

# Affirming a Choice

Diann L. Neu

*Diann L. Neu is Co-Director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual in Silver Spring, Maryland.*

Healthy reproductive choice includes the best medical, psychological and social support available. It also includes spiritual support that we sometimes forget in making all-important decisions and undergoing momentous events in our lives. We—friends, ministers, counselors—need to develop and celebrate liturgies that affirm women's reproductive choices. Women may need encouragement to consider such a liturgy because traditional churches and society do not provide them.

This liturgy affirms that a woman has made a good and holy decision to have an abortion. It provides strength and healing after making a difficult choice. It brings closure to an often intense and emotional process. It is intended to be celebrated with friends.

## **Preparation**

Place on a cloth in the center of the circle: oil, symbols such as flower petals or dried flowers, and a bowl that will be given to the woman as a gift. Invite her to choose a favorite song, poem, reading or Scripture verse for the ritual.

Invite the woman who has made the decision, her partner, if appropriate, and supportive friends to gather for affirmation.

## **Call to Gather**

Welcome. Today we gather with our friend, N. (name of woman), to affirm that she has made a choice to have an abortion. She needs our support.

## **Song**

(Play or sing a favorite, comforting song, one that the woman likes.)

## **Prayer**

Let us pray. Blessed are you, Holy Wisdom, for your presence with N. Praised be you, Mother Goddess and Father God, that you have given your people the power of choice. We are saddened that the life circumstances of N. (woman's name and, if appropriate, her partner's name) are such that she has had to choose to terminate her pregnancy. Such a choice is never simple. It is filled with pain and hurt, with anger and questions, but also with integrity and strength. We rejoice in her attention to choice.

Our beloved sister has made a very hard choice. We affirm her and support her in her decision. We promise to stand with her in her ongoing life.

Blessed are you, Holy Wisdom, for your presence with her.

### **Reading**

(Choose a poem, reading or Scripture verse that captures the message of the liturgy.)

### **Sharing**

(The celebrant invites the woman (and her partner) to speak about her (their) decision to have an abortion. If there is a symbolic gesture that expresses her (their) feeling, such as sprinkling flower petals, burning a rose, or sharing dried flowers, invite her (them) to incorporate it into the sharing.)

### **Blessing**

N., we love you very deeply. As a sign of our affirmation of you and of your choice, we give you this bowl and this oil. Oil soothes bones that are weary from making a difficult decision. Oil strengthens and heals. Oil... (Add sentences that reflect what the woman said in her story.)

We bless you with this oil. Come, friends, take oil from the bowl and massage N.'s hands, face, feet, neck, shoulders and head. Close your blessing by embracing her.

N., the bowl is a tangible symbol of this day. When times are difficult—and such days come to each of us—look at this bowl and remember our love for you. We bless you, N., and promise to be with you on your way.

### **Closing Song**

(Close the liturgy with a blessing song like the following: “Blessing Song” by Marsie Silvestro, from *Circling Free*, c. 1982.)

Bless you, my sister, bless you on your way  
You have roads to roam before you're home  
And winds to speak your name.

So go gently, my sister, let courage be your song  
You have words to say in your own way  
And stars to light your night.

And if ever we grow weary and our heart song  
Has no refrain  
Just remember we'll be waiting to raise you up again.

And we'll bless you, our sister, bless you in our way  
And we'll welcome home all the life you've known  
And softly speak your name.  
Bless you, our sister, bless you on your way.

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Diann L. Neu, Co-director of WATER  
The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual  
8035 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA  
Phone: 301-589-2509; Fax: 301-589-3150; E-mail: [dneu@hers.com](mailto:dneu@hers.com);  
[www.hers.com/water](http://www.hers.com/water)