

Pastoral Notes regarding Crisis Pregnancy Issues Related to Genetic Defect, Fetal Anomaly or the Health of the Pregnant Woman

Pro-Life Office • Pregnancy Help

Archdiocese of Boston

In the current cultural and societal situation in the United States, abortion has been accepted as a legitimate and even routine response to an unplanned pregnancy. Of the 1.5 million abortions performed each year in the United States 90% are performed in the first trimester. The overwhelming majority of these abortions are performed because of reasons that can be generally categorized as social: pressure from boyfriend or parents, pregnancy "interferes" with school or career, financial concerns, etc.

Given the ready acceptance and accessibility of abortion, the issues related to women considering abortion for health reasons - their own or the baby's - are particularly challenging. In many of these cases the pregnancy is very much desired. We have great empathy and compassion for women and couples faced with the anguish of a pregnancy with associated health problems. It is important, however, to be clear about the Church's teaching on abortion and to understand that it applies even in these most difficult cases. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states the following:

2270 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 to life. 2271 Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law.

Over the past year a number of situations have come to our attention that indicate that lay ministers, chaplains, social workers, counselors, religious and clergy who provide pastoral care in parishes and health care settings are facing

some complicated and challenging problems. The counsel and care of those in a crisis pregnancy for any reason requires a high degree of sensitivity and skill in presenting the Church's teaching in the context of loving care. This is