

*"Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"*



What awesome wonder comes our way
Through Jesus' birth on Christmas Day
Our God of mercy seeks to bring
His presence through our newborn King

No sin too great could thwart His plan
Of love immense for every man
Though through our sin we were defiled
Through Jesus' birth we're reconciled

Just hear the unborn children sing
"Glory to our newborn king"
And parents who had lived despair
Know that salvation now is here

United in an act of love
Sent down to us from up above
Though through our sin we were defiled
Through Jesus' birth we're reconciled

So, God of mercy born anew
We wonder at the love of you
That came to save the human race
By life anew through saving grace

Joined with our unborn now we sing
The Mercy of our newborn King
Though through our sin we were defiled
Through Jesus' birth we're reconciled

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UPCOMING POST ABORTION 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

January 15, 2011

February 19, 2011

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

Day of Prayer & Healing for Men

May 7, 2011

Contact Lumina: 877-586-4621

Day of Prayer & Healing for Siblings

For siblings of aborted babies

March 5, 2011

Contact Lumina: 877-586-4621

St Louis, MO

Day of Prayer & Healing

Weekend of Hope & Healing

Contact: Marisol Pfaff

MPfaff@archstl.org

Arlington, VA

Day of Prayer & Healing

Contact: 703-841-2504

projectrachel@arlingtondiocese.org

3/26/11

RACHEL'S VINEYARD

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

New Jersey

Linden (Archdiocese of Newark)

Contact: Michelle Krystofik

732 388 8211

1/14/11 – 1/16/11

Paterson, NJ

Contact: Marie Ryan

973-777-8818 x264

rachel@patersondiocese.org

4/29/11 – 5/1/11

Connecticut

Fairfield County

Local host: Diocese of Bridgeport

Contact: Clarissa Cincotta

203 218 0291

1/28/11 – 1/30/11

Website: www.rachelsvineyardbpt.com

Litchfield/Montforte House

Farmington/Our Lady of Calvary

Contact: Mary Hayden

1-203-882-1326

3/18/11 – 3/20/11

mmhdfc@sbcglobal.net

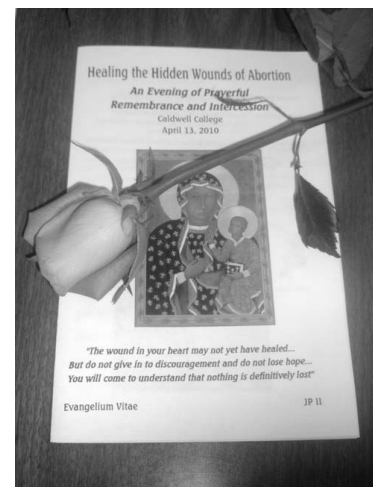
Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy - Seeking Holiness in a Post-abortive Society

Several Rachel's Vineyard site leaders and team members from Kentucky and Tennessee (led by Fr. Ben Cameron of the Fathers of Mercy) have recently formed a spiritual "confraternity" (a spiritual union of persons brought together for the purpose of mutual support for a common end). This Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy is specifically for women and men who are post-abortive (not just those who have made Rachel's Vineyard retreats, but also those who have been through Project Rachel or Entering Canaan retreats), but is also open to pro-life Catholics (and other Christians) who would like to join in spiritual solidarity with those who are post-abortive.

The purpose of this Confraternity is to help us to take the next step after we have received healing from the Lord Jesus (but we don't have to feel completely healed to begin this next step): we are called to holiness of life – to be Saints! In the history of the Church, whenever there have been times of crisis and moral degradation, God has always raised up saints, "men and women, outstanding in holiness" (quote from one of the prayers of the Mass), to bring the Church and the world back to God. In today's time of moral and spiritual crisis, in the midst of our "culture of death," who better for God to call to holiness than women and men who are post-abortive? We might think that we have been too hurt, too wounded, to become holy – but do we really think that it is beyond God's power and mercy? The Lord Jesus has shown His Love, Mercy and Healing power in our lives – so let us embark on this quest to be Saints, to be totally His! For those who are interested in learning more, please visit the Confraternity's new website, where you can learn about the plan of life for growing in holiness, who can join the Confraternity, and how to join: OLMercy.org -Fr. Ben Cameron

Morning of Prayerful Remembrance

Over the last eight years, an "Afternoon of Prayerful Remembrance" has been held at various locations including the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC and at St. Patrick's Cathedral in NY. On Saturday, January 15th, 2011, a "Morning of Prayerful Remembrance", directed by Rev Mariusz Koch, CFR, will be televised live, from 9:00am - 12:00pm, by EWTN from St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. The "Prayerful Remembrance" service was developed by Theresa Bonopartis with The Sisters of Life. For more information on how to conduct or host the service contact Theresa at Lumina/Hope and Healing after Abortion: **1-877-586-4621 or email lumina@postabortionhelp.org**



"Suddenly, my whole life made sense!"

Are you suffering because your sibling has been aborted?

There are many out there who have also experienced this loss.

Come to a **"Day of Prayer & Healing"** for siblings of aborted babies

Saturday, March 5, 2011, Bronx, NY, led by Rev Mariusz Koch, CFR

For further information contact:

Lumina, 877-586-4621 or email lumina@postabortionhelp.org

ALL AROUND THE TOWN



Monica Rafte, founder of <http://www.benotafraid.net/>, at the Affirming Life Symposium, Catholic University, DC.



Fr Benedict Groeschel, CFR, at GC concert.



Performers at concert by Eric Genius to benefit Good Counsel.

In Their Own Words The Journey to Canaan

Men's Day: *"The Men's day I attended was amazing. I am being flooded with so many feelings and emotions that have been bottled up for so long. It was enlightening to hear others with the same issues that I have... I feel that at some point I would like to help this mission in some way. I think it is up to us to change things—maybe one life at a time. God Bless You—Keep up the great work!"* – Bob

Adverse Diagnosis: *"It almost seems that the medical community's solution to "eliminate" the problem doesn't really make the grief go away but displaces it from a very tangible and overt grief into an intangible and hidden grief. Modern technology has not advanced to the point where chromosomal disorders are cured, only eliminated. And in the process of elimination we've lost touch with the very tangible support of community. I suppose that's why when faced with the decision to abort Tommy I reached out to the family elders. I thought they would have experienced infant mortality at some point in their lives prior to all this advancement in medical technology. So imagine my surprise when they too supported the doctor's choice to terminate."* – Lucy

SIBLING DAY WITNESS

It is difficult to put into words the great peace and comfort that I received when I participated in the Day of Prayer and Healing for Siblings. Meeting six other retreatants who knew personally the pain and grief of losing a sibling to abortion made me feel less alone in my loss. As a child, I can remember feeling like someone was missing from my family. During my teen years, I pushed those thoughts away because it seemed not true or possible. Six years ago, when I learned my mom had an abortion four years before I was born, suddenly everything that didn't make sense to me came into focus. I also instantly missed my sibling and instantly cried tears of grief. My mom felt the child she lost was a boy and she named him John Andrew. I had wanted and prayed for a sibling my whole life and now I realized that God had answered my every prayer.

The Day of Prayer and Healing last March provided me with a whole day to just be with my brother in the Communion of Saints and to talk about him with others who understood my pain and cared. The group was a nice mixture of men and women and something that helped me so much was the vulnerable tears the men shared over their pain and loss. Being with the group I felt safe and secure. Never before was I so struck thinking to myself, that this day retreat is a tangible sign that abortion is not a private matter between a woman and her doctor.

I would recommend this retreat to anyone who lost a sibling to abortion. Words could never express my gratitude to Lumina for hosting this Day of Prayer and Healing for Siblings. The wisdom and courage of this post-abortion healing ministry, gave me a glimpse of God's love. – JAMS

WITNESS

“There was the me that everyone knew and then there was the me that I knew.”

October 26, 1991 was the day of my abortion and the day that changed my life forever. Before the abortion, I had known that it was wrong and at first, I was sort of happy about having a baby, although scared. But because of my circumstances and I have to admit, my own selfishness, I had decided to go along with my baby's father's desire to abort.

It wasn't until I woke up afterwards, when I felt the complete emptiness and utter sadness of what I had done, did I realize the gravity of my sin. The Planned Parenthood worker woke me and told me to get up and get dressed, they needed the bed. I couldn't move and as I slowly came out of the anesthesia, I was overcome with such feelings of loss and desolation. I just sat there and got dressed...I couldn't even bring myself to get up and go into the bathroom. I was so full of shame.

I suppose that was my first acknowledgement of my sin, however, I tried to hide it and then bury it. With that came the consequences. That first day I cried and just wanted to be alone. The baby's father tried to console me, but he didn't understand and I didn't want to make him feel bad because after all, it was ultimately my decision.

I had made horrible choices and sinned terribly before this. I chose to not have God in my life. I still believed in Him and I knew He was there watching me, but I wanted to do things my way because I just wanted to do what made me happy. I liked my life and got lazy about my morals. I didn't go to Church regularly, I prayed very little, and tuned out my parents whenever they tried to talk to me about God. Since I ran from God before I even got pregnant, the thought never even occurred to me to run to Him for help after becoming pregnant.

This choice, this sin, however, was the most heinous. The only way to continue on with my life was to not think about it. I had to bury it and move on. It was just too painful. Aside from telling 2 family members and a friend, telling other family or friends was not an option, after all, what would they think of me? I think most people had a certain opinion of me and having an abortion did not fit with who I was. At that time I was very concerned about what people thought of me. Plus, I was too ashamed and didn't think they would understand...how could they? I didn't understand or believe that I could do such a thing. I thought they would hate me and think I was some horrible person. I couldn't deal with that from all of them...I already knew it to be true and I didn't want anyone else to see that part of me, the part that could do something so terrible. So I pushed it down and hid behind the façade that everything was fine. By pushing it down and not letting anyone in, I could still pretend to be the same old me, on the outside anyway. I went through life as if nothing was wrong or different. I was still with my boyfriend, we went out and had fun, I worked and did what I had to do. It was like living a dual life. There was the me that everyone knew and then there was the me that I knew.

The price I paid was emotional and spiritual. Never being a confident and secure person to begin with, my sin of abortion added to my low self-esteem. It was so hard to believe that I could actually do such a thing as this. What was I thinking? How could I be such a coward? I was a fake and a sad excuse for a human being. Why was God so far away? No, why did I push Him so far away???

It was at those times that I cried and begged God to forgive me. However, I didn't think that I deserved forgiveness. After all, I took my own baby's life. It was right for me to feel this way.

But I wanted forgiveness. I had admitted and repented a million times to God when I was alone.

Years later, one priest that I spoke with gave me a Lumina pamphlet. He urged me to call but I just put it in the drawer. I just couldn't do it. I couldn't make that call. However, at that time, I had started to let God back in my life. I really started looking for Jesus. I went back to Church, eventually I started teaching Religious Ed classes which started me wanting to learn more about my faith, but I still couldn't let go of my abortion.

Then one day, I had this sudden urge to call the Sisters of Life. I had seen them on EWTN, went on their web-site, had even pulled out my Lumina pamphlet and read it again and again. I still hadn't found the peace that I desired. At this point, I knew that God had forgiven me but I still couldn't forgive myself. I was still miserable inside. There was no time to think about it. It was as if God Himself was controlling my fingers to dial the phone. It was as if He had said ok, enough! You're ready now. This is what you need to do.

Things changed in me from that very first phone call. It was an amazing experience. After so many years of feeling isolated, not only did I meet other women who knew what I was going through, God put women of such compassion in my life, I just could not believe the love that surrounded me.

After that, I went to an Entering Canaan Retreat Weekend. As amazing as it sounds, it was during this weekend that my healing took place. It was then that I truly felt God's mercy and grace. After hearing Theresa and the other women give powerful witness during the conference, I had the most amazing confession with Father Mariusz. By examining my conscience through each commandment, I was able to confess not only my abortion but even sins that I had already confessed. For the very first time, my soul felt clean and the huge burden of all my sins, especially my sin of abortion, was taken off my shoulders.

I learned through the weekend that I needed to accept God's forgiveness because He had forgiven me and He wanted me to be at peace knowing this. I learned that I should not refuse this great gift of His, but embrace it and know that He does love me, no matter what. I learned that I'm not the monster that Satan told me I was. While I still hate my sin of abortion, I can finally look in the mirror and not hate me. One more very important thing that I've learned is that I do have a voice.

The peaceful and amazing retreat weekends that I've spent with Theresa, the Sisters of Life, the priests and every single woman who I met along the way have helped change my life. God put each and everyone of them in my path to help me. All of this and everything that I felt, every tear, every painful memory, every agonizing second of time that I've thought about my abortion has brought me closer in my relationship to God and my healing. With God's grace, I was finally able to accept His forgiveness. I am now closer to understanding the cross and Jesus' excruciatingly painful death for us so that we may live. I understand that He hates my sins but loves me dearly and longs to heal me.

I am so very thankful to God for all that He has done for me. While He must have been very saddened by my sins and my choice to run from Him, He stayed with me along my journey and helped me learn from these sins. As my journey continues, no matter what happens, I know that Jesus is always beside me and that I can always trust in Him and His mercy.

– Donna

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