

# *The Post-Abortion Review*

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## **No One Told Me I Could Cry**

Connie Nykiel

“Sorrow makes us all children again.”

—*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

I teach childbirth education to pregnant teenagers. My job is to prepare young parents for parenthood. This includes the possibility of parenting a baby with a birth defect or being the parent of a baby that is miscarried, stillborn, or dies soon after birth.

This is the hardest class for me to teach. Young mothers don't want to talk or think about it. It is their worst fear. I usually end up telling them that if it is too painful to think about their own babies dying, then listen and learn how to help others who have lost a baby.

We talk about the stages of grief, the feelings of those who are mourning, what to say and what not to say. We read poems and letters that mothers have written to their babies.

When I held this class during the fall of 1993, the girls, like all the girls in the classes before them, put their hands over their ears and said they didn't want to hear about it.

Despite their protests I taught the class and before I knew it, the girls were talking about an aunt, cousin or friend who had lost a baby. They said they wished they would have known what to do and say before. They realized that they had said and done some of the things that hurt these parents.

One of the young mothers-to-be, Maria, bravely told us how her little boy died only a few hours after birth. I do not know how or why her little boy died because it seems no one ever told Maria. She didn't get much sympathy and the only way she new how to cope was by becoming pregnant again. She thought that would make the pain go away, but it didn't.

The girls in the class hugged her, comforted her and said all the right things. They had listened well and I was proud of what they did for Maria. They decided to have a memorial service for Maria's baby.

There were four girls in the class who had miscarriages. They were slow to mention their miscarriages at first. It seemed they weren't even sure that it was normal for them to mourn for their babies. We listened with horror as they told about some of the cruel things that were said to them.

They received little comfort. They were told to get on with their lives. They were told that their baby's death was for the best, that they shouldn't have been pregnant anyway, and that their baby's death was a punishment from God. Few felt comfortable crying in front of family and friends. They had learned to hide their feelings and hold back their tears.

By the end of the class we all had stuffy red noses from crying. We were tired. We had shared and grown closer. At the end of class I casually mentioned that girls who have abortions or make adoption plans for their babies can also grieve deeply. Little did I know what that one statement would do.

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**Three girls came to my office that afternoon. Every one of them had had an abortion.**

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Three girls came to my office that afternoon. Every one of them had had an abortion. Each one had a story that tore at my heart. They were all mourning for their babies and didn't know it. Their trust in me led me to love them even more than I already did.

### **Tiffany's Story**

Tiffany was a young girl whose face full of tears I will always remember.

You couldn't help but notice her. She was a troublemaker. She was large and loud. She caused fights wherever she went. She questioned everything her teachers said. Her own mother, brothers, and sisters didn't want to be around her. She complained about the teachers, lousy food, being poor, stupid boys, stuck-up girls, an unfair world, and the color of the walls.

Tiffany was also a top student. She was fair and honest and she defended students that were picked on. She was streetwise. Mostly, she was angry and just plain raving mad. Her temper got her in trouble and she was always being sent to the principal's office.

I could never figure out why Tiffany was always so angry, until she came to me after the grief class. She practically knocked me over as she came rushing into my office. “Ohhhh, Connie, have I got something to tell you. You won't believe this, but I've got to tell you.”

I had always admired Tiffany for her openness and now I was admiring her big beautiful brown eyes. She looked anxious, scared and angry all at the same time. It seemed she was trying to catch

her breath, and then she blurted out, “I had four abortions.”

I closed my eyes, felt her pain, and in sadness I said, “Tiffany, I’m so sorry.”

Before I could ask her if she wanted to tell me about it, she started yelling. “I was fourteen when I had my first abortion. When I got pregnant, I told my mother right away. I did what I was supposed to do. I knew she would be upset, but I never thought she would make me get an abortion. We’re Catholic.

“One morning she woke me up early and told me to get ready. She told me I had an appointment for an abortion. I couldn’t believe it. I did what she said, but when I got to the abortion clinic, I cried and begged them not to do the abortion. My mother made such a stink about being poor and not wanting any more babies in the house that they listened to her instead of me. They did the abortion anyway.

“They didn’t even put me to sleep. They said it would cost more. It hurt! It hurt, and they didn’t even care! My mother, the doctor, the nurse, nobody cared!”

A look of agony spread across her face. Catching her breath she went on again, “Dalvon was the baby’s father. I loved him and I wanted him to be the father of my children. I never told him about the abortion. I just got pregnant again with our second baby.

“I told my mother as soon as I knew I was pregnant, because I never thought she would make me have another abortion. But she did the same thing and it happened all over again. I begged her not to make me get an abortion. No one listened to me. No one cared.

“I cried all the way home on the bus and I was cramping. Dalvon and I broke up after that. I couldn’t tell him about the abortions. I felt bad because his babies were dead and he never even knew he was a father.”

Calmer then, but stone faced she said, “After that I didn’t care what happened to me. I partied. I drank. I did crack. I had sex with anyone who asked and I got pregnant again. I waited until I was five months pregnant before I told my mother. She brought me to the doctor and he said it wasn’t too late to have an abortion. Why did they keep doing this to me?

“I had to go to the hospital that time because I was further along. They put something called saline into me. It was awful. I could feel the baby kicking and fighting. Then the baby stopped kicking and I knew it was dead.

“I started having labor pains the next day. The pains were awful. I didn’t want my mother in the room with me because I thought she was evil. We fought the whole time. I told her to go home. I wanted to have my baby alone. A part of me kept hoping that the baby would be alive and then they’d have to save it.

“The pains kept getting longer and stronger. I pushed and then my little boy was born dead. They all left me alone again. No one cared. I cried for about a minute and then I wrapped him in the

sheet and put on the light for the nurse. It took fifteen minutes before she even got there.

“I’m not even sure who the father of my little girl was. I was six months along before I told my mother about the fourth pregnancy, but it didn’t stop her from beating me and pulling my hair. I had another abortion by the same doctor and at the same hospital. I didn’t cry. I guess I just got used to it.”

Then Tiffany stood there in silence, with a look of hatred on her face, her mouth quivering and twisted as if she were daring me to pass judgment on her. She was ready to lash out at me. She was holding back the tears that were welling in her eyes.

“Tiffany,” I asked. “Have you cried for your babies?”

A puzzled look crossed her face, as if it were the last thing she was expecting me to say. “No one told me I could cry,” she said with surprise in her voice.

Then I realized why Tiffany had told me her story. What she wanted from me was permission to cry like the other girls did in class that day. So I gave it to her.

“Tiffany, you can cry all you want. It’s normal to cry. You have a right to cry. Your babies are dead and you miss them.”

Hearing those words, the tough, city smart Tiffany turned into a hurting, broken child. She held out her arms to me and sobbed, “Hold me. Hold me.” I hugged her, rocked her and smoothed her hair. Together we wept.

I knew I had to do something special for Tiffany. She was seven months pregnant and this time she insisted on having the baby and raising it herself. I didn’t know much about post-abortion counseling then. What I did know was that if I didn’t do something soon it would affect her and her baby for the rest of their lives.

That night I stopped by the library. I took home every book about abortion that the library carried. I read pro-choice books, pro-life books, and the stories of women of all ages who have suffered from abortion. I sent for studies from professional journals and for information from organizations. I spoke with women who had abortions and women who led post-abortion support groups. This book will tell you what I learned and what I shared with Tiffany.

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Excerpted from *No One Told Me I Could Cry: A Teen’s Guide to Hope and Healing After Abortion*, by Connie Nykiel. © 1997 For Teen Moms Only, PO Box 962, Frankfort, IL 60423, youngmoms@aol.com, www.forteenmomsonly.com. Or call (815) 464-5465 or 888-FOR-TEEN.



# Kate Michelman's Benediction

## A Case Study on Coping With Post-Abortion Trauma

As president of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League (NARAL), Kate Michelman is one of the most powerful pro-abortion feminists in the nation. Defending abortion is more than Michelman's job. It is her passion. In defending the "right of women to choose," she is first and foremost defending the choice that she made nearly thirty years ago.

In her much-repeated personal testimony, Michelman has described how in 1970, she was abandoned by her husband and left to care for her three young daughters alone. Then, just after her husband left, she found out she was pregnant.

As Michelman describes it, her decision to abort was an agonizing one. Because of the social and legal taboos surrounding abortion, she was unable to discuss her decision with anyone — not her relatives, her friends, or her priest. As a Catholic, she says, her decision to abort "challenged every religious, moral, ethical and philosophical belief"<sup>1</sup> she held.

Like so many other women today, Michelman abandoned those beliefs out of desperation and fear. She was on welfare, with three daughters to raise, and without the support and help of a husband. She felt that she had no choice but abortion because of her impossible circumstances.

Abortion was illegal at that time except where the mother's health or life was at stake. This was a broadly interpreted exception, but it required Michelman to appear before an all-male hospital review panel to obtain permission for the abortion on the grounds that she was unstable and incapable of raising another child. The board granted her request — provided that her ex-husband also agreed.

During the time she was waiting to get permission for the abortion, Michelman carried with her the name and phone number of an illegal abortionist whom she was prepared to contact if she was "thwarted" in her quest for a legal abortion. Since her ex-husband agreed to the abortion, however, she never used that number. But she says that having to obtain permission from the hospital board and her ex-husband for the abortion left her feeling "worthless and violated."<sup>2</sup>

As the spokeswoman for NARAL, Michelman uses her personal story to effectively appeal to the empathy of those who truly care about women. She argues not only that women must be free to choose abortion so they can control of their lives, but also that America should never return to the days of illegal and restricted abortions that injured, shamed, and degraded women.

### Michelman At Risk

Michelman's story is not an unusual one, either for that period or

for today. Clearly, it is not the story of an intellectual feminist, liberated from sexual, familial, and religious restraints, who simply took control of her "reproductive destiny." Hers is the story of a woman caught in a trap.

Michelman and her three daughters were all emotionally bruised and financially devastated by the husband and father who had abandoned them. Already confronted with poverty, another child would have increased their expenses and been a further drain on the time Michelman needed to raise her daughters and to earn an income.

"I had to . . . debate my obligations to my children against my responsibility to the developing life inside me," she

has said.<sup>3</sup> Like the Jewish woman in *Sophie's Choice* who was forced by a Nazi officer to choose which of her children would die so the other could live, Michelman felt she had no choice but to sacrifice one child for the sake of the others.

In many respects, Michelman matches the profile for those women who are most at risk of suffering emotional maladjustments after an abortion. She had moral and religious values that were in conflict with the choice to abort, strong feelings of ambivalence in making the decision, strong concerns about secrecy, prior children, a poor or unstable relationship with her male partner, and a lack of social support. She did not feel free to choose what was best, but instead felt that abortion was her "only choice" if she and her family were to survive.

Given all these risk factors, it is no surprise that Michelman felt "worthless and violated" after her abortion. It is also not surprising that she, like many women who had abortions prior to *Roe v. Wade*, has projected the blame for her negative feelings on social circumstances, the attitudes of the day, and the illegal status of abortion.

### Her Benediction

Perhaps her most revealing comment to date was during a speech she made in January 1998. Michelman said that when she had learned that the Supreme Court had legalized abortion, "I was quite overcome. It felt somehow like a benediction — a retroactive reprieve that helped restore my sense of worth, my integrity." She described *Roe v. Wade* as "the promise that emerged from darkness to light. From despair to hope."<sup>4</sup>

The emotional importance of the Supreme Court's decision to Michelman is not incidental. Indeed, it is very revealing that a woman who felt alienated from her religion because of her abortion would describe the Court's approval of abortion as a "benediction." To a former Catholic like Michelman, "benediction" refers to the highest

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**In defending the right to choose, Michelman is defending the choice she made nearly thirty years ago.**

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and most profound form of blessing by Christ Himself. For her, the Court's decision was a substitute for the religious blessing she needed to restore her moral identity.

Moreover, the Court's "retroactive reprieve" affirmed that she had done nothing wrong. Therefore, she had no reason to repent. Her shame and guilt had been for nought. Her painful decision to abort was not only accepted by the highest judges in our society, but it was even enshrined as a Constitutional right!

When one empathizes with Michelman's conflict over an abortion decision that violated her "every religious, moral, ethical, and philosophical belief," it is easy to see why she and thousands of other women like her have clung to the *Roe* decision as a vindication of their moral selves.

The emotional value of this legal ruling also explains why Michelman and other post-abortive women are so angry at those seeking to reverse *Roe*. For them, this would be more than a political set back. On an internal, emotional level, overturning *Roe* would remove the "benediction" that they have received for choosing what even Michelman herself admits is a "bad thing."<sup>5</sup>

### **Clinging to Approval**

No one loves abortion, but everyone yearns for approval. It is the insatiable desire for social approval which drives some post-abortive women and men to battle for abortion rights. They will never be content with merely legal access to abortion. What they long for is universal *approval* of abortion.

By immersing themselves in the political fight over abortion, post-abortive women and men are satisfying several psychological needs. First, they are surrounding themselves with like-minded activists who reinforce the rightness of their decision. Second, each time they see other women choose abortion, they experience it as a reaffirmation their own decision.<sup>6</sup> Third, they are diverting negative internal feelings into outward expressions of righteous anger.

As Magda Denes, a post-abortive woman and pro-choice psychologist, has observed, it is easier for a post-abortive woman to "regard oneself as a martyr and to battle the world" of anti-abortion enemies than to confront the "private sorrows" and the "heartache of self-chosen destiny" which are inherent to the abortion experience.<sup>7</sup> In the heat of battle with an outside force, one can avoid examining one's own self-inflicted wounds.

This is why Michelman honestly does not understand how abortion

today is *still* causing women so much pain and grief. Blinded by the "benediction" she received in the form of *Roe v. Wade*, she honestly believes that the shame and loss that is inherent to abortion can be wiped away by social approval. She wants to believe it. She needs to believe it.

The truth, however, is that social acceptance of abortion can never sanitize what is inescapably a life-destroying experience. As Denes rightly realizes, even if every critic of abortion was silenced, even if every person on earth approved of abortion as a pragmatic necessity, the "private sorrows" would still remain.

In the end, self-worth that is rooted merely in social acceptance will fail. The only firm foundation for our human dignity lies in the fact that we are children of God. Even when we fail, our one certain hope is that God will never turn away a broken and contrite heart (Psalm 34). He loves us. And when we cast aside the straw of our excuses, and lift up the gold of Christ's sacrifice, He will heal us and restore our joy.

There are many former abortion advocates like Carol Everett, Norma McCorvey, Dr. Beverly McMillan, and Dr. Tony Levatino became "converts" to the pro-life cause because they experienced the love of pro-lifers. This should remind us that those who are most outspoken in defense of *Roe v. Wade* are really crying out for acceptance. If we are to convert a nation, we must, as ambassadors of Christ's mercy and love, accept and embrace them.

-ARS & DCR

### **Notes:**

1. Testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee during confirmation hearings for Judge Clarence Thomas. Copyright 1996, NARAL.
2. Ibid.
3. Speech to the Commonwealth Club of California, San Francisco, January 15, 1998 (Transcript provided by NARAL, 1156 15<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20005)
4. Ibid.
5. Howard Kurtz, "Poor Choice of Words from Abortion Rights Advocate?" *The Washington Post*, Feb. 7, 1994. Michelman told a reporter, "We think abortion is a bad thing. No woman wants to have an abortion."
6. "I found that in talking to other women about abortion, their decisions to abort satisfied something in me. It was almost like I was gloating in their misery. If I'd had an opportunity to work at a counseling center to counsel women before their abortions, I would have done it. It would have strengthened my own decision to abort." Reardon, *Aborted Women*, 85.
7. Magda Denes, *In Necessity and Sorrow: Life and Death in an Abortion Hospital* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1976), xv-xvi.

## **The Court's decision was a substitute for the religious blessing she needed to restore her moral identity.**

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## ***Her Choice to Heal: Finding Spiritual and Emotional Peace After Abortion***

by Sydna Massé and Joan Phillips

Chariot Victor Publishing, 4050 Lee Vance View, Colorado Springs, CO 80918. Or Ramah International, Inc., 1050 Galley Square, Colorado Springs, CO 80915, (719) 573-7707, [www3.n-gate.com/ramah](http://www3.n-gate.com/ramah). ISBN 1-56476-734-5, \$9.95, 122 pages.

In *Her Choice To Heal*, Sydna Massé and Joan Phillips go step by step through recovery issues for women who are seeking emotional and spiritual healing after abortion. Using their personal experiences as a backdrop for each chapter, they cover the issues of denial, anger, grief, and forgiveness.

Each step is directed toward the ultimate goal of replacing the emotional and spiritual pain of this loss with the joyous knowledge that one's child is in heaven and, through the forgiving love of Christ, will one day be reunited with his or her repentant parents. Every one of the very readable chapters concludes with a well-chosen Bible verse and a short "journaling" assignment that will help readers start working through the step described in that chapter.

At the end of the book, Massé and Phillips quite properly encourage women to continue the process of healing by seeking out a post-abortion ministry in their own area. While books such as *Her Choice to Heal* can certainly help women make tremendous strides in abortion recovery, Massé and Phillips strongly recommend (and I suspect nearly everyone involved in post-abortion ministries would agree) that the human element — talking face to face, sharing both tears and joy — is essential to bringing about final closure.

That said, it is also true that many women won't talk to others until they have first been reassured by the example of women like Massé and Phillips that they, too, can be understood and accepted. That is why this book will be a great blessing for many. It would make an excellent gift for any woman you know who is hesitant about taking the first steps toward healing.

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## ***Starting or Expanding A Post-Abortion Outreach***

by Rose Diemler

H.E.A.R.T., Inc., PO Box 54783, Cincinnati, OH 45254-0783, (513) 734-1177, [heart@goodnews.net](mailto:heart@goodnews.net). \$35 includes shipping, 184 pages.

Every new venture is filled with uncertainty, doubts, new problems, and a thousand decisions. This is no less true for those who are trying to start or run a post-abortion ministry.

Rose Diemler offers hundreds of practical suggestions in *Starting or Expanding A Post-Abortion Outreach*. Her large format, spiral-

bound book reflects a solid combination of common sense and eight years of experience in starting, operating, and expanding her Cincinnati-based post-abortion ministry, Helping and Educating in Abortion Related Trauma (H.E.A.R.T.).

Diemler begins with a chapter on the practical details of running a ministry that simply can't be ignored: affiliation options (with a CPC, a church, or as an independent organization), insurance and liability issues, establishing a tax status, building a board, defining the ministry's mission, bookkeeping, finding a good location, and fundraising.

Another chapter offers suggestions on developing co-leaders and a support network from which the ministry leaders can obtain spiritual and emotional support. For many, this may be an especially important section since it is vital that ministry leaders maintain both enthusiasm and balance. Without a sufficient support network, a thriving ministry will come unglued because of burnout, and a struggling ministry will die because of discouragement.

Community outreach, publicity, and referral networking are discussed at length. Another chapter gives practical tips on how to prepare for and handle "first contact" with women and men who call for help, as well as information on record keeping and follow-up.

A major issue these ministries face, of course, is exactly how they will serve those who seek help. Will the ministry have licensed counselors or lay support persons? Will it provide one-on-one support, group programs, or only information and referrals?

Diemler examines the pros and cons of six options for program structure. The choice of which approach is best will probably vary given a ministry's resources and the goals and personalities of the ministry's leaders. Diemler offers insights that would be applicable to any program structure.

Since the bulk of Diemler's experience is in leading groups that follow a pre-designed Bible study program for post-abortion healing, she also includes three chapters specifically related to such a program. These chapters include practical checklists for materials to have on hand at meetings, maintaining a group library, working with a co-leader, and doing follow-up. She also includes many tips for facilitators, such as how to keep the group focused, how to address both group needs and individual needs, and how to deal with expected or unexpected problems.

The book also includes an extensive list of organizations and resources available for post-abortion ministries, and many samples of handouts, brochures and other materials developed by H.E.A.R.T. that serve as useful templates for developing your own ministry's materials.

In all of her recommendations, Diemler reminds the reader that



there is no single or simple answer to all of these issues. But for those who are contemplating starting a ministry or are already involved in post-abortion ministry, this book is a "must have" investment that is certain to provide more than a nugget or two of wisdom and practical help.

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### ***No One Told Me I Could Cry: A Teen's Guide to Hope and Healing After Abortion***

by Connie Nykiel

For Teen Moms Only, PO Box 962, Frankfort, IL 60423, (815) 464-5465, 888-FOR-TEEN, youngmoms@aol.com, www.forteenmomsonly.com. ISBN 1-888231-02-5, \$10.00 includes shipping, 88 pages.

Connie Nykiel, a registered nurse, has been a childbirth educator for pregnant teenagers since 1989. In 1993, she also began to minister to the special needs of teenagers who have suffered from abortion. (See page 1 of this issue of the *Post-Abortion Review* for an excerpt from the book, describing how this ministry came about.)

From the first page to last, Nykiel does an excellent job of conveying to young readers, both female and male, that they are not alone. She points out that the problems they face after abortion are common, not "weird." Most importantly, she reassures her readers that even though it may seem that no one can understand what they are going through, there really are people who already understand and are anxious to help them.

Given its relatively short length and the author's careful attention to keeping explanations simple, *No One Told Me I Could Cry* is amazingly complete. In a teen-friendly writing style that is neither condescending nor stuffy, Nykiel makes frequent use of metaphors and visual examples to describe all of the most common post-abortion reactions and to explain why bottling up feelings of grief and guilt can cause more problems.

Nykiel does an especially good job of (1) helping teens feel they have permission to grieve, (2) exposing the pitfalls that block the grief process, and (3) outlining the many issues that must be addressed in the process of post-abortion healing. She also includes a resource list in the back of the book to help teens seek out ministries that can help them find healing.

This book would make an excellent donation to high school libraries. And anyone who regularly works with teens should keep a couple of copies of *No One Told Me I Could Cry* on hand at all times. It may be just the right tool for injecting both understanding and hope into the life of a hard-to-reach teen.

-DCR



### **News Briefs**, continued from page 8

counseling both before and after abortion, and more support for women who want to carry the pregnancy to term.

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#### **Non-Physician Fined for Performing Illegal Abortion**

An Ohio woman got off with a fine after performing an illegal abortion on a 15-year-old girl. Melissa Henderson of Cleveland was fined \$250 and sentenced to two years probation for performing the abortion, but prosecutors said they could not make a felony case because the girl consented to the abortion.

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#### **Companies in Mexico Forcing Women to Take Pregnancy Tests, Human Rights Group Says**

A human rights group has accused international companies operating in Mexico of forcing women applying for work in factories along the U.S.-Mexico border to take pregnancy tests. A report issued in December by Human Rights Watch also says that these companies violate Mexican labor laws by refusing to hire pregnant women.

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#### **Abortion Cause of Sterility Among Russian Couples, Health Minister Says**

A Russian health minister has said that almost one in five Russian couples are sterile due to abortion, a Russian news agency reported. Deputy health minister Tatiana Stukolova said that between 15 and 20 percent of Russian couples today cannot have children.

Stukolova attributed the high sterility rate to abortion, which under the Soviet regime was the country's primary form of birth control. Abortion statistics from 1997 show that approximately two out of three women suffered from health complications after abortion.

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#### **Post-Abortion Leader Offers Pilgrimage to Poland**

Theresa Bonapartis, who works with the Sisters of Life's post-abortion ministry in New York, has announced a "Pilgrimage of Mercy" to Poland for those who have lost children to abortion. The pilgrimage will include visits to the Chapel of Divine Mercy and the convent of Blessed Sr. Faustina, St. Maximilian Kolbe's cell at Auschwitz, and the shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows.

The pilgrimage's spiritual director will be Fr. Marius Koch of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal. The pilgrimage will be held October 10-17, 1999. For more information, contact Canterbury Tours, at 800-653-0017. *All reservations will be kept strictly confidential.*

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# Stotland Moves

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In 1992, the Journal of the American Medical Association published a commentary by psychiatrist Nada Stotland entitled "The Myth of Abortion Trauma Syndrome." In her commentary Stotland emphatically insisted that post-abortion trauma "does not exist." While her arguments for this absolutist position were strained and inconsistent with the studies she cited, her opinion was widely echoed. (See "JAMA Gymnastics" *The Post-Abortion Review* 1(2):3-4, 1993.)

But now in a more recent article ("Abortion: Social Context, Psychodynamic Implications" *Am J Psychiatry*, 155(7):964-967, 1998) Stotland has softened her position. In it she describes a patient whose miscarriage precipitated an unexpected release of grief over a prior abortion that shook both the patient and Stotland.

Her experience with this patient inspired Stotland to write the article to call attention "the psychological complexities of induced abortion." She observes that no matter what a woman's political perspective may be, "an abortion is experienced by that woman as both the mastery of a difficult life situation and as the loss of a potential life. There is the danger that the political, sociological context can overshadow a woman's authentic, multilayered emotional experience." The failure to address this loss, Stotland writes, "leaves the person vulnerable to reminders and reenactments, to difficulties that may surface in life and in subsequent psychotherapy."

While Stotland clearly does not reject her pro-choice views, it is also clear that she has started to break through her own denial. Post-abortion trauma is not a myth.

-DCR



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# News Briefs

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## Arizona Abortionist Charged In Woman's Death

In a follow up to a case we reported on in the Summer 1998 issue of *The Post-Abortion Review*, Arizona abortionist John Biskind has been charged with manslaughter in the case of a woman who died after Biskind performed an abortion on her. Also included in the charges is the administrator of the clinic where Biskind worked.

\*\*\*

## Abortion Connection Found in Murder Case

A woman charged with first-degree murder for her son's death may have killed him in connection with an abortion, police have found.

Denver police say that Erika Arroya had an abortion shortly before she drowned her son, Armando Villalobos, in the bathtub last September. Her boyfriend, who was not Armando's father, had threatened to leave her if she did not give the child up, police said, because Armando reminded him of his aborted child.

The boyfriend, who has not been charged in the case, said that he meant only that Arroya should leave Armando with his father or grandparents.

\*\*\*

## Clinic Owner Admits Fraud, Unsanitary Practices

A New Jersey abortion clinic owner accused of defrauding five insurance companies admitted in court that he allowed clinic personnel to reuse disposable medical instruments during abortion procedures. Alan Weiselberg, a Florida man who operated an abortion clinic in Woodward, NJ from 1988 to 1991, has also admitted to filing false Medicaid claims for abortions performed

at his facility. U.S. Attorney Faith Hochberg called the case "a blatant, irresponsible disregard of basic medical and sanitary procedures."

\*\*\*

## Police Accused of Trying to Hide Abortion Death

Police have been accused of trying to cover up a woman's death from legal abortion, the *New York Post* reported. The woman died after having an abortion on Dec. 2 at the Women's Medical Pavilion, a Brooklyn abortion clinic. The state health department has said that the clinic is also under investigation for a Nov. 14 abortion in which a woman suffered a perforated uterus.

A police department source told the newspaper that police officers tried to cover up the abortion death by not including any mention of the abortion in their daily report. Instead, they listed only the address where the abortion had taken place.

\*\*\*

## Study Shows Need for Better Counseling

A study of South African women found that poor pre-abortion counseling can be a factor in women's emotional reactions to abortion.

Researchers at the University of the Free State say that women who did not have "sufficient opportunity to make a well-considered decision" about abortion are more likely to suffer from post-abortion syndrome. The study highlighted the need for better

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