



## Reproductive Justice and the Common Good

**Leadership:** [Emily Reimer-Barry](#) and [Simeiqi He](#)

**Languages of proposed virtual table:** English, with desire for broad inclusion depending on interest

**Purpose:** Women’s reproductive health is a complex moral issue. The threats to reproductive justice are experienced differently around the world. Catholic theological ethicists working on this issue can learn from one another. Whether discussing maternal and infant mortality, gender based violence, sexual education that empowers women to make good choices in sexual relationships, legal access to contraception and abortion, and many other facets of this question-- the issues of female fertility and reproductive health often divide Catholics. This virtual table will be a space for bringing scholars together around central questions and shared concerns, even if/when those scholars do not always share the same pragmatic conclusions.

Why ‘reproductive justice’?

Loretta J. Ross and Rickie Solinger, in *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction* (U of Cali. Press, 2017), explain that reproductive justice is a framework for thinking about reproduction through the lens of social justice. It goes beyond a “pro-life”/”pro-choice” framework. Reproductive justice is a social movement that should be intersectional in its praxis; it argues that people who reproduce and become parents require a safe and dignified context for these most fundamental human experiences. Reproductive justice cannot be reduced to abortion access, although some critics try to do that. Rather, a reproductive justice framework looks also at health care access, housing, education, political structures, healthy environment, etc. These methodological and ethical concerns are shared by ethicists working in the Catholic tradition. A common good approach in social ethics will be key in these discussions.

Questions for participants:

- What reproductive health issues are most pressing in your local context?
- What does reproductive justice mean to you?
- How is the Catholic community already a part of this discussion/movement?
- What can we learn from what is going well in your context?
- What can we learn from challenges in your context?
- How can our CTEWC network foster information sharing on reproductive health scholarship in these most difficult times?

**Goals:** In the first year, to bring 10-15 scholars from around the world into dialogue for information sharing and solidarity. Potential directions include:

- A shared working bibliography on reproductive justice and Catholic resources

- Opportunities for scholars to share working papers on reproductive justice and to receive feedback from colleagues in CTEWC
- Opportunities for participants who are junior scholars to be in dialogue with more experienced scholars in this area of the church/academy, including in particular cases of conflict should that arise
- At this point, I am not prepared to say that we have a goal of a publication or conference since we need to see what happens when participants come together. My goal is to begin the discussion first.

**Reporting methodology of the proposed Virtual Table:** If we have a closed group, and the co-chairs make reports to *The First* with regular updates, we can protect the identity of participants who may raise issues “at the edges of church teaching” or which in some ecclesial/academic contexts would make them more vulnerable. These participants need additional support, and this can be a space for that, but only if they feel that this protection is in place. So I propose that this group be advertised to the CTEWC network in the proposal stage, and then once constituted, closed, with names of members not made public. We will make regular reports (every 3 months) that protect the identity of participants. I believe this also serves well the CTEWC because it prevents trolls from attacking CTEWC and fostering misinformation campaigns.

**Call for members:** Are you a Catholic theological ethicist working on reproductive health issues? What reproductive health issues are most pressing in your local context? What does reproductive justice mean to you? How is the Catholic community already a part of this discussion/movement? How can our CTEWC network foster information sharing on reproductive health scholarship in these most difficult times? This virtual table aims to bring together 10-15 scholars from around the world into dialogue for information sharing and solidarity. Potential directions include:

- A shared working bibliography on reproductive justice and Catholic resources
- Opportunities for scholars to share working papers on reproductive justice and to receive feedback from colleagues in CTEWC
- Opportunities for participants who are junior scholars to be in dialogue with more experienced scholars in this area of the church/academy, including in particular cases of conflict should that arise

Emily Reimer-Barry (USA) and Simeiqi He have volunteered to co-convene this group and has requested that the group’s reports be shared with the CTEWC in a way that does not disclose the identity of participants. The first Zoom meeting would be focused on establishing ground rules for the virtual tables’ discussions. Future meetings may be structured around feedback on a participant’s paper, discussion of church teaching, hearing reports ‘from the ground’ in particular contexts, and/or other opportunities for discussion and collaboration.

### **Duration and meeting frequency:**

Proposed Methods:

- Communication by email listserv, private Facebook group, and/or whatsapp group message as issues arise and for planning
- Zoom “virtual” meetings every 8 weeks, for approximately 45 minutes, with agenda set in advance by the group (can include feedback on a participant’s paper, discussion of church teaching, or hearing reports “from the ground” in particular contexts and opportunities for discussion)
- All of the above is open to further debate, dialogue with members