

# Broken Branches

Issue 55

Dec/Jan 2007

John 15

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

## Fatima

For me the journey towards the World Pro Life Congress 2006, held in Fatima, Portugal, began when I saw the advertisement for this congress in Life Lines (the FLI newsletter). When I looked at the ad. it sort of jumped out at me. The word Fatima did a dance in front of my eyes, and I can still hear myself saying "I need to go".

Of course when I say I "need" or "want" to go, it usually means, finding funds, speaking with my "girls" and seeing if it's OK with them, speaking with my husband and family and seeing if it's OK with them. Somehow I knew this would come through and be OK with all of them, and within four weeks of seeing the original advertisement, I was dragging my luggage through the Melbourne international airport and 34 hours later standing weary in the hotel Santo Amaro lobby, in Fatima, Portugal. At Lisbon airport I had met up with another Australian lady traveller (Barrie) and together we finished the end of the journey by bus to the hotel.

## World Prayer Congress For Life

The congress began with Holy Mass concelebrated, in the apparition chapel. This is the Chapel where the famous Fatima statue stands, where it is believed that the Blessed virgin stood (at that time 1917 above the little

oak tree). Today she stands in this spot and it is beneath this statue (in a compartment) that all prayers and petitions are put. Around this Chapel many pilgrims "walk" on their knees whilst praying the Rosary. There were many of these sights which touched me deeply. One young man literally dragged himself on his abdomen, pulling himself forward by his arms, around and around the whole chapel, and the tears streamed from his eyes.

Several others also had me in tears. A young mother on her knees, carrying a brand new pink bundle (beautiful baby) praying the Rosary and her tears were falling onto the baby. Her young husband walked besides her carrying the baby bag, and had his hand on her shoulder. I spent many an hour at this Capelinha (little chapel) carrying in prayer my family, my supporters, my friends, all the girls (and men) that I had ever seen, are seeing, and the ones still to come.

Our opening speaker for the conference was His Excellency Bishop Karl Romer, Secretary to the Pontifical Council for the Family, and his talk set the tone for this congress. His talk "The Holiness of Life" led us through a journey of the love of God for each and every individual from the instant of conception to natural death.

For me, the line which exemplified the whole of Bishop Romer's talk and possibly the whole conference was "**each human person is an overflow of the love of God**" and perhaps another sentence which touched me was that God has created each species according to its own kind, and our kind comes from God, is like God, that is why we are always seeking and

A newsletter of victims of Abortion

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ P/C \_\_\_\_\_

Donation \_\_\_\_\_

I **would/would not** like to be on your mailing list.

Victims of Abortion, National Office  
PO Box 6094, Vermont South, Vic, 3133, Australia.  
Ph/Fax: +61 3 9887 7669 Mobile: 0408 175 033  
Email: annevoa@bigpond.net.au

looking and longing for the One after our own kind. Indeed how much sense this made to me. And how much I now realised that woman is again sinning and refusing her gift of life bearer, of life within her. This is why she is so lonely and needs so many distractions; she is looking for the original "her" which belongs to the divine order. **Thank you, Thank you Bishop Romer. You were wonderful! I could have sat at your feet all day and listened.**

The fantastic Monsignor Phillip Reilly, *founder of The Helpers of God's Precious Infants*, spoke on Humane Vitae, Donum Vitae, and Golgotha Today. I felt that I was in the presence of a living Saint. One particular sentence which touched me in this talk was "**each life is a song of praise to God.**" Can you imagine all the songs of praise which are not being sung because of abortion?

His Excellency Bishop Andreas Laun completed the trilogy by speaking on Evangelium Vitae, Fr Duarte, on Theology of the Body. Talks on St Padre Pio, A talk on Blessed Gianna Beretta Molla, by her own sister, Sr. Virginia Beretta.

Perhaps the list is too long to cite but there were several other moments that touched my heart deeply. One of these graced moments (for me) was to meet Sr. Charlotte, a nun of a new order of nuns from America, *Sisters of Life*, This order of Nuns works in "life" ministry, in all areas including post abortion counselling.

The reason I say that this was a graced moment is because Sr Charlotte's physical

stature is challenged (dwarfism) and as I looked at her I remembered the little girl who at 32 weeks gestation was aborted (here in a hospital in Melbourne) **because** she was thought to be suffering dwarfism, and her mother didn't want her, and threatened to commit suicide if the abortion was not performed. Furthermore the doctors (to their great shame) actually performed the abortion. As I spoke with Sr Charlotte, both privately and in tandem (we did workshops together), I kept thinking of this child that was killed here in Melbourne, at a developmental stage where she could easily have been saved and adopted out to any number of willing parents, and wondered whether we had allowed to be killed, another nun, a doctor, a scientist, a mother, a saint. This is what we do when we abort one of God's moments of joy or songs of praise.

Another moment which also touched deeply this pilgrim, was coming face to face with a life size cross (155-160 cm) made of instruments from a closed down abortion clinic. It was this cross which went ahead of us when we did the Stations of the Cross in Valinhos-Aljustrel. I felt very privileged to be asked to lead the prayers for the First Station, and then proceeded to cry for the rest of the thirteen other stations, as I remembered that these instruments forming this cross were used to kill my babies, Miriam and Joseph. I had a constant need to touch the instruments. This was reality and not an image from a magazine.

This way of the cross was constructed with gifts from the Hungarian people in thanksgiving and in memory of what happened in Budapest in 1956. Each of the Stations of the Cross have

I kept thinking of this child that was killed here in Melbourne...

been constructed and carved in sandstone type material and are so beautiful. At the end of the Stations we celebrated Holy Mass (His Excellency Bishop Romer and fellow priests). This Mass was celebrated at the chapel of St Stephen, but the place itself is called The Calvary, because above the Chapel are three Crosses which from a distance look exactly like the images we have about the original Calvary and the three crosses there.

Perhaps it is difficult for me to speak about all the remaining speakers because there were so many, and goodness so inspiring. Sufficeth to say that it would be impossible to do justice to them all. However, I would like to comment on the workshops which I participated in, in conjunction with the Sisters for Life.

The workshops came at the end of the actual congress and were conducted in a more relaxed manner. The Sisters of Life did a power point presentation of post abortion symptoms and I spoke on the efficacy of catholic counselling, in effect about my work and how I go about doing it. I also introduced the importance of being alert to abortive women with multiple abortions, which can often mean that there are other deeper issues

and wounds which need to be dealt with before the abortions are even discussed.

From my own experience in my counselling rooms, whenever I have a client who has had multiple abortions (3,4,5,6,7,8,) there is always, always, always, some form of sexual abuse present, (or even violence to her being as a girl/woman) and if this is the case it has to be addressed first. Her multiple abortions are a crying out for help with this wound which has affected all of her life.

It was interesting because as I was speaking I could see and hear several women who were sobbing, and I knew that I had touched someone's pain.

This was later confirmed when I spoke privately to three women, two quite older ones and one very young one.

On the last evening of the workshops we completed with a celebration of Holy Mass.

On this evening I was also asked to do a taped interview (1 hour) on my work in Australia, post abortion issues and the connection between multiple abortions and sexual abuse, and what to look for when someone comes in to the office looking for assistance.

*I introduced the notion of being alert to women with multiple abortions...*

The day following the end of the congress was a quiet one for me. I needed to reflect and think and be thankful for the opportunity to be present at such an event.

During my time in Fatima I also was present for the October 12/13<sup>th</sup> celebrations where between 30- 50,000 people attended. I had a fantastic position on the day of the 13<sup>th</sup> on top of a TV camera stand. I must have looked lost because I was offered a place and was thankful because I could look down and see this sea of humanity waving white handkerchiefs as the Fatima Statue was brought out of the Capelinha

(little Chapel) and to the Altar for Mass. She was taken to stand next to her Son and his Ministers and then at the conclusion of the Mass returned in procession back to her place in her Chapel. Can you imagine about 1000 or more priests!, Bishops, Monsignors, in procession and she humbly following behind the priests of Her Son.

The night of October 12<sup>th</sup> into the 13<sup>th</sup> (Vigil) was also spectacular with same numbers of people, the procession with the Blessed Virgin being taken to the Altar to be with her Son at Mass, and then returned in procession with a sea of humanity holding lit candles and singing

the Ave Maria, again and again and again.  
I also experienced a most moving Eucharistic Procession. Its so long since I have seen one of these, but never in these in these dimensions.

The rest of the time in Fatima I visited the houses of the three shepherd children, attended daily Mass, walked and looked and cried buckets of tears for my own sins and the sins of us humans. But mostly for the sin of abortion and our failure to really recognise what we do when we abort a child (including me).

I had several Masses offered for my family, and friends, Priests of God, and for my supporters whether financial or prayer. I prayed for everyone I could think of by name and the rest who live in my heart.

And I marvelled at the Mercy of God, and His extraordinary generosity to such a sinner like myself. I am an abortive mother. I should never have been allowed to be in such a Holy place, and yet the Lord in His infinite Mercy made all things new and possible.

Thank you to Dietmar Fischer (President HLI Austria) and his magnificent staff, Claudia, Ioannes, Nuno, Ana, Max, and the rest of the organising team for putting together such an event, and thank you to those people who helped me to get there. I could not have done it without your help.

**It is said that Fatima is the gate of Heaven. I believe it is.**

## **Wonderful, fantastic, miraculous news**

**Since I began this newsletter I have been told by email received from Fr Euteneuer (HLI President) that following the conference Dietmar Fischer was told by an abortionist that he had experienced a**

**complete conversion of heart. Can you imagine that!! The prayers that went up to heaven for life, changed the heart of an abortionist. Can you imagine what this means? Imagine all the babies that will live because his heart and soul were touched and changed.**

**It is these moments of grace which help us pro lifers to keep going. Thank you Dear Lord and His Holy Mother for such a special gift to us and I can imagine the laughter and joy in heaven on that day, when one sinner returned home to the fold.**

## **And here is another reason to keep going**

**A Very Special Letter so that you can know that your support is appreciated.**

Dear Anne

I would like to thank you so very much for everything you have done for me. While I sit here and write this the main word that keeps coming to mind is 'Love'. For everything you do is done with love

You have shown me understanding, kindness and compassion, but especially 'love'.

I don't really remember much about our first few meetings though I'm sure you remember more than me. All I can remember was the sheer hell I was going through, knowing that once again I had aborted my precious baby. My self loathing was enormous.

I despised myself, hated myself. I couldn't eat, sleep or leave my home. I couldn't look into a mirror for fear of seeing the monster I had become. My life was out of control and I was at the point of not wanting to live anymore. You said later that I looked 'empty' during those early dark days.

I first met you when out of desperation and fear I made a call to a Grief Counselling Line and the first of God's miracles occurred.

God had somehow led me to you. This is

## *Congratulations*

*Today I would like to thank and congratulate again my Parish Priest Rev. Father Brendan Dillon. This indeed is a priest made of solid gold. Today Fr Brendan thundered in his homily about the abortion issue. This week during his homily he reminded the congregation that there is nothing more important than the right to be allowed to be born. Irrespective of which political party is elected they must defend life. He encouraged the members of the congregation to become involved. to ring politicians, to find out where they stand on life matters and as constituents to make their beliefs known. Get involved. Get involved. I have been in this parish for nearly 11 years and I am absolutely proud of my priest and if all our priests, pastors of other denominations, Rabbis, became involved in defending life, the demon abortion would be defeated.*

*Thank you for Brendan you are a champion. Please encourage your fraternal colleagues. We must make "life" a priority if we are to be blessed with all the blessings God has in mind for us.*

something I still thank him for in my daily prayers.

As I said I don't remember much about our first meetings (my mind was a black haze) but I do remember first seeing you.

You stood at my front door with your arms opened wide. Your love and warmth shone all around you.

I fell into your arms sobbing loudly. You became my lifeline.

Anne I remember you sat with me and made a promise, that if I kept seeing you things would get better and I would find the peace that you yourself had found. I think you even made me shake hands on it!

I love your style of counselling .You talked with such authority and refused to give up on me, even though I felt like giving up on myself. (You wouldn't hear of it).

Anne I thank you for being an incredible woman I know I still have so much work to do but with you I know anything is possible. You have helped me and so many other women so much. I don't know where I would be without you.

As I said when I think of you I think of your 'love', for me and "your girls"

I thank you from the bottom of my heart - You are my rock.

God bless, I love you.

Jacquie

*Thank you darling Jacquie and she really is wonderfully healthy. In fact we are heading towards the end of our counselling sessions. Not quite there yet but really are close.*

*I originally went to her house because she was too weak to go anywhere. At the first sight of Jacquie I was fearful for her life and indeed she spent about 4 weeks in hospital before we actually began our work together. She is so utterly healthy and beautiful and so full of life and in the hope that she and her husband will be given another opportunity to have a child. Please pray that this might happen for them.*

*Ps. I have her permission to print this, as I have with all the other witness stories.*

**The Choice" SBS 16/11/2006**

## **Respectable Baby Killing**

After receiving a few "urgent" phone calls from several friends, to switch on my TV and watch the programme "The Choice" I thought I had better do so otherwise if I was asked to comment I would not know what the whole thing was about. I think I had known about the program, but I think I had subconsciously decided not to see it, thinking that it would be one of those pro abortion shows which have been our fare for some time. I am glad I saw the show.

What the show presented were the testimonies of 5 individuals who had had abortions, and their feelings about the experience. What was clearly evident to me was that each of the individuals was suffering post abortion trauma, but each handled it in a different way. Each of them showed signs of complicated type grief. And only one sought help with her grief.

The first woman "Natalie" cannot even speak about her abortion without breaking down. Long after the abortion.

The Second one "Pauline" I believe suffers some emotional deprivation issues (childhood) her parents working and "mum never home" so when someone (her boyfriend) showed her physical love, hugs, etc he filled her need for expression of love, so when he said abortion, she complied because of fear of loss/deprivation and her sense of need to be held and loved (personally) contributed to her decisions. Also it's interesting because her parents weren't there to hug her (were working) and she had her second abortion so she could continue working for carpets and things.

Ruth's "I can choose to kill my child" was heart wrenching. There are more issues there. Her comment "I just wanted my mother when I was sad and she wasn't there" (emotional deprivation).

Catarina, also uni student when she became pregnant had abortion because when she had children she wanted to be home for them, so because "I can't be home now I killed it" and "To have had a child then would mean ruining 3 lives, mine, fiancée's and child's." (note the word "child." She blocked out her emotional investment in this pregnancy by dehumanising the child "if it's not viable it's not a child, it's not life. So it's better to get rid of it. I WANTED MY

*I just wanted my mother and she wasn't there*

MOTHER"

Catarina split with fiancée and went on to have numerous relationships but no marriage or family. "I wonder what I would have been like" (poignant) she I believe is still so much in pain.

Hiroko, also emotional deprivation (she misses her father who left the family home and whom she remembers treating her mother with violence) After he left, she ran away and had experiences with men (looking for emotional - father)The trauma for this woman was twofold, remembering the violence of her father kicking her mother and her father (whom she loved) leaving the family.

Her inner thought when she became pregnant was "you need to be supported" (her father left and the family were unsupported). After the abortion the relationship ended. I TOOK CONTROL. I CONTROL WHAT HAPPENED. (She couldn't control her father leaving) Now she took control. This was something she could control)

The only male interviewed also justified the 3 abortions which his girlfriend had and it must have affected him deeply and now believes his girlfriend must have been traumatised (there was a sadness as he said this) . What those three abortions have also done for this man is

# Letters

*Dear Anne,*

*Thank you for your newsletter. I share it with our Wednesday Church group and another group and also pass it on to other friends in our town.*

*The August/September copy really stirred me so much that I photo copied it and sent it with an accompanying letter to our local and federal members of parliament. I hope and pray that this legislation (decriminalisation) will never come to fruition.*

*You, your family and cause are continually in my prayers. I pray you have a rewarding time at the Fatima Conference and come back refreshed to continue in the fight for justice of the unborn and support of those men and women caught up in this ongoing calamity.*

*With love and prayers.*

*Donna B. (S.A)*

*Dear Anne,*

*Today I visited my friend and on her coffee table I saw a copy of your newsletter, I asked my friend Pam who or what this was about and she explained the work that you do. I couldn't believe that there was someone who actually did this kind of work. Where were you 28 years ago when I need someone like you to help me? I also had an abortion nearly thirty years ago, and have never quite got over it. No I don't cry anymore ( I think I cried myself out) but that child has remained more in my heart than possibly e en the children I gave birth to.*

*I love my 5 children, but that child (a little boy I believe) has the closest place in my heart. I often wonder what other path I might have walked if I continued to have the child, rather than be convinced that my life would be ruined if I did have that child. My son would have been thirty years old now and I am sure a*

*beautiful your man.*

*When I come to Melbourne again, may I come in and visit with you, not for counselling, but just to talk to you.*

*I enclose a small donation, it is all I can afford, but more importantly I enclose my love and thanks for your love and generosity to these women and men who need help.*

*Could you also please add my name to your newsletter list. My address is as above,  
Sincerely*

*Mrs. Penny M.  
NSW.*

*Dear Anne,*

*I have now received your newsletter for about 4 years and have kept every copy you have ever sent out and I marvel at the quality of your work, your knowledge and your stamina. May the Lord continue to inspire and help you in all your needs.*

*Anne Marie K.  
Vic.*

*Dear Anne,*

*Your newsletter has always been really good, but this year's issues have been extraordinarily good. You seem to cover a lot of ground but always with a sense of love and compassion. Thank you for doing this work, it is sorely needed in our time.*

*May the Lord Bless your endeavours,*

*David R.  
Qld.*

that he now as a father of 7 children would not encourage any of them to have abortions. That he would support them if the need arose..

As I looked at this programme for me it was very obvious that all of the individuals were experiencing grief and at times long after the abortion. Even the one, who went to counsellor, is not completed. Her journey needs to continue for a while longer. There are other issues which complicate the healing process. And unless these issues are also dealt with they will keep retriggering the experience. This program was good because it showed that the abortion decision is situation specific but its effects are long term and at times lifelong.

## The Year that has Been

As we come to the end of another year, thank you to all who have stayed with me, I have counselled many new people, travelled interstate, within Victorian country, and overseas always speaking about the wounds of abortion and sexual abuse. I have attended many grief seminars for my continued learning

I have spoken to ladies groups, youth groups, on buses, trains, planes, whenever the opportunity presented itself. I have written another 6 issues of this newsletter. Some really good and received kudos for it and some maybe not so good and received constructive criticism. Thank you to all who take time to write, I read every letter that comes to me and try to reply to all.

I have this year worked from my new office in the heart of the city, and whilst it is a fantastic location it has meant that I leave home by train at 6am and it is a long day, I don't know if I will continue with this office it is very expensive, and there have been times where I have been

stretched to the limits.

Thank you for your prayerful support, and the many enquiries about my son Nicholas (nothing changed there please continue to pray). Thanks also for the many calls of support after the car accident of my other son Lucas. He is OK now thanking you for your care and prayers.

**I depend entirely on your generosity. Please help if you can. Thank you to those who I rang this past year and who answered yes. You know who you are. I thank you because without you I would have closed down.**

As I come to the end of the year I will break for about 4 weeks and then return (if God wills) to begin again. Please pray for me as I am really tired now. And also continue over Christmas to pray for my girls/guys Melissa, Hamish, Carlie, Marie, Jodie, Andrea, Tori, Darren, Adam, Jack, Jacinta, Michaela, Jacquie, Cassie, Clare, Elisa, Michelle, Derek, Catherine, Louise, Helen, Sarah, Iris, Greg, Dianne, Liz, Joanne, Jenny, Phillipa, Kelly, Stephanie, Gabby, Tara, Maria (new) Rachaela(new) Mike,(new) Ann,(new) Alicia (new)

**A Happy & Holy Christmas is wished for you my dear friends and I hope we meet again in the new year, which I am sure must be better than 2006.**



**Anne Lastman**

# Broken Branches - By email!



Dear Friends,

In an effort to help reduce the costs and time put into preparing each newsletter, I am now able to email it out to you in Adobe Acrobat format (.PDF). So if you would prefer to receive Broken Branches electronically, please email me at [annevoa@bigpond.net.au](mailto:annevoa@bigpond.net.au) with a request to be added to the email list.