

**Marissa Labrie**

**Age 15; Prospect Mountain High School; Alton Bay**

Everything we do in life is a choice. Whatever we decide to do is up to us. For example, I can decide to do my homework every night instead of falling behind in my classes. I can decide to eat healthy foods instead of simple carbs. Typically, I think that people try to make choices that they believe will benefit themselves in the end. When it comes to abortion though, it is not just the life of the woman that must be considered, but also the life of the growing and developing child inside her.

The Pro-Life philosophy does not oppose women's freedom to choose. Aside from sexual assault and rape, a woman makes multiple choices leading up to an unexpected pregnancy. She could have simply made the choice to not participate in sexual activities, especially if she does not want to take on the responsibility of raising a child. If she believes she is old enough to perform such acts, she is undoubtedly old enough to know the consequences. Additionally, if she does get pregnant, not only should she already be aware that this was a possibility, she must think about how the child can be put up for adoption, especially if she prefers not to raise a child. Chances are somebody else wants to be the parent of her son or daughter. It is not the child's fault for being the creation of an unexpected pregnancy, so why is it that the unborn child must be penalized with death? Women almost always have the choice of preserving their unborn child's life.

If a woman still chooses to take part in sexual activities, the Church teaches that these activities should be shared by two people in a marital relationship, a stable living arrangement and proper funds – more choices. This almost always guarantees that the woman will not be left to raise a child on her own without love and necessary resources. That way, if she has an unwanted pregnancy, the woman and her spouse have what is required to ensure that the new child has what he or she needs to be raised in a safe environment and experience a decent childhood - even if the raising of the child was unexpected or unplanned.

Marriage affords couples an opportunity to work together to prepare for the unplanned and unexpected, even when that means new life is created.

Women have the freedom to make choices that impact their sexuality. The Church has choices to make, too. It is not enough for the Church to simply preach that abortion is unacceptable. It must take action, broadly, in all communities, to provide loving support systems for frightened and overwhelmed women who are unexpectedly carrying a child. Such women must be empowered and reassured that there are alternatives to abortion - solutions that preserve blessed life and support the conscience of the sacred mother.