"Abortion Can Be Another Word for Mercy." Really?

I recently came across a 2022 interview on ABC's "The View" with celebrity guest, Anne Hathaway, an apologist for abortion. In the course of the conversation, she claimed that "abortion can be another word for mercy." She was not speaking only for herself. The abortion industry, led by Planned Parenthood, is promoting this line of reasoning. They have an annual budget of at least $1 billion by marketing abortion as a compassionate alternative to motherhood.[1] Since Marists understand themselves as instruments of Divine Mercy, this creative and distorted misuse of the word mercy caught my attention.

Hathaway proceeded to argue that women should have legal protections to safeguard their right to have abortions. "And by the way," she said, "this is not a moral conversation about abortion; this is a practical conversation about women's rights, and by the way, human rights, because women's rights are human rights."[2]

The Catholic position asserts that human rights are rooted in the dignity of the human person as a moral and social being. This dignity comes from God in whose image and likeness every person, female and male, is created. It is inherent, universal, and applies to everyone regardless of circumstances. Consequently, every human being is valued in themselves and not used as a means to an end. Furthermore, defending women's rights is essential because it upholds their dignity as human beings. Notice that human and women's rights are God given and not given by the state. This is a crucial distinction given that the state can change its mind regarding who enjoys protecting human rights depending on the whims of those in power. Nowhere is that more evident than when we talk about the rights of the unborn, who are dependent on the will of legislatures and public opinion.

Women who don't feel ready to be a mother, or are already struggling to make ends meet, or who have been told their unborn baby may have a birth defect, or realize that giving birth will disrupt their lives and impact their social standing, are told they can choose an abortion. They are told it will help alleviate further challenges to the mother and a potential life of hardship for the child. It serves as a get-out-of-jail-free card that permits them to return to when they were not pregnant and start over as if nothing had happened. Just like that, abortion becomes mercy.[3]

Contrast that thinking with that of St. Teresa of Calcutta. At the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C., on February 5, 1994, she spoke her mind and from her heart about the evil of abortion. Let's quote from her speech.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Allen, Virginia, November 3, 2022, The Daily Signal, *Anne Hathaway Calls Abortion 'Another Word for Mercy,'* https://www.dailysignal.com/2022/11/03/anne-hathaway-calls-abortion-another-word-for-mercy/.

[3] Allen, Virginia, November 3, 2022, The Daily Signal, *Anne Hathaway Calls Abortion 'Another Word for Mercy,'* https://www.dailysignal.com/2022/11/03/anne-hathaway-calls-abortion-another-word-for-mercy/,

> "How do we persuade a woman not to have an abortion? As always, we must persuade her with love and remind ourselves that love means being willing to give until it hurts. Jesus gave even His life to love us. Therefore, the mother who is thinking of abortion should be helped to love, that is, to give until it hurts her plans, or her free time, to respect the life of her child. The child's father, whoever he is, must also give until it hurts."[4]

The line of argument that proposes abortion is mercy rests on the assumption that the tiny fetus is nothing more than human tissue.[5] If the fetus in the womb were considered human, then abortion would be taking a human life. That complicates matters because there is a universal understanding that killing an innocent person is wrong. No wonder Anne Hathaway wants to separate a conversation about abortion from morality.

Relative to the tiny fetus being a person, recall these words from the Prophet Isaiah, "The word of the Lord came to me: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you" (Jer. 1: 4-5). This revelation has some serious ramifications. For example, when St. Teresa was asked why there has not been a cure for cancer, not skipping a beat, she blamed it on abortions. It stands to reason that someone whom God knew before being formed in the womb, whom God knew before being born, and whom God had dedicated to discover the cure for cancer could have fallen victim to an abortion. This has led to countless lives cut short by this dreaded illness.

Virginia Allen, senior news producer for *The Daily Signal*, observes that, "The notion that abortion is mercy also ignores the fact that women who have abortions are more than twice as likely to commit suicide, compared with women who give birth, according to a 2019 study reported by the pro-life Charlotte Lozier Institute."[6]

In addition, women who have an abortion don't realize how violent the procedure is. "Former Planned Parenthood clinic director-turned-pro-life activist, Abby Johnson, shared her story of how she changed her stance on abortion. In an appearance on Fox and Friends on July 19, 2022, she observed that many people would oppose abortion if they saw its "barbarity." Johnson also said the victim of abortion is often removed from the equation since many pro-choice activists have never seen the procedure performed."[7] In other words, out of sight, out of mind. Sadly, what some would say is 'mercy' for the mother is anything but that for the fetus.

Again, let me quote St. Teresa,

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[4] Catholic News Agency, *Blesssed Mother Teresa on Abortion, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resource/55399/blessed-mother-teresa-on-abortion*.

[5] "The fact is that a baby has his or her own unique DNA from conception, has a heartbeat after between five and six weeks, and by 10 weeks, a baby can suck his or her thumb and grasp an object in the womb. To say abortion is mercy ignores the humanity of the child." Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Fox News, July 10, 2022,*Former Planned Parenthood clinic director: More would oppose abortion if they saw its 'barbarity'* https://www.foxnews.com/media/former-planned-parenthood-clinic-director-more-oppose-abortion-saw-barbarity.

> "By abortion, the mother does not learn to love, but kills even her own child to solve her problems. And, by abortion, that father is told that he does not have to take any responsibility at all for the child he has brought into the world. The father is likely to put other women into the same trouble. So abortion just leads to more abortion. Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion."[8]

Our nation still wants to believe in the secular gospel that proclaims abortion is mercy. Here are some troubling statistics that support this claim.

> "Planned Parenthood's 2023-2024 annual report, titled "A Force for Hope," revealed that the organization provided 402,230 abortions over the year, an increase of nearly 10,000 abortions from the previous year's report and a record high in the abortion giant's history."
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> "As abortions increased, taxpayer funding increased as well. Public funding for Planned Parenthood was up by about $100 million from the previous year's report. At $792.2 million, taxpayer dollars made up nearly 40% of Planned Parenthood's revenue."
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> "Taxpayers "are paying more money for more abortions and less health care," New said."[9]

That brings me to the matter at hand. In the case of an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy, what would mercy look like? Again, let me quote from Virginia Allen:

> In the case of an unplanned pregnancy, mercy is the 3,000 pro-life pregnancy care centers that exist across America to provide financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual support to women facing unplanned pregnancies. Mercy is the sidewalk counselor who journeys with women through their pregnancy and beyond, and mercy is the church and society as a whole being willing to give their time, talent, and resources to support women and their children in need. In the case of unplanned or crisis pregnancies, mercy is choosing life."[10]

Catholics who have had an abortion also have available to them God's mercy, which is offered through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Sadly, today, the beneficial impact of this sacrament's grace is ignored or taken for granted. Someone who didn't ignore or take for granted the grace of this sacrament was one of the great Christian apologists of the 20th Century, GK Chesterton. When asked why he became Catholic, he replied, "To have my sins forgiven." This explains why

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[8] Catholic News Agency, *Blesssed Mother Teresa on Abortion,* *https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/resource/55399/blessed-mother-teresa-on-abortion*

[9] Quinones, Kate, Catholic News Agency, *Planned Parenthood says abortions at all-time high, taxpayer funding increasing,* May 13, 2025, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/264069/planned-parenthood-says-abortions-at-all-time-high-taxpayer-funding-increasing.

[10] Allen, Virginia, November 3, 2022, The Daily Signal*, Anne Hathaway Calls Abortion 'Another Word for Mercy,'* https://www.dailysignal.com/2022/11/03/anne-hathaway-calls-abortion-another-word-for-mercy/.

the founder of the Society of Mary, Jean-Claude Colin, emphasized to the Marist priests the importance of being instruments of Divine Mercy, especially when hearing confessions.

In conclusion, let me remind you that it is a given that our faith will be put to the test, and more than once. Let me explain how Mary's faith was tested when she suddenly found herself with an unplanned pregnancy. In his book *The Real Mary – Why Evangelical Christians Can Embrace the Mother of Jesus*, Scot McKnight paints a picture of the stark reality that now confronted Mary.

> "She knew that villagers would taunt and ostracize her son. He'd hear the accusation that he was an illegitimate child (in Hebrew, a mamzer) and that he would be prohibited from special assemblies (Deut. 23:2). She knew as well that Joseph's reputation as an observant Jew would have been called into question. As we noted in the law about stoning the adulteress, she knew that he was legally required to divorce her. And one more mental connection for Mary was that he could leave her stranded with the Messiah-to-be without a father. She knew that they were poor and that any legal settlement that came to her after the divorce would make life financially difficult. No sane, intelligent, pious young Jewish woman—and Mary was all these things and more—could avoid thinking these very things about herself, about Jesus, and about Joseph. She must have wondered if there was an easier way."[11]

Observe how Mary initially responded to Archangel Gabriel's announcement that she would be the mother of the long-awaited redeemer. Her first question was not about how she would navigate these dangerous social and religious threats. Her first question focused on how God would accomplish this, given that tradition holds she had made a vow to remain a virgin. She did not doubt that God could do this miraculous deed, but was asking how this miracle would happen given her unique circumstances. When it came to doing God's will, she did not weigh the pros and the cons of how her life would be impacted before giving her consent. She said yes and *then* thought about how her life would become "infinitely" more complicated. She put serving God's purposes first, trusting God would somehow make things right. That is why Mary is considered a model of discipleship.

Mothers with an unplanned pregnancy are invited to follow in Mary's footsteps. Like her, they are to serve God's purposes first, which, in this case, is to choose life for her unborn child, and *then* trust God to make things right.

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[11] McKnight, Scot, *The Real Mary – Why evangelical Christians Can Embrace the Mother of Jesus*, Paraclete Press, Brewster, MA, 2007, Kindle Edition, Location 169 of 2196.