

## **Forgiveness is an Act of the Will**

Forgiveness is not a feeling. Forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is not just for other people. Forgiveness is for me.

I am 46 years old. I learned about forgiveness only three months ago from a Project Rachel priest. I am thankful and I am grateful for receiving this gift, this knowledge, this wisdom. This cherished charisma.

I aborted the only child I would ever have at the age of 20. I thought the most important thing in my life at that time was to finish college. I thought being an accountant was more important than being a mother. If only... if only...

This very same priest, this wonderful man full of wisdom and compassion taught me even more three months ago. He taught me that being born during the 60s and living through the women's movement and the sexual revolution created a culture that made abortion an acceptable, even encouraged, "solution" for an unwanted pregnancy. While it was my free-will that made this wrong, horrible choice, our society has bombarded girls and women with a message that is very easy to believe when one has lost her faith. He also taught me that God makes the first move. God was calling me back to him and, at last, this time, thankfully, mercifully, I heard His call.

The process of healing from an abortion is so simple yet so far out of reach for most of us when we try to do it on our own. Seek forgiveness and then forgive yourself. Then the healing will start. When I began the process, I had an incredible feeling of renewal and rebirth upon receiving absolution at Reconciliation with my dear parish priest. Bless me Father, for I have sinned...it has been nearly 30 years since my last confession. I don't know what I believe any more, Father. He listened and he heard me. He told me that Jesus still loved me! Our God is a merciful, loving God. You have suffered enough—Our Lord does not want you to suffer. Be at peace, go and be grateful for the gifts of forgiveness and for His love. Call Project Rachel. Be grateful for every little thing. Be very grateful.

Shortly thereafter, I realized that while I had been Reconciled to my beautiful and merciful God, I was not reconciled to myself. I can't undo what I did. I still have to live with this horror, this nightmare. I still have to look at myself in the mirror. I can't forgive myself. I wished that I had never gone back—The reality of my abortion was more unbearable than it had ever been before. The darkness was frightening. Please God, bring me back to Your light. I saw it...I know it is there. Please, please have mercy and give it back. Please let me keep this little bit of faith that I have found.

I cried out to the angel working at the Project Rachel office and she answered. She cared. She wanted to help me in my despair and through my darkness. She taught me that I am precious to God. That I was made in His image and in His likeness. She taught me that my child is with God now—and he has been interceding on my behalf to bring me back to feel the comfort of God's loving embrace. Look at a crucifix, the angel said. Do you think that He died on that Cross to

forgive everyone else's sins? She gave me her books. She gave me her time. She gave me her patience. She gave me her sage advice. She gave me hope.

I grabbed at her offerings with both hands—my life was depending on her. She gave me the personal phone numbers of the Project Rachel priest. She told me that he would be honored to work with me and to help me. I know now that the angel always tells the truth. God put her here to help bring us back home.

And then there was the retreat. And there were more angels! More angels with huge hearts full of love and concern. They looked just like us—but they had something we all desperately craved...they had peace. They prayed for us, they cried with us, they told us of their healing and their blessings. And there were people like me...people with stories so heartwrenching, I felt guilty for having lived in my own pain for so long. We helped each other. I didn't think I could ever help someone else but I think I did, just a little, on that blessed day. I had no idea how much healing could come from even trying to help someone else. People cared about each other in such an intimate, trusting, and loving environment, that there could be no doubt that we had not only been forgiven, but we had been blessed and this was indeed a holy experience.

I have taken my strong will, the will that allowed me to abort my precious baby, the will that has kept me alive all these years through the darkness, the will that sought forgiveness from my heavenly Father, and I have used that will to forgive myself. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Thank you, Father, for the angels you have sent to heal me. I am grateful, very grateful.