

Editorial.

Before I begin in earnestly with this month's newsletter, I really need to express my appreciation and deep gratitude to the avalanche of phone calls, emails, faxes, and letters which arrived following the last newsletter. I must admit that I was surprised that so many made the time to contact me re. the comments in the last issue. Indeed one morning I was amazed to see almost visibly a battle being waged, with me in the middle. Let me explain: Every morning before I go to the office in the city I check the post office box for mail. On this particular morning there was quite a large amount (for me). It even surprised me and I think it certainly surprised my postmaster because he made comment (good comment). However, it was when I opened the letters that I was taken aback. On the one hand there were 5 letters of cancellations, and on the other hand there were 6 letters of affirmation and support. As I looked at the two separate bundles it occurred to me that I was observing an invisible, quiet battle being waged with one side saying "give up" and the other side saying "you're doing well-keep going. Don't change anything. We support you." I think until that moment I was not quite sure what was happening, then I realised that the battle was spiritual and that really the "enemy" was just trying to give me some moments of "hot curry" so that I would slow down or destabilise.

I need to say that the reason given for cancellation of newsletters was that what I write is too graphic and too depressing and reading this "stuff" month after month just leads to more depression and a sense of gloom and doom. Whilst I understand this, and I have spoken to some of those who have cancelled, I have to continue with the story the way that I see it. As far as I am aware, it is not possible to make abortion and post abortion grief sound like a pleasant topic. IT ISN'T. IT CANNOT EVER BE A LIGHT TOPIC. IT IS A TOPIC ABOUT DEATH AND VIOLENCE AND COMPLICATED GRIEF. IT IS ABOUT GUILT AND SHAME AND DEPRESSION AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES.

Whilst the topic itself is difficult, there is also the hope that through the mercy of God, healing and reconciliation is possible. The topic itself is not easy but the outcome can have a "hope" dimension inscribed within it. It is this hope that keeps me, and those that come to me, going.

ABUSE

There are many types of abuse underpinning post abortion syndrome and each type has its own characteristics, yet each converges onto the same outcome. In this newsletter, I would like to deal with the issue of sexual abuse and/or incest, and its relationship to post abortion trauma. This of course is not to say that in every case of abortion sexual abuse or incest will be found in the history of the person who has aborted; but it is my experience that in large percentage of those who have come to me for counselling have this in their history.

As I moved deeper into post abortion trauma, I began to ask more and more questions of those who came before me, and one of the questions was, "is there sexual abuse in your history?" Initially I was looking for a reason, which was possibly fuelling the already explosive post abortion behaviour. This was not the only question, but one of the questions posed. To my great surprise and horror a huge number of women began by gingerly saying

BROKEN BRANCHES



John 15

“yes.” This of course surprised, shocked and intrigued me because there appeared a pattern emerging.

With this in mind I began pondering, studying, reading about the reason and any possible connection between early sexual violation and later decision to have an abortion followed by severe depression and grief. Perhaps I have stretched the bow too far (as it has been suggested) however, I do not think so. The parallel characteristics between abortion and sexual abuse, especially incest, are astonishing. In both incidences innocence has been lost. In both instances a dehumanisation of the innocent one has had to occur before the violation was perpetrated. In both instances there is a sense of helplessness. In both instances there is first abandonment of role by significant other. In both instances, there is following the event, ambivalence. In both instances there is a sense of guilt and shame. In both instances there is a sense of, “its my fault I shouldn't have done etc.” In both instances there is a sense of deep loss. In both instances there is a numbing grief. In both instances there is a sorrow over the loss of a future without “this” event. In both instances there is sorrow over the loss of the person she could have become “if that had not happened to me.” In both instances there is demonstrable evidence of strong damage to the individual's own idea of self-regard. Indeed I can go on and on showing the similarities.

As I began thinking more and more about this, I began to look for reasons “why” the behaviours and responses were so similar, and why the first act of violence contributed to later, and other decisions, which were intended as destructive and self defeating.

It would of course be ridiculous to even suggest that in a newsletter of approximately 1800 words I would be able to cover such a deep topic as sexual abuse and abortion. However, just very briefly it is my contention (from observation of clients) that where there has been a sexual violation especially by a trusted member within ones family, or friend, then all manner of spiritual and psychological arrest and retardation of development is manifested. All manner of caricatures of emotions are experienced and displayed and all manner of disfigurement of “inner self” is found. Sexual abuse and more specifically incest, not only severs forever the notion of “trust” especially “trust” of figures of authority, and figures of others important to ones own wellbeing, but more importantly plant seeds of “worthlessness” which will follow the girl or woman throughout her life. Sexual abuse of a young girl sets her on a journey of deep pain from which she may never fully recover. Incest/abuse appears to wound so deeply that every aspect of her development will be affected and stunted. She does not “trust” herself. She does not “trust” others. She becomes promiscuous looking for love and confusing love and sex. There is a need for peace but temporary peace comes from being bought with sex. Her decision-making skills are challenged and often the decisions she makes are not self-enhancing but debilitating. As she ages (not matures) a new dimension appears to enter into her sphere and that is she either allows herself to be fully controlled by others in all aspects of her life or alternatively she becomes strongly controlling herself. However, she does not seek to control others but exercises vicious control over aspects of her own life. E.g. eating, which leads to eating disorders. Sexual abuse and eating disorders share a commonality. They are both about being in total control. For a young woman who has been psychically, spiritually, psychologically disturbed because she was unable to prevent what happened to her, her response is to get control and hold onto that control even unto death.

As I speak to and counsel those who have had such an experience, I am aware that their abortion was just another self-defeating, anti life act. The abortion decision was made based upon the very notion that she cannot trust herself to be a mother least of all a good mother and she certainly cannot trust “him”. Further, whilst often there is ambivalence towards her child in the womb this woman will remain detached. Simply because she cannot feel. For too long her feelings have been shut down (that's why she needs constant sexual encounters because for a brief moment she can feel something) so that the memory of the abuse will not intrude. While listening to their history and the strategies employed I am not surprised by their decision to abort. I am not surprised at the continuing violence, which they persist on inflicting upon themselves. I am not surprised at their heightened feelings of guilt and shame they learnt these from their abuse and I am certainly not surprised at the complicated type of grief they are caught up in. Post abortion grief is complicated type of grief not only

because it is usually an un validated loss but where there are other 'complications' then the person must deal with multiple losses. The abortion can act as the trigger for the other losses. She will grieve not only for the abortion but also for all the other "losses" which are also taboo and therefore un validated. Abortion appears to be the final act of 'violence' before 'something' happens.

I continue to look into this matter because there is more to the decision to abort than is apparent at first sight, and if I am correct then we have not seen the worst of it. Please pray God does send rescuing angels to heal the "life" wounds of the young and not so young so that in the healing of the wounds of abandonment, abuse, distrust, we may begin to respect life and in this help to prevent further death of babies. We need to relearn the value of life.

I know that I have touched on different sensitive issues this month and some of which I will develop in depth at a later stage, however, after four years and many questions the profile of the aborted and aborting woman and aborting society is different. There are many issues involved and amongst these is what I have mentioned here. Of course there is always the willful aborter but that again is something else. This type of person is rare.

NICK'S COMMENTS

My name is Nick. I am 16 years of age and I go to a Catholic Secondary College and am currently in year 11. My mum asked me to write a short piece so she wouldn't have to write so much of her newsletter (she's getting old). I agreed to do this because she threatened not to cook for me any more, and she further threatened not to take me to school. Not that I would have minded staying home, but being in year 11, I think its important to turn up for my classes especially R.E. (mum made me write that). Anyway, I think I better get to the point of my piece. Mother has asked me to write about a teenager's perspective on abortion and how other kids my age view the topic. I do not know exactly what to write, and am apprehensive as I sit here locked in the computer room, isolated from the outside world (mum hid the key and she's breathing down my neck) Here goes, I will tell you about some experiences that I have had when abortion has arisen as the topic of conversation. First of all, I have to explain that at my school, although it is a Catholic one, only about 20 percent of students who go there are actually practicing Catholics. Everyday when wearing my normal uniform, I wear the "Precious Feet" badge (international pro life symbol) near the top of my tie. In this way people who look at me notice it, and I get a lot of friends and teachers asking me about it. Thus, by wearing the "feet," I can spread the Pro-life message to a lot of people who do not even know what an abortion is. An example of this was when I first started wearing these "feet" in year 9. My best friend asked me what I was wearing on my tie, and I proceeded to inform him what the "feet" were and what it meant to wear them. After explaining this, he asked me, "but what is wrong with an abortion? I thought it was just when a girl gets pregnant, they take a pill, and the baby inside which is not fully a baby yet, comes out the backside" (at the time, more colourful language was used but mum wouldn't let me write it). Well... with the many years of being trapped in my mother's car when she drove us to and from school, and having to listen to the tapes **you people** sent her, and her sermons, I had a chance to actually use some of this knowledge. After explaining what really happens in an abortion, and showing him a picture from one of mum's books of the baby in the womb and then after it was aborted, he was absolutely shocked at the horrific nature of this practice and wanted to know how this was legal. Since that day, my mate has been totally Pro-life and has backed me up whenever the topic has risen. I have included this example to show just how much, teenagers especially, are unaware of what is actually occurring in an abortion. I have to finish this off now as my mum is getting jealous of my fine work. I will write again soon and in future articles will tell you about other experiences I have had as a teenage Pro-lifer. Please feel free to send in any compliments about this piece, but I will not accept complaints.

Your favorite features writer.....Nick.

LETTERS:

Letter 1.

Dear Anne,

This is something that I felt that I should say to you because sometimes I don't know how people would ever realise the impact that one could have upon another. Three years ago I saw my brother (after many years distance) as a very broken and troubled person. He asked for help after several attempts in other areas, despondency was my overriding feeling. After speaking in passing of his troubles, you offered to try and help, if we wanted it. Since my brother has started seeing you -from the very first day- he smiled and said that he now had hope. HE SMILED!!! That hope is life changing for him. It means everything. For a man who was barely communicating even just months ago I am now getting my brother back. There is hope in what you do and that is why many other counsellors could not help him- because they didn't know that hope. I read an article by Br. Andrew a few months ago about the futility of Psychiatry without God. I have seen several attempts at this now and now I can see the difference with you. My brother looks forward to seeing you and sorting out his life. A few months ago that expectancy wasn't there. Thank you more than words can say and may God bless you and all you do.....Denise.

Letter 2.

Dearest Anne,

I went to see my little plaque again at St. Peter & Paul. It really touched me deeply. I am so thankful for whoever was responsible for paying for it and more than thankful to you and all the wonderful and loving saints who were a part of this happening. It is hard to put into words what it means to me, as I have never ritualised in that way before but now I realise what great love God has for each and everyone of his children including me. It is hardly adequate to express what is in my heart but I know that all the pain and struggle of these past years was worth it and that God cares very much. Thank you dearest Anne...I love you and will always honour your great work. Love and blessings.....Sally. (3 abortions).

I have included these two letters not to have my shoulder patted but that you can be assured that even if it is a graphic and difficult ministry it is important and valuable. Also every topic I cover is only briefly covered but I hope that it alerts you to the suffering in your midst. I would like this month to thank "my brother in Christ," Peter (Syd), Fr. Bernard, Br Simon, (UK) Marget, Fr. Leo K.. Thank you to my priest friends who have offered Mass for this work and for my family - **please** continue. I value this so much. Please continue to pray for Allan, Teresa, Naomi, Robyn, Leeanne, Narelle, Marcus, Roger, Martyn, Katrina, Josephine, Angela, Vincent, Paul, Michael, Sheryl, Phil, Denise, **Valentina (urgent)** Marie. THESE NAMES REQUIRE STRONG INTERCESSION. Thank you to the many who contacted me this month and to those who have supported in other ways. May you be recipients of Mercy.

May the Lord Bless and Keep you.



Anne Lastman.

Name _____

Address _____ P/C _____

Donation/Newsletter _____

Yes/no, I would/would not like to be on your mailing list.

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