

A Fathers' Day Message from Project Rachel

By Carol Feeney, Project Rachel Coordinator

Fathers' Day recognizes and celebrates the important role of fathers in our lives. It can also be a day on which the father of an aborted child might reflect on his unborn child.

Many men who father children feel that they are not within their rights to voice an opinion one way or the other about the abortion of the child. Since the decision to give birth or to abort lies legally with the mother, many men passively yield the decision to their partner. Often, these men who are trying to be supportive by withholding their feelings may be perceived as not caring or emotionally abandoning the woman to face the decision alone.

Unplanned fatherhood is a reality that many men face, but for a man who intends to embrace the responsibilities and joys of fatherhood, an abortion of their child can be very painful. Even if a man was not involved in the decision, an abortion may cause personal and relational injury.

Some men are unaware of an abortion decision until the procedure is over. Others may abandon, threaten to abandon or otherwise coerce their partner when they become pregnant, thereby influencing an abortion decision. Others may feel powerless to speak their minds. Awareness of the importance of the loss of the child may come later in a man's life, especially at the conception and birth of future children. Grief, guilt, anger, anxiety, post-traumatic stress (Coyle, 2007) substance abuse, lost relationships or problematic relationships, compromised intimacy and depression are all common ways in which an abortion can affect the father. According to research by Coleman, Rue and Spence (2007a), men are more at risk than women for experiencing chronic grief from abortion, and men are more likely than women to feel despair long after the abortion.

Regardless of the law, every pregnancy involves a man and a woman. While the law allows for "choice" celebrated by some, fathers and mothers of an aborted child have no choice but to live with the aftermath.

Fathers who carry grief over an abortion decision do so because of their protective and caring nature. If you are a man who has been involved in an abortion decision, or if you are a man who was *not* involved in the decision; if you feel powerless and stricken by a father's grief, please call the Project Rachel help line: 505-831-8238. This confidential help line will put you in touch with trained, compassionate staff who can help you find counseling, spiritual direction, and the healing sacraments that can set you on the road to recovery and peace.

"I command you: be strong and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the Lord, your God, is with you wherever you go" Joshua 1:9