



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF FARGO

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April 3, 2016

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate the Feast of Divine Mercy. Concluding the Octave of Easter, this feast is a gift of Easter, a gift which reveals and expresses to us the depth of God's mercy. Mercy is a gratuitous gift that opens our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

This year Divine Mercy Sunday bears even greater significance as we celebrate the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. I would like to address my letter today to a special group of people for whom this Jubilee of Mercy can be a sign of *hope* and *forgiveness*. Since the legalization of abortion in 1973, we know that nearly 10 million Catholic women have had an abortion. In addition, the fathers of these babies who have died, together with grandparents and friends, have also been in some way affected by these abortions. Many of you who are reading this letter today have experienced this pain and personally know the tragedy that abortion is.

I desire to offer you words of hope and encourage you not to despair over your abortion decision. Turn to the Heart of Christ who is *mercy* itself, who alone can heal this deep and profound wound in your hearts. For some, this may be a secret that you have kept hidden for the past 10, 20 or even 40 years. For others, it may be an experience as fresh as this past week.

You may ask, where do I begin? I want to assure you that the Church is here for you. Once we admit the truth of our actions and the seriousness of the sin of abortion, healing can begin. The priests of our diocese will welcome you in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We have retreats which provide a safe and confidential environment for you to enter into the *freedom* found in forgiveness. Support groups are available to help you be healed of the emotional and spiritual wounds which abortion inflicts. And for those of you who may be experiencing serious post-abortion symptoms of destructive behaviors or suicidal tendencies, we have specially trained professional counselors to help you.

It is my hope that through these ministries, which we call *Project Rachel*, you will find the *peace* your heart longs for, a peace which only the Risen Lord can give. If you or someone you love needs help, call the Project Rachel hotline at 844-789-4829 or visit www.projectrachelfargo.org.

This Divine Mercy Sunday I invite you to meditate on Jesus, who became one like us to reveal to us the face of the Father, a Father who loves each of us and in whose mercy no sin is too great to be forgiven. He is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness." (Ex 34:6)

Sincerely yours in Christ,

†Most Reverend John T. Folda
Bishop of Fargo