

Pro-Life PERSPECTIVE

Begin Again

By Kimberly Baker

Lent is a time of cleansing, of purifying—not in a painful sense, but in a refreshing way. Participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation washes away the “dirt” of our sin and opens our hearts to encounter God’s mercy so we can start with a “clean slate.” When we consider our pro-life witness, it is helpful to reflect on the renewing power of God’s mercy in our lives and how that can affect others.

God’s mercy is extended to each person and has no limits, as long as we have true contrition. Whatever the circumstances, no matter how serious the sin—even something as serious as abortion—God wants to heal our hearts and make them whole again; he wants to fill us with his love.

Pope Francis provides such a simple witness of God’s mercy through his words and actions. He says, “God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy . . . With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and to start anew” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 3).

Simply put, God’s mercy is life-giving. To experience forgiveness is healing. It is freeing. It is renewing. The extent to which we have personally experienced God’s mercy will greatly affect how we are able to radiate his mercy to others—and how we communicate the pro-life message.

In the Gospels, a great example of God’s mercy is found in the story of the woman who washes Jesus’ feet with her tears (Lk 7:36-50). Especially significant: the woman comes to Jesus already in tears. At his feet, she expresses regret for her past life and pours out her heart. She has interrupted Jesus’ dinner with the Pharisees, but he responds with gentleness. The Pharisees regard her scornfully, but Jesus says, “I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love” (Lk 7:47). Then he tells the woman directly, “Your sins are forgiven” (Lk 7:48). In conclusion, as if to set her at ease and calm her tears, Jesus tells her, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace” (Lk 7:50).

Once you are touched by God’s mercy, you understand how he is gentle and loving and is always calling you closer to himself. Its impact reaches the depths of your heart and transforms your life. You see yourself, and the world, with new eyes. You realize that you are precious, that you are loved, that your life is sacred in God’s eyes, and that he cares about you deeply. Having experienced this gentleness and mercy, you then want others to experience the same peace and joy you have found. It is impossible to keep it to yourself.

Each one of us can be messengers of God’s mercy to the world, wherever we find ourselves, with the people we encounter every day. To be pro-life is not only to defend life. It also means to help heal and restore the life around us. For we live in a broken world, where people are crying for mercy and do not understand what it truly means to be loved.

So let us begin again, moving forward with hope and trust in God’s mercy. May this lenten season be a time of cleansing so each one of us experiences the love of God more profoundly, strengthening our hearts so that we, in turn, may share this love with others. Let us live the pro-life message, first and foremost, by being messengers of God’s mercy.

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If you or someone you know has been involved in an abortion, find hope and help at www.hopeafterabortion.com or call 888-456-HOPE (4673).

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