



UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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CARDINAL O'MALLEY WELCOMES POPE'S YEAR OF MERCY PLAN FOR POST-ABORTION HEALING

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WASHINGTON—Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley, OFM Cap., archbishop of Boston and chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), responded September 1 to Pope Francis' letter allowing all priests worldwide "to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it."

"Recognizing the seriousness of the sin of abortion and the implications this can have for those involved, Pope Francis is making particular outreach to women, noting that many women were under great pressure and felt that they had no choice," Cardinal O'Malley said.

"For many years in the United States, including in the Archdiocese of Boston, diocesan bishops have granted their priests the faculty to absolve the sin of abortion. As part of the outreach of the Year of Mercy, the Holy Father will now grant all priests worldwide the faculty," Cardinal O'Malley said.

Cardinal O'Malley referred those in need of healing to the Project Rachel post-abortion ministry website, saying, "My hope and prayer is that all those carrying the burden of an experience of abortion would turn to the Church and her sacraments and experience the Lord's mercy and love."

The full text of his response follows:

Pope Francis has given the Church and the world a great gift in his announcement of Jubilee Year of Mercy that will begin December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, continuing through to the Solemnity of Christ the King in November of 2016.

The Holy Father today shared that there will be many occasions for the faithful to experience the graces of the Year of Mercy, including those who are confined at home or at a medical facility and those who are incarcerated.

Recognizing the seriousness of the sin of abortion and the implications this can have for those involved, Pope Francis is making particular outreach to women, noting that many women were under great pressure and felt that they had no choice. Under the provisions of canon law, absolution of certain serious sins, including abortion, was reserved to the diocesan bishop. For many years in the United States, including in the Archdiocese of Boston, diocesan bishops have granted their priests the faculty to absolve the sin of abortion. As part of the outreach of the Year of Mercy, the Holy Father will now grant all priests worldwide the faculty "to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it." His words acknowledge the reality of God's abiding mercy in the Sacrament of Penance, and that God welcomes all with open arms.

My hope and prayer is that all those carrying the burden of an experience of abortion would turn to the Church and her sacraments and experience the Lord's mercy and love. Wherever a person might be in their healing journey, please know that in the Archdiocese of Boston and most dioceses in the United States, Project Rachel and other post-abortion healing ministries offer a compassionate and understanding pathway to renewal. To find the nearest diocesan healing ministry, go to the 'Find Help' map at www.hopeafterabortion.com or www.esperanzaposaborto.com.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Don Clemmer

O: 202-541-3206