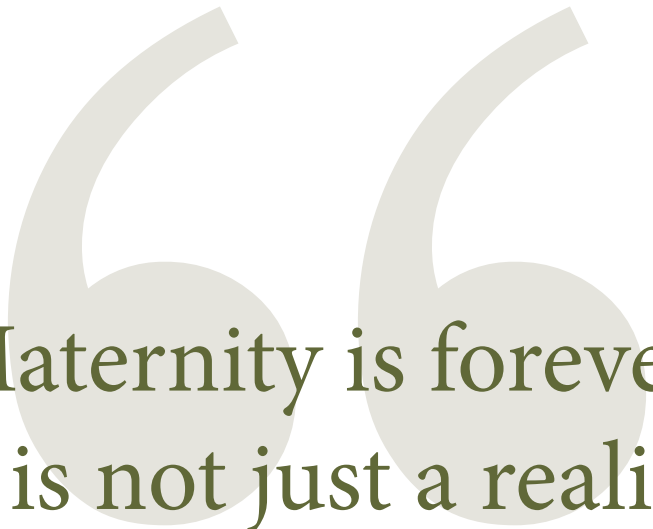




VIDEO 8

MATERNITY IS FOREVER:
HOPE AND HEALING AFTER ABORTION



Maternity is forever.
It is not just a reality
in this world. It is a
reality in eternal life.

SUMMARY

In this eighth video, “Maternity is Forever: Hope and Healing After Abortion,” participants are invited to understand the reality of what happens in a woman’s heart after the experience of abortion, and how to approach and gently journey with a woman who has suffered this experience. Although the video clearly focuses on accompanying women, men can also often suffer deeply after the experience of abortion. Abortion often brings a sense of loss, and deep emotional, spiritual, psychological, and relational pain. Someone who has experienced abortion needs to be met with mercy, kindness, and solidarity, and given the space to grieve. She often needs to be invited to encounter Jesus, who seeks her with his infinite love and mercy, eager to forgive, heal, and restore.

OPENING PRAYER

Most Holy Trinity, we praise and thank you for loving each one of us into life. We ask for the grace to receive anew the gift of our own lives, that we may live deeply out of our true identity as your beloved sons and daughters. We pray that each person may know themselves as chosen and loved, willed into being from the very beginning of time and held in existence at every moment by your love. Father, we ask you to fill us with your light and renew us with your peace. Holy Spirit, we ask for the courage to speak your Word of life; may our actions, words, and thoughts serve to uphold and protect the dignity and worth of every person, and may our lives give radiant witness to the truth of your love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

INTRODUCTION

Participants are invited to share something that is meaningful to them. Sharing an experience of importance is deeply humanizing and encourages the formation of trust between participants. These connections are essential for maintaining community.

Time: 10 minutes

Materials: *INTO LIFE: Love Changes Everything* Participant Guide

Instructions: Invite participants to share their response to the “Introductory Question”.

Reminders: Remind participants of time boundaries (if any) and confidentiality.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTION

What do you see in the world that gives you hope?

Read the question twice and allow a few moments for quiet reflection.

VIDEO #8

MATERNITY IS FOREVER: HOPE AND HEALING AFTER ABORTION



Time: 10 minutes

Materials:

Video 8: “Maternity is Forever: Hope and Healing After Abortion”

Instructions:

Introduce video segment.

Sample Introduction:

In this video we are invited to contemplate what happens in a woman’s heart after the experience of abortion. Abortion brings a sense of loss, and deep emotional, spiritual, psychological, and relational pain. This video may be more challenging to view and process than the previous videos. We are invited to enter into this video and the experience of those suffering after an abortion as much as we are able to, given our own wounds and losses. It is important to remember, that just as anyone with wounds, one who has experienced abortion needs to be met with mercy, kindness, and solidarity, and be given the space to grieve.

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Time: 15-30 minutes

Space: Church, if possible, or a quiet place for reflection.

Materials: *INTO LIFE: Love Changes Everything* Participant Guide

Instructions: Transition to period of personal reflection.

Reminders:

Remind participants that this time is for their personal reflection and that they are not required to answer every question or reflect on every Scripture passage, but should follow the promptings of God.

Suggested Scripture passages and questions are offered as aides to prayer.

Space for note-taking and journaling is provided in the *INTO LIFE: Love Changes Everything* Participant Guide.

SCRIPTURE FOR REFLECTION

PSALM 147:3

“He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.”

MATTHEW 11:28-30

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

JEREMIAH 30:17

“For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal.”

MICAH 7:19

“He will again have compassion upon us, he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Was there a word, phrase, or idea that resonated with me? That was new to me?
2. Imagine Jesus standing before you, looking at you with kindness and the gaze of profound love. No matter what you have done or not done in your life, he looks at you like this. Allow yourself to meet his gaze.
3. Are there wounds, sins, or memories from the past that I want to bring to Jesus? Is there something that is weighing on my heart that I want to be free from? Invite Jesus into those places. He will not force himself; he awaits your invitation. He wants to forgive, heal, and make all things new.
4. There is no sin or darkness greater than the mercy of Jesus Christ. How is the Lord inviting me to be healed by his love? Can I allow myself to believe in his infinite mercy, which is always being offered to me?
5. Have I or someone I know experienced the wound of abortion? Am I open to walking towards healing? Am I open to speaking with someone about this? Am I open to allowing the Lord to love me and restore me?
6. How is the Lord calling me to be a witness and an instrument of grace and healing in my family? My communities? The world?
7. Is there a fruit from my prayer that I would like to share with others? (Please know that this set of questions is potentially more difficult to share, and it is fine to share as little or much as you feel comfortable with.)

For information about healing after about abortion:

Sisters of Life

sistersoflife.org/healing-after-abortion

USA: 866-575-0075

Canada: 416-463-2722

International: hopeandhealing@sistersoflife.org

Project Rachel

hopeafterabortion.com

An initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, with resources and support at the national and diocesan level

Local Resources

Provide participants with information about any local resources offered in your area (you may consider preparing a supplemental handout with local resources and associated contact information).

It is highly recommended that if the facilitator does provide a supplemental handout, it is handed to each participant so that participants don't need to ask for these resources in front of the group.

“

God does not condemn us to live in our sins or failings. In his mercy, he acts to bring new life into our wounds.

”

DISCUSSION

After a period of personal reflection and prayer, participants re-gather as a large group for sharing and discussion.

Time: 15-30 minutes

Materials: *INTO LIFE: Love Changes Everything* Participant Guide

Instructions: Facilitator transitions to group discussion. Offer conversation guidelines, if using them.

Reminders:

Remind the group to maintain confidentiality. All comments and stories should stay within the group.

Remind participants that they are encouraged, but not required, to share. This is a particularly sensitive topic to broach, and it is likely that someone in the group will have suffered an abortion or know someone who has. Participants should be encouraged to share only to the extent they are comfortable.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is there a fruit from your prayer that you would like to share with others?
(Please know that this set of reflection questions are potentially more difficult to share, and it is fine to share as little or much as you feel comfortable with.)
2. How is the approach to the experience of abortion in this video different from the way the world often approaches abortion?
In particular, what struck you?
3. Sister Mariae Agnus Dei says that, regarding the discussion of abortion, “we always want to speak from a place of mercy, not judgment. ... Judgmental statements can be very harmful to someone who may be suffering from fear of rejection or self-condemnation. We want to invite people to encounter the face of mercy in the Church, not drive them away.” How might you be tempted to judge women who have experienced the wound of abortion? Why is it important to be so sensitive to the reality of the wound left by abortion? How does acknowledging the truth of the wound of abortion with mercy create a culture of healing?
4. How and why is our language about abortion so important?

5. Sister Mariae Agnus Dei says that “no matter what choice a woman makes regarding her pregnancy, whether she chooses to parent, places for adoption, or suffers an abortion—maternity is forever. It is not just a reality in this world but it is a reality in eternal life.” How can understanding maternity as eternal bring hope?
6. Sister Maeve Nativitas says, “We must also never push someone to seek help with her journey of healing. We may see someone we love suffering, but it often takes decades before a woman is ready to face a past abortion. We want to be a compassionate, listening ear, and let her know that help is available, but to be gentle and let God work in his timing.” Why is it so important to give someone the space to move at their own pace on the journey of healing?
7. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, St. John Paul II acknowledges the deep pain that abortion leaves, and speaks about the importance of “radical solidarity” with a woman who has suffered after abortion and says it is “not right to leave her alone.”
What are new ways to respond to the call to this solidarity, and to “pick up the pieces lest they be lost” (John 6:12)?
8. It is also important to recognize that men suffer deeply after the experience of abortion. How can we help create a culture in which both women and men are given the space to grieve past abortions, to encounter the mercy of Jesus Christ, and to be welcomed into a journey of healing?

NOTES

“

God has a unique and beautiful plan of healing for each person. He wants to make all things new in our hearts, our mind, our souls—not just once, or twice, but every day.

”

CLOSING

At the end of the group discussion, the facilitator should thank the participants for sharing and their involvement in the discussion. The facilitator may also ask if there are any closing questions, comments, or points of clarification before proceeding to the closing prayer.

What's coming up next?

Video 9: "Maternity is Forever: Adoption"

In this ninth video, "Maternity is Forever: Adoption," participants will be invited to look at the reality of adoption, and the tremendous discernment, maturity, and strength it requires. Adoption can only rightfully come about as a personal discernment, initiated by the woman herself. It can only emerge as an answer to the question, "What is the most loving thing I can do for my child?"

CLOSING PRAYER

*Jesus, we praise and thank you for your goodness and mercy.
We ask for an outpouring of your Spirit upon the whole world.
We pray that every person may powerfully encounter your love today,
and that all will come to know that life is a gift to be cherished and
protected. We pray for all those who are suffering after abortion, that they
may know your tender love, forgiveness, and mercy. May they know deeply
that you love them, that you have never stopped loving them, and that you
have a plan for their freedom, healing, and flourishing.*

*We ask this in your name as we pray: Glory be to the Father, to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.*

Amen. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of Life, pray for us.

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