

**I had an abortion many years ago. I have confessed my sin and really am sorry for what I had done. But can I ever get to heaven or avoid eternal life in hell? Can this awful sin be forgiven?**

Yes, yes, yes, the sin of abortion can be forgiven! The only sin that cannot be forgiven is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. And this blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the refusal to repent of our sins or to believe that God will forgive us. In effect, the only unforgivable sin is not to trust that God can offer His forgiveness and mercy. The Catechism states: *“There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss.”* (CCC #1864)

So by all means trust that God can forgive *all* your sins and then ask for and accept His mercy. The sin of abortion is a very difficult and emotional one for a mother to deal with, and my heart goes out to you at the loss of your child. We know that even once the sin is confessed and spiritual healing occurs, there is still much emotional healing that needs to take place. The Catholic Church has an outreach called Project Rachel which offers counseling to women, and men, who have been touched by an abortion experience to help with that healing. In the Archdiocese of Detroit you can call 313-237-5905, or there is a hotline: 888-Rachel5 (888-722-4355). All contacts are strictly confidential!

At the risk of confusing this subject unnecessarily, there is one detail that needs to be addressed, and that deals with properly confessing the sin of abortion. According to Canon Law: *“A person who procures a completed abortion incurs [an automatic] excommunication.”* (Canon 1398) And since a person who is excommunicated is deprived of the sacraments, including Confession, that person must approach the bishop, or a priest delegated by him, to have the excommunication resolved before the sin can be forgiven. But not everyone who has an abortion is automatically excommunicated, and for them, directly going to Confession is the proper route to attain forgiveness. Canon 1323 lists seven different reasons why an automatic excommunication would not be in effect for an individual. They include: being younger than 16; being ignorant that she was violating a law that deserved this penalty, or; being forced or coerced by grave fear.

You mentioned that you have confessed your abortion. If the priest hearing your confession needed special delegation from the bishop, and did not have it, he would have told you at that time and directed you accordingly. May the peace of Christ be with you.

**Deacon Joe Hulway**