

Broken Branches

Issue 60

Oct/Nov 2007

John 15

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

This issue is dedicated to the loving memory of Johanna Duke beloved wife Errol and mother of Robert, Aaron, Travis and Rachael. Johanna passed peacefully away after a long battle with ovarian cancer.

Johanna and Errol have been supporters of mine since I began this ministry. Thank you faithful friends. A beautiful new saint in heaven..

RIP dear brave beautiful Johanna.

Women and Post Abortion Grief and Trauma.

I often hear that "women" suffer post abortion grief. That "women" are left traumatised. That "women" are left to experience the after effects of abortion etc. All this is true, and of course I understand this to be very true both from a personal experience and from listening to the stories of many women over 12 years of working as a post abortion grief counsellor.

However, what I am going to take exception to is the term "women"

This term "women" assumes an adult status, however, more and more what we are seeing is not only "women" aborting but children aborting. Yes "women" abort because of pressures from husband, boyfriend, partner, career, and personal expectations and fears. However, I disagree that it is only "women"

who abort. It is more and more clear that "women" do not abort, but rather it is the chronologically immature, or the emotionally immature who abort. Why is this?

Perhaps the reason we use the term "women abort" is because there is no place or name that we can give to adolescents who abort. We cannot even contemplate that a young person just over childhood will take her own child to be aborted. And indeed if we contemplate that a very very young adult takes another child to be aborted, then we need to ask "how and why did this young person get pregnant in the first place?"

As I listen to the words of "women" who abort and also listen to the words of very very young "women" (girls) it is clear to see the differences in understanding and the differences even in the grieving patterns and styles.

Women of the adult variety speak of abortion as something that had to be done. "Women" of the immature and youthful variety speak of "killing it" "I had to do as mum said or I would be kicked out." Or, "I didn't think it would worry me so much but now I cant help thinking that it was a real human being" Or "I have looked up on the internet to see how big my "baby" was and it was real. How could I kill it?" These are common comments made by very young abortees.

For the first lot (mature abortees) it's about getting it done, the reason is "out there" external to themselves. For the youthful abortee it's

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about surprise, unreality. Whilst abortees of the adult variety, use different and varying terms. More adult language.

The reason why I have thought to speak about this is because I am hearing in the field that different organizations and different peoples have meetings and conferences about what can be done to help “women” keep their babies rather than abort. How to “embrace” those who have had abortions. Many words and dollars are spent on research into how to make it possible for “women” to keep their babies, and yet more and more I am seeing not “women” but very very young teens who have aborted and are aborting and the number of abortions continues to increase.

Actually the abortees of the more adult (women) variety have usually had the abortion years ago, or are those in their twenties and thirties who are career minded or in between relationships. but abortees of the very youthful variety have aborted within the last five years.

It concerns me deeply that in our speaking a language of “women” and their abortion and the helps that might be possible in order to prevent another abortion, we may forget that the “new” abortee is usually young, a school girl, wearing a school uniform, going into an abortion clinic and usually very distressed and being ushered in by either her mother or “best” friend, not even the father of the child being aborted. She is also someone who is engaging in behaviour not appropriate for her age and in going for an

abortion is removing the evidence of that behaviour.

A 13 year old having an abortion is NOT a “woman.” A 14 year old is not “a woman” yet we speak about “women” who abort and who may not have wanted to abort but for whatever reason have aborted.

It is my contention that when a “woman” of the youthful variety (adolescent) becomes pregnant and then has an abortion, the groundwork is set for future self destructive behaviours. For future complicated, disenfranchised type of grief and this then underpins the growing, maturing young woman’s emotional, psychological, spiritual development.

The groundwork is set up for increased risk of breast cancer. The groundwork is set up for increased risk of suicide ideation and even attempts. For depression, for future post natal depression, for eating disorders, for substance abuses and the list goes on. Indeed the ground work is set up for engagement in risky type of behaviour as a way of dealing with the abortion.

Today we have, what appear to be, young people on a journey to self maceration. Young people with a nihilistic mentality, young people who relieve their anxieties using measures which are destructive (eg drugs) and yet we would never dream of asking the big “Why” questions.

Yes, “women” do have abortions, and indeed we need to find ways to change this. However,

... A 13 year old having an abortion is NOT a “woman” ...

more and more they are younger and younger, and this being the case, we need to ask “why”

My own thought is that society as a whole is permitting the sexualization of children far too young. Children are introduced (via various means and media) into sexuality, way too young, and this being so they are unable to cope with the information and actions attendant to that behaviour.

Children are not being protected against this violence done to their innocence. Children are left to their own devices. Children (girls) are given the “pill” before they are given their first driving lesson. Children are introduced to the notion of “sex” before “sex” is important to them or has a meaning or an impact in their lives.

It is amazing that an adolescent has to be at least 16 years of age before being given “Ls” to begin to learn to drive. A Young person cannot vote before 18 years of age. Yet information about sexuality is being imprinted into their psychology during their most important formative years and most important years of tranquillity. This is a violence done to the→

developmental stages of that child. A violence done to the child’s innocence, so that it shouldn’t surprise us when an abortion results.

But **this is not** a “woman” who has had the abortion, it is a young adolescent who has aborted and who will be left with the memory of that incidence. Abortion as I have said many times is always situation specific; however, its effect is lifelong.

A really special short article written by a reader of my newsletter. The author of the article offered to write this for me and I jumped with open arms. It is a beautiful story. Please read it and enjoy its content. Anne

Anne,

I read in your last newsletter about therapeutic abortions. My name is Grazia, I’m 35 years old and I’m Italian. I’m a mum of six children, and I don’t have personal experience of abortion, but twice in my life doctors suggested for me to have an abortion. The first time was when I was pregnant with my first daughter. Because she

... Children are not being protected against violence done to their innocence ...

was conceived before the marriage, while I was studying at University and my boyfriend, now my husband was studying too. My doctor was very worry about my career, my professional life, but not about the life of my baby. He told me: “We don’t have much time; we have to do everything quickly!” I understood he was speaking about to commit abortion. In that time, I though about all my whole life, everything should changed, we were still engaged, without our own house, without job, without money, we were both 22 years old. The abortion was “therapeutic”. My doctor told me. For my life: “No one will know anything, you don’t need to speak with your parents, and you can→

continue to study, and you can wait for having a better life for your future children. Trust me; this is the best thing to do!” Five seconds, thinking about what he was telling me, were enough to make me feel, in my heart, the biggest pain which I never felt in my life. Only thinking to kill my baby, it already made me feel a huge suffering. And I replied to him: “I’m sorry, but I can’t do it! I know, everything will be hard, but I prefer don’t eat, don’t have house, don’t study, risking to loose the love of my parents, but I can’t kill my baby”. In few months we got married, and a beautiful girl was born. And very soon we had two more babies, twins. Little by little, we found a house, my

husband found a job, and also sometime among sufferings, we were growing up with our children, and we learnt to be parents just through them.

When I was 32, I was really in crisis with my self, with my husband. I was scared to have other children; I didn't want to make sacrifices any more. I was afraid of the sufferings of life. In the fear of losing my own life, I was really losing everything: my family, my husband, in fact we almost separated because of these fears and my selfishness.

Just in that situation, I discovered that I was expecting my fourth child. After seven years a new life was coming. Every one was happy, except me. I was spending all day long, crying and thinking about giving birth, about potential complications in the pregnancy, etc. My mind was full of "ghosts". In few days those ghosts took flesh, in fact since the beginning of the pregnancy, I had many problems with my health. I had many bleedings, risking to lose the baby. I was every day in the bed. And in three months I had 3 long hospitalisations. At that time I started learning to love my baby, because I understood he could die.

Around the fifth month of this pregnancy, during ultra sound, the doctor discovered a malformation in my baby. Cleft lip and palate, was the medical diagnosis. We were very confused, and astonished because it had never appeared in our family, a malformation like that. We asked to the doctor what could have happened, why this kind of sickness, and especially we wanted to know what we could have done for our child, soon after his birth. But the only answer that was given to us, was: "Do you know how many sufferings there will be for you and your child? How many operations? And also, sometimes, this malformation is a part of very bad syndromes. But fortunately today's there is abortion! In your case therapeutic abortion." We replied: "Therapeutic abortion?? "Therapeutic" for whom? Could he heal thru that? I defended the life of my child until this moment and now should I kill him, only

because of this malformation? God sent this life, and we are sure, also this malformation. We'll receive strength from Him, to live our future difficulties."

They also told us, at least we should have to do amniotic fluid test. But doing it, meant a death sentence for my child, because my many past bleedings. In addition that test was completely useless, because it couldn't help us to cure our child. We made choice not to do it, and we wanted to have this child as he was. We wanted to love him as he was. First of all, we spoke with our children, to prepare them about their little brother, about the malformation, and the operations. They were sad, but seeing us full of hope, made them feel better. And day by day, they were ready to accept him.

Also if we had spoken very clearly with the doctors about don't commit abortion; they still tried to push us to do it. In fact they rang us at home many times. Plus, they called my private gynaecologist, to speak about our situation, and especially about our decision to have the baby.

We were really under pressure, from the doctors, from some relatives. They told us: "You don't need another child, you had already 3! This new one will be handicapped person. You will not able to cure the sick one and look after the other ones all together properly!"

At that time we were exhausted, that's why we decided to visit the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Loreto, praying the Virgin Mary, to help us in our reality and difficulties. We also asked our children to ask Her a special grace, and surely She would listen to us. Our daughter, she was 9, she asked to Her: "My mum is suffering a lot, could this baby brother be born soon if possible?" The Virgin Mary really fulfilled this prayer, in fact after this, suddenly my bleedings got worse. I was in 33 weeks, I went quickly to the hospital and by caesarean set in emergency, and they saved both our lives.

Finally we could hold in our arms this baby. We named him "Andrea" because the meaning is

Congratulations

Congratulations to my beautiful second son Jonathon and my new and beautiful daughter in law Amy on the occasion of their wedding on September 23, in Perth .

I was the proud mother and mother-in-law.

It was such a happy occasion and happy day for all of us.

Please pray for them that their life together will be filled with great happiness and many little feet.

God Bless their life together.

“brave man, strong man”. Even if he was born prematurely, he weighs 2 kilos, he could breathe properly, and he could suck milk properly. He was full of energy and really a strong baby.

In few days we found the best cleft palate clinic in Italy, and in the first 3 years of his life, he had 4 operations. During these years we met many people, many families, and we had many experiences, some time suffering more, sometime less. But this event is the most important event of our life, ever, because this experience rebuilt our marriage, our children learnt to accept the differences, we experienced a big unity in the family, it cured all my fears, got rid of all my “ghosts”.

In fact following this, we had two more children; the last one was born here in Melbourne. We learnt also how God loves us as Father; He always knows what we need. And often times what seems a bad situation, that which seems only a suffering without meaning, it can become the biggest happiness in our life. Andrea is a really a special baby, he is not a handicapped person, he can eat and sing, he can talk and play, he's vary intelligent, and sensitive, now he is 4 years old and he can speak properly Italian and English.

Now we are here in Australia, as a mission family, helping the Catholic Church, and giving our life for the new evangelisation which the Holy Father spoke about. Also this is a gift from God for us and a fruit of this experience with our son.

Dear Anne, thank you very much, for this possibility you gave me to write my experience, I hope through this, someone who's living the same situation, can receive help to listen the voice of heart and not the voice of fear, to make the right decision.

Thank you darling Grazia.

What this story has led me to think about is the possible number of aborted infants who would have been such a blessing to their families and to the lives of their parents.

I am reminded of the 32 week infant who was aborted here in Victoria because it was thought to have "dwarfism." I think of the many women I have spoken to who have aborted advanced pregnancies without waiting to see what God is capable of doing. To give Him, God, the possibility to fill our hearts with such deep love for the wounded.

Abortion Is "Deep Wound," Says Pope

On a recent trip to Vienna the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI made a comment which I found interesting and so important because he confirmed what I have been writing and saying over many years. As reported by Zenit news Sept. 7, 2007, The Holy Father said that abortion is not only a "deep wound" in society but is the total antithesis of human right. He further called on humanity to defend genuine human rights but to realise that the most fundamental human right is the presupposition of every other right, is the right to life itself from conception to natural end.

Perhaps what I found most interesting is the→

term the Holy Father used "deep wound" in society. And indeed we do have a deep wound in society and this deep wound is a wound made up of abandonment, death, rejection and despising of "Life" itself and children. The "deep wound" that cannot heal, or is difficult to heal is the silent grief of human beings who are slowly being de humanised through the abortion experience and through experimentation of "life" Abortion dehumanises all of us. Not just the abortive man/woman, but the society in which the man and woman live.

A deep hole/wound is left in society every time a new human person should have been born but was refused entry. A "deep wound" is left in society, every time a "woman/girl" concedes to end the life that she is carrying within her, because in doing this she corrupts her very feminine essence. Her Motherhood and mothering.

This wound is made larger because abortion actually changes the "character" of the woman. It changes her design into something like a mutation. The woman was never meant to let, allow, permit her child to be killed while she stood by and did nothing to save it. The woman

... Abortion dehumanises all of us ...

(as witnessed in the animal kingdom) defends her offspring against all danger. She does not take her offspring **into** danger. The "deep wound" is then, the absence of the new creation which is no more, but also it is the changing of the design of woman "mother of all living" (not mother of death). The "deep wound" is the woman who says, "my baby is imperfect and I don't want it." This is the voice of the new woman, with the corrupted essence of womanhood.

Abortion changes the design into one whose character is sterility and death and for this reason, the grief we see in the post abortive→

man/woman is sign that there has been an acknowledgement of what has been done and the knowledge that a death in fact has occurred and a death where life and love should have been. Indeed there is a deep gaping wound in society caused by the millions upon millions of deaths of unborn infants, and the mourning subsequent to that death. But also that bleeding wound, I fear, is bound to become bigger and bigger, as the new artificial reproduction technologies take hold and more and more women and children are used as experimental objects and more and more "life" and the fundamental right to life become disrespected and blurred.

Letters

Dear Anne,

I am halfway through the book (I find that I have to read it bit by bit for it to really sink in) and I just want to say it is brilliant so far. You have very clearly explained for me what has happened to the men of today. I have asked this question for a few years now and yours is the first answer that tells it like it is. So thank you once again. I hope it is a 'best seller'.

Regards,
Madge

Dear Anne

Now I have read and scrutinised your book, I offer my impressions and judgement: a deeply felt conviction of its worthy character, full of truth, insight, analysis, humanity, spirituality and Catholic theology as they relate to abortion.

You have created the necessary framework for responding to and understanding how to promote recovery after abortion. Your treatment of the subject is both profound and comprehensive. This work deserves to be brought to the attention of all who need to understand abortion, which his everyone. Perhaps advertising and promoting it through a flier electronically or in whatever way authors and publishers communicate new works to booksellers. Here in Adelaide the Christian bookshops don't appear to hold any books on this subject -I can only surmise the reasons. It is a wonderful achievement- congratulation and well done. Thank you for autographing my copy.

Regards,
Simone.

Dear Anne,

There is only one word to describe your book Redeeming Grief and that word is AWESOME. But I have one question for you. Where on earth do you find the time to look after your family, counsel your "girls" write your

newsletter and write such a magnificent book. And I thought I was busy. Do you ever rest?

Peter S (Chelsea, Vic.)
Not often Peter!

Dear Anne,

Your book arrived a few days ago and from the first sight of the cover and then the dedication I simply couldn't put it down. I have never read a book so fast. I have loved every page of it Especially I have loved the personal stories of your women and the man (Graeme). Each of the stories spoke volumes about the character of the women (and man) and the strength and integrity which their suffering has given them. I was enchanted with each story and I could see the love and healing of God in all of the women. In fact what we can see through their stories is the love of God made real in the human being. Hannah, Grace, Marie, Leigh Anne, Juliet, Jacinta and most of all the story of the baby Michael Thomas. Each of the stories is filled with love.

Thank you also for making the book so easy to read and understand. I am no longer afraid of the challenge to speak out. Thank you dear Anne for all the work you do and thank God for the beautiful girls who share their lives and their stories with us, who would not know of their suffering otherwise. God bless all of you and the women and men you help.

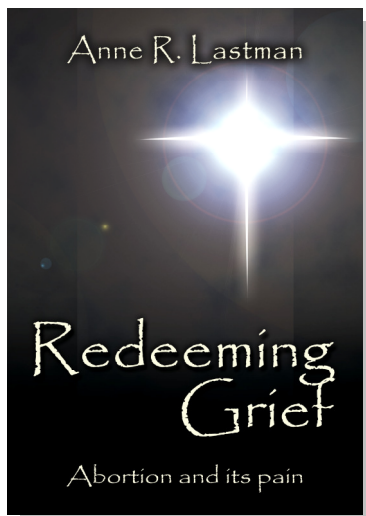
Mary and John K. (Sunshine, Vic.)

Dear Anne,

Thank you for the prompt delivery of your book. It is such a pleasure to read and I can feel such a sense of consolation and healing threading through the book. The girl's stories are beautiful and each of the girls has much to be proud of. They have shared their life with us readers and they can be assured that their life and story is honoured. Blessings on you and them.

Ian S. (Calista. WA)

Thank you Holy Father for your ongoing words for life and for our encouragement.



Thank you to the many people who have made enquiries concerning my book *Redeeming Grief*, and especially thank you to those who have purchased a copy from me. The feedback has been very positive (as you can see from just a few of the letters in the letters page) and those who have read it right through to the end have liked the content and style of the book. So I would encourage you to get a hold of a copy, when you can and read it.

At this time, apart from me, it is also possible to purchase a copy from Central Catholic Bookshop, 322 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, (03)96390844 or even from Freedom Publishing, 582 Queensberry Street, North Melbourne 3051 (03) 93265757. In due course I hope that distribution will be with other

outlets. Will let you know. Your support is hoped for.

As I come to the end of this issue of the newsletter I thank you for your ongoing support of me. It is at times difficult but mostly the Lord really and truly takes care of things. He really is a great “manager” couldn’t ask for anyone better.

Please continue to pray for this ministry which I offer and have offered for nearly 12 years. I know that the work I do is really good and those who work with me usually leave well. But I also know that this is not all my doing, but your prayers contribute enormously to its success. Often the girls tell me how much they feel prayed for. In difficult moments they feel a “peace” so I know it’s your prayers. So please continue.

Please continue to pray for Mel, Jacquie, Carlie, Hamish, Maree, Andrea, Michelle, Elissa, Iris, Dianne, Helene, Phillipa, Sophie, Brigid, Stephanie, Suzie (new) Derek, Silvia, Nancy, James, Kate, Kathy, Tania, Clare, Frances, Alexis (tons please) Mandy, Yvette, Sara, Julie, Judy (new) Adele (new).

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.