



## *Come Home to His Mercy this Lent!*

It is not unusual for someone who is post abortive to come to me upset because they have felt judged. "They think we deserve to suffer and deserve to go to hell."

The pain of the realization of the feelings of some people can be overwhelming, adding to the already unbearable pain of knowing that you have participated in the death of your child. In reality, most times, those feelings of judgment are just a reinforcement of what they are feeling about themselves, yet they are desperately looking for forgiveness, healing and acceptance, a way to find God's peace.

They are often surprised when I tell them, "They are right, we may deserve hell, but isn't that what makes our healing all the more beautiful. It has nothing to do with what we deserve, or what we have done to try to make up for our abortions, in truth we can never make up for them, but we do not have to. He already has."

Healing is a gift freely given, obtained through the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ

who died for our sins. Our healing is not about us and what we have done, but about Him and what He has done.

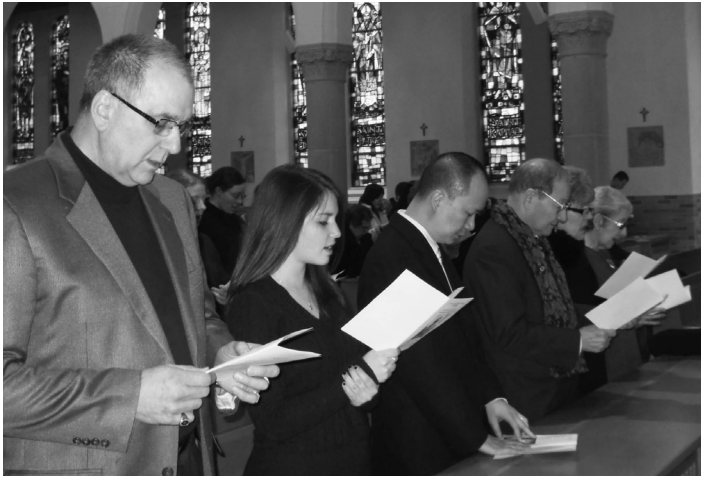
There is a freedom in that knowledge, and a profound gratitude and humility, an acknowledgment, that I am a sinner in need of His mercy. That we, who are responsible for the death of our children, even though to different degrees, can receive His mercy and forgiveness. That His sacrifice has paid the price for our sin and His desire is for our healing and to reunite us with Him and our aborted children.

It is hard to internalize such an amazing act of love and self giving. It is hard as a post abortive person to take the focus off of ourselves, admit what we have done and that we were capable of such an act, and place the focus on Him, but it is there alone that we will find healing, peace, joy and the freedom of knowing the unfathomable love and mercy of God.

TB

# ALL AROUND THE TOWN

The “Prayerful Remembrance Service” developed by Theresa Bonopartis of Lumina with the Sisters of Life took place in four diocese this January.



*Volunteer readers at our Afternoon of Prayerful Remembrance (APR) in Harrison, NY*



*Hosts of APR St. Gregory the Great Respect Group, Harrison, NY*



*Prayerful Remembrance Providence Volunteers*



*Day of Remembrance, Rockford, IL*

What a beautiful morning of prayer. Each testimony was beautiful, moving. Fr. Juniper, Fr. Nic and Fr. Ruggieri...were wonderful!

Carol Owens, Diocese of Providence, RI

On Saturday, Jan. 21 as our second “An Afternoon....” was about to begin Fr. Geno Sylva, director of St. Paul Inside the Walls, looked at me as the program asked what did I think. My feeling was that if one person arrived we should have the 3 hour time of prayer. He smiled a radiant smile and quietly said that’s how he felt, too! (“wherever two or more are gathered...”)

Size did not matter at all because it is all God’s work and those who participated and those who volunteered to read testimonies were moved. Everyone left with hearts changed, some with tears in their eyes, all expressing thanks for the experience. Our musician and singer were very talented and played beautiful soft loving music throughout which added to the peace of the day.

May God be praised!

Marie Ryan, Diocese of Paterson, NJ

I simply thought it was beautiful. The testimonies were powerful, and for some strange reason, at least for me, even more powerful being read by those volunteers instead of the actual person. I don’t know why that is but it was very moving. Maybe because it truly highlighted even more the extent of the impact of abortion on so many people, beyond the mom and dad. The prayers of petition were powerful as well. Beautifully inspired and written, they struck at the heart of deepest pain in each of those person’s experiences. The whole service was filled with sacramental grace...all those sacraments going on! It was a powerful morning of prayer for all of us, any of us, who have been affected, wounded and scarred by abortion. God’s mercy was tangible in those hours!

Terri White

Diocese of Rockford, IL

## UPCOMING POST ABORTION RETREATS

As post abortion ministry and outreach keep growing we are please to provide a list of retreats in our tri-state area as well as "Entering Canaan" retreats across the country. If you are not in these areas please visit one of the following sites to find help in your vicinity.

Abortion Recovery (ARIN): <http://abortionrecovery.org/abortionrecovery/CAREdirectory/tabid/234/Default.aspx>

Hope after Abortion: <http://www.hopeafterabortion.com/>

National Helpline for Abortion Recovery: <http://www.nationalhelpline.org/>

### ENTERING CANAAN & TRI-STATE RETREATS

#### ENTERING CANAAN MINISTRY

Sisters of Life or

Theresa Bonopartis of Lumina

Contact: 866-575-0075 or 877-586-4621

#### Days of Prayer & Healing for Women

March 17, 2012

April 28, 2012

Contact: 877-586-4621 or 866-575-0075

#### Day of Prayer & Healing for Men

May 19, 2012

Contact Lumina: 877-586-4621

#### Day of Prayer & Healing for Siblings

For siblings of aborted babies

March 10, 2012

Contact Lumina: 877-586-4621

#### Day of Prayer & Healing for Adverse Diagnosis

March 24, 2012

Contact: Lumina: 877-586-4621

### Entering Canaan Nationwide Retreats

#### ARLINGTON, VA

##### Days of Prayer & Healing

Retreats 2011/2012 Days of Prayer & Healing

March 10, 2012

September 22, 2012

Contact: (888) 456-HOPE or email:

[projectrachel@arlingtondiocese.org](mailto:projectrachel@arlingtondiocese.org)

### WASHINGTON, DC

#### "An Experience of Hope,"

##### Weekly Support Groups

*English*

One on Sunday afternoons - begins Feb. 12

One on Thursday evenings - begins Feb. 16

*Spanish*

One on Sunday afternoons - begins Feb. 12

#### Entering Canaan Days of Prayer and Healing

*English*

Men's Day Feb. 25th

Couples with a Poor Prenatal

Diagnosis May 19

Women's Day June 23rd

*Spanish*

Men's Day Feb. 25th

Women's Day April 21st

Couples with a Poor Prenatal

Diagnosis May 19

### INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

#### Day of Prayer & Healing

Contact Sister Diane at 317-236-1521 or

800-382-9836, ext. 1521 or

e-mail [dcarollo@archindy.org](mailto:dcarollo@archindy.org)

### ROCKVILLE, IL

#### Day of Prayer & Healing

May 5, 2012

Contact: Laura Christianson

E-Mail: [LChristianson@rockforddiocese.org](mailto:LChristianson@rockforddiocese.org)

### RACHEL'S VINEYARD

<http://www.rachelsvineyard.org/>

### NEW YORK

#### Huntington

Contact: Frank and Lorraine Gariboldi

516-523-0586 or [fi@optonline.net](mailto:fi@optonline.net)

May 25 – 27, 2012

*Spanish*

Contact: Donna Crean 631-258-5062

May 25 -27, 2012

[donnacrean@optonline.net](mailto:donnacrean@optonline.net)

### NEW JERSEY

#### Linden (Archdiocese of Newark)

March 9 – 11, 2012

Contact: Michelle Krystofik 732-388-8211

### Paterson, NJ

Contact: Marie Ryan 973-777-8818 x264

[rachel@patersondiocese.org](mailto:rachel@patersondiocese.org)

April 27 – April 29, 2012

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### ...Witness (continued from back page)

4) And the sinful woman, who barged into a party Jesus was at and stood behind him and wept so hard the tears were covering his feet and she knelt before him and dried them with her hair. The Pharisee hosting the party thought to himself, "If only Jesus knew who this sinful woman was, who was touching Him", and Jesus knowing his thoughts asked him, "If 2 people are forgiven a debt and one of them has a greater debt to be paid who of the two would be the most grateful?" The Pharisee replied, "The one who has been forgiven much." Jesus said, "So I tell you her many sins have been forgiven. Hence she has shown great love." And He said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven. Your faith has saved you go in peace"

So, I wondered: 1) Was I like the blind man in complete darkness? Yes 2) Was I desperate like the hemorrhaging woman? Yes 3) Did I feel like a leper filled with shame? Yes 4) And Was I like the woman in the Gospel who wept tears of repentance at the feet of Jesus? Yes

Jesus didn't push me away but held me up as one who was praised by Him for her tears of repentance and great Love. I used to think when hearing some of the Gospel stories that I had to have a great faith in order to be healed, but these encounters with Jesus in the Gospels taught me otherwise. Like those people in the gospels who heard the same words spoken to them, I had the Faith the size of a small MAYBE. Maybe if I cry loud enough He'll hear me and have pity on me. Maybe if I can just touch Him a little it will be enough to make me feel better...Maybe if I stretch out my hand He can grab hold of me and pull me out of the darkness. Just maybe He can heal me of this. He's my hope. That's all I had then. Just a maybe, but that's all I needed That faith, that gift, became trust. I know now I am a beloved daughter of God. Where once my understanding was no more than a MAYBE, it has become an acceptance of the gift of God. I know now what those words mean: "Your Faith Has Saved You" That Faith which is a GIFT. And that Gift Who is JESUS.

# WITNESS

## The Gift of Faith

When I was first experiencing the effects of my abortion, I began to write down and memorize scripture verses about guilt, hope, forgiveness, and faith. One of the verses I wrote down about faith read: *“Faith is the realization of what’s hoped for and evidence of things not seen”*. I really liked this verse and it mentioned hope and faith, two things I was desperate to have.

I needed faith to strengthen me to keep me going, and hope, that God would get me through this pain. This “definition” of Faith however, seemed more like a concept to me. Since then, I’ve learned that Faith is not a concept. **Faith is a Gift, and that gift is a Person, Jesus Christ!**

Because I didn’t really know who Jesus was, it was hard for me to understand and accept that someone could love me so much, to forgive me for what I had done. I’ve learned that not accepting this gift of faith, this grace of God’s forgiveness, is to not accept that Jesus died for sinners, *including me*.

I first started feeling the effects of my abortion in 1989 after my son was born. I wasn’t forced by my boyfriend or threatened to be abandoned by my parents. I chose abortion because I thought it would be the best solution to my “problem”. I was very insecure and worried about what others would say and think about me and the abilities the father and I had, to take care of a child.

For the next few years after my abortion I was in denial. After giving birth to my son, all the denial that I had built up crumbled and I was left with the realization that abortion had ended the life of my first child. The guilt and remorse made life unbearable.

Although I had not been attending Mass for years, I knew that I needed to go to confession. The priest I spoke with was very kind and compassionate and assured me of God’s love and forgiveness for me. I left the rectory after Confession thinking that I would feel enormous relief however, that’s not what I felt. As a matter of fact I began to feel worse.

This same priest eventually gave me information about post abortion counselors so, I started to go to counseling and Mass not just on the weekends, but during the week. I started saying the rosary, memorizing scripture verses about forgiveness and how God washes away our guilt, but still, I felt consumed with guilt and regret. How could I have done something like this? All those reasons for having an abortion seemed now to be things that I could have dealt with or that were not that important.

I thought that one of the reasons I had for not gaining peace from confession was because I really did not accept God’s forgiveness so, I kept going to confession, not to confess my sin of abortion but not accepting God’s forgiveness. I thought I was doing something wrong. Priests in the confessionals would tell me “you need to accept God’s forgiveness”, but how do you do that? I began to think: I was still offending God after He had forgiven me, because I was not feeling at peace.

Well my “confessing” took me to many different churches and priests. One afternoon as I was driving home from a church quite a way from my home after confessing again, I felt worse than I ever had before. The blackness of despair engulfed me, and I felt completely helpless and alone. It was like looking into a black abyss of nothing. How could this be when I go to church and cry out to God all the time for help. How could He not be here?

When I got home I laid on the bed and felt this nothingness that was more frightening than even the guilt and grief I felt about my abortion.

In the midst of this, as I looked up at the ceiling I heard a voice say: “Your Faith Has Saved You”. Those words have since meant a great deal to me, but at the time quite frankly they only startled me enough to think, “Excuse me.. “what’s that supposed to mean?” As far as I knew I had no faith! In fact, that was my problem!! How could my faith save me if I had none?

Well, that was over 20 years ago and through God’s grace and the help of people He has sent into my life I have been able to heal, and attain that peace that I was so desperately looking for. I do know now, that the graces I received through the sacraments of Confession and Eucharist did sustain and strengthen me. I’ve come to know that those words are actually words spoken by Jesus in the Gospel to at least 4 people.

When I looked at each one of these encounters these people had with Jesus, I began to see how meaningful those words were then and now.

1) The blind man named Bartimaeus, who screams out to Jesus saying, “have pity on me”. Jesus calls him to come to Him and He asks what he wants, the blind man replies, “Lord that I may see”. Jesus replies, “Go your way. Your faith has saved you.”

2) The woman who suffered with a hemorrhage, thought that if she could just touch the hem of his garment she would be healed. Jesus felt the power of his healing flow from him and He asked “Who is it that touched me?” The woman fell down at his knees and poured out her troubles. Jesus replied “Daughter, Your faith has saved you... “

3) The 10 Lepers who cried out to Him “Jesus have pity on us!” Jesus said to them “go show yourselves to the priest”, and on their way they noticed they were healed.

Only 1 of the 10 returned fell on his knees to thank Jesus. Jesus said “Were there not 10 who were healed.” Then He said, “Stand up and go. Your Faith has saved you.”

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**Donations to Good Counsel’s Lumina Program are tax deductible. Your gift today can be multiplied many times over in bringing those hurting to the healing mercy of God.**

**Lumina, 1955 Needham Avenue, Bronx, NY 10466**