



Sunday, 18 June 2023

'Listen to Her'

This year's *Day for Life* focuses on post-abortion trauma and the impact of abortion primarily on women, but also men and others.

Message

Voices of women who have had an abortion are often silent in Church and in society. This year's message for *Day for Life* is written by a woman and hopes to break this silence and offer opportunities for hope, healing and reconciliation.



Jane's Story

I went to Catholic schools, I knew about God and morality on some level, but for me, the culture spoke louder when it came to making decisions around sexuality.

When I was 15, I discovered I was pregnant and the fear clouded everything. I had one aim, and that was to solve the problem I had found myself in. A quick search for confidential help landed me at a clinic connected to an abortion provider. They seemed to genuinely believe that abortion was the solution to my problem and I don't remember discussing any other options. I was relieved when they determined that I was capable enough to make this decision alone, without the involvement of an adult, which is still legal to this day.

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Jane

That Saturday I travelled alone to the clinic. My parents were unaware, due to other difficulties in the family home that I didn't want to contribute to. I went through the degrading experience of a surgical abortion, and I thought that if I could just get through that day, I would never have to think about it again. I remember feeling conflicted as a tear rolled down my cheek, that I quickly wiped away. I believed I couldn't be sad because this was something I had chosen to do. So after the initial feeling of relief, I pushed down the experience and avoided anything to do with the topic of abortion. It was difficult to be around pregnant women and I found the anniversary difficult each year.

Over the next few years, I became more curious about faith through the invitation of a friend. I was looking for direction and truth, but my spiritual life was always tainted by the thought that I could never be forgiven for what I had done – somehow, God's mercy didn't apply to me. In the fleeting moments of honesty with myself and God, I knew that my choice didn't make me lose something, but someone. At times, this realisation was unbearable. This led to periods of deep depression and suicidal thoughts, as well as more promiscuous behaviour and numbing the pain with alcohol, food, or isolation.

This all changed when I was encouraged to go to confession. Even when I tried to justify my choice, the priest met me with the love and mercy of Jesus. The tears he shed melted my heart of stone. I began to give up my old ways of life and follow His way.

On this journey I was introduced to Rachel's Vineyard: a healing ministry that provides support for those who are suffering after abortion. I remember the kindness of the woman that I spoke to, and I knew I wouldn't be judged there.

It took so much courage to go on a retreat, but I can genuinely say it changed my life. By hearing other people share their stories and being gently encouraged by the team, I was able to speak the truth of what had happened to me on that day. My feelings were acknowledged, including my sense of loss. I was finally given permission to grieve for the baby that had died through my choice. I acknowledged my motherhood and named my son Joseph. This was the start of God turning the guilt, shame and unforgiveness into a deep love for my son, as any good mother would have.

The healing has continued alongside my faith journey. I've taken responsibility for the role I played in my abortion, but with perspective and time, I can see that my 'choice' wasn't really a choice at all. There were other people's failures, and an inability to truly give informed consent as a teenager that also contributed. The option that was presented as a quick fix solution has eternal consequences, and I truly believe that if I'd have known the impact abortion would have had on my life, even as a teenager, I would have made a different choice.



Prayer

These two prayers for the intercession of St Joseph, patron of the unborn and defender of life, can be used on or around *Day for Life* to bring our intentions to the Lord.

St Joseph, Patron of the Unborn

O St. Joseph, after your most holy spouse, our Blessed Mother, you were the first to take into your arms and heart the baby Jesus. From the first time you gazed upon him and held him, your heart and soul were forever bonded to him. You caressed the Holy Child with fatherly love and affection, and you committed yourself always to love, protect, and care for this Son.

Look now with similar love and affection upon this child of mine, who has gone from this world. I place my child, as well as my grief and guilt, into the eternal embrace of your arms. Hold and caress my child for me with the love of my arms and sweetly kiss my child with all the tender affection of my heart.

As God the Father entrusted the care of His most precious Son into your most loving and confident hands, so too do I entrust into your fatherly care this child of mine. Please present him to the merciful hands of Our Lord, so that one day, when I too leave this world, my child may greet me into eternal life.

Amen.

St Joseph, Defender of Life

Dearest Saint Joseph,
at the word of an angel,
you lovingly took Mary into your home.

As God's humble servant, you guided
the Holy Family on the road to Bethlehem,
welcomed Jesus as your own son
in the shelter of a manger,
and fled far from your homeland
for the safety of both Mother and Child.

We praise God that as their faithful protector,
you never hesitated to sacrifice
for those entrusted to you.

May your example inspire us also
to welcome, cherish, and safeguard
God's most precious gift of life.

Help us to faithfully commit ourselves
to the service and defense of human life -
especially where it is vulnerable or threatened,
Obtain for us the grace to do the will of God in
all things.

Amen.



Day for Life

www.dayforlife.org

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