



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO
Office of Family and Faith Formation

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To: Priests and Deacons

From: Steve Patton, Associate Director, Family and Respect Life Ministries

Date: June 10, 2019

Subject: Homily Considerations for Healing After Abortion

Dear Fathers and Deacons:

While many are aware that the Church teaches that abortion is wrong, fewer know of the Church's message that forgiveness and healing are available to every repentant heart. Sadly, even people in our parishes may be unaware of the Church's pastoral response to those suffering from a past abortion.

A homily is one of the most effective ways to reach those suffering after an abortion. This may seem surprising, as many homilists may share a concern that mentioning such a painful topic may only intensify the pain and cause more self-reproach for those involved with a past abortion. However, these women and men are in our pews, and time and again, we hear that they have been yearning for a compassionate message of mercy that would give them the confidence to seek reconciliation and healing. Every Sunday provides an opportunity for such a message of hope.

Archbishop Joseph Naumann, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, recently prepared the attached document, "Homily Considerations for Healing After Abortion". Please review it.

Three times each year, twice in English and once in Spanish, the Diocese of Sacramento offers the Rachel's Vineyard post-abortion healing retreat weekend. The next weekend, in English, is August 2 – 4. Please direct anyone who might be interested to (916) 733-0161 or 888-456-HOPE or projectrachel@scd.org. All inquiries are confidential and financial assistance is available.



project rachel

Peace starts here

Homily Considerations for Healing After Abortion

Archbishop Naumann, Archbishop of Kansas City, KS and Chair of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, shares that before preaching on abortion, he asks those present who have been involved in abortion to pray for him:

- That his words of mercy might give consolation and an encouragement to those in need of healing.
- That his message might prevent others from experiencing the pain of abortion in their lives.
- That those in need might have the courage to ask for help.

General Points to Consider:

- Acknowledge the loss of those who have experienced abortion. It may be the first time anyone has acknowledged their child's loss and their own grief and pain. A simple statement like "I'm sorry for your loss" can open hearts.
- Invite the congregation to pray for those they may know who have had an abortion.
- Remind people of the boundless mercy of God and encourage them to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Many wrongly believe that abortion is "the unforgivable sin." They may be longing to hear that God desires to forgive every sin of those who are sorry, even the sin of abortion.
- While respecting confidentiality, tell a story of healing from your own experience, or go to the Project Rachel Ministry national web site page ["Your Stories"](#) for some sample stories. The "Healing" quotations may be most helpful and encouraging.
- If available, mention that the diocesan abortion healing ministry, most often called Project Rachel, offers confidential help for women, men, grandparents, and other family members and friends who may have been involved in an abortion. Include contact information in the bulletin, the vestibule and church restrooms. Or simply invite those who seek healing to call you or another priest in the coming week. (Though some may prefer to pursue healing opportunities outside of their own parish, for confidentiality).
- Close on a positive note of hope and healing.

Additional Points to Consider:

- Abortion is a difficult topic that may stir unpleasant emotions or trigger very painful wounds. Be prepared that some may cry or even leave. Tears are often part of the healing process. Your words may be a pivotal moment in the painful, but ultimately restorative process of healing.
- Be aware of your audience. By the age of 45, as many as 1 in 3 women have had an abortion, and a similar number of men and family members have been involved.
- An elderly congregation may often include those wounded by abortion decades ago, even before abortion was legalized. Some wait to confess an abortion as they near death.
- Consider a message that is sensitive to children present in the congregation.
- Be mindful that abortion is often tied to national or local politics. Stay away from discussions on policies or legislation when focusing a homily on abortion healing.
- Every homily that mentions abortion should include the message that there is hope and healing after involvement with an abortion. This is particularly important around January 22 and Roe v. Wade commemoration events.
- If the Holy Spirit is guiding you not to specifically bring up abortion, you may still reach those suffering after abortion by preaching about mercy. You might speak of a lasting wound or recurring guilt and remind congregants that Jesus came to heal sinners, that God loves them infinitely, and no sin is too big for God to forgive. Or mention abortion among a list of other serious sins that many may believe are “unforgiveable.”

For more information on abortion healing resources, contact your diocesan abortion healing ministry or visit www.HopeAfterAbortion.com (Spanish: www.EsperanzaPosaborto.com).