

WORLD-PRAYER-CONGRESS for Life in LOURDES 2008
28th of Oktober – 4th of November 2008
„Maria, To You We Entrust The Cause Of Life.“
(Johannes Paul II., *Evangelium vitae* 105)

Talk No. 7

from 30th of October 2008 by Anne Lastman:

„ Post Abortion Grief - A Redeeming Grief. “

When I speak about a redeeming type of grief, I am speaking about the mourning done by parents (especially mother) of aborted children. I speak about this very legitimate type of mourning and grief.

I speak about the parents who look deep into the future and see the absence and the pockets of loneliness created by the loss of the children they have aborted. I speak about the parents who realise that they have sacrificed their children on the altars of convenience, fear, money, and career. I speak about the modern understanding of “motherhood” which has been so wounded, and the women who no longer understand “mothering, motherhood” and the dignity inherent in this charism. I think also about “fatherhood” also deeply wounded through abortion because the man who took his child to be killed has failed to protect that child the one whom they have engendered.

Today we know that when an abortion is suppressed from the consciousness, malignant and sometimes puzzling pathologies arise.

We also understand that grief and mourning is that process of disengagement from the lost loved one and the emerging from this time in such a way as to be able to continue living without the one lost. When this mourning, this process of disengagement is **not carried out well then indeed the puzzling pathologies should be expected, because the mourning which would have been the natural response to loss was suppressed.**

We also understand that events as they occur may not always be considered “loss” by all others. Indeed a loss can only become a loss when it is interpreted and understood as a loss by the person experiencing it.

This would explain why some women experience chronic grief following an abortion whilst another may appear untouched by the experience.

It would help us to understand why illness can follow abortion and why there is a need for healing.

We of course can tend to forget the healing power of grieving and mourning. And that in the grief and mourning, when done well a growth, a change, a maturing of the spirit

is possible whilst at the same time the imprinting of the event into permanent memory is facilitated.

**At times it can be felt that those who abort do not deserve consideration and compassion, that they themselves permitted the abortion, and perhaps it can be thought that all efforts at easing her grief, and easing her pain is a wasted effort. However, I know that this is far from reality. I know that in my work I help to bring back to the one who is mourning and grieving, a respect for their own human ness and a respect for the one they aborted. I help to unglue their emotions which are still stuck in the day of the abortion. This is good mourning work. It is important mourning work because each person, including the abortive mother is human and frail and wounded but still designed in the image of God. WoundedYES !!!!
Unredeemable NO!!!!.**

One of the things which the late Holy Father John Paul II will be remembered for is his insistence of the dignity of the human person whose rights are universal and unchanging. According to him and also the Vatican II documents , *The Church in the Modern World*, a human is always a human and remains a human even in its darkness, and with this vision of the human in mind, it is possible to minister to the

most wounded and broken in our society, that is, those mothers who have aborted their child (almost willing at all times) and have regretted that decision.

Perhaps it could be said that I help these parents to develop a special relationship between them and their aborted babies. And even to help them to reclaim that child and then relinquish the child, this time willingly and lovingly into the arms and household of God. This time without the terror of the first time. Without the confusion. Without the inner turmoil. This time in sadness, YES but lovingly also. You know to sit with them in the silence which is steeped in love, to weep with someone who is hurting over a mistake which they cannot undo, is to be present in a most intimate moment of a human's life. To be present and to mourn with a mother who has aborted her child and to relive with her the dying of that child is to be with her, and be consummately near.

Human beings have great capacity to love, to forgive, to laugh, but it is also a gift of extraordinary mercy and love that a human can weep for another, even the smallest in utero human. As a society we need to unmask this grief

To Bring it to the forefront, to make it visible and then to mourn for the loss of these children even when their own mothers and fathers cannot mourn for them. We need to weep even though there is the belief that it was not a child who died but the so called “cells” “tissue” or whatever euphemism used. We need to mourn because in our mourning we do speak a language of love. In the mourning we say something very important. We say “YOU MATTERED TO ME”.

We need to mourn, because the mourning and the regret, signifies we are journeying and reconciling with God. Our grief can become in itself a REDEEMING GRIEF. We need to mourn because very sadly this society refuses to mourn and weep for the loss of millions of its children and slowly our civilisation has suffered its dulling of conscience. This is a society which no longer sees children as a mark of blessing as described in the Psalms as a “quiver full” but as disposable, on demand, and this demand as a “right” and by sanction of the law.

We need to mourn over the loss of the aborted babies because in the mourning we speak a language which belongs to the substance of the psychic life of the human person.

Mourning is a sign and symbol of value, of love, of emotion, of eternity.

Symbolic thinking and understanding and language are an inherent part of the human being and precede even the spoken word. The symbol has a meaning all of its own (ref water, oil, words, baptism) which reveals another aspect of reality, indeed the deepest and innermost aspect of reality. Symbols always, probe the depths of the human spirit and speak a language that unveils the human yearning for eternity.

The life of the symbolic is important for the human person. It is a different dimension and vital for the spiritual wellbeing of the person. In its external manifestation it speaks of the richness of our human inner life. *And wherever there is no symbolic present there is a deep disequilibrium of the spirit.* This is important to remember and to understand because the abortion industry thrives because of this. The abortion industry has thrived mainly because it set out to change the language first, and with this accomplished then it became easier to convince society that conception is nothing more than “a bunch of cells” and nothing to mourn or grieve for. **THIS IS**

THE SAME LIE AS IN EDEN “YOU SHALL SURELY NOT DIE” So we mourn, we grieve for our loss (Yes there was a death) and in this mourning our hearts turn to God for His Mercy. This abortion grief has inscribed within it the blueprint for healing, for Redeeming.

The change of language from “baby” “mother” “father” to “foetus” “partner” has helped to dull the imagery within the memory system. The understanding surrounding such words as **mother, father baby**, evokes deep imagery, a realm of the imagination. **Mother, Father, baby**, has always meant a specific something. To all cultures the terms **mother, father, baby** have the same meaning. There is imagery which accompanies these words. The imagination is able to process the words and create an image, and be at peace with the images, whereas the new language is imageless “foetus” “Tissue” “cells” “partner” does not have a visual attached to it, so it is easier to dispose of something which cannot be seen or even visualised. The imagination is a function of the human memory and struggles to make images of the term foetus, therefore it becomes easier to convince society and women that very little is terminated in the termination of a pregnancy and if there is little to be terminated then there is little if anything

to mourn and weep about. This is where disequilibrium happens, becomes it cannot make sense of the absence of symbol and imagery yet experienced something very important. Imagination always finds its abode in the realm of images where it is at peace and at home.

There is a need to mourn, to weep; we need to be able to express grief because it is the most profound of our emotions. It touches on the moral law written into the human heart (Jer 31:31:33) and which can be known by our reason.

We need to grieve and to mourn the loss of every in utero child including aborted ones, because each new creation is God's own idea of His love, and has a place in creation and in history. Each and every creation has a role to play, a task to complete and has an influence to wield in a specific place, time, era.

To conceive this child is to become pregnant with His Living Word. His "Amen." and in the creation of each new child God encounters and keeps encountering humanity. Hence why abortion is so horrendous. It is a rejection of this encounter with God and a rejection of His Love whispered in the depths of the silent, mysterious womb. All created

beings including the aborted ones have been thought about, loved and created in the likeness of the originating Word.....JESUS.

Jesus is the pattern, the prototype of every human conception and it is a knowledge which is written into the womb of every woman. It is this knowledge which leads to the mourning and in this mourning, the redeeming elements.

The malignant syndromes (which I spoke at the beginning of this talk) arise because the womb weeps for the terrorism inflicted upon it. In the womb where “life” has its genesis, a cruel violent death occurs. The Word spoken and written into the womb is “LIFE” and God speaks this word. The word spoken by abortion is “death” Moloch the prince of darkness speaks this word.

I have called this talk **A Redeeming Grief, because it is a great Mercy of God to be able to mourn deeply for an aborted child. And we know that there is mourning because in one way or another it is expressed. It can be expressed by the woman or man in a self violence, through drink, drugs, self abuse, self neglect, self loathing. It can be expressed by the mental health compromising which occurs. It can be expressed by the total denial that the procedure has caused a**

problem and the development of hardness of heart previously unknown.

The mask of mourning an aborted child has many shapes but always, always always it is ugly. And a complicated type of mourning continues without the mercy of God. In fact it continues like a dull ache in the heart which has no ending. “I have written my laws on your heart” says the Lord. It is the place of profound encounter. The Heart is the place where God speaks and we cannot help but listen. It is the place where the pain of the aborted woman resides and without release from this pain her mental health is in danger. It is in this place of the heart where God needs to be invited when a woman is mourning her loss through abortion. It is the place where God visits and sees her sorrow over her decision and her need to be forgiven. Her grief is the clear expression of her regret.

Over the last fourteen years I have spoken many times about post abortion trauma, grief, and syndrome. I have spoken about abortion and its link to Alcohol and substance abuse, eating disorder, suicide and attempted suicide, domestic violence both as recipient and inflictor, risk taking behaviours, repeat abortions, repeat flawed relationships, change of personality. Abortion and abrest cancer. I have

spoken to anyone who would listen both in Australia and countries around the world and I need to say that my understanding of abortion grief has changed. Abortion grief is perhaps the most profound type of grief because of the volitional factor. And because it lends itself to a deep need for forgiveness both from God and infant, and then forgiveness of self and forgiveness of those surrounding the woman.

Because of the nature of this grief it has written in its core the essence of redemption. Unless forgiveness is even considered there will be little healing. Relief...temporary yes. Healing...no.

Yes it may be as it is often claimed that the psychological sequelae following abortion is the result of instilled religious/moral orientations. Maybe. Perhaps such anguish as evidenced in some women is not for those who have turned completely away from their faith. Yes this could be. However, we do know that Japan is a non Judeo/Christian nation and culture, yet it acknowledges grief of the post

abortive woman by setting up places for abortive mothers to visit and to remember. The Mizuko Kuyo (memorial service for infant) was created by women to remember their lost in utero child. It is a memorial place. A place where the mother can go and grieve for her loss, EVEN aborted children. YES Even non Christian and non religious women deeply mourn their aborted child and it is right that they do so because in their hearts is also written the words of God (Jer 31:31-33)

Today we understand that pathological grief lowers a woman's coping and immune systems which in turn affect not only her self but her significant others, her family, her friends, the health system and society. It is important to unmask this societal grief and then help her legitimately mourn for her deep loss.

During my work as an abortion grief counsellor I have seen a theory about regret emerging. And especially the regret which is related to the loss of the baby through abortion, and I believe that this regret understood well can become the "forget –me-not" (Isaiah 49. 15-16) of their child. After thousands of counselling hours , with many tears shed it is possible to speak about the loss of the child and the

profound grief through a different vision and with a different understanding.

I remember asking a client if she remembered her living children every day and what reminded her about them. She related a litany of things about her children which constantly acted as a reminder of their presence in her life. Then I asked her about her aborted baby and what she regretted most about the abortion. Her reply was “I regret that I never met my daughter and held her and bought her clothes, and took her to school and loved her and watched her become a “bride.” Then I reminded her that as long as she regrets the loss, she pays her daughter the love, respect honour due to her through her mourning for her. This child, her aborted daughter whom she named “Rose” would live in her heart and mind and presence. I like to use this explanation giving the analogy of a scar. The pain has gone but the scar (regret in the case of abortion) remains to remind us that this event once caused great pain.

The past is never gone, but remains hidden within the memory. For someone who experiences a great loss, especially where there is guilt, then regret may be the best and most merciful outcome possible. As I counsel and talk to men and women who have experienced abortion, they can

see that regret is a memory tinged with both love and sorrow. It is a memory they wish to retain for as long as life exists. I thank God for that, in my own experience as well. To remember even with regret and sorrow is a rare privilege and not to be despised. To remember means that the infant that was meant not to exist is remembered. To no longer regret means a certain forgetting must take place because it is in the pain of remembering that the imprint of the infant is indelibly etched.

In conclusion the enormity of the grief and suffering which abortion inflicts cannot ever be truly reflected because society has placed a veil of unbelief before this horror. The veil of unreality (no it's not a baby but a bunch of cells) preserves and protects society from the knowledge of what is being done and because of this veil of protection, abortion is sanitised, sterilised and removed from its true reality. However, post abortion syndrome, grief, and mourning, regret are the truth that abortion cannot be passed off as simply, or as a minor procedure like a dental visit. Abortion grief and mourning is present, is real and can be redemptive. It is neither useless suffering nor unnecessary, but it is indeed the most important suffering and mourning endured

in our age. This type of regret, of grief and mourning brings before the eyes of the world the reality of what abortion really does and can re focus attention to the very thing that was destroyed. HUMAN LIFE AND ITS SANCTITY.

Grieving, mourning, suffering (rightly accepted) as a result of an abortion can become the balancing if not entirely the reversal of the sin of abortion.

“This is a wicked generation and your lives should redeem it” (Eph:5:16) says St Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

For every mother, father, brother, sister, or friend who mourns the death of an aborted infant, we say thank you for making our baby’s worth immeasurable.

Thank you for being here.

Anne