Reconciliation Brings Easter Joy

Although Easter is a time of great joy for many, it can also be a painful season. Imagine a woman who has had an abortion watching children frolic through the grass at an Easter egg hunt. She may silently ache for the child she'll never carry in her arms. Her focus is on the tomb, not on Jesus’ victory over sin and death and the joy of the Resurrection. Those who mourn the loss of their children to abortion may feel they are not worthy of God’s love. How can the Church help suffering mothers, as well as fathers, move from silent suffering into healing, peace, and even Easter joy?

Many healing journeys begin with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Through what the Vatican’s Congregation for the Clergy calls the “sacrament of Divine Mercy,” we have a two-sided, real encounter with Jesus, present through his priest. We receive mercy, pardon, and grace to strengthen us. If you know someone hesitant to approach the sacrament because of a past abortion, assure them that Jesus, who never tires of forgiving, is eagerly awaiting them. Many diocesan parishes participate in “The Light is On for You” or similar programs that open all Catholic churches for confession on certain weekdays during Lent.

When you encounter those who avoid returning to the Church because they fear judgment, it may be helpful to remind them of all whom Jesus forgave and healed. The woman caught in adultery. The good thief on the cross next to Jesus at the Crucifixion. The woman of many sins who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears. St. Paul had been zealous in the killing and persecution of the early Christians until Jesus appeared to him. Even St. Peter, our first pope, denied Jesus three times while knowing that he was the Christ. Pope Francis has written, “It might seem shocking but I derive comfort from Peter: he betrayed Jesus and even so he was chosen” (The Name of God Is Mercy, 41–42). Remember that Jesus said, “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance” (Lk 15:7).

How can we live out the spiritual and corporal works of mercy? If someone confides in you about a previous abortion, listen to his or her story with compassion and patience. Comfort the sorrowful, pray for the living and the dead, and bury the dead. We may not be able to physically bury the child who was aborted, but he or she can be commemorated at memorial shrines and sites dedicated to unborn children. Local Catholic cemeteries often have memorials dedicated to unborn children.

Our celebration of life given to us by Christ’s victory over sin and death continues long after the Easter season through the sacraments. Sometimes called

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a “mini-Easter,” every Sunday’s Mass is a celebration of life together in Christ. Through baptism, we share in the power of Christ’s victory over sin and death. May God’s grace help each of us become channels of healing mercy, so all who suffer from abortion find peace in Jesus, the Church he founded, and the joy of the Resurrection.

Locate the nearest diocesan Project Rachel Ministry by visiting the “Find Help” map at www.hopeafterabortion.com or www.esperanzaposaborto.com. And please pray that many will receive the gift of God’s infinite mercy.

Written by Mary McClusky, assistant director for Project Rachel Ministry Development at the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.