

London

I need to begin by thanking all those who supported my trip to the London conference. I thank you and I would like you to know that I did thank you (my readers and supporters) publicly at the beginning of my main talk and all other opportunities

The conference itself was really excellent and I did get to meet those people who I had wanted to meet and spoke to them about post abortion grief. I broached the subject of post abortion grief with them and yes indeed they do know that it exists, that it is real and that **it is a highly political topic** and as one of them said **"it is too hot to touch."**

I arrived on Sunday morning, and used Monday to find my way around because conference began on Tuesday. I used the spare day to find my way from Sidcup to Waterloo Station from which I walked to Kings College. I became an expert after two days!

It was good to see a strong Australian contingent of people involved in various grief work and even Prof David Kissane (Aust. Palliative Care Supremo) was there. My goodness I gushed at being able to sit at his table and talk normally (or at least as normally as I could muster) with him.

All the Professors, psychiatrists, psychologists, psychotherapists, mere mortals like me and others, **know** of the reality of post abortion grief. There was not one person I spoke to who had not heard about it, or had not come across it in their work, but always the political nature of this topic seemed to be paramount.

I spoke to several "fellows" of the American Psychological Association about the possibility of research and categorization of abortion grief in their *DSM Manual* (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Symptomatology - in English, their book of symptoms which categorise a mental health disorder) and all spoke of the politics involved in the abortion debate which made research into this difficult. It was suggested to me that professorships and chairs at universities were at stake and this made serious research unlikely at least for the time being.

I must admit that I almost (I say almost because I contained my Italian temper) lost it at one stage because I was speaking with a serious researcher into grief and I asked her if she would consider doing research into the area of abortion grief and she clearly said no and proceeded to tell me that the



“religious right” would take the results and use them to confirm their own agenda. This was the time it was touch and go! I retorted as politely as I could that I was under the impression that a researcher’s task was to gather data and carry out research and not be interested in the results. A researcher’s job is to read the gathered data and determine if what is being indicated is statistically significant or not. That it was not her job to be influenced even before she had looked at it. I even suggested to her that whilst this research is ignored her “sisters” were being wounded for life and millions of children were being slaughtered (by now I got descriptive) and all because the pro choice lobby wants to continue to convince women that they had and could make a choice whether to have their baby or take it in to be killed.!! She then conveniently turned and talked to someone else and I was left disappointed at the coldness of this researcher. It’s no wonder she is a statistician.

I don’t think that I will be able to ever cite their names in essays again without remembering that they don’t really care about life!! That professorships are more important, and also of the potential good that could be done by them, yet they won’t. **I have refrained from using their names because of possible outcomes.**

I know that there is some research going on in this area, especially by the Elliot Institute in USA, but if the APA (American Psychological Assoc) categorised abortion and its effects and recognised the complicated nature of grief associated with abortion, then continual research would be carried out. Psychiatrists, psychologists and others would begin to devise programmes for recovery; medical funding would become possible etc etc etc. Indeed many doors would open. However, admitting that abortion causes serious psychological problems and lifelong grief, would put into question the “choice” option and possibly even the legality of abortion. And further would have to admit that abortion is not the minor procedure that the pro abortion lobby has been espousing.

Finally, regarding London, my own workshop went really well. It was well attended, especially by other grief counsellors. Indeed there was complaint that the time ran out and so we made arrangements with some of those who wanted that we would meet again in a different room and continue to speak informally.

A most interesting thing happened. At the end of my talk a woman came to speak to me (usually happens) and she told me about her own abortion 20 years earlier and she assured me that she had not suffered adversely and had processed it back then. Of course when someone comes to me with this I immediately know that she has not processed it at all but just “shut it away.” I thanked her for sharing and told her how pleased I am that she is well and asked what gender was her baby, and quick as shot she said “it was a boy” again I spoke gently about how lovely it was that she had a son who is with God, and proceeded to ask her had she named him and again quick as a shot she said “Alistair” and then she looked straight at me and the tears rolled and rolled and rolled as if a dam had opened up and spilled years of

accumulation of lacrimae. She then looked sadly at me and said “maybe I have never dealt with it, have I?” “No you haven’t” said I, and we went off together for several hours and I let her speak and because she is a grief counsellor herself, she understood the need to conclude her little boy’s story. We have promised to keep in touch.

If I went just for her it was enough and important.

Thank you to Greg and Aghi Clovis and their 10 children for lovely hospitality. I love staying with pro lifers we are such a nice lot aren’t we. Thank you also to Joe Clovis (and his wife Theresa and lovely children) for chauffeuring and taking me back to airport.

Brisbane Trip.

Since the last issue of the newsletter (June/July issue 46) went out, I also went to Brisbane at the invitation of the Guild of St Luke (Cath doctors assoc) to participate in an abortion forum. This was held in a room in the Queensland Parliament and attended by over 200 doctors, specialists, several politicians and other interested parties. The forum was opened by Bishop Oudemans who encouraged the gathering by sharing a little of his life as a priest and his own encounters with the damage of abortion. The ever intrepid and indefatigable Fr Gregory Jordan was behind this forum which was also attended by Melinda Tankard Reist, Sydney Auxiliary Bishop Anthony Fisher, yours truly, (me - yeah), Dr David Van Gend, Dr David Baartz, Rev. Fr. Dr John Fleming. Each of the speakers brought to the forum their experience of the abortion issue and their experience of the wounds attendant to this procedure.

I personally wanted to speak on the issue of sexual abuse/multiple abortion connection. I do not believe that this is being taken seriously. And the reason for this lack of depth of seriousness is again the nature of the topic. It’s not nice to speak about sexual abuse (especially incest) and abortion. These are the two topics which almost have no peer in the “yuckiness factor” and yet these two topics are rampant. I know I encounter them daily.

When I began working in the field of post abortion grief, about 10 years ago, I bought the idea that multiple abortions simply mean that a woman who has a first abortion, and is grieved may continually become pregnant in order to complete the pregnancy but always aborts because the same issues which drove her to the abortion clinic in the first place still exist.

I no longer believe this to be the fact. I think that there are several very important reasons for multiple abortions (by multiple abortions I mean 3,4,5,6,7,8) The first being repeating of trauma in order to make some sense of it. To find meaning that she can live, otherwise it has the potential to

become overwhelming for her and to destroy her. And the second reason for multiple abortions is sexual abuse. I believe there is strong link between sexual abuse of some nature and multiple abortions. The multiple abortions are the re living of a trauma and the trying to bring attention to a specific trauma.

This is serious because where there is sexual abuse and abortion/s the sexual abuse needs to be dealt with first before the abortion issue can be successfully seen.

Abortion wounds and sexual abuse wounds damage the very essence of the woman and no amount of platitudes or soft language will help. These wounds require special care because we are dealing with the wounding of the essence of humanity. Life principle.

Today society speaks about abortion with its morning cup of tea. It's become "normal" language and I am not sure it is such a good thing, but I am sure that it will eventually contribute to the knowledge that there is great suffering for women and men attached to this procedure, and perhaps will eventually abolish this barbaric act. However, sexual abuse still is shrouded with secrecy and the reason for this taboo is because it can be found within the home, or supposed safe place, the places where one would expect the greatest safety for a child. Though I must admit that we have a lurid interest in the sexual abuse stories relating to catholic priests, but we do not want to know about the same abuse when it happens in the home or other safe place. This for some reason remains hushed and the children being abused remain alone and abandoned.

Sexual abuse of children has risen and continues to rise and still there is stony silence. Again its one of those "yuckie" things of life and better left unspoken. Well, between sexual abuse and abortion (both death of innocence) we have the potential to destroy our humanity. It's that serious because a woman (and young boys and men increasingly) cannot function as a true woman when her "womanhood" has been violated and damaged. She cannot "woman well," she cannot "mother well," she cannot "spouse well,," She cannot properly function as prescribed within her design because her design has been corrupted, and those in her sphere of influence are the recipients of her wounded self rather than her true self. We need to take notice of this. Its important.

The day forum in Brisbane went fantastically well and I thank Dr Luke McLindon for invitation and Dr. John and Bernice for gracious hospitality.

Evangelisation

Wherever we turn these days the word " new evangelisation" is used and heard again and again, and why would someone working in the area of abortion grief be concerned with this recurring term? I suppose when we hear something repeatedly we must stop and ask questions (of self) and

listen for answers. What does it mean to evangelise and especially concerning this area of work. Well to evangelise means to show a way or a path. To teach how to live fully integrated and whole life.

I suppose that as I mull over these thoughts (especially on planes 23 hrs to London and 23 hrs back) an image emerges which helps me to make sense of how I in a small way can help to re evangelise and renew and redirect towards a new pathway someone who has not had a path to walk on. I do not mean that I set out to religiously convert anyone, I cannot do this God Himself does this, but I can help in re directing a focus from the destructive to the constructive. I can help someone to rethink their way of living so that their past though possibly unattractive and painful, can be properly seen as stepping stones.

I think the thing that I see more than anything in this work that I do is terrible unforgiveness we have for others and ourselves. We are capable of giving lip service about forgiveness, especially of forgiving others, but to forgive ourselves is almost impossible. The comment “God might be able to forgive me I never can” is frequent and it is the reversal of this lie that evangelisation is capable of bringing about.

There is a terrible poverty of spirit pervading society. A poverty which manifests itself in endless noise and activity but at the same time aimlessness. It is contradictory to life. It is a poverty which has its locus of control not necessarily in material poverty but in ontological poverty. It is a poverty of joy, a poverty of empathy (plenty of saccharine sympathy) a poverty of kinship. It is a poverty of science without heart. It is a poverty of real genuine love, and brought together this poverty produces a hybrid of the original design of the human person. This poverty also sets the stage for the seeing of in utero children as “tissue” “cells” rather than human persons in their earliest stages of growth, and further setting the stage for being able to discuss their disposal without thought or compassion. The poverty and defects of humanity then rob the human person of their rightful state as children of God.

Indeed a new evangelisation is sorely needed. An evangelisation which can be heard and understood. An evangelising WORD spoken directly into the wounded spirit. A truth needs to be spoken into the wounded soul and help to feed and transform this soul with truth so that it is enervated and brings it life and accompanies it on a new path. The word spoken needs to be filled with life.

I suppose I am in a unique position of being able to see at close range the effects of terrible wounds both to the soul and to the body and to the spirit. I am in the position of seeing what happens when actions contrary to our designs are perpetrated. I am in a position of being able to see clearly why a new evangelisation is needed because I get the opportunity to see what the absence of a good path is capable of doing. Perhaps I don't do very much but I do know that to tell someone how much God has loved them (even if they have never heard this before, like that woman at the conference who

professed that she is a humanist!) and how much He wants them healed and well, is my way of evangelisation. I can literally see the softened look in the eyes. I can see the spark of hope, that all is not lost. I can see the love written in the tears. I can see it when I speak gently of their baby, and vocalise the woman's (or man's) love for their child which is manifested in their grief, and their response to this knowledge. I can see when someone who has wounded another grievously is able to seek forgiveness and healing. I can see the change wrought when a victim (of sexual abuse) is able to say about her perpetrator "he never stood a chance did he?" This is not condoning a heinous act but seeing the humanity and human dignity of even the worst person.

Do we need a new evangelisation? Yes we do. But first of all we need to see clearly why it is needed. We need a new evangelisation because the prior evangelisation has been corrupted and cannot be heard clearly any more. We need a new evangelisation because the human person has really travelled downhill, indeed climbed onto the slippery slope. We do need an evangelisation which is truth and life governed, and this will help in returning us to the path of life and grace.

I love the work that I do because I can really see the Mercy of God even when the man or woman is still unaware of it. I am reminded of the Father looking far into the distance, (Lk 15:20) loving and willing onwards that really small figure limping towards home. I will never have big scores on the scoreboard but I know that some will hear of Love because they have come to see me and this is good.

Prayer card

I have received much correspondence regarding the prayer card which was sent out to you my readers and others. The correspondence has been for the most part really supportive, though there have also been a few more not positive ones and indeed a several suggestions that I need to retract the notion that aborted babies are in heaven. For now I think I have to leave this because if it goes further then perhaps I would not be able to continue to do what I do because I really really really need to believe that my aborted children and all the millions of others are with God. How He achieved this I cannot say, but that He has done so, I fully believe.

For God there are infinite possibilities and in those infinite possibilities cannot God find a way to bring home the innocent children? My charism is based on the infinite mercy of God for the children and for the mothers and fathers. It is based on the light of God being shone on the souls of these erring parents and bringing them home by showing them that their abortion was a lie spoken to them to cheat them of life.

It is based on my belief that the Mercy of God is endless and can incorporate even those who die without Baptism. And whilst Baptism is the principle and initiating sacrament and should be administered as early as possible, where it has not been possible (aborted children/miscarried children stillborn children) God has His own way of bringing them home. God devised the

most fantastic and intriguing way of bringing home his errant children and this by entering into the enemy's territory and leading home the captives. He did it full on, in the open and not by skulking around. There were no half measures. The Mercy of God was able to rescue the terrible sinners and the Mercy of God will also enfold the children. Otherwise what I am forced to believe is that the Mercy of God can reach so far....but not Limbo or whatever the place that all aborted, miscarried, stillborn, righteous people go to. To this place or state of being He and His Mercy cannot reach. This of course cannot be.

I feel very sad that several friends who have financially supported me and helped rescue me when I almost went down, now feel that they cannot support me anymore. I understand this, but I have to remain firm in my belief otherwise if for an instant I could no longer believe in the fate of my two children (and a third lost through miscarriage) however God chose to redeem them, then I would not be able to continue, simply because I myself would have felt cheated and I would not wish to cheat others.

I also understand that the late Holy Father John Paul II, instituted a commission in October 2004, to study this topic and hopefully be able to give a definitive response. However, this will take some time. So we wait.

I have a 73 year old lady who grieves for her long ago aborted child. I have had a 69 year old lady grieve for her aborted child; I have worked with a 63 year old lady who grieved years for her aborted child. I have a 71 yr old who has grieved daily for her loss and most especially as she believes she should never have listened to those who advised her to abort (backyard) because she has never had another child and has longed to see her daughter (she believes it was a girl which she has named Susan) This is the response of abortive women. This, not counting the grief of miscarriages and stillbirths, ectopic pregnancies, and other neonatal deaths and in utero deaths where the children at the time of death were greatly wanted and who died unbaptised. The grief of these mothers must also be insufferable to think that without fault or finger pointing, their child died in utero but it will never merit heaven or the friendship or presence of God. There has to be an answer and the answer I believe lies with Him and should be so.

What I can say with absolute certainty is that if we believe that God's mercy is limitless, and has infinite possibilities, then I and those others like me enormous sinners that we are and who don't merit heaven because of our sin, (abortion) if I throw myself at the feet of Mercy and receive that Mercy, then surely God whose Mercy is limitless can in His own way find a way to rescue these children and take them home. I don't know the way. Some say, Baptism of Desire, some say Baptism of martyrdom, whatever the way, it is good because it will be His way and His way is always surprising and good.

As I conclude this issue of the newsletter I again have to say thank you to all those who supported the trip to London I was glad I didn't have to come home to a huge credit card bill and a year to pay it off. Thank you

and thank you those who continue to help with the newsletters support. You are so wonderful. And please remember that I can only do what I do because you care for this work. I wouldn't last a month without your support. So whilst I am at the coalface I would not last long there if I had to continuously worry about money and money related issues.

By the time that the next issue of the newsletter comes around I will have been to Lismore (NSW- East Coast of Australia for my overseas readers) for about 5 days of talks and hopefully will also present a paper at another conference on grief here in Victoria. I have submitted another abstract and have received positive feedback. This is all good because what it does is help others especially those in grief related work, to recognise abortion grief and together we will be able to work to heal woman and in doing so help heal her surroundings. When a woman hurts, her family and environment are affected. Together with healing there will also be the spreading of the message that abortion means killing a child and no one, no one wants to really kill a child. It is the deceptive language employed which contributes to the abortion mentality and outcome.

Please continue to pray for those on the prayer list, Melissa, Jodie, Carlie, Darren, Marie, Adam, Susan, Sally (1) Sally (2) Toni, Michelle (1) Michelle (2) Hamish (lots please) Andrea P (lots please) Andrea K (lots & lots) Luke, Anonie, Lisa, Catherine (new) Tim, Cindy, Ann, Tori, Jack, Julianne (new) Diane (new) Nicole (new). Marc, Angela, Frances, Heidi, Matthew, Darren, Tara (new).

May the Lord Bless and keep you.



Anne Lastman

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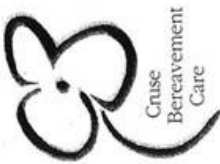
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LASTMAN, Anne R

In the mourning we remember them

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The death of a child or loss of child through miscarriage, stillbirth or abortion is followed by a time of deep questioning. The questioning is complex because multiple issues are present. Death of an infant, or an anticipated infant, causes pain at various levels which all must be negotiated before a levelling out can be expected. The intentional abortion of a foetus also appears to cause deep wounds. A period is required to grieve for this loss as with any other loss.

Following an abortion there is further distress due to the disenfranchised nature of the loss and the absence of acknowledgement that grief is possible after such a decision and procedure.

The work of post-abortion grief counselling presents some difficulties. Not least of which is the denial of grief which society expects and enforces, as a result of the belief that abortion is a "non event." Post-abortion trauma and grief counselling, whilst still in its infancy in research and practice, is of necessity something which can no longer be denied or left to fringe elements because of the politics involved. Healing of post-abortion grief requires special care and handling, and programmes for this type of care are of utmost urgency. For the woman who has regretted her decision to abort her foetus and is overcome with guilt, giving recognition to her grief and to the humanity of her child assists in concluding a begun story. The memorialising of the pregnancy, that is, the committing to permanent memory, creation of a history connected with that pregnancy, the reality of the pregnancy, the duration of pregnancy and the humanity of the child will assist the woman to begin to forgive herself. It is in the forgiveness of herself for her decision that will bring equilibrium.

Anne R Lastman has been involved in the area of post abortion grief for nearly nine years, and is a post abortive mother. Anne became involved in this work because of her own experience of disenfranchised grief. Anne has been a speaker at numerous abortion conferences, Human Life International Conference, guest speaker for nine days in Papua New Guinea in 2000 and 2005. She is editor of *Broken Branches*, a *Newsletter of Victims of Abortion*, and a member of the National Association for Loss and Grief. Anne is also a member of Family Council of Victoria, Australia, Catholic Pro Life Forum and Centre for Grief & Loss (Victoria) Australia.