

Broken Branches

Issue 58

June/July 2007

John 15

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

Limbo

On April 21, 2007 the News that I had prayed for, for many years came through. It was the news the maybe "Limbo" had been given the official exit that it deserved. Limbo in my opinion has given enormous anguish, perhaps even more than an abortion itself.

Why I say that it caused more anguish if possible even than an abortion, is the reality that there is no way to undo what the woman has done and her infant/s whom she aborted would never enjoy the company of Jesus. This causes agony.

It has long been my belief that this very idea that aborted, miscarried, stillborn, neonatal deaths, without baptism, caused enormous anguish and indeed removal of self from the ambit of Church life and the journey towards God. I know that I left the church for many years; I could not stand being before God with the knowledge of what I had done, and the worse knowledge that the infants (I was told) could never enter heaven. I understood myself never entering heaven and I knew that that was deserved, but the infants? No that could never be. And the anguish was unbearable.

Whilst I understand that this recent document doesn't definitively declare that Limbo is defunct, it goes to great lengths to say that today there is an understanding that God's mercy is far superior than sin and God's Mercy for the children knows no bounds. I liked the words that Limbo seems "too restrictive" of God's Mercy. Indeed this is how it seemed to

me, that God's Mercy could reach into the deepest of horrors but was stymied at Limbo's gates.

It is a destructive idea that appears to place limits on God's power and will to save everyone, including those in the womb of their mother, when the only limit to God's will, is willed, intentional sin on the part of the person. The concept also seems to go against Sacred Scripture, Jesus' universal act of salvation and the dignity of the human person.

I understand the importance of Baptism but today I think I have a totally different understanding of Baptism, and this is that it initiates the living child into the life and household of God and sets the child on its path towards eternity. For those who have died prior to this possibility Jesus "descends into their Sheol (death) and gathers them home as He did before."

With all the negative comments I have received through emails, calls, private discussions since the report from the Vatican came out, I am sure that it's going to take a long time for this concept of Limbo to be laid fully to rest. Perhaps what makes it more difficult is the fact that the word itself "limbo" has entered into vernacular, secular dictionaries, thus making its removal more difficult.

Ultimately no one knows who merits heaven, who enters into paradise, who can enjoy the beatific vision. In a way this is God's business so what we can do as parents who have miscarried, aborted, or lost children in some way or other, is to believe and to place them into the care and love and Mercy of God. Knowing He loves them better than us.

A newsletter of victims of Abortion

Name _____

Address _____ P/C _____

Donation _____

I **would/would not** like to be on your mailing list.

Victims of Abortion, National Office
PO Box 6094, Vermont South, Vic, 3133, Australia.
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Today I rest with greater comfort in the knowledge that my children (Miriam, Joseph and Gioia) rest in the Lord. Today when I speak with my "girls" about their babies I am serene. Our children are enwrapped in the loving arms and Mercy of God which is boundless and which surpasses all boundaries which human persons seem to want to erect, and I am so happy that God's mercy far surpasses the sins, failures, shortcomings of earthly parents, and this gives me the hope to continue. In all honesty I would not have been able to continue in this work if I believed that my two aborted children (and the miscarried one) could never be with God because of my own action and my own great sin.

For my wonderful readers, this was one of the things I prayed, spoke, pleaded for at the Vatican. Simply an answer to that International Theological Commission which had been set up by the late great John Paul II to inquire into this idea and tradition (small t) which has evolved within the Catholic system and which now has taken on a life of its own. Indeed my prayers were answered and very quickly too. I am so proud of those people I spoke to. They are not the unthinking unfeeling individuals portrayed by media. They feel and they care. My hope for the other requests is also strong. Thank you wonderful Lord.

Priests and Pastors: Reprise.

In this issue of the newsletter I would like to speak again to Priests and Pastors and I do this with humility and respect for them.

First of all I would like to say that in my nearly 12 years of work in this area I have encountered many Catholic, Christian (non practising) women and men. These have been individuals, especially women, whose origin is Christianity but who have abandoned their faith together with their aborted baby. Women who have agreed to an abortion not only surrendered their child to the abortionist, but also, in the process, their God. Their sense of being valued by God, and their belief that they can ever be forgiven by God, now seriously compromised.

Abortion not only creates a fissure in the woman's psychological life, but causes a deep rupture in her spiritual being. An abortive woman who has come to the realisation that abortion has meant death of her child then becomes afraid of God and of His punishment (fully deserved-according to her). The type of punishment that she feels is merited by her takes many forms, but most especially in the form of punishment by means of hurting or 'taking' present or future children or loved ones. The abortive woman lives in a constant fear that "something awful" will happen to her children or loved ones. The punishment envisaged is always grotesque.

It is important to understand the very real and very deep fear that an abortive woman lives with. There is always a dark cloud suspended over her and her family and anything may bring on the divine wrath so that "He" (God) will get even with her. This description is not an exaggeration; it is the norm, especially where the woman has had some religious input,

Abortion causes a deep rupture in her spiritual being.

especially a threatening and conditional input. It is also important to understand that where a woman is fearful of God she withdraws from Him and cannot speak about Him or have a relationship with Him. She cannot speak about the love of God or the Mercy of God because she has long since been silent and deaf in her relationship and dialogue with Him. It is also important to understand that where a woman cannot speak about God or His Mercy or even His very existence, then this contributes to the failure to bring God into the home and into the lives of her family.

Indeed this I believe **is one** of the contributing factors why children are no longer even acquainted with God or their faith. A mother (or a father) who has aborted her own child cannot then speak to her other children about the God of Life or matters of faith. A mother who has aborted her own child cannot possibly consider the possibility of an afterlife because this possibility brings with it the very real reality that the child she aborted will come before her at some time in the future. So it is always better not to even consider this possibility and to concentrate on giving the existing children a "good" now life, rather than a possible "after" or eternal life. →

Pastoral Care.

The pastoral care of abortive men and women will, I believe, become the new work of great Mercy of the future. With the huge numbers of abortions being carried out and ultimately the damaged women (and men) emerging, will mean that a new look will have to be taken into the "how to deal" with of these wounded individuals. To suggest that it is only a minor issue is to misunderstand both the nature of grief and the depth of pain involved in an abortion. Misunderstanding of this can then cause further harm and possibly a further flight away from God and into despair.

The Pastoral care of abortive men and women begins by acknowledgement that abortion really exists and touches the lives of all of us, and not just the abortive people. It continues with becoming fully conversant and knowledgeable about the trauma that is abortion grief, and then either offering of counselling (individually) or referring to others who can deal with this issue, and finally being available to help if called upon to assist in the final chapter of this woman's and her baby's story. This, by the exercising of the

The pastoral care of men and women will become the new work of Mercy.

sacramental gifts of priesthood in order to bring God's healing to him/her. Abortion trauma and grief can make women very ill, mentally, physically and spiritually. It creates a crisis in her life and those around her, and calls into question the very idea about salvation and her own place or value in life and role (if any) in the life of the Church. Anointing the sick (individual and congregation) in this instance would be of enormous value because through the anointing, the Holy Spirit (The Lord and Giver of Life) is asked to become involved in the regathering of the individual and or community. It is not extravagant or erroneous to offer anointing of the sick to the whole→

parish or community (for healing of abortion wounds) because when an abortion is carried out it is not only the woman and man who is involved, but the community in which he/she is a member, and whose norms she has acquired, which is now diminished and wounded. This is because the life of one of its brothers or sisters was summarily terminated whilst they stood by. This being so, the whole of the community has been affected. We understand that the Church is the Body of Christ so indeed when one member, either mother, father or aborted infant, is hurt the rest of the body feels the pain.

Whilst it is appreciated that priests and pastors for the most part remain silent about the abortion issue out of a perceived compassion for those who have already aborted, the reality is that this type of compassion only leads to more suffering. Families touched by the abortion experience continue to suffer but do so in silence. I can almost hear the seductive voice of Satan saying "leave them alone they are suffering enough" yet the voice of Jesus would say "come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yolk and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and *you will find rest for your souls*" (Mt 11:28-30) Jesus offers rest, healing, renewal. Satan offers silence. Jesus offers companionship, incorporation, and peace. Satan offers isolation and despair.

In my experience over these 12 years, I have encountered many women who continually confess and re-confess their sin of abortion, and are still unable to accept the forgiveness of God. This is usually because this woman is stuck in, and experiencing a complicated type of grief, because of the manner of the dying, and is unable to understand or move towards God or His forgiveness. Accepting forgiveness from God would mean re-establishing a relationship with Him and the possibility of new life. A new life would also mean letting go of her own self-punishment regime and making a choice for life beginning with her own life. This is not possible for her, because she sees her abortion as the most grievous of sins and absolutely unforgivable. An oft-repeated comment is "God may be able to forgive me, but I can never forgive myself." This is **an alert** that it is complicated grief and usually there are other very deep wounds which fuel the severity of her grief and her refusal to forgive herself. Again this is a sign of complicated grief and requires much work, love, care, and patience in order to reach a place of resolution and peace.

An individual who exhibits this type of behaviour has many unresolved issues and is grieving other unacknowledged losses. However the other losses, like the abortion, are filed securely in an inaccessible place. It is

important to speak to these individuals on a one to one basis and where this is difficult, to recommend a grief counsellor (or even me or someone like me). This person is looking for help and it has taken courage to make this initial step. It's therefore important to do the right thing immediately.

We live in a time of Mercy, yet we do not act like this is so. I would invite, urge, encourage priests, pastors to speak openly and from pulpits about the abortion issue because it then follows that it is possible to speak of His abundant Mercy, when and if this sin is committed. This way it becomes possible to fight against the destruction of all that is held sacred (family breakdown, drug addiction, sexual perversions, promiscuity, abortions and all other anti life activities), by going to the root of the pain.

Until the day comes when we who live immersed in this battle are openly helped by our ministers of religion, then this battle is uneven and we who work within this area "limp" rather than stride fiercely. Please understand that the anti life forces have their "high priests/priestesses" leading their unholy troops. We on the side of life also need our Holy Priests, Pastors, and ministers of religion to lead the holy troops. The enemy of life is Satan, not each other. His battle is against God. Those men and women who abort are instruments used to accomplish the attack and for the most part ignorant both of the battle being waged and their part in the battle.

Priesthood

Priesthood is an extraordinary gift to the world and it would seem likely that it would be a prime target for attack by the lower powers. And whilst it's possible that consumerism, and materialism and me-ism contribute to the loss of attraction to priesthood, it is also my belief that not only these contribute to this paucity of vocations, but also abortion contributes by ensuring that mothers and fathers cannot offer to God a son for his service because God is both absent from their lives and/or has already been "given" or as someone recently said, "had

Continuation about Rome...

Story of the grieving woman, cont...

"Anne, I want to tell you a little more about Antoinette. I forgot to tell you I spent some time praying for her and her husband two days ago while I was in bed with fever. I hope God will hear us praying and let them be parents one more time. Mauro and I had a wonderful evening at their place, she cooked a meal for us after we went together to see my wedding dress. Anyway after we returned Sal and Antoinette showed us the bible I gave them, letting us see the names of their 4 babies which were scripted at the end of the bible. They were so proud. During the dinner Sal started talking about you and said he would love talk to you and said he never thought of himself as a parent until you came here, and now he is so happy. **He feels like a father.** I think they were really in crisis in their marriage before you came. Now they seem more serene as if your encounter gave them more strength and hope and a bit of healing to their marriage too. Then we had a look at their wedding album which they said they hadn't looked at those for years, so I think it was good for them to have a walk in their past too and see how they once were. Perhaps I have written too much but it's important to say that sometimes God gives us miracles through people like you. Be always hopeful! I always pray for you and your family. Baci (kisses) from Bruna."

*Thanks darling Bruna, the reason I continue to bring this to you my readers is because I would like you to see that when God heals He heals wholly. This dear couple were helped to see that God has loved them and never abandoned them. He sent someone from the other end of the world to tell them how much he loved them and their 4 babies who rest with him. How wonderful it is that this man at last sees **himself as a father to four children.** Children who are not living with them but with the Lord, But he fully acknowledges them as his children and he is their father and she is their mother and whilst they miss the children, these children belong to them. Not only have these parents been reconnected with their babies (1 abortion 3 miscarriages), they have acknowledged them and given them a name and a family, and in the process Our wonderful Lord has renewed and strengthened their marriage. Indeed God does work strong miracles in our midst.*

thrown back in His face" the gift of another child. Abortion has not only deprived the world of future citizens and their whole genealogies but deprived the world of artists, musicians, health workers, scientists, pastors, priests etc. Abortion has proven to be the most nefarious of weapons against humanity. It can only have been devised by a monster.

I would encourage priests, pastors and other workers in the "vineyard" to speak out loudly, consistently about this evil which has marked our times. It is important to speak fearlessly about this issue because all other "rights" and "issues" disappear into nothingness when the "right" to life has been removed and or violated.

The church, through its Priests and ministers must speak out about abortion not only for its own sake but so that it can call out to those men and women who are either sitting in the pews silently weeping (a grandchild, a niece, a nephew, a sister/brother who has died that way) or more importantly go out into the marketplace and find those who are hurt and bind their wounds. Abortion deeply harms humanity. Reconciliation between God, the woman (man) and child can only be accomplished when the silence is broken. Indeed where there is silence women are condemned to suffering alone. Indeed they are the most wretched of creatures and know themselves to be such.

This type of suffering is not redemptive but a scapegoating type of suffering. The women who suffer as a result of their abortion redirect their suffering into a self-destructive type of suffering which is merciless. It is aggravated and it is a demonic call to suffering rather than redemptive type of suffering. Cate (one of my women) for many years went to reconciliation yet she never felt that God had forgiven her. She needed to hear the words that she had been forgiven but believed them for a time and then the need returned again. Her marathon came to an end after many sessions of counselling followed by an encounter with a priest who was compassionate and this time she believed. And her need to continually

seek forgiveness for the abortion came to an end. Hannah annually slipped into depression on or about the month of September and attempted suicide or did something very self destructive (self mutilation). Her suicide attempts have come to an end and whilst she remembers the month of September and does something special for her baby, it is not destructive. Sharon had a strong desire to take someone else's baby, any baby, just a baby. Today she can visit friends with babies and not feel the desire to walk away with them. She understands why the desire. Julie's habit is to walk away from any problem and pretend it never happened. For her the abortion did not happen either. It was simply a curette. Her life is one of walking away from any sign of difficulty including relationship after relationship after relationship. It is important to understand that the mental health of some of the women who abort is very fragile and it may only take something very trivial, to set her off into deep depression and trauma. This is why it's important to speak about abortion because to speak about abortion means that it is possible to speak about healing, love of God, Mercy of God, forgiveness by God and baby. To remain silent means that only occasionally a priest or pastor will hear about the suffering of→

someone who has had an abortion.

This Work

I have received some phone calls and emails asking me, if I am doing the same work as other post abortion initiatives, and if so why don't we all work together etc etc. etc. and what's the difference?

I have decided to write a little about this because I am sure others are also wondering.

I began "Victims of Abortion" before the other initiatives came to Australia. I began VOA when really there was not much happening in the area of post abortion counselling and have spent the last twelve years learning and speaking about the after effects of abortion on women, men and society. I have continued to educate myself, and to slowly refine and hone my counselling skills in this particular area.

I have further learnt that wherever there is an abortion/s there has been pre abortion and post abortion self destructive behaviours and these also need to be dealt with before all is Ok. If this is not done, then during another of life's crisis the old torments of "this must be my

To speak about abortion means it becomes possible to speak about healing.

punishment from God for my abortion/s" will resurface and begin the anguish again.

I have also discovered that where there are multiple abortions invariably there is also some form of sexual abuse present. Again this also needs dealing with, before gently laying to rest **ALL** the babies one by one, and name by name.

I have also skilled myself and educated myself to deal with this topic (sexual abuse) when I find it in the life of the woman.

My mission is to help bring wholeness to the person in front of me. I do this slowly, weekly, step by step, with many stops and starts, but→

they are assuredly well, by the time they leave me.

In 12 years I have never written one invoice to one of my girls and the reason for this is because when I began, in the earliest days, I "lost" two girls because as they said at the time "Anne I can't come any more because I can't afford \$10" (Karen, 17 years, Cheryl, 19 yrs) and they disappeared down the phone line never to be heard of again. From then on I decided that if the Lord wanted me to continue He would have to help me deal with the financial aspect. And He has. To date I pay the bills monthly.

Letters

Dear Anne,

Congratulations on your newsletter. Over the years I have been quite uplifted by your work and the various topics you cover in the area of the long term suffering of abortion. May you be showered with graces and blessings so that you continue in your vocation. With love and prayers,
God Bless
Carmela...Vic...

Dear Anne,

Thank you for your nice card. I will pray the prayer every day. Saw yesterday that the Vatican have abolished Limbo The Holy Father believes that those babies that never had the opportunity to be baptised return to the Lord. This would a great comfort to so many people. It has always been my own belief that God is too loving to leave anyone who has not sinned outside of Heaven. These are Saints. God bless your work and thank you for supporting ours.

Yours in Jesus and Mary,
Leo

Dear Anne,

Enclosed find a donation towards your apostolate. Your meeting with the Pontifical Council is pretty impressive. I hope and pray that your requests are heard and given help. I was also impressed with the time you spent talking with "Antoinette".
Good on you Anne,
From Peter T.

Dear Anne,

That Vatican meeting sounds excellent hope everything comes through, you have earned your stripes.
God Bless you and your girls and family,
Joanne B.

Dear Anne,

Thanks so much for today. I felt healing happening, even while you were here. I will talk to Mum now - I feel I can do it without anger now, so that she can also be helped. I feel I can put aside myself in order to try to help her. So thank you and praise God!

I also gained a larger perspective on the abortion/sex-ed/sexual abuse etc problem of the world. Still don't know how to tackle it. I guess I'll pray for a while and wait for God to take me by the hand again.

I'll be praying for you and your family and your girls.

In Christ
Anne

Dear Anne,

Congratulations of your recent visit to the Vatican! It must have been an experience indeed. Reading your recent "Broken Branches" has been a revelation in more ways than one. So pleased to hear that you were well accepted and welcomed at the Vatican. No doubt this will be most encouraging for you as you continue your loving and caring work, especially in times of heartbreaking areas of which we see and hear much about.

I am enclosing a small donation and hope to it helps. We are so very proud of you dear Anne that words fail me when I try to express my admiration but at least I can continue to pray for you and those who work with you and your loved ones.
May God Bless and strengthen you.
Sincerely
Ivy.

I have now seen over 1000 women and men (mostly women), some really long term and some short term (depending on their needs).

The difference between my work and others is that I work with the person on a one to one basis, and **this includes**, helping them return to their God (where there was a religious belief but abandoned because of some trauma, abuse, abortion). A Masters Degree in Theology helps me to do this. I tend not to accept more girls than I can cope with because I work intensely with them until the end when we hug and say goodbye.

There is so much anguish in society that not only my work but the work of other post abortion initiatives is desperately needed, irrespective of what the organization is called.

I needed to clarify this because there was distress shown by several callers that someone had spoken ill of me (not my work) and so it's important to clarify. While your support of me continues I will keep going, when your support stops I will retire and sit under the plum tree in the back garden with a "cuppa tea, or wine" and a good book.

So indeed it is up to you whether I continue.

As far as other initiatives are concerned, bless them and I hope we can see the work of God in what we all try to do for those who are hurt.

R.I.P.

Rest in peace two precious supporters of mine, dear young Michael Corrigan, who returned to God recently and my very dear friend and supporter Fr Cyril (UK). Father paid for my recent trip to Rome. He was always mindful of

my needs. I will miss these two friends so much. They liked me and I really liked them.

Another of my friends has asked that their new website be recommended to you for downloading free catholic books.

www.freecatholicbooks.com

For Leo and Paul. Thanks for your support.



Meet Baby Alexander son of one of the girls, Athina, you have prayed for her. *Isn't he gorgeous? I love my work. When God heals He heals beautifully.*

Please continue to pray for Melissa, Jacquie, Carlie, Hamish, Maree, Andrea, Michelle, Elissa, Iris, Greg, Dianne, Helene, Phillipa, Natasha, Sophie, Brigid, Stephanie, Anne, Sue, Grace, Derek, Carlie, Silvia, Antoinette, Nancy, James, Sophie, Kate, Kathy, Simon, Tania, Clare, Catherine.

Anne Lastman

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Broken Branches - By email!



Dear Friends,

In an effort to help reduce the costs and time put into preparing each newsletter, I am now able to email it out to you in Adobe Acrobat format (.PDF). So if you would prefer to receive Broken Branches electronically, please email me at annevoa@bigpond.net.au with a request to be added to the email list.