



Upholding Catholic Teaching on Surrogacy: A Statement from MaterCare International

MaterCare International (MCI), an organization of Catholic health professionals dedicated to the care of mothers and babies, issues this statement to reaffirm our commitment to upholding Catholic teaching on surrogacy, in response to His Holiness Pope Francis's address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See on January 8th, 2024¹.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church in paragraph 2376 states “[assisted reproductive] techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife by the intrusion of a person other than the couple (donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus), are gravely immoral. These techniques (heterologous artificial insemination and fertilisation) infringe the child’s right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage. They betray the spouses’ right to become a father and a mother only through each other (Donum vitae, 1987, II 1).”^{2,3}

As faithful adherents to the teachings of the Catholic Church, MaterCare International stands in solidarity with His Holiness Pope Francis in his condemnation of the practice of so-called surrogate motherhood. Surrogacy represents a grave violation of the dignity of the married couple, the child and the surrogate mother: both members of the couple deny each other the right to become parents only through each other; the child is reduced to a mere commodity; the sacred bond between mother and child, which is ordained by nature and enshrined in Catholic moral teaching, is undermined; and, the circumstances of the surrogate mother's material needs are exploited.

The Catholic Church teaches that every child is a gift from God, regardless of the circumstances of their conception or birth. Surrogacy, by its very nature, commodifies the gift of human life and reduces it to a contractual agreement, devoid of the love and selflessness that should

¹ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/january/documents/20240108-corpo-diplomatico.html>

² Catechism of the Catholic Church. Official edition for Australia and New Zealand. Homebush: St. Pauls, 1994.

³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Donum vitae: Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation, Replies to Certain Questions of the Day, 1987.

characterize the relationship between parents and child. It promotes a culture of exploitation and objectification, where the fundamental dignity of the human person is disregarded in pursuit of personal desires or financial gain.

Furthermore, surrogacy perpetuates a distorted understanding of family and parenthood, by artificially separating the biological, psychological and spiritual dimensions of parenthood. It undermines the natural and God-given bond between biological parents and their children, introducing a third party (and more if donor gametes are used) into the sacred relationship of parenthood. This disruption of the natural order of familial relationships can have far-reaching and detrimental consequences for the well-being and development of the child, as well as the parents, both biological and social, the surrogate mother and her other children.⁴

There are other risks associated with surrogacy such as assisted reproductive and obstetric complications. Serious complications include multiple order pregnancy, gestational diabetes, hypertension and damage to reproductive organs.⁵

MaterCare International reiterates the position of the Catholic Church that a child is always a gift to be cherished and welcomed into a loving family, rather than a commodity to be bought, sold, or traded. Surrogacy fails to respect the inherent dignity of every human life and instead reduces the child to a product of commercial transaction, denying them the right to be conceived, gestated, and nurtured within the loving embrace of their biological parents.

As an organization committed to the promotion of maternal and child health in accordance with Catholic moral and ethical principles, MaterCare International condemns the practice of surrogacy in all its forms. We call upon policymakers, healthcare professionals, and society as a whole to reject surrogacy as a violation of human dignity and to uphold the sanctity of life from conception to natural death.

In conclusion, MaterCare International reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting mothers and babies in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church, which uphold the sanctity of human life and the dignity of every person. We stand united with His Holiness Pope Francis in condemning the practice of surrogacy and advocating for the protection of the fundamental rights and dignity of all individuals, especially the most vulnerable among us.

⁴Tonti-Filippini N. About Bioethics, Volume 4: Motherhood, Embodied Love and Culture. Surrogacy. Chapter 5: Assisted Reproductive Technology. Ballarat, Australia: Connor Court Publishing, 2013.

⁵ Patel NH et al. Insight into Different Aspects of Surrogacy Practices. *J Hum Reprod Sci.* 2018;11:212-218. https://doi.org/10.4103%2Fjhms.JHRS_138_17

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