

A newsletter of *Victims of Abortion*

"Take courage! God has healing in store for you; so take courage" (Th. 5:10)

Issue 27 – June/July 2002

Editorial,

Since we last met many people have asked me why I have remained quiet over the stem cell research issue and why do I not make comment. Indeed I have not remained quite but have spoken and written about the embryonic stem cell issue however not all my efforts at script get printed. However, more than this, I think I cannot become too involved in all issues because I must keep focus on abortion and post abortion issues like grief, mourning, sorrow and anguish. I know that there are magnificent pro life and people of goodwill who are dealing with this new anti life activity so I leave it to them. However this is not to say that I am not concerned (seriously) over the issue and in order to redress this deficiency on my part I have included in this issue a talk given by Nicholas Lastman at his school. I think you will find the talk very interesting and you can see why I leave this topic to others. It is unedited and his own work. I will also move "Nick's Comments" to this section and give him a swelled head by suggesting he is writing a guest editorial.

NICK'S COMMENTS!

Greetings once again all you intelligent intellectuals. I hope this newsletter finds you all well. Recently, the issue of Stem Cell Research has become a hot topic in the media, and being in Year 12, I had to give a speech as part of my English assessment, so I chose to tackle this morally challenging topic, using mainly ethics as my argument. The speech was a slightly condensed version of this article, but still went on for 6 minutes. I hope you enjoy, and I hope you agree.

God creates man. Man creates man. Man destroys God and man. We have finally attempted to fulfill Nietzsche's prophecy that God is dead.

"You may never do an evil so that a good may come from it." This statement about the sanctity of human life, from Evangelium Vitae, The Gospel of life, an encyclical addressed by the Supreme pontiff, John Paul II to all the bishops, priests, deacons, men and women religious, lay faithful, and all people of goodwill on the inviolability of human life condemns Embryonic Stem Cell research and all the evils associated with it. We should speak with courage on behalf of those who have no voice, in particular, unborn children whose fundamental right to life has been trampled on and destroyed. It is the role, duty and task of both us and the church to respect, protect, love and serve life including unborn life from the moment of conception to its natural end.

The dignity of a human person is not gauged upon the degree of the size of the person, but on the relationship to its creator. Not even a murderer, or the worst criminal ever loses his or her personal dignity as a human person, and we know that

BROKEN
BRANCHES



John 15

God promised this when he put a mark on Cain for his own protection from those who would attempt to murder him for his sin of fratricide (Genesis 4:14).

According to Catholic theology and teaching, and reaffirmed by science, life begins at the moment of fertilization and ends upon NATURAL DEATH, and when I say natural death, I mean letting die of natural causes – NOT being cannibalised for spare parts, as in Embryonic Stem Cell research. ALL life begins at fertilization. All human embryos are post-fertilization; therefore they ARE living human beings with the same fundamental right to life as us, just in their tiniest, most vulnerable form, when we should be most protective of them.

Any scientist who believes otherwise is severely deluded and has these beliefs and makes these claims for the purpose of justifying this evil, or covering up a hidden agenda. The rush is on to accelerate Embryonic Stem Cell research in order to harvest stem cells, human stem cells, humans. The rush is on to harvest humans; And indeed there remains a complete absence of empirical evidence that Embryonic Stem Cells will accomplish any of the hoped for cures which began this lunatic race towards cannibalising tiny people. But even if Embryonic Stem Cell research was the answer, which would bring in the cures for all the diseases in the world, the creation, and destruction of human life for harvesting and experimenting remains a totally despicable, evil act.

Not only is the destruction of human embryos unethical, immoral, and illegitimate, but it is also unnecessary. Adult Stem Cells pose an infinite source of an already successfully proven means of curing disease, and the best part is, we do not have to murder anyone to attain them. We have concrete evidence of the multitude of successful treatments heralded by use of Adult Stem Cells, such as, the restoration of vision to legally blind people, and the saving of a little boy from a fatal disease by using placental stem cells, from his sister's birth, in his treatment. Adult Stem Cells are found in nearly every human organ, umbilical cords, and placentas of which we are not exactly running out of. Compare this with the POTENTIAL good that scientists can only SPECULATE about with Embryonic Stem Cell research. In fact, the only human trials using Embryonic Stem Cells proved to make the conditions of patients with Parkinson's disease get markedly worse. Scientifically, Embryonic Stem Cells are a medical Pandora's box with their forming cancerous masses and tumours after their implantation, whereas, Adult Stem Cells face no immune rejection as they are from the person or a relation, and can do really a lot more good that Embryonic Stem Cells have been claimed to do.

Even if we use Embryonic Stem Cells, where have we get them from in the first place? We have obtained them only through the gross misuse of the IVF program of which doctors have created 16 embryos for each couple, instead of the required 2 leaving a surplus. So why would doctors want to do this? Do they have a secret agenda in mind that we are not made privy to? Once the surplus has been used, what will be our source then? Do we create new embryos? And if so, how? Cloning. The attempts of men trying to play God in the foolish pursuit of a power they have no true knowledge of. This is the evil that ESC research is attempting to impose. A society which would grow life for its destruction. What type of ethos do we possess?

And those who would argue that the frozen embryos would die anyway miss the point that these embryos were created for life, not dismembering or experimentation. The sacredness of human life is a constant teaching of the Catholic Church from the Didache through to Vatican II and will be till the end of time.

Pro Embryonic Stem Cell zealots try to dehumanise embryos referring to them as bunches of cells, but really, aren't we all just bunches of cells? This manipulation of the truth could then be likened to say that a baby is not a human because it is less developed than an adult. All of us were once this size, being an

embryo is just another stage in the cycle of life, and who are we to murder this life?
THIS LINE OF RESEARCH IS LEGALIZED MURDER.

And then to call these embryos unneeded? Who are we to decide the value of someone life? The last time we saw this treatment, the holocaust had just come to an end. Are we condoning Nazi activity? The only person to do experiments like this on humans was the infamous Dr. Josef Mengele, the Nazi Angel of Death. What society could possibly allow this behaviour to continue? When Dr. Mengele carried out anti-life experiments, it was a horrendous crime. Now we embrace it calling it compassionate science? The cures claimed are only potential, but even if possible, they can never justify the evil of embryo destruction, because it is not rat embryo destruction, or frog embryo destruction, it is the DESTRUCTION, the murder, of young human lives whose rights are inviolable.

According to *Evangelium Vitae*, *The Gospel of Life*, You may never commit an evil in order to achieve a good. Embryonic Stem Cell research can never be considered good, and must never be used because of the truth of its underlying evil... the evil used to create, and then destroy, to kill, young human lives. Embryonic Stem Cell research must be stopped, or we must face the future where life is manufactured, for death.

Not bad hey? You'll all be pleased to know that I got 100% for this talk and have been asked to do it again in the library for English Week. Anyway, I have taken up enough space so I'll leave it here until next time (actually, mum's getting that jealous look in her eye so I better go now ☺). Until next time, keep well.

Nick Lastman

PS, while doing the actual talk, I revealed a picture of a baby playing with a soft toy when I said "It is the DESTRUCTION, the murder, of young human lives." The funny part is I actually had to walk into a newsagency and buy an edition of *Australian New Baby* – A pregnancy magazine. The girls behind the counter, and other customers found it quite amusing to see a young male teenager buying such a magazine. The things I do! Anyway, Laterz.

Priests, Pastoral Workers, Health Workers,

Some issues back I wrote on the topic of abortion for foetal abnormality. I would like to return to this topic because it appears to me that we need to take a look at this issue again. In the last newsletter I said that I had recently heard of about 6 abortions for foetal abnormality and the distress that this has caused and more than anything the ease with which abortion is encouraged when a foetal abnormality is thought to be discovered. Since last newsletter I have been told of three other later term abortions due to foetal abnormality and indeed one of these mothers has begun seeing me.

I want to return to this topic because this issue of abortion for foetal abnormality causes anguish of enormous proportions. Whilst an abortion for social reasons (parents generally want the abortion) causes life long suffering, abortion for foetal abnormality causes deeper and more difficult and complicated grief. This is because the decision to abort this baby is made usually in a hurry and because the baby is considered imperfect.

Today we understand, through studies, that abortion for genetic indications has inscribed within it suffering at many levels. This should not come as a surprise because usually the pregnancy is quite advanced when screening for abnormalities is carried out and further the baby is usually very much a wanted baby. This is usually not a crisis pregnancy but a “wanted” pregnancy and this being the case there has been an enormous emotional investment. Because of advanced stage of the pregnancy bonding has occurred, movements felt, the future discussed and looked to, motherhood and fatherhood anticipated and family and friends told of the happy event. Indeed life has changed in order to accommodate this new reality.

To then be told that this much-awaited child has been found to have either mild or severe abnormalities catapults the parents into a previously unknown world. A world inhabited by unknown people and emotions, that is, doctors, tests, specialists, geneticists, doubt, confusion, sorrow, fear and loneliness. From a place a great joy and anticipation to a nightmare of previously unknown proportions. The words “there appears to be something wrong” are the words that every expectant parent fears and the words which change forever the lives of the parents.

As I listen to my new young woman (Shelley) speak about the nightmare, which was the week between receipt of the screening results and the abortion date, I hear the anguish and loneliness in her voice and heart. I hear the anguish of the loss. I hear the attempts made to bargain that all will be well *Please God-make it well* and I hear the quiet suppressed despair. However, I also have heard (especially with the last 3 calls and sessions for foetal abnormality) of the various attempts made to talk to professionals about the baby and about the abnormality and about the possibilities for the baby, and I am saddened to hear that the advice given was slanted towards abortion. Perhaps the saddest part about Shelley’s story is that she and her husband contacted their local parish and spoke to a pastoral worker and were told “we will support you whatever you decide.” I would like to say this; when a couple contact their own parish or a local parish and desire to speak to a priest, Pastor or Pastoral worker, they are clearly showing a desire to know what it is that God says in these circumstances. What does God say?. When a couple contact their clergy it means that they have a connection with their church and it is important to them to know the truth about their situation. Under these circumstances they are turning to God to hear what is the right thing to do and it should be understood that when a Pastoral worker, Priest, Pastor, Deacon, gives a watered down response, the people are being cheated of the truth of God. To say to someone in such deep crisis “we will support you whatever you decide” simply says “if you choose to abort we will support you in this also” This is counterfeit compassion. It is the type of compassion that Peter tried to show Jesus and was soundly rebuked (Mt 16:23).

Further to this to encourage abortion for foetal abnormality speaks to many levels of the human person. Especially a person seeking an answer from God. At one level it simply says that “God made a mistake with this infant and the parents have to redress the error.” This simply is untrue. *God never*

makes mistakes. Added to this, when abortion is encouraged it removes from God His opportunity to work His miracles whether of healing or of conversion. We are reminded of this when Jesus was asked “Rabbi who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?” “Neither he nor his parents sinned” Jesus answered, “he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (Jn 9:2-3). A child with abnormalities is no less human and no less a child of Father God, than a child conceived and born without abnormalities. Its human dignity is never in question however, what is in question (by the powers that be) is its value according to the prevailing norms. God never speaks about prevailing norms.

I would encourage, urge, plead with Priests, Pastoral workers, health workers, please do not encourage the abortion, because ultimately the reality is that no one can “support” a traumatised mother and father when at 3.00am morning after morning they sit in the darkness and weep for their son or daughter. No one can “support” a mother who feels that “when she took the baby in it was alive and when she went home it wasn’t there anymore and “I don’t know what happened to it.” (Shelley) “I wish I we hadn’t made that decision because we decided the moment the baby died” (Carole) “I miss him so much-I want him back. Thank you for saying that it was wrong to abort because that’s what I felt but everybody said I did the right thing” (Shelley).

I would like to encourage anyone who is called to speak to someone contemplating an abortion for foetal abnormality to please call out for help. Please contact me I may not be able to do much but I can speak to the person. I may be able to help.

Set out below I have included a personal story from Jeanette. Jeanette and her husband Martin also were called upon to make that devastating decision whether to or not to abort for foetal abnormality. **THEY CHOSE NOT TO ABORT** and whilst there has been grief it is a wonderful grief of parents and others who miss the baby because the child died. in God’s timing and not human decision. I think you will be touched by such love for God and Baby. This is the different side that is possible when God is trusted and whilst pain is present God is given all glory and the infant’s humanity is deeply honoured.

THOMAS MICHAEL JONES-A MIRACLE OF LOVE.

My name is Jeanette, I am married to Martin and we are the parents of 3 children and a fourth one Thomas Michael who has returned to God. At about 16 weeks gestation I had some spotting. I was extremely concerned due to the fact that spotting in a previous pregnancy had resulted in a miscarriage. So we went to the doctor immediately thinking the worst. An ultra sound concluded that the baby had two serious genetic abnormalities: Anencephaly and Spina Bifida. Anencephalic babies have 100% mortality rate. After many consultations with doctors and specialists, we learnt the specifics of the abnormalities. Anencephaly derives from the Latin meaning ‘no skull’. Basically the baby had not developed a complete brain and hence could not survive on its own outside of the womb. The doctors gave us the hard statistics that most babies simply

did not survive birth and if born alive would die short time after. Therefore the natural thing to do “of course” would be to abort this child. The doctors had even booked me in for a termination the next day. At this point my husband said “what if we decide to continue with this pregnancy?” Now this was a shock to say the least...

None of the staff we saw had even considered that this was a human life! This “foetus” apparently was not valid? None of the staff we saw were rude, on the contrary, they were very caring and compassionate, but only because they knew what had to be done...From here we went home and researched anencephaly. There was a great deal of information on the Internet and my husband even looked up pictures of anencephalic children to prepare himself for the birth. We also found that there were some cases where anencephalic children had lived for a number of days after birth. We discussed all these matters with our families, our community and our Catechists and we were determined to go ahead with the pregnancy and birth.. Despite this abomination (to the medical profession) and the opinion of most people we spoke to, we concluded after much anguish and prayer that we could not be the ones to decide or control the end of this baby’s life. God had created such a unique and special child, it was entirely in his hands. One thing that we did immediately was to name our son to assure ourselves and others that he was real, valid and a child of God. ***Thomas Michael Jones.*** The pregnancy was the single most difficult period of our lives but it was also one of the most blessed.

We lived our lives fully not pretending at any stage that our lives were supposed to be easy, because it was difficult, especially knowing what was to come. Our son Isaac was happy to know that soon he would have a little brother and our daughter Rachel although too young to comprehend knew that there was a baby in mummy’s tummy. I needed to have on going ultrasounds as I had also been diagnosed with placenta previa, which presented a very real risk of bleeding to death during the delivery. I had ongoing prenatal care and the ultrasounds were very intense. We took the children with us and could see our son’s heart beating, his little hands and tiny feet. I had the amazing blessing of carrying my son almost until full term. We invited our brothers and sisters and our family to join us at the hospital for his birth.

Thomas Michael died during the trauma of birth. This was heart wrenchingly sad, but we were overjoyed to experience and bear witness to God’s love. With our families and brothers and sisters present, *Thomas Michael* was born directly into eternal life. A priest who guided us through the entire pregnancy said to me “how does it feel to be the mother of a saint?” Every member of our family was proud to hold *Thomas Michael*. Many photos and mementoes were taken. It was very difficult to let go of *Thomas* but we were blessed enough to spend two days with him in the hospital. More than one hundred people participated in *Thomas*’s funeral to bless God for His wonderful deeds. We celebrated his life and death in a beautiful service. My husband and *Thomas*’s father carried his tiny coffin into the church and at the end sang for *Thomas* a beautiful hymn.

When we are born we know that one day we will die and hopefully go to heaven. *Thomas Michael* was lucky enough to go straight there. Our jobs as parents to him were now complete. After *Thomas Michael* was born into heaven we were advised that in having any more children the same could happen again. One and half years later Michaela Maree entered this world and two weeks ago turned one. Now my husband and I have 3 children and one in heaven who knows and prays for us.

In loving memory of Thomas Michael Jones born into eternal life Dec. 19, 1999.

Thank you Jeanette and Martin for such kindness and love in sharing this story of suffering love with all of us.

To conclude the issue of abortion for foetal abnormality we cannot ever “blame” when we encounter this sadness and difficulty however, what we

can do is to encourage and support the parents to love their infant until God calls the child home and not when we decide that the child should die. The outcomes as seen from the story above (Jeanette) and Shelley's story of guilt and pain are entirely different and the suffering itself is also different. One can bless God for His love and Mercy the other believes God made a mistake.

Letters:

I have received some really lovely letters from young readers and am encouraged by what I read. If these are the type of young people coming up then we have great hope both for the Church and for the future.

Dear Mrs Lastman,

Thank you for sending me your newsletter. I admire you for the wonderful work you do, I know it wouldn't be easy. I have written a small article for you, I hope its Ok.....God Bless.....Louise Moran (17 yrs)

It certainly is OK Louise...here it is.

I attend an all girls Catholic school and I am currently studying year 12. Among my peers, I find that a wide range of views exists surrounding the issue of abortion. Some girls like myself believe that it is entirely wrong. Others that it is acceptable in 'particular circumstances' some hold the view that it is a woman's right and agree with it entirely. Again some believe that a foetus is a human being. Yet others see it as an undeveloped organism.

Their different views have all been shaped through different experiences and teaching and this is why a wide range exists. Some girls' outlooks are heavily influenced by their families or their parent's teaching. This can be for good or for bad. Other girls are more influenced by the values of the secular world, but this poses as a demon working on an innocent mind, corrupting its moral principles, as the way of the world is the way of abortion. It is here that the schools and teachers have not utilised their valuable influence and educated girls on these ethical issues. Not once has any religion teacher or Nun spoken out about abortion during my four plus years at school. Not once have they attempted to educate us young girls about it, even though so many are eager to learn. Instead they simply avoid the issue. In religion classes, we are often told to believe in "what we want to believe in" but this is a fundamental error in their approach, as they are not teaching at all, but rather they are removing any concept of Christian teaching or guidance. Hence I find many Catholic girls believing that abortion is acceptable.

I think that there is a huge need for *true* education on abortion, especially for young girls at a vulnerable age. I believe that Catholic schools especially should be discussing these issues and offering the Catholic teaching on it. If this has already been taught at home, then it would re enforce that teaching and if it has not, it would then offer girls who are ignorant on the matter, exposure to the true teaching and Catholic view. Religion teachers should be carefully chosen because they could be shaping the way many girls view abortion and then in turn, possibly the fate of a child's life.....Louise

Because of lack of space I need to conclude this issue however I would like to say thank you to Eva (15 yrs) for your lovely letter . To Clare (16) for your letter. To Frances for your letter. Hopefully I will be able to print some more next issue. I felt that the topic of abortion for foetal abnormality is very important and needed to be dealt with. So hopefully next issue I will have more space for letters.

I conclude this issue with a request for your help (financially) I continue with the project to send a newsletter to every priest in Australia. This will have to be an ongoing situation and now I have added several hundred Pastoral Associates to the data bank. These also I will try and distribute as far and wide as possible. Other important avenues will also be explored. However as you can imagine this costs heaps and heaps and I do the writing, folding, and posting on my own with some help from the 'boys' when they are not doing assignments so it can be a bit difficult in all ways. So please help if you can.

Thank you to those who responded to the call for help especially John Y (NSW) Paul M (Melb), Joanne G., Anonymous, Madge and girls, Christopher S. (NSW) and all my lovely, wonderful supporters. Thank you for your prayers there are days when I know that it is the prayers, which keep me going. Please pray for Susan, Sue, Judy (new) Lee, Andrew, Jane, Sally, Michelle, (new) Shelley (new) Maree (New) LeeAnne (New) Anne (New) Simone (new) Linda (new) Chris (new) Evelyn, Maureen (cancer) Helen N. (cancer) Please continue to pray for the in utero baby boy with kidney problems and pray for his parents also. Please also continue to pray for the other names on the list. This month there have been a lot of new calls and I have started to see all of the above mentioned new ones. ALL THE ABOVE NEED LOTS OF PRAYERS. PLEASE HELP.

May the Lord Bless and Keep you.



Anne Lastman.

Name _____

Address _____ P/C _____

Donation/Newsletter _____

Yes/no, I would/would not like to be on your mailing list.

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