



Pro-Life Bulletin Board

A project of American Life League, Inc.

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Abortion: What about protecting the life of the mother?

We hear the question often when we're defending a no-exceptions approach to abortion: What if the pregnancy poses a threat to the health or life of the mother? Many people who do not understand the inherent value of every person from conception struggle with the question of abortion for the health or life of the mother. Do pro-lifers oppose abortion even in these cases?

The answer is yes.

Sir Albert William Liley, the father of modern fetology, teaches: "No matter how severe the mother's heart disease, renal complaint, diabetes or mental illness, no one would be suggesting abortion was essential if the mother wanted the baby."

Abortion is intentional killing

It is important to distinguish between direct abortion, which is the intentional and willed destruction of a preborn child, and a legitimate treatment a pregnant mother may choose to save her life. Such operations—such as the removal of a cancerous uterus or an ectopic pregnancy that poses the threat of imminent death—are not considered direct abortions.

They are justified under a concept called the "principle of double effect." Under this principle, the death of the child is an unintended effect of an operation independently justified by the critical necessity of saving the mother's life.

The baby is the second patient

The preborn baby is a patient to be cared for and treated just as the mother is cared for and treated. This means that both the mother and her child are to be respected as human beings and are deserving

of equal protection. There is a moral obligation to do everything medically possible to save the lives of both mother and child in life-threatening circumstances.

Abortion will not "cure" any life-threatening condition a mother might have. In certain circumstances, pregnancy may, in fact, relieve a medical condition. The outcome of a "problem" pregnancy can never be guaranteed, and we need to remember that doctors are not God.

The point: No exceptions

Once pro-lifers say that there can be a "good reason" to kill a preborn baby, the foundation of the pro-life position crumbles. Either the preborn child is a person, or the child is not a person. Since the preborn child is a person, there can be no exceptions for abortion.

The Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision allowed abortion on demand at any time during the full nine months of pregnancy. In his written opinion on the case, Justice Harry Blackmun made a point that goes right to the heart of the "life of the mother" exception. In *Roe v. Wade*, the state of Texas argued to the Supreme Court "that a fetus is entitled to Fourteenth Amendment protection as a person."

Blackmun pointed out the illogic of the statement in light of the state's "life of the mother" exception. "If the fetus is a person who is not to be deprived of life without due process of law," Blackmun wrote, "does not the Texas exception appear to be out of line with the [Fourteenth] Amendment's command?" Indeed, it was ruled out of line, thus paving the way for unlimited abortion in America.

Pregnant and in need of help?

Heartbeat International: 800-395-4357