



# The Personal Ordinariate of Our Lady of Walsingham Coventry Group

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023

**The Fourth Sunday after Trinity**



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## Collect

O GOD, the protector of all that trust in thee, without nothing is strong, nothing is holy: increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal; grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

## First reading *2Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16a*

One day Eli'sha went on to Shunem, where a wealthy woman lived, who urged him to eat some food. So whenever he passed that way, he would turn in there to eat food. And she said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, who is continually passing our way. Let us make a small roof chamber with walls, and put there for him a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp, so that whenever he comes to us, he can go in there." One day he came there, and he turned into the chamber and rested there.

And he said to Gehazi his servant, "What then is to be done for her?"

Gehazi answered, "Well, she has no son, and her husband is old."

He said, "Call her."

And when he had called her, she stood in the doorway. And he said, "At this season, when the time comes round, you shall embrace a son."

## Second reading *Romans 6: 3-4, 8-11*

Brethren: All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

## Gospel *Matthew 10:37-42*

At that time:

Jesus said to his apostles,

"He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and he who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

<sup>40</sup>"He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. <sup>41</sup>He who receives a prophet because he is a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. <sup>42</sup>And whoever gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

## Saint of the Week

### Saint Thomas the Apostle

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> July

#### The little-known story of how St. Thomas the Apostle brought Christianity to India

(from the Aleteia website)



Pentecost delivered the gift of tongues soon after Jesus had proclaimed: “... go and make disciples of all nations.” The paradox is how little recognition goes to the evangelist who used his powers of communication to take the message further than anyone else.

Eight days after Jesus met his disciples following the Resurrection, he encountered St. Thomas. Since then, St. Thomas the Apostle has been better known as Doubting Thomas. His least-used title is “Apostle of India.” In the Subcontinent, the situation is very different. There, even the vast non-Christian majority of 1.7 billion are mostly aware of his role as missionary extraordinaire.

When Vasco da Gama’s fleet reached India in 1498, the Portuguese were surprised to find Christian communities thriving in the south of the Subcontinent. They were even more surprised by the locals’ certainty that their church had been established by St. Thomas. They shouldn’t have been, as countless travellers, including Marco Polo, had claimed that the saint’s grave was there. St. Thomas had preached to the Hindus and the Jews of southern India and had won thousands of converts. For the St. Thomas Christians, there is still no doubt that theirs is an unbroken tradition going back to their patron’s arrival in 52.

There has been a revival of interest in St. Thomas’s path through the Middle East, with the continuing plight of Christians in Syria and Iraq. Further east than that, however, the co-religionist radar is picking up almost nothing. A recent book by one of the most enterprising travelers of present times might help

western Christians look again at the development of their faith.

Serena Fass is an 80-year-old writer, photographer and wanderer who has followed St. Thomas’s progress across much of Asia. Her book *In the Footsteps of St. Thomas* corroborates the evidence that has existed for centuries. This does not come from the Bible or other texts that historians find unreliable, although written sources described his travels as long ago as 1,800 years. On-site investigation is the new key to unlocking the truth about St. Thomas.

There are few Christian communities that go back to the time of Jesus’s disciples. Serena Fass finds much to support the beliefs that the faithful in India hold firm to, although there are still plenty who dispute them. In those pioneering days, India was the magnet that drew Europe to the East. When Columbus chanced upon what was later called the West Indies, it was India he thought he had reached. India was the trading world’s most profitable destination.

The evidence of Thomas’s presence in India is considerable. Some of it stretches the imagination while the rest is at least as plausible as the Turin Shroud, albeit with less publicity. Keeping a low profile has been the secret of survival. Levels of hostility to Christians in India are on the rise, and the belief that St. Thomas was martyred by either a local ruler or a Brahmin priest hardly lessens what is considered by some Hindus to be a blood libel.

St. Thomas’s tomb is less conspicuous than that of other Apostles to be honored with a basilica. His original south Indian resting place was not in a Christian stronghold, and he was buried without much ceremony. Most of his bones were removed from India in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and sent to Edessa in Mesopotamia, where the saint’s vital role in India was acknowledged at the time. Once again the bones’ progress is followed across the globe by Serena Fass as they eventually end up in the Italian town of Ortona.

The Catholic Church maintains a neutral stance on the proposition that Christianity might have been established in India long before it was in most of Europe. There is more evidence of St. Thomas’s life in India than anywhere else; in 1956 Pope Pius XII granted minor basilica status to San Thome Cathedral in Madras.

Serena Fass has collated traditions handed down over almost 2,000 years, along with a physical trail that includes some very old Crosses. The “Thomas Christians” of India use a Cross of distinctive shape.

Crucifixes are rare, as would be expected of a community that started long before the Corpus became an accepted part of Christian imagery.

Relics of St. Thomas are less common than his tombs, of which there are purportedly six. A fascinating reliquary exists in Mylapore. Originally housing some of the saint's bones, it is now empty. The decoration tells a heartening story of coexistence in India. With decoration in Hindu style, probably by Muslim craftsmen, on a Christian theme, it is a testament to Indian multiculturalism. The only thing missing is a Jewish element; it is known that the earliest converts to Christianity in southern India were, like Thomas himself, Jews. This is part of the Diaspora that tends to be as forgotten by the Jewish community as St. Thomas of India is by Christians around the world.

Even if every other part of the St. Thomas story is one day proved to be false, there can be no doubting the Thomas Christians' incontrovertible links with Syrian Christianity. In southern India they still use the liturgical Syriac language — a dialect of the Aramaic language spoken by Jesus and St. Thomas. Syria was the bedrock of early Christianity and an important part of the Roman empire, trading with southern India from the Red Sea. This was inevitable for the Romans, with their addiction to pepper and knowledge of monsoon winds. Roman coins and other evidence is found in abundance. In the 1930s one of Britain's greatest archaeologists, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, even found the remains of a Roman trading post.

At a time when the earliest Christian communities are being eradicated in the Middle East, their legacy at least lives on in India, thanks to St. Thomas.

*'In the Footsteps of St Thomas' is available through [Aid to the Church in Need UK](#), a Catholic charity dedicated to helping the persecuted and oppressed*

## Notices and news

### Recently departed

Terry Hutchinson

As well as praying for Terry, we pray for Susan and their family, at this very sad and difficult time.

I'm pleased to say that Terry's funeral service will take place at **All Souls at 1pm on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> July**. His burial will take place at Marston Lane cemetery at 2.45pm. I know that Susan will be greatly supported by your presence.

### Anniversaries of death

4<sup>th</sup> Joyce Sweatman

5<sup>th</sup> Beatrice May Cawthrow

O GOD, the Father of mercies: grant unto the souls of thy servants a place of refreshment, the blessedness of rest, and the brightness of light; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

### Prayers for the Bishop of Coventry

It was announced recently that after 15 years as Anglican Bishop of Coventry, Bishop Christopher Cocksworth is to leave the Diocese of Coventry and take up the post of Dean of Windsor (the Deanery of The King's Free Chapel of St George, Windsor Castle) in November. I hope you will pray for Bishop Christopher, who back in 2009-2011 was very gracious to those of us from the Diocese of Coventry who were open with him about our difficulties and subsequently left the Church of England. He listened to us and was, it seemed, genuinely pained by the disunity in his diocese and the Church of England generally. We wish him well and God's blessing in his new ministry.

### The Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Please hold Mother Winsome and the Sisters in your prayers as, with the Ordinary, they continue to seek to secure a new home. The Sisters constantly pray for us; now it's our turn to pray for them.

Remember us in heaven, Saint John Henry Newman.

Obtain for us the gifts you sought for your friends here below: the grace to follow the kindly light of

faith; belief that is firm and true; a heart to speak to the heart of God; and a voice to give praise to the Holiest.

Obtain for us the courage to follow your teaching and example: in loyalty to Christ and the Church; in love for the Immaculate Mother of God and in compassion for the perplexed.

*I pray especially for the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin, that they may find a new home in which to love, serve and worship you.*

Obtain for us support all the day long of this troubled life till the shades lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed and the fever of life is over and our work is done; so that the Lord in His mercy may grant us a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last; and that we may pass, with you, from shadows and images into the fullness of truth and love.

### No July meeting

Our next monthly meeting will be our barbecue in August (see below). There is no meeting in July. But of course, Sunday Mass weekly!

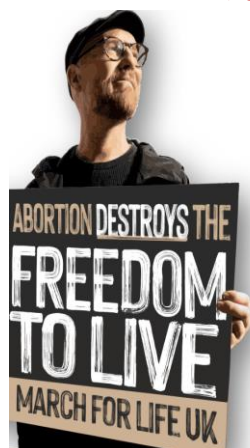
### Parish picnic

I hope you'll support the parish picnic, **12-2pm on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July**. It's important that we play a part in parish life, as well as those things intended to build up the life of our Ordinariate life and community.

### Summer barbecue

John and Sarah Ingram will very kindly be hosting our summer barbecue on **Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> August**. Please let them know if you're planning to attend (which I hope you will), with any dietary requirements.

### March for Life 2023



### 2023 THEME

Many are concerned about restrictions on freedoms but it's often not until these restrictions affect us personally that we speak up. Sadly, those who have their most fundamental freedom taken from them, by abortion, cannot speak for themselves - this is why we march. For our nation to be truly free, no one can be denied the number one freedom, the freedom to live!

**EVENT PAGE**

This year's March for Life in Westminster is on **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**. Monsignor Newton is very

keen that those who are physically able turn out in support of this growing and peaceful act of witness to the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

Many people are concerned about restrictions on freedom, but it's often not until these restrictions affect us personally that we speak up. Abortion destroys the most fundamental freedom, the freedom to live, and leaves so many women and men deeply hurting. Join thousands of others at this peaceful, prayerful and family-friendly event in London to speak up for those who can not speak for themselves.

**A deanery coach will depart from All Souls at 9.45am, after Mass at 9am.** Cost per person £15 on the day. The march ends in Parliament Square at around 4.30pm, so arrival back in Coventry will be late evening. To book a place contact Fr Paul on 02476674161 or at [fr.paul.burch@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:fr.paul.burch@rcaob.org.uk) Full details of the event can be found at [marchforlife.co.uk](http://marchforlife.co.uk) Speak up for those who can't speak for themselves. Speak up for the rights of all those who are poor. (Proverbs 31:8)

Lots more information at [www.marchforlife.co.uk](http://www.marchforlife.co.uk)

### Priestly ordination of Reverend Matthew Topham

Please pray for Deacon Matthew Topham who will be ordained to the Sacred Priesthood at Our Lady of the Assumption Warwick Street by the Rt Revd Philip Egan, Bishop of Portsmouth.

### Parish pilgrimage to Walsingham 2023



We have made a provisional booking for a parish pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady at Walsingham, **Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> - Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023**. Accommodation at Elmham House will be half board (Bed & Breakfast and Evening Meal). Lunches can be obtained in the village or at the shrine. Half board costs per room per day are as follows:

#### SINGLE ROOM

Ensuite £85

Budget (standard) £68

Bunk bedroom £57

#### TWIN/DOUBLE ROOM

Ensuite £170  
Budget (standard) £136  
Bunk bedroom £114

Please contact the parish office – 02476674161 or [allsouls.covty@rcaob.org.uk](mailto:allsouls.covty@rcaob.org.uk) - if you are a **definite**. If you need more information please contact Fr Paul at [allsoulscov@gmail.com](mailto:allsoulscov@gmail.com) General information about the Shrine and accommodation can be found at [www.walsingham.org.uk/guest-information-elmham-house/](http://www.walsingham.org.uk/guest-information-elmham-house/)

**It would be wonderful to have a good number of members of the Ordinariate community on the pilgrimage.**

### **Ordinariate monthly e-newsletter**

If you're subscribed, you should have received the latest newsletter in your inbox this last week To subscribe go to <https://www.ordinariate.org.uk/news/newsletter.php>

### **The Portal for July and podcast**



Visit <https://www.ordinariate.org.uk/news/portal.php> to read the monthly online review and to listen to the weekly podcast.

### **QR code for donations to Coventry Ordinariate Mission**

This method of donating is powered by CAF (Charities Aid Foundation) and is being promoted by the Ordinariate Finance Officer as something all groups might use to boost their income. CAF helps charities get the most from their fundraising by providing online donation processing services. It is a registered charity (Charity Commission of England and Wales number 268369). For more information about CAF visit



<https://www.cafonline.org/> Donations can be made either by scanning the QR code above or going directly to the CAF Coventry Ordinariate Mission webpage at <https://cafdonate.cafonline.org/21076> Both the QR code and URL will be displayed on the Ordinariate weekly newsletter, Facebook page, noticeboard etc. There are the options to make just one donation or to give regularly (see below). If you give to the group already by standing order, you could make a single occasional donation via CAF anytime too. There is also an option for you to **gift aid** your donation.

## Praying the Daily Office this week

If you intend to pray daily **Morning Prayer** and **Evening Prayer**, the table below gives you the page numbers for each of the parts of the Office for each day this week. Placing the markers in the correct pages, as indicated in the table below, takes a few minutes each time, but once done, actually praying the Office is quite straight-forward.

The Order of Morning Prayer (MP) (Matins) begins on page 375

The Order of Evening Prayer (EP) (Evensong) begins on page 421

All numbers below refer to *page numbers* in Divine Worship: Daily Office (DWDO), unless otherwise indicated.

Note: the Office hymn is always optional, but encouraged.

Day	Morning Prayer (Matins)				Evening Prayer (Evensong)				Notes
	Psalmody	Readings	Hymn	Collect	Psalmody	Readings	Hymn	Collect	
Sunday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July <b>FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b>	468	1362	201	99	471	1365	201	99	
Monday 3 <sup>rd</sup> <b>ST. THOMAS, Apostle &amp; Martyr</b>	473	1934	309	138	476	1934	309	138	
Tuesday 4 <sup>th</sup> Feria	479	1372	202	99	481	1373	203	99	
Wednesday 5 <sup>th</sup> Feria	484	1376	203	99	486	1377	204	99	
Thursday 6 <sup>th</sup> Feria	489	1379	204	99	492	1380	205	99	
Friday 7 <sup>th</sup> Feria	495	1381	205	99	498	1383	205	99	
Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup> Feria (Our Lady on Saturday)	463	1385	205	99	466	1387	201	99	EP I of Fifth Sunday after Trinity.
Sunday 9 <sup>th</sup> <b>FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY</b>	468	1388	201	99	471	1391	201	99	

For those who are looking initially for something a little simpler, the **Office of Prime** (page 397) is a shorter form of prayer for the morning, and the **Office of Compline** (page 427) is a shorter form of prayer for the evening. These will take about 10 minutes each to pray.

# Novena for Life



This novena, nine days of intercessory prayer, is offered to encourage a flourishing of a culture of life, with a particular focus on ending abortion and healing the trauma of abortion.

**Day for Life** is the day in the Church's calendar set aside for raising awareness of the meaning and value of human life at every stage and in every condition – from conception to natural death.

**Theme and Message: 'Listen to Her'.** Focusing on post-abortion trauma, this year's *Day for Life* message was written by Jane, who attended Catholic schools as a child, and had an abortion as a teenager. You can read her full message: [cbcew.org.uk/df123-message](https://cbcew.org.uk/df123-message)

## Rachel's Vineyard

Rachel's Vineyard is a healing ministry for those who are suffering from the trauma of abortion, or those who have been connected to someone who is. To find out more, visit [www.rachelsvineyard.org.uk](https://www.rachelsvineyard.org.uk)



Start the novena with the following prayer each day, taken from St John Paul II's concluding comments in his encyclical letter 'The Gospel of Life', followed by the daily quote or reflection as set out below and finish with the Glory Be

### **Daily prayer**

O Mary, bright dawn of the new world,  
Mother of the living,  
to you do we entrust the cause of life.  
Look down, O Mother,  
upon the vast numbers of babies not allowed to be born,  
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,  
of men and women who are victims of brutal violence,  
of the elderly and the sick  
killed by indifference or our misguided mercy.

Grant that all who believe in your Son  
may proclaim the Gospel of life with honesty and love  
to the people of our time.

Obtain for them the grace to accept that Gospel as a gift ever new,  
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude throughout their lives  
and the courage to bear witness to it resolutely,  
in order to build,  
together with all people of good will,  
the civilization of truth and love,  
to the praise and glory of God,  
the Creator and Lord of life. Amen.



### **Day 1: All life has inestimable value**

The first of nine days of prayer and readings to encourage a flourishing of a culture of life and end abortion.

#### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'All life has inestimable value even the weakest and most vulnerable, the sick, the old, the unborn and the poor, are masterpieces of God's creation, made in his own image, destined to live forever, and deserving of the utmost reverence and respect.'

*Pope Francis, Message to Catholics participating in Day for Life in Britain and Ireland, 28 July 2013.*

**Glory be** to the Father  
and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
as it was in the beginning  
is now, and ever shall be  
world without end. Amen

### **Day 2: Culture of life**

Our second day of our Novena for Life focuses on the promotion of a culture of life being the highest priority in our societies.

#### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'The promotion of a culture of life should be the highest priority in our societies...if the right to life is not defended decisively as a condition for all other rights of the person, all other references to human rights remain deceitful and illusory.'

*Pope St John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae*

#### **Glory be**

### **Day 3: Judged by our treatment of others**

Day Three of our Novena for Life sees us reflect on how we will be judged on our treatment of societies weakest members.

#### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'A society will be judged on the basis of how it treats its weakest members; and among the most vulnerable are surely the unborn and the dying.'

*Pope Saint John Paul II, Address to the New Ambassador of New Zealand to the Holy See, 25 May 2000*

#### **Glory be**

#### **Day 4: Violence through abortion**

Day Four of our Novena for Life sees us reflect on how the Womb becomes a place of unutterable violence through abortion.

#### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'How can it be that the most wondrous and sacred human space – the womb – has become a place of unutterable violence through abortion?'

*Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day Sydney, 17 July 2009*

#### **Glory be**

#### **Day 5: Protection of nature**

Our fifth day of our Novena for Life explores the protection of nature and its incompatibility with the justification of abortion.

#### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion...how can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?'

*Pope Francis, Laudato Si*

#### **Glory be**

#### **Day 6: Defend the innocent unborn**

Day Six of our Novena for Life sees us reflect on how we defend the innocence of the unborn and the dignity of Human Life.

#### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'Our defence of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stakes is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person regardless of his or her state of development.'

#### **Glory be**

## **Day 7: Stand up for life**

Day Seven of our Novena for Life calls on us to Stand up for Life, to work and pray against abortion.

### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'You are called to stand up for life! To respect and defend the mystery of life always and everywhere, including the lives of unborn babies, giving real help and encouragement to mothers in difficult situations. You are called to work and pray against abortion.'

Pope St John Paul II, New York, 1995

### **Glory be**

## **Day 8: God's infinite mercy**

Day eight of our Novena for Life sees us reflect on how abortion is a grave sin, but there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father.

### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life. In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father...I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion.'

*Pope Francis, 21 November 2016*

### **Glory be**

## **Day 9: Never tire in the defence of life**

The final day of our Novena for Life calls on us to never tire of firmly speaking out in defence of life.

### **Daily prayer**

#### **Reflection/Quotation**

'Never tire of firmly speaking out in defence of life from its conception and do not be deterred from the commitment to defend the dignity of every person with courageous determination. Christ is with you: do not be afraid!'

*Pope St John Paul II*

### **Glory be**

## Other prayers

### **Prayer to St Joseph, Patron of the Unborn**

O St. Joseph, after your most holy spouse, our Blessed Mother, you were the first to take into your arms and heart the baby Jesus. From the first time you gazed upon him and held him, your heart and soul were forever bonded to him. You caressed the Holy Child with fatherly love and affection, and you committed yourself always to love, protect, and care for this Son.

Look now with similar love and affection upon this child of mine, who has gone from this world. I place my child, as well as my grief and guilt, into the eternal embrace of your arms. Hold and caress my child for me with the love of my arms and sweetly kiss my child with all the tender affection of my heart.

As God the Father entrusted the care of His most precious Son into your most loving and confident hands, so too do I entrust into your fatherly care this child of mine. Please present him to the merciful hands of Our Lord, so that one day, when I too leave this world, my child may greet me into eternal life. *Amen.*

### **Prayer to St Joseph, Defender of Life**

Dearest Saint Joseph,  
at the word of an angel,  
you lovingly took Mary into your home.  
As God's humble servant, you guided  
the Holy Family on the road to Bethlehem,  
welcomed Jesus as your own son  
in the shelter of a manger,  
and fled far from your homeland  
for the safety of both Mother and Child.

We praise God that as their faithful protector,  
you never hesitated to sacrifice  
for those entrusted to you.

May your example inspire us also  
to welcome, cherish, and safeguard  
God's most precious gift of life.

Help us to faithfully commit ourselves  
to the service and defence of human life,  
especially where it is vulnerable or threatened.

Obtain for us the grace to do the will of God in all things. *Amen.*

# Day for Life Message 2023

*This year's 'Day for Life' message is written by a woman in the hope that it can offer opportunities for healing and reconciliation.*



## **Bishops' Introduction**

*Voices of women who have had an abortion are often silent in Church and in society. This year's message for Day for Life is written by a woman and hopes to break this silence and offer opportunities for hope, healing and reconciliation.*

## **Jane's Story**

I went to Catholic schools, I knew about God and morality on some level, but for me, the culture spoke louder when it came to making decisions around sexuality.

When I was 15, I discovered I was pregnant and the fear clouded everything. I had one aim, and that was to solve the problem I had found myself in. A quick search for confidential help landed me at a clinic connected to an abortion provider. They seemed to genuinely believe that abortion was the solution to my problem and I don't remember discussing any other options. I was relieved when they determined that I was capable enough to make this decision alone, without the involvement of an adult, which is still legal to this day.

“By hearing other people share their stories and being gently encouraged by the team, I was able to speak the truth of what had happened to me on that day. My feelings were acknowledged, including my sense of loss.”

That Saturday I travelled alone to the clinic. My parents were unaware, due to other difficulties in the family home that I didn't want to contribute to. I went through the degrading experience of a surgical abortion, and I thought that if I could just get through that day, I would never have to think about it again. I remember feeling conflicted as a tear rolled down my cheek, that I quickly wiped away. I believed I couldn't be sad because this was something I had chosen to do. So after the initial feeling of relief, I pushed down the experience and avoided anything to do with the topic of abortion. It was difficult to be around pregnant women and I found the anniversary difficult each year.

Over the next few years, I became more curious about faith through the invitation of a friend. I was looking for direction and truth, but my spiritual life was always tainted by the thought that I could never be forgiven for what I had done – somehow, God's mercy didn't apply to me. In the fleeting moments of honesty with myself and God, I knew that my choice didn't make me lose something, but someone. At times, this realisation was unbearable. This led to periods of deep depression and suicidal thoughts, as well as more promiscuous behaviour and numbing the pain with alcohol, food, or isolation.

This all changed when I was encouraged to go to confession. Even when I tried to justify my choice, the priest met me with the love and mercy of Jesus. The tears he shed melted my heart of stone. I began to give up my old ways of life and follow His way.

On this journey I was introduced to Rachel's Vineyard: a healing ministry that provides support for those who are suffering after abortion. I remember the kindness of the woman that I spoke to, and I knew I wouldn't be judged there.

It took so much courage to go on a retreat, but I can genuinely say it changed my life. By hearing other people share their stories and being gently encouraged by the team, I was able to speak the truth of what had happened to me on that day. My feelings were acknowledged, including my sense of loss. I was finally given permission to grieve for the baby that had died through my choice. I acknowledged my motherhood and named my son Joseph. This was the start of God turning the guilt, shame and unforgiveness into a deep love for my son, as any good mother would have.

The healing has continued alongside my faith journey. I've taken responsibility for the role I played in my abortion, but with perspective and time, I can see that my 'choice' wasn't really a choice at all. There were other people's failures, and an inability to truly give informed consent as a teenager that also contributed. The option that was presented as a quick fix solution has eternal consequences, and I truly believe that if I'd have known the impact abortion would have had on my life, even as a teenager, I would have made a different choice.