



I was nineteen years old when I had an abortion. I do not remember all the details because it was so long ago, twenty-eight years- and because I believe it caused such severe shock and trauma that I was unable to physically, mentally or emotionally cope or process the experience at the time. I do know that I let fear rule the day. I was scared to death to tell anyone and my boyfriend did not want a baby. I did not even really know what abortion was at the time or who Planned Parenthood was but somehow, I got the information to make an appointment with them. I had a pregnancy test at Planned Parenthood in Orange County, CA. It was positive. I recall that according to Planned Parenthood I was six weeks pregnant and I remember saying two things over and over again. "I'm too young to have a baby, I'm just a kid myself," and "I have to do something before this is a baby." Why I did not believe it was a baby, I'm not sure. I was probably told this by Planned Parenthood staff and because I was so afraid and in shock, I believed it and justified it. I went in pregnant and came out not pregnant. But abortion was not a solution to what I thought was a problem! It was the beginning of a change of who I really was to what I would become, without realizing it until eighteen and a half years later. I believe I tried to shove the abortion to the back of my mind and go on with my life as best I could and I'm sure I thought I did a pretty good job of it. My experience of post-abortion trauma was lived for many years without me even knowing that I was! I now see how anger and rage, divorce, depression, inability to cope and make decisions, especially related to my children, emotional numbing, promiscuity, trust issues, isolation and sadness, and a pattern of starting and stopping so many things in my life have all been after affects of my decision to abort my child.

The forgiveness of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Confession in 2001 was the beginning of my healing journey. It has continued through a Rachel's Vineyard retreat in 2005 and a Save One Abortion Recovery Bible Study in 2010. And while I know I will be healing from the wounds of abortion until I meet Jesus Christ, and my child in Heaven, I am most grateful to God for His gift of forgiveness and the opportunities to allow me to use my personal tragedy of abortion to help women choose life for their unborn babies, and direct others to Jesus and community resources for healing from their own abortions. One of the most rewarding of these experiences came when I was able to meet and hold a newborn baby whose mother I shared about my abortion with as she sat outside Planned Parenthood one morning where she had an appointment to abort her son. God used me as an instrument that morning to convince her to join me at Mass and when it was over, she stayed in His Presence and there He convinced her to choose life for her son. We still keep in touch via email and texting to this day, praise God!

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As a divorced mother of three girls, my life is devoted to raising my daughters and otherwise serving God by leading four local 40 Days for Life campaigns, and sidewalk counseling outside the local Planned Parenthood abortion clinic weekly. I am a past Crisis Pregnancy Counselor for the local Birth Right, and have recently become the Silent No More Awareness Campaign Regional Coordinator for Winston-Salem, NC. I enjoy taking walks, playing board games and reading books together with my daughters, praying, daily Mass and Rosary and reading spiritual books, especially the lives of the saints.

We are blessed to have Toni taking calls on the National Helpline for Abortion Recovery for Concepts of Truth, Inc. in Wynne Arkansas sharing her story with anyone who is searching for healing and forgiveness. To God be the Glory!