

First Place – Senior High Division

Better Too Much Than Not Enough

By Christine Novelero

Love. Love conquers all. Love is love. I love you. One word has come to encompass so many definitions, from strong liking, to physical desire, to letting others do whatever they want. From a Christian perspective, however, love is defined as this: to will the good of the other.

Now, what does the definition of love have to do with why I'm pro-life? Well, there are always two people involved in a pregnancy: the pregnant woman, and then there is "an other." As in, the preborn child. Today's culture often portrays the issue of abortion as a dichotomy. Either you love the woman and forget the fetus, if you're pro-choice; or love the fetus and hate the woman, if you're pro-life. In reality, I'm pro-life because I reject this false dichotomy. I'm pro-life because I choose to love them both.

Now, although the dichotomy is a false one, I recognize that it feels real for many women across the nation. As a student largely surrounded by pro-choice classmates, I've learned that many of them view abortion as a lifeline for women who can barely provide for their own needs, much less those of a child. But this is where the definition of love comes in. Whereas many would offer them the quick "solution" of a trip to the abortion clinic, our duty as pro-lifers is to show them true compassion, to accompany them in the trials of motherhood. We are called to actively will the good of these women and their children, to empty ourselves for their sake—by offering our time, money, and companionship.

Some might object, "Why would you make women go through all that for a clump of cells that won't even feel anything?" There are several ways I could respond to that. There's the biological route, which involves the scientific consensus that life begins at conception and developmental milestones. There's the philosophical route, where we discuss how abortion's justification depends on dehumanization and why the preborn child's life does, in fact, supersede the mother's bodily autonomy.

But whereas those routes are closer to my head, the route that's closest to my heart is that of love himself. That is, Jesus Christ. Being all-powerful, he didn't have to die on the cross for us. He could've saved us with a snap of his fingers, or he could've abandoned humanity entirely. But no, he didn't choose the quick solution. He picked up the cross meant for us, bearing on his scourged back and pierced hands the suffering of all humanity.

When Jesus said, "This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me," he was in one way pointing at his death. As children of God, most of us aren't called to undergo a torturous death like he did. But we are all called to love like he did. As pro-lifers, that means accompanying women in crisis pregnancies, no matter how much it costs us. That means looking at preborn children with the eyes of God, as human persons who are infinitely worthy of life and love. Because at the end of the day, I'd rather have loved too much than not enough.

Second Place – Senior High Division

Voice in the Making

By Maryah Nunziata

Standing outside of Planned Parenthood I saw many faces of young women walking in the clinic with their heads hung low, and their mouths glued shut. At 8 years old I did not understand the weight and severity of what choices were being made. I didn't understand why, but there was a heaviness in the air. My parents prayed over the young mothers, that their eyes would be opened to other options. We prayed over the tiny babies being formed, that the Lord would deliver them like he delivered Moses. I saw my mom talk to these scared young women and share with them the love of Christ, while providing resources.

Often times I think of my own story and how it unfolded. My mom was in a similar position I am in now. She had just turned 18 and was a senior in high school. She was a typical teenager who would enjoy family, friends, and fun. However, there was one major difference, she was carrying a baby in her womb. I picture my young mother and how scared she must have been. She hid this from her parents, because she was afraid of what they would say. I can just imagine how many young girls go through this and are just as afraid as my mom was. Many of these girls fear they have no choice but to abort their babies. One of my mom's friends said she could give her the information to an abortion clinic if she ever needed it. My mom along with my biological father went to a free pregnancy clinic, they did an ultrasound and showed them the little person inside. My mom knew that life was the only option for this small human being whose inner parts were still being made.

Now, 18 years later, here I am speaking against abortion. Now I understand why those women had that sad look on their face. If my mom, like many other teen moms, decided to have an abortion I would not be here. I was not just a clump of cells. I was a living growing being. As a growing child in the womb, I would have spoken for my mom to choose life. Just because I didn't have a voice yet in the womb, doesn't mean I didn't want to have life. I'm speaking as a child who could have been a victim of abortion, choose life! I am also speaking for the young women who are told that abortion is the only way out, it is not, choose life. I am living proof that having a baby is not the end, but a beautiful beginning. From being in a situation that seems so dark and hopeless, I know that God can use that for good.

By God's grace and mercy, I am alive. For as long as God fills my lungs with air I will speak against abortion because at one point my voice was in the making, but it is fully developed now. I am Pro-life, because I believe every child deserves life and a chance to fully develop, no matter the circumstances in which they came to be. I believe that the Lord can turn anything for good and for His glory. "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish" Matthew 18:14

Third Place – Senior High Division

Black and White

By Madeleine Bassler

There are many complex and confusing issues at hand in today's America; immigration, gender, and religion are just a few of the most hotly debated topics in our country. But there is one issue that divides America like nothing else, and that is of course abortion. The right calls it "murder," the left calls it "reproductive rights and healthcare." I call it the simplest debate of our day.

I have always been pro-life. When I was a toddler, my parents brought me to rosary rallies at our local planned parenthood. When I was in middle school, I participated in some pro-life clubs. I went to a couple of pro-life galas. I was pro-life, but I was not passionate about it. I knew abortion was bad, but I never wanted to have to defend my position.

As a teenager, however, I realized my ignorance would have to stop. I needed to convince myself, independent from my parents, that abortion was morally wrong, or I could no longer call myself pro-life. And when I decided on a side, I needed to fight for it. So, my journey began.

I thought it would be a lengthy period of reflection, but I was surprised by how black and white the issue really is. The question at hand was whether abortion was murder, and everything else was just an emotional argument to throw me off track. When the background noise is removed, I can hear the melody clearly.

There is no reason to think that an unborn baby is not alive. Every fact points to the unborn child being a living human separate from his mother. He has his own DNA, 10 fingers and ten toes, a heartbeat and feels pain. How could this not be a child? The answer slowly dawned upon me. The only reason we would argue that this perfect little creature is not alive is if we did not want him to be so.

Abortion is the simplest of issues. If abortion is murder, then it is always wrong, regardless of the circumstances. If abortion is only the "termination of a pregnancy or a clump of cells" then it is perfectly acceptable, regardless of the circumstances. Every shred of evidence points to the baby being very much alive, therefore abortion cannot be in any way morally permissible.

I would encourage anyone who is unsure about their stance on abortion to research the issue fully, and from a completely unbiased perspective. Ignore the emotional arguments from either side, and simply determine when life begins. And you will find that life does, indeed, begin at conception.

Honorable Mention – Senior High Division

Life is Everywhere

By Turner Young

There is no consensus on what life is, no dictionary definition, no existential argument, nothing has been able to accurately describe what life is, and yet every living thing and everyone knows what life is. The single cell organism knows it's alive, the deer at the river knows it's alive, and we know that we are alive. This strange mystery of knowing and not knowing what life is has permeated human civilization for our entire existence. From the 20,000-year-old Lascaux paintings to the latest DreamWorks movie, *The Wild Robot*, we have thought about what it means to live, inspiring us to do great things and to conquer the greatest obstacles in our quest for life.

I am pro-life because life is something beyond us, something we cannot explain, but something we know like an old friend. This familiarity with life is why death scares us so much. We have all had a crisis about what will happen once our eulogy is said and our bones are in the ground. We have all been scared that our life will be taken in stride by lost time or a lost soul, and this terrifying reality is why life should not be taken lightly, for it is something far greater than us, it is a gift from God. But if we were to instead play God, and trust that we have the power in our hands to give or take away life, this world would come to a terrifying, deadly ruin. And in abortion, we are playing with something far too important: life.

Life is present in all organisms, though we cannot define it, we can identify it. In humans, and all animals, our lives begin at conception, when we go from being two lifeless things, egg and sperm to a tiny, but more importantly, *living*, egg. And though this egg is small, *it is living*, and if our government protects the eggs of a bald eagle, of how much more value is a human's life compared to an animal's?

This is why I am pro-life. If we already protect life in the smallest of creatures in their earliest forms of life, it is far more necessary for us to protect our unborn children, no matter where they came from. We are required to let our unborn generation experience the great mystery that we call life because life is the driving force for civilization, art, and philosophy. Life is what makes us human, and we should preserve it at all costs or else lose what makes us human.