

LENDING WOMB FROM HUMANE POINT OF VIEW

Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ

I am not a medical practitioner. I have neither studied medicine nor am I acquainted with medical science. So this article comes from my readings, discussions with knowledgeable people and from my own meditative reflections. Our topic of lending womb here is discussed and evaluated from a humane and ethical point of view.

When does a human life begins? The beginning of human life is a much discussed subject in our times. But in my mind I am very clear about it. Human life begins when a sperm from a man meets an egg of a woman. In other words, when men's sperm impregnate a woman's egg human life begins.

Normally a woman gets pregnant and human life begins through an intercourse with her husband. But modern medical science has found new ways and means to fecund a woman's egg with sperm outsider her body. One way is called in-vetro fertilization. In the process one or usually more eggs are extracted from a woman's body and are fertilized in a test-tube with sperms from a man. Here the fertilization or fecundation takes place scientifically in a test-tube and the fertilized egg(s) are implanted in the uterus of a woman.

In an intercourse man's sperms meet an egg of a woman normally in her fallopian tube and she becomes pregnant. But due to defective or non functional fallopian tube a husband and his wife have recourse to in-vetro fertilization for pregnancy. Many people regard the in-vetro fertilization a great achievement of the medical science.

But I am against in-vetro fertilization. Usually in in-vetro fertilization more than one egg is taken from a woman and they are fertilized in a test-tube. Then, only one of the fertilized eggs is implanted in the uterus of a woman and the rest of those fertilized eggs are destroyed!

We believe that human life begins with the sperm fertilizing an egg. So from an ethical and moral point of view destroying a fertilized egg is homicide. I believe that it is a heinous crime to destroy life at any stage from the moment of conception to its natural end. So destroying an in-vetro fecundated egg is a murder of human life.

Now take the example of lending a woman's womb for bringing forth a new life from a fertilized egg of another woman. Normally an egg of one woman fecundated by her husband's sperm is implanted in the uterus of another woman. That other woman nurtures the fertilized egg for nine months in her womb and gives birth to the child of the couple for whom she has lended her body. For her 'service' the woman receives a considerable sum of money from the couple.

The woman who renders her service to a couple is called surrogate mother. The equivalent word in Gujarati literally means temporary mother. Perhaps some people consider lending womb a great service to another woman, who for some reason or other is incapable of conceiving and then nourishing a faetus in her body. But for me it is nothing more than a business. In fact I consider it a unethical and immoral business.

I consider holy and sacred, as a sign of true love and commitment, the intercourse between a man and a woman united in marriage. The conception which may take place in such a holy union is also holy and sacred. Such conception is moral and blessed. But outside the sacred marriage an artificial fertilization of woman's egg with the sperm of her husband or of another man is immoral because you are playing with human life.

Often people have recourse to artificial fecundation because woman's egg may be defective or her husband sperm count might be below normal, or the man must be impotent in one way or other or the woman may be barren. A couple may be childless in marriage because one or the other life-partner is not potent or incapable of contributing to bring forth a new life. But childlessness is neither a sickness nor it is a crime.

Naturally every couple wants to have their own child / children. I have seen the heavenly bliss of men and women in fondling their own child holding it in their hands close to their hearts. Still the couple who cannot beget their own child can adopt an orphan child. Sometimes the couples who have been barren for years have been helped to bear their own children through medication and counseling. I know a number of such couple who have had no children for years after their marriage and then they have been helped to bring forth their own children in the natural way of conception.

It is my religious belief that men and women are created by God in his/her own image. So I believe that the dignity of men and women created in God's own image must be preserved at all cost in every way. I believe that the gift of life is the greatest gift of God to a person. The science and the greatest scientists can create something new from transforming one thing into another. Only God can create something absolutely new from nothingness. In giving life to a new person within the sacred union of marriage the parents are co-creators with God in bring forth a new life.

Today it is a reality that a married or an unmarried woman lends her body for nourishing in her womb for nine months and then bringing forth the child of a couple in exchange for a considerable sum of money. I believe that the relationship between a woman and the child she has nourished and carried nine months in her womb can never be one of business of giving and taking. That relationship is a love-relationship between a mother and her child.

A sacred bond or relationship is steadily built up between the faetus and the woman carrying it nine months in her womb. That faetus develops and grows into a child with the blood and flesh of the woman carrying it. The nine-month long union of a faetus in its mother's womb is a life-long relationship, which a mother can never forget in her life. The child may be bought with money but that love-relationship can never be bought with any price. Auctioning, yes, selling and buying, a child-mother love-relationship is nothing more than selfishness of the people concerned. (Contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in & www.vpaulsj.org)

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