

Practical ways to help

Donate to services that provide counselling (e.g. Open Doors, Caroline Chisholm Society)

Organise a collection of baby goods and clothing in new or good and safe condition to donate to the Caroline Chisholm Society. Items that are needed include:

- Prams, bassinets, baby linen and blankets, high chairs, baby baths
- Baby and toddler clothes (sizes 0000 – 6), maternity clothes, nappies
- Books, toys and puzzles
- Baby formula and general canned/package household groceries

Support families in your parish/ local area who need help. This could include volunteering to help out with jobs around the house or babysitting.

Write to and meet up with your local members of parliament to discuss your concern for our abortion laws and why.

Celebrate pregnancies by congratulating new parents.

Consider dropping off dinner for a new family you might know.

Volunteer at organisations that assist pregnant women:

- The Babes Project: www.thebabesproject.com.au/volunteer
- Olivia's place (Warragul): <http://oliviaplace.org.au/volunteering-opportunities/>

Become informed.

Join the conversation.

Pray.

Called to mercy

The unborn and pregnant women



Pope Francis has called for an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy that is to have the mercy of God at its centre. It is a Holy Year of Mercy and to delve a little deeper into mercy and some of its themes, the AOY is putting together a series of video blogs to highlight issues where we might be able to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God throughout this Year of Mercy. This resource is a supplementary guide to help youth groups break apart the topics for further discussion. There is also a list of other resources that you can check out included here.

Other resources/links

Content in articles and videos may provoke an emotional reaction in some young people, please make sure you check all resources first and be prepared to offer emotional support to any young people that may require assistance.



Pope Francis' letter on indulgences in the Year of Mercy – particular reference to paragraph 6 https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150901_lettera-indulgenza-giubileo-misericordia.html

Evangelium Vitae (Pope John Paul II's encyclical on Human Life) http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html



DVD:
Walking with love (ACBC documentary) available from the AOY Library. Contain two real life stories from women who have experienced unplanned pregnancies and the Catholic teaching featuring Bishop Eugene Hurley.

Books:
Giving Sorrow Words by Melinda Tankard Reist (available from the AOY library). Personal stories of post-abortion grief.

Explaining Catholic Teaching: Abortion by Helen Watts. Super short resource with clear explanation of Catholic Teaching and where it has developed from over the years (available from the AOY library).

The current law in Victoria (abortions up to 24 weeks, and up to 36 weeks with two medical opinions), read it in full: [http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/web_notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt1.nsf/d1a8d8a9bed958efca25761600042ef5/69d6c3a5305f935bca2577610017c10d/\\$FILE/08-58a003.pdf](http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/domino/web_notes/LDMS/LTObject_Store/LTObjSt1.nsf/d1a8d8a9bed958efca25761600042ef5/69d6c3a5305f935bca2577610017c10d/$FILE/08-58a003.pdf)

In 2015, an amendment to the current legislation was introduced, this website was put together with a series of fact sheets: <http://www.infantviability.org.au/resources>

Website for foetal development stages: www.babycenter.com.au/pregnancy-week-by-week

Scripture

The old and new testaments are full of passages that encourage us to take care of each other and especially those who need our mercy. Here are just a few of the many passages to reference:

Whoever welcomes in my name one of these children, welcomes me.
Mark 9:37

You created my inmost self, knit me together in my mother's womb. For so many marvels I thank you; a wonder am I, and all your works are wonders. You knew me through and through, my being held no secrets from you, when I was being formed in secret, textured in the depths of the earth. Your eyes could see my embryo. In your book all my days were inscribed, every one that was fixed is there.
Psalms 139:13-16

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations.
Jeremiah 1:5

Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you.
Isaiah 49:15

Your hands having shaped and created me, now you change your mind and mean to destroy me! Having made me, remember, as though of clay, now you mean to turn me back into dust! Did you not pour me out like milk, and then let me thicken like curds, clothe me with skin and flesh, and weave me of bone and sinew? In your love you gave me life, and in your care watched over my every breath.
Job 10:8-12

Sons are a birthright from Yahweh, children are a reward from him. Like arrows in a warrior's hand are the sons you father when young. How blessed is the man who has filled his quiver with them; in dispute with his enemies at the city gate he will not be worsted.
Psalms 127:3

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in

the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."
John 7:3-8



In Victoria, unborn babies are in urgent need of our mercy and compassion. It is unknown how many abortions occur as official data is not kept, however it is estimated that more than 100,000 abortions take place in Australia every year. Women experiencing unplanned pregnancies can suffer a great deal. They can often be placed in very difficult situations, having to choose between the life of their unborn baby and other stressful outcomes. They often feel pressured to abort their babies and suffer greatly after their abortion. They also deserve our mercy and compassion. This resource will look at some of the situations that women with unplanned pregnancies face and look at what we can do to support them to carry their baby to full term.

What can we do?

Being a good friend to anyone experiencing pregnancy regardless of whether it is planned or unplanned is one of the best supports you can offer. The transition between life before and after children can be one of the most challenging times for any one.

Discussion points for youth groups

Watch the AOY video resource at <https://youtu.be/-D2Kf7w45c>

This topic can be difficult to discuss with all ages and is suited to an older youth group (16 years plus), consider which questions you may want to discuss prior to your discussion.

It may be helpful to gain an understanding of the current abortion laws in Victoria (each state differs), see the links panel for more information.

Points to consider discussing *prior* to watching the video resource.

- What does it mean to be merciful?
- What are some ways you have experienced God's love and mercy in your life?

- What does it mean for us, our family, or our parish, to be merciful as God is merciful? How can we concretely express this merciful attitude that is grounded on the love of God?
- Do we consider pregnant women to be in need of mercy? How can we extend God's mercy to those around us? What steps can we take to extend mercy and hospitality to all pregnant women?
- In the gospel of John 7: 3-8, Jesus famously does not condemn the woman who commits adultery, he simply tells her not to sin again. He has forgiveness for the woman but does not condone the act... how does this gospel teach us about judgement, mercy and compassion?

Having watched the resource, below are some follow-up discussion points:

- Why do babies in the womb deserve to be shown mercy?
- How can we show mercy to women who have had an abortion?
- Why do we need to show compassion?
- Can you suggest practical ways that you can show mercy to women with unplanned pregnancies?

- Pope Francis specifically talks in his letter on indulgences in the Year of Mercy about women who have had an abortion and the mercy we need to show. Why do you think he has directly addressed this topic? How can his words guide us?
- Pregnancy can be a challenging experience for all women, regardless of their situation, what can we do to be more compassionate, informed and involved regarding this community?
- What questions do you have surrounding this topic?
- How do you think that this group is treated by the greater community? How can we show mercy and compassion to these women?

Corporal Works of Mercy

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give drink to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To shelter the homeless.
5. To visit the sick.
6. To visit the imprisoned.
7. To bury the dead.

Spiritual Works of Mercy

1. To instruct the ignorant.
2. To counsel the doubtful.
3. To admonish sinners.
4. To bear wrongs patiently.
5. To forgive offences willingly.
6. To comfort the afflicted.
7. To pray for the living and the dead.