

Untitled

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I am one among the many who grew up in a conservative Catholic household and were given a Catholic education, which would not be complete without us being instructed on the sanctity of human life. After all, the fifth commandment that God gave Moses on Mt. Sinai says, “Thou shalt not kill.”

My teachers thought it of utmost necessity to impress upon our little minds that in no uncertain terms was abortion murder. The child in the woman’s womb is defenseless and helpless. It is completely dependent upon the woman carrying it. It simply is wrong to take the life of someone who has done no wrong and can’t defend itself. If we are going to fight for animal rights, why not for the rights of a tiny, powerless human being?

We were told numerous stories of young women who lived a life of chastity, were raped, and became pregnant as a result. In some stories, there was only one rapist, and so the father was known. In others, there was more than one man who assaulted the woman, and so they had a harder time knowing who exactly sired the baby. In all of those instances, they were all praises for the woman’s decision to carry the unwanted and unplanned pregnancy to full term and give birth to the baby. No matter how the pregnancy came about, the baby in the mother’s belly can’t be blamed for it. It is unfair to punish the innocent baby for the crimes of its father by refusing it a chance to live. Or, really, let’s not mince words – by killing it.

I remember adults discussing exceptions to the rule. If the pregnancy was going to put the mother’s life in danger, abortion was permitted, of course. Still, praises were sung in honor of virtuous women who would give their life up just so the baby could live. Sacrifice and putting other people’s needs first were highly regarded, even to the point of self-abnegation, as how my young mind perceived it. What I have learned from all that the adults around me have taught me, and from observing adult behavior, was that prioritizing your own needs was selfish, and other people, even an unborn baby, was more important than your own self could ever be.

I look back on this part of my childhood and feel relieved that, while I wholeheartedly embraced those beliefs as a naïve child, I eventually did a 180-degree turn. I did not expect it to happen and it did not happen overnight. Perhaps, if my life had gone smoothly and as planned, I wouldn’t worry about abortion rights, and maybe I would be too privileged to care about

abortion access for people who could not afford to bring another human being into this world. But then I became one of those people who can't afford to bring another human being into this world.

I was diagnosed with ADHD only as an adult. I developed depression and anxiety because my unmanaged ADHD made it difficult for me to perform satisfactorily at school. Of course, depression and anxiety fed the vicious cycle, and it became hard for me to achieve financial stability. A person who has a slew of mental health issues would not make a good parent. I could not even take good care of myself. Could I be expected to be able to take good care of a tiny and helpless human being who could not up and leave if I became an abusive or negligent mom?

I have been privileged enough to have access to birth control and medical consultations. There are a lot of people, however, who do not have the same privileges as I do. Perhaps, they are in an abusive relationship, and their partner sabotages their birth control. Perhaps, they have been sexually abused by a relative. Or maybe their birth control simply failed, as no birth control is 100% effective.

What is honor if you bring a child into circumstances that virtually guarantee a life of suffering? Why is bringing another life into this world automatically regarded as a virtue? Why is it held higher than actually carefully considering if the existing conditions are healthy enough to support new life? And why does it seem like the owner of the womb is simply regarded as only slightly more valuable than an actual incubator?

I hope to never need to have an abortion, but I want safe and easy access to it in case I would need it. And not just for me, but for everyone who has a womb. I want it to be available to any daughters I will have in the future.