

Broken Branches

Issue 61

Dec/Jan 2008

John 15

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

The last issue of the newsletter (issue 60) was dedicated to the memory of Johanna Duke who recently died of ovarian cancer. Below is a tribute to her, by her husband Errol and appropriate for this newsletter.

The Most Precious Gift of Life

In January 1976 I became engaged to a lovely lady, but for unexplainable reasons at the time, broke off the engagement six weeks later.

Shortly after I met Johanna and I soon became besotted with her! She was a single mother though which was almost scorned upon in those times. While friends at the time of Robert's birth (1972) urged her to have an abortion, she was determined to have her baby.

Naturally I was initially cautious about becoming involved. In the early stages (realising that a third party was also involved) but Robert (baby) and I soon established a great relationship and as my late father advised me at the time "if you are prepared to love Robert (Bob) as your own-then go for it!"

Jo and I became engaged in November that year and were married on the 14th of May 1977. Shortly after I adopted Robert as my own son.

Four children, Robert, Aaron, Rachael and Travis, then became a special part of our 30 year marriage. In early 2004 Johanna's epic battle with ovarian cancer began, until she eventually passed away surrounded by her loving family with her at the Royal Adelaide Hospital on August 16th 2007.

Robert her first born son is now 35 years of age, married with a special daughter (Charlie Johanna)

who was born on the 20th May this year, after his wife Donna miscarried twice at around 2months, on both occasions. All of our children (the youngest still at home) live within 10 minutes of our family home. Robert and I share a most special bond of love. Hardly a day goes by without some sort of telephone, email or other social contact. He just cannot do enough for me!! Ever since the funeral of Johanna, I thank God so much for the special gifts of both Johanna and Robert and the other three children in my life.

Thank you Anne for the opportunity to write this story.

God Bless
Errol Duke.

Grandmothers

Often I have written, and indeed we see at abortion facilities, mothers pushing their at times struggling and crying daughters headlong into the abortion facility, to kill their grandchild. Fighting at times vigorously, any attempts to help or even to hear anything else, other than to get "it done quickly"

I have in past issues written that when a mother insists or takes her daughter to have an abortion, whether the abortion is wanted by the girl or not, the end result is a fractured relationship with that daughter.

From that moment on and after the abortion the daughter will always remember that "my mum took me to have my baby killed." There is an ache in those words that unless one hears them said,

A newsletter of Victims of Abortion

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one couldn't believe the pain that these words convey.

However, there is also the situation where the "grandmother" has not rushed the daughter into the abortion facility and indeed, has offered all manner of help in order to be able to be a grandmother to that still unseen baby. And then still not been able to help save the life of that child. How does that grandmother feel? How does she feel just even tasting the idea of "grandmother hood"

I have below a short story of one of these cases and again it's important to see that abortion does (as I have so often said) affect the whole spectrum of family and society.

How many grandmothers and grandfathers are wounded because of the decision to abort? How many grandparents are not even considered when the decision is made? Please read the story carefully and perhaps see the self blame this grandmother feels, even though there was not much she could have done because the decision was taken from her hands.

How Many grandparents would have loved to love their grandchild and see into the future a life which they helped to bring forth?

I asked Sarah to write her story, as much or as little as she could, this would help her and perhaps others to see that grandmothers can also be devastated when their own grandchild is aborted. That not all of grandmothers rush to have their grand baby aborted.

A Grandmother for 18 days

My unmarried 30 year old daughter, Bernice, told me she was involved in a new relationship earlier this year when she visited me. As she was about to return home she said to me "Before I go I may as well tell you I'm pregnant". With these words began an emotional few weeks that changed everything for me forever.

She then asked me if I'd mind the child for her from time to time if she wanted to pursue her career. I said yes. She asked me how I felt about her situation. I spoke of mixed feelings but said I partly felt joy – there is always joy in a new life.

I spoke of her unborn child and how it would be part of our family with uncles and aunts who would love him/her. I wanted to say things that would make the child more real to Bernice as I was aware that she did not share my beliefs against abortion. Bernice said "it's not really anything yet being only 4 weeks", however she was considering "having it".

She then left for her shared house about 4 hours drive away in the city with other young career minded people. I worried that once back there her friends and work colleagues would influence her against having the child.

Soon after there was a brief phone call from her to let me know that her boyfriend was relatively positive about the pregnancy. Bernice had asked me not to tell anyone of what she'd told me and I felt bound to the promise of silence. I continued with life – reading into the early mornings (my main addiction), working, walking the dogs – all the usual things that take up one's life.

"...I felt bound to the promise of silence..."

A few short days later I emailed Bernice suggesting she speak to a non-directive Christian counselling service dealing with pregnancy related issues. There was no reply from her which concerned me. I decided to leave further contact to her – I'd emailed so she could reply in her own time.

A week later being worried and not knowing the best approach to take I phoned the Christian counselling service for advice (I'd put off speaking to anyone because of Bernice's asking my silence). They suggested I try to persuade Bernice to not rush into anything – that it was important to take her time and act according to her true values.

I phoned my daughter but she did not want to speak for long. Again she said 'it's only a nothing I'm carrying'. Again I said I'd look after her child for her when he or she was young if that would help. Bernice sounded surprised and asked 'Why?'. 'Because it's my grandchild' I answered.

Bernice didn't want to speak any longer and hung up. I let a few days pass and phoned Anne Lastman. She gave me some very good advice regarding the words I could use to have my daughter think more carefully about her→

decision. The next evening I phoned my daughter and asked if she was still pregnant. There was a silence and then 'No'.

The day before I'd had a strong feeling the baby was already gone but being told this still hit hard. I asked her when the abortion had happened but she would not tell me. She asked why I wanted to know and I said knowing when it had happened would help me deal the grief I felt. Bernice was defensive and said again that it had been 'a nothing, more like an insect being killed, not something to grieve'.

I managed not to reply in a hurtful way. We said many things & I was able to tell her that I still loved her when she questioned me about that. Initially my grief was that numbness one feels immediately following a loss.

Because I'd offered to help look after the baby I had dwelt on thoughts of the future. I had imagined my daughter as a Mum to her child and although I knew life would hold difficulties with an unplanned baby had focused on the positive believing all life an unrepeatable gift from conception.

I had imagined the baby in its cot, and even once

"...it had been 'a nothing, more like an insect being killed ..."

had a strong image of my grandchild as a toddler walking beside me and holding my hand. So strong was this, in my imagination, that I could feel her hand and see her face. I saw my grandchild growing into adulthood. Now all of this was gone and my grief became intense after the numbness passed - I did not expect to feel so devastated.

Later Anne asked me if this grief was because I'd felt cheated or disappointed about the loss of being a grandmother in the years ahead. That was not my feeling – rather there was a feeling of the injustice of the death of an innocent one. Believing the death so unnecessary and→

thinking of the violence of the abortion added a sense of horror to the grief. The truth was I had been a grandmother for the few brief weeks that my unborn grandchild had lived.

After the initial grief I went through a stage of feeling a lot of guilt about not having prevented the abortion. I felt I'd let an innocent one, my grandchild, die and my daughter do something which has the potential to become extremely destructive to herself. I felt I'd failed the both of them in the extreme. For a while I had feelings of hating myself. I felt that although there was no certainty that if I'd tried harder things would have ended differently, I should have tried harder and

then at least been able to look back knowing I'd done my best.

Now I realize I cannot undo what has been done, and can only hope that some good will come from this. I've been through feelings of strongly resenting my daughter for the decision she made. In many ways I had not been a good mother to Bernice when she was a child, having been a single mother myself when she was born, and knowing this added to the guilt I felt about her having the abortion. I'd asked myself if I had been a better mother would she have acted differently. I cannot know the answer to this. Anne has offered me counselling to help heal those wounds and I am grateful for this.

I ask myself what I now believe I could have done differently. If I had that time over I would not have felt bound to silence. I would have phoned a counsellor earlier for advice. I would have spent every effort trying to find the words to prevent the tragedy of an abortion. There is so much else I could write, my life is different in many ways, having been the grandmother of that one for that short time. Anne has described this as a 'Kairos' moment in my life with the potential for great good or great harm.

The challenge ahead is to be a good and loving mother to my daughter. Maybe in the future if Bernice has regrets she will also take up this offer to speak to Anne.

'Sarah'.

Thank you Sarah for these words.

They echo what I always hear, self blame, self hate, could have done more, loss of dreams and hopes and visions, etc. It simply goes to show that abortion deeply wounds grandparents.

BENDIGO..... Victoria.

The Gianna Centre

Since the last issue of newsletter I have had the opportunity to travel through country Victoria and twice especially to Bendigo.

This I did at the invitation of the Gianna Centre, a marvellous Pregnancy support service. This centre refers (to me) women for post abortion counselling. I have over time developed a deep affection and appreciation of their work and the love and devotion with which the unpaid staff carry out this labour of love.

When Louise and Catherine from the centre asked me to be a member (I speak on post abortion matters) of a group presenting a program to a Catholic Secondary School in their area, I jumped at the idea because, this is how I believe we **might** begin to win the war against life, little miracle by little miracle, one small change at a time. I have asked Dianne (from the centre) to write for me (in her own words) a brief synopsis of the work of the centre so that you may see what marvellous work is being done. Herewith Dianne's words:

"One of my biggest passions is working at 'the Gianna centre'. The centre began as a pregnancy support centre in August 2004. I was a client over two years ago for a variety of personal reasons and since then I have joined the centre as a volunteer.

Why the name Gianna? It was chosen in honour of a very courageous and inspirational Italian doctor Gianna Beretta Molla. During her fourth pregnancy in the late 1950s, it was found that there would be complications (cancer). It meant death for either Gianna or her baby. Gianna wanted her baby to live. Gianna, a devout Catholic is now recognised as a Saint in the Catholic Church.

The centre has grown from not only supporting and referring pregnant mums, to also supporting and referring mums and dads who have had abortions. The centre does not claim to be a group of counsellors but supporters of those in need.

Due to lack of volunteers, the centre can only be open at certain times of the working week although we do have a mobile number for emergencies.

The centre also runs a program called CDO (Choices, Decisions, Outcomes) which was



Christmas Greetings

I wish for you dear and precious friends

A happy and Holy Christmas and a new
year filled with graces and joys.

I wish for you the peace which only God
can give.

And I pray that all your heart's desires
will be granted.

From myself and those who help me with
newsletter distribution,

God Bless your lives,

And if God wills we will meet again in
February.

God Bless,

Anne

and the little hard working elves.

started by a lady in Geelong, Victoria. The program is about relationships and we take this program into Secondary schools.

Several ladies from the centre also train potential mums and dads in The Billings Ovulation Method – Natural Fertility Control.

We have recently begun our own educational programs for schools, women's groups and anyone who is interested.

Our aim is to educate people about the truth on matters such as Abortion, STD's, Contraception, Drugs, Alcohol and much more. Topics that the general public are not told the truth about by the medical profession and drug companies.

This not-for-profit centre is run by a small handful of devoted volunteers. Most of the ladies I work with are Catholic although the centre is not based on any religion, and is non-political. I am an atheist and I have done much work in the area of research for the centre, and my eyes have been opened about many things that the centre stands for. I have also recognised that the truth in what we do is researched and presented by Catholic organizations because they have the courage to do so and to speak about the truth.

The five ladies (including myself) who do the presentations have acquired much knowledge and insight into what we are presenting. Our information is based on facts.

As well as research for the centre I prepare PowerPoint presentations for our sessions. These are very powerful to get the message across.

Although it is a struggle to remain open, (we are not funded from any source) we have managed to do so with the help of donations and fundraising. It is challenging and rewarding work. For myself, I have found something I truly believe in. The centre is very much what the community needs. However, it struggles very much in the funding and at times is threatened with closure."

Dianne Halls November 2007.

Thank you to Louise, Catherine, Dianne, Teresa, Sheryl, Michelle, and Sacred Heart Catholic College for such a warm welcome and appreciation of the work presented to the students.

Hopefully much more of this will happen next year.

If there are any of my readers who feel that they could help in any way to keep this centre open, please direct your enquiries to:

Catherine or Louise at

The Gianna Centre,
Shop 7,
Victoria Lane, Pall Mall
Bendigo 3550 Victoria, Australia
Ph: (03) 5442 4644
Mb 0417 392 255.

Thank you. Anne

The Year that Was

Well my dear and precious friends, we have come to that time of the year again. It seems to have snuck up and overtaken. I don't know if time is speeding up, but it only seemed to have been Christmas not long ago (I think I am still→

paying off last year's credit card Christmas purchases!!!) and here it is again. I hope to have about 4 weeks off from mid December to mid January and this year I think I really, really need it. It must be my ancient bones rebelling.

This year has been so busy that at times I don't know how I managed to stay standing on my feet.

I have counselled many new women and several males, (in fact 6 new women in this past month). I have travelled to Rome twice, for meetings (please pray for the success of these meetings), I have travelled interstate throughout Australia, and within the state of Victoria.

Always wherever I have travelled it has been for reasons of post abortion wounds and healing and the necessity for some powerful people to become involved. (Not one day's holiday in all the travel!!)

As I look at our society I am frightened for the future of the young, the future of marriage, the future of society in general. I am frightened because of the anti God anti life machinations that are afoot. I am frightened for the race for artificial life creation. And how long can we continue to mock God and think we can remain unscathed.

"...I am frightened because of the anti God anti life machinations that are afoot ..."

I have spoken to ladies groups, youth groups, a talk on Sydney radio station, conferences, seminars.

I have attended about 30 hours of grief and loss seminars/training for my own continued ongoing personal development. I believe this to be necessary so that I may offer my "girls" the very best of care.

I have been accepted for membership by the Australian Counselling Association as a fully qualified post abortion grief counsellor. →

This past year has at times been so busy that I have travelled into my office by train (its easier and cheaper daily) at 6.00am for 6 days per week.

I think I have to be careful what I say to the Lord. Every time I tell Him I want an easier time it somehow gets busier. So I am going to shhhh.

This past year I have also continued to write the newsletter and to bring to the readers various perspectives of the story of post abortion grief. Its disenfranchised nature. Its potential to change radically our society. Its complicated nature and I have encountered so much sexual abuse (incest), in the life of those who come to see me, that its

Letters

Dear Anne,

As I read your book I kept thinking about “a light appearing in the darkness”. If people really absorb your book their horizon will be broadened. My experience in reading the book is different from your other readers “who couldn’t put it down”. To me it’s so jam packed with insights and teachings that a small bite goes a long way. It’s a monumental work Teaching Catholic/Christian teaching and attitudes.

I especially liked the young father’s story over his grief over the loss of his child and his sense of unforgiveness of the mother. For me that was honest confession of his feelings and he has told of his feelings in an unglossed way. He has told the truth and won my admiration. To me he is standing in the light and I am praying for him.

Thank you Ann for such a work as your book.

Maria B.
NSW

Dear Anne

Thank you for your work and your recent issue of Broken Branches. The story you printed about Grazia makes us realise how much pressure poor mothers and fathers are put under from all sides, even doctors, to “have the baby aborted” What sad times we live in with so little trust in God.

I often wonder if those who are happy to encourage abortion would be happy if the same had been done to them before they were born.

May Our heavenly Father help you and those you help.

Your Carmelite friends.

Dear Anne,

All I can say is goodness!!!! I have just finished your book and then read your last issue of newsletter with Grazia’s story and I am in awe of you and the work you do and the women you speak with.

Grazia’s story touched me deeply because my sister was in a similar situation and they felt they had to fight for the life of their child even against the doctors. My niece turned out to be beautiful little girl, much loved and so clever, but then again I am biased. She is gorgeous and to think we may never have had her, had my sister and her husband listened to the doctors.

Ann keep going whatever you do, please keep going.

Sandra K.
Melbourne.

Dear Anne,

I have received your book Redeeming Grief and love the cover design. I notice that your son Lucas was the designer. What a gifted family you have. Your dedication moved me to tears and I knew from then on I would probably cry all the way through. which is what happened.

I have loved Marie’s story especially, and I wept much reading Thomas Michael’s story as told by his mother and father.

Whilst reading the last chapter I wept at the journey which is possible for those who want to travel the road of forgiveness and love, and I suppose I understood more clearly the work you do. Its brilliant. Congratulations Anne, well done. Your logo of “forget me not” is just so perfect.

Bev. C.
SA

Dear Anne,,

For me Chapter XV was important. We can see what a mystery plan is Divine Mercy. Several thoughts in this chapter stood out for me.
God Bless

Fr. Paul.

possible to see that sexual abuse and abortion can actually be seen causing the same kind of anguish and trauma.

It's interesting because I do not publicise my work in sexual abuse area and yet they are beginning to come in numbers to see me. I see the Lord at work in that and I see a great need for healing of this deep lacerating wound of the spirit. I have received many many kudos for my newsletter and also as per usual the criticisms, especially when I write about sexual abuse.

I have, as you know, published my book ***Redeeming Grief***. And I thank those who have bought a copy. It is not moving/selling as I would have thought but perhaps with time.

Mind you I have not promoted it apart from this newsletter. My husband thinks it will be a massive best seller if it ever "sees the light of day". I am still at the same office, difficult as it is, but I really haven't had time to do much else.

Thank you to my prayer warriors and supporters. Thank you to those who keep me and my girls and especially my family covered in prayer. This has been so important. Please, please continue to do this. As you know I depend entirely on your generosity. Please help if you can.

Thank you to those who keep the needs of this work in their heart and mind. Thank you to a particular supporter who has remained anonymous all year but faithfully sends regular donation. Thank you. You have helped with the rent. You know who you are. I appreciate your care especially as several of my larger supporters have not supported this year and I don't have the heart to ask them.

Please meet baby Daniel, son of Jacquie and her husband. You have been praying for Jacquie. Isn't he handsome!



As I come to this place, please continue to pray for me and family, and Melissa, Hamish, Maree, Jacquie, Andrea, Michelle, Alessia, Iris, Dianne, Helene, Phillipa, Sophie, Stephanie, Suzie, Derek, Silvia, James, Kate, Kathy, Tania, Clare, Frances, Mandy, Yvette, Sarah, Julie, Judy, Adele, Barabara (new) Jodie (new) Fiona (new) Sabrina (new) Angie (new) Leigh (new) Maria (new).

God Bless your life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne', with a horizontal line underneath.

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.