

Healing Words for the Wounded

A recent article on communicating the pro-life message left me nodding in agreement – but sometimes shaking my head in disagreement. While it rightly states that words are powerful and can shape opinions, it also says to always use words like “kill” and “sin” in reference to abortion. The article should have mentioned the importance of being aware of our audience when we choose what words to speak—and when we choose whether to speak at all or to simply listen. While never avoiding the fact that abortion ends a life, as pro-life people we should be aware that our audience will almost always include women who have had an abortion or people who have been involved in one. We should take special care to use words of love and mercy, rather than judgment and condemnation, in order to better help those in need of Christ’s healing touch and to help prevent greater loss of lives and souls.

Abortion’s impact is extensive. After 41 years of legalized abortion in the United States, the death toll is over 55 million children. Because of repeat abortions, about 35 million women have lost one or more children to abortion. In addition, a roughly equal number of men have fathered a child who was then aborted. The grandparents of the deceased child or other family members are often involved, and they, too, may blame themselves for real or imagined failings that contributed to the death of a child.

A priest active in Project Rachel, the Church’s post-abortion healing ministry, described the spiritual desolation experienced by women who have had an abortion: “Many feel they have committed ‘the unforgivable sin’ and are destined for hell, or that they deserve to be on death row. Most suffer this spiritual desolation in silence, too ashamed and feeling unworthy to seek reconciliation from God.”

The terrible fact is that many suffer from this unresolved grief and guilt that restrict their ability to live fully in the presence of God’s love. The good news is that Christ offers hope, healing, and his merciful love to all who have suffered from abortion.

The Lord calls us to help bring about that encounter with Christ, the Healer and Divine Physician, through our compassionate words, actions, and sometimes even our silent yet attentive presence. By listening to the stories of those wounded by abortion and expressing sorrow for their loss, we can witness to their child’s life and affirm their right to grieve. Showing kindness and offering assistance to those leaving abortion facilities might even help prevent repeat abortions by encouraging them to turn to pro-life groups for support with a future unexpected pregnancy.

One caller to Project Rachel demonstrated the importance of a compassionate attitude. She said, “I had done a fine job of beating myself up for years and I certainly didn’t need the person on the other end of the phone to make me feel any worse. But, when I finally called, it was not like that at all. The voice on the other end was warm and full of hope for me. My journey of healing began on that day that I made that phone call.” Our use of language that conveys God’s love, warmth and mercy can bring hope of his forgiveness and healing to those struggling from a past abortion.

The Church offers help for those suffering from abortion’s aftermath through a diocesan-based ministry usually called Project Rachel. If you or someone you know needs help, please visit www.hopeafterabortion.org (www.esperanzaposaborto.org for assistance in Spanish) or call 1-888-456-HOPE.

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