

## HOPE

“When will you get new signs?”

Looking with frustration at the woman handing out signs at the local “Life Chain,” the aggravated young man challenged her that the only signs left to hold were “Abortion Kills Children.” Todd was there with his new girl friend, Julie, who highly encouraged that he go to support the cause and the parish youth group. He was genuine in his personal opposition to abortion, but was very bothered at the more blunt signs that lined the road, and year after year caused agitation in his mother (well, that is to say the years when they saw them; usually they avoided the area).

The young man knew why it bothered his mom. It was because of his deceased aunt. The other night when he told his mom that he was going to “Life Chain” she explained that those signs use to just stir up pain and suffering for Aunt Sally due to an abortion she had after a college “date rape.” The only way to hide the “party life” she had been experimenting with from her parents was to terminate the pregnancy. His mom explained to him that, “those people just don’t understand that most women getting an abortion have no choice, and those signs just add salt to a wound they want behind them.”

Thinking now about Aunt Sally he knew he didn’t want to hold any sign that had caused her pain; she already had suffered. Her marriage ended in divorce after she turned to too much wine to numb memories and the grief from two miscarriages, then the aggressive breast cancer took her life. He remembered how his mom wept during those last days with her sister, and told her she was sorry, but her sister was too weak to respond before she died. After the funeral Todd asked what she was sorry for, but she said it was something that happened a long time ago and didn’t matter anymore. So much sadness, no way would he hold that sign...

The sign lady was telling him that maybe someone would be willing to trade signs with him when Julie spoke up, “Maybe you should just leave if you don’t believe that abortion kills!” Then she spun around and left. Stunned, he walked away too.

He was hurt. Julie was such a great girl, he was drawn to her the first time he saw her when the family moved down the street. She played guitar and knew all the new music that he liked. Even though she didn’t have a Facebook, she seemed to be able to stay in touch with the group and joined in the activities as soon as the new school year started. Sometimes she was quiet, but never snappy like this.

At first he wasn’t going to that night’s youth group meeting, but he needed to get out of the house. His mom was in a mood. She hadn’t even asked anything about the afternoon, which was just as well by him. Arriving a little late, Todd quickly scanned the room and noticed that Julie wasn’t even there. The youth leader thanked them for witnessing to life, and told them that it was a larger turnout than last year. He didn’t pay any more attention after that, he was just glad that no one seemed to have noticed that he hadn’t stayed. Well, no one but Julie, and she wasn’t there.

When Todd got home there was a letter. Todd was glad for the first time that Julie didn’t have a Facebook, at least this was better than breaking up online.

*Dear Todd,*

*I am sorry about this afternoon. I really liked you, and I will tell you what I have only told Father Gary, not because I think that it means we will still see each other, but just so you don’t deceive yourself into thinking that you have a clue, because you don’t.*

*I heard you say today, "Some women don't feel they have a choice, why cause more pain?" My parents were so angry when they found out I was pregnant....that's right, I was pregnant. My dad suggested that I get an abortion; it was early and I could do it with medicine he said. My parents fought about it and I wished I hadn't even told them. When my mom and I went to the priest at our parish she started to cry and asked me to leave. That evening my dad stormed out of the house. I figured it was all my fault, that I was ruining their marriage. But after awhile he came home, and Father was with him. The four of us sat at the table and after a prayer Father told me that our family had some healing to go through. My mom had never told my dad that she had an abortion when they were dating, and to this day she missed that first baby. She insisted that she would do anything she could to help me not endure the loss she felt.*

*Todd, my dad and mom both needed to deal with what happened so that they could help me make a choice I would not regret. It has been really hard. Giving up my baby for another family to raise is the hardest thing I have ever done; but I did it out of love for her. I didn't do it through my own strength. I made some bad choices before I became pregnant; choices out of fear that a guy wouldn't like me. Choosing life instead of abortion was a choice not out of fear, but a choice out of trust that God loved me and my baby both, and would make something good happen. The next choice, the adoption, was possible because I was again choosing out of trust and love.*

*Like I said, this has been really a hard time. But it has also made us more sensitive to the difference between trying to escape and cover over a wound, and dealing with it with truth, trust, and love. When you didn't like the sign, you weren't willing to admit something that is real, something that is true. You were hiding. No one wants to cause a woman who had an abortion to hurt more. We stand out there and pray for them because we know there is pain, but we also know there is healing available; God loves us and he forgives. We also can't forget the children. My mom and dad eventually named their first baby, and I chose the same name for mine: Hope.*

*Todd, don't be afraid to be honest. People need to know the truth, and they need to know they are loved – we all need both. I don't know what you will think of me now that you know this, but I hope that no matter what you think of me, you will think again about having the courage to stand up for life; for the babies, for the moms, for the dads, for all the people who were deceived in thinking that abortion was an answer to their fears, and for those whose lives they touch while trying to mask their hidden pain.*

*Not ashamed, Julie*

The next day at school Todd found Julie. He told her about his mom's tears after reading the letter and she agreed that acting out of fear leads to mistakes you can't undo; and that trying to bury the wounds afterwards doesn't bring healing. His mom had encouraged his Aunt Sally to get the abortion and driven her to the clinic. They never talked about it after that, until it was too late. Julie's letter and courage touched her heart and made a difference. Todd's mom was making an appointment to talk with Father Gary that afternoon. His mom wanted to know if the two of them would meet her at the church after school to pray and light a candle for Aunt Sally, trusting her to God's mercy and love; and to name a third child Hope. For Todd's other two cousins, they would name them together.

*....This was a simple imagined story, meant as a catalyst for prayer for people all around us, whose stories are unknown to us, but known to God.*

Perhaps too it can be a discussion starter... How were Sallee's and Julie's situations the same/different? What are we doing in parishes and families to encourage communication and right choices? Are you aware that there is an increased risk of future miscarriage in the event of scarring from a surgical abortion? While certainly not everyone with breast cancer has had an abortion, nor will everyone who gets an abortion develop breast cancer, abortion is a risk factor [here](#) and [here](#). How do we encourage adoption as a loving option? Are you aware of the Catholic Social Services adoption program...see their website, under Programs...view (and share!) the adoption video!

*There is hope for healing after abortion, for confidential help:*

**1-888-456-HOPE**

[www.hopeafterabortion.com](http://www.hopeafterabortion.com)