

**Diocese of Lafayette Office of Pro Life Apostolate
Policy on the Use of Graphic Images**

Policy on the use of graphic images

The Diocese of Lafayette Office of Pro Life Apostolate does not promote or endorse activities with indiscriminate public use of graphic images.

Rationale

The mission of the Office of Pro Life Apostolate for the Diocese of Lafayette in Louisiana is to persuade people of the truth about the sanctity of every human life, made in the image and likeness of God. To accomplish that our emphasis is on showing the beauty of human life in an effort to restore appreciation of the humanity of children before birth, with a view to preventing abortions.

While the harsh brutality of abortion is truthfully portrayed in the graphic images, it does not tell the whole story. The damage of abortion goes far beyond the death of a child, as awful as that is, affecting those left behind in the wake of that destruction. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, friends, abortion staff, and many others are affected for the rest of their lives on earth, and into eternity. Many of those affected see no way out of their sadness and suffering; they actually feel trapped by that awful event. They believe they have committed an unforgivable sin.

Women and men say that the graphic signs reinforce the belief that they can never be forgiven – by God or by their child. Many are close to despair. Some have contemplated, or even attempted, suicide. Statistically, 45% of women have had an abortion; so, nearly half of adults driving past the signs are post-abortive.

While in no way condoning abortion, we want to emphasize the mercy of God for the many who have made a terrible mistake, usually under great pressure. It's a mistake that they can never undo. For them, their entire relationship with their child is based on the horrible memory of the abortion procedure itself. Spiritually and emotionally unhealthy, it affects all their relationships every day of their lives. The whole society suffers the after effects.

Our Rachel's Vineyard Retreats/Diocese of Lafayette Site help women and men to experience God's mercy and also to establish a new relationship with their children - a healthy one - based on forgiveness and the natural bond of love parents and children share. As they work through the weekend, their expressions of tremendous regret, and also of great tenderness and love for their babies, are moving. We are made by God to live eternally with him and with those he puts in our lives here on earth, especially our families. God wants these women and men to experience forgiveness, be happy and begin to live the life He has in mind for them now, and also to help them look forward to reuniting with their children in eternity.

Regarding the effects of indiscriminate displays of graphic images, there is also something else to consider. Displayed along a roadside, many driving by equate the ugliness depicted on the signs with the prolife movement. Rather than persuade them to our view, they are provoked into seeing *prolifers* as violent, unforgiving and unfeeling. Though the signs portray truth in one sense, the awful message shown is projected onto those holding the signs, and the message itself is lost in confused, angry and hurt feelings. This can be a real barrier in explaining the prolife message.