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Tracy Harkin, from Co. Down, with daughter Kathleen Rose >



Kathleen's Story “The day my husband and I were given Kathleen Rose's diagnosis is a day we won't forget in a hurry. Doctors told us our daughter would be very lucky to survive past her first birthday. Trisomy 13 is a chromosome condition. It was a very dire diagnosis. It was presented to us in a very bleak way. We knew in our hearts we wanted what was best for our daughter and we just wanted her to reach her full potential whatever that would be, whatever that would mean.

The term 'fatal foetal abnormality' is not only hurtful to parents, it's also medically inappropriate and extremely misleading. No doctor can say with certainty just how long a child with one of these conditions will actually live outside the womb. Kathleen has surprised us in so many ways. She's now ten years old. It's just amazing.

If I were to sum up Kathleen's personality – she smiles and she hugs and she loves. She shows nothing but love. She teaches us so, so much. She teaches us to accept people the way they are, to be non-judgemental. She teaches us that you need to take every day as it comes and to celebrate every day.

Right now in Ireland we're at the brink of a very special time in history. I think we really need to stand up and shed light on what we have in our Irish culture, which is a very deep respect and love for all our citizens whether born or unborn. Children like my daughter are protected and valued and cherished. The repeal of the 8th Amendment will change that in a very dramatic way.”

For the full video of Tracy and Kathleen visit chooselife2018.ie.

Your Questions

Does life begin at conception?

Yes. But this is not just a question of belief – it's a scientific fact. At the moment of conception a new, unique human being with his or her own DNA comes into existence. In recent years, amazing advances in ultrasound technology provide us with a window into the womb and reveal the truth that the unborn child is undeniably one of us – a human being and much more than 'a clump of cells'. In the past, some people may have pleaded ignorance to the humanity of life in the womb but today we no longer have this excuse.

When does a baby's heart start to beat?

The first few weeks are the most rapid time of development of a new human life. The baby's beating heart has been recorded as early as 21 days after conception – this is sometimes before mum discovers she is pregnant!

What can I do?

Why not follow Choose Life 2018 on Facebook and @ChooseLife2018 on Twitter and share our posts?

Bump!

Hi Mammy!
Congratulations, you're pregnant with me! You don't know it yet but you will find out soon. Everything about me – my eye and hair colour, my gender and my fingerprints – was decided at the moment of my conception. I am very unique and I love you!



Over the coming weeks we will be following the development of Baby Bump based on pregnancy milestones up to 12 weeks

Church teaching

Why is cherishing human life so important?

The Catholic Church's teaching on the dignity and value of every human person is very special. Every human life is precious and beautiful. Some people feel the right to life of the unborn should be a matter of personal choice for the mother. Others maintain, while they are opposed to abortion as a general principle, there are some children to whom the right to life does not apply because they have been diagnosed with a serious medical condition or because they have been conceived as a result of rape.

The Church's belief, based on reason as well as faith, is that there is no such thing as a human life without value.

The Eighth Amendment

Article 40.3.3 of the Constitution of Ireland

'The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.'

The Eighth Amendment is a very positive aspect of Irish society. It gives equal right to life to pregnant women and unborn babies. This is a unique protection which should be cherished.

"BROTHERS AND SISTERS

I encourage you to be missionaries for the cause of life.

Remember those words of Pope Francis: 'To serve human life is to serve God'.



Speak to your families, your children and grandchildren, friends and colleagues about cherishing the precious gift of life at all times from conception to natural death. Speak the truth about life, and speak it with love."

Extract from the Pastoral Message for 2018 by Archbishop Eamon Martin of Armagh and Chair of the Bishop's Council for Communications. For the full message see Chooselife2018.ie

Family Prayer

All powerful God,
You are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your
tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power
of your love, that we may
protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may
live as brothers and sisters,
harming no one. Amen.

Prayer of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*



"I panicked when I realised I was pregnant. I was so scared. I felt much calmer after talking to Cura. It's great to know they're at the other end of the phone if I need them again" Jane, 18

Cura is an agency of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference which supports women experiencing unplanned pregnancies. If you need Cura's help call **1850 622 626** or visit **Cura.ie**

To access videos, testimonies and frequently asked questions visit www.chooselife2018.ie