

The Gift of Our Emptiness



*"Love to be real, it must cost—it must hurt—it must empty us of self."
--Mother Teresa*



I always am in awe at the wonder of the season of fall. On their way to dying, the leaves on the trees become breathtakingly beautiful before falling to the ground leaving them barren in the winter. Soon however, spring comes and the new buds of flowering leaves are visible to us, and it is just a matter of time before the trees will be filled again. Without emptying its branches it would be impossible to obtain new life.

This always reminds me of the spiritual life. The call for us to empty ourselves before Christ, and to embrace that emptiness so that God can fill it with Himself.

I don't know about you, but instead of accepting

it, even though I know its merits, I fight against the emptiness. My human nature completely rebels against it, and as much as I hate to admit it, I am smitten with myself in spite of the fact that I know I am my own worst enemy. I am always getting in my own way on the road to heaven.

As soon as I feel that void, I seek to fill it up, most times with one of my many vices; anything to avoid the void. I busy myself with trivial things. I run around or feed my emotions with a variety of different things, from food to other means of entertainment. Most times, I do everything but what I know I *should* be doing: embracing the emptiness, trusting that the only One who truly can fill that void is at work in me.

*May we each this Advent season willingly empty ourselves like the trees in the fall,
so that Jesus Himself can fill us with His life. - Theresa*

WHAT'S NEWS ~ TALKS AND EVENTS

LUMINA DINNER DECEMBER 6, 2012

This January we will mark the 40th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade. Since that time, 54 million abortions have occurred in our country. That means that countless mothers, fathers, grandparents, siblings, and others have been affected, and many are suffering in silence feeling like there is no help for them. I know this is true, because I used to be one of them!

For years I suffered from guilt, grief, and shame, thinking I was the only one feeling that way and was crazy for my feelings. I came to learn that my feelings were not only normal, but that countless other women were experiencing the same thing and were also having their experience denied. With over 54 million abortions in just under 40 years, who do you know? Helping those impacted heal is not only an investment in their personal health, but in our families and the health of our society as a whole.

On **December 6th**, Lumina/Hope & Healing after Abortion, will be holding a fundraising banquet at The Mansion in White Plains, NY, from 6-9:30pm.

The honoree of the dinner will be Monsignor Philip Reilly Founder of Helper's of God's Precious infants who recently made news because of the closing of the oldest and largest abortion clinic in New York City where more than a quarter of a million unborn children lost their lives. Msgr and the Helpers had been praying daily in front of the clinic since 1990.

The guest speaker will be Allan Parker, ESQ., of The Justice Foundation. Mr. Parker is the lead legal counsel for Norma McCorvey, Roe of Roe vs. Wade, and Sandra Cano, Doe of Doe vs. Bolton, in the legal effort to overturn their landmark Supreme Court ruling that brought abortion on demand to America. He is also a frequent speaker on Roe vs. Wade and the harm abortion causes to women.

The cost of the dinner is \$75 per person including wine & beer. A free will offering will be taken up to support the work of Lumina. The flyer and form can be found at Lumina's web site here:

<http://postabortionhelp.org/pah/advent-banquet/>

AFTERNOON OF PRAYERFUL REMEMBRANCE AND INTERCESSION

Saturday, January 19, 2013: 1-4pm
Sacred Heart Church, Monroe, NY

The hidden wounds of abortion affect each of us. Whether it be one's neighbor, co-worker, friend, relative, maybe oneself...as a community we have all been touched. Join us as we observe the 40th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court Decision legalizing abortion. We will gather to pray and intercede on behalf of our entire nation, seeking forgiveness and healing in God's merciful love.

The day will include Mass, Eucharistic Adoration and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of NY Family Life/Respect Life Office and Lumina/Hope and Healing after Abortion. For further info call Lumina 1-877-586-4621

SIBLING DAY

On March 2, 2013, we will be having our 4th retreat day for siblings of aborted babies. For the past three years people have come from all over the country to attend this day, which gives them the opportunity to express the many ways they are impacted by their parents' abortion, while at the same time knowing their parents whom they love, are not being judged. Please spread the word as we once again are blessed to be able to provide this very special day, which will have a witness by a sibling who has gone through healing, and will be Directed by Fr Mariusz Koch, CFR.

MEN'S DAY

On September 9th we began our new year of retreats for post abortive men and were blessed with nine participants. We thank them for sharing their hearts, and for the witness of Bob Filitore, and of course, the gift of the direction of Fr Mariusz Koch, CFR.. we are currently in the process of planning our first men's weekend which we hope to do in the spring or early fall of next year.

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIAN COUNSELORS has begun a new division led by Julie Woodley named: "The Crisis Pregnancy and Abortion Recovery Network," which will focus on healing for men and women from abortion. As many of you know, often women and men seek counseling for healing from a past abortion only to be told it is their Catholic or Christian guilt that is causing them to feel that way, denying the very real impact of abortion. It is a great joy to see the AACC devoting a new division to this and an extra blessing for us to be on The Board of Consultants. May more and more women and men be helped in finding the forgiveness and mercy of Jesus Christ!

MARCH FOR LIFE

The March for Life will take place in Washington, DC on Friday, January 25, 2013 marking the 40th anniversary of Roe vs. Wade.. Each year the Silent No More Campaign headed by co-founders Georgette Forney and Janet Morana leads a group of women and men who have participated in abortion to the steps of the Supreme Court where they give testimony to the harm of abortion and their healing through Christ. If you have been through healing and feel called to testify at the March. Please contact Georgette at Georgette@SilentNoMoreAwareness.org Prior registration is necessary to participate.

OPERATION OUTCRY

Please visit Operation Outcry here: <http://www.operationoutcry.com/?Page=MillionVoices> to find out how you can share you testimony, make a difference, and still retain your anonymity if you want, by filling out a declaration which will be used in legislation regarding abortion.

ENTERING CANAAN MEN'S POST ABORTIVE RETREAT

Thank you so much for all your hard work making the Men's Retreat happen! I feel very blessed to be in contact with you and now Father Mariusz and Bob as well!

It was a very, very important day in my life. I am still processing it. There are so many thoughts and emotions that I experienced. My main lesson of today was to trust Jesus and accept his mercy. While I was speaking with the younger priest, he told me to open up my heart and then ask Jesus to touch it to do His healing work. This is a really beautiful image and one that I will continue praying on.

One thing from today that I am absolutely certain of is that God was in the chapel with us today helping us as we fought to reclaim our lives.

When you think that it is the right time in my healing journey, I would be honored to help someone else who comes to you by speaking with them over the phone. It's probably a little too early yet for me to counsel others but I wanted to put that out there for when the right person comes along.

Thanks again, it was wonderful to meet you in person and I pray for you and your very important work. - Drew



In Memory of Mary and Marianne

This fall, the Lord called home two wonderful women who were involved in our ministry. I for one feel so blessed by God that they were a part of my life and I know many from the ministry feel the same.

I have no doubt that both Mary and Marianne are looking down on us surrounded by our children, interceding and praying for more and more women and men to come forward for healing from a past abortion. May they both rest in peace!

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 19, 2013
February 16, 2013
March 23, 2013
April 27, 2013
June 1, 2013

Day of Prayer & Healing for Siblings

For siblings of aborted babies
March 2, 2013
Contact Lumina: 877-586-4621

ENTERING CANAAN NATIONWIDE RETREATS

ARLINGTON, VA

Days of Prayer & Healing

February 9, 2013
July 30, 2013
Contact: (888) 456-HOPE or email:
projectrachel@arlingtondiocese.org

WASHINGTON, DC

Entering Canaan Days of Prayer and Healing

English
December 1, 2012
June 8, 2013

Spanish

November 12, 2012
April 27, 2013

RACHEL'S VINEYARD

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

NEW JERSEY

Linden (Archdiocese of Newark)

Contact: Michelle Krystofik 732 388 8211
Jan 18-Jan 20, 2013

PATERSON, NJ

Contact: Marie Ryan 973-777-8818 x264
rachel@patersondiocese.org
Español

WITNESS

Loving My Siblings

While I was growing up, my mother used to tell me every once in a while that she had had multiple abortions before I was born. But she and my father were not practicing Catholics and we were not in the habit of going to weekly Mass. I really did not grasp the full meaning of a life and the spiritual depth of what she had shared with me. In fact, even after I became a practicing Catholic after college, I didn't think about the four siblings I had lost to abortion, or even remember them.

Growing up in my family was very rough. There was domestic violence between my father and mother coupled with child abuse between my mother and my sister and I, and it lasted for many years. My mom was a real alpha-female and led our family in a very matriarchal way. She perpetually clashed with my father. I had trouble bonding with my mother all my life. When I was a little girl, I would want to kiss her goodnight, but she would just turn her cheek away. My aunt tells me that she witnessed my mother hitting me as early as when I was two years old. The police came to our home more than once because of the neighbors' reports about the violence in our family. When I was in 5th grade, a social worker was sent to my house, but nothing came of it, even though my sister and I desperately needed help at that time. Though my mom beat on the both of us a lot, I got the worst of it for reasons I'll never totally understand (including my supposed "family resemblance" to my mother-in-law, who my mom seemed to hate). At times, I would find myself telling others that it was because I was the oldest child. Sometimes, I outsmarted my mother, though, in my struggles to survive as a kid, but mostly my childhood was filled with lonely, harrowing days in which I waited to become an adult, and I was glad to leave home, go to college and be free of my mother when the time came. I remember that on that fateful day when I left for college, my mother hit me as I was getting dressed to leave home, almost in a last effort to exert her domineering will over me as she had always done, in denial of my maturity.

However, about a year ago, after many years of practicing my Catholic faith, I read an interview with Theresa in a newsletter written by the Sisters of Life, where she mentioned Lumina sibling day. I thought about my siblings deeply for the first time...ever. It hit me that had any of them been born, I would not have been "the eldest" but the second youngest. The more I thought about, the more I felt a certain identity crisis. Would my mother have treated me better if I were the second youngest child? (My mother oftentimes seemed to favor my sister, the younger sibling.) Would an older brother have defended me against abuse from my mother? In addition, since my mom used to say that she disliked large families and would speak of them demeaningly, I've mused that perhaps my sister and I would not have been born at all if she had had all the previous four children before me, because she would not have wanted an even larger family.

My mother says that she aborted those kids because she didn't want them to grow up in South America, where life was even rougher for her dealing with the family politics of living near her in-laws there, since my father was sometimes violent with my mother during family quarrels. Still it would have been nice to have my siblings alive, and yet, I really don't think I would be, if they had been born. It feels like a chicken-or-the-egg kind of mystery.

At the Lumina retreat, though, I feel I made peace with my siblings. In fact, I've sensed them as a benevolent presence in my life, as people whose souls were sent by God to our family and who are still linked to us. Sometimes when I imagine them, I see them as androgynous cherubs looking out for me and the family from wherever they are, perhaps even praying for us. I am thankful to Lumina for helping me to connect to them in a more spiritual way. A lot of people have lost siblings to abortion and we need to be aware of our invisible family on the other side. For me, it's a comforting thought that no matter how broken my earthly family is, I still have more family members to relate to, somewhere! And, while I may never understand God's will, that doesn't seem to matter so much as the love that can still possibly exist between me and my siblings, born and unborn.

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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.

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