Opinion
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by NCR Staff

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In a recent commentary, St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk reminds us that while moral considerations are important in making individual decisions, a rigid moral approach has significant limitations. When considering legislation on abortion, there are additional facts to consider.

Many thanks to St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk for providing such a balanced and informative article. In the din of protests which are so frequently uninformed, on

both sides, Schenk gives us facts and figures which should cause most of us to do the serious kind of reflection that this very complex issue demands.

(Fr.) CHRISTOPHER SENK

Fort Myers, Florida



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The facts that St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk shares about fertilized ova should be brought up in every single discussion about whether or not personhood begins at conception. Years ago, when I read about the number of blastocysts that fail to implant in the uterine lining and simply die, my mind was blown. These human organisms are not persons, and the hierarchical church does not recognize them as such in word or deed. Where are all of the homilies bemoaning the scale of pre-embryonic deaths? Schenk is right to ask: "Will we require women to bury — or baptize — their menses, most of which presumably contain fertilized eggs?" The answer is obvious: the hierarchical church will do no such thing.

I am skeptical of polls/studies of Catholics that do not distinguish between practicing and non-practicing Catholics, so I am more interested in Schenk's anecdote about female pastoral ministers being approached within parishes. I'd like to see some research published on the abortion rate of practicing Catholics, preferably broken down into how often these practicing

Catholics attend Mass.

I agree with Schenk that discussions of abortion among Catholics often assume that the human organism in the womb is of greater importance than the life of the pregnant. I do not agree that a just alternative to that is to emphasize the moral agency of pregnant women over and above the status of the human organism in the womb, provided that that organism has developed into a person. The killing of innocent human persons is abhorrent.

JEFFREY JONES

Hamburg, New York

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Thank you for St. Joseph Sr. Christine Shenk's column. The real moral authority concerning abortion lies with those who have lived with it: pregnant and formerly pregnant women, medical personnel, and others in the helping professions.

A truly misbegotten, cruel, abolitionist approach to abortion has done real harm to women and families, to the church and to our society. It will do even more harm now. Let's grant that abortion — like everything else — is a moral issue. And let's acknowledge the truth of Schenk's column, that abortion requires exercise of moral judgment.

But who should judge? You? Me? Someone in "power" many miles away? There can be only one answer to that question. Pregnant women should decide, freely, without interference or restriction. Preach what you believe, I will join you preaching the good news, but don't interfere with a woman's profoundly personal choice on this difficult issue. Stand ready to forgive her if she gets it "wrong," and humbly accept that she may not be "wrong" at all.

DAN MONGAN

Amagansett, New York

Advertisement

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In the late 70s, as a mother of eight, I was walking up the granite steps of our post office burdened with a package in one arm while gripping the tiny hand of my youngest with the other. Confronted by the heavy glass/brass door at the top of the stairs, I was startled when a spry older gentleman popped out of nowhere, solved my dilemma while murmuring, "I'll open the door for any woman who has given birth to a child."

During this interval of conflict after the Supreme Court's controversial decision, it would be well for all of us to pause, take a breath, then open the door to the voices and visuals of women throughout our nation (and the world) who are burdened with decisions that are often as difficult as the court's.

St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk's article, including her past experience as a midwife, is a great start for helping to dispel the biased ignorance of many who call themselves Catholic-Christians. This is not a time for outraged diatribes, trendy picketing and vile judgements of either camp, but for educating ourselves thoroughly on the subject at hand by listening to the stories and plaintive pleas of those most directly affected — women.

In truth, clergy, religious and laypeople, called to the ministry of offering pastoral counseling to women in crisis and/or dispensing responsible parenting guidance to young married couples, might benefit greatly by first watching all 12 seasons of the useful PBS series, "Call the Midwife." Doing so would surely contribute greatly toward developing the sensitivity and listening skills necessary to perform their services with wisdom, compassion and loving Christ-like mercy.

NANCY MCGUNAGLE

Kalispell, Montana

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What an absolutely horrible opinion piece from St. Joseph Christine Schen. She uses medical conditions such as ectopic pregnancy in misleading ways in order to further a pro-abortion agenda. Her willingness to accept the killing of unborn children conceived in rape or those suffering from physical abnormalities, as well as her approval of an adult's decision to have an abortion performed on a pregnant minor, are appalling.

Abortion harms women because killing your child is never the right choice. A Catholic publication should be able to explain the difference between procured abortion and ectopic pregnancy treatment. Failing to do so is deliberate ignorance in the service of evil.

For the past 49 years, we have had an abortion industry that tempts desperate women to kill their children. This is an offense against women's moral agency. Along with making abortion illegal, we need to continue, as crisis pregnancy center long have, to offer mothers the help they need to act without fear.

LUCY SCHEMEL

Greencastle, Pennsylvania

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