

## Divine Mercy Transforms the Despair of Abortion

By Donna Crean

I want to share with you some thoughts on the role of despair and forgiveness in the lives of women who have had an abortion. A woman shared with me the following: "Over ten years ago, I myself was in despair, facing a major dilemma after making numerous bad choices. Like many women deciding whether or not to have an abortion, I felt trapped by the circumstances around me."

There are many interior struggles a woman contemplating abortion goes through; one being the maternal desire to raise and nurture the child. On the other hand, she may fear that if she does not abort the child, she will lose something-her boyfriend, the love of her parents, or her security.

Fifteen years ago, I was facilitating a healing retreat for post abortion and, an elderly woman of 80 years, broke down as she entered the retreat house and fell to the floor in the pain of why she was there. As she told me the following story, tears starting streaming down her cheeks:

"When I was twenty years old, I became pregnant by my husband. I have carried this for many years. I have carried the pain of this for 60 years and never told a soul. I never told him I was pregnant and that I had an abortion. Even today, I carry the guilt and shame of knowing I killed my own child. Do you think God will forgive me?"

For me, it was an experience I will never forget. That woman's pain was as real and fresh as if she had had the abortion yesterday. And to think of her despair and shame and guilt that she carried all those years-all because she did not understand and come to accept the mercy of God.

Abortion involves an element of despair. Contrast that despair with the hope that Our Lady had when carrying baby Jesus-a young woman, unmarried, yet knowing that she must trust in God. Abortion happens because one lacks trust in God and sees one's world crumbling before her. The act of abortion contrasts with the Image of Divine Mercy words below the Image- "Jesus I trust in you." Jesus is saying to trust; He has a greater plan for the mother and child.

In contrast, Satan is telling her that the only way to keep what she has is to merely give up an expendable piece of tissue. And then, after the abortion, all the guilt, shame, and doubt appear and the mother finds it difficult to forgive herself. She says to herself over and over again, "How could God ever forgive me? What a worthless wretch I am." But don't we all do that at times? I reflect in my own life how many times I would say, "I have been forgiven," and yet I really didn't believe what I was saying. I was just going through the motions. How many of us fall and think that God could never forgive such a sinner? He may be merciful, but He's not THAT merciful! We contemplate the gravity of our sins and turn our guilt into an everlasting cycle of despair.

Forgiveness of self is very difficult for many of us. I want to share with you a story from St. Faustina's spiritual Diary regarding forgiveness:

"On the evening of the last day before my departure from Vilnius, an elderly sister revealed the condition of her soul to me. She said that she had already been suffering interiorly for several years, that it seemed to her that all her confessions had been bad, and that she had doubts as to whether the Lord Jesus had forgiven her. I asked her if she had ever told her confessor about this. She answered that she

had spoken many times to her confessors and 'the confessors are always telling me to be at peace, but still I suffer very much, and nothing brings me relief, and it constantly seems to me that God has not forgiven me.' I answered, 'You should obey your confessor, Sister, and be at peace because this is certainly a temptation.'

But she entreated me with tears in her eyes to ask Jesus if He had forgiven her and whether her confessions had been good or not. I answered forcefully, 'Ask Him yourself, Sister, if you don't believe your confessors!' But she clutched my hand and did not want to let me go until I gave her an answer, and she kept asking me to pray for her and to let her know what Jesus would tell me about her. Crying bitterly, she would not let me go and said to me, 'I know that the Lord Jesus speaks to you, Sister.' Since she was clutching my hand and I could not wrench myself away, I promised I would pray for her. In the evening, during Benediction, I heard these words in my soul:

**Tell her that her disbelief wounds My Heart more than the sins she committed.**

When I told her this, she began to cry like a child, and great joy entered her soul." (Diary, 628).

You see, God's mercy is like an ocean that has no bottom. It is greater than the greatest sin we could ever commit. Look at the two thieves on the cross. One repented while the other rejected God, even to the final moment. God forgave the repentant sinner, and even that day was with Our Lord in paradise! What an example of forgiveness!

Look at the story of Mary Magdalene. She was an accomplished sinner and was known throughout the area for her transgressions. Think about who announced the Resurrection. It wasn't Peter the first apostle or John the beloved disciple. No, it was Mary Magdalene. This should give us great comfort!

As we approach the Great Feast of Divine Mercy, let us repent and bathe in God's ocean of mercy, and come to accept His Divine Mercy and say with conviction, "Jesus, I Trust in You!"