

**ENCYCLICAL LETTER
EVANGELIUM VITAE
ADDRESSED BY THE SUPREME PONTIFF
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO ALL THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS, AND DEACONS
MEN AND WOMEN RELIGIOUS
LAY FAITHFUL
AND ALL PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL
ON THE VALUE AND INVIOLABILITY
OF HUMAN LIFE**

#99/C I would now like to say a special word to *women who have had an abortion*. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. The wound in your heart may not yet have healed. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you his forgiveness and his peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will also be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord. With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life.