

# Broken Branches

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

ISSUE 156 – July/August 2023

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## Dear Friends,

I apologise for the delay in writing this newsletter, but I've gone through a time of some really busy moments. How interesting that since I said that I hope to retire by the end of the year all types of related grief work has been requested.

I've even gone to Sydney, Canberra, and 2 full weeks in Melbourne, giving my "girls" extra time with them. I must admit that I was really tired when I arrived home and all I needed was a long sleep.

The hip pain, arthritis, and other pains seemed to find me tired and took advantage of it so you can imagine the rest.

Whilst in Melbourne I was asked to speak with a woman whose little one had died (illness) and she was inconsolable even after many months.

I think that most of her friends whilst lovingly cared for her they thought that maybe she should have begun to at least look up from looking downwards and tears rolling down her face. Not saying anything but silence and tears.

The person who told me this is someone who has been with me several years and she has stopped her own tears and even said that she doesn't feel "sad" anymore about her abortion just that she wishes that it had never happened and if she knew what it would be like after the abortion, she would never have had one.

It was good to hear that this is how she felt now, but I wondered why she couldn't understand that the friend had not yet processed or even begun to process her grief and that she was just managing to keep going and the moments when she thought about her child were the moments that the tears would roll down, and that this would also explain why she couldn't engage with the group of friends who used to meet together. I also explained that maybe she needed to disengage from the group as a group and see friends individually for a

while because she couldn't allow herself to feel joy even for a moment. She would be empty of joy. Further, if there were others with little ones then this would make her pain more intense.

Disengagement is the removal of oneself (not necessarily physically though at times physically necessary) but her "her real self" and taking time to nurse that "I" who is in much pain.

The death of a child seems grotesque. We believe that this shouldn't happen. We have such confidence in our systems that we believe that this isn't right.

The death of a child changes the whole plan. It changes the hopes for the future. All tied in this little one and when death unexpectedly occurs then what remains is "why" A why that is impossible to answer.

This particular child had been ill from birth and it had earlier been suggested that she be aborted but the parents could not even envisage such an act. This baby was loved from the moment of conception and will be loved long past after her death and into eternity and will never be forgotten through time.

Intentional death and like this one unintentional death and severance from life and loved ones seems unheard of and leaves those behind voiceless because there is nothing to say. The voice is lost.

I remember when my son "intentionally died" I kept shaking my head. I couldn't do anything else. I could speak and speak and speak about him as though he was still here. I referred to him in the now and I continued this until one day about two years after the death when I had to collect his birth and death certificates for estate/probate purposes, I looked at the certificates given to me and saw birth and death and each with the same name on them, and I remember looking up at the young lady who gave them to me and I just said "he's dead, isn't he?" just as if the penny had just dropped and the tears began, slowly, a torrent, at first but then over months intensely, at any time, any place.

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What I had done was “put away” the event. Disengaged myself from the event because I couldn’t cope, especially hearing the details, for a time somewhere in the future when a trigger would bring the event to the fore, a memory.

I couldn’t cope with what had happened and continued thinking and believing that it had not happened. This was made easier to believe by the fact that we lived in separate states and didn’t see each other regularly, so it was easy to think that all was normal. And so, it continues. Those who sent condolences, came to funeral, called for a while had moved on with their lives, but the me mother is left still in the same place and once grief well is opened its hard to shut it down.

And so, with the young mother who still didn’t want to face a world that didn’t include her little one. A future where all things planned had to now be forgotten and this she couldn’t do. After 4 years I still look at my son’s portrait and ask “why?” and at times I’m angry with him but mostly “why?”

As a grief counsellor I know the answer, but it still doesn’t help. All the “whys” don’t make reasonable sense, or really answer the Why? And yes, there are days of anger attached to the “why” just as there will be anger, with herself. Self-blame, insecurity, fear that any other baby in the future will die too. Anger with all those around her. More anger with those who have babies and she doesn’t. Fear to go near any other child same age as her own. All the confusion that a child’s death brings. This because it seems unfair. It shouldn’t happen Especially babies and Children aren’t expected to die.

And yet, I have dealt with parents (mostly mothers) of children who do die and most of the time taken to death by own parents who later ask the same question “why did I do it. I/we could have managed” “why did I listen to him?” all the same “whys” directed same, but different. All the whys because it’s discovered that the

death of a child intentional or unintentional is unnatural.

I suppose that understanding the meaning of the grief of parents of young child is to understand the love that existed at the moment of that conception. The moment that this presence felt present, the moment which this presence was confirmed.

The days of ultrasounds. The planning of all that was needed. The lying-in bed holding each other and talking about the one that they had created. What would he/she look like? What colour eyes etc. the sublime bliss that is experienced by a couple in love who created a new life, an extension of themselves realised the miracle of their new one who will be with them and then continue carrying them with him/her. These are the moments which begin the journey to parenthood. First the joy of the parents and then the joy of that which they have created together.

Perhaps if it would be possible to begin to understand what bonding actually means it might be of help and perhaps even answer the “why?” pain after an abortion. Why is there pain, confusion, anxiety especially after the abortion which was wanted by the woman herself? Why is there such a sense of loneliness, emptiness, wrongness, loss “I feel empty inside, something should be there. I went in that place feeling “full” and came out feeling “empty” (Carole), nobody told me I would feel this way, even my friends who said that they had had an abortion said that they felt alright after the procedure and a few days later went back to where they were before the termination. But I can’t go back to being the same “it’s gone”

Both the one who was feeling empty after the procedure and the one whose child had died both experiencing something unreal in their life. No one had prepared them for something like this No one had told the mother whose little one had died that this sometimes happens, and no one had told the abortive young woman that life wouldn’t be the same

after a decision she herself was helped to make. And both of these experiences speak of a wound in the feminine heart, that which speaks of a love which no one else can experience, but woman.

The myth which is established in our day speaks of children as disposable if unwanted just a choice. But there really is no choice because if the wrong choice is made, then there is no reversal and an inkling of a lost love remains because woman's maternity is her redemptive special love role. Every time she says yes to that role woman lessens the enemy's hold over her and all women. She accepts that her Yes is the second chance she is given to say yes instead of no, without needing to make choice. The moment choice enters into her heart then the "garden" looms nearby.

A mother's love for her child is never forgotten or lost. It may be denied, suppressed for a time, but not forgotten or lost its innate in her make up. For the young lady in Melbourne, we spoke together for several hours, stopping as she needed to stop and speaking as she needed to speak.

The blessing of my work has been that I do not have to watch the time and say after 50 minutes "it's time for me to see the next client" or she cannot afford more fees. Donations have taken care of that issue and I am able to slowly work with

the person in front of me without having to count \$ time because I know Lord will and has provided well so this work could continue.

At the end our meeting she was a calmer and we promised to get together again when I return in about 6-8 weeks and in the meantime, I would contact her once per week and just catch up and see how she is travelling and she seemed happy with that.

On my return home from Melbourne, I had hoped that I would have a week to catch up on emails, mail, "thank you" for donations and feet up reading a book (The Immortal in You) have had it for a long time (thanks Yvette) but had not had time to read but now I felt I could sit and read a while. But wrong!!! A text saying, "are you back yet? I need to see you I'm feeling really bad" OK...appointment for day after.

I had accepted this lady (I'll call her Sharne for ease) just several weeks before I went interstate, though I had doubts about doing so as the issue is sexual abuse.

Counselling of sexual abuse grief, losses, violation, pain, (adults now who after many years remember, with flashbacks making episodes seem like yesterday) present many difficulties because when this work/counselling is sought many years have passed and the memory has intensified the event/s which further strengthen the memory and severely weaken mental health.

Healing is, I believe, possible but it means walking along in the pain with him/her and allowing that memory of broken pieces (like a jigsaw puzzle) to slowly be put together bit by bit.

Sexual abuse deadens the spirit, the I, and it also withdraws from life. Indeed, leaving the one alone. Not quite completely, but its absence is felt deeply. An aloneness, like life has left but hiding nearby. A deadened spirit doesn't respond to life and all manner of extra violence to the victims is possible.

A slow awakening of internal life is the first order of work. From then onwards it's a matter of understanding how, why, when it happened and slowly, without causing more pain, revisit every episode and take back the piece of her, left behind

due to the shock. And then re integrating little by little all the pieces of the jigsaw which were scattered as the first episode occurred.

As "Sharne" spoke I could hear the text book symptoms. Loss of "me," loss of what had been her family relationship, loss of knowledge of right ness of her family, loss of self-esteem, self-trust, confidence in the future, loss of belief that he/she was/is a good person, loss of control, loss of the ability to be with friends, loss of knowing how to make friends and keep them because they might know what happening/happened to her and not liking her, loss of trust that mum would or would not protect her, And apart from the many losses, there are threats, and loss of peace because there is always the expectation that it's going to happen again tonight, tomorrow, when alone. Loss of knowledge that the perpetrator is no longer her loved person. Fear that this will never stop and she will be "normal again"

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looms"...*

Sharne, seemed distressed, so I called her and she was very agitated, we talked for a while and she seemed calmer because “you’re not far away Anne. I thought you wouldn’t come back” and so we re confirmed the appointment and she was happy.

This of course causes me concern because I’m not sure or I even know that I can complete the work with her in 4 months. But I guess we’ll have to see.

The difficulty when dealing with sexual abuse is that a trust must be established first before any work can be done and when this happens its difficult to refer someone on to someone else, especially as we have developed a relationship of trust and all counsellors have our own “ways” which we have found work for us and for our clients and referring someone to another counsellor is not always successful. Not because counsellor not good but because client doesn’t want to go through her experiences with another.

Each of us have our own way and manner of understanding. Our own nuances. And with these we are able to eventually enter into that place where the little child is hidden from further assaults. We are able together to collect all pieces, and use all manner of talk therapy, narrative therapy which I particularly find successful.

I strongly believe in “homework” therapy because all senses are used and, in the words written, after a time a thread emerges which she herself (and me of course) is able to talk about and understand.

Because we are meaning making creatures we can overcome much as long as we can make sense of what happened and why. It’s much more difficult when it seems something so awful, so wicked, happens and no meaning in it. It helps to be able to find a meaning and purpose because this helps to virtually survive much and look forwards. Viktor Frankl’s book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*, is excellent to read.

It also reminds me of a movie of many many years ago of a prisoner in Alcatraz high security jail who spent his time raising many birds. He went from violence to gentleness because a new meaning in his life was found. For him caring for the birds became the meaning to turn his life around. That meaning. That tiniest of gentleness left within him (after 2 murders) was able to be surfaced and building of care where care had not been found before.

If we are Catholic, Christians, or simply people of good will seeing this movie or reading the story then it would be possible to say “don’t underestimate the spark of the divine, it can change one.” Another living being, in this case a bird, was able to bring the best

part of the prisoner, which lay dormant, to the surface. And changed him into a more humane being. We might even say that its interesting that it was a bird which rescued him from terror and to self-destruct” bird-Holy Spirit?)

## Sexual Sins Worst Kind of Sin?

In 27 years of working as a Catholic Grief therapist/counselor, mostly working with clients of some religion mostly Catholic and Christian and more recently those who avow no religious belief but “I don’t believe in God or Jesus but I do believe in the universe” there seems a terrible loss of our true faith, but a new belief in an abstract, a big something like the universe that sometimes hears and at other times does not’, Listening to this is difficult and because I am a Catholic therapist, I try to integrate the faith into the process and follow the teachings of the Church I know. many of the clients I see and work with I can happily and easily discuss their reason for seeing me not only from a psychological point of view but also from a spiritual point of view. Some cases almost in a hushed voice and a sense of shame speak of sins from which they cannot seem to break free.

Over the years of listening, I think the overall belief among my especially catholic clients, when it comes to their understanding of sin, is that sins of a sexual nature are the worst kind and the most sinful type of sin.

I think that to some extent it is connected to their early life experience in their family or teachers who communicated their idea of faith and transmitting it with at times frightening words of punishment and horror and after effects from childhood to adulthood, and resulting in a fear leading moving away from a personal and loving God, his son Jesus, and all our beautiful beliefs and prayers. G. K Chesterton said, “when men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing but they become capable of believing in anything.”

Believing is a deeply written need “I am your God and you are my people (Jer. 31:31-33) a strong and deep loneliness is felt without a belief and when there has been a loss of faith in God then they then hear of a benevolent “universe” which is greater than God or themselves, who can forgive them and listen to them forgive all their sins including the sexual ones they wander towards that deity.

Sexual sins seem to frighten them more than any other sin and having asked why this is so, the usual and

similar response is that God would “hate” them for their sin but the universe does not hate them. I have thought much about this because I have felt their fear of their “sins” however, I believe that I have also heard of the need for the God they grew up with. One of them even said, without realizing what she said, “I miss my Jesus” This with sense of pathos. It appears to me that there is a desire for “my Jesus” but the idea that they cannot keep their promise to him not to sin again is the barrier and so they have turned to the “universe” in order to believe in something. I have heard not one person male or female say that they are afraid of committing any other sin and not being forgiven except the sexual ones including abortions, abuse, pornography, and its effects/results etc.

Of course, in my area of work, according to the person speaking, she has heard and been told that abortion cannot ever be forgiven, and sexual intercourse leading to pregnancy cannot be forgiven. But the universe can forgive the sins of intercourse and pregnancy and abortion.

I tried to explain that God does not have rating or a tier or shape, size, weight of sin because sin is always sin. It is an offence against the creator, and I assure them that He has found a way to look on them with love and mercy, through his son Jesus and when they turn to Him and ask for forgiveness for their sin it is granted. When they look on Him with love and repentance then He looks on them with love and Mercy. He does not weigh their sin and he does not keep a score. When he hears and sees their understood pain and deep regret his forgiveness wipes all sins away so that they have a newness in them.

I Have a love of the clients and sessions which at times emerge unexpectedly. A session where she/they do not want to speak about abortion or sexual abuse but want to hear if they can be forgiven for what they have done or are doing (looking to the universe, sitting in a garden) to be forgiven.

These sessions are a great pleasure and honour for me, because I am able freely speak about Jesus and to help the person hear about God and His love and forgiveness let them know to not be afraid. I learn of their unknown or unacknowledged need for God whom they seek for and hence the universe idea. This spoken word of love by God for them and their response to that is new, because that is not what they learned in childhood, school, but of a God of terror who sent people to hell to burn forever. But hearing and reasoning they are able to see that God is love itself. as a more mature person they can look at their life and see the goodness and love which they received without even knowing it.

Exploring such a dimension and she/he seeing it is a pearl of great price and hence the memory of from childhood about “my Jesus” has lain dormant for a time.

When we encounter sin or the client comes in feeling “full of sin” it is important to attend to this because it is her spirit which is yearning to be together with him again and be at peace rather than at a distance. And so, as I said its vitally important to be alert to the possibility that the client wants to talk about her “sin” but does not know how or is ashamed, or thinks inappropriate so a moment of grace for both counsellor and counselee can be missed. It can also be a need to speak about Jesus but no one she/he knows wants to talk about these things.

We can quote of the many people Jesus met along his way both males and females who were sinners or very sick or blind, and he showed his compassion to those who were considered different, outcasts, or those who were guilty, (mention thief on the cross) so if she who to the counsellor speaks, who doesn’t know about the types of sins Jesus dealt with, then it’s reasonable to mention some entities we read about in scripture and whom Jesus treated all the same.

All sins of humanity are part or fruit of the deep seed planted in the “Garden.” All our sins come from there, beginning with murder and all other sins which follow. Sin is not done in a moment of planning and carrying out, (usually not, though wickedness does exist) sin is the actual carrying out of the error and so for this not to happen its best to walk away.

Abortion is a huge sin because it steals, through murder, the life of another human being, but this does not usually happen quietly at night with nobody looking. (Though it used to be done in both kinds of darkness (night/soul in eras past) intentional, because there was an action which should not have been., “I know that God cannot forgive my sin of abortion but I committed it knowing that it was wrong. I convinced myself that it was not a baby yet but I really knew it was and should not have killed my baby I did it anyway.”

Well, this is the thing about sin, there must be an intention and knowledge to do a wrong and harm in the action otherwise it is not a sin. If we do not know how and why something is wrong and sinful it will unite itself to the rest of the world’s moral evils, (which at the moment seem to grow exponentially) but it is not appended to one’s act. *The very fact that we do what we know and understand it to be wrong is what makes it a sin.* We can take comfort in our knowledge that it’s the sins we all commit knowingly that Jesus took on himself to the cross. He didn’t die for those who don’t know or understand. He died for

sinners, those with intent sin but His forgiveness is not only for those who are ignorant of the weight of sin and commit sin, but also, His forgiveness is for those of us who do wrong things, at times intentional, and then regret what was done, even murder, stealing, hurting another, and abortions, etc. wrong acts, and then repent and confess them. We have a sacrament of God's Mercy which cleanses us.

Sins of the flesh (we know them all) wound the Holy Spirit because He is the Lord and Giver of Life and the body of the human being is His temple, so there is no making light of these sins and we need to ask for grace to be able to resist the temptation to repeat all sins and do our best to avoid them. Once sin enters our being it then tempts to repeat not only that sin but to despair because of the repetition. However, if this is known and learned how to recognize it, then to immediately return to ask for forgiveness and reconciliation with the Lord this defeats the tempter knowing that Jesus has gone long before us and He knows us intimately and forgives us and does not want us to stay away from his friendship.

In our work as counsellors, I believe that unless we help our client encounter, "my Jesus," we are failing them. Telling us counsellors we cannot go near the spirituality of the client especially when it comes to the issue of death, abuse, abandonment we are contributing to further harm and pain.

This very short article came about because after speaking to the young lady and the "universe". I spoke to another counsellor about the belief in the "universe" and she seemed horrified that I would allow spirituality to be brought into counselling session, and she being a grief counsellor, I wondered how she dealt with someone who is grieving the death of a loved one and especially one suffering complicated grief.

As I have found on this journey which has involved much death (abortions, suicide of abortive mothers who couldn't cope with their decision) sexual abuse which destroys the inner peace of a child or adult in many forms of death it is important to ask and

# Letters

Dear friends,

Just a short note to say thank you to those who have helped over these several months. It has been hard but got through. Thank you to Laurie H, , Christopher S. Tim, Margaret, Mary, Frances, Giacomo, Fr Michael S. Cynthia, L, James L, Carole H., C Mitchell.

Thank you, you have helped.

Please accept this as my thank you

Anne.

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Thank you to those who have sent me personal letters re my retiring. I don't think I've still processed it. I'm still busy, so I haven't thought about it. But thank you.

Anne.

Speak about the bigger questions without fear of doing or saying the wrong thing.

I believe it's possible (and I do this) to ask if there is a religious belief in the life of a child and if the answer is no then we respect that and avoid the topic, but I have always found that where there is a religious belief healing seems more definite, firm, complete. With a belief the baby (aborted) is not used as experimental material, or as medical waste matter but the baby is the arms of his/her creator, whole not crushed or shredded.

Dear friends I hope you will like this newsletter with its little piece of spiritual writing. There is always someone who will complain about such topic being brought into counselling session and yet what we deal with is healing of wounds of psyche. We can call them grief wounds, marriage break up wounds, abuse wounds, abortion wounds, addiction wounds death wounds, without speaking about big questions of life.

We can call them by the name we have given them in our language but they are wounds of the spirit otherwise they would not hurt so much. As far as I am aware robots have no feelings of any kind. Not yet anyway and we are not robots and when injured we are pained and when we are pained, we need assistance whether spiritual, physical, psychological, or medical but we need help because we are human beings created in the image and likeness of the one who created "the universe" 😊 Our God. This need is the most important need of our life and work.

I've come to the end of another newsletter.

I haven't this time wanted to write much about abortion. It seems that we need to look forward and allow God to work with us also, and not just our own steam. And having spoken to many over the past several months, unless we gather for a round table meeting and all being on the same page singing from the same song book then we will continue to work

really hard, to burn out stage, but the enemy will keep winning.

We need prayers, prayers, donors, foot soldiers, artillery etc just like the likes of planned parenthood has. We all need one voice, (not aborigine type of voice) one mantra, one desire to save life of babies and their mothers and fathers, and our society.

Australia now declared that not enough babies have been born and now need lots of immigration. All the babies aborted 20 yrs. ago would be adults today.

We don't have enough babies born? Probably will be blamed on Covid, but the reality is that we do not have enough babies because they have been and are being aborted. Nearly 80,000 per year and over the past 20 years the same who will not be here because they have been killed and the same the year after etc So, our population is in decline. Not replacing itself and still our parliamentarians call for more abortions and more sophisticated methods and funded by the state, of course.

As I come to end of this newsletter, please continue to pray for me and health and my still remaining clients in Melbourne and a few in Perth. Support is still very necessary I can't do it on my own.

*Keep well, Till next time*

***God bless us all and protect us from further offerings to Molech.***



**Anne Lastman**

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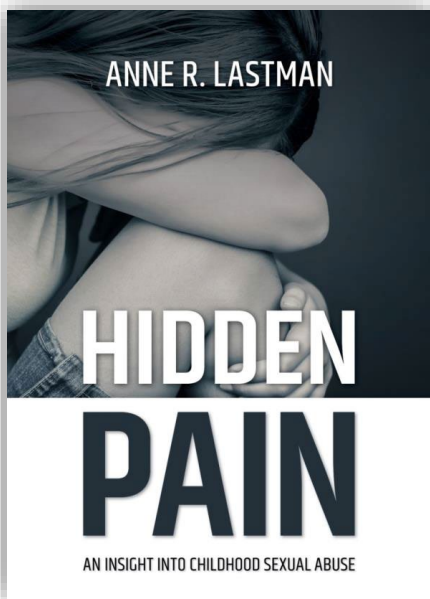
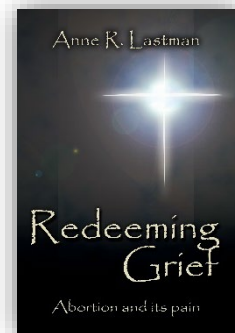
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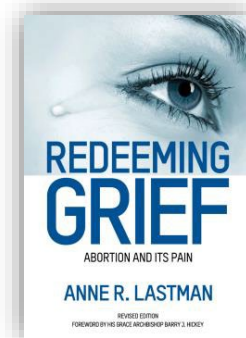
**HIDDEN PAIN** is written about memories which are hidden and cannot be spoken out loud. It is a book about shame, pain, sorrow and lives which have gone wrong both for victims, families, and perpetrators. Sexual abuse of children is common in all communities, in all societies, and yet it's still one of the last remaining taboos. It is something which cannot be spoken about because it's so awful, so inappropriate that it cannot be discussed. Yet discussed it must be, because the children are crying and pleading to be helped.

This is not a step by step guide to dealing with abuse. It is the result of my engagement with those who have come to me originally for post abortion counselling and on further investigation it was found that abuse (especially in cases of multiple abortions) existed in their history. It is my hope that **HIDDEN PAIN** can be of help to those who read it and more so be vigilant and not to turn away when a child is suffering.

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