

Chairman's Statement on 52nd Anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*

USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities

I join all Catholics throughout our nation in observing January 22 as a day of prayer and penance. As we prayerfully continue the essential work of restoring full legal protection of all preborn children and supporting parents facing difficult pregnancies, we also recognize our need for asking forgiveness and healing from the Lord for when we have given in to the culture of death.

Abortion inflicts deep and lasting wounds on society, but more directly on individuals and families. Many mothers and fathers may feel they have no choice except abortion. Some are pressured or coerced. No matter the circumstances of the abortion, we must recognize the often-silent grief of parents for their child and their despair of being worthy of the love and forgiveness of God and others.

To the parents of children who have died by abortion, I am deeply sorry for your loss. Know that our Lord loves you as His daughters and sons no matter your actions. No sin is beyond His unfathomable Mercy. Jesus greatly desires our repentant hearts and invites us into an encounter with Him. For Catholics, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is always available for those seeking God's forgiveness, hope, and peace.

As we celebrate this Jubilee Year as *Pilgrims of Hope*, Pope Francis invites us to experience God's love 'that awakens in hearts the sure hope of salvation in Christ' (*Spes Non Confundit*, 6). Hope allows those who have been involved in abortion to turn to God and repent, confident that He will forgive and make them whole.

This January 22 and beyond, we need to be reassured that Jesus Himself, who is the source of our hope, was first wounded for our offenses, and suffered for every sin of ours, including abortion. Please join me in praying that God will fill the hearts of mothers and fathers suffering the emotional and psychological wounds from abortion with the hope of forgiveness that only He can give. We invite them to seek support from the Church's compassionate and confidential ministries.

If you or someone you know is interested in confidential help after abortion, please reach out to your local Catholic parish, or visit the national Project Rachel Ministry websites, www.HopeAfterAbortion.org or www.EsperanzaPosAborto.org for a listing of diocesan abortion healing ministries.

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