

# **DAY FOR LIFE 2023**

**Ireland, England, Wales and Scotland**

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Day for Life is celebrated this year on Sunday 18 June. The theme is 'Listen to Her' and focuses on the experience of one Catholic woman in the aftermath of abortion. It tells of her journey towards healing. The hope is that this will help people to listen, to understand and to respond with compassion.

## **Day for Life Message**

### **Jane's Story**

I went to Catholic schools, I knew about God and morality on some level, but for me, the culture spoke louder when it came to making decisions around sexuality.

When I was 15, I discovered I was pregnant and the fear clouded everything. I had one aim, and that was to solve the problem I had found myself in. A quick search for confidential help landed me at a clinic connected to an abortion provider. They seemed to genuinely believe that abortion was the solution to my problem and I don't remember discussing any other options. I was relieved when they determined that I was capable enough to make this decision alone, without the involvement of an adult, which is still legal to this day.

That Saturday I travelled alone to the clinic. My parents were unaware, due to other difficulties in the family home that I didn't want to contribute to. I went through the degrading experience of a surgical abortion, and I thought that if I could just get through that day, I would never have to think about it again. I remember feeling conflicted as a tear rolled down my cheek, that I quickly wiped away. I believed I couldn't be sad because this was something I had chosen to do. So, after the initial feeling of relief, I pushed down the experience and avoided anything to do with the topic of abortion. It was difficult to be around pregnant women and I found the anniversary difficult each year.

Over the next few years, I became more curious about faith through the invitation of a friend. I was looking for direction and truth, but my spiritual life was always tainted by the thought that I could never be forgiven for what I had done – somehow, God's mercy didn't apply to me. In the fleeting moments of

honesty with myself and God, I knew that my choice didn't make me lose something, but someone. At times, this realisation was unbearable. This led to periods of deep depression and suicidal thoughts, as well as more promiscuous behaviour and numbing the pain with alcohol, food, or isolation.

This all changed when I was encouraged to go to confession. Even when I tried to justify my choice, the priest met me with the love and mercy of Jesus. The tears he shed melted my heart of stone. I began to give up my old ways of life and follow His way.

On this journey I was introduced to Rachel's Vineyard: a healing ministry that provides support for those who are suffering after abortion. I remember the kindness of the woman that I spoke to, and I knew I wouldn't be judged there.

It took so much courage to go on a retreat, but I can genuinely say it changed my life. By hearing other people share their stories and being gently encouraged by the team, I was able to speak the truth of what had happened to me on that day. My feelings were acknowledged, including my sense of loss. I was finally given permission to grieve for the baby that had died through my choice. I acknowledged my motherhood and named my son Joseph. This was the start of God turning the guilt, shame and unforgiveness into a deep love for my son, as any good mother would have.

The healing has continued alongside my faith journey. I've taken responsibility for the role I played in my abortion, but with perspective and time, I can see that my 'choice' wasn't really a choice at all. There were other people's failures, and an inability to truly give informed consent as a teenager that also contributed. The option that was presented as a quick fix solution has eternal consequences, and I truly believe that if I'd have known the impact abortion would have had on my life, even as a teenager, I would have made a different choice.

## **PAPAL MESSAGE FOR THE DAY FOR LIFE 2023**

***Pope Francis has kindly sent a message of encouragement for all who participate in the Day for Life. The message is as follows:***

The Holy Father Francis was informed of the celebration of the 2023 Day for Life in Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales under the theme "Listen to Her" and sends his greetings and good wishes to all the participants.

In listening to Mary, our Mother, and following her example, he invites us to discover our personal call from God who is the source of our existence, reminding us that, "Each human being is called by God to enjoy the fullness of life; and, is entrusted to the maternal care of the Church. Every threat to human dignity and life cannot but have an effect on her heart, on her maternal 'womb'. To defend life is not an ideology for the Church. It is a reality; a human reality which involves all Christians, precisely because they are Christian and because they are human". (General Audience, 25 March 2020).

With these sentiments in mind, I assure all who participate in this year's Day for Life of Pope Francis' prayers, particularly for all expectant mothers and their families. Through the intercession of the Mother of God, the Holy Father cordially imparts his Apostolic Blessing to all participants and invokes an abundance of Divine graces.

## **Prayers of Intercession – Day for Life – June 18<sup>th</sup> 2023**

On this Day for Life, we make our prayer for all our needs and, in particular, for the needs of older people in our society.

1. We pray for Francis our Pope that, as he experiences something of the physical frailty of old age, he may be strengthened in body, mind and spirit, to be able to complete the mission entrusted to him by God. Lord hear us.
2. We pray for the grace to listen and to understand, so women in our community who struggle with the challenges of pregnancy may never feel that they walk alone, but they have the support of a community that really cares. Lord hear us.
3. We pray for women and men for whom abortion has been part of the experience of life, whether recently or in the distant past, that they may find healing and peace in God, whose love is never taken back. Lord hear us.
4. We pray for political leaders that they may have the courage and the integrity to stand with all who are vulnerable in our society, including women and their unborn children. Lord hear us.
5. We pray for doctors and nurses and other healthcare professionals that, in their professional lives they may always be advocates for life. Lord hear us.
6. We pray for all who are coming to the end of life's journey that they may be sustained in the face of death by their hope in the resurrection of the dead. Lord hear us.

Eternal God, you call women and men to share in your work of creation through the gift of life to their children. May your blessing come upon all parents, and especially on those for whom parenthood is particularly challenging or difficult. Bring to our society a fresh awareness of the unique value of every life. We make this prayer through Christ Our Lord.

## **NEWSLETTER NOTICE**

### **Day for Life 2023**

Day for Life is celebrated this year on Sunday 18 June. The theme is 'Listen to Her' and focuses on the experience of one Catholic woman in the aftermath of abortion. It tells of her journey towards healing. The hope is that this will help people to listen, to understand and to respond with compassion. You can read the message in full on [www.councilforlife.ie](http://www.councilforlife.ie)

## Support Organisations

*Have you or someone you know been affected by abortion? There are some wonderful organisations that can help you. Here are three.*

### **Rachel's Vineyard**

[rachelsvineyard.ie](http://rachelsvineyard.ie)

[rachelsvineyard.org.uk](http://rachelsvineyard.org.uk)

Rachel's Vineyard is a safe place to renew and rebuild your life after experiencing the trauma of abortion. Their healing weekends offer a supportive, confidential and non-judgmental environment where women and men can deal with painful post-abortive emotions.

### **Gianna Care**

[giannacare.ie](http://giannacare.ie)

Gianna Care's goal is to help people in any way they can. Whether you are experiencing an unexpected pregnancy, or need help following an abortion, their trained client advocates, counsellors, nurses and doctors are here to help.

### **Abortion Recovery Care and Helpline (ARCH)**

[archtrust.org.uk](http://archtrust.org.uk)

ARCH is dedicated to promoting the emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being of clients, by the provision of real understanding, counselling and supportive help to women, men and families after an abortion.