

Summary

- From the moment of conception, every human life is beautiful, every human life is precious and every human life is sacred.
- Government does *not* have to provide for abortion in Ireland to comply with the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights.
- Legislating for abortion denies the humanity and dignity of the child in the womb and violates the most basic human right of all – the right to life.
- It is never necessary to target the life of the baby in the womb to save the life of the mother. Ireland, without abortion, is consistently one of the safest countries in the world in which to be pregnant.
- Many women who have had abortions speak of their deep regret, and research also confirms the harm that abortion can cause women.
- International experience shows that once abortion is legalised, even in apparently very limited situations, it becomes more widespread than was first intended.

How can I support the 'Choose Life' initiative?

- Say the 'Choose Life' prayer every day during the *special month of prayer* between Sunday, 7 October and the Feast of All the Saints of Ireland on Tuesday, 6 November.
- Visit our special www.chooselife2012.ie website for additional resources and watch the video presentation there.
- Sign up to the '@chooselife2012' Twitter account and receive regular messages on the 'Choose Life' theme.
- Contact your public representatives asking them to 'Choose Life' and not to introduce abortion to Ireland. Invite them to set out their position on this important matter.
- Write letters to local and national newspapers expressing your views. Participate in radio and television debates and use social media such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs to participate in discussions about this issue.
- Make people aware of the many services of CURA Crisis Pregnancy Support Service. Details can be found in your parish or at www.cura.ie.
- Volunteer with a pro-life group.

The Precious Life of the Unborn Child

The baby's life in the womb is an astonishing odyssey of growth and development. As science makes clear, it is at fertilisation that a new, unique and genetically complete human being comes into existence.

From that moment onwards, each of us did not grow and develop into a human being. We grew and developed as a human being.

- **18–21 days** after conception, before many women will even realise they are pregnant, the baby's heart is beating.
- At **8 weeks** every organ to be found in a fully grown adult person is already formed.
- At **11 weeks** fingerprints and fingernails can be clearly seen.
- At **12 weeks** the baby's lips open and close. The baby can turn her or his head and move around the womb.
- At **16 weeks** the baby reacts to sound, sucks, swallows and yawns.
- At **18 weeks** most mothers feel the baby moving. The baby exercises her or his developing muscles by pushing with the feet and head. The baby now sucks her or his thumb.
- At **24 weeks** the baby continues moving, hearing and perhaps even dreaming.
- At **30–40 weeks** the baby, if protected from harm, will continue to grow bigger and stronger until it is time to be born.



In England and Wales abortion is lawful up to 24 weeks and sometimes later. In 2011 there were 196,082 abortions in England and Wales.



Day for Life is celebrated yearly by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Scotland and England and Wales. It is a day dedicated to raising awareness about the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition: www.dayforlife.org

Resources

WEBSITES

www.chooselife2012.ie

Choose Life website

www.catholicbishops.ie

Irish Bishops' Conference website

www.dayforlife.org

Day for Life website

www.cura.ie

CURA website

RELEVANT PUBLICATIONS

What is a Person? by Bishop Donal Murray
Available from www.veritas.ie

Human Life is Sacred by Irish Bishops' Conference
Available from www.catholicbishops.ie



www.chooselife2012.ie



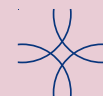
Choose Life 2012



www.twitter.com/chooselife2012



ChooseLife2012



VERITAS
www.veritas.ie

Day for Life

Sunday, 7 October 2012

*Every human life is beautiful,
every human life is precious*

Choose Life!



IRISH CATHOLIC
BISHOPS' CONFERENCE
COMHDHÁIL EASPAG CAITLICEACH ÉIREANN

Life is precious

Amidst all the rich variety of life on earth, human life is cause for special wonder. We alone can contemplate the beauty around us. We alone can create art and music and literature to express this beauty. We alone can love one another.

Each human being has the capacity to experience and express this beauty and love in a unique way and, in doing so, to enrich others. We know that we did not create the beauty and the love around us. We know that we did not create ourselves.

When we say that human life is sacred we are recognising something that is sensed not only by religious people but by everyone who appreciates the wonder of human life. As human beings we depend on one another and so others have the right to expect something from us – it is the right to be recognised and respected and never to be treated as less than he or she is. That is true at every moment of our life – from its first beginnings to its natural end.

A decisive moment for Ireland

The Church's annual *Day for Life* coincides this year with a decisive moment for Ireland. In the coming weeks, our Government will decide how to respond to a 2010 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights.

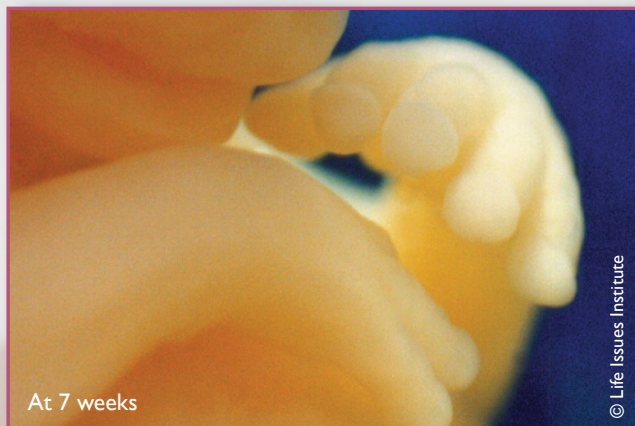
Despite what some have asserted, the Irish Government is under no obligation to legislate for abortion because of this ruling of the European Court.

On the contrary, our Government is free to respond by seeking full protection in Irish law for the right to life of the baby in the womb. This could be done while ensuring that women in pregnancy continue to receive every treatment necessary to safeguard their lives.

The Government's choice will also have implications for attitudes to abortion in Northern Ireland. And so, our message is for people of all backgrounds and traditions across this island. To all who believe in the equal dignity and beauty of every human life, we say: join us in calling on our public representatives to respect the humanity and life of children in the womb and to reject abortion.

Every life deserves respect at all stages

The Church has never taught that the life of a child in the womb should be preferred to that of a mother. By virtue of their common humanity, the lives of both a mother and her unborn baby are sacred.



However, because a baby in the womb is voiceless, some would have us believe that she or he is less human or less deserving of life. Advances in genetics and technology make it easier than ever to see the flaws in such thinking.

Any mother or father who has gazed in wonder at an ultrasound scan of their baby, or heard his or her heart beating for the first time, will know how rapid and beautiful is the development of their baby in the womb. They will know that their baby does not suddenly become a human being at birth. And they will know that the daughter or son now present before them as an infant or teenager is the same human life, the same human child they saw in that first scan.

As science makes clear, it is at fertilisation that a new, unique and genetically complete human being comes into existence. From that moment onwards, each of us did not grow and develop *into* a human being, but grew and developed *as* a human being.

The child in the womb is not a 'potential' life, but a human life with potential – a precious and God-given potential that all of us, whether as parents, nurses, midwives, doctors, politicians, lawyers, citizens or voters, are called to respect and protect.

We should protect and cherish the most vulnerable

If our concern for human rights is to mean anything, it must include concern for the most basic human right of all – the right not to be killed. This right exists regardless of stage of development, gender, physical health or intellectual capacity. A primary function of any state or legal system is to vindicate the right to life, especially of the most defenceless and vulnerable members of the human family.

Under Article 40.3.3 of our Constitution, the State recognises 'the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect' that right.

The clear intention of this Article is to equally protect from direct attack the right to life of both a mother and her unborn child. But this intention was undermined by the decision of the Irish Supreme Court in 1992. The 'X Case' judgment of the Supreme Court interpreted this Article as permitting the direct killing of a baby in the womb in certain circumstances.

To be clear: if the Government now chooses to legislate in line with the Supreme Court judgment in the 'X Case', whether by statute or ministerial regulations, this will mean legislating for abortion in Ireland for the first time.

Protecting both mother and baby

Those who support such legislation claim that abortion can be necessary to save the life of a mother. This is not correct.

Abortion is the direct and intentional destruction of an unborn baby. In rare cases, where a seriously ill pregnant woman needs medical treatment which can put the health, and even the life, of her baby at risk, every effort is made to protect and save the baby. Such treatments are legally and ethically permissible as, unlike abortion, *they do not directly and intentionally seek to destroy the life of the unborn baby*. In fact, everyone wants the baby to survive.

To their great credit, nurses and doctors in Irish hospitals understand and apply this basic but vital distinction. In fact, recent statistics from the World Health Organisation confirm yet again that Ireland, without abortion, remains one of the safest countries in the world in which to be pregnant and to give birth. This is something we should be proud of as a country and seek to protect.

Compassion and care in difficult circumstances

We must show the utmost compassion for women who find themselves with an unwanted pregnancy. Understandably, many women feel isolated, frightened or distraught when faced with such a potentially life-changing situation. This is especially the case where pregnancy results from an act of violence against a girl or woman. Such acts are vile, criminal and gravely immoral and deserve to be utterly condemned by all. In standing by the rights and supporting the needs of victims of rape, it cannot be forgotten that the child conceived in such terrible circumstances remains a totally innocent and unique human life.

As a society we are challenged to give all the encouragement and care required to help a woman faced with an unwanted pregnancy and to enable her to respond in a life-affirming and positive way.

We warmly endorse the work of *CURA Crisis Pregnancy Support Service* which was set up as an agency of the Irish Bishops' Conference in 1977 to ensure that any woman who is unhappily pregnant, for whatever reason, has ready access to compassionate, understanding and expert support. It is important too that we remember in our prayers women experiencing the anguish of an unwanted pregnancy. We must also reach out with sensitivity to support and encourage those who discover that their 'wanted' child in the womb has a serious or life-threatening condition.

Too often abortion is talked about as if it offers a 'solution' to difficult or tragic circumstances. But the deliberate taking of innocent life can never be the basis for a genuinely humane or compassionate solution. Moreover, international experience shows that once abortion is introduced, even for apparently very restricted or limited situations, it becomes more widespread than was first intended.

The child in the womb is not a 'potential' life, but a human life with potential

In recent years we have also become more aware of the negative consequences of abortion for women, psychological as well as spiritual. We need to reach out to those who are suffering as a result.

As children of the God who is Love, we are called to show, through our practical care and solidarity, that there is always a better alternative to abortion for both mother and child.

Our call to all: Choose life!

Our public representatives now face a critical decision. They can preserve current medical practice which guarantees necessary treatment for women in pregnancy while respecting the right to life of the baby. Or they can choose to introduce abortion to Ireland for the first time, with all the tragic consequences this will have.

Faced with this decision, we ask our public representatives to make a positive choice. Every human life is beautiful, every human life is precious and every human life is sacred: *Choose life!*