

From “Sacred Values: A Multifaith Celebration of Freedom, Health, and Justice,” held on 2/8/2007 at the Indiana Statehouse, sponsored by the Indiana Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

Reflection on Health by Rev. Pam Senko

Creator God tells us to Choose Life.

We make an infinite number of choices each day –

- › simple and complex, coerced and free,
- › informed and uninformed, thoughtful and impulsive,
- › respectful or degrading, delightful or shameful,
- › honest and manipulative, courageous and fearful,
- › loving and selfish.

We make choices.

Most of the time we believe that we are *at least* making choices that will make this minute, this day, this life endurable, satisfying enough, happy enough.

Creator God calls each of us to choose Life that is not merely endured; but life that includes valuing and celebrating the gift of being embodied sexual creatures.

Bone, muscle, nerve, tendon, blood, organ, brain, mouth, eye, fat and skin. This is the body - shaped and colored and put together in a variety of ways:

- › Rarely, if ever perfect, often not quite our idea of excellent.
- › Many times awkward, or odd or different.
- › Bodies made to interact with nature, the world, each other.
- › Bodies made to carry and shelter our souls and spirits.

We are called to choose Life by

- › caring for our bodies,
- › appreciating whatever body we have,
- › and using our bodies well.

We are called to choose.

Our desire for a good and blessed life experience may have little chance to become reality without first caring for and making choices about our bodies. As my tiny grandson grows toward his first birthday, he daily discovers and rediscovers his body – fingers, tongue, bottom and feet. His mother says to him, “Yes, Elliot, that is your arm. It is your arm and nobody else’s arm.” “That is your foot, and no one else’s foot.”

In a world where much of our life and well-being is in the hands of others, our choices are sometimes greatly limited or invisible to us. Our real choices about our bodies disappear when persons who determine what we will be taught about our bodies, and, how we will name their

features and capacities, decide that less is best, and distortions justify political or religious means to a particular end.

The questions about caring for and celebrating our bodies and sexuality abound:

How to choose in a world populated with persons who make grave choices to pursue their needs without regard for the consequences or who simply injure each other as a result of their own ignorance?

What to choose in a world with confusing messages about

- what is good enough,
- what is important,
- what is joyful or degrading,
- foolish or playful,
- too soon or too late?

How would God have us celebrate our bodies when we are unclear about

- who my body/your body belongs to,
- whose responsibility it is to make the decisions that affect it,
- where to get accurate, truthful information,
- will I be abandoned if I don't make the choice some other believes is right for me?

All bodies are sacred –

- Young and fit bodies are no more important than older or less fit.
- Bodies with some parts missing or not functioning are as sacred as bodies with all the original and working parts.
- Bodies that have been injured, abused, damaged, or made sick – are to be cared for and valued.

The call to choose Life establishes that your life is important and valued by God -no one more significant than another. Your life, your body absolutely valued and loved by God.

Not one of us makes only excellent choices for the care of our bodies and how we use them. No one of us has available all the knowledge and resources we wish were available to us. Neither do any possess a full understanding of God's love, wisdom, will, and compassion regarding the care and use of our bodies, our sexuality, and reproduction choices.

In order to choose and to choose well, to choose what is best in accordance with her or his faith journey and his or her seeking, all people must have be taught and offered real choices that are compassionate, respectful, accurately portrayed, available, affordable, non-coercive and supported. *All* people:

- Children, teens, young adults and old, the elderly, the weak , the strong,
- the faithful and the non-religious, the odd, the ordinary,
- those clear minded, those troubled, those fearful and alone,
- those abused and maligned, those mistaken,

- those yearning, those eager for wisdom.

We pray that with God's wisdom we will all be guided to provide what is needed so that we and our families, our neighbor and the stranger, will be offered real choices regarding our bodies, particularly sexual and reproductive health.

It is our prayer that girls and women, boys and men, couples and families will learn, through comprehensive education and access to resources, how to prevent many difficult life and faith crisis.

I pray, that when difficult, even heart rending or faith shaking, decisions must be made, each person will have available all that they need to decide what will be necessary for their valued and significant Life.