

FAIRNESS, FREEDOM, AND RESPONSIBILITY

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It is natural and good to insist on fairness. If we have been unduly burdened with a task, we rightly object. We do not mind so much if others also have the same disagreeable task, but an unequal imposition of responsibility infringes on our freedom. It seems unjust that we should have to bear such an infringement. Sometimes the burden is by way of someone in need. When faced with situations where someone needs our help, what are our responsibilities?

To focus the discussion, let us consider the abortion issue and, in particular, the case of pregnancy through rape. There seem to be a couple of levels of unfairness here. On the first level, and most generally, two people are involved in causing a pregnancy, and only one has to carry the child to term. On a deeper level, the woman who is pregnant through rape is in no way responsible for becoming pregnant, yet her freedom will be dramatically curtailed if she brings the pregnancy to term. Why should her life have to be ruined? Nobody else has to bear this burden; it seems unfair that she should have to. More than this, she has suffered the obvious injustice of rape. How is this to be remedied?

Our discussion will be divided into three sections. In the first, we shall consider briefly the issue of abortion in general. In the second, we shall take up the special case of ending a pregnancy due to rape, looking at how it differs from other abortion cases and to what degree these differences are morally significant. In the third section, we shall consider the dimensions of freedom and responsibility in the special case of pregnancy due to rape and in our relations with others.

I

In this first section, let us sketch briefly the best arguments for insisting on including all stages of human life from conception to death under the umbrella of the right to life. If the zygote/embryo/fetus has an intrinsic right to life, such a right should never be directly violated. Thus, the zygote/embryo/fetus should never be subject to the direct attack of an abortion.

When Thomas Aquinas lays out the principles of the natural law, he holds that "good is to be done and promoted, and evil is to be

avoided."¹ In the realm of moral responsibility, we have a more absolute duty to avoid evil than we do to promote the good. Thus is grounded that most obvious of moral absolutes: do not intentionally violate the good of innocent human life. Our responsibilities to promote the good of human life, which we shall discuss later, are much less specific, and apparently less absolute. For besides the good of human life, there are other goods which have intrinsic value, such as friendship, knowledge, and beauty.² So, promoting good is not equivalent to promoting the good of life. We are not all required to procreate; we are not all required to become doctors or nurses or researchers in the life sciences. We can, without being immoral, enter politics, study metaphysics, or write poetry.

Although it seems straightforward to say that we should never intentionally take the life of an innocent human being, the problem in abortion is not solved, for one can ask what constitutes a human being. Is there a stage of development before which the zygote/embryo/fetus (or, to follow such contemporary thinkers as Peter Singer, Michael Tooley, and Mary Anne Warren, the new-born child³) is not yet human?

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* (hereafter *ST*) I-II.94.2.c, 5 vols. translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen, Texas: Christian Classics, 1981), 1, p. 1009.

² In *ST* I-II.94.2.c, Aquinas mentions the self-evident goods of life, procreation, knowledge, and orderly social life (friendship). Contemporary thinkers Germain Grisez and John Finnis, among others, have developed this theory, pointing out other basic goods found in the natural law tradition and elsewhere in Aquinas. For the basic principles of this theory, see Germain Grisez, *Way of the Lord Jesus: Christian Moral Principles*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983-97), and John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

³ These thinkers argue that a human being does not have a right to life until specifically human activities such as self-awareness, rationality, and freedom are exhibited, normally at about two years of age. Thus, they argue for the permissibility of infanticide up until this time. See Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp.122-26; Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide," *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 2, no. 1 (Fall 1972): 37-65; and Mary Anne Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion," *The Monist*, 57, no. 1 (January, 1973): 43-61.

The arguments in favor of denying the right to life to any stage of human life subsequent to conception are unconvincing, for these stages do not signal substantial changes, but only accidental changes.⁴ Even Judith Thomson admits as much in her 1981 article "A Defense of Abortion."⁵ The changes are in terms of things like quantity, quality, time, place, and relation, and not in terms of the kind of thing it is. Thus, just as my status as a human being is not changed by changes in my weight, my hair color, the time of day, my position in the room, or my relative dependence on others, so too the accidental changes from conception to birth, although more dramatic perhaps, do not change the kind of thing that continuously exists from conception to birth. Let us look briefly at the arguments from biology, philosophy, and law on this matter.

Embryologists universally agree that biological life begins at conception. At that point there is a being with its own unique and non-repeatable set of chromosomes. True, there could still be twinning, but that does not mean that we do not have an individual now – only that we will have two individuals then. The disagreement, when there is one, is more semantic than biological.⁶ Without doubt, a new living being, which is neither sperm nor egg, exists at conception. The artificial procedure of conception known as *in vitro* fertilization makes this clear: the doctor imitates nature, forcibly joining sperm and egg to create new life, so that the infertile couple can have a child. The debate is about whether to call this zygote "human life." Philosophically, we can say that from the moment of conception there is a unique

⁴ Aristotle distinguishes substance and accidents in his *Categories*. Specifically, "a substance as such is never truly said to vary in degree in time or as compared with another substance." Aristotle, *Categories* 5 [4a6] in *Aristotle Selected Works*, edited and translated by Hippocrates C. Apostle and Lloyd P. Gerson (Grinnell, Iowa: Peripatetic Press, 1982), p. 34.

⁵ "I am inclined to agree, however, that the prospects for 'drawing a line' in the development of the fetus look dim." Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1, no. 1 (Fall, 1971): 47-66, p. 47.

⁶ See Dr. and Mrs. J. C. Willke, *Abortion: Questions and Answers* III.7 (Cincinnati: Hayes Publishing Co., 1990), pp. 40-43; and Patrick Lee, *Abortion and Unborn Human Life* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 69-73.

individual with his or her own life-force, the same life-force that will sustain the human being throughout his or her entire life. Without this unique life-force, there would be no growth or development. Sure the zygote/embryo/fetus depends on the mother for nourishment, but it does not depend on the mother for its ability to take the nourishment and transform it into growth. There is no substantial change – that is, change from one kind of thing (genus/species) to another – only accidental changes of quantity, quality, time, place, relation, etc.⁷ Perhaps, one might argue, as did Aquinas, that there is a process of delayed hominization,⁸ that the rational soul cannot be infused until the matter is sufficiently developed. If, as Aquinas argues, the rational soul is the only form of the human being,⁹ then, before it is infused, there is no human being. There is some plausibility to this theory, but it is not a demonstrated fact or a necessary truth. How could it be since, as Aquinas makes very clear, the rational soul is immaterial and can exist on its own?¹⁰ If this is so, then it could exist with a zygote as well. And in matters where there is some doubt, one should always take the morally safer course. Since it cannot be proven when the rational soul is infused, and killing an innocent human being is a grave moral wrong, we should give the benefit of the doubt to the zygote and consider it human. The clarity with which biology has shown the zygote to be the product of man and woman (and not from the male alone, as Aristotle and Aquinas thought) gives added reason to take the moment of conception as the definitive beginning of human life.

There is even a medical and legal distinction now in place related to biological death which, if consistently applied, could be used to define the moment human life begins. The distinction comes into play regarding the argument many hold which claims that an embryo, in the early stages, is just a bunch of cells. Since it is not wrong to remove a bunch of cells from the human body so that they die, as in surgery, so it

⁷ Richard Werner makes this argument in his article "Abortion: The Ontological and Moral Status of the Unborn," in *Today's Moral Problems*, edited by Richard Wasserstrom (New York: Macmillan, 1979).

⁸ Aquinas, *ST I.76.3ad3*, and *ST I.118.2ad2*.

⁹ *Ibid*, I.76.3.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, I.75.2.

is not wrong to remove the embryo so that it dies. In an article in *First Things*, Maureen L. Condic suggests that there is already a way of distinguishing human life from a bunch of living cells, worked out by those who have need of distinguishing the boundary of life and death at the end of life:

The medical and legal definition of death draws a clear distinction between living cells and living organisms. Organisms are living beings composed of parts that have separate but mutually dependent functions.... The critical difference between a collection of cells and a living organism is the ability of an organism to act in a coordinated manner for the continued health and maintenance of the body as a whole. It is precisely this ability that breaks down at the moment of death, however death might occur.¹¹

When we apply this same distinction to the beginning of life, we find that the embryo satisfies the same criteria as does life in its latter stages. "Embryos are in full possession of the very characteristic that distinguishes a living human being from a dead one: the ability of all cells in the body to function together as an organism, with all parts acting in an integrated manner for the continued life and health of the body as a whole."¹²

Given that one should never choose directly against the good of innocent human life and that embryos are innocent human lives, the conclusion that one should never take the life of an embryo logically follows.

II

There are, however, three cases that many people who consider abortion in general to be wrong count as exceptions. These are when the mother's life is in danger, when the pregnancy is due to rape, and

¹¹ Maureen L. Condic. "Life: Defining the Beginning by the End," *First Things* 133 (2003): 50-54, p. 52. See also, Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, Vol. 2 pp. 493-94.

¹² Condic, "Life," p. 52.

when the embryo is severely handicapped (or is likely to be so because of incest).

The last we should reject out of hand since to accept it is to accept a sliding scale in honoring human life. We are all defective in one way or another – if not physically, then emotionally, intellectually, and always morally. No two of us are exactly equal in intelligence, ability, and moral integrity. Since we do not accord adult human beings the right to life according to their perfection, neither should we accord rights on this basis to embryos.

The case of abortion as the only way to save the life of the mother is a complicated one. We allow that people have a right to preserve their lives: killing in self-defense is legitimate, though it must be only as a last resort.¹³ Thus, abortion in the case of the mother's life being threatened could be a legitimate act if it could be shown that the intention is life-saving and that the death of the child is only an unintended side-effect that is accepted but not chosen. The issue is complex but moot in most cases, since it is nearly always possible to save both the life of the child and that of the mother.

The case for the legitimacy of abortion in cases of rape is the one on which I would like to focus. Happily such cases are very rare, for a variety of reasons: the woman is fertile for only a few days of her menstrual cycle; in many cases there is lack of penetration or premature ejaculation; and the trauma of rape often prevents the pregnancy from occurring.¹⁴ Still, such pregnancies do sometimes occur, and we should ask whether these cases should be exceptions to the prohibition against abortion. On the face of it, the argument to permit abortion in pregnancies due to rape is less strong than in pregnancies that threaten the life of the mother since in the latter case what is lost and gained is a proportional good – human life. In rape cases, the good that is lost – human life – is not commensurate to the good that is gained (if it is indeed gained) – peace of mind, freedom from a dependent child, prevention of financial or emotional burden, etc.

¹³ See Thomas Aquinas, *ST II-II.64.7.c.*

¹⁴ See Willke, *Abortion*, 150.

The case of rape does, however, involve a moral dimension not found in the case of an action taken to save the mother's life – the injustice perpetrated on the woman. She is not pregnant by choice, nor was it an accident: she has been forced against her will. Normally, responsibility comes with freedom of choice. Only acts done by free choice can be right or wrong. This is Judith Thomson's point in her famous violinist analogy in "A Defense of Abortion": since you did not give your assent to the violinist (or his caregivers), you have no obligation to let him remain plugged into you. Nor, it seems, does the woman pregnant through rape have any responsibility to carry the child to term. We are responsible for our chosen actions and for the normal consequences they entail. But sexual intercourse in the case of rape is not the woman's action; it happens to her, but she does not choose it. This is unlike the case of accidental pregnancy, where the woman might plead that she did not intend to become pregnant. Her choice to engage in the act of sexual intercourse, which is naturally linked as cause and effect to the coming to be of new life, makes her responsible. In the case of rape, however, it does not seem that she is responsible for the pregnancy that such an action entails, nor for bringing that pregnancy to term.

As we begin a discussion of abortion in rape cases, it is essential that we admit fully and unequivocally that bringing the child to term is a burden on the woman. Moreover, it seems that it is not one she should have to undergo. There are really two instances of unfairness here: the rape itself, and the consequent requirement to bear the child. The rape is not only unfair; it is unjust. It violates the integrity of the woman as well as the good of orderly social life (and, in addition, the law). It also violates the good of procreation, for life is best brought into the world in the context of mutual love and support; that is, rape is a violation of the right of the child to come to be in a loving environment.

The second unfairness – the requirement that the woman should carry the child to term – is the particular one at issue in this paper. Why should she have to accept a burden that she did not freely accept? Here the relations between freedom, fairness, and responsibility are brought most closely into focus. After all, if someone arbitrarily throws a fifty-pound pack on my back, am I obliged to carry it? If someone promises that I will pay back his friend for the money he borrows, am I obliged to do so? Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the

answer is “No” to each question. So why should a woman who is pregnant through rape be obliged to carry the child to term?

One critical difference between pregnancy through rape and these cases is that a child is intrinsically valuable, whereas the pack and the money are not. The act that frees the mother from the child (abortion) is a direct violation of the basic human good of life – the life of the child. But the woman might say that she does not want the child to die: she just does not want to undergo the imposition of carrying the child to term. She directly intends only the goods of freedom and peace of mind; the death of the child is an unintended side effect. If this imposition could be removed without killing the child, she would do it; but such a removal cannot be done, given the current state of medicine. Why should she have to carry this physical and emotional burden? She did not in any sense assent to it, nor was it in the normal course of things (such as a child’s duty to help out around the house even though the child did not assent to being born).

One could argue that dying of cancer is not in the normal course of things, and yet the patient should not commit suicide. The patient did not freely accept the illness; on the contrary, she would undoubtedly be happy to be free from it. Nevertheless, because life is an intrinsic good, she is morally obliged to refrain from suicide as a way of escaping her suffering. Here, like the case of rape, the burden is of intrinsic value – the life of a human being who does not deserve to die. What is missing in this case, but present in the case of rape, is the willful violation of the woman. Human justice exists to address willful violations. Just as when I steal from you, the law requires that I pay you back to right the balance I have upset, so it seems some redress is due the woman who is pregnant through rape. But here, of course, is the important distinction: punishment is due the rapist who willfully violated the woman, not the child who is completely innocent of all wrongdoing; yet abortion kills the child. Clearly, the child should not pay the price of the violation with his or her life.

When presenting the precepts of the natural law, Thomas Aquinas says that, besides our strict obligation not to violate basic goods such as life, truth, and friendship, we also have an obligation to promote them. We are not merely supposed to refrain from hurting people; we are supposed to help them. In fact, although the requirement not to take innocent human life is more absolute than the requirement to promote

human life, the negative insight into the strict prohibition against taking life is based on the positive insight into the good of life. We only know that violating life is bad because we know that life is good. Badness is always parasitic on good. We know a bad pen (one that blots or fails to write) by knowing what a good pen should be. We know a sick dog because we know what a healthy one should be. Likewise, we know the badness of violating life because we know life to be good. When Aquinas talks about this obligation to help others, he grants that we have no absolute obligation to help everyone in need. Since it is not possible to help everyone, we can have no obligation to do it. It is enough, he says, for us to help those we meet who are in great need and who have no one else to help them. "Since one cannot do good to all, we ought to consider those chiefly who by reason of place, time, or any other circumstance, by a kind of chance, are more closely united to us."¹⁵ Not everyone in need has the same claim on our aid. "If, however, it is easy to see how he can be otherwise succored, either by himself, or by some other person still more closely united to him or in a better position to help him, one is not strictly bound to help the one in need."¹⁶ However, because of the fact that until viability, at least, the mother is the only one who can help this child, it seems that she has a strong obligation to do so.

We said at the outset that our positive obligations to help others are not as strict as our obligations not to harm others. But it seems that in some cases the positive obligation approaches the same level of absoluteness as the negative. Consider the following scenario: Suppose I'm walking on the beach minding my own business, thinking of some metaphysical problem or just enjoying the beautiful day. As I'm walking along, I come upon a young child lying face-down in a tide pool struggling to get out. Can I just walk on by thinking of my problem or enjoying the day and do nothing, or am I obliged to help the child up? Clearly, I am obliged to help the child. In the first place, the need is dire - life is at stake. In the second place, I am the only one around. And in the third place, it is easy for me to save the child. When these three

¹⁵ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* I.28, quoted in Aquinas, *ST II-II.71.1c*, 3; p. 1491.

¹⁶ Aquinas, *loc. cit.*

things come together, the positive obligation to save life approaches the absolute status of the prohibition against taking life.

It is not my fault: I did not mean for the child to fall into the pool. Nor was I doing anything irresponsible that might have led to the scenario. Nevertheless, I cannot just mind my own business: I am morally obliged to help the child. The case of pregnancy through rape is similar. It is not the woman's fault: she did not mean to get pregnant. Nor was it her irresponsibility that led to the pregnancy. Still, the child is in dire need: if the mother does not continue the pregnancy, the child will die. The mother is the only one who can help: given the current state of medicine, we are not able to take the embryo from the mother's womb and keep it alive until it can live on its own.¹⁷ And it is relatively easy for the woman to continue the pregnancy. It is not that carrying a child to term is as easy as my reaching down to raise the head of the drowning child, but carrying a child to term is the normal way that new lives are brought into the world.

There is, however, the difference that, not only is the pregnancy not chosen by the woman (as I did not choose that the child should fall into the pool and be drowning), but the pregnancy was against the woman's will. Thus, it is doubly beside her free intention. Still, the intrinsic value of the child and the sole ability of the mother to save the child indicate her responsibility. In any case, it is not the child's fault that the mother is pregnant. It is not the child who acts against the woman's will. The rapist is guilty of a grave injustice and should be severely punished, but the child is entirely innocent.

There are many other cases in our lives where obligations come our way to which we did not agree beforehand. Consider the case of the responsibility we have to care for the elderly or the disabled - in particular those in our families. This is perhaps closer to our particular case since, just as the woman did not ask or consent to be pregnant, so we did not ask or consent to be born. We never freely agreed to have parents, so why should we be responsible for them? Yet clearly we have

¹⁷ It is possible that, in time, we may be able to do so. If so, the obligation for the mother to carry the child to term would be significantly reduced since she would not be the only one who could keep the child alive.

obligations to them, and special ones at that, since they are our parents. Admittedly, this example does not involve an injustice, as in rape cases.

But, ultimately, unfairness or injustice does not change the obligation. It seems unfair that innocent bystanders who did not look for trouble should have to try to stop a mugger from beating up an old lady. Yet clearly, if they do nothing when they could have helped, they are morally and legally culpable. And why should a particular generation of young men have to risk their lives to defeat the uninvited aggression of Japan and Nazi Germany in World War II? Yet those young Americans who did not ask for the fight were obliged to defend their country and to go to the defense of our allies in Europe. So too in the case of pregnancy due to rape: the injustice is irrelevant to the responsibility of the bystander or citizen soldier. If there is a mugging or a war, although they had nothing to do with starting it, they must act to protect the common good. Although we clearly recognize the hardship that bystanders and soldiers face when they protect us, we think it is proper that they should do so. Is it fair that these people in particular should have to risk their lives or die for their fellow citizens? Not in particular, but someone must do so at times of crisis if the commonweal is to be protected. There is an unfair burden here, but it is their job to shoulder this responsibility. So, too, it is an unfair burden for a victim of rape to carry the child to term; nevertheless, it is her duty to shoulder the responsibility for the good of the child and of the community.

III

It has often been said that the goods intended by abortion due to rape – the healing, the peace of mind, the restoration of freedom – are actually not met by getting an abortion. Patrick Lee presents a number of important arguments on this issue in his book *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*.¹⁸ These are points in addressing what seem to be the obvious positive reasons for having the abortion. But I would like to suggest another here – the goodness, for others and for oneself, of freely accepting the responsibilities which come our way.

¹⁸ Lee, *Abortion*, pp. 123-24.

At issue in our discussion are two very different notions of freedom.¹⁹ One stems from the social-contract tradition. On this view, our responsibilities are self-imposed, and we should be free *from* all responsibilities except those to which we agree. We give up our right to do anything we please in order to live in a society; therefore, we are obliged to obey the laws of that society. There are no other licit claims on our freedom. On this basis we should be free from any externally imposed responsibilities (much at play in our contemporary world). The second kind of freedom is quite different. It is a freedom *for* responsibility. That is, it is the ability to accept willingly and make our own those responsibilities we have to others. Often these responsibilities are externally imposed, not dependent on a prior assent from us. Such responsibilities are those we have for our parents and for our fellow human beings beyond just avoiding hurting them. But our willingness to accept them is a mark of moral maturity, of love in action.

The first kind of freedom and responsibility seems to be a kind of minimum for living in society; however, society itself cannot survive if this is all we have. If our relations with others are based merely on our prior assent, then all obligations to our parents and elders are void. And all responsibility to God is void, too. We did not agree to be born or created. But our obligations to be grateful to, to respect, and to honor parents and God are fundamental, for without parents and God we would not exist, nor would we have any goods at all.

The argument for this obligation has two premises, one from practical reason and one from theoretical reason. The practical premise is that we should be grateful for good done for us. This is a corollary of the self-evident principle that we should do good and avoid evil. Since I know that I seek the good and would be happy if I found it, if someone gives me the good, I should appreciate that gift. If you share your lunch with me when I forget mine, I should thank you. If you save my life, I should be grateful. But parents have given us life (a great good), and God has given us all goods including parents. The theoretical premise is

¹⁹ These two kinds of freedom are distinguished by Germain Grisez and Russell Shaw in *Beyond the New Morality: The Responsibilities of Freedom* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), ch. 1.

that we received our life from our parents and (needing more metaphysical proof) that we receive all good things from an ultimate source, the God the Creator. This we know theologically, but we can also know it philosophically, as demonstrated by Augustine, Aquinas and others (based on arguments from Plato and Aristotle).²⁰ Together these two premises imply that we should repay the good that parents and God have done for us. Since we cannot do this in kind, we do it by showing gratefulness and respect. In the case of what is owed to God (everything), we can pay nothing back (since He needs nothing); therefore, we should show our gratitude by giving to those around us.

Without gratitude for what we have been given, we can find no reason to give to others, except self-interest. Self-interest breaks down quickly as a basis for social life. For if self-interest guides us, then we do not care for other people in any sense for their own sakes. Therefore, as soon as we are able to renege on our promises to them without negative repercussions, we will do so. Such a basis for communal life is precarious at best. Certainly it is not a true community where there is free unity of wills.

To realize that “there but for the grace of parents and God go I” is to see one’s being in the world in an entirely new light. Our role is not to avoid the effort of communion with others – striving for the least effort and the most pleasure. Rather, our role is to transform the disordered and unjust into the order of justice and love. Those who accept undeserved and even unjust suffering and turn it to the good, exercise their freedom in the fullest sense. In the first place, turning something to good must be a free choice, for there are no fully moral actions that are not free. Secondly, turning suffering toward the good takes enormous effort and willed sacrifice: there is no reason to believe that the person does so for selfish motives.²¹ Through the free acceptance of

²⁰ See Aquinas, *ST I.2.3*.

²¹ That is, unless one means by selfishness the rarefied meaning Aristotle gives it in Book IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here he points out (rightly, ultimately) that to be selfish in the most precise sense of the word is to care for what is most one’s self, which is oneself as free and intelligent, rather than subject to the whims of pleasure or fancy. This self is benefited by virtuous action. The community benefits and the individual agent benefits.

responsibility in love, they transform the accidental into the ordered and the maliciously intended into acts of love. The free acceptance of suffering imposed on one against one's will takes what is disordered and transforms it through the order of intelligent will. The free acceptance of suffering due to injustice and malicious intent envelops what is evil within the generosity of love. The pregnant rape victim's acceptance of the advent of a new life works in both ways. This is a great good for society and a great good for the individual. In addition, it recognizes the clear truth that the child is entirely innocent and "infinitely" loveable.

To accept such suffering and hardship is a tall order, whether it be bringing a child to term, risking one's life for fellow citizens, or caring for infirm parents. Those who do accept it are rightly thought of as heroic. But they also commit themselves to the meaningful exercise of their freedom for the sake of others. This is a great moral good for the individual agent and a great political good for the community. And it is an opportunity to share in the providence of God,²² which is worked out through the free gift of self to others – even to the point of death.

Conclusion

We must never minimize the burden that a woman who is a mother through rape faces. That would be a great injustice. However, neither should we minimize the injustice done to the child if the child is aborted. Given that the mother is the only one who can preserve the life of this child, she has a duty to do so. But when she does so, she should be recognized for her heroism (particularly since our current societal norm dictates that in such a situation one chooses abortion). She deserves our wholehearted support. But lest she see her responsibility as a mere duty and burden, we should emphasize the

But this is not the normal sense of selfishness, nor is it the Hobbesian sense that underlies the social contract theory of morality.

²² This is a participation in Providence in the sense that Providence is the free act of God, not based at all on our merits, and turning evil to good (e.g., rape to the birth of a child); it is also a free act of charity, guided by the recognition of moral obligation, but not determined by biological or sociological necessity.

deeply meaningful and enriching act of selflessness that she performs. Such free self-giving is indeed a great treasure for others, but also for her. Aristotle says that friendship (which is a greater good than justice since if all were friends, there would be no need of justice, but just people still seek friends²³) is more in giving or loving than in receiving or in being loved. If we honor friendship, then the one who gives achieves it more than the one who receives.²⁴ Though the giving comes in response to suffering, uninvited and unjustly perpetrated, it transforms the disordered into the ordered, the malicious into the loving, and the meaningless into the providential.

²³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII.1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, VIII.10.