

A newsletter of *Victims of Abortion*

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

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Guest Writer

Sally

Hello Anne, here is my promised story.

Some of the things that I have learned are, that the road to recovery is long and ever-changing and the goals always grow as you progress.

I use the word recovery because that is what it has been for me.

I was damaged inside, but I really didn't know it. At the age of 15 I fell pregnant to my first and true love. Yes I know! 15 years old. A baby. My partner was moving interstate to study and my own family was falling apart with mum and dad constantly threatening divorce. With this background I was a terrified little soul, because where I came from "only girls with low morals fell pregnant unmarried" so you can guess what I felt my only course of action was. The bit that you can't guess is that I was 20-22 weeks pregnant when we had the baby terminated. How the heck did they let me do it! The doctors that is.

As I sat there for the three hours it took for the tablet to relax my body enough to allow the operation, we were told that I too may possibly die in the process. I looked over at my then boyfriend and thought "if I survive this I will never forgive you!" I guess the thing I didn't realise at the time was that in reality I could never forgive myself! And I set off on a repeated cycle of meeting someone, falling in love and then falling pregnant and then aborting.

By the time I was 22 years old I'd had 4 abortions and I truly hated myself. I drank heavily (always with the intention of getting drunk) and I smoked heavily. I was totally unstable and unable to like, love or respect myself. In fact I didn't know what self respect felt like as I had lost it so young. Apart from my (and my babies) self abuse, I watched as my parent's relationship totally fell apart ending in an ugly and also violent divorce. I then watched my mother attempt to pick herself up again and find some sense of self. Which she began to do with the greatest of dignity, only to be struck down at the age of 54 by a massive blood clot to the brain and die.

I was then 21 years old, my sister 19 years, and my brothers 23 and 29 years. We had a father who had walked out on us two years earlier and a beautiful mother who did not survive her massive stroke.

I guess you could say that life at 22 years for me was at a very dark phase. No home, I was 1500 kms from my family (I had been interstate before mum died and returned there as I didn't have anywhere else to go) No mum, no dad and four abortions on my conscience.

BROKEN
BRANCHES



John 15

But I had friends, wonderful, beautiful, fabulous friends. They were my surrogate family and stuck by me like chewy. They loved, supported and inspired me to want to believe in the goodness of life.

I was introduced to Anne by one of those friends and through Anne I learnt the HOW of healing.

I was embarrassed at our first meeting. I was full of self loathing and embarrassed by my own story. But slowly and gracefully Anne opened me up, she gently began to help me remove all the hurt and the guilt, the self loathing and the mistrust, and she helped to replace this with life education, faith and love.

It was a long and often exhausting process, but I was fully committed and as the end of the year grew closer, I gathered the courage to track down my father, whom I had not seen for eight years.

I drove 1500kms and knocked on his front door (my knees knocked with apprehension), but as he opened that door our eyes met and we both burst into tears and cried for the eight years of life we had missed together. This was the start of many things that Anne helped me to do. We also had made a plaque with the children's names on it and even though I am not a Catholic or religious (though I think I am a spiritual person) with my permission Anne helped organise a beautiful holy Mass for my beautiful beautiful children whom I have named

Maree, Alistair, Angie Damian

Three years later and I still see Anne from time to time, as I am still learning to fully love myself. But because of her I can hold my head up high and know that my four children are happy with the Lord and with my much loved mum. I can also help others as I come across them, and most amazing of all I can look towards the future with excitement. I can never thank Anne enough for the true blessing she has been in my life.

My next dream is to have my family meet up for Christmas as my siblings and father still don't communicate. And my other big dream is to find that someone special and have a solid relationship. Most people in this world may dream of fame and fortune, I dream one day I'll have a positive and normal relationship based on honesty, love and trust. The fact that I think I am worth it after 15 years of self loathing is really exciting for me.

Thank you Anne for giving me my life back, one which I have only just found at the age of 30.

Sally.

Thank you darling Sally, please continue to pray for her, her journey is not over but its going really well and Sally has a fantastic attitude and a desire to live well. Also I think that each of the girls' stories are important because they acknowledge the humanity of the child and makes known to the world the fact that these children have existed. These children who were never meant to be known or accepted as human beings now have a name, and a permanent memorial place. A place where the mothers and fathers can go and be with them for a moment.

Lismore, Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Kingscliff.

Recently I had the opportunity of going to Lismore, Bellingen, Coffs Harbour, and Kingscliff at the invitation of Apostles for Life (Angela Martello and colleagues and her supportive husband Nadir). It was an good experience not only because of the pleasure of seeing places I had never seen before but more importantly being able to speak on the matter of post abortion issues and sexual abuse issues. It also gave me a little opportunity to have a rest especially at Bellingen where there was a two day retreat in the most peaceful surroundings this side of heaven and to meet up with some of my newsletter supporters.

I was able to speak to the people present about the abortion scourge and pain and sorrow and regret and be able to rest in the chapel and pray whenever I wanted to.

Whilst there I met some really lovely new people and some old friends and a special gift from the Lord I believe, was the visit from Sophia (issue 41 of this newsletter) and her husband and brand new baby boy came to see me. They had to drive about 3 hours to get there but OH my goodness it was so lovely to see her. The difference from when I first met her is enormous. She simply shines. And I met her lovely supportive husband Tim who has stood by her and loved her, all these years of being wounded. Please re read her story she is an inspiration. Tim and Sophia also brought their new baby boy to meet his old auntie Anne (moi!). Thank you to Hans, Coby for taking care of me.

Perhaps the best way to write about this would be to set out below a report written by Angela Martello, director/founder, Apostles for Life. I have permission to do this.

Report on the Visit of Anne Lastman to Coffs Harbour, Bellingen, Lismore and Kingscliff 26th-30th August 2005. (Angela Martello)

At Coffs Harbour, Anne spoke to a meeting of approximately twenty women predominantly members of the Catholic Women's League from Grafton, Coffs Harbour and Bellingen. I would like to pay tribute to the warmth of the hospitality shown to Anne and myself, by the members of the Catholic Women's League.

Nobody could fail to be enthralled and moved by Anne's story of how she came to this work of healing for those who suffer emotionally and spiritually after abortion. Anne's own personal experience, together with over ten years of working with women and men, supported by her own extensive studies in theology, psychology and grief and loss, along with a passion for helping those who suffer, and an openness to the grace of God, enable her to offer hope for those who have long despaired of ever overcoming the pain and grief of their joyless lives.

During our Apostles for Life retreat at Bellingen, because we spent two days together, sharing meals and conversations, praying and seeking God's help

and will for our pro life apostolate, Anne was able to share with us on a deeper level. We even had the pleasure of meeting one of Anne's "girls", together with her husband and gorgeous baby boy who had travelled over three hours to meet with Anne.

Anne spoke to a group of about fifteen people after the 5pm Mass in the parish centre in Lismore. At every meeting, there was at least one person who came out of her personal need to come to terms with her own or close family member's abortion. Often the question arose as to the apparent lack of adverse effects in some people. As Anne pointed out, the immediate reaction after abortion is usually relief that the immediate "problem" has "gone away," but many of Anne's girls are in their later years, who are, up to thirty years later, dealing with their abortions. The trigger could be the loss of a grandchild or a parent or even a TV soapie. Anne has been called to see a dementia patient where a woman was distressed because "I killed the children." Delayed onset is often one of the marks of post abortion syndrome.

The warm hospitality offered by Pastor Jim and Mrs Ruth Gallagher at the Baptist Church was deeply appreciated by Anne and all who attended the Luncheon. We are very much at ease and of like minds when it comes to the relief of the distress of those affected by abortion. Anne speaks so passionately of the love and Mercy of Jesus and the need to acknowledge the humanity of the child lost, of his/her membership of the human family and the need we have as surviving members to remember him/her as we do any other deceased member of the family. The need to name the child and accept the forgiveness of God and of the child and to acknowledge him/her in a physical way, such as a plaque or a tree planted.

Our final meeting was at St Anthony's Kingscliff and was attended largely by parishioners of Kingscliff, Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads. In the last two parishes, prayer groups meet regularly to pray for the protection of mothers and children, and for all involved in abortion. As there are two abortion clinics in Tweed Heads where mothers take their babies to die, there is a great need for prayer. Anne told us that the devil comes to an aborting mother to deceive her that the baby is "tissue", a "clump of cells" "product of conception" anything but a baby. However, after the abortion, he comes back to torment her with the fact that she has killed her baby and so God will never forgive her, that she is too bad to receive His Love and Mercy, that she has committed an unforgivable act. The lie is there before and it is there after, in different form, but equally destructive of Life. That God loves her and wants her back in His embrace has to be implanted in the mind of the woman and so move into her heart, to begin her healing process. Anne sees her work, in brief, as moving the child from the woman's shoulders where it is a burden, and to transplant it into her heart where it can rest peacefully until she meets her child "who is now living in the Lord." (EV 99).

Thank you Angela for permission to share the story. Also thank you Michael C and his Mum (Kingscliff) for gift it helped. And as an amusing finale to this I was in a hurry to come home because it was

August 30th and it was our wedding anniversary and guess who forgot his wife at the airport? His name is Andrew and he is my husband and 3 hours after I arrived at airport I got home deeply frozen and in a wounded silence and guess what? He forgot the anniversary too!! And yet he still lives! I must be converting.

NALAG CONFERENCE August 31st 2005

Apart from anniversary, I had to hurry home because on August 31, I had to attend another conference here in Melbourne, Victoria, and I was to present a workshop on the topic of post abortion grief. The National Association for Loss and Grief conference for 2005 had a fantastic and suitable theme “Unmasking Grief” and I offered to present a workshop on my topic. Indeed it seemed timely because it is exactly what needs to be done with abortion grief. Unmask it and then heal it. If it remains hidden it cannot be healed and the woman continues wounded and disabled.

Whilst it was a secular conference I was full of admiration for all the presenters and speakers and the work that is being done in the area of grief and loss, and I was also able to share with other counsellors some of my thoughts and strategies on the healing of abortion grief.

As per usual several women approached me after the talk and thanked me for speaking out about this grief as they had suffered in silence for many years and one lady even said that it “was important to unmask this monstrous grief.” (Pat)

I thank Christina and Catherine and the rest of the staff and NALAG Victoria for their gracious invitation to be a presenter at their conference.

FAMILY LIFE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE MELBOURNE – VICTORIA 16th-18th SEPTEMBER 2005

Following from the NALAG conference, two weeks later, I attended the Family Life International Conference, 2005, here in Melbourne Victoria. Again as a speaker and very much as a friend of the Family Life International team. This is now my fourth conference with them and it is true that it gets better and better.

Beginning with the Opening Mass, Friday night, this was followed by excerpts from *A Call to Guadalupe*, a pro life musical and supper was enjoyed by all.

Saturday morning and the serious business of the conference began. It was good to meet up with so many of my friends and newsletter supporters from around Australia. And my goodness the speakers were fantastic. Steve Mosher (USA) Eve Silver (USA), Eamonn Keane (Aust) Dr Les Hemingway, (Aust) Rev. Fr. Paul Stenhouse, Rev. Fr. Paul Newton, Dr Valerie Peers, Wanda Skowronska, Gerry Keane (no relation to Eamonn I am assured) Richard Grant, Dorothy Kuek, and yours truly. And of course the fantastic Rev. Fr. Linus Clovis, (St Lucia, West Indies) spiritual leader and pastor of Family Life International.

Many topics and themes were covered, from the vanishing numbers of world population, abortion and breast cancer relationship and personal story, Education and the Gospel of Life, Eucharistic Dimension of marital love, contraception and its devastating effects on civilisation, Disengagement of family from the Church, post abortion grief and mourning (moi!) NFP and a medical doctor's experience, Catholics, psychology and new age, abortion and the resultant looming economic catastrophe, Creationism. The youth were well catered for by Fr. Paul Newton and Dorothy Kuek, and Fr. Linus Clovis as dinner speaker –excellent.

Overall it was a conference which covered all aspects of life and as someone said to me as I was leaving “why don't we have these every year, it would help us stay focused on the need to be alert to the anti life squad and keep us invigorated.” My own sentiments expressed, though I would imagine that Gail Instance and her staff from FLI, Sydney and Melbourne would find it difficult to cope with a conference of such magnitude every year. However, it keeps us looking forward to the next one.

FAMILY LIFE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE NEW ZEALAND. SEPT 23rd – 25th 2005.

Following on from the Family Life International Conference here in Melbourne, Australia, the following week I went to New Zealand for the Family Life International Conference New Zealand. Again as speaker and friend of FLI and its members.

What can one say! Again this conference covered many “life” themes and topics and speakers came from around the world. Vatican, His Eminence Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, and his assistant Monsignor Soto, His Grace Archbishop Charles Balvo (NZ Papal Nuncio) His Excellency Bishop Patrick Dunn (Bishop of Auckland) Fr Linus Clovis (St Lucia West Indies) and many priests from New Zealand itself. Other speakers and delegates came from Australia, PNG, Samoa, Kiribati, South Africa, UK, Canada, USA, Hong Kong, and I am sure other places which I have forgotten.

It is difficult to say anything specific about the conference because it was magnificent and it was so good to see the Church hierarchy in attendance for the whole three days. It simply shows that they care for the work, effort and sometimes great hours and tears put in by people like Colleen Bayer and her staff at FLI New Zealand, and Gail Instance and her staff at Family Life International Australia. I appreciated the support and words of encouragement spoken to me by the Bishops and Cardinal and the many others who took time to seek me out and speak and whilst I watched in the sidelines I saw how much Colleen's husband Terry did to make sure that the international visitors were well looked after, and this led me to think about how much, the husbands and families of people like Colleen and Gail Instance and myself, contribute so that we can do the work that the Lord has called us to do. So for a change to Colleen's husband Terry, Gail's husband Michael, and my husband Andrew, and to all the husbands (wives and

families) who quietly and unobtrusively support the work for life, I would like to say thank you and “well done good and faithful servant” (Mt 25:21).

Like the Australian FLI conference, the kaleidoscope of topics at the NZ conference was equally wide ranging and the speakers magnificent. However, for me personally the memory which is etched within my heart came at the beginning of the conference, during the opening Mass and the Maori welcoming ceremony and the guard of honour (for the Cardinal and other celebrants) formed by the Knights of the Southern Cross. The Maori welcoming ceremony was so moving that I wept throughout though I didn't understand a word. Something in the words the young female singer was calling out resonated deeply within my being and it seemed to call to mind something long forgotten. I wept, I think for many memories, and many might have been. I also wondered if this was a sign of things to come. And it was!

I enjoyed doing my talk and as usual after the talk four different ladies came and spoke of their experience and please God I was able to help. I have returned home and I think that for this year I have been conferenced out, and talked out and even in a little way counselled out. Though that's one area where I will have to buck up and get going again. Because between conferences and talks I have continued the counselling and in fact took on extra. I have also had a spate of one off sessions, which is good.

Ps I also did a 10minute segment for Mother Angelica's EWTN TV network (USA) and a different interview (with Steve Mosher) again for her network here at the Melbourne conference. Yeah....

Nick

Wherever I went for conferences and talks many newsletter supporters have made comment that Nick has not written for some time and they miss his comments and humour. So I am going to let you know what happened. On March 30, 2005 Nick was involved in a fairly serious car accident and whilst the physical bruising and abrasions and other minor injuries have been healed, we believe he is suffering some form of post trauma stress because he has undergone a complete change of personality. He has dropped uni. In third year (Dr of Chiropractic) dropped all his old friends (and acquired unknown new ones) Left his part time jobs, and behaves in a manner unlike Nick. We have been trying to deal with this on a day to day basis. So I would ask my friends if you would please pray for him. We his family are finding it very difficult to see the changes which have come over him, from the beautiful, happy, friendly, rabidly catholic youth, to someone who is introverted, belligerent, evasive and elusive. So thank you for asking and if you would keep praying for him, we his family would appreciate it. Also please no correspondence over this. Just help with prayers. Thank you.

This issue of the newsletter is different as there were many things to write about especially about conferences. Its been a busy year in this area and as I conclude I would like to thank you for your past support and to say that I really need some help again. Please.

The last two issues were not well supported so now I need to ask. I try and not ask too often and I leave the financial support to you to decide. I have done a lot of printing (prayer cards and post abortion leaflets) and I need to print other stationery so it's over to you again.

Whilst it appears that I have travelled a lot and spoken a lot at conferences and groups, I have also counselled the usual girls and young men and have taken on board another young man and am at the moment phone counselling (tentatively) three new women. So in between everything the usual work must continue.

No Room at the Inn.

I have recently been told that the rooms which the Catholic archdiocese has let me use (at cheaper rent) have become unavailable and I must find new premises. I have looked and I **can** find lovely rooms but so expensive is rent. Is there someone (Parish perhaps?) who has a room or two (preferably) close to inner city of Melbourne who could help me out? I would prefer several unobtrusive out of the way rooms secure and which can be used and locked up. I have found several which are excellent and just perfect but the rent is too high for the kind of support I get. Please let me know if you can help.

Please also continue to pray for my people and add Nick to the list. Please pray for Melissa, Jodie, Carly, Darren, Marie, Adam, Susan, Sally (1) Sally (2), Michelle, Hamish (lots) Andrea P (lots please) Andrea K (lots) Luke, Anonie, Lisa, Catherine, Cindy, Anne, Tori, Jack Julie, Diane, Marc, Angela, Frances, Heidi, Darren (2) Tara. Rita (new) Kathleen (new). Greg (new).

May the Lord Bless and keep you.



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