

IN MEMORY OF OUR CHIEF SHEPHERD

JOANNES PAULUS II 1920-2005

Over the coming times many accolades will be accorded to our much loved Holy Father John Paul II and each accolade will be well deserved. I don't want to say much except that we who have been left behind will be much sadder and poorer for his going. All my time in the church (returned from being away many years) has been with him as pontiff and I have devoured any word which he has written or spoken.

Perhaps it may be difficult to see why someone in the post abortion area would be so grieved at his passing. It is because of a paragraph he wrote in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* 1995. It was the reading of this passage which spoke directly to my heart. Please just this once let me make a long quote:

"I would now like to say a special word to women who have had an abortion. The Church is aware of the many factors which may have influenced your decision, and she does not doubt that in many cases it was a painful and even shattering decision. Certainly what happened was and remains terribly wrong. But do not give in to discouragement and do not lose hope. Try rather to understand what happened and face it honestly. If you have not already done so, give yourselves over with humility and trust to repentance. The Father of mercies is ready to give you His forgiveness and His peace in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. You will come to understand that nothing is definitively lost and you will be able to ask forgiveness from your child, who is now living in the Lord. With the friendly and expert advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life. Through your commitment to life, whether by accepting the birth of other children or by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of a new way of looking at human life" (EV. 99 pp 183-184)

It was the reading of this encyclical and this passage and other providential people who came into my life, which contributed to my own personal healing. The reading of this passage helped me to see and finally believe that someone understood the pain and sorrow involved in an abortion. It helped me to see that God still loved me and my two aborted children loved

BROKEN BRANCHES



John 15

me. It helped me to be able to openly grieve for them and then proceed to do something about it.

It was this passage and the lines, “*by welcoming and caring for those most in need of someone to be close to them, you will become promoters of life,*” that helped to shape the road I took. I took the Holy Father at his word and his invitation to care for those most in need of someone to be close to them. I understood this to mean that if the Lord heals He heals not only for me, individually, (which He does) but also that His glory may be manifest to others and in others.

The words “*your child is living in the Lord*” were such a healing balm because I had been told emphatically that no matter what I did I could and would never see my children again. When the Holy Father wrote those words (which I now use when necessary) he lifted from my heart the heaviest of loads. I have said this many times at speaking engagements and to individuals, that no mother would ever feel that she could merit or even aspire to heaven if the child/children she aborted were not permitted to enter heaven or to be re united with their mother. The words *living in the Lord* eased the hurt as this opened the door to a future encounter with them. My own work and charism is based on this; is based on forgiveness and Mercy of God and the forgiveness and love of the children. And the future meeting with the aborted children.

Within a year of reading this encyclical and making this section my own, together with other providential happenings; I slowly began to be involved in pro life work and especially post abortive pro life work. Indeed I took the Holy Father at His words to care for those who need it, and to my way of thinking those who most needed comfort and care were those like me whose spirit had shrivelled and had almost died but was revived through the Lord Himself coming to meet me. This is why my ministry is not money based and never will be (that’s why I depend on newsletter to keep going).

I have much to thank the Holy Father for, and I do. Today I believe my children are “*living in the Lord*” and that I will see them. And yes I do extend my love and care for others like me whose spirit is also shrivelled and I hope I can bring to them the same words of life as were given to me.

In a personal letter to me he wrote, in part..... “bless your work of reconciliation with those who have undergone an abortion. His Holiness will remember you and your supporters in his prayers and he invokes upon you the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ”

I will treasure the four correspondences I have had from him.

He came to speak for the child in the womb at a time when many many others railed against it. He came on the scene after the infamous laws which declared that the child in the womb is not human. He emerged and defended their humanity and their rights. Millions of children are living testimony to his being here. This extraordinary human person witnessed to the holiness which is life and at the end witnessed to the sanctity of life even in a

disabled condition and in frailty. He defended life when the world said it had reached its “use by” date and of no value.

To have watched the extraordinary happenings in America where a woman Terri Schiavo, was starved and dehydrated to death at the instigation of the man who is supposed to have loved her would once have been inconceivable. And to make matters worse to watch the evil of an American judiciary out of control and without a skerrick of mercy is beyond anything we have seen.

The Holy Father bent and doubled with infirmities showed that life is valuable. Michael Schiavo and the judiciary thumbed their nose and challenged the world to watch a real live murder and do nothing about it. That is pure evil. Imagine a mother (Terri’s mother) being forbidden and having to plead to please be given her daughter back. Indeed we have reached the time where evil is called good and good evil.

In memory of precious child of God Theresa Marie Schiavo 1963-2005.

Both the Holy Father and Terri Schiavo have died and please God are living with the Lord but we as a society were witness to evil without restraint. Recently in Australia we watched an abortion being performed live on television and did little about it and some pro lifers even recommended it. In the last three weeks we have witnessed the killing of a disabled woman and could do little about it. We should not be surprised. What terrible times we live in.

Thank you my much loved Holy Father, may you now “live in the Lord” and I hope you meet my children Miriam and Joseph and I also hope that you meet the hundreds of children of all the mothers that I have helped because of your words.

Margaret’s Story

A Parent’s letter to anyone contemplating abortion

Written from a mother and grandmother’s point of view.

In our home, family life never seemed quite as it should have been. The husband and father’s long absences from home while he was working, and the mother working while trying at the same time to bring up three children. Added to this a feeling of isolation and frustration; coping with household duties and mothering the children finally took its toll. I (wife and mother) took comfort in alcohol for consolation and in order to dull the senses, leading, of course, to a dysfunctional family life.

Love for my family was always in my heart but somehow never quite shown physically. I think this was possibly a trait I inherited from my own parents. My eldest daughter Sally always seemed non communicative and even though we tried to communicate, there was always a space or barrier between us. Now I know I should’ve held her in my arms and hugged her

often but the reality is that I didn't and she was really starved for love and affection.

Perhaps as a result of this distant relationship which we had, she fell into bad company. I hadn't realised or even recognised the changes in society from the times of my own youth, but the 70s had completely changed what were the times of my own youth, the 50s. As my mother had trusted me to be morally correct, so I also trusted Sally to stick to family morals.

When Sally was 17 years of age she heard of a job that promised her a really good career but it was in a small country town. Sally pleaded with us (her father and me) to let her go. Eventually we agreed, not knowing what would happen. We thought it was safe for her to go as she had a safe and reliable place to live and we foolishly expected the people in that place to protect her. I still regret, to this day, allowing her to leave home and go so far away from us because this is where she became pregnant and all our troubles started.

We were bewildered and upset, as nothing like this had happened to us before. We were more worried for Sally than ourselves because we were also told that illicit drugs were involved and at that time no one knew how drugs affected the unborn child.

I (her mum) searched for someone to talk to and confide in, but all that happened was that I came to a dead end. There appeared no where to go! My mother once told me that if I ever became pregnant, I would have to have an abortion, and the seed had been planted in my mind, and so I spoke the same words to my daughter Sally, that my own mother had spoken to me and I said the words "do you think that you should have an abortion?" and from that moment onwards passed on the seed of the idea of "abortion"

Without further discussion on the matter, Sally made the arrangements and left in a taxi to go to the abortion clinic and have her abortion. ***From that moment onwards our relationship changed.*** There was now a greater distance or barrier between us than was even before.

We knew in our hearts the tragedy and great grief involved in abortion, and I only found out a few years ago (much after the first one) that the first abortion led to another, and this caused me more grief, as I would never have allowed her to have another abortion and I would have shown her the love and support she needed, the second time around. Now we (Sally and I) live with deep regrets about what could and might have been.

I have spent 25 years of deep regret, fearful of talking to Sally about the abortions because I knew what she would be going through and I didn't want to inflict more wounds. I have such a deep love for Sally and I am afraid of hurting her more because I realise that it was me who first put the thought into her mind.

Abortion pain is devastating and never leaves, staying with you forever.

Sally first heard about Anne Lastman by word of mouth from a neighbour who received her newsletter, and made an appointment to see her, and from

that day Sally has finally begun her healing journey. I have also gone to Anne and she has also helped me regain peace of mind and I feel that healing is almost complete in my heart. We understand that the loss will always be there but it does not have to destroy us. The Mass for our beloved daughters and grand daughters has brought such sense of completion, love and peace. It was such a beautiful Mass that Anne helped to prepare with Sally and we were able to say goodbye to our beautiful babies.

I agreed to write this piece as a help and maybe a warning to other mothers: love and protect your children! Watch who they mix with and give them lots of hugs and kisses and encouragement and listen to them. Abortion is never, ever, the answer. Margaret.

Thank you dear Margaret. Margaret is 68 years of age and it was difficult for me to see such suffering on the face of someone who deeply regretted a comment she made without thinking. Margaret felt totally responsible for everything. Its good to see her at peace and the relationship between Margaret and her daughter nicely mending.

PARENTS WHO TAKE THEIR CHILDREN TO AN ABORTION

I asked Margaret to write her story because we have come to the end of our relationship together (nearly 18 months) and also because it is important to hear from someone who (without thinking) made a comment “do you think you should have an abortion” which led to years of pain and heart ache for all involved. It led to a further disengagement and distancing between Sally and her mother Margaret. It led to deep distrust between mother and daughter.

Many times I have spoken and written on the damage that a mother does to her relationship with her daughter when she suggests “abortion” to her daughter. There is more than just disappointment and hurt feelings involved. There is the loss of trust between the two. There is the loss of feminine intimacy between the two. There is the sense that the one who should’ve known better has in fact failed. There is a sense that Mum who is meant to protect actually fails in this very important issue.

When a mother suggests, encourages, urges, forces an abortion on her daughter the very bonds which bind them are snapped. Not gently broken. Not even neatly cut but are violently broken. There is the sense by the young woman (daughter) that their “sameness” has been destroyed. The young woman is suddenly unable to see her mother as the protector against all adversity, but is in fact one of the ones who hurts most.

Rightly or wrongly parents are supposed to have all the answers (not that we do! I know I don’t) and children remain confident of their parent’s love, strength and goodness. It is this which helps the young to firstly believe in goodness. It is an image of the “good” that their parents are. This is important, really important because all children have a need to believe that their parents are “good people” because if their parents are “good people”

then they themselves will also be “good people.” All children have a need to know and believe in this goodness in order to be able to develop a healthy sense of sympathy, empathy, compassion, love. When parents are seen by their children as being “good” they emulate their beliefs and their ideals.

Abortion destroys this because when a mother suggests to her daughter an abortion, (having in mind her daughter’s wellbeing) this sends the daughter into a state of confusion, fear, anger. Her very belief that her mother is “good” is violently destroyed because she has suggested that a baby is killed. Further, where very young are concerned (13-17 yrs) they are in a psychological and possibly even spiritual state of idealism where everything is good and true. Where pregnancy means “baby” and not “foetus” Before the denial structures (to protect against unwelcomed thoughts) are formed and set into place.

I have heard a 14 year old say to me, “mum wanted me to kill my baby and I had to do as I was told because I didn’t know what else to do” In our conversations she did not once use the term “foetus.” This is a term used by the more experienced and the more worldly of our “sisterhood,” and of course those who would deny that what is in the uterus (baby) is not “a real human.” The term baby evokes imagery whilst the term foetus (which of course means the same but not used in general conversation) leaves a blank image and its easier to

Abortion destroys not only the woman’s own sense of her feminine design but also destroys the solidarity she shares with womanhood. An abortion sets her off into another camp where she must learn new rules about who she is. She needs to accommodate a reality (abortion) which she and her design is not equipped to handle. Perhaps this is why those who abort must develop a hardened heart and mix with others who feel the same. There is always a need for some form of solidarity and sisterhood even “among thieves”

Today I understand post abortion grief, trauma, and sadness differently than I did even 5 years ago and certainly a lot more differently than ten years ago. The grief which follows an abortion, even when it is disguised, is spirit mourning and it is appropriate. It cannot be otherwise. The grief, anger, confusion which follows an abortion instigated by a parent is doubly more appropriate because the losses are to be found at many many levels.

Perhaps one of the most important things that we tend not to think about when a parent takes a daughter to have an abortion or even encourages an abortion of a daughter or son, is that the dynamics of that family life change forever. Whilst maybe not overtly, covertly there will be continuing bonds with a person who should have been there but isn’t. Continuing negative bonds can lead to really deep complicated type of mourning and deep wounds which in turn affect existing relationships.

The Outcome and some losses following Abortion when it is encouraged by a parent.

Primary loss is always child/grandchild. This is followed by loss of innocence, trust, and in some ways, youth. Secondary losses are legion. Loss of normal family interactions. There will be barriers in place so that freedom of spontaneous speech is denied.

Loss of freedom and a new sense of neediness.

Loss of assumptions, that is, I am “good” and my mum is “good”

Loss of self esteem, self trust, confidence, loss of capacity to make judgements. Thus allowing the young person to know that they are capable of good judgements and decisions.

Loss of control because the one who encouraged the abortion and didn't have good solution is a trusted person.

Loss of freedom because an abortive woman/girl then either isolates or becomes promiscuous.

Definite loss of reverence for her own body and bodily integrity

Loss of sense of peace and happiness within the family setting. And a new sense of unspoken “blame” develops.

Loss of joyful intimacy with a loved member of the family and a withdrawal from appropriate human touch

A relentless pain of the spirit.

Special Need

After some effort and to-ing and fro-ing and acceptance by an ethics panel, I have been granted permission to deliver a workshop at an international conference (London) on grief in contemporary society. The name of my paper (abstract) is *In the Mourning We Remember Them*. However, because I made the request and pushed for it, I have to pay my own way there. I have thought much about it and discussed it with my husband and family and they also think it is important that I do this. The hearers will be mainly other grief counsellors so perhaps I could help them deal with post abortion grief. More than this, I think its important to go because all the contemporary names in grief research will be present. People like Prof K. Prigerson, Prof. Kissane, Prof Colin Murray Parkes OBE, Prof. Henk Schut, Prof. Robert Nieymeyer, and the list continues. These are people whose names one cites at the back of a Masters thesis and who write text books on grief and psychology. It is an important conference and to be truthful I feel daunted, however, I would like to be able to network with them throughout the 4 days of the conference and see if something cannot be done to train the professionals to deal with post abortion grief and even sexual abuse grief.

The upshot is this, I do not have reserve funds to be able to do this and the last two newsletters just paid for themselves and the phone bills, so I have a great need to ask for your help. Whilst my husband has said he will try and help, I think its important that he doesn't because he gives so much already. Not financially, but in the time I am needed and the use of the house as an office when someone cant climb the 51 steep stairs to my office in the city. My husband (Andrew) supports me 100% in this work. So I hope that you will respond and help with the funding for this.

The conference is in July and I will be gone from 12-17th. I have need for funds for fare and accommodation, unless I find someone who can give hospitality.

I believe this conference is important because of the people who will be there and the possibility of being able to speak to them close up and bring their attention to the problem of grief within society which is related to abortions and sexual abuse.

Perhaps this could be a way that we open up for other counsellors to come fourth and do this work. I know that there are others who do some kind of this work but we begin to need good programs that can incorporate both the religious dimension and the secular dimension.

I firmly believe that good grief rituals are needed to be developed. I have developed mine and these work for me, and those who come to me, but may not work for someone who does not have my level of studies especially in the area of suffering, theology, psychology and education. So we need some generic ones which can help. Anyway I place this request with you and leave it to you to consider. Several people I have spoken to have said “don’t worry the Lord will provide” and He usually does, but it requires willing hearts for Him to be able to provide.

Thank you in advance and if and when I get there I will bring the information back for the first newsletter after the conference.

As I conclude please pray for

Melissa, Jodie, Carly (new) Darren, Evan, Maree, Susan, Sally (1) Sally (2) Toni, Michelle (1) Marc, Hamish, (lots please) Michelle (2) (new), Andrea P (lots please) Luc, Anonie (new) Liza, Tim, Andrea K (lots and lots please) Cindy (new) Trudy (new) Michael (new) Anne (new) Torie and Jack (2 children not well) Adam (former person who I used to see).

May the Lord Bless and Keep you.

Anne Lastman

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Victims of Abortion, National Office PO Box 6094, Vermont South, Vic, 3133, Australia. Ph: +61 3 9663 9032 or Ph/Fax: +61 3 9887 7669 Mobile: 0408 175 033 Email: lastman@iprimus.com.au