

# BROKEN BRANCHES



John 15

A newsletter of *Victims of Abortion*

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Issue 7

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Welcome to Anne's Page!!

Is it just me or does it appear that there is more and more suffering in the air these days? Is it simply that in the area that I work in I tend to encounter suffering humanity and others tend to tell me about hurts and difficulties.

Over this past week, it had seemed that one after the other someone had rung to tell me about suffering of one kind or another. A mother suffering over her son's behaviour. A wife suffering over her marriage. Another mother suffering over her child's drug behaviour. A call from a young woman wanting to abort her fourth pregnancy (she has already had 3 abortions and this one she also aborted -16 weeks ) because she couldn't cope with whole gestation sickness and wouldn't be persuaded otherwise. A call from a young man whose girlfriend had aborted their infant without telling him anything about it. Two new women to counsel each are experiencing anniversary symptoms and one young lady who "took time out" because she didn't like where we were going. It just seemed to go on and on. This month appeared like the month from hell.

One morning a week ago as I was thinking about this past month it dawned on me why there is a sense of sadness, suffering, and anguish in the air. We are in lent! We have been in the season of lent since Ash Wednesday. As this thought occurred to me I began to seriously think about what this means. Why is there such sense of heaviness even in the atmosphere? The answer really came to me as I was talking to one of my new clients (I'll call her Mary). Mary is experiencing severe anniversary symptoms. This month would have been her aborted baby's second birthday. For Mary Lent last year and this year and for the years to come for the rest of her life, will have an extra dimension of pain.

As I continued to meditate on this sense of universal pain and heaviness during this season leading to Easter I wondered, could it be that every year at Lent we as a humanity undergo the "agony in the garden" (Mt.26: 36-46) experience. Could it possibly be that every year we as humanity, whether knowingly or unknowingly "remember" His (Jesus) time of waiting and suffering. Could it be the heaviness that we feel is related to our "watch" with Him "for an hour". Could it be similar to the anniversary symptoms experienced by individuals who have known a terrible trauma and an imprint of that trauma is etched onto the human psyche?

As I read through again "The Agony in the Garden" (Mt. 26:36-46) I read the words, "sadness" "great distress" "my soul is sorrowful unto death" "this cup" There is a sense of heaviness and death. Already, even the atmosphere is reflecting back His desolation. The words printed in this passage are heavy with emotion. They convey a specific time. They mean a specific suffering. Akin to the cross, but separate from it. This is a time of preparation. A time of "fear." A time of enormous emotion. A time of waiting. This is a time when Jesus needed comfort and found none. His own were asleep then, and continue to be asleep now.

As I continued to meditate on the Gethsemane scene and the sense of loneliness which it conveys, I am reminded of the weeks of lent and our own time of waiting, of knowing, of privation, of sensing that something momentous will happen soon. It is our own experience of the "anniversary syndrome." The "anniversary symptoms" are symptoms, which occur (usually annually), around the time of a traumatic event and serve as a reminder of our escape from some kind of death. For many aborted women anniversary symptoms are clear indicator of Post Abortion Syndrome.

These symptoms are specific in duration, in manifestation and in all cases are very painful. It never ceases to amaze me the consistency, across cultures, creeds, and ages. The slow awakening of pain, the slowly intensifying depth of feeling. The almost manic need for complete shut down to the point of serious suicide contemplation as the date comes closer, and then an easing of the deep pain and levelling out for another time.

Over the time that I have been speaking to and counselling post aborted men and women I have encountered many “anniversary” suffering people. Indeed some have not even associated the abortion and the emotional condition relating to a particular month. With women, even their feminine cycle can be disrupted during this particular time. However, none of this surprises me. What does surprise me is the fact that in some cases the women have not even consciously associated their sadness and depression with an abortion they had 2, 3, 8, 11, 24 years earlier during a particular month and on a particular day. It isn't as if they remembered the event and reacted accordingly but somehow or something remembered that something momentous, life changing and indeed life shattering had happened to them at that time. The “anniversary syndrome” is an unconscious reminder that the mind, we can at times manipulate, but the heart and spirit cannot be manipulated. Where there has been a violation of something as important as “life” then for a time perhaps we can try to escape but we can never fully hide from our sin.

The Gethsemane experiences, that is, the suffering of Jesus and the abandonment by His own people continue to haunt us. Today we can look back “piously” and wonder at the Apostles’ insensitivity and their lack of compassion for the Lord but are we any different. As we read the words we are reminded that when He needed them most they were asleep. Today we continue to sleep. Sin abounds – yet we sleep. We know this because the scenery has changed but the suffering remains the same. Innocence continues to die on a daily basis and we continue to sleep. We continue to hide behind the “privacy” door and refuse to be brought out into milieu because this would demand a response. Perhaps Lent is the societal “anniversary symptom” and if this is the case, then this must be good because it is our spirit awakening us to the reality that a serious

wound has been inflicted on it and it is rebelling against the rupture on its design.

### **Dorothy Day**

In my line of work I do not often hear really good news however, on March 19<sup>th</sup> through Zenit News came the story about Dorothy Day the American lady who founded the Catholic Worker movement. A movement and newspaper devoted to corporal works of mercy and whose cause for sainthood has been officially opened. Perhaps you might wonder what is important and what is different about Dorothy Day and in particular why would Anne Lastman (me) be interested in Dorothy Day's cause for sainthood. Well the reason for my excitement over this news is that in the biography of Dorothy Day, there is notice of an abortion experience in her life and not only an abortion but also details of a life that to all intents and purposes does not appear “holy.” She is a proposed “saint” who has lived the “sins of this century.” She is a saint whom Cardinal O'Connor from New York has called “not a gingerbread saint or a ‘holy card’ saint, but a modern day devoted daughter of the Church.”

Dorothy Day is not a St. Therese the Little Flower, or St. Maria Goretti, indeed she would be hard pressed to be seen as closely resembling the saints that we know on our Calendar. Dorothy Day was passionate, in everything that she did she was passionate. She loved, she responded, she acted passionately and she made some terrible mistakes for which she suffered for the rest of her life.

Dorothy was born a protestant in 1897, went to Illinois University, became involved in a frenetic lifestyle, became pregnant, had an abortion,. Later she married and divorced. By the age of 30 she had another child whom she kept. After the birth of her daughter, Tamar Therese, she appears to have slowed down and slowly became more devout. This eventually led to her conversion to the Catholic faith. Dorothy was what we might call a radical – she fought hard and indeed spent some nights in jail as a result of protests for and on behalf of the poor.

Dorothy's life was, as Cardinal O'Connor said, not ‘holy card’ saint material, but then again neither was St. Paul's life prior to his conversion.

Today we speak with great reverence and awe of St. Paul, yet we know his history. We know what his behaviour toward Christians was not always saintly and further we know that often the lives of the great medieval saints were very “unsaintly” until they experienced the touch of His Hand (Jesus) or heard the call of His voice.

I do not wish to make apologies for her life, however, I am interested in her belief about the wrong-ness of her abortion and her suffering for rest of her life, especially over this experience. This is the experience of the people whom I have seen and my personal experience. It is a lifelong sorrow not always up front but always on the back burner slowly influencing all future decisions. In the biography of Dorothy Day we are told of her lifelong regret over her decision to abort. There is sense that this is one decision that she would have given all to be able to reverse. This is the reality with all the over 100 individuals whom I have seen. For those who come to the understanding of the enormity of what they have done life is never the same again. The history of the individual is always marked “pre” and “post” abortion. From the moment that the realization comes, the woman’s or man’s personal history is always divided in two. Further, there is ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS a need to make atonement. This is the hallmark of the post-aborted woman. She either negatively or positively attempts to atone for her action.

Whilst there has been some reluctance over the cause of Dorothy’s beatification being even presented, I am so grateful that this happened and especially I am most grateful that the Vatican has given permission for the opening of her cause. Not because I wish to see enshrined “**abortion**” as a cause for sainthood but because it clearly shows that God can forgive **even the sin of abortion**. For aborted women (especially) it is too hard to believe that God would forgive such a sin, and always life is lived with a sense that at the end all will be lost and no amount of repentance will suffice.

This is why I ask in this newsletter and in all my newsletters that readers will in their mercy continually pray for aborted men and women because I know that even when a healing is experienced this is the area of weakness. This is the area that satan always tempts. There may be other sins in the life of the individual but the sin of abortion will always be the point where satan

knows that he may find an entry point. A sadness is one of the companions of the aborted woman .

In my work over the last three years I have noted the difference between a healed person and a person who has come to terms with the decision. One who has encountered and experienced God’s mercy and forgiveness has an air of peace about her, one who has come to terms with the decision remains on constant alert. She is waiting for “something” to happen. One of the features of Post Abortion Syndrome is hyper-alertness. When a genuine healing occurs hyper-alertness disappears. A serenity enfolds and surrounds the woman. She is freed from the pain. The memory always remains but the deep pain is gone. However, this is not to say that there will be no further pain, this is not so. The persistent, gnawing pain does go but memories come and go. Regret remains. When an accommodation of the abortion has been achieved then the sense of “fright” “alertness” is always present. More and more as I continue in this area I can see that there is something more to Post Abortion Syndrome than simply guilt and/or shame. There is present a “living death” which must be dealt with.

Perhaps this letter from Lee may help illustrate what I mean. All that I will change are some personal particulars and her name the rest is verbatim: This letter was received on March 14<sup>th</sup> 2000.

Dear Anne

*Just a short note to let you know how I am getting on since seeing you on a regular basis and the phone help and counselling. I just wanted to let you know I am doing fine. After having three terminations and keeping them a secret for 10 years, my life is finally getting back on track. You will never know how much I appreciate your help. You have got me from being unable to get out of my house to returning to full time study. I really don’t know where I would be without your help, sympathy and kindness. My bouts of depression, suicide thoughts are things of the past, without your help I would still be an emotional cripple. My two children and I have just moved into our new home and we actually enjoy our life together now. As you know I was having a hard time coping with panic attacks and also finding it hard to look after my children. It is still hard at times because I am a sole parent bringing up two nearly teenage children so that’s*

hard in itself, but as I said, today we are living in our new house, happy in each others company, and I have returned to study so that I can give them a better future. The full time study has also showed me that I am not so stupid as I was led to believe for most of my life. Anne, without your help and support and encouragement to believe in a LOVEABLE, WISE AND MERCIFUL GOD, I don't know where I'd be. God Bless you... love, Lee and kids.

Lee came to me every week for nearly 18 months and it is true that when I first received her initial call for help I had to visit her at her home because she was afraid to leave the house. Indeed there was a time when even I doubted that she could be helped because she was not responding in any way and all she wanted to do was to die. I believe that it was love for her children, which prompted her to make an effort to get better. The breakthrough came some months after the initial encounter and with a lot of help from prayer supporters, a beautiful Mass said in loving memory of her children, and a re established and rebuilt relationship with her living children, today Lee shines. She literally glows. Lee knows that she has been forgiven and she knows that one day she will meet her children. For the time being "Jesus and Mary are looking after my children and I'm happy with that." (this is a quote from her the last time I spoke to her on the phone about a month ago) Lee is not weighed down, she has accepted God's forgiveness and has grabbed with both hands the chance that she has been given....to live again.

In concluding this newsletter I would like to invite readers especially Priest friends to pray for and offer Holy sacrifice of the Mass this coming

month for Nandi, Helen, Sonia, Kathy, Kerry, Barbara and Lois. Several of these still remain with me the others have moved on. Pray most especially for Kathy and her family, Kerry and her family. All these names have very special needs. I do this because I would like to have a Mass offered for every aborted woman in Australia. Only through prayers can they come to an understanding of what was done. If we have a "turnaround" by aborted mothers and fathers then they with loud voices will scream do not abort the babies. Do not hurt them and us.

Thank you to the Priests who have already said some Masses for the names in the Newsletter. Thank you for letting me know that you have done this. Together we can defeat this demon called abortion and destruction. Special thank you to my friend from Queensland who draws for me happy faces. They really make me happy when I receive them.

Please, please, do not forget to support this charism it is really very worthwhile and as I will not be writing again till after Easter I wish for you all A happy and Holy Easter.

***The LORD IS RISEN!***

***HE IS RISEN INDEED.***

May the Lord Bless and keep you.

Anne Lastman  
Founder-Victims of Abortion.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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