

Broken Branches

Issue 53

Aug/Sep 2006

John 15

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

Campaign against Labor Governments push for decriminalisation of Abortion.

Until the forthcoming elections later this year I plan to keep reminding my readers that both the ruling Labor Party, here in Victoria, headed by Mr Steve Bracks, and the new leader of the Liberal Party have clearly stated that they intend to put into place the machinations (proposed legislation) for the decriminalisation of abortion. Indeed it is surprising that Mr Baillue (new Lib leader) is so supportive of this. Again I would say that Pilate and Herod have shook hands at least for the time being.

Please, please, understand that the decriminalisation of abortion up to 9 months (on demand) means that abortion is a normal part of life. It is something perceived as being "good" because it is legal. It means that the barriers are removed and life becomes valued only when someone considers it valuable.

Please become involved, I have been writing about post abortion grief for 11 years now. I have shared my own story with you, my own grief, and the grief of the women and men who have come to me for help.

Please don't allow this Victorian government to make child killing legal. Please become involved by writing to

your local Members and telling them that this is not on. Become involved when pro life groups call for help.

We need to remember that as soon as this early life issue is resolved according to the dictates of these anti life politicians, then they will start again on the euthanasia story. If life is worthless at the beginning, imagine how worthless it will be considered when it cannot pay taxes anymore and indeed it costs the government much money to maintain.

Please become involved in stopping this push to make abortion, which means death of an in utero child, a normal part of society. I can tell you that the sorrow of the post abortive woman is unlike anything known. She knows she has taken her child to be killed. Her own baby to die. Her defenceless little one. Yes God does forgive and He eases the pain, but we are allowed to keep the memory, and the memory we take with us every day.

Please become involved and stop Mr Bracks and Mr Baillue from doing violence to our whole society.

Hello and welcome to
2006!!!!

Hello dear friends, I had to say the above because my last newsletter (issue 52) I had dated as **June/July 2005** and many of my astute readers rang to tell me about it.

A newsletter of Victims of Abortion

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I **would/would not** like to be on your mailing list.

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I got out of it by saying that I am so overworked, so underpaid (not paid at all actually) and so light-headed (three-thirty-itis as the commercial would say) that I had forgotten that we are actually well and truly into a new year.

So now I have apologised and I promise not to do that again (I hope!). Well at least I will try hard. Thank you to those who took the time to let me know. I got to meet (on the phone) a few of my readers and we exchanged wishes, laughs and hopes for the future.

Pastoral care of post abortive women.

Several years ago I wrote an issue of the newsletter totally devoted to Priests and Pastors and the vital role that these clergy can play in the healing of post abortive women and their wounds. I would like to revisit this area as I feel that it is very important, and I believe that there should be some training of Priests and Pastors in how to deal with the approaching women, so that more wounds are not inflicted.

After ten years of this work, I hope that I am able to offer some suggestions, so that the pain and the guilt and shame with which the woman approaches this representative of God, isn't even unintentionally increased.

First of all it needs to be said that today I am seeing nearly 95% Catholic/Christian women who have had an abortion experience. I don't

know if the Catholic/Christian population is aborting more, or simply that I am known as a Catholic practising Counsellor and somehow the women are guided towards me. However, I do know that more and more are Catholic or come from strong Christian roots.

For this reason I believe that it is important that Priests and Pastors be helped in their knowledge of how to deal with these women.

Of course I offer these suggestions with deepest humility, and do not imply that priests and pastors do not know how to handle these cases, but if not handled well with the first approach to this representative of God, the damage both to the person and to their emergent hope that they might be forgiven, can very easily be destroyed. There is a wisp like fragility both emotionally and spiritually, so that the wrong (or perceived wrong) word/action can become almost disastrous.

By the time that I am able to encourage a young woman (catholic) to go to reconciliation (according to the Catholic tradition) I have spent much time and work, speaking about the Mercy of God, the love of God, the forgiveness of God. The love of her baby who wants her to be well. We have spent time looking at the decision to abort, her role at the time, her support or lack of support. Her fears and terrors, her nightmares and much time with her particular fear of coming before God and her baby. This fear is related to her guilt and in this fear she is sure that her sin is so big that she cannot ever be forgiven. This, and her fear that her baby will hate her forever; I have worked through with her. So that by the time she gingerly goes to her priest/pastor, we have

"However, I do know that more and more are catholic or come from strong christian roots"

covered much ground **about the abortion.**

It needs to also be said that someone who has had an abortion/abortions will have lived outside of the ambit of the Church (irrespective of denomination) and will usually have lived a life according to the ways of the world. They have abandoned their faith. In fact my belief is that when a woman accedes to an abortion she also relinquishes her belief in God and her Church affiliation.

This is understandable as the sense of guilt and shame is greatly enhanced. Their own sense of value and their belief that they are of value to God is now almost totally gone. They convince themselves that God cannot ever forgive them and that they don't deserve peace.

Abortion not only disturbs the woman's psychological environment but also creates a deep fissure in her spiritual being.

The abortive woman who has come to the realisation that what she aborted was not a "bunch of cells" but her own son or daughter, becomes filled with fear, anguish, self hate. Her self thought and self talk is one of continual debasing and continual loathing, so

much so, that emotional meltdown is not only a possibility but indeed a reality.

Her self torture takes many forms, including the fear of death (accidents) of present living children. Her fear that those she loves will die and it's because of her. The fear that her husband, fiancé, parents etc will abandon her. This continual self torture very often will result in a breakdown.

While it has been said that Christianity inflicts guilt upon the woman and her upbringing is the cause of her complicated type of grief, I challenge that. I do not believe this is the case.

Yes indeed it is true that those women who come from a Christian background experience deep guilt about their abortion, and subsequent behaviour. But women who do not have a religious belief also experience a sense of guilt. And whilst they do not relate to God and see this guilt as a personal failing, it is still a deep guilt, too deep to be thought of as just a "personal failing." There is a sense of "knowing" of a wrong committed which is different than a general knowing. I would suggest that the natural law has been deeply etched within their beings and it is this law

"It needs to be said that someone who has had an abortion/abortions will have lived outside the ambit of the Church (irrespective of denomination)"

which is violated and in its violation registers is an ease.

I have dealt with many young women without religious belief of any type and still I have seen the same complicated type of grief as those who profess a past Christian belief. It is not a religious belief or lack of belief that creates this meltdown but I believe it is the violation of the innate law within her being which creates the unease and her eventual collapse.

Abortion, contrary to the politicians whose aim is to make available all forms of in utero child

killing, a "normal" part of a woman's "right," is ontologically profoundly wounding. It begins with the death of the in utero infant and slowly leads the woman down a path of self imposed tragedy. From this starting point then there will be a self alienation because she slowly begins to shut down parts of her self so that she will not remember, and if she chooses to remember then she will set up further self defeating structures in order to justify her decision.

A woman who aborts and then further on becomes a mother, is also unable to speak to

her living children about God because this God is now distant from her reality. Yes there was the big wedding in the big church. Yes there were promises made. Yes, the words spoken were meant, but the heart was hardened through years of hiding and running from God. A mother, who has previously aborted her child, cannot now speak to another of her children about a God who loves them because she has not believed this for herself. Today the existing children are not only deprived of siblings, both by contraception and also by abortion, but as a consequence are denied knowledge of a God who loves them, which should have been imparted by the persons who love them most (Mum and Dad).

The pastoral care of post abortive men and women will become the new "pool of Siloam" Because of the sheer huge numbers of abortions and the subsequent grief accompanying this, means that a serious look into this aspect of pastoral care needs to be undertaken. To look on this as simply another transgression is to misunderstand the nature of this grief and the depth of pain associated with it.

Failure to firstly understand and then accommodate this understanding in the context of the woman's (and at times the man's) life and decision and after effects, can result in more damage being done at a time when tentative steps are being taken by her to return to wholeness, including a return to her faith, or as importantly a turning to God for the first time.

The pastoral care of abortive men and women must encapsulate many areas including an acknowledgement that abortion exists. That abortion actually happens even within Christian lives and that abortion wounds deeply not only the woman and the man, but the family, the wider family and society. Abortion touches all our lives and leaves in its wake a deep wound.

I would ask Priests and Pastors that when a woman approaches for the sacramental gifts dispensed by the priest (reconciliation) that great care be exercised. It has taken many

hours of counselling and talking about the nature of God and His Mercy and Love. It has further taken much convincing that Priests stand in the place of Jesus and will not judge her. It has taken much courage for her to make the call to see the priest/pastor to speak about her abortion. So please, please, please, remember that she is watching for "Jesus" not to forgive her because she is too awful to be forgiven, and if this happens, then she is convinced that her sin is so huge that it cannot be forgiven ever.

Please dear Fathers and Pastors, know that abortion trauma and grief makes women very ill at all levels of life, that is, the physical, emotional, spiritual and if not handled very well the damage may be more difficult overcome.

Dear Fathers, whilst it is understood that priests usually remain silent about the abortion issue out of compassion for those who have already aborted, the reality is that it is a false type of compassion (not intentionally) which leads to more suffering. Remaining silent does not mean that the abortion goes away but that it remains to silently continue to wound.

In my experience as a post abortion grief counsellor I encounter many women who have given their faith away because they felt unworthy to even be in the Church where Jesus is present. It is a great act of love and Mercy to be able to help one of these children of God to return to their Father's house. Tentatively and slowly and watching for rejection by Jesus, the woman (and man) makes attempts to return to and belong to God's family. Often this takes the way of many attempts at confession, different churches, different priests, till one day something clicks and they believe that they are loved and forgiven.

Whenever I have encountered someone who cannot believe that they can be forgiven, I work with them to find out the root cause of their unbelief (apart from abortion) and in the finding of this poisoned seed is discovered when the journey to the abortion clinic began. Further, in the finding when that lie was planted in their being, it is possible to erase the

Thank You

Dear Anne

I would like to thank you for your kindness and your wonderful help in helping me through this time, when I honestly could not see any light.

You have not only saved me and showed me where the light is but have also given me a sense of peace and calm which I had not been able to feel or have before. Please dear Anne accept my heartfelt and sincere thanks and thank you for being available for me in my time of need. Your type of counselling is different but it is the kind that is filled with love and compassion and authority.

You seem to speak with authority in everything you say.

When I first came to you about two months ago, I had just been very ill and I didn't think I would ever see the light of day again. Thank you I not only see the light of day but also the sun.

I now know that the abortion was the biggest mistake of my life, I should have listened to my feelings rather than listen to others. I won't ever do that again. No matter what.

Thank you for helping me to forgive myself and to get my life on track again.

*May your God bless you
Narelle.*

Narelle has finished with me. She is at peace with herself. She wanted no religious service of any denomination. She just wanted help to be at peace.

Anne

lie and replant the truth of how much loved they are by God.

From this point onwards the new truth means accepting the forgiveness offered by God, letting go of the destructiveness which has been part of the lie implanted in their being, and beginning a journey towards restoring life. The life of the abortive women will never be the same as before the abortion, but it does not have to be worse. Indeed as the Holy Father John Paul II said "With the friendly and expert help and advice of other people, and as a result of your own painful experience, you can be among the most eloquent defenders of everyone's right to life." (Evangelium Vitae, 99)

I would like to ask all my priests friends, catholic and other denominations, to please be careful when dealing with a woman who has had an abortion or multiple abortions. They watch for signs from you that they are OK and if the signs are good then God is good. If the signs are not encouraging then it is God (and not you personally) who rejects them.

I am always available to come and speak personally with any priest who may wish to speak with me. I don't promise to have all the answers but I can have just some of them. And it's important to remember that when a woman feels healed and loved by God, she blooms and is happy and this happiness is then shared with her husband, fiancée, family, and children. When the heart of the home (woman) is sick then the head of the home struggles to maintain the household. It is her wholeness that ensures that the home is at peace.

I have also discovered that when a woman returns to her faith she is able to speak powerfully about her belief in the love and mercy of God. She can witness to her encounter with the God who forgives. Hers is not an intellectual witness but a witness set in her concrete reality. She can speak about Mercy because it has been extended strongly to her. She can speak about God's love because He has loved her even when she didn't love herself or anyone else in her life. Her witness is powerful because she has encountered God in

the middle of her messy life and He didn't reject her.

Dear Priests of God, this is why it is so important to handle well a woman who either comes to you for reconciliation, or is sent to you for the same. It is in this encounter that determines how she sees her God.

Poem

*A Baby is a Blessing.
God created the sunshine
And all the flowers that grow
And He made the music of the songbirds
And the beauty of rain and snow.
He gave the world so many things
But a baby, so dear and small
Is the nicest blessing God can give?
And His greatest gift of all.
Sheila House.*

Thanks Sheila. I think it fitted just here.

Abortion & Career

Since my last newsletter I have spoken to three

understand that all three of these women aborted because their careers were either taking off or at a critical time and they believed that it was the best thing to do.

Two of these women have married and have other children and the third one has never married and has no other children. All three of them speak of sadness and loneliness (even those with the existing children) and all three point to their abortion as the cause of this deep sadness "that won't go away". Indeed all three of them have said that the job/career enhancement wasn't worth it.

All three of the women (independent of each other) have said that if they had the choice again, they would have chosen to have the baby rather than the career.

This is important because when a career is underpinned by, and its cornerstone is the intentional death through abortion of their baby, the gloss is darkened and the success a little bitter. The years of success, the money, the shine is tainted because there is the memory of that day when "I entered that place in East Melbourne" Now that money is not an issue, and the hunger for success has subsided, what remains is the sense of deep loss.

"its cornerstone is the intentional death through abortion"

women who were referred to me by various others. The interesting thing about these three women was their common reason for why they acceded to their abortion. In each of the cases the reason given was that they were in a career they loved and at a critical point in that same career.

The first woman (Marie, 43 yrs) had her abortion 18 years earlier. The second woman (Sally 37) had her abortion 19 years earlier. and the third woman (Joy, 35 yrs) had abortion 15 years earlier. I have seen these women a few times and hopefully will be helped. But the important thing is to

It seemed interesting to listen to these three successful women (according to the ways of the world) and each say that they would have given everything up if they could have that baby back again.

When ever I speak publicly or write, I always say that the tragedy of abortion, and the decision made to abort, is that it is made during a time of crisis. That it is always situation specific and as such a good decision is never possible. Because the situation in which this decision is being made, won't be the same in years to come, but the decision is made and

Letters

Dear Anne

We still have not got together, though you and your apostolate are often in my thoughts and prayers. You still get a monthly Mass said for your intentions and I offered Mass for your father and all bereaved last week, a day early for his anniversary.

I am disappointed that the Archdiocese no longer rents you a place at less than "market" price and that you were not listed in Kairos as a contact for counselling on Respect Life Sunday. Enclosed please find a small donation to help with your rent. Don't wear yourself out so much or your apostolate will end up breaking you. You and your vocation are really special. His choicest blessings on you.
Fr. Leo.

Dear Anne,

We have received a copy of "Broken Branches" and we want you to know that we are praying for you and for the good work that you are doing. We pray also for those who are suffering on account of abortions and ask our heavenly Father to have compassion on them in their troubled hearts and to help them to remake their lives and to go forward in faith and trust. We also ask Our Blessed Mother to be with you and with those who help you. May the Holy Spirit whose feast we celebrate on Sunday guide and strengthen you always.
Yours sincerely
The Carmelite Nuns.

Thank you dear Fr Leo and sisters for your prayers. I appreciate your care.

Dear Anne,

Thank you for continuing to send me the newsletters. I have every copy of it since you began and sometimes I look through them and my goodness Anne you have covered a large amount of ground. What I like about your newsletter is that it is so informal and it feels like you are writing especially to me. As I read the letter I can

almost feel that you are writing and talking directly to me. Maybe its because I know you and have met you and maybe I can hear your voice as I heard it when we spoke. Whatever it is I really love to receive it and I take it to my ladies group, and I take it to my prayer group and share it with both groups. I think some of the other ladies are beginning to also forward to its arrival.

Anne in the prayer group we pray for the people at the back for the newsletter, and we pray for you and your family and especially we have been praying for Nick. We really miss his writing, my two teenage daughters really liked his writing and they became interested in pro life stuff because they read what he wrote. So we pray that sometime he will write something again.

Enclosed is a small donation. I wish it would have been more, as you know it can't be.
God Bless your work

Cathy H.
Clayton Vic.

Dear Anne,

Greetings of peace of mind and body to you and your family.

Firstly my entire apology for not keeping in touch with you since I started receiving your newsletter. And I am quite sure you understand the problem that I am facing, is the time factor. I seem to be busy with heaps of things, for instance, assignments, essays, pastoral work, personal studies, etc. Nevertheless, thank you for your generosity in sending me the newsletter. And I can assure you that you have taught me lots of things from your publication. Besides they are really full of wisdom and realistic in our modern times. I encourage you to continue inspiring us readers. And lastly I am always praying for Nick and the others. Please you also continue praying for me.

Yours faithfully,
Basil D. (Seminarian in PNG)
Thank you Basil and prayers for you always.

cannot be reversed. I have yet to meet anyone who made a decision to abort because of career, trip, special occasion, and believe that the decision they made was the right one. The women and several men that I have spoken to have all said, the abortion for that particular reason (career, trip) was not worth it. Even when it meant advancement in career prospects and life that goes with it.

I guess it means that the shine which should have been present with success is rightly absent because the cost was too much. A baby.

As I come to the end of this newsletter I have to thank several people who read between the lines and answered the call for help.

Thank you Paul (Sydney) you somehow can hear even when I am whispering. Thank you to those who continue to support in whatever way you can whether by prayer or financial. Please remember that I don't ever charge anyone any fees. In this way I can speak about the mercy of God with freedom. I do all things professionally but I don't charge, in this way those who cannot afford to come will be able to come without fear or embarrassment. So without your support it's really, really, really hard.

Please continue to pray for Melissa, Hamish, Carlie, Marie, Adam, Susie, Jodie, Andrea, Catherine, Tori, Darren, Jack, Julianne, Jacinta, Jacquie, Clare, Louise, Katie, Athina, Iris, Ave, Liz, Phillipa, Elissa, Cassie, Michelle, Helen, Marie, Joanne, Dianne, Greg, Sarah, Michaela, Jenny (new) Larissa (new), Joy, Kelly (new) Stephanie (new).

Until next issue

God Bless your life.



Anne Lastman

Broken Branches - Back Issue Request

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