

Puzzle Project

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'Come home. We forgive you?' Father Winterkorn added. 'I don't know why. The Lord said, 'Go in peace! Ninety-nine percent of the time, the only way they're going to go in peace is through forgiveness.'

Under canon law, a person who obtains or procures an abortion is excommunicated, except if he or she is: under the age of 16; unaware of the penalty proscribed by canon law; compelled toward the action by grave fear; or acting in a heightened state of emotion, rage, anger or hatred.

Formerly permission to lift the penalty of excommunication when it did apply was reserved to the bishop of the diocese. The new Code of Canon Law however, permits priests to remit the censure of excommunication in the case of an abortion, without gaining permission from their bishops.

Thus any pastor or priest can offer reconciliation. But because of the stigma attached to abortion, many of those who seek the sacrament are afraid to talk to their own pastors or familiar priests. 'Some have been hollered at by priests,' Father Winterkorn said. 'My philosophy is that they wouldn't be coming to me if they weren't already repentant.'

His philosophy as well as his interest in post-abortion counseling resulted more from accident than design. A young woman sought counseling from him while she was in the midst of a struggle against drug addiction. The woman, who was unmarried, became pregnant after previously having an abortion. Father Winterkorn and an "adoptive family" supported the woman through her decision to have the second child and offer it up for adoption.

'That first case happened so gradually. The situation was just there, and I had to do something,' he recalled. 'I can realize now how un-

comfortable a priest would be if somebody just showed up and said, 'Here's what I did — boom!'

'One thing you must always, always, always be is non-judgmental,' he added. 'People are looking for you to judge them so they don't have to tell you their story, and they're very good at picking it up.'

Through the diocesan Human Life Commission, Father Winterkorn and the woman whom he counseled got together with Father Mura, whose interest in post-abortion counseling stemmed from his work in youth ministry.

'I was coming across girls who'd had abortions and needed counseling,' Father Mura recalled. 'I thought I might as well reach out and see if other people needed the same service.' Through a friend and fellow priest from

Buffalo, Gary Bagley, Father Mura learned about the concept of the Puzzle Project and brought it back to Rochester.

News of the project spread primarily by word of mouth and through the bright yellow posters that hang in the vestibules of many churches. Nowadays, the Puzzle Project offers phone numbers for callers in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier regions as well as in the Genesee Valley. What little funding the project receives has come largely from annual grants awarded by the diocesan Respect Life Fund, and is used for advertising and telephone charges.

For some callers — most often those who have recognized their abortions as mistakes — the sacrament of reconciliation suffices and

they don't return. Others with more deep-seated problems may have been denying they were wrong for a long time, and may continue to call or visit a counselor over a period of weeks or months.

'What I try to do is to get the woman to say what's happened has happened. Reconciliation means letting go,' Father Mura explained, 'not that you're not going to still feel pain sometimes and want to kick yourself, but that you've got to get on with your life of loving the Lord...'

'I suggest that when they're really feeling the pain, they offer their suffering as a prayer sacrifice for some other girl or woman who may be thinking of getting an abortion,' he said. 'Maybe then, she will have the grace to make another decision.' —

Respect Life Fund announces grants to 14 groups

Members of the Respect Life Fund Committee have chosen 14 pro-life groups from across the Diocese of Rochester to share more than \$23,000 in grant money.

Bishop Matthew H. Clark announced the names of grant recipients at an October 1 news conference scheduled to focus attention on issues that endanger or eliminate human life during October, which is Respect Life Month.

'Whenever life in the womb is terminated, a prisoner is tortured, a human being is sentenced to death, (or) the withdrawal of nutrition and hydration from the elderly or the infirm is considered, we reject Christ's gift and threaten peace,' Bishop Clark wrote in a letter which was read at Masses throughout the diocese on Respect Life Sunday, Oct. 4.

The following groups were chosen as 1987 Respect Life Fund recipients:

Finger Lakes region — Birthright of Canandaigua, \$1,700; Birthright of Cayuga County, \$750; Birthright of Ontario, \$800; Birthright of Penn Yan, \$700; Birthright of

Seneca County, \$200; Finger Lakes Office of Social Ministry, \$500.

Southern Tier region — Birthright of Corning, \$1,400; Birthright of Ithaca, \$3,000; Birthright of Owego, \$2,300.

Genesee Valley region — Birthright of Rochester, \$1,725; Catholic Family Center, \$1,725; Melita House, \$6,000; Nazareth Academy, \$2,500; Puzzle Project, \$1,400.

Groups seeking grants from the Respect Life Fund, which is funded by the annual Thanks Giving Appeal and by donations to the Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, must meet three basic criteria, according to Father John Firpo, diocesan director of social ministry. They must be not-for-profit organizations that do not perform abortions, make abortion referrals, or promote abortions in any way.

Eligible organizations must also demonstrate that the project for which they request

funding does not duplicate existing services. Finally, applicants must provide services in at least one of the following categories: care for pregnant women; pastoral care for persons who have had or have taken part in an abortion; public education to prevent abortion or promote alternatives to abortion.

Workshop focuses on sex roles

Father Richard Rohr, OFM, an internationally known preacher, author and spiritual leader, will conduct a workshop on "The Changing Role of Men in Church and Society" on October 31 at the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School auditorium. The program, which will run from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., is sponsored by the Great Lakes center and is open to the public.

Registration can be reserved by calling the Great Lakes Center at (716)288-3854. The cost is \$15 per person.

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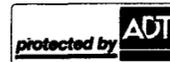
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