Homily Considerations for Healing After Abortion

project rachel

Peace starts here

Introduction:

When a homilist is considering preaching on abortion, it may be helpful to ask those present who have been involved in abortion to pray for him:

- That his words of mercy might give consolation and 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 the reality of their child/children 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 Ministry, 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 4 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. While most younger children will not understand the meaning of the word "abortion," older children may. One approach is to speak positively of the need to protect babies (both born, and in the womb) from all harm and to take good care of their mothers. You can always acknowledge that some babies have sadly died at an early age, and we must pray for their mothers and fathers who can feel so sad.

- 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 or alludes to 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.org (Spanish: www.EsperanzaPosAborto.org).