



LIFE ISSUES FORUM

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Come Back to God, who is Love and Mercy, By Susan E. Wills

What is at the root of the culture of death? Why is it so entrenched?

In *The Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II offered this explanation: "The heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man [is] the eclipse of the sense of God and of man ... when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life" (*The Gospel of Life*, no. 21). This involves a "darkening of the capacity to discern God's living and saving presence" (*Ibid.*). We can stumble blindly into serious sin and remain trapped in our misery, because we fail to see how eager God is to restore a repentant heart to wholeness and peace. Many mistakenly view God as the Law Giver and Judge who condemns and rejects *us* along with our sins.

The priests and counselors in the Project Rachel network – the Church's post-abortion ministry – see proof of this mistaken notion every day. They also see daily proof of the healing and joy experienced by those who've reconciled with God and opened their hearts to His grace and love.

For decades our culture has exalted personal freedom, subjective morality, and self-interest – all of which make it difficult to accept the responsibilities and sacrifices of parenthood. When confronted with an unplanned pregnancy, then, many women and men fail to understand the full moral gravity of abortion. Often they are blind to the truth that what they have conceived is a priceless and irreplaceable child whom God has entrusted to their care. The child is seen as a barrier to their own plans and fulfillment, and abortion is seen as the "fix."

But after the abortion, the fog of moral confusion can quickly burn off. Many mothers and fathers become overwhelmed with guilt, grief, shame, and self-hatred. They may despair of ever being forgiven. Many find it impossible to forgive themselves.

To help those who have been involved in an abortion understand the heart of God, to understand the Divine Mercy proclaimed by many saints, the USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities has embarked on a new outreach campaign, using ads that invite these wounded souls to reconcile with God and find peace through the Project Rachel ministry. Each ad opens with despairing words commonly voiced by post-abortive women and men, and then responds with the promises offered by God's merciful heart:

I don't deserve to be happy. *God wants to restore your happiness.*

God will never forgive me for this. *God's greatest desire is to forgive.*

I feel so worthless. *You are precious to God.*

I can't believe I let this happen. *Never let your past keep you from God.*

The ads close with the invitation to "Come back to God, who is love and mercy."

Jesus came not to judge, but to reconcile us to the Father. He knows our sins and bore them on the cross. He is the Redeemer who can make all things new, including our broken lives burdened by sin. God willing, these lessons will resonate in the heart of every Christian this Lenten season, and especially in the hearts of those most in need of God's mercy.



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USCCB Pro-Life Secretariat