

A newsletter of *Victims of Abortion*

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

Issue No 43 – Dec/Jan 2005

Guest Writer

Julie *

When Anne asked me to write my story I felt a bit scared because I am not someone who expresses myself really well and I was surprised that Anne would ask me to write, but I eventually agreed because she is very persuasive and because I really owe her my life. At least my new and much happier life.

I first heard about Anne from a friend who had been to her and was really happy with the experience. I thought I would also give it a last chance because I had really given up on ever experiencing peace in my heart or ever being able to laugh again. My abortion and life history saw to that.

My story is really too long (Anne said only about 1000 words) so I will try and shorten it by not spelling out the years of anguish. Just know that they were real.

At the time of my abortion I was married and in a very violent marriage (when you hear of domestic violence know that it is often much worse than it is reported, because of fear and shame), I was trying to work part time, look after two other children and had the hope that one day I might be able to leave the situation. You see my marriage was both physically, emotionally, sexually violent and for some reason I thought it was my entire fault. When I got pregnant again I was really angry because this meant that I would be tied to him for longer still, so I quietly went off and had an abortion. At the time I was too angry to think about what I was doing so when I went to the doctor to confirm my pregnancy he offered a way out and I took it. The doctor assured me that it was early stages yet so it wasn't fully developed (9 weeks) and it wasn't dangerous. Of course because of my situation I really needed only little excuse to do it and I really believed that it wasn't fully formed yet.

Nobody even mentioned after effects, nightmares, crying uncontrollably, unable to cope, guilt etc. It was just one of those things and it seems that the moment I mentioned to friends that I had had an abortion, all the others came out of the woodwork and admitted that they had one too. It seems that everyone was having an abortion but no one was speaking about it

BROKEN
BRANCHES



John 15

I suppose the day of the abortion was the day that really changed my life in many ways because the anger at being pregnant changed to anger at being put in a position to have to make that decision to have an abortion. I remember standing in the doorway and looking at my husband and feeling absolutely empty...nothing left. No love. No liking. No wanting to find a way to tell him. Nothing. Just an emptiness and almost a vision of what life held for the kids and me if we stayed. More of the same. Drink. Violence; verbal, physical, emotional then sex and then starting the cycle again.

I think the reason I stayed as long as I did and probably did more damage to my self and the children was because I am a Catholic (even then) and I had been taught to respect the Sacrament of Marriage and as my mum often said "you made your bed you have to lye in it." And I actually did listen and I stayed and stayed until that day of the abortion. That was the deciding moment. I either took the kids and went or I would do myself in.

I did leave and it was really hard trying to bring up kids on my own and work and be all things for them, but I think it was the right thing. Even the kids after we left seemed to look better. There were no more nightmares for them and the fear in their faces seemed to leave and they never complained. You see many times they heard and saw what was going on.

In many ways things did improve especially after the legal stuff were finished and he was told not to come near us or trouble (I think he heard the word trouble and fled-interstate) but new sufferings began for me. I found myself crying for no reason. I couldn't be near anyone who had a baby or was even pregnant. I kept dreaming about death.. Always about death. I had a fear for my kids that something awful was going to happen to them. Somehow God was going to punish me for the abortion by taking my living children. I became withdrawn and I lost my own desire to live and be happy. I guess I thought I didn't deserve to be happy after all I killed a baby. Its funny you know, before the abortion I don't recall thinking it even once that it was a baby, in fact I assured myself that it was not a baby, but after the abortion it became very much a baby and me a murderer.

I think I also gave the kids more suffering because I wasn't such a good mother. In many ways I neglected them and their needs to look after my own false ones, and today when I look at them and see how much they love me I am deeply ashamed. I also think as I looked back on my life (with Anne we journeyed through my whole life) that I was suffering depression and trying to cope with a job, children, abortion, abuse, and had no one I trusted enough to speak to. Abuse tends to destroy love, trust and faith in goodness itself and in the genuineness of people. This went on for nearly nine years with times in between when I felt better than other times.

I think one of the best presents I gave myself was when I became friends with my now girlfriend who told me about Anne. My friend also had had two abortions and appeared to have suffered and found peace after going to Anne. And because I saw the difference in her behaviour and her quietness

and her being able to speak about her babies without breaking up, I also thought I would try it. I figured I couldn't lose much as I had tried nearly everything and been to psychologists and even an organization that said they specialised in abortion grief, and including going to confession zillion times and confessing the abortion a zillion times and it never felt any better. I seemed to have been stuck, and really I didn't believe I could be forgiven such a terrible sin.

When I went to Anne I really didn't believe or have confidence that anything much would change. I think she saw that the first time I went there, because she asked me strait out if I really wanted to get better or was this my way of punishing myself for leaving my marriage and for my abortion. I had never thought of that and I really had to think about the answer. In fact Anne asked that I think about this question all week and then let her know if I wanted to continue because she said she didn't want me to go to her if I didn't really want to get better, and of course I did, and it's the best thing I have done in a long time.

During my time with Anne we had many stops and starts mainly because it became painful at times and I would take time off and go away for a few weeks, but went back when I could cope with a bit more. This I think is so fantastic about her because she seems to know really how painful it is and when you think you cant take any more she says something beautiful like "God and your baby love you and want you to be well." The first time I heard these words, I cried for a whole day. It was like clean, warm water being poured gently over me and cleaning me. It was like something soft touching my heart. I had gone to counselling many many times and never had I felt this easing of pain. For this I am grateful.

What I liked most about Anne's counselling is that it is so normal, and she picks up on things that I am thinking about and worrying about and she seems to know exactly what it is. She doesn't just sit there with what appears a stunned look in her face like most counsellors. She always seemed to know more than I am saying and she is right. Something else I also liked with her was the fact that we dealt with a lot of my hurts. One by one and I could see how one led to the other. In fact Anne told me that we would deal with the abortion later but first we needed to work with abuse and why I accepted the abuse, and my self-esteem problem and where that started from, and many other issues.

Eventually I was able to understand why I made that decision to have an abortion. I can't really say that I have forgotten but I can say that it really is not as bad or as painful as it was, and I have understood why I couldn't forgive myself. One of the nicest things Anne said is that I don't have to forget my aborted daughter, that it's OK to think about her and to want to see her one day. I dared not think this way before. Anne has worked really slowly and patiently with me and after some time I am beginning to feel the same peace that my friend has. Are we finished yet? No. We are still dealing with God things and the abortion, but then again I don't mind

because now I am not afraid to talk about the different things that hurt me, I am beginning to trust someone and it's a good feeling.

Im sorry if its gone over the length but there is so much more and I couldn't shorten it more because it would not come out sounding right. What I want to finish off with is to say thanks Anne. For helping me see that my life is not worthless but it is good and valuable and I am worth so much to myself and the kids and God especially.

Ps I also need to say that Anne never once asked for money (she knew I struggled financially) or gave me an invoice. She said God always provides, and He does He sent me to Anne

- **Thank you darling Julie * (not her real name) and yes Julie is coming along beautifully. Not finished yet but I can see the day when Julie will walk out of my office for the last time and I will be both sad and really happy. I tend to love my girls.**

DISGUISED GRIEF

In my work as a post abortion grief counsellor I assist those women who have not been able to reconcile their decision to terminate their pregnancy. However, as I have said many times now, behind each decision to end a pregnancy there is very often a "story" because those who are generally really traumatised present with a complicated type of grief and require some help to "uncomplicate" the grief and assist the man or women to embark on a more "normal grief" journey. In most cases post abortion grief, and abuse grief has been suppressed, but a lot of the time it is also "disguised."

I say disguised because often the person will have grieved, but not ostensibly for the abortion, or for years of abuse, but chronically grieve for the loss of something that appears really trivial. This, because the loss of something which appears to the onlooker as trivial, is acceptable and can easily be spoken about and managed, whereas the reality of the acceptance of violence, or acceptance of further violence of abortion - also because of shame, - these cannot be spoken about. (see Julie's story above her friends had abortions also but didn't speak about it). Speaking about these would shatter and make vulnerable the very essence of the human person, leaving the individual utterly exposed, vulnerable and without coping strength.

Over the years I have learned many things but one of the most important, I believe, is the reality that abortion and violence and sexual abuse are types of violations, which can only be healed by the mercy of God and humanly by processing these various kinds of losses as "death" experience and seeing these as causing the death of innocence. Where there is much violence and many losses, there has to be time to process and make sense of each episode individually. Sense has to be made of the "why" such things happened or else the person feels a deep sense of injustice and it is difficult to recover from injustice. One can forgive an injustice but only if it makes some sort of sense.

By helping a woman to begin to process the violence in her life (all kinds of violence including the abortion----and seeing the abortion as the ultimate type of violence) will enable her to regain custody of her very self and be able to say “no more.” **This is** why it is important to deal with all matters in her life (I no longer believe that abortion happens in isolation-the groundwork is clearly mapped if one looks for it) and individually lay to rest those events, which caused terror. To try and deal with an abortion issue and leave other hurts and wounds untouched is ultimately only bandaid treatment. A temporary easing of pain but that’s all temporary.

I think it’s also important to understand, especially where the abortion is concerned, that leaving the aborted child behind (that is to put it in past and leave it there) is really not an option. This in fact is perpetuating more violence by going against the very nature of woman that is to care for the one she is committed to protecting. Carrying the memory of the child, the name given to it, its short history, and its now recognised place in the mother’s life is of crucial.

However, this is not to be taken that the child is carried forward as a spectre, but as a child who has died and is part of her life and history. Emotionally relocating the deceased (aborted) child into a spiritual realm is very healing for a mother whose nightmares have imaged a dismembered baby, and continuing bonds permits the memory of the lost one to be maintained, not as before, but in a new dimension. We know that when dealing with love and loss it is unthinkable that absence would diminish attachment. This, because love ensures that no one is forgotten. Yes even the hair on heads is counted and remembered

Special letter

Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care,

Dear Miss Anne,

On behalf of the President of this Pontifical Council, His Eminence Javier Cardinal Lozano Barragán, I wish to acknowledge receipt of your Oct/Nov 2004 issue of the newsletter of Victims of Abortion.

I find the testimonies very touching and encouraging. Once again, thank you for helping people to pick up their lives again. We assure you of our prayerful support and may the Lord bless all your efforts.

+José L. Redrado, O.H.

Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care.

Thank you Your Excellency for taking the time to write and for the encouragement found in your words. I also appreciate your promise of prayerful support of me, this work and the people I work with. Thank you.....Anne

Letter 2

Dear Anne,

I felt it was time to write and say thanks for the newsletter which you faithfully send to me issue after issue. I am amazed at the output and the topics, which you cover and the diversity of thought. I must admit I really like your newsletter best of all and I look forward to its arrival.

You know the thing I like most, apart from the different aspects of the same topic are the girls' own personal stories and Nick's comments (he has a wonderful sense of humour). I have to admit that I photocopy every issue you send to me and make sure it gets spread around as much as possible.

Sometimes we, that is my friends and I, will have a morning tea or lunch and talk about it and what your newsletter does is help us be prepared to speak about the issue of abortion and its after-effects and it also gives us courage to know that there are those like you who are doing the frontline work, so we know that it is important that we also do some of the hard work.

Dear Anne please keep going because this newsletter is spread further and further than you know. To help with costs please find enclosed a small donation, I know its small but I hope it helps.

God Bless you, Nick, and the girls you minister to

Ronnie G.

Perth.

NICK'S COMMENTS

Hello once again good people,

I hope this newsletter finds you all happy, and healthy. Currently, I am none of these as I am mid exams and stressing! The only solace I find is that I will have three and a half months off once I am finished – most of which I will

be catching up on lost sleep 😊 Yes, uni has been very intense this semester leaving me barely any spare time, so I must apologise for my recent absence of high quality, thought-evoking articles that I know you all desperately

love 😊 I promise to write an excellent piece for the next newsletter, one that will be so amazing, you'll be pondering on it for weeks after reading it!

Just a quick note to say Merry Christmas to all in the coming months and I hope you all have a pleasant and safe New Year

Take care,

Nick

Thank you's and God Blesses.

As we come to the end of yet another year I really need to say thank you for your support and love. Its been a varied year at best and a sad year also. I began the year with a pilgrimage to some beautiful holy places. A couple who support me in this work graciously paid for me to have a break. On my pilgrimage to Rome I was also able to have a meeting with several dignitaries and speak about the work that I do. It was one of those rare privileges in life. It voided all past sufferings connected with this work. Thanks Paul and Michaela and family for making this possible. Thank you to those special people who received me at the Vatican (especially thanks Fr Marc for continuing dialogue and helping further) Please God, something really fruitful will emerge as by the time you read this newsletter I again will have returned to Rome for further talks. Thank you to those who made this second trip financially possible, I hope to be able to report more fully in the New Year.

Sadly this special feeling was marred with the illness, diagnosis of cancer and death of my father in June. It was a difficult time though I felt supported by many of you my readers. Thank you for the very many cards sent to me, I appreciated them and the support. Thank you to my priest friends who offered Holy Mass for the repose of the soul of my father.

Work wise this year has been busier, with many new people and a few of the carry overs from last year. I have written a newsletter every about 7-8 weeks I now send out 1400 per issue so you can imagine the work of labelling, stamping, folding and enveloping – it now takes nearly a week. This on top of counselling both local people (5 males included) and interstate people and some of this long term, once a week calls, and regular personal encounters. I have spoken at ladies groups, prayer groups, youth groups, a catholic men's group. Have travelled country Victoria for talks, I have attended for my own furthering of knowledge as part of my ongoing learning, a mental health & spirituality seminar. I have done radio programme, have prepared and had published several articles and answered mail and many requests from students for materials on post abortion trauma. I hope you found your support of me worthwhile.

It has been a year of struggle, especially financially and I have had to resort to ringing around for help but I have to say it came when asked for. I also have to say that I still haven't got better at asking for the help, I find it embarrassing but I guess it teaches me humility. Thank you to the group of supporters who are with me all the time and extra thank you to new and once off supporters. Thank you to my pray ers you are so wonderful. All financial and pray ers and those who simply like my work...thank you.

I will break for several weeks over Christmas and early new year and I want to visit my mum in Perth who is trying to manage without Dad, Mum is also not really well so I want to spend a little time with her and give my sisters a break from looking after her. Then I will return in full force—IF GOD WILLS for 2005.

This year in particular I have dealt with quite a lot of sexual abuse issues together with abortion issues and related depression. I have also done an inordinate amount of one off counselling, and I must admit that I don't like these because it just seems to me that those young women simply put their anxiety away and it will come back at some time. However, I have to respect their desire and I do so. Of course there are the usual abuse calls also but these are part of what I do and they do not upset me anymore.

And finally thank you to the girls who happily shared their story with you. The reason I originally asked them to do this was so that you would be able to hear from the person herself whether she has been helped. To date not one that I have asked has said no and I am proud of them because I see this also as validating their own life and the life of their child.

Lastly just thank you for your support of me especially His Grace Archbishop Denis Hart for support with inexpensive rooms. I couldn't keep going without this help, as commercial rents are too high for me.

I Really, really, really need to ask for your help financially as I don't have much in reserve because the last two or three issues were really not well responded to...So please I really need to ask. Thank you in advance.

Please continue to pray for Louise, Sarah, Edward, Vesta, Simon, Jodie, Darren, Victoria, Melissa, Maree, Margaret, Susan, Donna, Sally (1) Sally (2) Toni, James, Michelle, Marc, Fran & Eileen (sick) Hamish, Luc, Catherine, Andrea (new) Mary (new)

I wish for you and your families and friends a marvellously happy and holy Christmas and a new year filled with all good things but especially with graces.

God Bless



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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