

which was of course alive ... life begins with conception, because we contend that the soul also begins from conception; life taking its commencement at the same moment and place that the soul does.”

—Tertullian, theologian (150-225), *Treatise on the Soul*, pages 25 and 27.

“Those who give drugs for procuring abortion, and those who receive poisons to kill the foetus, are subjected to the penalty for murder.”

—Trullian (Quinisext) Council (692), *Canons*, 91.

### **Summary of the Most Significant Early Church Teachings Against Abortion**

- The *Apocalypse* of Peter.
- Hippolytus, Bishop of Pontius and theologian (died 236), *Refutation of All Heresies*, 9.7.
- Origen, theologian of Alexandria (185-254), *Against Heresies*, page 9.
- Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage (c. 200-258), *Letters*, page 48.
- Methodius, Bishop of Olympus (died 311).
- Council of Elvira in Granada, Spain (305), *Canons*, 63 and 68.
- Council of Ancyra in Galatia, Asia Minor (314), *Canon*, 21.
- Ephraem the Syrian, theologian (306-373), *De Timore Dei*, page 10.
- Ehipanius, Bishop of Salamis (c. 315-403).
- St. Basil the Great, priest (c. 329-379), *Letters*, 188.2, 8.
- St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (c. 339-397), *Hexameron*, 5.18.58.

*Apostolic Constitutions* (late Fourth Century)

- St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), *Enchiridion*, page 86.
- St. John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople (c. 347-407), *Homily 24* ("On The Book of Romans")
- St. Jerome (died in 420)
- Council of Chalcedon (451)
- Caesarius, Bishop of Arles (470-543), *Sermons*, 1.12.
- Council of Lerida (524).

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Pamphlet 464

## **Early Pronouncements of the Catholic Church Against Abortion**

The most common pro-abortion lie about Catholic Church teaching claims that the Church has not always condemned abortion. This particular lie has been effectively used by unscrupulous pro-abortion activists all over the world to confuse and neutralize their Catholic opposition.

These falsehoods have been bandied about by devious pro-abortionists for the last century, and the time has come to lay them to rest once and for all.

Most importantly, the Catholic Church has *never* "approved of" or "condoned" abortion in *any* part of its history.

The teachings of the Catholic Church have been uniformly against abortion in any form, and have been stated and restated consistently through the centuries.

### **Early Teachings of the Church**

The following lists some quotes from the early history of the Church delineating its *true* teachings regarding abortion. These quote passages from only a few of the many early Church documents that explicitly condemned abortion.

Other early Church theologians examined the methods, motives, morality and

metaphysics of abortion. They all described abortion as a heinous sin, and their writings are listed.

“You shall not kill an unborn child or murder a newborn infant.”

—*The Didache* ("The Lord's Instruction to the Gentiles through the Twelve Apostles"). II, 2, translated by J.A. Kleist, S.J., *Ancient Christian Writers*, Volume 6. Westminster, 1948, page 16.

‘You shall love your neighbor more than your own life. You shall not slay the child by abortion.’

—Barnabas (c. 70-138), *Epistle*, Volume II, page 19.

“For us [Christians], murder is once and for all forbidden; so even the child in the womb, while yet the mother's blood is still being drawn on to form the human being, it is not lawful for us to destroy. To forbid birth is only quicker murder. It makes no difference whether one takes away the life once born or destroys it as it comes to birth. He is a man, who is to be a man; the fruit is always present in the seed.’

—Tertullian, 197, *Apologeticus*, page 9.

“Those women who use drugs to bring about an abortion commit murder and will have to give an account to God for their abortion.”

—Athenagoras of Athens, letter to Marcus Aurelius in 177, *Legatio pro Christianis* ("Supplication for the Christians"), page 35.

“It is among you that I see newly-begotten sons at times exposed to wild beasts and birds, or dispatched by the violent death of

strangulation; and there are women who, by the use of medicinal potions, destroy the unborn life in their wombs, and murder the child before they bring it forth. These practices undoubtedly are derived from a custom established by your gods; Saturn, though he did not expose his sons, certainly devoured them.”

—Minucius Felix, theologian (c. 200-225), *Octavius*, p. 30.

“... if we would not kill off the human race born and developing according to God's plan, then our whole lives would be lived according to nature. Women who make use of some sort of deadly abortion drug kill not only the embryo but, together with it, all human kindness.’

—Clement of Alexandria, priest and the "Father of Theologians" (c. 150-220), *Christ the Educator*, Volume II, page 10. Also see *Octavius*, c.30, nn. 2-3.

“Sometimes this lustful cruelty or cruel lust goes so far as to seek to procure a baneful sterility, and if this fails the fetus conceived in the womb is in one way or another smothered or evacuated, in the desire to destroy the offspring before it has life, or if it already lives in the womb, to kill it before it is born. If both man and woman are party to such practices they are not spouses at all; and if from the first they have carried on thus they have come together not for honest wedlock, but for impure gratification; if both are not party to these deeds, I make bold to say that either the one makes herself a mistress of the husband, or the other simply the paramour of his wife.”

—St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354-430), *De Nuptius et Concupiscus* ("On Marriage and Concupiscence"), 1.17.

“Some virgins [unmarried women], when they learn they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs. Frequently they die themselves and are brought before the ruler of the lower world guilty of three crimes; suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child.”

—St. Jerome, Bible Scholar and translator (c. 340-420), *Letter to Eustochium*, 22.13.

‘The hairsplitting difference between formed and unformed makes no difference to us. Whoever deliberately commits abortion is subject to the penalty for homicide.’

—St. Basil the Great, priest (c. 329-379), *First Canonical Letter*, from the work *Three Canonical Letters*. Loeb Classical Library, Volume III, pages 20 to 23.

“Accordingly, among surgeon's tools, there is a certain instrument, which is formed with a nicely-adjusted flexible frame for opening the uterus first of all, and keeping it open; it is further furnished with an annular blade, by means of which the limbs within the womb are dissected with anxious but unflinching care; its last appendage being a blunted or covered hood, wherewith the entire foetus is extracted by a violent delivery. There is also a copper needle or spike, by which the actual death is managed in this furtive robbery of life: they give it, from its infanticide function, the name of *enbruosphaktes*, the slayer of the infant,