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Multiple Abortions

By Fr. Frank Pavone

You have probably heard that statistic that almost half of the abortions that occur each day in America are repeat abortions. In other words, almost every other woman walking into an abortion mill has had the procedure before.

But how many times before?

Of the abortions reported in 1999 to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), 26.2% of women who aborted experienced one previous abortion, 11.2% had two previous abortions, and 7.5% had three or more previous abortions. The situation may be even worse than this, because the reports that states make to the CDC are voluntary, and the largest abortion state, California, does not report. Forty six states do report, and this led to a total count of 861, 789 legal induced abortions in 1999. That means that in one year, by the most conservative data available, 64,634 abortions were performed on women who had had three or more previous abortions.

Why would a woman have multiple abortions?

Several factors can account for this. Dr. Phillip Ney points out that pregnancy, like sleep, is a biorhythm. If you are awakened in the middle of the night, your body says, "Go back to sleep". Many who abort, therefore, feel the urge to get pregnant again. A biorhythm has been interrupted. Many want a "replacement" or "atonement" baby.

Yet once pregnant again, they realize (or someone else makes them realize) that the same circumstances that led to the first abortion are still in place. Hence, another abortion follows. Often the mother, pregnant the second time, thinks, "I aborted my first child. I'm not worthy of being a mother. I don't deserve this child." And she goes to the abortion mill. Repeat abortions are a sign of ambivalence, and at times of self-punishment.

Dr. Theresa Burke also explains, "Repeat abortions and replacement pregnancies are two common ways in which women reenact elements of their abortion trauma". (Forbidden Grief, pg. 110). As Dr. Ney puts it, "Tragedy is

repeated not because we do not understand, but because we are trying to understand” (Deeply Damaged, pg 118). In other words, an underlying conflict, perhaps created by a previous trauma, is unresolved. We find we cannot resolve it by simply replaying it in our minds. So we re-live it. This happens in many arenas of life. The sexually abused child may become seductive; the child who lacked touch and affection may seek an emotionally cold partner, and so forth. We repeat what we don’t understand, in the hopes of mastering it.

Repeat abortions can be repulsive even to people who call themselves “pro-choice” and even to those who work in abortion mills. Sometimes our own reaction is an exasperated, indignant, “How can she do that?!?” But we should change the question and ask instead, “How can I help you to heal?” That question expresses the heart of the pro-life movement, a movement that knows the destiny of mother and child are forever intertwined, and that we can’t love one without loving the other.

Let the healing begin.



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