

THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH DEFEND THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Excerpts from the sayings of the early church fathers. One of the allegations promoted by supporters of abortion is that the Church, at its earliest days, was silent on the question of abortion. The following selections from the Fathers will give ample witness to the contrary.

THE DIDACHE CIRCA AD 120:

“Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion.” – 2:2

“The Way of Death is filled with people who are ... murderers of children and abortionists of God’s creatures.” – 5:1-2

THE EPISTLE OF BARNABAS CIRCA AD 125

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor more than thy own life. Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion.” - 19:5

THE APOCALYPSE OF PETER CIRCA AD 135

“I saw a gorge in which the discharge and excrement of the tortured ran down and became like a lake. There sat women, and the discharge came up to their throats; and opposite them sat many children, who were born prematurely, weeping. And from them went forth rays of fire and smote the women on the eyes. These were those who produced children outside of marriage and who procured abortions.” - 26

“Those who slew the unborn children will be tortured forever, for God wills it so.” - 2:264

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA CIRCA AD 150-180

“Our whole life can go on in observation of the laws of nature, if we gain dominion over our desires from the beginning and if we do not kill, by various means of a perverse art, the human offspring, born according to the designs of divine providence; for these women who, in order to hide their immorality, use abortive drugs which expel the child completely dead, abort at the same

time their own human feelings.”
- *Paedagogus* 2

ST. ATHENAGORAS CIRCA AD 165

“We say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God. For the same person would not regard the child in the womb as a living being and therefore an object of God’s care and then kill it. . . . But we are altogether consistent in our conduct. We obey reason and do not override it.” - *Legatio* 35

TERTULLIAN CIRCA AD 160-240

“For us [Christians] we may not destroy even the fetus in the womb, while as yet the human being derives blood from other parts of the body for its sustenance. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter when you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. That is a man which is going to be one: you have the fruit already in the seed.”
- *Apology* 9:6

“They (John and Jesus) were both alive while still in the womb. Elizabeth rejoiced as the infant leaped in her womb; Mary glorifies the Lord because Christ within inspired her. Each mother recognizes her child and is known by her child who is alive, being not merely souls but also spirits.”
- *De Anima* 26:4

MINUCIUS FELIX CIRCA AD 180 – 225

“There are women who swallow drugs to stifle in their own womb the beginnings of a man to be — committing infanticide before they even give birth to the infant.”
- *Octavius*

ST. HIPPOLYTUS CIRCA AD 170-236

“Reputed believers began to resort to drugs for producing sterility and to gird themselves round, so as to expel what was conceived on account of their not wanting to have a child either by a slave or by any paltry fellow, for the sake of their family and excessive wealth. Behold, into how great impiety that lawless one has proceeded by incul-

cating adultery and murder at the same time.” - *Refutation of all Heresies* 9:7

COUNCIL OF ELVIRA CIRCA AD 305

“If a woman becomes pregnant by committing adultery, while her husband is absent, and after the act she destroys the child, it is proper to keep her from communion until death, because she has doubled her crime.”
- *Canon* 63

ST. BASIL THE GREAT CIRCA AD 330-379

“She who has deliberately destroyed a fetus has to pay the penalty of murder. . . . Here it is not only the child to be born that is vindicated, but also the woman herself who made an attempt against her own life, because usually the women die in such attempts. Furthermore, added to this is the destruction of the child, another murder.”
- *Letter* 188:2

“Moreover, those, too, who give drugs causing abortion are deliberate murderers themselves, as well as those receiving the poison which kills the fetus.” - *Letter* 188:2

ST. AMBROSE OF MILAN CIRCA AD 339-397

“The wealthy, in order that their inheritance may not be divided among several, deny in the very womb their own progeny. By use of parricidal mixtures they snuff out the fruit of their wombs in the genital organs themselves. In this way life is taken away before it is born. . . . Who except man himself has taught us ways of repudiating children?”
- *Hexameron*

ST. JEROME CIRCA AD 342-420

“They drink potions to ensure sterility and are guilty of murdering a human being not yet conceived. Some, when they learn that they are with child through sin, practice abortion by the use of drugs. Frequently they die themselves and are brought before the rulers of the lower world guilty of three crimes: suicide, adultery against Christ, and murder of an unborn child.” - *Letter* 22:13

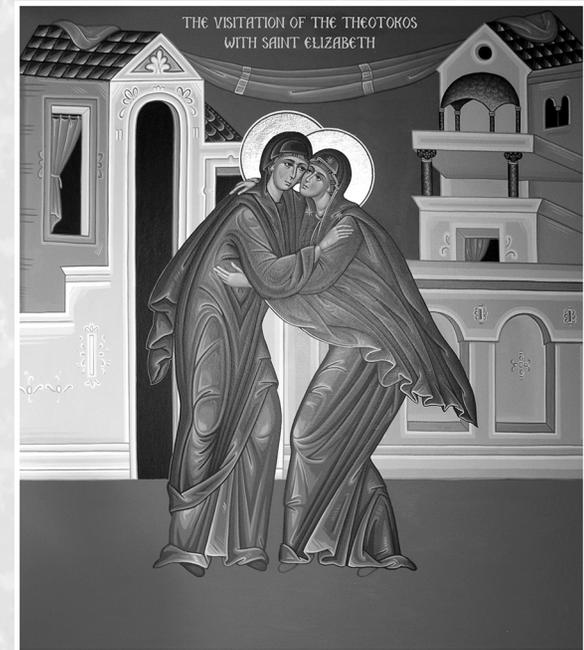
THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS CIRCA AD 380

“Thou shalt not slay thy child by causing abortion, nor kill that which is begotten. For everything that is shaped, and has received a soul from God, if slain, it shall be avenged, as being unjustly destroyed.” - 7:3

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM CIRCA AD 340-407

“Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? Where there are many efforts at abortion? Where there is murder before birth? For you do not even let the harlot remain a mere harlot, but make her a murderer also. You see how drunkenness leads to whoredom, whoredom to adultery, adultery to murder; or rather something even worse than murder. For I have no real name to give it, since it does not destroy the thing born but prevents its being born. Why then do you abuse the gift of God and fight with His laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the place of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter?” - *Homily 24 on Romans*

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