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## Children she got that she did not get: After abortion

by Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés

El Rio Debajo del Rio

*What if the Good Samaritan had left the injured man to die by the side of the road... instead of ministering to him? The injured man would have had nothing to say to encourage others to care for Life, for no one had helped him with his own injuries.*

Recently, Bishop Robert Hermann, administrator of Archdiocese of St. Louis, Mo., gave an interview to his archdiocese newspaper, *The St. Louis Review*: "If American youth are willing to go to war and lay their life down to defend our freedoms, then every bishop should be willing to give up his life, if it meant putting an end to abortion."

Bishop Hermann's personalized call for a seeming pre-planned martyrdom for himself and other bishops raised some eyebrows. But, I noted this part of his report, "...people do not realize that it is 50 million children that we have killed."

**Yet, what his talk did not mention once, what the same bishop's recent speech to the Conference of Bishops did not touch on**, what is never spoken about by prelates, is what Jesus might have been equally concerned about: The 100 million men and women who have had abortions of their offspring, and who were unaware of so many things beforehand, who often had no kind, wise, or loving counsel a priori... but who presently walk wounded, deeply hurt by a previous choice, uniformed or otherwise.

If 50 million is the number of "no new lives for the USA," as the bishop parsed it, then there is a need for at least 100 million Good Samaritans to notice all the wounded mothers and fathers of aborted children, lying by the side of the road, literally piled atop each other there.

In our time, there are still many, like those in the Good Samaritan story, who being of the religious classes in that time, purposely crossed to the other side of the road, and passed by the injured and bleeding ... trying to avoid uttering any substantive ministering, including withholding bandages and medicines, using all rationale to avoid giving money to see that the waylaid and the wounded were cared for in a restful refuge.

Neither does Bishop Hermann mention the 400 million potential grandparents who now carry a wound on their hearts for life, having lost what would have been their firstborn grandchild.

**How is it that literally millions of walking wounded, who are right now present on earth, are made invisible instead of being tended to?** How is it that life that is already here on earth is so little valued that it does not even merit repeated mention... though the numbers of the suffering who are still alive are in the millions?

There are even more millions hurt by abortion, as other family members learn of that loss; sisters, aunts, uncles, brothers, friends. Some think that because people often do not speak of these matters, post-abortion, that all is well with each person who carries such knowledge of life lost.

**That is not so. The psyche records all events, all choices a person makes, and has a higher mind that weighs them all, and judges them...** even as the ego alone has its own nattering mind that also weighs all matters... often too trivially or too darkly.

The truth is, actions undertaken by ego, based on a broken scale provided by not the wisest and most loving in culture, but by those interested most in expedience and social carving of other's lives that conform to their own earnest extremes... that encourages serious life decisions based on the least far-seeing function within the psyche, rather than the most visionary aspect given to every soul on earth.

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**While Freud wrote about the death wish, a sort of pull to be against the life force via sloth, disregard or other means... there is more so in most of us a strong Life Wish, a pull to be for Life in any and every way we can.** The drive toward Life, is protective, thoughtful, vulnerable and invested in immaculate love. It is this last, that marks the difference between a wise heart muddied with real life experiences in the trenches, and a dry heart that functions on rote concepts alone.

I'm no Pollyanna. I do not underestimate how most pregnancies are seldom the perfect pregnancy? with the perfect mate, the perfect finances, and health insurance. I know firsthand that the perfect circumstances for bringing children into the world? are seldom available for most, and the imperfection of circumstances? increases dramatically the more impoverished one is economically, and how one's immediate culture sees such matters, and how the over-culture sees women, or else invisibilizes them, their lives, their healthcare...thereby cutting them off instead of offering them viable options.

Because I am a book author, I sometimes see thousands of people at a single venue. Afterward, if I open the conversation about abortion and childbearing loss, as I often do, many men and women stay to tell me their stories. Thus, I've become a confidante and am aware of some who have had abortions who say they have no regrets. And in terms of sister book authors, I know some who say they are proud to have had an abortion, and sometimes ask those in their audiences to stand up and admit publicly they've had an abortion and to be proud of it. I know one woman author who says that were abortion something men had

regarding their own bodies, abortion would be a sacrament.

**All that aside for the moment, I have a tiny corner of the post-abortion, childbearing-loss world that I would like to show you...** one that I began in ministry four decades ago, to try to help mend those who suffer so. This is only my two cents? worth anecdotal evidence... if I, after my reading or lecture, or ?evening with Dr. E,? open a discussion about post-abortion trauma in safe environs, the number of women and men who attend, that is, those who are hurt and still unhealed.... far outnumbers those who say they feel no post-abortion effects.... by about 1,000 to 1. That?s a lot of wounded and untended to souls. That?s also very few persons who have had an abortion who say they feel little or no effect after.

I don?t mean to, but sometimes I draw the ire of a certain kind of person who has a large stake in not looking at the underlying realities of abortion, and only glossing the topside realities. I think all the realities have to be given respectful and generous thought. I have a sense that were that to become a new norm, that there will also be far less severing of new life, and much more familial and social architecture built to support new life in ways that do not exist now.

Nonetheless, I?ve been catcalled, yelled at, ridiculed, hate speeched, shouted down and screeched over when, in certain settings, I try to explain my holding of life as sacred...

But, and, yet...

Here, look through this little window: My view of those suffering at the side of the road took shape in many ways long ago. This is one I?d like to tell you about...

**Many years ago I sat next to a small black women on an airplane ride into O?Hare. She had great big eyeglasses and a tiny face. Her name was Gwendolyn Brooks and I knew her work as a poet. I had read Miss Brooks? poem, ?The Mother,? which had this one line that meant so much to me --** for I had lost my first born child to forced surrender. That very poem meant a great deal to other surrendering mothers I?d read it to also, those who also had been unsupported in their pregnancies and forced/frightened into relinquishing their children. This one sentence of the poem that was so poignant to us for it was a cry, a lamentation, like our cries, like Rachel on the hills of Ramah, who ?would not be comforted,?

*?You remember the children you got that you did not get...?*

That was us. We remembered our children, even though older people had told us we would forget. No dice. We remembered deeply and with fullest sacred heart of love, our children ?we got,? we carried, we loved, we sang to, we spoke to, we petted through our bellies, we named, we cherished, we ate for, we protected, we understood as new and real Life, we fearfully but gladly suffered to bring into the world alive... but we did not get to keep our own children, our precious, precious children....we did not get to keep the Loves of our lives, most often our first born children.

Instead because of the time of the times, instead we were led into a narrow gauntlet that carried each young and most often impoverished mother to the same place: lifelong loss, lifelong laceration of the heart.

Forget our own children? Never! *You remember the children you got that you did not get...*

Miss Brooks and I spoke for two hours on the plane ride, and it was clear, and she was so gracious and kind. Though I was young at the time, and she was the age I am now, in her seventh decade, even though her situation was different than mine, she understood that life was Life, for reallies and for certain...

**Long before there was an anti-abortion movement, long before the church began to put in it's public two cents worth, long before people carried placards showing what an abortion of an embryo actually looked like ...** Miss Brooks understood what most mothers who have aborted or been forced into surrender, understand; that this child who was severed from its source, is and was Life itself, blessed and creative and filled with love... and that so much of everything dear was shattered when that Life was turned away...or forced away from its loving source... by whatever means.

I've had permission from Miss Brooks these many years to use her poem in any way to help others see and/or heal from child loss. It is the strongest, most raw writing I know about choices made, and perhaps more than once, that were guaranteed to cause life-long suffering... for no one was there to help. No one. Not enough.

In her poem, written in 1945, you see yet, all the unresolved issues for Miss Brooks all those many years after abortion, all the questions asked with no one to help her answer, no one's help to mend, to minister. There's a reason poets often say, "Poetry saved my life," for often the blank page is the only one listening to the soul's suffering, the only one registering the story completely, the only one receiving all softly and without condemnation.

### **The Mother**

By Gwendolyn Brooks

*Abortions will not let you forget.*

*You remember the children you got that you did not get,*

*The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair,*

*The singers and workers that never handled the air.*

*You will never neglect or beat*

*Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.*

*You will never wind up the sucking-thumb*

*Or scuttle off ghosts that come.*

*You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh,*

*Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye.*

*I have heard in the voices of the wind the voices of my dim  
killed children.*

*I have contracted. I have eased*

*My dim dears at the breasts they could never suck.*

*I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized*

*Your luck*

*And your lives from your unfinished reach,*

*If I stole your births and your names,*

*Your straight baby tears and your games,*

*Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages, aches, and your deaths,*

*If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,*

*Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.*

*Though why should I whine,*

*Whine that the crime was other than mine? --*

*Since anyhow you are dead.*

*Or rather, or instead,*

**Here, in this little corner of the world, far from the gabble and gyre of people hashing out who is right and wrong,** far from bishops' conferences at which, regrettably, no *la que sabe*, no woman who knows, is allowed or invited to speak and thus inform those who can never know the intimacies of childbearing what's what...

far from secular culture where only the same old drones are given the microphone and their predictable words show no progression of thought... far from screechers and verbal assaulters on public sidewalks, and far from people who draw energy by shouting at those they consider sinful, who confuse standing on spiritual principle with slapping the souls of others around...

As I write this article, I keep thinking I wish there were a way to convey this all with such precision, and I am afraid, I am only able at this time, to toss out raw material that I know to be *ovario y conyones* true. Though I've never had an abortion, I most definitely see well defined parallels in the shattering that takes place in heart and spirit when a person is driven to believe she/ he cannot care for her/ his own child, when all resource is withdrawn or out of reach... and thus the child is taken, forced away, or else not allowed to come to life.

**I'd just say for now I hope we all can say much more on the subject of post-abortion wounding, and child-bearing loss...** that we can tell the stories of our lives with insight and inquiry and not be afraid. Or be afraid, as I often am, and leap into the unknown anyway... because one senses in doing so that at least one more soul might be freed from a prison of torment.

Although some will only emphasize the protection of life in formulaic ways, I think we can now begin to, insist on telling our actual stories, 'the real deal,' all our stories no matter what they are, that have remained hidden for so long....

out of fear of retribution; out of being shamed so indecently and thoroughly long ago; out of being stigmatized; disenfranchised; exiled; out of being looked down upon; out of being spoken of in vile whispers behind one's back; from being seen as a bad person; from fear of disappointing or being sent away from family; from being seen as not worthy to be a mother or father; not worthy of respect; not worthy of life itself; from being patronized; exploited; from being called out specifically for others to heap scorn upon. And all these attacks, too often led by those who held themselves out as scions of culture.

Those depersonalizing and inhumane opinions toward other human beings in their times of travail, are exactly the attitudes that brought us to the place we are in culture now, the place where millions of the scorned and thus unattended suffer, the place of overwhelming numbers exist regarding 'the children I got that I did not get.'

**It seems there is a strong need for protection of a new and different way of thinking about other souls.** And I believe that can happen. With your voices and my voice, I believe matters about protection of life can change, evolve for the better.

But consciousness rather than the same old contentiousness will, I believe make the greater difference. Mercy instead of mockery. Understanding instead of understating. Stories that are real instead of stentorian grandstanding. Whatever is genuine with immaculate heart attached, will help. Even semi-immaculate heart goes farther than no heart for each human at all.

Yet and still, the greatest legion of human beings existent on earth who know a stark and strong awareness of the true preciousness of life -- for they have lost a life somewhere in time -- still wander

untended. They are the ones who are most able to speak of cherished life deeply and authentically. They know it at the cellular level, not just the cerebral. Silencing them by ignoring them and not tending to them, is wrong.

*What if the Good Samaritan had left the injured man to die by the side of the road... instead of ministering to him? The injured man would have no story to tell to encourage others to care for Life.... for no one had reached out to help him heal from his own injuries... no one cared about his Life.*

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