

March for Life Speech-

I'd like to start by thanking the Campaign Life Coalition for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. This is my first year with the pro-life movement; I am a recent member of the CLC and writer for ProWomanProLife.

I've grown up as a feminist, studying feminist works, participating in feminist culture, and all throughout my earlier years I considered myself pro-choice. I was pro-choice from a place of misinformed and misguided love, as many women are, because I believed that women suffered more unjustly without the procedure. I also assumed that being pro-choice was the natural and established position for feminist theory. I want to speak to you today about this change from being pro-choice to becoming pro-life, and I want to suggest that we have good reason to hope that this personal change can be replicated not just in individual women, but also in our society at large, as it so desperately needs to be.

There is an assumption in sections of our culture that abortion is progressive, that history is moving inevitably towards greater acceptance of abortion globally. But legalized abortion is not in any way a new or a recent phenomenon. Abortion was legal in many ancient societies, including that of Rome. Not simply abortion, but infanticide. The killing of babies was common. There are interesting parallels between these practices and those of today. For example, as with abortion today, Roman infanticide led to the deaths of many more girls than boys, boys being considered more valuable. So too were the babies of slaves routinely killed, being considered less human than official citizens. Only with the rise of a new persuasive way of thinking, Christianity, was abortion and infanticide rejected. They were rejected because of the belief that all life had dignity, and that this dignity was not determined by gender, citizenship or any physical, or lack thereof, attribute.

Our culture today, however, does not agree. Today we are told that a baby in the womb does not have the intellectual, or physical capacity to be considered as worthy of life. Our culture echoes ancient Rome in that the dignity of the baby is falsely assumed to be dependent on his or her characteristics. Where we are different from ancient Rome is that we, so far, are less consistent in our ideology. Whereas Rome understood human dignity to be based on citizenship and so killed chosen infants deemed without it, we

understand human dignity as based upon *self-awareness* and so we only, thus far, kill our unborn and in some instances, our very old. If we were more consistent, more universal in our terminology, the severely mentally disabled and all lacking the intellectual gifts we associate with being a proper human being would be killed too, as many already are prior to their birth. Is this where we're going? Are we going further on the road towards a culture that mirrors the violence of ancient Rome? I'm here today to suggest that we don't have to.

I believe that we, today, can offer to our culture a new, better, more coherent account of the human person that can help us to overcome the current climate of violence, just as was historically achieved before. Why do I believe this? Because I myself was convinced by an account of human dignity, that was more coherent, more persuasive and infinitely more beautiful, than the barbarism of *our* culture.

The Myth of Choice

I was convinced in part by the myth of choice, this term... choice, the central cog in the pro-abortion perspective. I discovered, that it was a lie. And the victims of this lie, as in early Rome, were both the murdered infants and the women whose babies they were. The myth of choice attacks the most vulnerable; the unborn, the poor and, disproportionately, *women*. This started to become clear to me when a woman, who I love, a close relative of mine, who had an abortion, confided her story to me. Her boyfriend during this event had threatened to leave if she had the baby, and she was terrified. A woman, living in a male dominated society, who believed that no one would *want* her with two children (she had one already). Want her? As if being wanted was the goal of life. She feared her financial state without him, she feared furthering her education, she feared being alone as a mother of two. Her fear and lack of self-confidence so consumed her that she had the abortion, an abortion she was recounting to me ten years later, in tears and full of regret. Now, I can't generalize and say this story is typical of all abortion recounts, but it was obvious to me from her recollection that 'choice' ... was not involved in this process. She was under immense stress, and as we know from basic psychology, when a person is under stress the process of thinking is, as Lazarus and Folkman write in their textbook, "usually characterized by loss of concentration, inability to perceive new information (to learn), hampered short-term memory, lack of initial planning of your actions, and hasty decision

making". So with this scientific fact in mind, I thought, how was this a choice? She wasn't really given any concrete options, she wasn't given any resources, or, she believed. given the choice to be both a mother and the woman she envisioned herself to one day be. And if this wasn't a choice for her, maybe it wasn't a choice for others either.

Furthermore, although she grew up in Christian society she had never encountered the understanding of life that overcame the infanticide of Rome and prevailed since. She had never heard that all life is a composite of both reality *and* potentiality. For example, we cry more, we're struck more strongly, by the death of an 11 year old than at the death of a 111 year old. Why? They have both been robbed of their life, we don't necessarily love one more than the other. So why? It is because the *potentiality*, the very thing the pro-choice movement says is not enough to be granted life, of the 11 year old is far greater. They've both lost the exact same in terms of the now, the real, but the potentiality lost in the death of the 11 year old is greater. We all know, if only instinctively, that life is not just what you are, it is also all that you can become, not in terms of success but in living. The unborn are filled with the potentiality that is central to all life and yet she, my relative, had never been exposed and to this way of thinking.

In our culture, we are taught that our value is decided by our qualities, who we are, how much money we have, how attractive we are, she had never encountered the idea that our worth is not based on our attributes. An idea that the unborn, loved by our community here, have a dignity than can never be annihilated by their lack of any attribute.

What choice, then, did she have? She was assailed by her society, she was attacked by stress and she was robbed of a perspective that would have allowed her to morally evaluate her action. She was not aware of the alternative perspective of life, which says it has value because of its potentiality. And so, let me ask you again, what choice did she have? Choice was for her, and is for millions of others a myth, a myth.

It's a myth that the pro-abortion movement desperately wants to maintain, even while gendercide is taking place in China. And it is pro-abortion, because a pro-*choice* movement, would not oppose education of women about to have an abortion on what their baby looks like, a pro-*choice* movement would not oppose the education of women about to have an abortion of the options they have if they keep their baby. A pro-choice movement would not oppose the current bill in parliament, Roxanne's Law, to

ban coerced abortions, but a pro-abortion movement does because they realize that they are all coerced on some level. And to open a discussion, about what *qualifies* as coercion, would expose this fact.

It is this culture of abortion, which, like ancient Rome, needs to be challenged. I would like to read to you a quotation from 'The Revolution' (published by Susan B. Anthony in 1868) from Mattie Brinkerhoff, a powerful suffragist and lecturer on women's rights:

"When a man steals to satisfy hunger, we may safely conclude that there is something wrong in society - so when a woman destroys the life of her unborn child, it is an evidence that either by education or circumstances she has been greatly wronged."

'Greatly wronged'... The woman who initially confided in me had been greatly wronged by her society. By the man who threatened to abandon her, by the male culture who made her think she would be unwanted, by those in the pro-abortion movement who continue to perpetuate the myth of choice. And by us, who support life but don't properly educate woman like her that the baby inside her has dignity, beauty and rights *or* provide her with the knowledge or resources to overcome her basic fears of socioeconomic obstacles. She has been failed, and one of the reasons I am here today is to apologize to her. I am part of a culture who has abandoned her, and for this I am sorry. But I am also here today to offer hope. Abortion and indeed infanticide were legal before, but people discovered that reasons for it being legal, were weak and false and violent and so it was made *illegal*. This, no doubt, saved millions of lives and many of us here today, are here because abortion was *not* legal throughout all history. So let's not categorize our current legislation as a progression, when it is clearly a regression. It is a regression to a violent and destructive ideology that had, as its primary victims, women and the very weak, especially the weakest of all, the unborn. But as I have been changed by different ways of thinking, as Roman culture was changed by Christian ways of thinking, so too our culture, can be changed by the witness of the people here today.

Lifting the Taboo

Last year's statistics revealed that only 1 of every 5 Canadians actually knew the current legislation on abortion, though 60% morally opposed abortion. Most believe there are legal restrictions. Because of the silence that blankets

this issue, even to the highest levels of the Canadian government, we're not a properly educated populace when it comes to this issue and are therefore misrepresented by the legislation. So it's important to lift this taboo, to talk about abortion, to learn and to witness the reality.

We need to witness to the reality that there is a link between the status of women and the status of unborn children. When we, as a society, see childbirth as an obstacle to achieving a "successful life", by standards that don't value motherhood and its sacrificing nature, then we have to wonder where the ideals of this "success" come from. Mary Astell, an English feminist author and philosopher, said "We go on in vice, not because we find satisfaction in it, but because we are unacquainted with the joys of virtue." It is easier, it is simpler, to have abortion in our legislation, just as the Romans, who killed for entertainment and enslaved their women, did. What does it say about our values, when we have abortion in common with them? We go on in vice because we are unacquainted with the joys of virtue. Rome went on in vice because it did not have an account of dignity that was not based on citizenship. My relative went on in vice because she was not acquainted with a society of acceptance, with the love and support of those around us. I went on in vice because I was not acquainted with the falsehoods of the pro-choice position which in recent years I have come to see so clearly and our culture goes on in vice as it believes in the myth of choice, in the violence that assumes a person's dignity is based only on their attributes. All of us were and are insufficiently acquainted with the truth and with the joys of virtue. Today we'll open a discussion so desperately needed to lift the veil of silence that has burdened so many women, burdened so many in our society from giving their voice to this subject, burdened our health care providers and our legislature from being able to address the societal issues behind our staggering abortion rates. We're here because women, and their unborn children, deserve better.

-Thank you.