Keep all who suffer from post-abortion pain in your prayers, and commit yourself to being an instrument of mercy.
Maria* was going back to Church after her second-grader enrolled in First Communion classes. She didn’t know what to say to her daughter after being asked why she didn’t go to Communion.

Maria had an abortion in her teens and felt that she couldn’t go to confession because she had committed an “unforgivable sin.”

Li* and his wife, Vanessa*, were attending counseling to address problems in their marriage. Li decided to finally tell Vanessa that, while in college, he had taken his former girlfriend to get an abortion. Vanessa was devastated.

Jennifer* comes from a large, pro-life family that is active in their parish. At the funeral of her devout, beloved mother, Jennifer was despondent beyond the grief of her loss. Jennifer couldn’t stop thinking that her mother in heaven would now discover the secret she had kept for thirty years: the existence of a granddaughter, whom Jennifer had aborted in college because she was too ashamed to tell her parents about her pregnancy.

When Darryl* started attending a parish men’s prayer group, he began to feel more connected than ever to his faith. But with his increasing engagement, he began to wonder whether God would really forgive him for encouraging and paying for the abortion of his only child.

Maria, Vanessa, Li, Jennifer, and Darryl are among the tens of millions of Americans whose lives have been directly touched by abortion. Like so many others, they have experienced shame, regret, guilt, and unhealthy secrets. But as they have also experienced, God’s healing love and mercy are always possible.

While many Catholics want to help women and men heal from past abortions, most don’t know how to begin. Here are a few ways that Catholics of different backgrounds can assist friends, family members, fellow parishioners, clients—or perhaps even themselves:

- **If you are like Jennifer**, who had an abortion, read the words of St. John Paul II to women who have had abortions.** Be assured that it is never too late to seek God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and that “you can with sure hope entrust your child” to the Father and his mercy (Ev 99).

- **If you know someone like Maria** who has had an abortion, express your sympathy for her loss. Assure her of God’s unconditional love, and encourage her to seek healing and forgiveness. Explain that the Church’s Project Rachel Ministry for post-abortion healing can help.

  (www.HopeAfterAbortion.org)

- **If you are a priest** who fears alienating parishioners, be confident that you can preach on pro-life issues with sensitivity as long as your message reminds the congregation that no matter how serious the sin, God longs to forgive every repentant heart. Many who have participated in abortion like Maria, Li, Jennifer, or Darryl believe they have committed the

  “unforgivable sin.” Your preaching can be a unique channel of God’s mercy for them, inviting them to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

- **If you are a parish faith formation leader**, become aware of the potential pastoral encounters with those hurting from past abortions like Maria or Darryl. Work with your pastor to include catechesis on forgiveness and reconciliation.

- **If you are a member of your parish pro-life committee**, remember those who may be suffering like Jennifer or Li. Regularly highlight information about Project Rachel Ministry and post-abortion healing using bulletins, bulletin boards, literature racks, parish websites and e-newsletters, and any other appropriate means of communication.

- **If you are actively involved in public pro-life advocacy** which people like Jennifer may encounter, remember to communicate with messages that are respectful, non-judgmental, and compassionate.

As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.

Pope Francis