

The Post-Abortion Review

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Divine Mercy in My Soul

Theresa Bonopartis

“We are to show to those in need His goodness to ourselves . . .”

This phrase at Mass speaks to my heart. It reminds me of the despair, the grief, the pain of abortion from which Christ delivered me. It reminds me also of my duty to give hope to those still suffering, to help point the way to a place of shelter and peace in the heart of Jesus.

And so, I relate my experience—unique and personal, but not unlike the stories of many other women. But this story is not, finally, about me. It’s about our good and merciful God . . . always there, wanting to forgive us and to make us whole again.

At 18 I honestly believed I was the only one *not* having sex. I gave in to peer pressure and slept with someone I was seeing occasionally. I remember vividly the day I phoned the doctor for my test results and learned I was pregnant.

After months of denial, I was nearly four months pregnant, so I knew the answer long before the word “positive” was uttered. I was overwhelmed by a range a feelings: happiness at the thought of a child growing within me, but also fear of telling my parents—the reason I had “denied” it for so long.

I immediately told the father of the child, and we decided to get married. Although we planned to tell our parents together, I blurted the truth to my mother and father. Their reaction took me by surprise. Shocked, angry and disappointed, they told me to leave the house and forget that I was their daughter.

In retrospect, their reaction was understandable. They believed that premarital sex was wrong and thought it would be a disgrace to have a child out of wedlock. At least, I thought, my parents were practicing Catholics and would never ask me to abort my child. I left the house with no job, no money, no home and nowhere to turn, feeling utterly abandoned and alone. It wasn’t long before the baby’s father and I broke up. Still, I was certain I would not get an abortion. I wanted my child.

A friend’s mother invited me to stay in their home. I had no idea how I could support the baby and myself, and things began to feel hopeless. During this period, my father sent several messages urging me to have an abortion. He even offered to pay for it. I

refused. But as I began to feel more desperate, I decided, finally, to let the abortion happen. I shut down my feelings and went through the motions, functioning more like an observer in a surreal world than someone in control.

Thirty years later, I still can’t remember how I got to the hospital. But I do remember being alone in the hospital room when a doctor entered, and I’ll never forget the sadistic look on his face as he injected saline into my abdomen.

No one explained to me the baby’s development or what the abortion would be like. I had no idea what was going to happen. I lay there just wishing that I could die. I could feel the baby thrashing around as his skin and lungs were burned by the saline. He was dying. Labor began. After 12 hours of labor, alone in the room, I gave birth to a dead

baby boy.

I looked at his tiny feet and hands. All I wanted to do was pick up my son and put him back inside of me. I couldn’t fathom what I had done. I rang for the nurse. She came in, picked up my son and dumped him in what looked like a large mayonnaise jar, a jar marked 3A. Then she left the room and I was alone again, filled with hatred for myself. The thought of death seemed comforting. My downward spiral had only just begun.

After the abortion I flew to California to spend time with my sister and her family so I could get my bearings again. I wasn’t the same person anymore. I went through the motions of daily living, but I had no desire for anything. At night, in the room I shared with my two-year-old niece, I’d lie awake asking God over and over again to forgive me.

Three months later I returned to the New York area. Although I was not in contact with my father, my mom would slip out to meet me occasionally. Still trying to run away from myself, I moved to Florida. During my two years there, I called my dad and we began speaking again, although never mentioning my abortion.

When I returned to the area, I found a job and outwardly things seemed fine. But nothing was as it seemed. I tried hard not to think about who I was and what I had done. When I thought about my dead child, I would become depressed and despairing. Desperate to be loved, I became involved with the man I would

**All I wanted to do was
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marry, even though he was emotionally and psychologically abusive to me.

Two years later I was thrilled to be pregnant with our first child. But I was also afraid that God would punish me for the abortion, that something would be wrong with my child. I prayed constantly that the baby would not have to suffer for my sins, and was immensely relieved when he was born healthy.

The marriage began to fall apart soon after the baby's birth. My husband was abusing alcohol and we were arguing all the time. We tried counseling to salvage our marriage. Knowing that my abortion was at the root of my problems, I told the counselor about it. He told me to just forget about it. It was in the past. I could not make him understand that the abortion was very much in the present because I was living with the consequences every day.

For a while my husband stayed sober, and I became pregnant with our second child. By the time I was to give birth, however, his addiction was again full-blown. The night our second child was born, I did not expect my husband to be there. By the time he got home, I was well along in labor and we barely made it to the hospital in time.

The birth of my son was anything but joyous. I didn't know how I was going to care for two children, living with someone addicted to alcohol. Unlike the husbands of mothers around me, my husband did not show up the next day; he was recovering from a hangover. I lay alone in a hospital room, but this time my child was alive.

Soon after I brought the baby home, my husband overdosed and had to be rushed to the hospital. The incident helped me to begin breaking the cycle. During his two-week hospital stay, I began to enjoy my children for the first time. I didn't have to worry about where he was or what he was doing. I gave the children my full attention. I promised myself that I would not let them grow up in an abusive home, and that if he didn't straighten out, the children and I would begin a life for ourselves.

I kept my sanity by praying and reading the Bible. My husband stayed sober for two years before it began all over again. The day my older son, then four, told me to hide in the closet when he saw his father coming home, I knew we would have to leave.

For myself, I may well have stayed in that abusive relationship forever, but I did not want the boys to experience abuse. One day when my husband was drinking again, I took the children and walked out the door. Once again I found myself with no job, no

money, no home. This time, thank God, I had my children.

My sister took me in to her already full apartment, and with my family's help (in this crisis I had their full support), I began to get my life together. Shortly after I walked out, my husband ended up in rehab, so the boys and I were able to move back into our apartment. I found a job. Within a year or two I returned to school to train as a substance abuse counselor. My family helped me both financially and by helping to care for the boys. I could not have made it without them.

After graduation, one of my teachers offered me a job. I thought I had finally gotten it together. Little did I realize how fragile this new life was. By this time I had grown in my spiritual life and had a relationship with God, even though I did not truly know Him and still kept a distance from church. I still suffered from depression, entertained thoughts of suicide and had very low self esteem; the fact that I had been one of the few from my class offered a job did not raise my self-esteem.

In time, as I struggled with my personal problems, my professional work began to suffer. I experienced "burn out." It was devastating to have worked so hard to achieve what I had and then become unable to function. I realize now that it was God's way of drawing me closer to Him.

I quit my job and struggled to stay out of the hospital. My dad supported me and the kids. I just moved through life. Every day it was a challenge just to get out of bed and take care of the boys. I did, however, begin attending Mass again, sitting in the back of the church, certain that everyone knew I had had an abortion, certain that the walls would come crashing down on me. But I went, listening for some word of hope that I could be forgiven for my terrible, "unforgivable" sin.

By then my older son was seven and ready to make his First Penance. At a meeting for the parents, a priest talked about God's mercy and His desire to forgive any sin, even the sin of abortion. I remember thinking: Can this be true? Did I hear him correctly? Will God really forgive abortion? That evening I left with the first inkling of hope I had known in ten years.

It took time and courage, but I decided to contact that priest and ask him to hear my confession. Scared and nervous, I made my first confession in many years. The priest was gentle, trying to make it as easy as he could for me. He showed great empathy and support. At last, I was on my way home.

I began to see the priest regularly for spiritual direction. At first,

I remember thinking, can this be true? Will God really forgive abortion?

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all I could see was darkness. It was an effort to do the things he asked, like examining my life, because I was sure I would uncover only what a terrible person I was. But I was tired of the depression and desperate enough to try. I felt sorry for my children who had a mom who cried a lot and simply couldn't cope with life. I wanted more for the three of us. And so I prayed, went to Mass every day and spent time before the Blessed Sacrament. I needed so badly to trust in this God I had been told was so good.

Still I could not forgive myself. I continued to struggle with depression. I would beg Jesus for healing. I felt bad that I had not reached full healing, and my confessor's eyes showed his own sadness over my continued struggle. I understand now that the fullness of healing must come in God's time.

One night I felt depressed and suicidal again, but despite these feelings, I also somehow felt a deep trust in God. I didn't want the children to see me crying again, so after putting them to bed, I closed myself in the bathroom, crouched on the floor, and repeated over and over, "Jesus, I trust in You."

I don't know how many hours I did this, but well into the night I had an experience that changed my life. I experienced being on the cross with Christ. But instead of experiencing suffering, I felt love so intense that it was capable of taking away that pain. I felt His love wash away my sin and I knew my healing was complete.

I have never since felt the despair of abortion, only the profound love and forgiveness Christ gave me. I've watched my life be transformed, miraculously, as I've been privileged to help countless women and men suffering from abortion's aftermath. Christ's love transformed not only my life, but the lives of those I love.

Before my mother died, I learned that my abortion had caused her great suffering, although she had never told me. One day when we were watching TV, abortion was mentioned. She said, "Well, sometimes it's all right to have an abortion." I said, "Mom, it is never all right."

God gave us this moment of grace. She told me that my abortion was her sin and that she would take it to the grave with her. I was able to comfort her, telling her that we both bore responsibility for it. I told her that I forgave her and asked her to forgive me. After that my mother went to confession to the same priest I had seen for direction, and she felt that her terrible burden was lifted.

Most difficult was telling my children. I felt that God was calling me to speak out about abortion, but I knew I couldn't unless my children knew first. I was terrified they would hate me. It took me years to muster the courage. By now I was active in the pro-life movement and they had been brought up to respect human life.

I planned to tell them many times, but each time I backed out, afraid to say the words. Finally one day I knew I was being given the grace to talk to them. How can I describe that day? I trembled as I told them of how our lives had come to be as they were. If not for my abortion, they would not be living in a fatherless

household or seeing the strained relationship between my father and me.

The boys wrestled with their feelings. They were angry at me. They grieved for the brother they never knew. They felt guilty for surviving. It took time, a lot of talking, and the grace of God, but they understood finally why things were as they were, and why I had spent years crying. They grew closer to God, and we grew closer to one another.

I didn't speak publicly right away. The boys needed time to deal with their feelings and cope with the loss of their brother before I would do that. I was even resigned and at peace with the fact that the day might never come. But a few years later, they gave me their blessing. To say I am proud of them is an understatement. They have become great advocates for life.

I crouched on the floor and repeated over and over, "Jesus, I trust in you."

I've now worked for some years with the Sisters of Life, conducting Days of Prayer and Healing for those suffering abortion's trauma. I am grateful to be able to stand alongside the Sisters at the foot of the cross and minister to these children of God, and blessed to watch

them be transformed by His love and forgiveness. I have witnessed countless miracles of His mercy and am convinced that God is marshaling an army of once-wounded women and men to dispel the lies of abortion.

Saint Faustina Kowalska's diary, *Divine Mercy in My Soul*, tells of words spoken to her by Christ:

Let the greatest sinners place their trust in My mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy. My daughter, write about My mercy towards tormented souls. Souls that make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls I grant even more graces than asked. I cannot punish even the greatest sinner if he makes an appeal to My compassion, but on the contrary, I justify him in My unfathomable and inscrutable mercy.

I know that this is true.

Jesus I trust in You.

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Is Cerebral Palsy Ever a “Choice?”

Brent Rooney

“When Emily was ten months old, her doctor told us he thought we should have Emily evaluated for ‘possible mild cerebral palsy,’” said Sandra. “I suddenly found myself at the beginning of a whole new emotional roller-coaster ride. My jaw dropped, my face felt immediately on fire, my eyes filled with tears, and my body began to shake all over. I clung tightly to my precious girl as I heard his words . . .”¹

Cerebral palsy (CP) is a brain disorder resulting in improper balance, posture and movement. About 5,000 U.S. children under age 5 are yearly diagnosed as having CP.²

There are many unknowns about the risks for CP, and because of lawsuits against obstetricians, anyone identifying a new CP risk will be strongly challenged. In 1991, medical researchers did a review of previous studies and reported that very low birth weight newborns (those weighing less than 3 lbs., 5 oz.) had a whopping 38 times the risk of CP as normal weight newborns.³

Thus, it is hardly surprising that a CP expert such as Dr. Elliot Gersh, developmental pediatrician and medical director of Mt. Washington Pediatrics Hospital, lists preterm birth as a major risk factor for CP.² The more preterm a birth, the higher the risk that the newborn will have a very low birth weight.

The Abortion Link

The connection between abortion and premature birth has been acknowledged as far back as 1967, when abortion supporter Dr. Malcom Potts wrote that “there seems little doubt that there is a true relationship between the high incidence of therapeutic abortion and prematurity. The interruption of pregnancy in the young (under 17) is more dangerous than in other cases.”⁴

Professor Barbara Luke of the University of Michigan is a highly regarded author in the field of obstetrics. She notes that,

If you have had one or more induced abortions, your risk of prematurity with this pregnancy increases about 30 percent. If they were done during the second trimester, after 14 weeks, your subsequent risk of prematurity is greater than if they had been done during the first trimester, before 14 weeks.⁵

At least 16 studies, including one published in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*, support Luke’s claim that a previous induced abortion elevates the subsequent risk of a premature birth.⁶

Most recently, a study of more than 61,000 Danish women, the largest study ever on premature births, found that women with

previous induced abortions had double the risk of very preterm births (births before 34 weeks gestation) and almost double the risk of preterm births compared to women with no history of abortion. Women who had two previous “evacuation” type abortions had a 12 times higher risk of prematurity compared to women who had not had abortions.⁷

Luke has identified one mechanism that explains how abortion causes a risk of prematurity:

The procedures for first-trimester abortion involve dilating the cervix slightly and suctioning the contents of the uterus. The procedures for second-trimester abortion are more involved, including dilating the cervix wider and for longer periods, and scraping the inside of the uterus.

Women who had several second-trimester abortions may have a higher incidence of incompetent cervix—a premature spontaneous dilation of the cervix—because the cervix has been

artificially dilated several times before this pregnancy.⁵

The risk of infection resulting from abortion may also explain the higher risk of premature births among post-abortive women. Researchers from the University of Wisconsin stated that “our findings indicate that an abortion in a woman’s first pregnancy does not have the same protective effect of lowering the risk for intrapartum infection in the following pregnancy as does a live birth.”⁸

In 1992, pro-choice researcher Dr. Janet Daling and her colleagues reported that if the previous pregnancy ended in induced abortion, the risk of intraamniotic infection increased by 140 percent.⁹

Pro-Abortion Silence

Despite the fact that studies have shown a significant increase in premature births among women who have abortions, most clinics don’t list premature birth as a risk of abortion. In doing so, they’ve borrowed an argument from “Big Tobacco.”

In 1954, following the publication of research showing that cigarette smoking increased the risk of lung cancer, the Tobacco Industry Research Committee placed a full-page ad in major newspapers entitled “A Frank Statement to Cigarette Smokers.” Their message: the link between smoking and lung cancer was “not regarded as conclusive.”

Was this statement true? Yes, but it implied that no warning of possible lung cancer risk should be given until “all” the evidence was in and was conclusive, a process that can take decades.

At least 14 studies support the abortion-cerebral palsy link.

Smoking cigarettes is not curative for any disease nor is it necessary, so when the risk was first identified in 1954, cigarette packs should have carried warnings about possible lung cancer risk.

Just as abortion clinics refuse to inform women of the many studies showing a significant increased risk in breast cancer following abortion—insisting that the evidence is not yet “conclusive”—so they can also evade disclosing the risk of premature birth and CP by insisting the evidence is not yet “conclusive.” Shades of spokesman “Joe Camel.”

Crunching the Numbers

So how many cases of abortion-related CP occur yearly in the U.S.? If just 20 percent of U.S. women giving birth yearly had a previous induced abortion, that represents 800,000 women. The 1999 Danish study reported that a previous induced abortion doubles the risk of a very preterm birth. It is reasonable to assume that the risk of very low birth weight is also doubled. The 800,000 women will give birth to about 19,360 very low birth weight (VLBW) newborns, with about half of the cases (9,680) being due to a previous induced abortion.

The odds of a VLBW newborn having CP is about 9.34 percent.³ This yields 904 VLBW newborns with CP due to a mom’s previous induced abortion. A similar calculation for moderately low birth weight (between 3 lbs, 5 oz. and 5 lbs., 8 oz.) births to women with prior induced abortions yields an additional 185 newborns with CP born to moms with prior induced abortions.

Grand total: 1,089 infants are born in the United States each year may develop CP because of reproductive injuries related to their mother’s previous abortions. This is only a ballpark estimate, but it is more than three times the number of victims (412) in the Tuskegee experiment, where patients were also denied the truth. And it happens every year.

The Higher Risk for Black Women

According to abortion apologist Dr. David A. Grimes, black women have 35.2 percent of all induced abortions in the U.S., although they comprise only about 12 percent of the U.S. female population. It has been a “mystery” to the vast bulk of medical researchers why black American women have about three times the risk of VLBW newborns compared to Caucasian women. Certainly, not all of this disparate impact on black women can be blamed on the tripled rate of induced abortions, but to assign no impact requires willing blindness.

In 1987 it was reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that black women with two previous induced abortions had a 91 percent higher relative risk of a subsequent preterm birth than black women with no induced abortions. The study noted that “black infants remain twice as likely as white infants to die during the first year of life.”⁶

VLBW newborns have over 90 times the mortality risk in their

first year of life compared to normal weight newborns.¹⁰ In a study of children in Atlanta, Georgia between 1985 and 1987, it was reported that 10-year-old black children had a 30 percent higher prevalence of CP than did 10-year-old white children.¹¹

This disparate rate of VLBW babies for black American women has ominous implications for CP rates among black infants. Which black leader will start a campaign to lower the rate of CP by informing black women of the health risks of elective abortion?

A Malpractice Lawyer’s Dream?

Every year parents of infants with CP sue obstetricians, believing that errors of commission or omission contributed to their child’s malady. At least some medical researchers believe that some cases of CP are caused by problems occurring during delivery.

This article does not dispute this very real possibility. What is virtually unknown by malpractice lawyers and parents of CP children, however, is that the actions of another doctor may have boosted their

child’s CP risk when he or she performed an induced abortion on the mother in the past.

Successful CP suits can result in damage awards exceeding one million dollars. If parents are considering suing the obstetrician who delivered their child, they should also consider adding the name of the abortionist(s) to those sued. The risk for subsequent preterm births is rarely, if ever, listed on abortion clinic consent forms, nor is this risk verbally communicated to young women considering surgical abortions. It is even less likely that the consequences of preterm births are explained to women: neonatal death, cerebral palsy, and other developmental handicaps.

One thing that medical malpractice lawyers love to see is an *unconsented* risk; that is, a risk about which the patient was not informed and therefore did not consent to accept as a risk. Also, since induced abortions are legally considered to be elective procedures, there is no justification for withholding information about risks for which the evidence is still not absolutely conclusive.

The bottom line is that elective induced abortion is a credible risk factor for CP, but this has never been disclosed to women. The vast majority of U.S. adults believe patients have a right to give informed consent about medical decisions, yet that right is being denied at abortion clinics. Some jury members may be outraged by this fraud of not disclosing risks to women of prematurity and CP.

In this case, the result of this non-disclosure is that newborns are put at elevated risk for CP. No wonder some groups talk about “choice” but not about *informed* choice.

Brent Rooney has written major articles on breast cancer prevention for the highest circulation health magazine in Canada, ALIVE. Citations to other studies linking CP and

Clinics aren’t telling women abortion can cause cerebral palsy.

abortion can be found on his web site at www.vcn.bc.ca/~whatsup. © 2000 Brent Rooney. Reprinted with permission.

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News Briefs

Unborn Baby Helps Mom Survive

A British woman who has suffered from kidney failure for 22 years was kept alive during her pregnancy by her unborn child, whose kidneys worked for both of them, doctors say.

Carol Davies, 42, became pregnant last year after trying unsuccessfully for 15 years to have a child. About 12 weeks into the pregnancy, doctors found that her unborn child's kidneys were cleaning Davies' blood as well as his own. Davies' son, Owen, was born premature but healthy.

This case dramatically shows that, as we always fond of saying, the welfare of a mother and her unborn child are literally intertwined. They contribute to each other's health. When we help one, we help both. If we hurt one, we hurt both.

Colorado Acupuncturist Charged in Illegal Abortion

A Colorado acupuncturist has been charged with criminal abortion, assault and theft for performing an illegal abortion on an 18-year-old woman who was later admitted to a hospital with complications. Doctors found parts of the unborn child's remains still inside the mother.

The unidentified woman told investigators she went to the home of Zhong Fu, 43, for an abortion. Fu runs an acupuncture business out of his home, and reportedly told the woman he would perform an abortion on her for \$1,500. If convicted on all charges, Fu could face up to 22 years in prison.

Abortionist Back in Business After Prison Term

A Mississippi abortionist who recently served five months in prison for tax fraud is working again at an abortion clinic.

Joseph Booker, once Mississippi's only abortionist, has had his license reinstated and is now reportedly working at the New Woman Medical Center in Jackson, one of the state's two abortion

clinics.

Pro-life groups in the state say they are upset by the decision to reinstate Booker's license, in part because last December, police discovered a cooler that had once belonged to Booker with the remains of aborted babies inside. No charges have been filed in that case, which police say remains a "loose end."

Iowa Woman Sues Clinic Over Incomplete Abortion

An Iowa woman has filed a lawsuit against an abortion clinic after undergoing an incomplete abortion she says left her unable to have children.

Shaleea Tomlinson underwent an abortion performed by Robert M. Kretschmar at the Emma Goldman abortion clinic in Waterloo in August 1998. The lawsuit, which names Kretschmar and the clinic as defendants, states that the that Tomlinson afterwards suffered blood clots and a septic infection that left her unable to maintain a subsequent pregnancy.

Court Says Woman Can't Sue Over Coerced Abortion

A Minnesota appeals court has ruled that a woman cannot sue a man she says coerced her to abort by promising to marry her.

The woman said she only agreed to the abortion because the man promised to marry her and have another child with her, and that she suffered emotional distress as a result. The appeals court dismissed her lawsuit, citing a 1988 state law that bans lawsuits based on breach of promise to marry and damages resulting from it.

Unfortunately, the abortion clinic counselors were not sued for failing to inform the woman that abortion usually leads to broken relationships, not marriage.

-ARS & DCR

Letters to the Editor

Breaking Down Walls

Keep up the good work! The last few issues of your newsletter have been great. One of these days we'll break through the wall of denial surrounding those who think that making abortion legal made it safe and healthy for women.

Anne Burns

Reframing the Issue

Your recent letter was most encouraging. George Bush needs help reframing the abortion issue so the public learns that his is the compassionate approach. Keep up the excellent work. We really do appreciate your efforts.

Patty Stark

The Toll of Abortion

I still have difficulty with comprehending the fact that as many as 40 percent of childbearing women have had abortions. Whenever I stood in a checkout line, it seemed so overwhelming that one-third of the women in line had aborted and two-thirds had involvement with other's abortions. But last summer, abortion entered my husband's family.

A relative tearfully confided in me how she had been unable to prevent her young niece from being aborted. The teen had been psychologically troubled with anger and issues about her own

adoption. After being kicked out of a private Christian high school because of her pregnancy, she was badgered and bribed to abort by her psychiatrist and her up-til-then pro-life parents.

Those three sectors (Christian parents, school and shrink) which should have been most solicitous were the most predatory. Their collusion in this heinous, immoral (dare I say "hate") crime will remain unacknowledged and unpunished by the law. I've read enough of the literature to know that she is in the most vulnerable category of all abortion victims, with more tragedy lurking around the corner.

Name Withheld

Finding Hope and Healing

I am very blessed by your paper, *Hope and Healing*. I had an abortion in 1978. I just had a hysterectomy in January of this year so I have been seeing my doctor more than the normal once a year. I have a very godly doctor; we talk about the Lord when I'm in his office.

I feel God has brought me through a long healing process. God is so faithful and loving. I've been a Christian for only six years; I don't know how I made it through all those years with such pain. I still have some tough moments but God always pulls me through. I praise God for using me with other people and giving my testimony at churches. If it reaches one person, it's all worth it!

Name Withheld

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Victims and Victors

Book Tells Women's Stories of Sexual Assault Pregnancy

“Having lived through rape, and having raised a child ‘conceived in rape,’ I feel personally assaulted and insulted every time I hear that abortion should be legal for rape and incest. I feel that we’re being used to further the abortion issue, even though we’ve not been asked to tell our side of the story.”

These words from rape survivor Kathleen DeZeeuw form the introduction to a compelling new book that looks at the issue of rape and incest pregnancies and abortion from the viewpoint of those whose voices are often unheard in this debate: the women themselves.

Victims and Victors: Speaking Out About their Pregnancies, Abortions and Children Resulting from Sexual Assault, brings together the experiences of nearly 200 such women. Published by Acorn Books and edited by David C. Reardon, Julie Makimaa and Amy Sobie, it includes survey results from a study of 192 women who became pregnant through sexual assault and either had abortions or carried their pregnancies to term, insightful personal testimonies, and informative overview chapters.

“What we found from the survey is that, contrary to what most people think, women who become pregnant through rape or incest don’t usually want abortions,” Reardon said. “Most women who aborted did so only because they felt it was their only choice, and more than 80 percent said it was a choice they deeply regretted. Many felt that abortion only compounded their emotional trauma and allowed others to ignore their need for compassion and support.”

In contrast, Reardon said, most of the women who carried to term reported that they believed they had made the right decision

in having their children.

“For many women, knowing that something good had come from their experience helped them heal from the assault,” he said. “What is especially striking is that even though some women were still struggling with the pain of the assault, none of the respondents expressed regret over having given birth or a wish that they had chosen abortion instead. Instead, many saw their children as instruments of healing and grace in their lives.”

Reardon said that the editors tried to shed some light on the experiences of women who have experienced sexual assault pregnancies and give them a voice in a debate from which they have often been excluded. The book also calls on legislators to hold hearings to allow women to share their stories of sexual assault pregnancy and abortion with lawmakers.

“Abortion advocates tell us that women pregnant from sexual assault need access to abortion,” Reardon said. “But government lawmakers are debating this issue without any input from the women who have actually experienced a rape or incest pregnancy. Not only does this book allow the general public to hear their stories, but we hope it will also give legislators the chance to hear them as well.”

Victims and Victors is available for \$11.95 plus \$3 s/h from Acorn Books, PO Box 7348-V, Springfield, IL 62791-7348. To place a credit card order or for information on quantity discounts, call Acorn Books at (217) 525-8202.



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