

## For the Sake of His Sorrowful Passion

by Tom Grenchik

For any of us who have joined in a Divine Mercy Chaplet a few times, the response is automatic. We simply hear: “For the sake of His sorrowful Passion . . .” and our lips are already responding with, “Have mercy on us and on the whole world.”

How consoling it is to embrace our Lord’s Divine Mercy and be confident in his forgiveness. We know He will forgive any sin, if we are truly sorry. But for some, especially those who have lost a child to abortion, trusting in that forgiveness is not so easy. Even if they trust in God’s capacity and overwhelming desire to forgive them, they still often struggle with forgiving themselves.

Many in our culture are deeply wounded, including many Catholics who are in great need of God’s mercy and healing. Twenty-eight percent of women who have had abortions identify themselves as Catholic, which translates into as many as 10 million Catholic women affected by abortion. An equal number of men have been involved, even if the extent of their involvement was to abandon the woman on discovering she was pregnant. Then there are the grandparents, other family members, and friends who have also been affected. The impact on our culture and our Church is far-reaching. Rare is the individual who has not encountered the trauma of abortion in the suffering of friends and family members.

Immediately after the 1973 Supreme Court decisions legalizing abortion in our land, the US bishops not only condemned that action, but they also prophetically called for the creation of diocesan post-abortion healing ministries as an integral part of the Church’s pro-life response. Yes: being pro-life means being missionaries of mercy to those now suffering from a past abortion.

Project Rachel, the Catholic Church’s ministry to those who have been involved in abortion, is a diocesan-based network of specially-trained priests, religious, counselors, and laypersons who provide a team response of care for those suffering in the aftermath of abortion. In addition to offering sacramental reconciliation, the ministry provides an integrated network of services, including pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, support groups, retreats, and referrals to licensed mental health professionals. For many who struggle with accepting God’s forgiveness, Project Rachel can gently open the door to embracing His forgiveness and mercy, as well as learning to forgive oneself, and praying for the forgiveness of one’s child.

In a recent homily as Chairman of the US Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, Cardinal Seán O’Malley stated, “The Good News is that God never gives up on us. He never tires of loving us. He never tires of forgiving us, never tires of giving us another chance. The pro-life movement needs to be the merciful face of God. . . .”

The bishops are firmly committed to extending that offer of God’s infinite mercy. More and more dioceses are increasing their pastoral outreach to women and men who have lost a child to abortion. Recently, a large number diocesan directors, staff members, and priests participated in an intensive training on providing an integrated approach to post-abortion healing at the diocesan level. To find information on the Church’s resources near to you or a loved one, visit [HopeAfterAbortion.org](http://HopeAfterAbortion.org) or [EsperanzaPosAborto.org](http://EsperanzaPosAborto.org). . . . May these diocesan post-abortion healing ministries across the country bear much fruit in connecting hurting individuals to the merciful love of Christ. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion . . .

*Tom Grenchik is Executive Director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Go to [www.usccb.org/prolife](http://www.usccb.org/prolife) to learn more about the bishops’ pro-life activities.*

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