



# *LIFE IS A GIFT*

*Tuesday, October 18, 2016*

**C**an you imagine a world without abortion? In some ways it is easy—just no more abortion. But think about it all the way. What does it mean for the world? What might it mean for you?

Abortion is the most devastating and contentious social issue in modern history. With over 40 million babies aborted since the passage of the infamous Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision in 1973, abortion has claimed more lives than every war the United States has been involved in, put together.

These numbers are staggering, to the point where we become desensitized to the sheer magnitude of what this means for the victims of abortion, for us, and for our world.

Abortion is the ending of an unborn human life. It is not a modern problem. People through the millennia have looked for ways to end pregnancies. Why? Because having babies and raising children is hard and very often inconvenient.



*One of the serious problems of our time is clearly the changed relationship with respect to life. A widespread and insensitive mentality has led to the loss of the proper personal and social sensitivity to welcome new life. The tragedy of abortion is experienced by some with a superficial awareness, as if not realizing the extreme harm that such an act entails. Many others, on the other hand, although experiencing this moment as a defeat, believe they have no other option. I think in particular of all the women who have resorted to abortion. I am well aware of the pressure that has led them to this decision. I know that it is an existential and moral ordeal. I have met so many women who bear in their heart the scar of this agonizing and painful decision. What has happened is profoundly unjust; yet only understanding the truth of it can enable one not to lose hope.*

Pope Francis, Sept 1, 2015

## PRE-BORN LIFE

In the past, it was possible for a woman to have an abortion under the false belief that what she was doing was not actually taking a human life.

Science had not advanced to the point it is today, so people thought the developing baby was nothing more than a mass of cells without “personhood”. Maybe just a “potential person”.

Today we know that is not true. Advances in science now tell us that an unborn baby’s heart begins to beat when the baby is only 22 days old; brain waves are detected at 6 weeks, and a baby can feel pain and respond to it as early as 20 weeks.

But, even before that, from the very moment of conception, something amazing is already happening. The genes of the mom and the dad are no longer acting separately. They have created a new human being who is determining his or her own development and building a body that will continue to grow until that person’s death. There is no longer any doubt about what abortion does. It stops the life of a growing, developing unborn child.

If simply making these statements about the reality of the unborn child were enough to end abortion, it would have ended years ago. Unfortunately, the situation is far more complex than that. Many people cannot or will not believe the science of preborn human life because to do so means they have to change their entire way of thinking about themselves and their own life choices.

## WHAT WOULD A WORLD WITHOUT ABORTION ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?

In a world without abortion, EVERY SINGLE time a woman found out she was pregnant, the first thing she would be told is “congratulations!” Whether she was 16 or 49; rich or poor; married or single, having a baby in perfect health or one with Down syndrome, this mom would be affirmed that her child was a perfect creation, a gift that God was sending to the world. It doesn’t mean that every situation is perfect, but that every person is created perfect.

In a world without abortion, parents who were having a hard time would be taken care of within their own communities. Even small acts of kindness can add up quickly and take the burden off over-stressed parents: neighbors, families and churches donating baby things; friends swapping child care; communities coming together to truly support each other rather than looking away because it is “somebody else’s problem”.

In a world without abortion, legislators would create support systems for parents. Things like paid maternity leave and affordable childcare are extremely important to work toward. But, what about tax incentives for parents who stay home with their kids? Corporations supporting flexible working conditions so parents can telecommute? Tax incentives for grandparents and other family members who watch children during the workday?

In a world without abortion, schools would have every resource for women and girls who are pregnant or parenting. Students would be able to learn from home, having student-housing that welcomes children, and free child care on campus. Classes would accommodate maternity leave so students don’t lose credit or have to repeat classes.

In a world without abortion, parents who cannot take care of their own children would place them with families who are waiting to adopt and give these children a forever home. Families who cannot have children of their own would adopt babies and kids in foster care. All families would open their hearts to kids in need of a home and a family.

In a world without abortion, men and women would respect the power of their bodies to create new human life and would treat each other, and their own sexuality, with the reverence they are due. When couples engage in sex, they would do so with the full knowledge that their action might result in the conception of a new human life with an eternal soul. And, if they are not prepared to welcome a new baby into their lives, they will refrain from sex out of respect for themselves, their partners, and the baby they might bring into the world.

## HOW ABOUT MY WORLD WITHOUT ABORTION?

When abortion is no longer a choice, things change. Imagine this in a different scenario:

Let’s say you made a commitment to the tennis team. You promised yourself that you wouldn’t quit—no matter what. With that attitude, you go to practice every day doing your best. Maybe you have really bad days. Maybe some teammates are unkind to you. Maybe your coach is really mean. Maybe you sustain an injury. Maybe the cost to be on the team is more than you can afford. Maybe your bus breaks down on the way to your most important match. Life is uncertain all the time. Any

one of these factors might be enough to make someone want to quit. But, if you have made a commitment to stay on the team, then you will find a way to overcome any obstacle to keep your commitment. And any thought of quitting? It’s not even in your mind or part of your decision process.

Some things in life (will your dream college accept you?) are out of our control. We can work and work, but at the end of the day it is someone else’s decision.

*A widespread and insensitive mentality has led to the loss of the proper personal and social sensitivity to welcome new life.*

– Pope Francis

**Give that child to me. I want it. I will care for it. I am willing to accept any child who would be aborted and to give that child to a married couple who will love the child and be loved by the child.**

Mother Teresa

Other things are completely within our control. If you make a decision that abortion will not be part of your life, then, if you ever find yourself in a situation where abortion could be an option, you won't even consider it. Instead, you will find the resources and the strength to make the choice for life. Because, the resources are out there and the strength will be given to you—you just have to look for them.

### HOW DOES IMAGINATION BECOME REALITY?

None of us are JK Rowling, with the power to create an entire world from our imaginations. But, using imagination is critical in creating social change. Now that we have a sense of what a world would look like without abortion in it, it is up to each one of us to make it a reality.

How to start? Small. Creating a world without abortion will not happen simply through legislation. Political action is a positive way to change the world, but Pope Francis reminds us continually that real change comes about through personal encounter. One person helping out another person.

Try one of these suggestions or think of one of your own:

### PRAY

Prayer is action. It changes us and those around us to be more open to the possibility of doing good. Start by saying a prayer to end abortion at school

Mass, or organizing a rosary to end abortion once a month during lunch, or even joining a 40 Days for Life campaign to pray outside an abortion clinic.

### VISIT

Don't underestimate the power of a simple gesture. Do you know someone who is pregnant or has a baby? Maybe a friend, relative or neighbor? Go visit and bring a small gift—a Starbucks gift card or a flowering plant. Better yet, offer to watch the baby/child while the mom or dad takes a nap or goes for a pedicure.

### HELP

Resources are available. There are more than 90 pro-life pregnancy resource centers and clinics in Southern California plus more maternity homes and adoption centers. Find one near you at [www.freewomensclinic.com](http://www.freewomensclinic.com) and ask how you can help. They might need diapers or formula. Maybe they need someone to design flyers or post on their Facebook page. What talents can you offer to help women find the resources they need to choose life?

### LIVE

You are the best ambassador for a world without abortion! This world is not just inhabited by other people, but by you too. What are you willing to do with your life to create a world where abortion is not necessary? This means choices you make in your own relationships and how you support friends facing a pregnancy decision. Be armed with resources that will allow you and others to choose life!

## DISCUSSION

1. What are the effects of abortion in our world?
2. What do we know about preborn human life?
3. What are some characteristics of a world without abortion?
4. How can our culture prepare for a world without abortion? What resources do we need to create or support do we need to offer?
5. What are you willing to do to ensure a world without abortion?