

Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Nebraska Regarding Project Rachel

We, the Bishops of Nebraska write this letter to invite those wounded by abortion to seek spiritual and emotional healing through Project Rachel. As our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II said in his encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, "The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the sacrament of reconciliation."

Since the legalization of abortion in 1973, nearly 40 million babies have lost their life through surgical abortion in the United States. This staggering destruction of human life is compounded by the spiritual and emotional wounds that abortion can inflict on the aborted child's mother, father, relatives, and anyone involved with an abortion. Feelings of grief, anxiety, guilt and anger may initially be buried, sometimes for years, but may be manifested by relationship difficulties, depression, or other psychological or spiritual problems. It may even be intensified by a sense of alienation from God and the Church.

The Catholic Church's consistent and strong teaching about the gravity of abortion is very well known. However, the Church has another message too—one that those in great pain sometimes fail to hear—and that message is that we are a forgiving Church. Project Rachel is a program of the Church intended to reach out to those hurting psychologically and spiritually after involvement with abortion and to welcome them home to the mercy and love of Christ Jesus.

Project Rachel draws its name from the biblical reference in Jeremiah 31:15-17, "*Rachel mourns her children; she refuses to be consoled because her children are no more. Thus says the Lord: Cease your cries of mourning. Wipe the tears from your eyes. The sorrow you have shown shall have its reward. There is hope for your future.*"

*E Elden F. Curtiss - Archbishop of Omaha E
E Fabian W. Bruskewitz - Diocese of Lincoln E
E Lawrence J. McNamara - Diocese of Grand Island E*