

We are a generation of survivors! Abortion has touched us all, and I am no exception. I come from a large family of 10 children: three older sisters, myself, and then six younger brothers. By all appearances, we were a very pious family, practising our faith, with everything in order, and holding in the first place the conviction that children are truly a gift from God and the veritable source of joy and hope in the life of the family. But hidden within the heart of my family, under the joyful surface, there festered the wound of abortion. It was something about which my mother spoke to us frequently and openly. After my parents marriage, when my mother realized for the first time that she was pregnant, she wanted with all her heart to keep her child, but my father, not having the courage at that time to take upon himself the responsibility of fatherhood, urged her to choose between abortion and the possibility of a divorce. In her desperation, she turned to her sisters and friends to ask for advice, but all advised her to do as my father wished. At the end she submitted, and three months after their marriage, they went together to the clinic to have the abortion.

It was only two months afterwards that my parents realized how much their act was contrary to life and to God. They both went to confession, hoping thus to begin a path towards healing. Driven by the desire to repair the evil that they had done, they chose to welcome however many children the Lord and providence would give to them. And both became activists for some time against abortion.

Even if the sin of abortion had been forgiven in confession and, through activism, they had made public reparation to alleviate their consciences, nonetheless the effects were always present. The sense of fault, pain, and loss remained with my parents for all of their married life. Even from my youngest years, I remember the many fights between them, sometimes violent. Each one accused the other for the fact of the abortion, and no one wanted to take upon themselves the blame for the death of my brother. Sometimes my father would become too angry from the many accusations and the continuous fighting and would leave the house for the whole day, leaving my mother in desperation. Crying, she would implore us children to console her from her sadness and to forgive her for what she had done to our brother.

The abortion of my eldest brother created a breach in the family that grew with time; my father and mother became ever more distant from each other, and in the case of my mother, she became more abusive towards us children and, in the case of my father, more absent while we children became ever more bitter. After 24 years of marriage with 10 children and the youngest being only four years old, my parents divorced and the family practically collapsed.

During my adolescence, I spent most of my time away from home, seeking a refuge in my studies, in nature, or in travelling. At 16 years old, I finally found a breath of tranquillity in the course of my travels when I discovered my future home in Umbria, Italy. The peace and the recollection that I felt during my first visit to the monastery there helped me finally to confront the pain that I felt on account of the dissolution of my family.

After having completed my studies at the university, I entered definitively into the monastic life so as to be better able to deepen the peace that I had discovered in the presence of the Lord. One year afterwards, my mother recounted to my by telephone her own experience in a retreat for healing that she had done in the United States with Rachel's Vineyard. I was very interested, especially because I still had difficulties with forgiveness towards my parents on account of the

abortion and the following abuse that we suffered at their hands. I decide a year later to participate in a weekend-retreat with Rachel's Vineyard in Bologna. I felt the need to give to give a response to the many questions that I still had and to finally find peace, forgiveness, and compassion. In prayer and Eucharistic adoration during the retreat, I was able to feel the presence of my little lost brother with whom I was able to speak directly, calling him by his own name, which was "Felix". It means "happy". My mother received the inspiration to give him this name years ago when she heard, sung at the Easter Vigil, a verse from the *Exultet*, the beautiful hymn of praise sung at the lighting of the paschal candle. I will cite the verse for you. "O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ! O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!"

The death of my brother on account of the abortion was for my mother her happy fault, because on account of it, she was driven to return to Christ. For me as well, it was a happy fault, because the suffering that it had caused in our family moved me to seek after Christ in my own life, and to find the peace and consolation that only comes from him. This painful 'night' of sin in which we find ourselves today is the same night, as the "Exultet" says, "in which Christ, having destroyed the chains of death, rose again from the underworld, a victor." And we believe that all our brothers, sisters, and children who are victims of abortion will rise again together with Christ in that day when "evil shall be dispelled, faults shall be washed away, innocence returned to sinners, and joy to the afflicted."