

**THE AMENDMENT TO THE MARYLAND CONSTITUTION STATES:**

**Article 48: That every person, as a central component of an individual's rights to liberty and equality, has the fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but NOT LIMITED TO the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end one's own pregnancy. The state may not, directly or indirectly, deny, BURDEN, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means."**

**THE BALLOT will say (not required to match amendment language):**

**Question 1 - Constitutional Amendment (Ch. 245 of the 2023 Legislative Session)**

**Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom**

**The proposed amendment confirms an individual's fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but NOT LIMITED TO the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end the individual's pregnancy, and provides the State may not, directly or indirectly, deny, burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means.**

**For the Constitutional Amendment**

**Against the Constitutional Amendment**

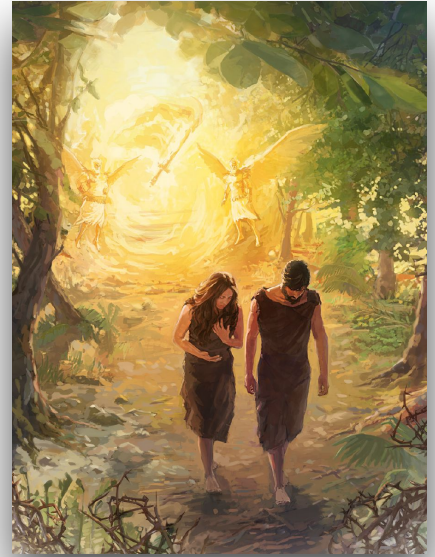
This November, Marylanders will be asked to vote on Question 1 - The Right to Reproductive Freedom Constitutional Amendment. (The language of the law passed by the House and Senate, and how it will appear on the ballot are at the top of the page.) This week I have decided to reflect on the creation story in the Book of Genesis, what it tells us about the human person, and how the passage of Question 1 might impact our identity as children of God and brothers and sisters in Christ.

In the Book of Genesis we read that God created man differently from all other living creatures. While the other animals were created by the spoken word of God (Genesis 1:20-25), when God created man, He went about it in a more deliberate way. First He "formed man of dust from the ground, and then He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen 2:7). The fact that God breathed His Spirit into man made man more than a body and certainly different from other animals. The man God had created was a union of body and spirit... an embodied soul made in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27). God, who is a communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, made man for communion too...



But God went further in His loving intentionality. Knowing that "it was not good for the man to be alone", God created a "helper fit for him." (Gen 2:18) "So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man" (Gen 2:21-22). What I found amazing is that God didn't create woman as a new and separate creature. He created woman from the rib of the man... Thus man and woman were united in both spirit and flesh from the beginning! It sounds like the description of marriage to me (Gen 2:24-25). And even more amazing is that the man and woman were in communion with God in a Garden! You might say the communion of the three of them in the Garden formed a trinity. The Evil One who was watching from the sidelines must have been seething with jealousy!!

Amazingly, our abundantly and lovingly generous God still was not finished with the man and woman. “God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen 1:28). He, in fact, commanded man and woman to establish a family and serve as co-creators and caregivers of creation. When God did THAT, the Evil One must have HAD A FIT!!! In the Evil One’s mind, the man and the woman were being given what BELONGED TO HIM, the Evil One!!! So what did the Evil One do? He slithered into the Garden and tempted the man and woman with the one thing denied them. He convinced Eve that the God who had created her, not out of necessity but out of love and a desire to live in communion with her and the man, was a jealous and angry God who wanted to keep wisdom, power and glory to Himself!! Of course, we know how the story goes... Rather than to trust the God who had created them and given them dominion over all of creation except one apple tree, she grasped an apple from the forbidden tree and shared it with her husband.



Arghh!! What was the consequence of them grasping for themselves that which belonged to God alone? Separation not only from God, but from one another, a dark self-awareness, and recognition of their nakedness, causing them to literally hide from God (Gen 3:10). Indeed, they lost communion with God and one another... They turned into self-absorbed individuals rather than a family bound together through self-giving love. It also led them to being expelled from the Garden and condemned to leading lives of toil and pain, and the loss of their true identities as partakers in the divinity of God.

Something strikes me about Question 1 and how it may relate to story of the first man and woman. In the amendment isn't the “individual” declaring a NEW RIGHT? A right to reproductive freedom which involves having authority over life and death, an authority that only God has? Remember the apple tree? The passage of Question 1 would, among other things, give the **individual** power over life and death by means of procedures such as IVF, abortion, and surrogacy. Does anyone but God have such authority? It also threatens the institution of the family, the fundamental unit of society. In the amendment, the word “individual” refers to individuals of all ages. There is no age restriction. Thus the word “individual” refers to members of all age groups, from small children and adolescents to adults and the aged. In essence, this amendment is asking parents to hand their God-given parental rights and responsibilities regarding the reproductive health of their children over to the state.

**NOTE:** God’s timing is amazing. The readings at mass during the first week of Respect Life Month centered on Catholic social teaching and the dignity of the human person and the family. I highly recommend listening to Bishop Barron’s homily for the 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time (<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=nwIRsAjlX78>) .

St. John Paul II and Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!!!