

Dear Friends and supporters

Well we have reached that time of the year again a time that for some moments this past year seemed impossible to arrive at however, with God's help we have reached the end of another full year and the second for both Victims of Abortion and *Broken Branches*, this newsletter.

Since the last issue (Oct/Nov) I have been to Bendigo for further talks on post abortion grief and also to Adelaide (Dec 10-13) and importantly have begun working with four new girls three of whom are still with me and the fourth one came only once then felt that she was "OK" I generally do not disagree with someone who makes this kind of statement because I know that she is not ready to continue. However, she now knows where I am and had met me so when she is ready she will have a place to go to or perhaps even find someone else. She appeared uneasy in my office and I was not able to determine whether it was the icons or a painting I have (painted for me by my friend and artist Carol Hegarty) which shows an image of Jesus holding a tiny infant in His hand.

When I first began this ministry I used to be conscious of trying to please everyone that came into the office then it occurred to me that this is not possible so now I understand that some will wish to go elsewhere. However, even though this young lady did not return, in the two hours that she was with me she heard her baby being called "baby" She heard that God loves her and wants to see her well and happy. She heard that her baby does not hate her. She heard that she is and always will be unique and special because she is loved by God and He has sought her out. Perhaps these words were the "seeds" planted into her being and someone will come along and water them and protect them from pests.

One of the difficulties, which I think emerged from that encounter, was when we came to the possibility of her naming her child. For the first time that day tears welled in her eyes and then immediately there was a retreat by her into herself. It was almost visible that barrier that she brought down. This is always a sign that she cannot at this moment move from that "safe space" that she has created for herself. Her withdrawal simply means that the defences she has erected are firmly in place and have over time been strengthened. I also suspect that there are many other issues in her life which are fuelling the depth of this grief.

The naming of an aborted child and subsequent service and the placing of a name plaque are very difficult decisions for the mother to make because to reach this stage much has had to change with her cognitive and emotional understanding about abortion and more still has to change with her understanding of what this has meant for herself and her baby. To name the



John 15

child that before the abortion was not a “baby” but “disposable product” “medical waste” etc means a complete reversal of thought. To begin to see the humanity of the child is bound to cause immense pain because with this understanding comes the enormity of what has happened. The crystallising of the fact that she has taken her own child to die.

Even when there are no religious sentiments/beliefs this clarity of understanding halts progress. The woman (or man) cannot now function, as before, but must stop in order to process this new understanding and unless this is done with the utmost care this is the place where psychological disturbance is located and where these disturbances will persist. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why I cringe at “how to heal manuals” and leaflets for self healing, extended phone counselling and the new phenomenon of email counselling.

This type of availability (counselling) in the initial stages of contact is excellent, however, counselling cannot remain at this level because inscribed within it there is the potential for much more harm. An understanding of the psychological, psychosexual, psychosocial and spiritual dimension of grief and trauma must be understood if proper care is to be given to someone suffering post abortion psychosis and to my understanding there are no mild feelings of psychosis, just deeply repressed feelings. There are no mild feelings of unease because where there are some mild feelings of unease, there is more.



As I continue work and study in this area and perhaps look more closely at PAS (post abortion syndrome/ psychosis) I am more and more restrained in what I do because of what I believe is the gravity of the situation. Post abortion psychosis is serious. There is no doubt about it, and more especially when there are other deep wounds in the life of the woman. Therefore, if we understand that it is serious it must be treated as such and delivery of care must be geared to the seriousness of the situation. If, however, like pro abortion proponents we think that maybe its not so serious or maybe exists only in the mind of “guilt ridden-Christian, Catholic, or rabid pro lifer” then of course a “few chats over the phone or over email, or over a few cups of tea” will suffice. We **must decide** what we believe and then proceed accordingly.

To confirm this on November 16, 2001 (from Pro –Life E-News) came the report that “buried deep in the appropriations bill for the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education that passed the senate last week is an amendment that recognizes the existence of “post abortion depression and post abortion psychosis...”

This is the first time that the American House has passed (albeit quietly) such a senate amendment. It simply said and acknowledged that a syndrome relating to abortion exists and the symptoms of this syndrome are

characterised by guilt, severe depression, eating disorders, anxiety anger low self esteem, all this following an abortion. Whilst it is anticipated that this amendment will be dropped before the Bill's final passage, the reality is that it was passed was in the first place without heated debate and acknowledged that a certain condition exists. Perhaps the declining mental health state of women worldwide should give rise for concern and if this is the case we can hope for recognition of what abortion does to a woman and a recognition that women have been lied to by their own "sister group- the feministas"

NICK'S COMMENTS

Greetings and salutations people of earth.

Not a lot has been going on in my life lately in my approach to educate other young people on the topic of abortion as I have just had exams and was studying hard, but I did manage to give out some "Love and Let Live" leaflets which I obtained from the HLI conference I recently attended. These handouts on one side show a baby's development in the womb from conception to birth in stages, and then on the other side the harsh truth of what happens in an abortion, pictures of the various ways of abortion and the innocent babies being aborted. This leaflet is a very useful tool in spreading the pro-life message as it actually can show people what injustice is happening.

On another note, I attend mass every week at least once without fail, even when sick (and I'm not lying, mum has taken me to mass with pneumonia before, she says the reason I eventually got better was because I went, who could argue with that?), but because of my brother's work times, we go to different churches most of the time so we can still go as a family. I have noticed lately as I listen more, to the sermons especially, that priests aren't really talking much anymore about issues such as abortion, promiscuity, euthanasia etc. Going to a variety of different churches including school masses and various nearby parishes, it has become more evident to me that a possible reason that people do not know about these topics is that they are no longer being told about them. I hear priests talking about sports, and old stories, and saints, all of which are fine, but I rarely hear about the church's stance on the more controversial topics. It seems as if some priests are almost too scared that parishioners will leave if this harsh truth is spoken of. The reality is that they give happy sermons that will please the audience. I grew up in the Neo-catechumenate communities and found that each week the priest's sermon was strong and dealt with everyday life and the issues that we must face as Catholics. Seeing the difference between the two, I must pose the question "why are some priests so afraid to talk about these issues?" If people do not hear of ethical issues, how can they have ethics? If people of my generation are to know about



these things, their parents must teach them first, and then have this reinforced by a priest. I'm starting to sound like my mother here so I will end my piece. Lastly, as Christmas is approaching, we must give thanks so I will close here with a poem involving thanks to God.

*"As I looked into the sky
A bird dropped a message from up high,
As I wiped it from my eye
I thanked the Lord that cows don't fly."*

(Mum liked that one)

Laterz people...Nick

SUMMARY OF 2001

In just a three weeks I will be closing for a break and with Christmas rapidly approaching I think it is important to review the year and see perhaps what might be possible and what is impossible for next year.



The year 2001 began quietly with some of my carry over girls from the previous year. However, as the time passed and to this month I have counselled 42 girls, 5 males, and several sets of grandparents, a sibling survivor, and two friends of aborted girls. Some of these have been one offs, others longer period (6-9 months) and 9 long term (over a year).

I have counselled several couples (other issues). At present I am still carrying and seeing 9 including 3 new ones. Also as I reviewed my work over the nearly 5 years I know that I have now seen over 300 men and women and others.

Perhaps this does not seem much but many hours have been spent with people experiencing enormous grief. This of course does not include speaking to people who ring from interstate and simply need to speak to some one. This evening phone counselling (it is a lot cheaper at night) also accumulated many hours of work.

Above and beyond the counselling I have written articles for publishing, wrote and distributed the newsletter (10 issues), 14 public talks (Melb-Vic) 1 by 1 hour radio interview. Went to Papua New Guinea, Brisbane, Adelaide, country Victoria, and completed my second Masters degree in 2 years. Last year it was a Masters in Religious education and this Year Masters in theological Studies. Attended meetings. *And now I think I am tired!* So I am looking forward to a good rest of 4-6 weeks at least until the kids go back to school.

I need to thank many people this year but especially those who have supported me in whatever way they could. Thank you to those who supported me financially, spiritually, psychologically, with Masses, prayers

and words of comfort especially when others were knocking my work and newsletters.

This year for the first time my newsletters have been variously described as “vile” “Disgusting” “offensive” (sexual abuse issue and pornography issues) “brilliant” “excellent” “right on target” and I have had nearly 160 cancellations as a result of people being upset with topics. Thank you to those who took time to write. It’s lovely receiving letters especially the affirming ones. I have to especially point out some names without whose response to my SOS for help, I would not have been able to continue. Thank you Peter B (Syd). Thank you Margaret (Melb) Fr. Leo K. (Melb) Paul M (Melb), Bro. Con (Bris) Frs Walters & Conroy, Gail and HLI (Syd) Thank you to David P (Melb) and his colleagues (KOSC) thanks to Madge and ladies CWL, Thank you to those who were able to read between the lines and responded. Even after 5 years I still have enormous difficulties asking for help So it has been helpful when the help arrived because someone read between the lines. Millions of thanks to my wonderful people who sent whatever little or much that they could. Every little has been much appreciated and contributed to the ongoing of this charism.

*God grant you
The light of Christmas
which is Faith,
The radiance of Christmas
which is Hope,
The glory of Christmas
which is Love.*

As I said before, as Christmas is galloping towards us I need to once again draw your attention to the financial aspect of this work. The truth is that I rely on you completely to run the office, the four phones, the newsletter (650pm) and my car (petrol) and parking, stationary, computer repairs. Recently someone inadvertently sent me a virus through an attachment and it cost a minor fortune to repair the damage and to install new anti virus program. I also nearly died when I recently went to buy a cartridge for my printer (\$169). I also need to have small

amount of cash in hand when I travel interstate or within state. I am blessed that the Archdiocese of Melbourne through the continuing support and generosity of His Grace Archbishop Denis Hart and Vicar General for Healthcare Very Rev. Prof. Anthony Fisher, have continued to support me with lovely rooms in East Melbourne but still the rooms and everything else needs to be financed. **So again it is over to you.** If you wish me to continue next year I need you to let me know through your response.

As I have said in the past I never put pressure on anyone to pay for coming to see me. (it has been suggested that I am not professional that’s why I don’t charge-see after my name) For many reasons I don’t charge, but also because I may book someone in for one hour but because of her state of grief I do not complete the session until I am happy that she is OK (this has at times taken 2-3 hours –with small breaks) Also because some of the girls are supporting mothers and I don’t like to put more pressure on them or if unemployed. I believe this to be a work of mercy and not a work of politics,

power, and grandiosity. Still even works of Mercy require some forms of funds to be able to continue with them. **Again over to you.**

There is a reason for mercy. Indeed there is reason to believe that Jesus loves the very wounded and awaits them. My role is to help someone know that even in their worst moments and worst fears God has loved them

But He has loved them too much to leave them where they are, in a place of self-destruction. As I re assess my work I can see clearly that all that I really do is bring the love of God to the forefront so that the wounded person is able to see it and respond to His call. In the area of such brokenness it is really God who heals.

Thank you to *all* my friends and I wish for you a happy, holy and blessedly joyful Christmas (lots of presents too!) and a New Year filled only with graces.

Please continue to pray for all the names on the newsletter list and also include Mary (new) Leigh-Anne (new) Rosemarie, Jasmine, Joe (new) Carole, Frank, Jon, Teresa, Valentina, Nadia, Sandy, Julie, Rhonda (New) Vincent, Leah, Kurt, Kristie, Stasy, Philip, Jan., Faith (New) Marc. Agnes. Could I ask for prayers for my family and me also? Thank you. If God wills we will meet again in about 6-8 weeks.

May the Lord Bless and Keep you.



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