

## Made in the Image of God

As we commemorate Respect Life month, our U.S. Bishops Conference has provided informative, inspiring materials on this theme at [www.usccb.org/respectlife](http://www.usccb.org/respectlife). Below is an excerpt from one of their articles, reminding us why we as Church care about and work on so many issues— and how everything is connected.



### Poverty and Abortion: A Vicious Cycle

“In a 2005 study, 73% of women undergoing an abortion said not being able to afford a baby now was a reason for the abortion. That number rose to 81% for women below the federal poverty line.<sup>1</sup> And while the abortion rate for American women declined by 8% between 2000 and 2008, among poor American women it increased by 18%.<sup>2</sup>

Economic pressure and government abortion policy can combine to make things worse. One study found that poor women on Medicaid had twice the abortion rate of other women in their state. If the state’s Medicaid program paid for elective abortions, their abortion rate was more than *four times* that of other women.<sup>3</sup> By offering “free” abortions, the government effectively places its thumb on the scale to favor death for the unborn child. By contrast, if these programs continue funding care for mothers and babies but stop funding abortion, abortions among women in the program decrease by as much as 35%.<sup>4</sup>

For many years policymakers have debated whether we should reduce abortions by fighting poverty or by passing pro-life laws. The question is misplaced. It is not a matter of either/or, but of both/and. We need to address both poverty *and* bad abortion policies.

So poverty can lead to an increase in abortions. How does abortion affect poverty?

Here we have to look at a trend called “the feminization of poverty.”

Women are more likely than men to be poor, and to be in “deep poverty” (with an income less than half the federal poverty line). U.S. Census Bureau figures show that 5 million more women than men were poor in 2012. Almost 31% of households headed by a single woman are below the poverty line, compared to 6% of households headed by a married couple.<sup>5</sup> Women head over 80% of single-parent households, and almost half of children living with only their mother are poor.<sup>6</sup> So poverty in America is often a story of poor women and children, with no man in the house.

Some social observers once thought legalized abortion would solve this problem. If single poor women had access to abortion, they could avoid the hardships of trying to raise a child alone without resources. But after more than forty years of legalized abortion, out-of-wedlock births have increased, and the plight of poor women has worsened.

Beginning in the 1990s, groundbreaking research has found that the “technology shock” of widely available contraception and abortion has *increased* out-of-wedlock births. Previously, it was widely accepted that an unexpected pregnancy out-of-wedlock should lead a man to offer marriage.

Once contraception and abortion became widespread, the same pregnancy came to be seen as the woman’s responsibility – and as her problem. The man’s obligation can end with an offer to pay for abortion; if the woman refuses, she often soon finds herself to be a single mother. Today over 40% of births are out-of-wedlock.<sup>7</sup> ...

In defending unborn children, whom Mother Theresa called “the poorest of the poor,” we resist a “survival of the fittest” attitude that ignores the needy – including poor women, many of whom feel pressure to undergo abortions. And in standing for the needs of the poor, we oppose a mentality that treats the very lives of some human beings – any human being, from conception to natural death – as unimportant or burdensome.”

*“Even the weakest and most vulnerable,  
the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor,  
are **masterpieces of God’s creation**, made in His own image,  
destined to live forever,  
and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.”*

- Pope Francis’ Day for Life Greeting

Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words.

View the Holy Father expressing his reverence, respect and love for all  
in this short video: <http://bcove.me/5sazbyua>

May we be inspired to follow his example.



### Learn More!

This year’s Respect Life cover many important topics related not only to abortion but also to *in vitro* fertilization, miscarriage and end of life matters. The titles include:

*Poverty and Abortion: A Vicious Cycle*

*Healing Within Marriage from Abortion*

*Solace and Strength in the Sorrow of Miscarriage*

*An Adoption Love Story*

*Children as Commodities*

*Advance Medical Directives: Planning for Your Future*

All of these articles, along with intercessory prayers, can be downloaded from [www.usccb.org/respectlife](http://www.usccb.org/respectlife)

Contact our new Diocesan Life Issues Coordinator Suzanne Stack to learn how you can be involved in respect life activities. She can be reached at [SStack@dor.org](mailto:SStack@dor.org) or 585-328-3210 ext. 1304.

### References from “Poverty and Abortion”

1 L. Finer et al. in *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Sept. 2005, pp. 110-118 at 115.

2 R. Jones and M. Kavanaugh, in *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, June 2011, pp. 1358-1366 at 1362.

3 R. Jones et al. in *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, Sept./Oct. 2002, pp. 226-35 at 231.

4 S. Henshaw and R. Jones, Guttmacher Institute, Sept. 20, 2007, at <http://paa2008.princeton.edu/papers/80673>.

5 “Poverty in the United States: A Snapshot,” National Center for Law and Economic Justice, at <http://www.nclj.org/povertyin-the-us.php> (accessed July 2014).

6 “Single Mother Statistics,” June 23, 2014, at <http://singlemotherguide.com/single-mother-statistics/>.

7 See H. Alvare in *Villanova Law Review* (2013), pp. 379-436 at 408-11, [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2272821](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2272821).

**We renew our offer of assistance to anyone considering abortion:**

**If you are overwhelmed by the decisions you face,  
if you cannot afford medical care,  
if you are homeless or feel helpless,  
whatever your needs,  
we will help you.**

**The Church and her ministries,  
inspired by the word and example  
of Jesus Christ,  
will help you with compassion and  
without condemnation.**

**”A Matter of the Heart”**

**U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops**

### Justice & Peace Ministry Staff of Catholic Charities

**Monroe** 585-546-7220 Marvin Mich ext. 7021; [MMich@cfcrochester.org](mailto:MMich@cfcrochester.org) / Ruth Marchetti ext. 7099; [RMarchetti@cfcrochester.org](mailto:RMarchetti@cfcrochester.org)

**Chemung/Schuyler/Tioga** Kathy Dubel 607-734-9784; [KDubel@dor.org](mailto:KDubel@dor.org)

**Cayuga/Ontario/Seneca/Tompkins/Yates** Laurie Konwinski 607-272-5062 ext. 12; [LKonwinski@dor.org](mailto:LKonwinski@dor.org)

**Livingston** Tabitha Brewster 585-658-4466 ext. 13; [TBrewster@dor.org](mailto:TBrewster@dor.org)

**Steuben** Lynda Lowin 607-776-8085 ext. 217; [LLowin@dor.org](mailto:LLowin@dor.org)

**Wayne** Peter Door 315-331-4867; [PDohr@dor.org](mailto:PDohr@dor.org)