

Welcome to the April Newsletter.

It is amazing to think that already we are in April, the time seems to fly these days and I for one am forever trying to catch up with myself. Whether its because its busier or because I am getting older or maybe both somethings are moving faster and other things are slowing down.

Its been an unusual month because I have received and spoken to and seen a spate of calls and people who are distantly involved with an abortion experience (and indeed some have not even been involved with an abortion edxprience) yet they have come to me because of deep grief. I am amazed at the enormous amount of grief that is present within the human community. I am amazed at the amount of suffering that is in the lives of our human brothers and sisters and more than anything I am amazed at the horrific way that some of the suffering is being inflicted either by the self or by others.

At times I am left with the sense that I am just putting on band aids. That I am just stemming the flow of pain. That I am just plugging up one rivulet whilst another bigger one begins. I am sure it must be something important that we are heading to wards because it cannot be that so much is happening yet we blithely move from day to day without any effort to really change anything.

I am constantly aware of ‘talkfests’ and ‘strategies’ and politically correct manouvres yet the societal crisis remains. We can console ourselves till the proverbial cows come home and we can tell ourselves that ‘things’ are not so bad but the reality is that things are bad, that young people want to die at an extraordinary rate. That young, middle aged and older people are being more and more wounded. That young and older people are aborting, and suiciding, and overdosing and breaking down at a very fast rate. To hide behind the facade of “she’ll be right” is getting harder and harder. We need to take stock and if we are to have ‘talkfests’ then they are to be productive and instructive. If they remain at the realm of the ‘head’ they achieve nothing and lead to disillusionment by the many who would otherwise be supportive. It is time to take stock and see where the rot is. Where it began and importantly how to curb its destructive force.

BODY IMAGE

Amongst several of the new callers this past month I have encountered and spoken to three different types of responses to an abortion experience. The first one, a young woman of 19 years of age came to me because of her abortion (her second). As I listened to her story it became apparent to me that self destruction takes many forms. This young person (I’ll call her Belinda) appears to have been a ‘normal’ teenager (I don’t know what ‘normal means) who loved music was fairly academic had hopes and aspirations and looked forward to the future. She became involved in a relationship which lead to pregnancy, abandonment by the boyfriend and of course abortion. This is pretty standard stuff to my ears daily, however, there was something different to this story. Soon after the abortion, Melinda began to mark her body. At first it was scratches with her finger nails and soon developed into more deeper cuts usually with instruments and finally cutting herself with razors. Indeed she told me that she felt “really stressed until I cut myself, then I feel really

BROKEN BRANCHES



John 15

good. And I don't really feel any pain when I am doing it." She came to me because she is becoming afraid of what she might do next. She is afraid that the next step will be 'something' more serious. Maybe suicide.

What is particularly interesting about what Belinda has said is that she is afraid of what she may do next. What I also found interesting was her description of her disfigurement especially the disfigurement of the lower part of her body, that is, her thighs and her abdomen and her absolute hatred of the lower part of her body. She literally sees the lower part of her body as shapeless, ugly and she covers it severely. She appears obsessed with how ugly the bottom part of her body is. From her waist down according to her it is ugly. Yet to look at her is to marvel at such beauty. The lower part of her body is not ugly, is not overweight, is not "unbalanced" as she thinks.

Belinda was case one. The second person with silent disfiguring habit is Therese an older woman of nearly 40 years of age. Therese is married with two children and a history which would bring tears to the heart of the most heartless person. Therese's history contains abuse of every description, that is, sexual, physical, drug, alcoholism, spousal, suicide attempts and culminating with abortion. Indeed as I look at Therese I am more and more convinced about God's love for the very broken. Therese is one of the broken vases yet a clearly beautiful vase. The pieces though broken are beautiful.

The third 'different' call came from a young man whose life seems one big loss and failure. This young man whom I will call Albert (27 yrs) is also self destructive to the nth degree. Albert cannot remember a time of peace in his life. He cannot remember when he knew that he was happy. Albert cannot remember past the day of his girlfriend's abortion. The day that he pleaded with her not to abort their baby. He oozes a rage which can at times be frightening. The loss of this baby appears as the proverbial "straw which broke the camel's back." Albert's method of self mutilation comes in the manner of 'head banging'. "I just feel like I want to get to the pain in my head and stop it."

SELF DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOUR A SYMPTOM OF ABORTION EXPERIENCE.

I have spent much time over the last month thinking about self destructive behaviour and self mutilation and perhaps some of the reasons for this. These were not the only people I have seen who have physically hurt themselves following an abortion. However, the spate of calls this past month forced me to sit back and think and review the cases and look for common denominators amongst the different cases both past and current. As I listened to the people in question I noticed that there was a similarity in their life story. That is, their history contained event after event which was both demeaning and demoralising and at times very destructive. There was a sense that a complete psychological shut down had been purposely activated. It was almost as if the pain receptors were now closed and no information from the brain was getting through. No pain could be felt by these people. The self protective measures had been so strongly secured that nothing, not even physical pain could be felt.

I think I began to see some kind of breakthrough when Belinda said that it did not hurt her at all when she scratched herself raw or even when she cut herself with a blade because she "had no love inside of me-and if you can't love you can't feel." The actual mutilation is perhaps an unconscious action to "feel pain" to feel "alive"

to feel that there is some normality to her life. Of further interest I found her comment that “I like to watch the blood because it reminds me of the way the baby must have bled to death.” With Belinda it is possible to see the ‘why’ of the self mutilation. It is her response to her causing her baby pain and death. I also suspect a borderline personality disorder, as indeed I do with the others also. With these several past cases there is a similar pattern of suffering in their lives, beginning with early childhood abandonment (psychological) followed by years of other wounds and a deep yearning to be loved and “wanted.”

What is distressing at times is the necessity to listen to and hear the stories of people who appear not to know what it is to love. Belinda said it herself “I don’t know how to love because I don’t have any inside of me.” Belinda also confuses love and sex. She has led a most promiscuous life “looking for someone to love me and for me to love.” She has a deep sense of loneliness which she appears to alleviate temporarily through a new sexual encounter when this comes to an end she is left with the same loneliness and now a deeper self loathing. Belinda continually sabotages herself and even her relationships. Further it is interesting that most of Belinda’s relationships were with men who are unsuitable and transient and certainly not the type to want a marriage or long term relationship. Perhaps the only sense I can make of her life and story is that Belinda needs to know, learn and feel love for herself first before any other work of abortion grief is tackled. The abortions in her life are not surprising because an abortion is a moment of absolute absence of love. Love totally rejected.

Therese’s story is different even though she also self mutilates. Therese scratches her upper thighs till they are red raw then waits for scabs to form then begins the scratching again so that healing never occurs. She also said that she does this to her arms (showed me-always wears long sleeves) and told me she used to do this to her abdomen. Therese also strongly believes that her lower body is “so ugly.” Again as I sat and thought and read through some text books and pondered some more (I do a lot of this these days!!) it dawned on me why she hates her body so much and especially that part of her body. Indeed the clue was given to me by Therese herself, “I lay there while they did it to me.” It was the exposure, the violation, the comments made during the preparation for the abortion and the insensitivity shown which made her feel absolutely violated as a woman. The areas which were exposed for the abortion are now the areas which she hates most and which she wishes to hurt most. I also believe that because she felt no physical pain during the abortion she now wants to compensate for that lack of pain. She wants to “atone” for her absence of feeling by over compensating.

As I reviewed the cases I realised that the physical pain that these individuals and others attempt to cause to themselves and which I only discovered because I saw Belinda very agitated, is something important to them. It is important because in this action there is a deep sense of shame, guilt, regret. It is a flawed human (not of God’s demand or wanting-but human) act to understand and feel pain for another. It is of course also a self punishment which is more violent than any punishment another would mete out. A self mutilator so dislikes their own being, their own self that this is an action which falls just short of complete annihilation. At the heart of self mutilation is a desire for self annihilation. At the heart of self mutilation is a loathing of “self” which is so deep that it could almost be diabolically motivated. At the heart of self mutilation is a complete shutdown of emotion leading to a sense of nothingness. This type of absence of pain is destructive because it leads to the feeling and notion that there is nothing worth living for. This type of self hatred is utterly paralysing and sad.

Can I help these people? I don't know. I do however know that what is lacking is Love. Any form of love. There is no love at all for "self" and yet we would say that this is a good thing but it isn't. Not to be able to feel love, warmth, compassion for "self" would then make it impossible to be able to feel love, warmth, compassion for others, least of all another who is part of the 'loathed' self. It makes sense that an abortion was sought. It could not be any other way. Prideful and boastful love of self of course is always a sin and deadly but love of the creature which God has created is not wrong indeed it is needed if we are to survive. In the commandments we are asked to love neighbour as ourselves. If we cannot love the "self" and indeed despise the "self" then surely it must make all things possible including abortion, suicide, overdoses in fact any death. More and more as I talk to the young I can see clearly that there is such an absence of real love in their lives which is then compensated for with all manner of pseudo-love.

I conclude this month's newsletter with a request for prayers for Belinda, Therese, Albert, Robin, Leanne, Vincent, Sharon, Michael, Paul, Roger, Linda, Teresa. All of these people need strong prayer support and of course I do too. Thank you to those who have sent in poetry to me for inclusion in newsletters I will begin doing this in the near future. Some poems are lovely. Thank you to Marget for your response to my phone call for funds help. Thanks Dave F. Thanks also to those who respond in one way or another. Thanks to my Priest friends especially Fr. B.B.L, Fr. Leo K., Frs Walters and Conroy. Could I please ask my priest friends for remembrance at Mass of the above names. Thank you. And please could each reader of the newsletter try and find at least one more subscriber. I need to increase list to at least 1000 to make it comfortable. Thank you. Please continue your financial support I rely on your generosity to keep going.

For now I wish for you all a happy and holy Easter.

THE LORD IS RISEN !!!

May the Lord Bless and keep you.



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