

# A newsletter of *Victims of Abortion*

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

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Welcome to all my friends,

It is good to be in communication with you again. Sometimes it feels like a really long time since I wrote. So much seems to be happening at the moment especially in the "life" areas.

I have just (last night) returned from Sydney where I attended the Human Life International Conference. I actually went a few days before the conference so that I could have a short break before we start the second half of the year. It was good just to be away, because even when I have a day off from the office in the city I usually don't have a day off at all because I use it to catch up with correspondence and requests either for newsletters or other materials. So in effect I work just as hard from the home office as from the city office.

Whenever I have returned from a Human Life International conference I always say that this last one was the best ever and still they improve. The theme of this particular conference was 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, the papal encyclical, which was soundly rejected by the laity and for the most part ignored by the clerical world and today as a result of this rejection we have seen fulfilled all the words of that encyclical.

The speakers at this particular conference could only be described as magnificent from Bishop Cesare Bonivento of the Vanimo diocese in PNG, to Bishop Luc Matthys, Armidale diocese, retired Bishop Sir Desmond Moore MSC., Bishop of the Alotau diocese of PNG, to priests, doctors, lay speakers each bringing an understanding of *Humanae Vitae* which not only was enthralling but made such perfect sense. If only the church and the world could have heard of the importance of *Humanae Vitae* perhaps today we might have had a different understanding of the nature of love and marriage and life.

His Excellency Bishop Luc Matthys's paper on "The Two Pillars: *Humanae Vitae* & *Veritatis Splendor*" were breathtaking in their clarity. "Contraception and Why silence kills" a talk given by a New Zealand doctor, Peter Scanlon, Marvellous. "Fighting The Global De Population Movement" by Fr. Tom Euteneuer (President Human Life Internal-America) Amazing. "Contraception and the Mind of Christ" a talk given by the Perth apologist Mr Raymond De Souza. "Face to Face with the Culture of Death" talks by John Gresser and Bishop Sir Desmond Moore. (Phew! You should hear about AIDS and its legacy.) Then, Eamonn Keane spoke on Matrimony and the Theology of the Body. One could only say, goodness!! And I must not forget to mention a talk by His Excellency Bishop Cesare Bonivento (PNG) entitled *The priest & The Teaching of the Church*. Breathtaking.

BROKEN BRANCHES



John 15

Fr Brendan Lee, PP and marvellous supporter of life. Richard Lyons, TFP., Dr D. Little. MD., My lovely friend Wanda should have spoken on culture of death but she nearly spoke from experience of death (the flu got to her and that was the end of the conference for her). Yours truly made a very poor and humble contribution also.

Perhaps the reason that I came away so enthralled with this conference was because the speakers, both international and Australian said something which clearly showed that had we listened, even a little to what that *Humanae Vitae* encyclical had to say, or even just listened to parts of it, perhaps we may have been spared the slaughter of the innocents, the marriage breakdowns, the family breakdowns, the abandonment of children and wounding of children and the list goes on.

I realise that this is a big statement that I have just made, but I really believe that had we, that is, the Church hierarchy and the laity worked in cohesion we may not have opened the doors to such change of the natural order.

Can we reverse the situation and begin again? I don't know because as far as I know when a genie has been let out of the bottle it does not want to go back. The genie has been let out of the bottle whether we can convince it to go back is up to us. My only sadness as I looked around the conference attendees was that more young faces were not there. More Pastoral carers not there. Much much more priests, deacons, religious, seminarians, weren't there. These people who will have an influence in the lives of those they minister to chose not to come. That Ministers of other denominations did not bother. Everyone bandies the word "ecumenism" but when the possibility to be ecumenical and to share in the learning about "life and love" is presented, ecumenism flies out the door.

In my own area of work I can see the bad fruits which followed society's rejection of *Humanae Vitae* and here I would like to quote from the encyclical itself "It is also to be feared that the man, growing used to the employment of anti-conceptive practices, may finally lose respect for the woman and, no longer caring for her physical and psychological equilibrium, may come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion." HV 17. Indeed this is exactly what I see. The abortion, followed by barrier, followed by tension, followed by breakdown of relationship whether marriage or otherwise.

I often feel the hurt and heartbreak of a woman who has listened to her boyfriend, husband, or "partner" who has not cared for her "physical or psychological equilibrium" and driven her to the abortion clinic and waited while their baby died and then expected her to be well and ready for his next sexual demand (within a matter of days) as if nothing had happened. I see the hurt and the pain expressed by the one in front of me. I hear about the loss of respect which follows an abortion. I hear about the sense of "something is different now-we are not the same"

I hear the one in front of me say that following an abortion the “friendship” which existed between the couple has gone. I hear her speak about his emotional abandonment of her. I hear her speak about needing her husband (sometimes they say boyfriend, partner) to say to her that they don’t need to go through with this abortion that they will manage even with a new baby. I hear (Julie) saying “we have money, and everything we need but I don’t like him anymore, he is not the husband I married” “Why did he force me?”

Indeed there is a section in *Humanae Vitae* (p13) which states, “Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents” (quoted from Vatican II document, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 50) Perhaps this is why following an abortion there is such illness and dissonance in the life of the abortive individual.

I began by saying that each Human Life International Conference that I have attended, (this has been the third one) I have come away refreshed, encouraged and with new learning, and indeed this has been true of all the conferences that I have attended. However, this *Humanae Vitae* Anniversary conference was exceptional because I came away with a sense that maybe there are the 10 people which Abraham bargained with God about (Gn 18:32) Maybe we don’t see them or know them but somewhere they exist. When speakers of such goodwill and knowledge can come together and share this knowledge in a sense of togetherness, then maybe we can, with a few more, begin to win the battle for life. However, we must go back to where the battle began and start again. And the battle began when we decided that we knew better than God about Life and love and family and responsibility and the sacredness of sexuality. Our vision for these and God’s vision of these have proven to be entirely different and hence we have a caricature of what might have been.

### **ENCRYPTING OF MEMORIES.**

Of recent times I have begun seeing a new girl called Marie., Marie’s story is one of physical violence, sexual violence, sexual abuse, alcoholism and abortion. Indeed one could say a cocktail of sorrow and self destruction. As I listened to her story I was observing her physical reactions as she recounted the story of her life and my goodness it became clear how much the body remembers.

As she recounted her earliest memories it became apparent that the whole memory of the event/s was encrypted into her being. Not only of the perpetrator but also her own reactions, her own terror, and even her own recognition that she could and would get over this. I could see her recoiling, her eyes expressing terror, her body stiffening and even her voice seemed to change.

This was not surprising to me because I have thought that the only way for someone to have an abortion and be able to continue living is to put into place strategies of denial and that when these strategies are weakened the trauma of sexual abuse and or abortion become completely manifested. As I observed Marie and her pain and her movements I again realised how very much we have to be careful, especially those who would offer phone counselling. Phone counselling has the dimension of anonymity however, it has also the dimension of great danger because the somatic (bodily) responses to trauma cannot be seen and cannot be attended to as the need arises.

Marie was gently stopped from remembering (and much time spent debriefing) because of the distress she began to show through her body. Now, had I been counselling over the phone I would not have been able to see any of the bodily responses and perhaps may have contributed to her psychological meltdown. More and more as I continue I have to admit that I am fearful for what is possible following sexual abuse and or abortion.

Where abortion and sexual abuse are concerned, the inner conflict is difficult to bring to a resolution (though not impossible), because so much of the emotional impact of the events have had to be disassociated due to their traumatic nature. Thus then encrypting the nature and experience with all its responses, whilst at the same time being psychologically absent in the process. Therefore on revisiting the event, the strength of it is overwhelming.

To help to bring healing or even to be able to help the hurting individual the whole story of the losses and what these have meant to his/her life have to be explored. The person who comes to me is a mourner. He or she is mourning, ostensibly her aborted baby, but invariably many losses. It is these losses (with the loss of the aborted baby as the catalyst) which have been encrypted whole into her psychological being, and deeply remembered that cause the need for resolution.

### **WHEN AND WHY DO PEOPLE SEEK POST ABORTION COUNSELLING?**

Whilst at the conference in Sydney I was asked by another attendee when do people go for abortion counselling before or after the abortion? My answer to that has to be that I have spoken to many many women (who rang my number by mistake-thinking I was an abortion provider) before they went to abort (they usually hang up when I explain what I do). However, for those who have already aborted their child they seek help anytime from almost immediately following their abortion to sometimes years and years following the abortion.

In my experience I have seen a woman two days following her abortion and another 45 years following her abortion and all times in between. It has been said that those who seek help immediately following their abortion are

better off because they do not allow their feelings to be suppressed/repressed. This of course is true however, there is also a difficulty attendant to this and that is that someone who seeks help immediately following an abortion has deeper guilt to deal with because they knew that what they were doing was contrary to their beliefs and wishes and yet proceeded anyway. These people will be those who find it most difficult to forgive themselves and others. The very real knowledge they have that they could have prevented the abortion, and didn't, actually works against their healing. The memories, discussions, feelings, reasons, for the abortion are remembered clearly. They cannot say that time has dulled the memory but they remember. It is also very interesting that prior to the abortion all the reasons, feelings, discussions, difficulties were more powerful than following the abortion. Following the abortion, all the reasons seem to diminish and be forgotten. It appears that all of them could have been overcome with just a little thought.

Other individuals have sought help following an abortion, when someone has said or done something, which has triggered a memory of their own abortion. This triggering event can be anything which reminds them of all the things which have been encrypted about their abortion experience. It could be a discussion, a feeling, a name, a smell, the word "baby" or even the word "foetus." I have found that when a pregnancy is a wanted and anticipated event then the woman is pregnant with a baby. When the pregnancy is considered unwanted etc, then the woman has termed the baby "foetus" and hence encrypted the word "foetus" so even if overheard this word can trigger memory of abortion and resultant sense of loss.

Other losses in the life of woman whether relationship losses, job losses, other pregnancy losses, death, can also act as trigger and bring to mind the memory of an abortion and when this happens at some time after the event and some more maturity then the meaning of the pregnancy may also have changed for her.

When a very young girl is forced or taken or counselled to abort her child for her "wellbeing" and of course she concedes because of her youth, the future becomes clouded. As herself a child aborting a child, the possible psychological damage is enormous. She has encrypted into her being the knowledge that she has contributed to the death of a child. At some time in the future this knowledge can become deadly because with more maturity the exact nature of the event becomes clearer and her own sense of blame is exacerbated to the nth degree. The young are very idealistic and cannot bear to believe that they are responsible for the wounds, pains and death of another. This is a concern for me because I am seeing younger and younger girls and these girls and their "boyfriends" are the wounded citizens of the future. Please pray for the young they deserve better.

As I come to the end of this newsletter I would like to say thank you to Human Life International (Gail Instance and HLI tribe in Sydney) for their invitation for me to be present and be a speaker at their conference. Thank you. Most of the talks were taped so it would be good if you are interested in any of the previously mentioned topics to contact HLI Sydney (02)92112793 or [hliaust@ihug.com.au](mailto:hliaust@ihug.com.au) the tapes I think are reasonably priced but I am sure that Gail or Jane or John or Patrick or Simon will be able to help. They really are brilliant talks. Thank you also to those few people who sent donations to me after the last newsletter. Thanks James, Fr John C., Paul M., CWL Mel, Fr Fen., John & Jane (Syd)Mrs White. Joe (Qld). My Br in Christ (Qld). Thanks to all. I appreciate your ongoing support. I just need to say that I am beginning to struggle again not completely but beginning. **PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THIS WORK**

Also I would like to say that I have completed my book. It is in the hands of three different readers and an editor so that I now have to decide whether to find a publisher or self publish. I have a tendency to think self-publishing because I don't want to change any part of it (Its Catholicly inclined) or perhaps change some of its Catholicity and go elsewhere. At the moment I am unsure which way to go. Your comments might help.

Please pray very much for Melissa, (coming along well) Darren, Marie, Margaret, Julia, Jodie, Judy, Jason, Samantha, Leigh Anne, Anne, Donna, Susie, Susan, Sarah, Tina (new) Maria (new), "boat girls who have disappeared" friends of a priest friend of mine, Rachel, Eileen(new) Cindi, Janine (new) Julia (2) Maria, Helen & Janet.

Nicholas sends his apologies he is snowed under with work & Uni. Needs to catch up.

Keep well and may the Lord Bless and keep you whole.

Anne Lastman



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