: living souls in living bodies. Thus, man is a psycho – physical being which was and is created by God according to His image (Genesis 3:28), and in His likeness. The logic consequence of this teaching and faith is that all the human beings are basically equal as regards their nature and vocation. They own both actually and potentially the same dignity and value: they are the image of God, but an image in a continuous process of resemblance to God.

Because it is the bearer of the image of God, any human being, no matter his/her age, situation of physical state, owns a real dignity and it imposes special respect. This is why everything committed against the human being is committed, to a certain extent, against the will of God, the same as every good thing we do to a fellow being of ours is done to God Himself: I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me (...) whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me”(Matthew 25: 40, 45)

If life, and especially human life is not the product of hazard neither the perpetuation of the human life is the effect of hazard and neither exclusively the product of human effort. Human life is from God and is perpetuated through the human beings, according to what God ordered. Man enjoys life and the power of life; he has the right to life and the responsibility to respect this life, to defend it in any circumstance, knowing that, in the historical existence in his body man is preparing his participation in the kingdom of God.

Revelation (mentioned in the Holy Scriptures and in the Holy Tradition) provides us lots of proofs showing that what is conceived in the woman is a human being (not a simple “product of conception”), which does not exclude God’s care and which must enjoy the respect owned to the human dignity. As the Church takes special care of the helpless defenceless beings, she cannot help being worried about the most helpless human beings, namely the human embryos and unborn children.

Psalmist David said in this regard: “...you put me together in my mother’s womb.” (Ps 139:13). And God would tell Jeremiah “I chose you before I gave you life, and before you were born I selected you to be a prophet to the nations..” (Jeremiah 1:5). Job said: “...your hands made and shaped me.” (Job 10:8-9). Moses legislation paid great heed to the mother and child (for ex: Exodus 21: 23-24; 9:6).

We notice two very important things in the story on the visit of the Mother of God to Saint Elisabeth:

a) Elisabeth shows special respect to the One conceived in the womb of Saint Virgin Mary;

b) The baby in the mother’s womb participates, in its own way, in the events his mother does; the Evangelist tells us that as soon as Elisabeth received Mary’s salute, the child jumped with gladness inside her (Luke 1:44), which fact shows that the child feels the presence of God even before being born.

While extending into the Gentile space, the Christian message was faced with a world and civilisation which had quite different aspirations and coordinates than those established by Revelation. The abortive practices, for example, either by surgery method or by medicines had long been known in the Gentile’s environment. What the Greek-Roman world did not know was the idea of sin, of ugly things to God, namely the infringement, right by one’s own will, of God’s will, an idea present in the Jewish tradition and Christian life. The writings of Saint Paul present sins which if committed will not allow people to

go into the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:19-10; Gal 5:20, Ephesians 5:5). One of them is consuming pharmakeia (venevicia). The Cornelian law of 81 BC interpreted this term as abortive medicine. Therefore, in the New Testament we have the proof that the sin of killing the foetuses is one of the most serious, one of those which excludes us from the Kingdom of God.

That was and remained the view of the Church on such sins.

The epistle to Barnaba (written at the beginning of the 2nd century) rendered the point of view of the Church of the time saying: "Love your neighbour more than your own soul. You shall not kill the child, foetus in his mother's womb; neither you will kill him after he was born..." (19:5). The same point of view will be expressed in the Didachia (Law) of the 12 Apostles (2:2, 5:2). Following the same line of the Church concern, Tertulian would express in the 3rd century the idea of the concomitant existence of the soul and body: both of them are formed at the same time (De anima 27:210). The same Tertulian would call abortion murder (Apologeticum 9), and Hipolit the Roman would blame the sterilising medicine (Philosophumena 9:12). Points of view similar to those of Tertulian and Hipolit can be found at Clement the Alexandrine (The Pedagogue, 2:10:96) and Minucius Felix (Octavius 30:2). "The Letter to Diognet", the gem of the Christian literature of the first three centuries, shows us that one of the things that distinguishes the Christians from the non-Christians is that they do not kill their babies: "They marry as all people do, and give birth to children, but they do not give up the unborn ones" (3:6).

In the 4th century, several Holy Fathers present the point of view of the Church on abortion. We remember some of them: Saint Gregory of Nyssa (De hom.op.29, In Canticum, 8), Saint Ephrem the Syrian (Discourse on the theme of God, 10), Saint John Chrysostom (In Rom, 24:4), Lactaniu, Ambrozie, Ieronim and others. Saint Basil, for example, says that the woman who kills the foetus will be punished for murder (Ep. 188 and Can. 2).

The Council of Elvira (305 – 306) decides to excommunicate of the woman who had abortion, with no right to have the Holy Communion but on the death bed (Canons 63, 68). The Quinisext Council (691), canon 91, forbids the women who have abortive medicine to get the Holy Communion for ten years time.

Everything mentioned above shows that abortion was a practice alien to Christianity, known in a world where there was no fear, or love of God. All the Holy Fathers show that abortion is infanticide in any phase. This one infringes the divine commandment: "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13). It is so much the more serious as it means killing a human being unable to defend itself.

The texts presented above show that the Church has always considered abortive medicine as a very serious sin, equal to abortion. Therefore, as serious as the surgery abortion are the mechanic barriers (I.U.D. and certain pills, RU 486 too) designed to hinder the fecundated ovule to fix into the womb (this is an abortive practice too) and the contraceptives, with unknown consequences for the woman's body.

Abortion and all abortive practices are serious sins because:

- A human being is killed through them;
- The woman's dignity is affected;
- They risk maiming the woman's body, as well as sickening or causing the premature death of the mother or of the young woman.
 - If the mother's life is really in danger due to pregnancy or birth, priority should be given to the woman's life, not because her life has a greater value in itself, but due to her relations and responsibilities towards other persons who depend on her.
 - In case the genetic investigation reveals an abnormal child unborn, the advice is to give birth to the child, observing his right to life, but the decision belongs to the family, after the physician and father confessor have informed them of all the moral and maintaining implications. All these things should be resolved from the perspective of the saving significance of the presence of a handicapped being in the life of every person and in that of the community.
 - The risk of abortion because of rape or incest must be avoided first of all at the level of education teaching not to commit such sins. In case the state of pregnancy appeared, the child will be born, adopted, according to case.
 - Abortion can never be morally justified by the economical state of the family, by the disagreements between partners, by the effect on the career of the future mother or on her physical aspect.

The woman must not be reduced to the level of the object to satisfy the man's pleasure; she must not be humiliated in what is more specific to her, namely her feminineness and motherhood.

The woman's dignity and good health are affected by the pills based on hormones for hindering fecundation. Their serious effects are not seen right away, but they will certainly appear later. Having been substances with

hormonal effects over the woman's body, their effects are unexpected. The list of the diseases caused sooner or later to the women who use abortive and contraceptive medicines is impressive (all these medicines are based on hormones).

For example, from 1977 – 1988, a study was done in England on 200,000 women concerning the effect of the contraceptive pills based on hormones. The percentage of the diseases caused by cardio-vascular diseases was 40% bigger in the case of the women who used such pills compared to those who have not. The risk of brain strokes was 6,5 bigger at the women who used such pills. The risk of pelvic infections is 7 times bigger at the women who used the pills compared to those who have not; the risk of infertility grew as such.

Everything mentioned above shows that abortion, the abortive or contraceptive treatments are serious sins which kill human beings, hinder the natural process of procreating human beings, affect and endanger the dignity and life of the young woman and exclude us, at last, from the Kingdom of God the Christians long for.

Unfortunately, the abortive (and contraceptive) practices are a reality of the contemporary secularised world. In the name of the immediate "happiness" and of comfort, generations of people are killed and the young woman – a mother or not – dies. The Church cannot be indifferent to this tragic reality maintained by institutions called sometimes "charitable", "humanist" or even "medical".

The contemporary secularised society justifies abortion in various ways, most times from a medical and social point of view. Having lived in the world, the Church is realist, but she cannot be superficial in regard to the reasons concerning the tendencies to justify abortion.

Therefore,

In order to prevent these serious sins an intense process of information regarding the seriousness of abortion is needed (taking into account all its medical, psychological, social and religious aspects). Society should offer concrete solutions. The Church should initiate great effort to educate today's man in regard to the purpose of human sexuality. The priest's pastoral activity should be diversified.

The Church should appeal to all factors focused on the education of the people or on their good health; man should be educated and taught what true

gentleness and love mean, to put good order in his life in the present social conditions.

The factors of political and administrative decision must be appealed to facilitate the creation of the conditions needed lest the woman be humiliated, and neither she be content with humiliation (considering this state normal).

Πηγή: <https://patriarhia.ro/abortion-6038-en.html>