



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE

# Office of Human Life, Family and Bioethics

## Forgiveness

“But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope.” The Gospel of Life

Abortion is often thought of by those who have procured one as the “unforgivable sin.” There is a belief that there is no way God could possibly forgive such an act. This leaves those who have an abortion feeling doomed to hell with no way back.



Feeling alienated from God and without hope of reconciliation has left many in the Catholic faith too terrified to confess, and convinced that their perceptions are truth. In addition, the ever-present manifestation of guilt and shame felt by post abortive people, and the reluctance of society and the Church to address their pain, only exacerbates it. Part of this reluctance comes from a desire to prevent further damage, but in effect, it is often portrayed as condemnation, or an attempt to deny the reality of abortion. It is no wonder so many still believe the Church offers no forgiveness!

Contrary to that belief, however, ministries for those suffering from a past abortion are available throughout the Catholic Church. True forgiveness from God can be found in the Sacrament of Reconciliation when the proper conditions are present.

These conditions are:

**Contrition:** Contrition is “sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1451)

**The confession of sins:** The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others. Through such an admission, man looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of, takes responsibility for them, and thereby opens himself again to God and to the communion of the Church in order to make a new future possible. (CCC 1455).

Blessed Pope John Paul II addressed this in his encyclical, “The Gospel of Life,” when he speaks to those who have participated in abortion. He says, “try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of Mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in

the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord.”

**Satisfaction:** Many sins wrong our neighbor. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice requires as much. But, sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbor. Absolution takes away sin but, it does not remedy all of the disorders sin has caused. (CCC 1459)

Many times, women and men who have participated in abortion and confessed it relay the following...

“I have confessed my abortion countless times and still do not feel forgiven.”

“If I am forgiven, why do I still feel so bad?”

“I still do not believe God has forgiven me for this terrible sin.”

As noted above, “absolution takes away the sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused.” In other words, just because your sin is forgiven, it does not mean the pain of your abortion will disappear right away.

For many, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not the end of the journey, but most often, it is the beginning. A beginning made through stepping out in spite of fear, with courage and humility, to receive the forgiveness of God.

Healing from a past abortion takes time... God’s time, not ours. In the process of healing, it is not unusual that there will be times when you feel you have not been forgiven.

### **Claiming God’s Mercy**

The devil will use our feelings to keep us trapped in his despair. He taunts us with doubts of forgiveness in order to keep us in his grasp. Dave Reardon says it best in his book, “The Jericho Plan” when talking about conquering despair. “Before the abortion, Christ condemns it and Satan makes excuses for it. After the abortion, Satan is the one condemning it while Christ wants to forgive it.”

### **So What Are We To Do?**

Claim God’s mercy and forgiveness if you have confessed. You are forgiven because HE SAYS SO and Christ never lies. Do not allow your feelings to dictate where you are, but trust in Our Lord whose love is infinite and who wants to bring hope and joy into your life again. He will not let you down.

Seek out help and support from a post abortion ministry, a peer group, a professional counselor trained in post abortion healing, or a clergy member. There are specific things to learn to aide you on your healing journey and people are available to help you. However, remember, once you have been to confession and received absolution , your sins have been forgiven!

**Go in Peace! – TBonopartis**