

Lumina

Hope and Healing after Abortion

A post-abortion ministry & referral network



A ray of light in abortion's darkness

Winter 2013



During Holy Hour today, I asked the Lord Jesus if He would deign to teach me about the spiritual life. Jesus answered me, *“My daughter, faithfully live up to the words which I speak to you. Do not value any external thing too highly, even if it were to seem very precious to you. Let go of yourself, and abide with Me continually. Entrust everything to Me and do nothing on your own, and you will always have great freedom of spirit. No circumstances or events will ever be able to upset you. Set little store on what people say. Let everyone judge you as they like. Do not make excuses for yourself; it will do you no harm. Give away everything at the first sign of a demand, even if they were the most necessary things. Do not ask for anything without consulting Me. Allow them to take away even what is due you-respect, your good name-let your spirit rise above all that. And so, set free from everything, rest close to My Heart, not allowing your peace to be disturbed by anything. Jesus to St Faustina - Divine Mercy in My Soul*

A wise priest once told me, “The way of God to a new plan is kind of American instead of European. In American architecture they knock everything down and begin completely over while Europeans build on the old.” So true.

It is not easy to let go of things and allow God to tear down what you feel is your foundation, especially if it is *“very precious to you.”* In our humanness we tend to cling, especially if we feel

something is being torn from us. It is then that we either let go kicking and screaming, or freely chose to let go. Either way we must let go if we are to live in the peace of Christ.

In the case of abortion, we need to let go of hurt, bitterness, anger, shame, guilt and all that separates us from allowing God to love and heal us. We need to learn the dynamics of abortion and the many different ways it impacts us so we can move forward. With the support of those who have gone before us and those trained in healing we, by God’s grace, are able to do that.

We also need to decide to forgive, and even embrace this pain of letting go, so that we are “set free from everything,” even if we value *“highly”* what we are called to let go of.

It is in this letting go, this surrender, that we rest close to the heart of Christ, and come to know that the only thing that is really important is our personal relationship with Him. This letting go, will ultimately bring us to His peace and the freedom of spirit He speaks of, so that He can be born anew and more deeply in our souls.

Whether it is with abortion, or one of the many other things we cling to in life, may we all let go of everything that keeps us from Him so that He may find room in our heart to dwell for all eternity.

A very blessed Christmas to you all! - TB

“Make nothing of yourself, so that God can make the universe of you.”

-Ambrose of Optina

All Around the Town

Pilgrim Icon of Our Lady of Czestochowa Visiting NY



Catholic Underground



NYC Procession

APR Bridgeport Diocese



Meridan Respect Life Conference



Jeanne Monahan & Theresa

Taste



Theresa Bonapartis speaking at TASTE in Laurel, MD

...WITNESS

(continued from last page)

miss out on a lot of things and would be held back had I kept the baby. However, once I had the abortion, the drinking and the drugs made me feel worse. They helped the abortion be buried for a little bit but they eventually made me feel so bad that I realized I couldn't live like this anymore. That's when I called Theresa. My abortion was in January and I was at my first retreat in June. I remember finally being able to open up to the RIGHT people about my abortion. When I first told my mom and dad, they encouraged me to go to confession and were very supportive and told me they wished I had told them sooner. When I look back and face this situation honestly, I didn't tell them because I knew they would make me have the baby. There was no room for that in my path to self-destruction. It was a Saturday during lent, a time of repentance, and after my confession the priest asked me if I knew what today's gospel was. No, father I don't. It was the Prodigal Son. God had been waiting here all along. I was the one that messed up our relationship. His sun was and is always shining, I just had my umbrella up to block it. I need not fear Him, I have to LOVE him. I have to love everyone. I have to love myself. Then began my journey of forgiveness and hope.

There are many layers to this healing process. The one thing that's been a driving force recently is a quote from Pope John Paul II's Encyclical letter where he says "nothing is definitively lost". To me, that's so beautiful and helpful. My daughter is with God in His kingdom of heaven, the most perfect place anyone could be! As for me, I'm in the best hands, too. Though I can't see God or touch Him, I know he's there. It took me a while to realize that, but I say with confidence today I KNOW He's there. Jesus died for our sins, He has forgiven us, and it is our humanness that holds on to the sin of abortion. It is our egos that get in the way and the devil that tempts us to feel that we are unforgiveable. God doesn't want us to beat ourselves up anymore. He wants us to bring our pain to Him. He can handle it. By the suggestion of Theresa, I was led to a Catholic therapist that has changed my life.

For a while I struggled with "how could God have let this happen?" But, God didn't do this to me, but He allowed me to go through with it when I chose it. I know Theresa often says this, but I have to agree: God used my worse sin, my abortion, for my salvation. He used it to bring me back to my faith. I have to remind myself daily that God does not want me to carry this weight- I am forgiven and I have to forgive myself. It is a process. I struggle with forgiveness all of the time. When I put it in terms of my daughter and think how she has forgiven me, it makes me sad but hopeful and a little more at peace. I want to be the best person I can be here on earth so that I can spend eternity with her in heaven.

-BT

UPCOMING EVENTS



AFTERNOON OF PRAYERFUL REMEMBRANCE

An Afternoon of Prayerful Remembrance and Intercession (APRI) developed by Theresa Bonopartis with The Sisters of Life is, as its name suggests, a prayer service created in the spirit of the New Evangelization, for the entire local community. Acknowledging the universal impact of abortion through reflections and testimonies offered as part of the day, the prayer service offers the opportunity for all of us to come together in an extended period of prayer, contemplation, and intercession in the context of the Church's Sacraments, seeking forgiveness and healing for our entire nation. The day of prayer includes an opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a period of silent Eucharistic Adoration, and concludes with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

January 11, 2014

9:00 – 12:00pm
St. Joseph Parish
512 S. Elm Avenue
Owatonna, Minnesota 55060
Contact: Mary Eisman
507-271-3164

February 22, 2014

Diocese of New York
St. Columba Catholic Church
Route 82
Hopewell Junction, New York

January 11, 2014

1:00 – 4:00pm
Archdiocese of New York
Church of St. Mary and
Holy Name of Jesus
160 Broadway
Kingston, NY 12401
Contact: Theresa Bonopartis
718-881-8008
lumina@postabortionhelp.org

January 22, 2014

6:00 – 9:00pm
Diocese of Fall River
St. Vincent De Paul Parish
71 Linden Street
Attleboro, MA
Contact: Kathy Davis
stvincentdpattleboro@gmail.com



Upcoming New York/CT/NJ Post Abortion Retreats

ENTERING CANAAN MINISTRY Days of Prayer & Healing for Women

Sisters of Life: contact: 866-575-0075
(Entering Canaan Ministry begins with day retreats which we encourage all who can to attend preceding our weekends. Please call for our weekend dates)
November 16, 2013 January 18, 2014
February 15, 2014 March 15, 2014
May 31, 2014

Theresa Bonopartis/Lumina 877-586-4621
July 19, 2014

Bridgeport Diocese

December 14, 2013
Contact: Maureen Ciardiello (203) 416-1445
Email: mciardiello@diobpt.org

Men's Weekend Retreat

April 4–6, 2014
Contact Lumina: 877-586-4621

Day of Prayer & Healing for Siblings

For siblings of aborted babies
March 8, 2014
Contact Lumina: 877-586-4621

ENTERING CANAAN NATIONWIDE RETREATS Arlington, VA

Days of Prayer & Healing
Contact: (888) 456-HOPE or
email: projectrachel@arlingtondiocese.org
February 22, 2014

New Orleans, LA

Day of Prayer & Healing
Contact: Susan Mire
smire@womansnewlife.com

Washington, DC

Entering Canaan Days of Prayer and Healing
English: December, June
Spanish: November, April

RACHEL'S VINEYARD

Connecticut
Hamden, Ct
Contact: Marie Laffin 203-631-9030
mlaffin@prolifeministry.org
<http://www.rachelsvineyard.org/>

New Jersey

Archdiocese of Newark
Kearney, NJ
Contact: Cheryl Riley 973-497-4350
rileyche@rcan.org
Spanish: February 7–9, 2014
English: May 16–18, 2014

New York

Rockville Center Diocese
Contact: Frank and Lorraine Gariboldi
516-523-0586 fgariboldi@optonline.net

Northern NY

Diocese of Albany
Contact: Kathleen Whimple 518-469-0079
Rachelsvineyardalbany@yahoo.com

WITNESS

Acknowledging My Sin

Here I am today, two and a half years after my abortion. Through God's mercy and forgiveness, I have begun to heal in ways that I never thought were possible. I had full intent on bearing the brunt of my sin of abortion for my entire life, never to experience full happiness – because that's what I was sure I deserved. I had done the unthinkable and I was prepared to beat myself up forever. I assumed the pain would be bad, but it was so much worse than anyone could ever prepare you for. However, through Lumina and Entering Canaan and an open heart things are better. Things are SO MUCH BETTER. This struggle is the hardest thing I've ever had to face, but with struggle comes growth. There are many layers to our healing, God keeps us in check by allowing certain hardships to come our way but we have to remember that we need Him always – for everything. If we keep our eyes on Jesus, we can conquer and learn any thing that comes our way.

This sin in particular was so multi-faceted, I didn't even know where or how to begin to look at it. There are effects pre and post-denial. I would constantly cry immediately leading up to and after the abortion. The people at the clinic read off statistics to me as to how many other women have gone through the same thing but the whole time all I could think about was how mad at myself I was that I was even part of that statistic. I NEVER wanted to be part of that statistic and hearing that "so many people do it" was definitely never going to make me feel any less pain or make what I was going to do okay.

I was aware from the beginning that what I was doing was wrong, but I was in survival mode. I couldn't think too long about each step of the process because I felt that I'd lose my mind. Little did I know, I was absolutely losing my mind – and my child. I was fully aware of the regret that would come afterwards, but I was willing to live a life of regret just to preserve my worldly reputation. I had no idea the extent and the deepness of the regret that was to come.

The whole situation surrounding my pregnancy was an out of body experience from the instant I took the pregnancy exam. I simply just got through the days until my appointment at the clinic was made. I cried myself to sleep every night, however that wasn't enough for me to realize that God was trying so hard to get me back. The devil wanted me on autopilot. He didn't want me to accept the life that had been bestowed to me - as a GIFT from God, not a burden. Granted, being a pregnant, unmarried, young twenty two year old girl wasn't "convenient" but it seemed so much scarier than it actually was. The root of the matter is based on all worldly things. Things that pain me so much to look back on, realizing how insignificant and silly my reasons to abort were. I was so unbelievably scared of what people would think. I was so eager to maintain a reputation that wasn't even faithful to protect myself, that I lost sight of the one thing that REALLY matters – God's opinion. He is the only one I should have been worried about. He gave me a precious gift that I was too scared to accept. I believe that my sin of abortion began when I was sickened by the results of my pregnancy test and thought, "I need it out". I was in such denial it took me 4 months to finally even buy one. All of the physical signs were there, but I refused to believe it. What's absurd is how I could think that I could bargain my way out of this? "God, I won't have sex anymore if you just let this test be negative." What I failed to realize is that I conceived 4 months prior so no matter what I bargained, the reality of the situation was that I had gotten pregnant. The thought of having a child would immediately be blocked out of my mind. It was like I was rejecting any hopeful or happy thoughts of life. I didn't reach out to any of the people that could have helped me. I would Google things like "do you ever get over an abortion?" I would read blogs with responses from girls that had had abortions. They didn't make me feel better; instead they definitely kept me on track to self-destruction. The things written on these blogs and pro-choice websites are positively the workings of the devil. The devil had me though at that point, so I wasn't very sensitive to his presence. I yearned for God but I felt that my mindset was so despicable that I might as well just save my prayers until after the abortion. By not trusting in God's plan, I did exactly what the devil wanted me to do – I chose death. The catch here is that, after I chose death, the devil wasn't there.

I didn't honestly face what I had done yet so I sat quietly as people around me trying to console me told me that I did the right thing, and that it was my choice...but this never felt right. I didn't ever want to be part of that statistic. I wanted to be the girl outside of the clinic praying a rosary. Not the one that couldn't even look up at this angelic girl – probably my age – trying to persuade me away from the clinic. My shame and guilt were so heavy I could not look this girl in the eye. I made a bee-line for that clinic. Self-preservation can bring out the worst in someone. Self-preservation is no way to live. There were so many "me", "I", and "my's". I wasn't acting out of love, I was acting out of self. That's always recipe for disaster.

When I woke up from the anesthesia after my abortion, I would be lying if I said I didn't feel initial relief. I wasn't pregnant anymore and had assumed the pregnancy was the problem and now I was no longer pregnant. However, the relief quickly wore off. I had this empty feeling in my stomach. I could feel it physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually - just empty all over. I thought that I was scared leading up to the abortion, well now I was fearing everything. I feared God and I was never a God-fearing person. I was a shell of my once confident, loving and faithful self. The nights following my abortion were filled with anger, screaming, regret, pain, and utter sadness. I couldn't believe what I had done. I missed my baby. I missed this person that I don't even know – that I killed. All of my reasons for aborting suddenly seemed so silly. They were NOTHING compared to the life that I had just ended. The reality of the situation was starting to sink in. I had had an abortion...but at the time and for months following I couldn't even say or hear the word "abortion."

When I was younger, any time I had to write about or debate a social issue, I chose abortion. I would write pages upon pages about how wrong it is. My innocence and conscience were fully in tact. I grew up in a pro-life household in an Irish Catholic family. My parents weren't abusive or unloving. They are reasonable, extremely loving and supportive people; they were whom I went to with all of my problems. When I went to college, I was very well-rounded. My freshman year, I remember I gave up alcohol for lent – and it wasn't an issue. A lot of people thought I was crazy, but I had no problem doing it. Drinking was something that I liked, so I would sacrifice that for 40 days. Well, that mentality did not last long. By sophomore year I was drinking and using drugs on a regular basis – it was a way to feel out of myself – a way to not feel reality. My parents were divorcing and I didn't want to deal. This continued for years after...when I made the decision to abort I felt as if I still had more partying to do. My boyfriend and I at the time just weren't ready and should still "enjoy" our young lives and not disappoint his parents and the people that knew us. I feared that I would

Continued inside on page 2

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