

PRONOUNCEMENT

Surrogacy



WHAT IS SURROGACY?

A **surrogate mother** is the woman who is pregnant with the child and intends to relinquish it after birth. The word surrogate, from Latin *subrogare* (to substitute), means appointed to act in the place of. The intended parent(s) is the individual or couple who intends to rear the child after its birth.

In **traditional surrogacy** (also known as the Straight method) the surrogate is pregnant with her own biological child, but this child was conceived with the intention of relinquishing the child to be raised by others such as the biological father and possibly his spouse or partner, either male or female. The child may be conceived via home artificial insemination using fresh or frozen sperm or impregnated via IUI (intrauterine insemination), or ICI (intracervical insemination) which is performed at a fertility clinic. Sperm from the male partner of the 'commissioning couple' may be used, or alternatively, sperm from a sperm donor can be used.

In **gestational surrogacy**, the surrogate becomes pregnant via embryo transfer with a child of which she is not the biological mother. She may have made an arrangement to relinquish it to the biological mother or father to raise or to a parent who is unrelated to the child (e. g. because the child was conceived using egg, sperm donation or is the result of a donated embryo). The surrogate mother may be called the gestational carrier.

Altruistic surrogacy is a situation where the surrogate receives no financial reward for her pregnancy or the relinquishment of the child (although usually all expenses related to the pregnancy and birth are paid by the intended parents such as medical expenses, maternity clothing, and other related expenses).

Commercial surrogacy is a form of surrogacy in which a gestational carrier is paid to carry a child to maturity in her womb and is usually resorted to by higher income infertile couples who can afford the cost involved or people who save and borrow in order to complete their dream of being parents. This procedure is legal in several countries including in India where due to high international demand and ready availability of poor surrogates it is reaching industry proportions. Commercial surrogacy is sometimes referred to by the emotionally charged and potentially offensive terms "wombs for rent", "outsourced pregnancies" or "baby farms".

RATIONALE

Intended parents may arrange a surrogate pregnancy because of female infertility, or other medical issues which may make the pregnancy or the delivery risky. A female intending parent may also be fertile and healthy, but unwilling to undergo pregnancy.

Alternatively, the intended parent may be a single male or a single woman who is unable to bring a pregnancy to full term.

SURROGATES

Surrogates may be relatives, friends, or previous strangers. Many surrogate arrangements are made through agencies that help match up intended parents with women who want to be surrogates for a fee. The agencies often help manage the complex medical and legal aspects involved. Surrogacy arrangements can also be made independently. In compensated surrogacies the amount a surrogate receives varies widely from almost nothing above expenses to exorbitant amounts.

The fees for the rest of the process, including fertility clinics; lawyers; medical fees; and agencies and/or egg donors (if they're used) generally cost more than the fee going to the surrogate. Gestational surrogacy costs more than traditional surrogacy, since more complicated medical procedures are required. Surrogates who carry a baby for a family member (i.e., sister or daughter) usually do so for expenses only.

THE THEOLOGICAL ETHICAL ISSUES

Whilst the church is charged with a Godly commission to show empathy and love for perishing people, to inter alia hear the scream of pain and loneliness from the empty womb, it also cannot deviate from its course of issuing warnings against sin and rebellion against God.

There are various theological ethical issues involved in the practice of surrogacy. These are the Biomedical intervention in the natural process of conceiving of a child, the renting of a womb for the purposes of carrying the baby for nine months, the possible involvement of a third person in the marital life of a couple who decided for whatever medical reasons agree to use the sperms and or eggs of a donor.

Biomedical intervention

The fundamental ethical question in this regard is whether it is morally right for biomedical intervention in the private sexual life of a couple through reproductive technologies? Is this not a violation of the natural processes that God has ordained for procreation within marriage?

It is important to note that human beings have been created in the image and likeness of God. As such they were created as free moral agents with a sense of choice and responsibility. In the final analysis they will ultimately be called to give account of how they have executed their responsibility in life.

God is the Author of life and wisdom which he gives to each according to his will. The biomedical interventions in this regard to do something good in situations of infertility, where there is a yearning by the couple involved to have a baby.

The renting of a womb

The finances involved in the process of the surrogacy is in most cases justifiable when one thinks about the services rendered by the various agencies to match the prospective parents and the surrogate mother, as well as the legal and medical cost involved. This is also applicable to the monies payable to the surrogate mother for her time and willingness to drastically alter her life to the benefit of the unborn child. The issue of the renting of a womb becomes a serious ethical issue if and when it is done for commercial purposes.

The involvement of a third person as a donor

If and when a third person becomes involved in the process then it has serious consequences for the marital life on the basis of our theological understanding of marriage - which is a divine institution between one man and one woman.

In some instances (as already described) surrogacy can be justified. Where surrogacy is extended, however, to unnatural realms like other species surrogacy, men, or test tubes, something has gone terribly wrong. Practices like these should be disavowed by the church. Ultimately, it is to be remembered though that the concept of sin and sinners are not integrated with each other. Sin can be disapproved of, sinners not.



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