

A Matter of Life and Death

By Peter B. Crapanzano, M.D.
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Most of us are outraged when we hear the recurring story of a newborn baby's body being found in a garbage can—disposed of like trash. Although those responsible for these acts seem to receive less harsh punishments than other types of murderers, no one denies that the victims in these crimes are indeed persons.

At what point in our individual lives did each of us obtain the right to life? Anyone born after January 22, 1973, would have to answer, upon birth. However, since all individuals are utterly and undeniably human at the moment their life begins, delivery from the womb should have nothing to do with the presence or absence of personhood.

Some terms used to describe our stage of life postnatally include: newborn, infant, child, adolescent, and adult. Unfortunately, prenatal terms such as *fetus* and *embryo* are often conducive to dehumanizing the unborn, which is favorable to those who reject their humanity. Since every individual is exactly the same entity prior to and after birth, one could argue that the crux of the justification for devaluing the sanctity of life of the unborn is founded on semantics.

There is a contradiction in acknowledging that a newborn baby is a person while denying the personhood of the unborn. Many prematurely born babies are the same developmental age as many aborted fetuses, yet one group is considered persons and the other is not. This mentality that the unborn are not persons has largely contributed to our citizens tolerating the termination of 43 million unborn lives over the past thirty-one years.

Choosing a particular developmental stage as the crucial factor for acknowledging the presence of a new, unique individual is a tragic mistake, as illustrated in the example of prematurely born babies. Extrapolating from the time of birth back to the instant of conception, where could a line possibly be drawn that would identify when the unborn become human? Since no such line exists, we must accept that every one of us became human at the moment of conception, the time at which our lives began. This is also the time at which we should all have the rights guaranteed to us under the Constitution.

Some people are appalled when pictures of aborted babies are publicly displayed. I think that their outrage is a manifestation of internal conflict, which erupts when graphic pictures force them to face the fact that their misguided values support the inhumane destruction of human life. Anyone who denies the personhood and humanity of the unborn should look at pictures of aborted babies. Many websites on the Internet, such as *Priests for Life* <http://www.priestsforlife.org/resources/abortionimages/index.htm>, have made these pictures available. Also, recent developments in ultrasound technology allow for high resolution, real-time images of the unborn. These extraordinary images provide another visual example of the undeniable humanity of the unborn and can easily be found on the Internet.

Every time an innocent person's life is willfully destroyed, our country loses a little more of its soul. However, by educating our children and voting for officials that will work to protect the unborn, we can end this ongoing massacre.