

“To be a mother is an opportunity for a lifetime of love. To be a mother to a baby with a terminal illness is no less a privilege. It is an extraordinary opportunity for a deep and lasting love.”

Cliona Johnson, from Dublin, whose son John Paul lived for just 17 minutes >



Cliona's Story “At my 22-week scan I was given the diagnosis that my son had anencephaly, a condition where the baby’s brain doesn’t develop fully. I felt complete devastation as the future my husband and I had seen for our child disappeared before our eyes.

“At the same time, we realised this child was a gift from God. We believe all of us are made in the image of God so every child brings an image of who God is into our lives.

“The doctors told me I had two choices. I could travel to England and have a termination or I could continue with my pregnancy. I remember at the time asking the doctor ‘will he suffer?’. That was my big question. The doctor assured us ‘no’. This baby did not know any different. He was safe in my womb. Everything in me wanted to protect John Paul.

“When John Paul was born he lived for 17 minutes. He was held for all 17 minutes and loved his entire life. My prevailing memory of that time is one of peace. We walked the journey of life as far as we could with him. We had done everything we could for him. We had given him everything that we wanted to give him and now we could let him go.

“For us, as parents who have faith in God and in God’s Kingdom, we were letting him go somewhere he could be complete, where he could be fully healthy, where he could be fully alive but always with us.

“To be a mother is a great privilege and an opportunity for a lifetime of love. To be a mother to a baby with a terminal illness is no less a privilege. It is an extraordinary opportunity for a deep and lasting love.

“There is some treasure in life you have to dig for. The lives of babies like John Paul are a treasure way beyond what you could have asked or imagined. To lose this in our society is to lose something very profound.”

What can I do?

Mother’s Day is a special day for mothers all over Ireland. Why not spend some time with your mother today and tell her how much you love her?

Your Questions

What if my baby won't survive?

Many parents who received this news and continued their pregnancy to term say the chance to hold and care for their child, even if just for a few moments, helped them to grieve and heal after their child passed away. They have memories that they cherish and are consoled knowing they did all they could to care for and love their sick baby. As a society, we should strive to increase and improve perinatal hospice care and support for these babies and their families.

As well as medical assistance, what support is available?

One Day More and *Every Life Counts* are Irish charities which offer support to mothers and fathers of babies with life-limiting conditions. They enable families to make meaningful plans for their child’s life, birth, and death, in a way that honours the baby as well as the baby’s family.

Week 9

Hi Mammy!

I'm now one inch long and all my organs and body parts are present and developing. My heart has divided into four chambers and my nervous system is now functioning. My eyes are completely formed but my eyelids will stay closed for a few more weeks. My legs have grown and make me look more like a baby. Soon you will feel my first kicks. When I grow up I want to play for Ireland!



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

Church teaching

A fundamental human right

The right to life is not given by the *Constitution of Ireland* or by any law. Catholic teaching is expressed well by Saint Teresa of Calcutta in a 1994 letter to the US Supreme Court on *Roe v Wade*. She wrote: "Human rights are not a privilege conferred by Government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of our humanity".

Reasons to promote a culture of life

Abortion discriminates against the most vulnerable

Statistics published by the UK's Department of Health reveal 90% of babies with Down Syndrome in the womb are aborted. Abortion is legal for any detectable disability in all nine months of pregnancy.

If the abortion rate of babies with Down Syndrome in Denmark continues, it is likely no babies with the condition will be born in future years. Iceland is close to becoming the first country in the world where no babies with Down Syndrome are born. Only one or two babies with Down Syndrome are born every year.

Pre-natal tests were introduced in Iceland in the early 2000s and the vast majority who receive a positive test opt to terminate their pregnancy.

Adoption

Hundreds of Irish couples are on waiting lists having been approved to adopt a child. The reality is not enough babies are offered for adoption. For every baby available there are at least 14 couples wanting to adopt that child.

According to the Adoption Authority of Ireland's *annual report*, only five infants were presented for adoption in Ireland in 2016.



"I panicked when I found out that I was pregnant. I was so scared. I felt much calmer after talking to Cura. It's great to know they are 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**

"THE EIGHTH AMENDMENT TO THE Constitution upholds the right to life of both mother and baby. It is not about one life at the expense of another.



It is about cherishing mother and baby equally. Occasionally medical interventions need to be carried out with the intention of saving the life of the mother, resulting in the unintended and unavoidable death of the unborn baby. This is not an abortion because it is not the *direct* and *intentional* ending of innocent human life. The greatest gift that each person has is the gift of life."

Excerpt from the Pastoral Message from Bishop Francis Duffy of Ardagh and Clonmacnois

A Mother's Day Prayer

Thank you Lord for all mothers
On this day let us think of them
Whether they are with us or gone
to their heavenly reward.
We think of their kindness
their compassion, their care for
us and all their unconditional love.
We pray that you will watch over
them and support them in the joys
and struggles of their daily lives.
We ask this through Christ our
Lord. Amen.

*A Prayer for Mother's Day from
The Family Book of Prayers*

Our website has been newly redesigned. To access videos, testimonies and frequently asked questions visit **www.chooselife2018.ie**