

The Popes Speak to Women Who Have Had Abortions

The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. 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. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.

Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*
(*The Gospel of Life*), no. 99 (1995)¹

The Church, after the example of her Divine Teacher, always has the people themselves before her, especially the weakest and most innocent who are victims of injustice and sin, and also those other men and women who, having perpetrated these acts, stained by sin and wounded within, are seeking peace and the chance to begin anew.

The Church's first duty is to approach these people with love and consideration, with caring and motherly attention, to proclaim the merciful closeness of God in Jesus Christ. Indeed, as the Fathers teach, it is he who is the true Good Samaritan, who has made himself close to us, who pours oil and wine on our wounds and takes us into the inn, the Church, where he has us treated, entrusting us to her ministers and personally paying in advance for our recovery.

Pope Benedict XVI, Address to an International Congress on "Oil on the Wounds":
A Response to the Ills of Abortion and Divorce"
(April 5, 2008), www.vatican.va

¹ Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (*The Gospel of Life*) (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 1995).