

Guest Editorial
Leigh.

He Gave Me To Drink!

He gave me to drink! He has filled my thirst and like the Samaritan woman I run with joy to all open to hear this good news that He is real, God does exist! Ask Him, turn to Him and I promise you He will not disappoint you.

“The woman then left her bucket and went back to the town. She said to the people, ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I did! Could he possibly be the Messiah? They left the town and came to him’ Jn 4:28-30
“Many more came to believe on account of his words, and they said to the woman, ‘We no longer believe on account of what you said. Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that he is truly the savior of the world.’” Jn 4:39-42.

There came a time in my life, when everything completely turned around in a way I never imagined possible. He has and continues to bless me abundantly and in particular has given me the grace of hope.

Have you ever noticed a butterfly? They come from a place of darkness, a cocoon, and become the most beautiful of creatures, simply for us to enjoy. They flutter between the flowers, fields and life, and I can see a freedom in their flight. They flutter, like the flutters in our heart which I call hope. A light from God, a gift from God. **Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Jn 10:10.**

When I think about God’s goodness in my life I’m reminded of the scripture passage about the Wellspring where Jesus has an encounter with a Samaritan woman. It begins in **Jn 4:7, “A Woman of Samaria comes to draw water.”** I find that I am comparing myself to this unnamed Samaritan woman whom we can assume that through her being alone and by the hour that Jesus meets her that she was somehow an outsider, someone not held in high esteem as a result of the way she lived her life. As unaware that I was at the time, I too, was once living a life of darkness, it was all I knew.

BROKEN
BRANCHES



John 15

The day will always be clear in my memory, the day that I lay on that cold hospital table (waiting for my abortion) when my body began to shake. I couldn't cry but an almighty flood of tears suddenly welled up in my eyes and a deep unexpected sob came from the bottom of my heart as I realised what was really about to happen. I was terribly confused, I was terrified, I knew that something wasn't right and I suddenly wanted it to stop. Then it was too late. It was over and I was awake and alone and my baby had died.

A deep emptiness covered me and flowed over into my life for the next couple of years as I pushed down and ignored what had happened. My life began to spiral downwards on the dark road of self-destruction. It was at the lowest point of my life when my screams of pain had turned to hopeless murmurs and all I could do was whimper alone in the darkness that surrounded me. One night sitting in front of a mirror looking blankly at my reflection, my heart yelled out in a way it never had before, it was this time without words and it was my cry of help. I had nowhere else to turn, I asked God if He really existed that He help me.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Give me to drink.’ His disciples had gone off into the town to buy provisions.” Jn 4:7-8. It is only today that I can reflect on the last five years of my life and realise that it was at that lowest point in my life that I became aware that God was asking me to give Him something. That something was simply in my weakness and humility to call upon Him for help. To ask Him.

From the book titled “At the Wellspring” by Brother John of Taize he comments, “The God of Jesus is a God of forgiveness, the shepherd who goes looking for the lost sheep, the one concerned above all with restoring a broken relationship.”

“So the Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?’” Jn 4:9. Brother John describes the woman's response as one of “astonishment” meaning that she was becoming open to something new. Amidst my terror there too was a tiny light flickering in my heart, there was a strength edging me on and inviting me to respond to this radical change of thinking.

“Jesus said to her in reply, ‘if you knew what God gives, and who is saying to you ‘Give me to drink’ you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.’” Jn 4:10. The longing that was always in my heart, the thirst that I quenched in doing what I thought, the right things but in the wrong places has become finally satisfied through drinking from this eternal Wellspring that is in my heart and the hearts of all people. My life has become totally liberated and transform in a way I could never have imagined.

“Anyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I will give will never be thirsty again. No, the water I give that person will become in them a spring of water gushing forth to eternal life.” John 13-14. The living waters that well up inside of me, is the Holy Spirit, the Giver of life. They make me well, it is the Wellspring. This gift of the Holy Spirit was poured upon me in my baptism and again at my confirmation as a young girl and it is now after so many years that I finally acknowledge that gift, which has given me new life. It is through Him, in Him and with Him that I experience a hope and peace that is not of this world.

This new hope is so well defined by Father Daniel Lowery from the book titled ‘Following Christ’ – “The virtue of hope does not depend on our good feelings. Like lighting in the sky, our feelings come and go, flash and fail. We experience that some days we feel optimistic, other days we don’t. Some people, for example, have a predominantly melancholic or pensive temperament. They tend to feel blue more often than they feel orange! But this does not signify that they have no virtue of hope. The point here is not to put our feelings down. Feelings are important in the moral life. Feelings tell us a lot about ourselves and our relationships. It is helpful to be ‘tuned in’ to our feelings. They are not, however, the foundation of our hope. It does not ensure, of course, that we will never experience trials and tribulations and temptations. All of us must walk at times in the dark valleys of life. All of us experience in a personal way the dark cloud of evil that hangs over the world since the fall of Adam. Hope is not a quick fix against all suffering. Rather, the virtue of hope affirms that, no matter how we feel or what sufferings we face, God is always with us and his grace is sufficient for us.”

“The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me that water, so I will never be thirst and never have to come back here to draw water.’ Jn 4:15. He initially asked of me and upon my yes in asking Him for help He has become my God as Giver from which I have received the gift of life and healing. As Brother John comments, “When she comes to know Jesus, the One sent from the Father, the Samaritan woman will know God as He really is. She will know Him as Giver, as the Wellspring of life.”

“He said to her, ‘Go call your husband and come back here.’ ‘I have no husband,’ the woman replied. Jesus said to her ‘You are right to say you have no husband. You have had five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband. You have told the truth there.’ “ John 4:17-18. He too brought me to a place where I experienced a great sorrow shame and guilt for my sins. It was during this very difficult time after many years that I made my first confession.

You know I would do anything in the world to reverse what I did. The abortion. However I have come to understand that through God’s mercy my wounds have become resurrected. That is, I carry them completely transformed. Jesus Christ risen and resurrected wounds, have glorified my wounds. Wounds of bitterness, ugliness, sorrow, self despair, hopelessness

and all self destructive habits, which became my own scars of sin blinding me from hearing and seeing my life's purpose. Through finding the light of Christ these wounds have been transformed into something wonderful. That is through His resurrection these wounds shine a brilliant bright light for all to see the joy of my sorrow and ugliness turned into something very real and wonderful. If I can quote Anne, (my counsellor) "your lemons can be turned into lemonade through God's grace he can send all the ingredients, all the bubbles to turn your bitterness into something sweet". God's goodness has allowed me to see;

We can go into our world
and shed a light over hopelessness,
a sweetness over bitterness,
a shower of beauty over ugliness,
a song of laughter over sorrow,
and a flood of self-love and worth over self-destruction and despair.

You know we never found out what happened to the Samaritan woman, but we do know that she had an encounter with God and was given the opportunity to face herself for who she was, and this completely changed her life. I too, as my dear friend (Anne) says experienced the 'miracle of transformation' and now in my new life I give thanks to God our Father everyday for the gift of my life, and I find myself full of dreams, possibilities and hope as I know He is always with me.

From Archbishop Fulton Sheen "The World's First Love" "Calm minds like calm music, the heart has its own melody and one day when the score is played, the heart answers 'this is it'. So it is with love. A tiny architect works inside the human heart drawing sketches of the ideal love from the people it sees, from the books it reads, from its hopes and daydreams, in the fond hope that the eye may one day see the ideal and the hand touch it..... Some go through life without ever meeting what they call their ideal. This could be very disappointing, if the ideal never really existed. But the absolute ideal of every heart does exist, and it is God.

(References at end of newsletter).

Thank you darling Leigh it is always heart-warming to hear about God's Mercy. Leigh has completed with me and as you can see is happy and at peace with herself and her baby and her God. Anne

The Fatherless Generations

I recently attended a talk and heard Mr Wade Horn, Federal Government of the United States minister, speak on marriages, and the fatherless phenomenon, which is sweeping his own country of America and the rest of the western society. It is a phenomenon, which appears related to the West. It is a phenomenon in which the nature of fatherhood has changed leaving in its wake a “fatherhood in chaos” Mr Horn very clearly outlined the need to strengthen marriage and the family in order to restore fatherhood to its original meaning and intent. Mr Horn cited many statistics showing that weakened marriage has resulted in children suffering in all manner of ways from poorer economic conditions, poorer psychological development, poorer social development and an increase in child abuse and neglect. Indeed he went on to say that children who grow up in a fatherless situation face enormous difficulties.

Whilst I really appreciated Mr Horn’s comments and really well researched talk and especially the focus of strengthening of marriage between a man and a woman in order that the ensuing children grow and mature into healthy and happy individuals, I was somewhat disappointed that the politically incorrect topic of the relationship between abortion and distant fatherhood was not even considered.

As many of you my readers know, research into post abortion difficulties of women and motherhood has been inadequate (though steadily on the increase) however, if these are inadequate what best could be said of research into the effects of abortion on men and fatherhood is that it has been simply appalling and until we begin to look and study this area I don’t think that marriage is not going to improve and fatherhood or motherhood even less.

I would like to pose several questions. How can a young man who is now happily married to the love of his life and with a hope that children will surround their table, cope when his wife gives birth to his child. Especially as this young man may have anywhere from 1-5 abortions of his own children in his history? How will he now “father” this particular and any other child knowing that he has previously taken other of his children to be aborted?

Inscribed within fatherhood there are meanings, which unfold during the life of the man and his child. Progenitor, protector, provider. This role (fatherhood) is meant to bring with it leadership (spiritual and secular) love, support, presence. It at times brings with it sacrifice, always meant to bring honour, and the essence of all that is maleness. This and more is the inscription profoundly embedded within “fatherhood”

The question again is, how can a young man now father well, if he has in the past, taken any of his or some other's child to be killed.? My answer is that he cannot and therefore the emotional distancing between fathers and their children. Just as there is emotional distancing between mothers and children, which have come after abortion. The living children always subtly act as a reminder that there should be other children and that "I have taken it/them to die".

Abortion not only weakens "motherhood" which is inscribed in the essence of the woman, but equally weakens and seriously damages "fatherhood" inscribed in the essence of man. A distance must be placed between himself and his child because this child is a reminder of the "other/others" which he has rejected and taken to die. A psychological barrier must be placed between himself and the child so that he is not reminded of his past actions.

Abortion weakens maleness. Studies appear to show that only "some" males are affected. But then again it is said that only "some" females are affected by post abortion syndrome, grief, trauma. Yet even if it is some who are affected the percentage of the "some" is sufficient to severely damage the fabric of humanity and society because the "some" males and the "some" females interact within their milieu who in turn are also affected and so on it continues.

Mr Horn spoke strongly on the need for strengthening of marriage so that children are born into a solid situation thus contributing to their psychological and spiritual and physical wellbeing. However, I must again say that the politically incorrect word "abortion" was not cited as a reason for such failures of marriages.

I have seen the relationship breakdowns and marriage failures following abortion. I have seen and spoken to men and women who can no longer see their spouse as the person he/she was before. I will always remember one young man saying "I can't see her as my loved wife or even as a good mother to our little boy because she took our baby to be killed. She didn't need to do it. She just wanted to do it and nothing I said helped." (Garry, 34 yrs). An abortion within a relationship or marriage fundamentally says, "I don't want another you" and can be the catalyst for dissolution of the relationship.

I concur entirely with all the proposals Mr Horn offered to strengthen marriage and fatherhood, and they are to be commended, especially education programs which hopefully will reduce the incidence of failure and child neglect and abuse. The abstinence programs and other initiatives also. However, I believe that unless the abortion issue is tackled first all other initiatives will struggle because abortion, first and foremost tells children, "Children are conditional and wanted under only certain conditions". "If a child is inconvenient it can easily be disposed of" If a child can be easily disposed of in its most helpless state, why should we be surprised that it is abandoned by its

father and at times mother in its growing stages. Why are we surprised that there is a psychological distance between fathers and their children. Why should we be surprised that marriages, where entered into (with all the best intentions) are failing and children are the primary victims of that failure. Why should we be surprised that children in fatherless homes struggle to even grow? Why should we be surprised when we hear that violent criminals (cited by Mr Horn) in US (as I am sure the same in Aust) are males who grew up without a father? Extraordinary figures like 70% of prison inmates grew up without a father. Suicide and fatherless ness. Suicide and abortion. Suicide and teenagers. Suicide and depression. Depression and abortion. Depression,loneliness and abandonment.. The list can be endless.

Mr. Horn makes a startling comment “a compassionate society doesn’t stand idly by and tolerate the abuse and neglect of children” That is true. However, a compassionate society also shouldn’t stand idly by and shriek for its “right” to terminate the life of unwanted future citizens, its children. A compassionate society would not tolerate women being herded into abortion clinics, stand by while the procedure is carried out and then drive her home and hope for the best for her future. A compassionate society would certainly not tolerate abortion clinics whose very essence is death by cruelty. It is only this *un*compassionate society in which we live, which has openly and defiantly said “bring us the children you don’t want and we will kill them for you.” This type of society does not interfere when abuse is present because it knows that it is culpable of a greater abuse, that of death of children for no other reason than that they are unwanted. This type of society can call an evil (abortion/abuse) a “right” and a “good” and therefore cannot legitimately object when other abuses are being committed. I agree entirely with Mr Horn but lets look for the real demon and name it. **Abortion**. Unless this is done then trying to fix marriage is only palliative. Seeing fatherless children will be normal. Dysfunctional society assured.

It may appear that I have been critical of Mr Wade Horn’s talk on the hope for renewed marriage and transformed fatherhood and I hope that this is not the case. However, I am waiting for someone of his stature within the political world to begin to see and speak that unspeakable word “abortion.” We know that unless we treat the cause of the infection then the treatment is superficial and we can be assured of more of the same infection. Abortion is both a familial and societal infection, its eradication will be what will heal marriage. Heal fatherhood and motherhood. Everything else will be bandaid treatment.

As I come to the end of this newsletter, I would like to thank those of you who have responded to my call for funds. Thanks to Paul & family (Syd) Fr John (Syd) Fr. Joe B. (Mel) Fr. A.J.G (Mel) My good

friend from Armidale, Fr. Lane, Sr Marianna, Sr Maureen, Nancy M, dear Christopher Sc., Karen C, Errol D, Steven M (trip) John W, Ivy, Arnold J, Sheila H, Margaret G., P.B., (Emelb) NRB (Mel), F. Murphy, Currans (Qld) J McMhn. (5 anon donors) It has been a struggle to meet the commitments and again I find myself not knowing quite what to do whether to close down operations or to continue. My friends from Sydney (Paul & his family) came to the rescue again however I find it difficult to need for their constant generosity. The last four newsletters overall have not been well responded to and I am wondering if support for this work is waning or perhaps even the Lord is saying no more Anne. If this is the case then OK. Since last newsletter I have taken on board 4 more individuals (2 couples) together with ongoing work with two from interstate and two from country Victoria and the rest local. I have spoken at 4 public arenas, so I am not quite sure if I am meant to close the operations. However, I will wait and see.

Please pray for Louise (new) Kim, Sarah, Angela, Stacey (new) Edward (new) Simon, Jamie,(new) Vesta (new) Victoria, Melissa, Jason, Kerrie, Ann, Marie, Margaret, Donna, Samantha, (Johanna and Aaron-not abortion but very ill) Vanessa, Julia, Sally, Ellie (new) Could you also please pray for my father who is very ill with lung cancer and towards the end. He lives in Perth so it's hard for me to be here (Melb) at the moment. Thank you.

May the Lord Bless and keep you.



Anne Lastman

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