

Oh, I felt so betrayed.

I tried to see things this way—this nameless, faceless being which I could "put on hold" for a while and create again when the time was more "appropriate." But there was always a face and a name. From the very beginning I felt connected to my baby and believed that I could see him. I even named him but I do not care to repeat that name these days.

For many months after the termination I woke during the night to hear my baby screaming. Sometimes, confused, I would get up and look for him. Other times I thought, this is my penance, and lay awake and forced myself to listen until he settled down. Eventually, after many months, the screaming turned to crying, and then to whimpering and then to sniffing....

I lost my child and my relationship [with the father] broke down....I see him around....He once told me that he was devastated that I had listened to him then. He holds this wish that I had said 'no' to him and continued with the pregnancy. We both grieve. But we do so alone.

The guilt? There is certainly some of that. I wrote in my diary about a year and a half later:

*I sit like Theseus in my chair. Unmoving. I'm doomed to never sleep but to think think think—to regret the failure of my kingdom, the death of my son, the loss of my honour amongst the gods....*

This shame is all-consuming. Yet, I am not a religious person. I believe that women have the "right" to have an abortion. That does not stop me from feeling like a murderer for terminating my child. I did not terminate a "bunch of cells" but a real human being. And yet, I do not expect to be shamed by my community. This is not an issue for the moral majority. I have fought the stigma of the majority—on both sides—who talk of my abortion as if it is a "right" or a "wrong." These are simplistic terms which cannot convey what it means to me: a regret and a grief. Abortion is an issue which every woman approaches differently. I have spoken to women who have terminated and who have never looked back. This is not how it is with me. I have looked back and am constantly remembering and grieving. I grieve and see no end to the grief because what I did, rightly or wrongly, was irreversibly and irrevocably permanent. Do you see? I cannot, for all the riches in the world, get my child back....

If you ask me what grief is, then it is all that I have described above. It is a mixture of loss and desire, guilt and shame. It is palpable. It permeates waking and sleeping hours. This is the kind of thing every woman considering termination must be aware of before the procedure, not after. In my mind, I have a son I cannot touch and cannot feed and who follows me about like a ghost. He grows with me. I sense him around me all the time. I love him with all my heart yet I do not have the power to bring him back to life.

There is a face and there is a name, but there will not be a resurrection day for the selfless, shapeless seed that I held.

From "Giving Sorrow Words" by Melinda Tankard Reist, in *Human Life Review*, Winter 2001. Ms. Reist is an Australian writer and researcher with special interest in women's health, new reproductive technologies and medical abuses of women.

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# Old Orchard Church

January 18, 2009 – 10:15 to 11:45 a.m.

The Ages of Man

**And God made from one every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God....**

—Acts 17:26-27a—

# Celebrating Jesus, Incarnate Son of God: Lord of the Life of the Family of Man

Before we are redeemed we are human,  
Made in the marvelous image of the one living God,  
Like all our neighbors—believers and unbelievers alike;  
Together, all the children of Adam are the one “family of man,”  
Created by the great God of grace and mercy!

All Christian responsibility in the civil sphere is directed toward  
The high end of protecting and promoting our common, created, human life,  
In all of its fractured glory,  
That the ascended, incarnate Lord of all things  
May do his work of blessing and giving and saving  
Among the daughters of Eve and the sons of Adam,  
In every nation of the earth!



## Today's Scripture

**Old Testament Lesson:** From Psalm 104

**New Testament Lesson:** from Colossians 3, 1 Corinthians 7:29b-31

## Today's Sermon

“Orthodox Christians: proliferacialreconciliators”

*Ron Lutjens, senior pastor, preaching*

We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**

## Giving Sorrow Words: Marguerite's Story

I realized the other day that my grieving for the dead has come to overshadow my love for the living....

I wanted my baby. I unequivocally wanted my baby.

I was a twenty-three-year-old student living with a man who was prone to violence, resorted to violence, loathed violence, was violent. I had recently suffered a breakdown. My friends and my family were absent. He said that I did not need them. He took hold of my hand and said that he would be there for me always. But now, we must act responsibly. He said he was not ready for children. He said I was not ready for children. If I had the baby, he would have to leave. There would be other children one day. Truly.

A week later I was in the hospital for the abortion.

I remember the preceding week fairly well. I spent most of it in bed dreaming of my baby. Pretending to myself that if I lay there long enough, I'd give birth before the abortion took place....

Protocol had me meet with a doctor. My partner was present. I could not speak. Were they going to ask me if I wanted the abortion? I waited. No questions asked. The day drew nearer and panic set in. I remember one night being so alarmed by pain in my womb that I was convinced I was miscarrying. I ran to the hospital and burst in, tears streaming down my face. "What does it matter?" a nurse scolded. "You're going to have an abortion anyway." I slunk away.

The day of the procedure, my partner fell asleep on the hospital bed while I sat and waited to be taken into theatre. He was tired and exhausted and upset. I was feeling ill-fated. They took me away. On the operating table they proceeded to administer the anaesthetic. I looked into the anaesthetist's face. I said "no." But they performed the operation anyway. No last minute absolution in this place....

I remember also before the operation, recalling part of Judith Wright's poem "Women to Man:"

*The eyeless labourer in the night,  
The selfless, shapeless seed I hold,  
Builds for its resurrection day—  
Silent and swift and deep from sight  
Foresees the unimagined light.*

*This is no child with a child's face;  
This has no name to name it by:  
Yet you and I have known it well  
This is our hunter and our chase,  
The third who lay in our embrace.*

(continued on back)