

What is abortion ?

Abortion is the premature death of the embryo or fetus during his development.

We talk about **spontaneous abortion** or miscarriage when the death is not caused deliberately.

We talk about **induced abortion** or **direct abortion** when someone voluntarily puts an end to the life of the embryo or fetus.

The expression "termination of pregnancy" masks the reality that is the death of the child, the one who is most directly interested in living.

The situations of women who consider having an abortion are very different. Laws regulating abortion also vary greatly from one country to another. In some countries abortion is legal and in others it is only permitted or tolerated. A distinction is made between:

- **Elective abortion**, in the case of maternal distress (rape, unwanted pregnancy, social insecurity...), and
- **"Medically indicated" abortion**, permitted in some countries throughout the 9 months of pregnancy, if the mother's life is in danger or if the fetus is likely to have a serious, incurable ailment.

Worldwide, there are around 50 million abortions every year, which means that one out of every five pregnancies ends in abortion.

Statistics show that in France there are around 240,000 abortions per year, 1 million in the U.S.A. and around 4.2 million in Central America and South America; the last figure is merely an estimate. These are millions of unique, irreplaceable children.

Methods

Suction

The fetus is dismembered by aspiration (suction). This method is commonly used for elective abortions.

Dilation and curettage

The embryo is destroyed with a surgical instrument and the remains are removed from the uterus.

Partial birth

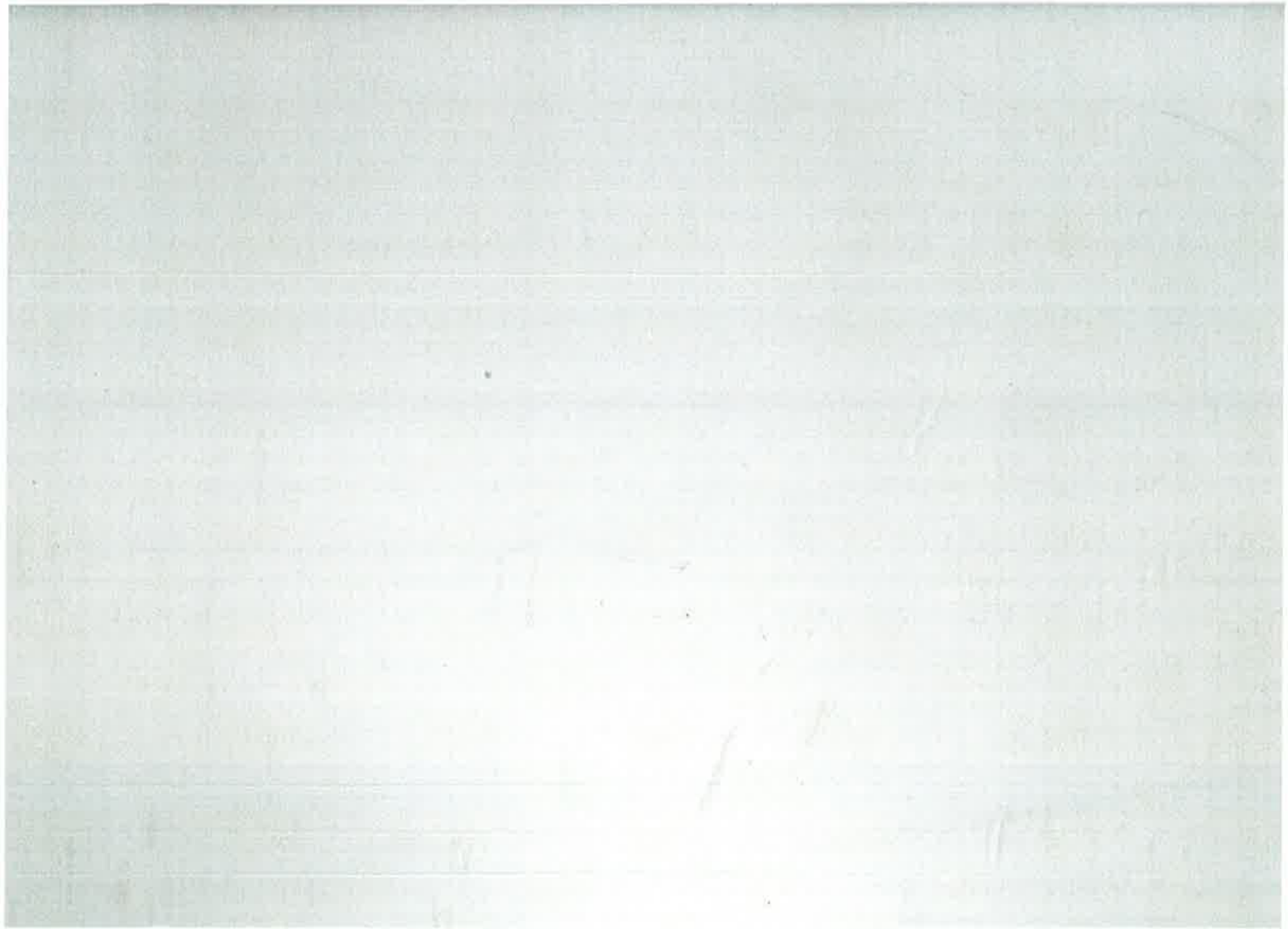
This allows live nerve cells to be obtained from the fetus for research. The process is too terrible to describe here.

Injection

- Potassium chloride is injected into the heart of the fetus, killing him and causing premature delivery.
- A hypertonic solution (one with a higher salt concentration than in the cells of the baby's body) is injected into the amniotic fluid, which then kills the baby within a few hours. Twenty-four hours later, the mother delivers a still-born child. This type of abortion is used for "medically indicated" abortions up to the ninth month of gestation.

WARNING:

This chapter may shock some of you. Since abortion is a violent reality, describing it, even discreetly, might offend some people. But in order to understand what is at stake, it is necessary to talk about it. We have tried to present this reality plainly, while choosing to not depict aborted fetuses.



Methods

Intrauterine device

An intrauterine device (IUD) is placed in the uterus to prevent pregnancies. It is contraceptive because it is a chemical obstacle to sperm; it can but does not always prevent them from reaching the ovum. It also causes an early abortion when a sperm cell has nonetheless managed to reach the ovum and fertilize it: then the intrauterine device mechanically prevents the embryo from implanting in the uterus, condemning it to death (it irritates the uterine lining, which prevents the implantation of the embryo).

RU-486 pill

This pill makes the mucus of the uterus' lining unsuitable for the survival of an embryo that is already implanted. It causes an abortion.

Morning-after pill/ "emergency contraception"

If taken at a certain time in the menstrual cycle, this pill prevents the occurrence of fertilization and has a contraceptive effect. It is also possible, however, that it acts by preventing the implantation of an embryo that has already been conceived, thus aborting it.

▶ An intrauterine device and the morning-after pill can cause abortions when they prevent the implantation of the embryo.

Frequently asked questions

“Should a woman get help?”

A woman thinking about having an abortion needs someone to listen to her.

After an abortion, a woman must get help, because she may be quite alone and have feelings of guilt. She must be able to shape her future while agreeing to include this event in it.

“If you are pregnant and alone, what is the way out?”

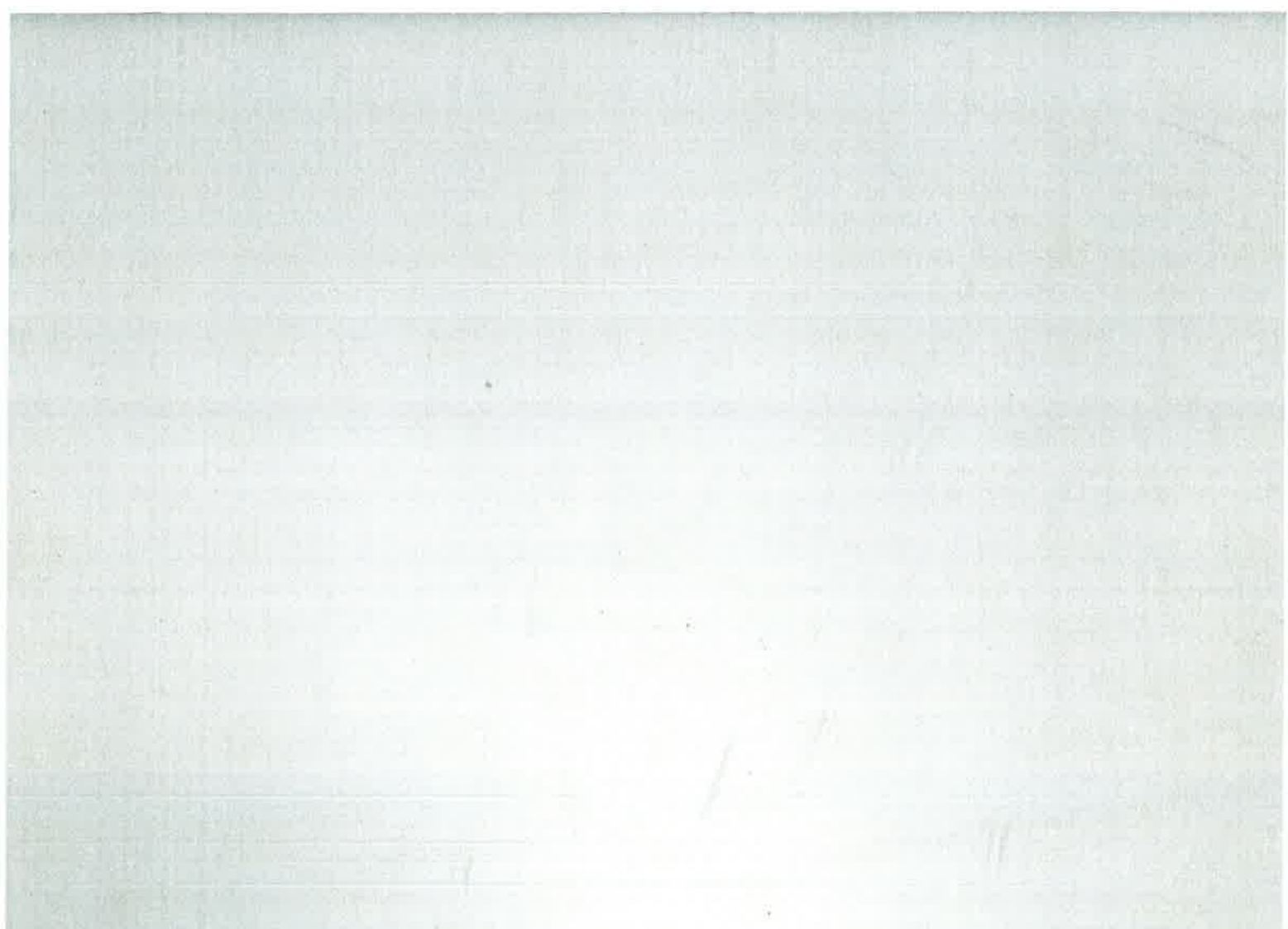
A pregnant woman, especially if she is alone, can be fearful and dejected and may feel overwhelmed by the situation. She needs to be listened to, supported, and sometimes helped financially. Although elective abortion may seem to her to be the best option in a bad situation, she should know that many women painfully regret their abortions and regret not having chosen life and love for their children. To lessen her fear and loneliness, she should know that groups are there to help and guide her.

“Does abortion have psychological consequences for the woman?”

Yes. Many women who have aborted show signs of **depression** and other disorders, including guilt, loss of self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, insomnia, anger, sexual troubles, nightmares about her baby. ... A woman who has aborted a child may not make the connection of her symptoms to her abortion. These consequences, which can appear right away or much later, are now well known and are identified by the name of **“post-abortion syndrome.”** These symptoms are intensified every time the mother meets a pregnant woman, sees a baby, passes by an abortion facility, or thinks of the anniversary of her baby's death.

Post-abortion syndrome is not limited to the mother. It is possible for it to extend to those close to her: to the father, to brothers and sisters, and others.

Women throughout the world are starting to give witness: “If only we had known.” For more information, see silentnomoreawareness.org.



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Frequently asked questions

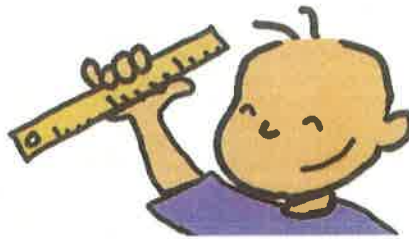
“Is there a right to abortion?”

How did we get to the point of considering abortion as a woman's right? It was by forgetting the main victim of this act: the pre-born child, and by answering yes to questions of this sort: “Shouldn't a woman decide whether or not she is ready to welcome a child?” As though the woman were the only one concerned! Now the child did not ask for any of this; he is the product of the relations that his parents had together. The child therefore becomes a problem... Getting rid of the “problem” seems like the only solution imaginable, but this does not take into consideration the fact that the child is present from the moment of conception and that he has no way of making his voice heard. The child is therefore at the mercy of the good will of those who brought him into life and now reject his right to be born. Any other alternative that might benefit both the woman and the child is unfortunately disregarded, although solutions exist (adoption by a sterile couple). Could we finally talk about the good of the child instead of about the “right to abortion”?

“What about abortion worldwide?”

There are an estimated 50 million abortions each year throughout the world, and more than a billion legal abortions have been performed worldwide because of legalization in various countries since the end of World War II. These were at first totalitarian regimes that legalized abortion in the 1960s, achieving record abortion rates of about two abortions for every live birth. Then most so-called developed nations decriminalized abortion in the 1970s.

Source: <http://www.numberofabortions.com>



The paradox involved in the death of a 6-month-old fetus

Recently “prenatal grief counseling” has been available in places for the families of infants who die before a full-term pregnancy is completed. Indeed, relatives suffer when society fails to acknowledge their child. Some propose a ceremony for these families. However, judges refuse to use the term “relatives” for these children who die in their mother's womb: they recognize only children who are born alive. The expression “lifeless child” is coming into use as a compassionate concession toward the families. Now the parents need society to recognize their babies and to admit that they did in fact exist.

At the age of 2 months, I measure 3 cm from head to buttocks. With a microscope you can see my fingerprints!

Ethical reflections

Woman and child: friends or enemies?

Why should the mother's option to kill her child overrule the child's right to live? Can the child be considered as an unjust aggressor? Even though this theory has unfortunately been developed by some philosophers, **the child is always innocent**. The bond that unites the mother and her baby, which is the very symbol of love and peace, is terribly damaged by a law that allows abortion.

Cases of rape

It is understandable that a woman may not want the child of a rape. The mother needs special care after experiencing such trauma, but killing her child does not undo the tragedy. On the contrary, it aggravates it. The criminal must be punished, but why should the child, who is innocent, suffer the death penalty?

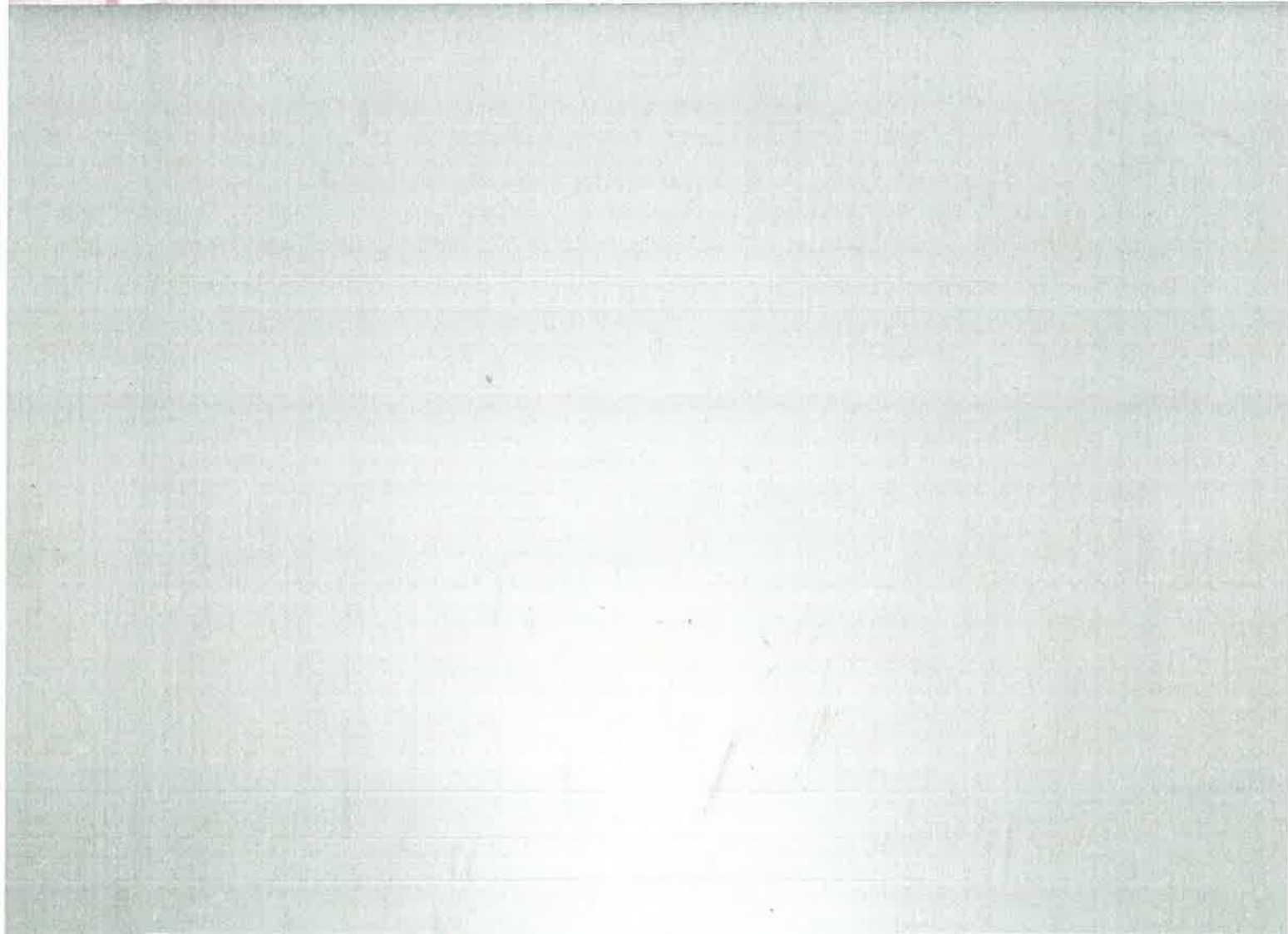
Women's empowerment

Some claim that abortion liberates a woman from the constraints of motherhood and gives her a "right to control her own body."

Biologically, though, the child is not a part of the mother's body: the child is a guest. Therefore the mother cannot dispose of the unborn.

Moreover, abortion is an attack on the very nature of woman, which is to be a mother. The immense suffering of sterility demonstrates what an essential part of the feminine identity motherhood is.

Hence killing one's child cannot be the source of freedom or personal fulfillment.



Ethical reflections

Can abortion be called a choice?

In choosing abortion, parents choose death for their child. Thus, the law gives parents the right to kill. What is legal is not necessarily moral. Even in countries where the law allows it, conscience recalls this fundamental principle: **"Thou shalt not kill."**

Money problems

Are financial problems sufficient reason to terminate a pregnancy? The best way to help a woman in difficulty is not to help her kill a life but rather to **resolve her financial problems**. If the mother cannot raise her child, adoption is another possible solution for her.

What about fathers?

It is not uncommon that young pregnant women feel obliged to abort because the father does not want to take responsibility for their child.

Conversely, it sometimes happens that women abort against the will of the child's father.

The father cannot oppose the mother's will and protect his child. Is it not, however, the child of them both? The child is "flesh of the flesh" of both of them through procreation.

A young 22-year-old father confided that he had nearly jumped out of a window when he learned that his girlfriend had aborted their child.

The law ignores the father.

"A society that kills its children loses its souls and its hope at the same time."

JÉRÔME LEJEUNE

Adoption

In cases of extreme hardship, it may happen that a mother cannot raise her child. She can then entrust her baby to adoptive parents. Unlike abortion, in which the child loses everything, adoption gives him a chance: he loses his mother but keeps his life and finds new parents. Many parents are ready to welcome a child through adoption.

Abortion and contraception

The contraceptive mentality and abortion

The contraceptive mentality (intentionally rejecting a child) leads to accepting abortion more readily as a solution to the “problem” of an “unwanted pregnancy.” INPES¹ notes that “an unintended pregnancy is less and less welcome” and that “60% of unwanted pregnancies are ended with an abortion, as opposed to 40% a few years ago.”

The French National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED)² also observes that “the tendency to resort to abortion in the case of an unintended pregnancy has increased along with improvements in fertility control.”

1- Institut national de prévention et d'éducation pour la santé (INPES), *Les Français et la contraception*, June 5, 2007.

2- “La loi Neuwirth (France) quarante ans après: une révolution inachevée?” A study by the INED published in *Population et Sociétés* 439 (November 27, 2007).

Does contraception prevent abortion?

It is often said that contraception is the most effective remedy against abortion. But is this true?

No, for 3 reasons:

- The contraceptive mentality leads to accepting abortion more readily in the case of an “unwanted pregnancy.”
- Contraception encourages sexual relations with multiple partners in unstable relationships, which in fact increases the number of unintended pregnancies.
- Moreover, some contraceptive pills can cause early abortions of which the woman is not even aware.

Statistics confirm that increased contraception use does not decrease the number of abortions.

The Pill and abortion

All contraceptive pills cause a percentage of early abortions. Indeed, the classic “combined,” or estrogen-progestin, pills act as contraceptives when they block ovulation and modify the cervical mucus, making it hostile to sperm. But when one of these mechanisms is not enough (1 out of 10 times ovulation is not blocked), a third effect of the Pill takes over: the modification of the uterine lining to prevent the implantation of the embryo. This, then, is an abortive effect, since the embryo dies. The micro-dose pills and progestin contraceptives (“mini-pill,” “morning-after pill,” “emergency contraception,” contraceptive shots, and implants of contraceptives under the skin) have the same effect. In these cases, the abortion takes place without the woman being aware of it.

Testimonies

I was 22 years old. For 3 years I had been having a relationship with a student from my school. One night, since I had forgotten my pill, we used a condom that happened to tear. Two weeks later, my life was turned upside-down: I was pregnant.... From then on, the loneliness that I felt and the pressure from the child's father to abort were immense: he wanted nothing to do with the child. We fought violently for 6 days, then I gave in, too isolated and intimidated and without any support from my family. When I woke up there was nothing left: the world was empty. Ten days later I experienced 2 days of hemorrhaging. For the next 20 years, on the "anniversary" of that day, I have relived the anguish and the loneliness of that moment and I have had terrible stomach pains. At the birth of each of my children I experienced months of depression and terrible nightmares, that I was killing my baby with my own hands. Today, at age 40, not one day passes without my thinking about that child and about the part of myself that I killed in having an abortion.

EMMA, a mom

Accepting abortion counteracts peace

I feel the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a direct war, a direct killing—direct murder by the mother herself.... If a mother can kill her own child, what is left [but] for me to kill you and you kill me?

MOTHER TERESA

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.” Jeremiah 1:5

What the Church says...

God alone is the Lord of life

“Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end. God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end: no one can under any circumstance claim for himself the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2258

Abortion is a serious sin

“Direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.” *Evangelium vitae*, no. 62.

God is merciful

“I would now like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart

may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. To the same Father and his mercy you can with sure hope entrust your child. “With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone’s right to life.

“Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.” *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 99