

For My “Girl” Agnes.

This issue is dedicated to the loving memory of one of my “girls” Agnes who passed peacefully away as a result of a brain tumour. Agnes was one of my girls and I say this with great pride in her. She came to me first by phone counselling and several times in person followed by phone counselling again. It had to be this way because Agnes lived in country Victoria and it was difficult to get to me in person. However over several years we developed a lovely relationship. I remember when I met her for the first time she radiated both a sense of sorrow (in her eyes) and a sense of frailty. I often had the feeling that she would “slip” away if we were not careful. Many years ago Agnes had an abortion and like all the other women whom I have seen and no doubt those I have not seen, regretted that one decision all the rest of her life. For Agnes it was probably the one decision that she would have given anything reverse. In our discussions and several encounters (our encounters lasted usually the whole day-because of the distance) I got to know Agnes and her baby boy whom she called Jordan. Over the time I watched and listened as she slowly reclaimed Jordan as her son, named him, and slowly then let him go. Not completely out of her mind but began to let him go so that she could begin living in her reality as he had to live in his. The last time I saw her physically (for the third time) she was in hospital after head surgery and preparing to go home. She looked frailer than ever and the last words to me were “thank you Anne for coming to see me. Thank you for acknowledging my son. Thank you for helping me to get to know him and keep going with your work. Its important work. I don’t really want to die but if its time for me I won’t mind because I really want to see my son and I know he and Jesus will be waiting for me. So its OK.” Agnes went to meet Jesus with whom she had been reconciled and her beloved son Jordan on February 10, 2002.

Eternal rest grant to them O Lord and let your light shine on them and may they rest in your peace....Amen.

EDUCATORS:

At the risk of getting pilloried (again) I feel it is important at this time to speak about the role of educators in this fight against abortion and abortion aftermath. The reason for this is the number of times where I have been told by the very young that abortion was discussed in their classroom (upper level secondary) but that the inference was that abortion is OK and that really it is the woman’s choice. It is not a comment I occasionally encounter it is a comment which ***I always*** encounter when speaking to, or counselling



John 15

a young girl who has had an abortion and who now feels cheated because nobody told her what it would be like afterwards. I am at this point referring to a new seventeen year old that I have just started to counsel. She is still a student and struggling to cope with her year 12 whilst at the same time attempting to deal with an abortion at the beginning of the year. What emerges from my discussions with the young is that when the topic abortion is raised it often divides the class into pro abortion and anti abortion groups with the anti abortion group being made up of generally a small number of students. I am also told that the sacredness of human life is not discussed but what are discussed are usually the “wanted ness” or “unwanted ness” factor. The difficulties envisaged and the ease with which an abortion can be procured, followed by the notion that after the abortion is procured “all the problems are gone.” In fact the baby isn’t even discussed as “baby” but as an imageless foetus.

There is a terrible naivety or worse still, a terrible callousness with this kind of thinking and teaching. An educator would not dream of teaching an untrue or a false mathematical formulae, knowing that this would lead to more and greater error as the teaching and learning in this area continued. An educator would not knowingly teach his/her student erroneous scientific formulations, yet when it comes to issues concerning life matters then this is somehow believed to be governed by a different set of rules. This is not so. When teaching and discussing life matters it is important that truth also be given a hearing. All truth beginning with genesis of Life, sacredness of life, the dignity of life of every individual in an including the child to be aborted, and the possibility that a violation of the life principle and moral values will bring with it immeasurable lifelong suffering.

Whilst the role of the parents is to safeguard the child and to maintain the delicate balance between holding back and gently releasing their child so that the child emerges at the other end as a well-balanced and mature adult, the educator in whose care the child is also placed bears, some responsibility with the final outcome. The educator who lives and loves their charism as “teacher” knows and understands this. Knows and understands that educating children is more than a “job” or at least it should be more than a job, it is a gift and together with the parents is entrusted with assisting the young to emerge at the other end as balanced and mature adults.

I need to say at this point that those whom I have seen and who have been still at school do not really blame anyone for their predicament. They usually blame themselves and it is difficult for them to reconcile how they could have done what they have done. It is also telling that a very young girl will not call the child “my baby” but always, always it is referred to as an “it.” This is because at this stage psychologically she is still idealistic. She cannot bear to say the word “baby” because to her mind she could not have possibly “killed a baby” It is easier to refer to it as an “it” because there is no imagery involved. However, at a deeper level there is the

intuitive knowledge that it was more than an “it” because her response is congruent with deeper knowledge of what her action has meant.

For the educators it is important to understand that until the day comes when abortion aftermath is discussed whenever the issue arises, the young in your classrooms will continue to subject themselves to this life changing procedure. An abortion in the life of a very young man or woman does not mean that a conception did not take place, but that the conception was discarded. It does not mean that the girl stopped being a mother or that the young man stopped being a father on the day that the procedure was carried out. No – the conception and life of that child was terminated but the fatherhood and motherhood of that child will always remain. She is still a mother. He is still a father but in both cases of a dead child rather than a living child.

This is what is disturbing; that the belief is that abortion removes all traces of a conception. Yes indeed it does- the physical. The psychological and the spiritual; - this cannot happen not even with the deepest desires to eradicate the knowledge. Human beings were not designed to kill their young but indeed are designed to nurture and protect them. The role of a mother and father is to protect the child not abandon, reject or kill it. When this happens the essence of our own humanity rebels at such an act. The psychology of those involved is radically altered to accommodate the new reality of “death.”

ABORTION AFTERMATH

Repeatedly studies have shown that women experience emotional distress following their abortion, with some of the women experiencing this distress so strongly and so severely as to necessitate psychological/psychiatric care. The number of women who report complete satisfaction with their abortion decision is very minimal and indeed there are no reports where it clearly shows that abortion has any beneficial result. On the contrary studies are clearly showing not only detrimental physical effects of abortion such as PID (pelvic infections), perforations and the spectre of future breast cancer, but the psychological/spiritual effects now clearly outweigh the physical.

The psychological suffering of women in our society is clearly evidenced through their need to become a caricature of themselves. It is in the progressive changing of the psyche of women, which results in new suffering. This new suffering is one in which in ancient times was found shame. It is in the self-sterilising and then becoming womb less in order to respond to some unknown, nameless, call.

It is my contention that the first step to abortion is the absence of God from the psychological environment of man and woman and thus then children cannot grow naturally. With the removal of God and life principle then it becomes possible to remove an unexpected and unwanted child, and after this all other manner of disposals become possible. When a society loses its

sense of God, pride overtakes the human heart and all forms of violence become the norm. Abortion, abortion grief, abortion trauma, Post Abortion Syndrome, self mutilation, self destructive behaviour, depression, suicide, divorce, family breakdown, etc.etc., all have their roots in violence and death and unhappiness. There appears an aimless wandering especially by men and women. They seem to be looking for something; for some peace. There is an estrangement from self and others. There is turmoil in family life and this surely must make some sense to us because the sin of the parents in a family (an abortion history) must find its place of expression in the family itself and family life.

With each generation the dignity of the human person has been diminished and a kind of darkness now encompasses us. Men and women now are fearful of children and those children who have escaped the death net are becoming at times tyrannical. Truly, just in this, if nothing else, it is possible to see how deeply and profoundly humanity has been wounded. It is no wonder that the reaper has found a place of rest within humanity.

POST ABORTION DEPRESSION A SOUL'S JOURNEY TO FIND ITSELF

It is important to have a clear outline or understanding of what depression is before we can posit some reasons for its existence. A possible understanding is that it is a marked decline or lowering of energy which is needed for day to day living. Indeed it can become so lowered that conscious living becomes intolerable and at times it becomes easier to retreat into safe areas of make believe or even psychosis.

Depression can begin with a triggering event, but the event itself is not the cause. The cause or causes maybe many and in the guise of psycho/spiritual and/or physical or a combination of all of them. However, the primary cause is usually a deep wound, unresolved grief, unrecognised grief, important loss, deep crisis, abandonment, rejection and so on. In its mildest form depression is something, which is experienced by all. It is a state of mind and spirit, which are not harmonious. Depression manifests visibly an internal dissonance. There is something deep within which remains hidden and which is causing pain – yet continues to remain hidden, and until the “whatever” is brought into the light it will continue to cause tension and a lowering of *joi-de-vivre*.

In its more severe form depression is debilitating to a degree which is extraordinary. It can paralyze and can induce meaninglessness unimaginable by a non-depression sufferer.

Post abortion depression can begin with the former, that is, mild form and can be understood as something, which is disturbing yet it has no name. At this level it can be manageable. However, post abortion depression does not remain at the mild level but progressively intensifies as meaning is sought for the feeling of unease. Indeed it could be said that if the abortion

experience remains the nameless event which is not permitted to be brought to the upper memory, acknowledged as something which was life changing and serious and validated as an experience, then depression is the response to the tension within.

Post abortion depression, the depression that is not chemically based can be also understood as illness of the spirit. This kind of depression when treated as a biologic illness (drug therapy) can and is damaging. Spirit illness alerts that something is amiss within one's own values system, within one's own conscience. As a result, guilt becomes the self-punishment and is a function performed by the superego because of the loss of self-esteem, and a devaluing of self. Psychic and/or spiritual disorders (which I believe Post abortion Syndrome, grief, trauma is) can only be treated or perhaps even resolved by using moral and spiritual dimensions whilst appreciating that the cognitive dimension is also involved and important.

Letters From The Young, and Young At Heart ***Letter 1.***

NICK'S COMMENTS

Fellow greetings once again loyal readers,
How hast thou been? I'm sorry I haven't written in a while, but I am suffering from the disease commonly known as "Year 12 Syndrome," the symptoms which include stress, lack of sleep, stress, pressure, stress, work overload, and did I mention stress? So as you can see, I have been a little bit busy lately.

Quite recently however, I had the opportunity to go on my Year 12 retreat, which was aimed at helping students with their study skills, and also as part of the R.E. program at school. Although we only spent 2 days at our retreat, I did get to know a fair bit about different student's views on God and Religion as a whole. What actually happened was, we were split into groups of approximately 9 or 10 students, and we would go off with a teacher and then discuss various things about life. In one of these sessions we took part in, we had to discuss the changing way we viewed God, and religion, through different ages of our lives. Previously I had thought that if a student was not Catholic, they did not want to know about anything religious, but I soon found out that this was in fact quite the opposite. Once we had begun to really share our experiences and feelings, a multitude of questions began to pour fourth, and debates over certain aspects of God and the Bible. One student in particular, who had been a catholic most of his life even though he was not a practising one, seemed to have more questions than most. Eventually he told of how some Jehovah's Witnesses came to his door one day, and started preaching, yet when he asked them various questions, they were unable to answer, and from this stemmed his constantly increasing doubt over the entire truth of God debate. Even though we were privileged to have the school's R.E. Coordinator as our teacher for these sessions, I still found that she was not able to really answer most of his questions, and although she did try very hard to make up for the damage these people had

caused, he did not really seem to be over his doubts. I have come to now feel that this is how many young people are feeling today, that is, they feel lost due to the fact that there are not enough people to answer their questions. When was the responsibility of teaching religion passed solely to the schools? Children and young people should be having their religious lives moulded by their parents, not only a teacher who takes R.E. to make up the required six subjects. I have really noticed how much of a difference there is religion wise in those young people who have been brought up in a religion by their parents, be it Catholic, Coptic, or Greek Orthodox. It is not that the young people of today don't want to know about religion, its just that very few have the knowledge to nurture the needs of these young people. This is the reason why the young people of today do not attend mass, or keep sacred the holy days; no one has explained WHY they have to, and in addition, that is why they seek any form of spiritual guidance they can, be it good, or unfortunately in most cases bad, as in religious sects and cults. For the next generation to keep Catholicism alive, they need constant teaching from small to tall, young to old. Religion should be taught number 1 at home, number 2 at church, and number 3 at school, not the other way around, and it is up to the parents to take that initiative in preparing their children not only for life; but for the afterlife too.



Anyway readers, I hope you have once again thoroughly enjoyed the artistry my work is (confident aren't I? But with a mother like mine, who can blame me?), and I hope you all have a Happy Easter, and don't eat too much chocolate! ☺

Laterz people,
Nick Lastman

Letter 2

Dear Anne,

My name is Sophie and I am 14 yrs old. I am very interested in pro life and have been involved in several prolife movements in the past year as well as attending a sidewalk-counselling afternoon. In Sept. I also attended the HLI conference at Banyo which was very good but unfortunately I missed your talk. The reason I am writing is to volunteer to assist in any way that might help in the wonderful work of life. A few months ago I wrote to the Premier of Queensland asking him to NOT make abortion legal and to change the abortion legislation so that women cannot get abortions on demand. A few weeks later his secretary wrote back saying that Mr.....(Premier) has no comment on the matter and that if abortion was to become legal it would have nothing to do with him. (I know for a fact that in the past he has said that he is a pro choice and that he would do everything in his power to make abortion legal).

I believe that God has a purpose for everything and that he puts us on this earth to help our brothers and sisters by teaching them the truth. I am also

*striving to be more like Jesus Christ and I know that Jesus would be doing everything he could to stop abortions if He was here on earth now.
God Bless,
Sophie (age 14)*

Letter 3

*Just a short letter to say hello and thank you for adding me to your newsletter list. I am 16 years of age and still at school and I am very much pro life. I am sad that so many babies are killed each year. It must be because their mum's don't really realise that the one they are killing is their son or their daughter. How sad it must be for them when they realise what they have done. I heard you speak at a youth group towards the end of last year and was impressed by the work you and by your care for the people who come to you. You seem to really love your people. Thank you for the information you put in your newsletter-it's the best. I save mine so that I can use it for my persuasive arguments against abortion.
Please keep going with what you do...God Bless
Melissa (age 16)*

Letter 4

*Dear Anne,
I have just read your newsletter which arrived today. Thank you for having raised some very important matters. I for one will profit greatly from what you have written. The point about speaking about abortion and opening the door for us to speak of God's mercy, love, forgiveness and understanding really hit home. This what Msc's are meant to be about.*

(the next part of the letter is of a different nature) but concludes with

*I appreciate that you are doing a splendid work and sincerely hope you will never give in to discouragement. I hope that those who find healing and peace with an through you will themselves go out to others with the message of hope and the promise of peace.
May God bless you and the work you do. Every best wish for 2002.
Fr. John Conroy Msc.*

The above letters heartened and encouraged me especially the letters from the young. With young ones like Nicholas, Sophie, Melissa, and young at heart like Fr John then indeed it becomes possible to see a future where the dignity of the human person (including tiny ones) is respected.

As I conclude this newsletter I would like to say thank you to those who have written to me this month with words of encouragement. Especially as I try to continue with my project of getting a copy of the "Priests" newsletter to every priest in Australia. It is slow but progressing. I dare not look at the whole picture because otherwise I will only become overwhelmed by the size of the task. As the saying goes "little by little"

I would like to advise all my supporters (whatever way your support is financial, prayerful, emotional, friendship) that Fr. John has agreed at my request to have three Holy Sacrifice of the Mass said for your intentions. This is as a thank you for your care and concern for me and those who come to me. Thank you and thank you to Fr John for this kindness.

In the past 4 weeks I have been rung and told about 4 late term (2nd trimester) abortions. Each of these abortions were for foetal abnormality and the sad part about it all was that all the abortions were spoken about in "matter of fact tones" as a foregone conclusion. I spent an hour and half in peak hour, country phone call, with a young girl whose 19 week infant was found to have Down Syndrome but who eventually aborted. Indeed that day I felt a great sadness. Please pray that this hardness of heart which seems to have overcome all of us will melt into nothingness.

I conclude this issue by thanking those who sent financial support so that I could begin the new year by being able to pay the outstanding accounts and have sufficient to do the next newsletter. Thank you Peter, Helpers, Fr John, David B., Paul, Michaela, Helen, Ivy, Cath & Ladies from CWL, Fr. Cyril (UK) Indeed thank you to those who have asked to remain silent. Thank you to all of you.

In your mercy please pray for Leigh, Denise, Philip, Melissa (new) Alan, Andrew, Bree, Antonia, Helen, Kristy, Leah, Vincent, Maureen (cancer) Evelyn, Janet (new) Jane (new) Jeanette (new) Nathan (new) Joshua (new) Sally (please please-help) Sue, (new) Susan, and an in utero infant who is unwell (unnamed) but is a little boy with kidney problems. He is quite advanced please pray for him and his family. Every one of these names really needs prayers. Please help. Thank you for your prayers for Julie, she has now left my care (not my heart though) she is well and happy and has said yes to life again. God is good.

Please also consider some financial help as I have the strong desire to get the newsletter to all priests and then to other outlets where it can be of service.

May the Lord Bless and keep you.



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