



When Rhetoric Meets Reality

“I’m four months pregnant, and my baby is a parasite right now!” This is the first thing “Mary” said to me while I was standing next to our poll table at Texas State University. We frequently hear extreme rhetoric like this, but rarely from someone who is currently pregnant.

She immediately tried to convince me her baby wasn’t human.

Mary: It’s not human until it’s born!

Jeremy: If it has human parents, doesn’t it have to be human?

Mary: I guess so.

Jeremy: And isn’t it always wrong to intentionally kill innocent humans?

Mary: Yes, but what if the child would have a difficult life?

At this point, we were joined by Angelica. She echoed Mary’s rhetoric that abortion is killing but that it is OK if the child will have a difficult life.

Angelica: Isn’t abortion needed if the child will have a tough life? My cousin is a good example of this. She got pregnant at 16 and decided to keep the baby, but she had to drop out of school, and now she has a very low-wage job. That kid is going to have a



My conversation with “Mary” at Texas State University

really tough life. Doesn’t that prove that abortion is necessary?

Jeremy: I think it proves the exact opposite.

Angelica: What do you mean?

Jeremy: Do you think your cousin wishes she had aborted her child?

Angelica: Absolutely not! She loves her son.

Jeremy: Doesn’t this then illustrate that in



Here is where Angelica (to my right) joined my conversation with Mary.

the end, almost no parents would have preferred that they killed their born children through abortion?

Angelica: Yes, that's a good point.

Angelica's rhetoric met the reality of her cousin's real-life situation. And her cousin's love for her son shows that even when the child may have a difficult life, abortion would not have been the best solution.

I then found out that Mary's rhetoric about the "parasite" with whom she was pregnant also met the reality of her life. She told me that she considered abortion for weeks before deciding to keep her baby. She then decided that she would not put the baby up for adoption, but instead would upend her life in order to care for the child with her boyfriend.

It was fascinating that as she went on talking about her baby, Mary dropped the parasite rhetoric and started talking about her child as if it was the valuable human being that it actually is. By the end of our conversation, both Mary and Angelica abandoned their rhetoric and spoke with me about the reality of abortion. They had not totally changed their position, but they both had gone from thinking abortion is OK in all cases to thinking abortion is OK only in the case of rape. I discussed that difficult case with them before they both had to leave.

This conversation was an amazing opportunity to show Angelica and Mary that the reasons they thought abortion was OK looked much different when the reality of an actual pregnancy came about. I was glad to be able to show them why their rhetoric failed when it met with the reality of the new humans that entered their lives.