In your own life, there are also important values beyond mere physical life. You have moral obligations to your family, to your friends, to the people you work with, to yourself, and to God. Only you know and understand what all of these obligations entail. No outside advisor, not even a priest or a counselor or family member, can tell you how to weigh all these in the balance. That’s what your conscience must do.

4. Study, reflect, pray. Following your conscience is not a mystical or obscure process. It has many practical aspects. Vatican II says that you must make a “knowing” choice. That means you need to study and learn things. You need to learn the medical facts. You need to learn the practical implications of the alternative choices you face. You need to talk to people who have been in the same place you are now, to counselors and to spiritual advisors. You need to reflect on what the best thinkers in your own religious tradition have said. Then you reflect. Then you pray. Then you make a free decision, you follow your conscience, and you hope that what results is a “spontaneous choice of what is good.”

If you are interested in learning more about the progressive Catholic viewpoint on ethics, the reform organization Call to Action is a good starting point (on the web at www.cta-usa.org).

Also, contact Catholics for a Free Choice (1436 U Street, NE, Suite 301, Washington DC 20009).
www.cath4choice.org

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Reproductive Choices: A Roman Catholic Perspective
Frank O’Hara

The Maine Interfaith Council for Reproductive Choices

Maine Interfaith Council for Reproductive Choices
159 State Street
Portland, Maine 04101
4. Church and Family Life. The Roman Catholic Church offers moral advice to married couples and governments on many issues, but the Church does not provide specific rules on abortion.

5. Your conscience rules. The Roman Catholic Church offers moral advice to married couples and governments on many issues, but the Church does not provide specific rules on abortion.

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