



TALKING

to Your Catholic Family about

ABORTION

A Guide for Compassionate Conversations

SHARED VALUES

Because of politicians and the media, it can seem like “pro-choice” and “pro-life” people could never agree on anything. Let’s leave this sharp divide behind. Here are some of the values that Catholics can share — regardless of how they feel about abortion.

We don’t want the government interfering with family decisions.

Even if your loved one thinks abortion is morally wrong, banning abortion means the government would decide how many children we can have.

We support religious freedom.

In a nation founded on the idea of separation of church and state, the religious beliefs of some shouldn’t overshadow the beliefs of others. That means each Catholic has the right to practice as they see fit — whether they choose natural family planning, contraception, abortion care, or none of the above.

We believe children are a blessing.

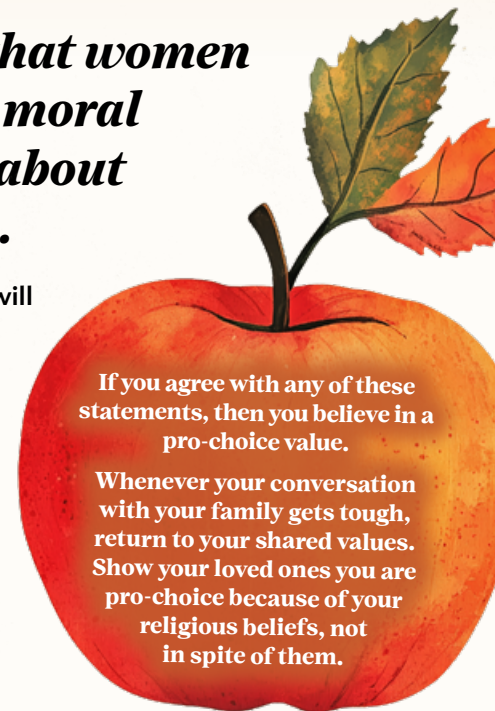
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 60% of people who have abortions are already parents. Abortion, much like birth control, can be an important part of building a family.

We trust that women can make moral decisions about their lives.

God gave us free will for a reason. Through faith, we can use our consciences to make medical decisions.

If you agree with any of these statements, then you believe in a pro-choice value.

Whenever your conversation with your family gets tough, return to your shared values. Show your loved ones you are pro-choice because of your religious beliefs, not in spite of them.



As Catholics for Choice, we get it.

Talking to your Catholic family is hard.

Whether you're Catholic, raised Catholic, or an ally, the stigma around abortion can make it tough to talk about. But now, Roe v. Wade is gone.

We have a moral responsibility to break the silence.



IN THIS BROCHURE, YOU'LL FIND FACTS, THEOLOGICAL IDEAS, AND PASTORAL GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT YOU IN YOUR QUEST TO END ABORTION STIGMA IN YOUR FAMILY.



TO GET US STARTED, HERE ARE THREE GROUND RULES OF DOING THIS WORK:

Assume nothing.

Pro-choice beliefs don't always fall neatly along party lines, and people who identify as "pro-life" have abortions. Anyone who's experienced a pregnancy loss has likely gone through an abortion procedure.

Approach with care and curiosity.

Make sure your loved ones know you're not in a space of judgment. Pregnancy, childbearing, and miscarriage can be deeply complex and personal topics. If your family is struggling with how they feel about abortion, that's OK!

Remember that everyone is the expert on their own story.

Facts can be debated, but it's harder to disagree about personal stories. If you or a family member shares their abortion story, it's important to honor that truth. Even if the story doesn't align with your ideas about abortion, faith, or conscience, we hold space for storytelling.

Pro-Choice Pro-Tip

You might hear a family member say something like, “I’m pro-life for myself, but I think abortion should be legal.”

That’s actually a pro-choice statement!

Thinking about what you would do if you became pregnant is part of making your own moral decisions about your life.

Just because you might not choose abortion doesn’t mean your opinion should take away others’ rights.

THREE PRINCIPLES OF PRO-CHOICE CATHOLICISM

**How can we be pro-choice and Catholic?
Catholics support abortion access
because of three core principles.**

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

As Catholics, we believe that one religious group’s beliefs should never be codified into law. Religious freedom guarantees the right to practice one’s religion and to be free from the religious beliefs of others.

CONSCIENCE

Catholic doctrine has long taught that each person’s individual conscience has the final say in all moral decision-making. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church (para. 1778) states, “In all [one] says and does, [one] is obliged to follow faithfully what [one] knows to be just and right.”

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Abortion bans and restrictions disproportionately harm the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized — the very people our faith calls us to prioritize.





CATHOLIC THEOLOGY IS PRO-CHOICE

Here are a few important ideas from Catholic theology and church history that support our perspective.

- » Abortion is never banned, shamed, or discouraged in the Bible.
- » The total prohibition of abortion became the law of the Catholic church only in 1917.
- » The church has never formally excommunicated someone for having an abortion, nor has it formally excommunicated anyone for supporting abortion rights.
- » The Catholic church's teaching on abortion has not been declared infallible, and it has changed over time.
- » St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, two of our church's most influential theologians, taught that a fetus didn't have a soul until later in pregnancy.
- » In 2016, Pope Francis decreed that any priest could welcome people who've had abortions into the church if they make a confession.

JUST THE FACTS

There's so much misinformation about abortion, so make sure you've got the facts straight.

63% of Catholics think abortion should be **legal in all or most cases**

(PRRI 2023).

»

In the U.S., **1 in 4 abortion patients is Catholic**

(Guttmacher 2016).

»

Only **8% of Catholics** agree with the bishops that **abortion should be illegal in all cases**

(PRRI 2023).

»

87% of Latinx Catholics say they would **support a loved one** who had an abortion

(PerryUndem 2018).

»

95% of women do not regret their abortions five years after their decision

(Turnaway Study 2020).

More facts!
More sources!

[catholicsforchoice.org/
resources/facts](https://catholicsforchoice.org/resources/facts)



ABORTION BANS ANYWHERE IMPACT ABORTIONS EVERYWHERE.

Abortion bans mean the government could force your family member, at great risk to their personal health, to give birth to a baby who won't survive.

Abortion bans mean hospitals won't help someone through a miscarriage because they are afraid of being sued. Abortion bans threaten fertility treatments like IVF and other medical innovations that could help a loved one grow their family.

Pro-Choice Pro-Tip:

If your family is OK with abortion in the case of rape, incest, or life-threatening pregnancy, ask some questions...

Why are they OK with abortion in certain cases but not others?

OR

Isn't it the same procedure?



ELEMENTS OF A COMPASSIONATE CONVERSATION

Know your audience.

What are your goals? People don't change their minds overnight. Start small. And remember — even if talking to your uncle at dinner ends in disaster, you never know who might be listening in silence at the table.

Plan ahead.

Speaking of dinner tables, when and where will you start the conversation? The setting should match your goal. If you're feeling squeamish about opening the floodgates, it can help to write down your first sentence or start by bringing up a current event.

Listen and repeat.

It's important to let the other person know that you are listening rather than just planning what you will say next. Don't interrupt, and practice active listening like head nods and other body language. Use, "What I heard you say was X. Is that correct?" to show that you are hearing their perspective.

Clearly communicate your thoughts.

Remember, this is a discussion, not a monologue! So, speak your truth, but don't monopolize the conversation. Using "I" statements is helpful to share your thoughts, such as "I feel X because Y." This guide provides short talking points and facts to pepper into your conversation, but remember that stories are key to changing hearts and minds.

Change will not happen overnight.

Do not set out to change the minds of your dinner companions right from the start. Having these conversations is ongoing work that allows us to destigmatize abortion and make space for people to grapple with the moral complexity of abortion and Catholicism. There is a lot to be unlearned, and it cannot all be done at once.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

This work is important, but it can be painful. Please know you are not alone. You are part of Catholics for Choice's community of advocates who know that healthcare is a human right — and that includes abortion. Catholics who've had abortions are in the pews, serving as Eucharistic ministers, and teaching Sunday school.

They are participating fully in the life of the church, which means that abortion is a part of the life of the church.

The Catholic laity's support for social issues has changed over time despite resistance from the hierarchy. We are the people of God. We are the church. Time and time again, polls show that our church supports people who choose abortion.

Catholics for Choice — which serves the pro-choice Catholic majority — encounters, educates, and emboldens people of faith who support reproductive freedom.

Want to learn more?

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