

# Woman's Right to Know

Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2270*)

## Church teaching

- ★ Children truly are the family's greatest treasure and most precious good. Consequently, everyone must be helped to become aware of the intrinsic evil of the crime of abortion. In attacking human life in its very first stages, it is also an aggression against society itself. Politicians and legislators, therefore, as servants of the common good, are duty bound to defend the fundamental right to life, the fruit of God's love. (*Pope Benedict XVI, Address at a Meeting on Family and Life Issues in Latin America*)
- ★ The commandment of God is formal: "You shall not kill" (*Ex. 20:13*). Life is at the same time a gift and a responsibility. It is received as a "talent" (*cf. Mt. 25:14-30*); it must be put to proper use. In order that life may bring forth fruit, many tasks are offered to man in this world and he must not shirk them. More important still, the Christian knows that eternal life depends on what, with the grace of God, he does with his life on earth. (*Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration on Procured Abortion*)
- ★ As well as the mother, there are often other people too who decide upon the death of the child in the womb...Doctors and nurses are also responsible, when they place at the service of death skills which were acquired for promoting life. But responsibility likewise falls on the legislators who have promoted and approved abortion laws, and, to the extent that they have a say in the matter, on the administrators of the health-care centers where abortions are performed. (*Pope John Paul II, The Gospel of Life*)
- ★ While at times human law may not fully articulate the moral imperative - full protection for the right to life - our legal system can and must be continually reformed so that it will increasingly fulfill its proper task of protecting the weak and preserving the right to life of every human being, born and unborn. (*USCCB, Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life*)

## Resources

- ★ **Woman's Right to Know** Texas Department of State Health Services ([www.dshs.state.tx.us/wrtk/pdf/booklet.pdf](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wrtk/pdf/booklet.pdf))
  - ★ **Texas Catholic Conference** Abortion page ([www.TXcatholic.org/abortion.asp](http://www.TXcatholic.org/abortion.asp))
  - ★ **US Conference of Catholic Bishops** Abortion page ([www.USCCB.org/prolife/issues/abortion/](http://www.USCCB.org/prolife/issues/abortion/))
  - ★ **Second Look Project** ([www.SecondLookProject.org](http://www.SecondLookProject.org))
  - ★ **National Catholic Bioethics Center** ([www.NCBCenter.org](http://www.NCBCenter.org))
  - ★ **Pontifical Academy for Life** ([www.AcademiaVita.org](http://www.AcademiaVita.org))
- (Last Updated August 5, 2008)

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The Texas Catholic Conference (TCC) is the association of the 15 Roman Catholic dioceses of the State of Texas, and is the Official Public Policy Voice of the Catholic Bishops of Texas.

## Woman's Right to Know

The Texas Catholic Conference supports the distribution of the Women's Right to Know brochure, which provides women seeking an abortion with information regarding their pregnancy. The law requires that all women seeking abortion be given the opportunity to read the brochure so they can educate themselves on both pregnancy and abortion. However factors such as the brochures not being available in a particular language, or lack of oversight on the waiting periods between receiving information and performing an abortion, may prevent women from truly gaining insight from the brochure before making their decision.

### Woman's Right to Know<sup>i</sup>

During the 2003 legislative session, the Texas Legislature passed the Woman's Right to Know Act (House Bill 15). Under this law:

- A doctor who is to perform an abortion (or the doctor's agent) must tell the woman that benefits may be available to help with medical care before, during, and after childbirth.
- The father is required to help support the child whether or not he has offered to pay for an abortion.
- The woman has the right to look at printed information, which is available in English or Spanish. The information includes a booklet with information on fetal development, pregnancy and abortion, as well as a resource directory of abortion alternatives providers. If she chooses to see the material the law describes, the doctor (or the doctor's agent) shall give her a copy at least 24 hours before the abortion is scheduled. The doctor (or agent) may instead mail her the materials, with delivery restricted to her, at least 72 hours before the abortion is scheduled. The doctor (or agent) is not required to give her the material if she signs a statement that she chooses to look at the material on this Web site.

Below are excerpts from Woman's Right to Know that educate women on the risk of abortion. Having this information prior to making a decision is crucial for a woman in considering her health and her pregnancy.

#### ***Future Childbearing and Infertility***

The further along you are in your pregnancy, the greater the chance of serious complications and the greater the risk of dying from the abortion procedure. Some complications associated with an abortion, such as infection or a cut or torn cervix, may make it difficult or impossible to become pregnant in the future or to carry a pregnancy to term. Some large studies have reported a doubling of the risk of premature birth in later pregnancy if a woman has had two induced abortions. The same studies report an 800 percent increase in the risk of extremely early premature births (less than 28 weeks) for a woman who has experienced four or more induced abortions. Very premature babies, who have the highest risk of death, also have the highest risk for lasting disabilities, such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, lung and gastrointestinal problems, and vision and hearing loss.

#### ***Breast Cancer***

Your chances of getting breast cancer are affected by your pregnancy history. If you have carried a pregnancy to term as a young woman, you may be less likely to get breast cancer in the future. However, you do not get the same protective effect if your pregnancy is ended by an abortion. The risk may be higher if your first pregnancy is aborted. While there are studies that have found an increased risk of developing breast cancer after an induced abortion, some studies have found no overall risk. There is agreement that this issue needs further study. If you have a family history of breast cancer or clinical findings of breast disease, you should seek medical advice from your physician before deciding whether to remain pregnant or have an abortion. It is always important to tell your doctor about your complete pregnancy history.

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<sup>i</sup> "Woman's Right to Know." 17 Dec. 2007. Texas Department of State Health Services.  
<<http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/wrtk/default.shtm>>.