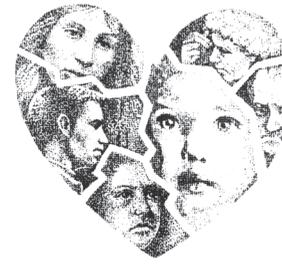


Memories from Romania



Three of these photos—the obvious ones—are from an orphanage we visited in Bucharest. Very clean, loving, and Christ centered. We all wanted to take a child or two with us! The top right photo is me with my interpreter speaking to women in an OB/GYN waiting room. Most were waiting to have abortions. The bottom right is a gynecologist who told me she had a D &C every quarter as a means of birth control.

For those who have had an abortion, there is a need for a **Word of Hope**.



Nothing could be more painful than the death of a child. But those who have lost a child because they had an abortion, or were part of an abortion decision, often do not allow themselves to grieve or don't know how to grieve.

If you are experiencing adverse emotional reactions following an abortion, you may have post-abortion syndrome (PAS).

For help, please call 888.217.8679 or go to www.word-of-hope.org. **Word of Hope** is the post-abortion ministry of Lutherans For Life.

To learn more about the work of Pro Vita Clinic Romania go to:

www.clinicaprovita.ro/en/index.html



Lutherans For Life

www.lutheransforlife.org

info@lutheransforlife.org

888.364.LIFE

Item LFL407T

Confessions of an Executive Director

It was not at all what I expected from a woman waiting to have an abortion.

It was not at all what I expected. She sat on the floor, back against the wall. Fear filled her eyes and tears spilled over. It was not at all what I expected from a woman waiting to have an abortion.

This scene took place in Romania in 1996. I traveled there with a team of other pro-life leaders to see if we could assist a small group called Pro-Vita (Pro-Life) deal with an abortion rate that was the highest in the world. Nearly 85 percent of all pregnancies ended in abortion.

I confess that I expected to see women who callously disregarded the precious gift of life. The Lord quickly taught me differently. Our group visited a hospital that performed abortions. We talked with women waiting to have abortions. One woman begged us to find her husband who insisted on the abortion because of the devastating financial situation in the country. I did not see callousness or disregard for life in these women. I saw in their hollow stares hopelessness and a resignation to doing something they abhorred because they could not see any other alternative.

My lessons painfully continued. The abortions were performed behind a sheet-draped doorway. You could see the dark shadows of the abortionists which spoke of the darkness of the deed. They smoked while doing the killing. Instruments remained unclean

between the five-minute executions. I finally saw the callousness and disregard for life I had expected, but in a place and on a scale I had not.

The Lord was not through teaching. That evening our usually talkative team was quiet and somber. Hearts were heavy; eyes moist. Then, unexpectedly, the young Christian woman who was my translator broke down and confessed having had two abortions. That day she translated much about fetal development and the value God places on life. The reality of her past decisions overwhelmed her. We shared the value God places on her life and the price Jesus paid for her sins and the holiness Jesus gives to cover her. Her tears of sorrow turned into tears of joy.

Knowing I'm a slow learner, God kept teaching. The next day we spoke at a gathering of 300 Romanian youth. The public was also invited. We spoke of the value God, in Christ, gives to life and how we are all bought with a price and can glorify God with our bodies. We spoke of making good decisions based on this. We spoke of forgiveness when making wrong decisions. Afterward, an elderly Romanian woman told me of an abortion

she'd had years ago. Then she added, "It wasn't until this year that I learned my Jesus died for that sin too."

The next morning I spoke to a gathering of pastors. I told them the story of the elderly woman. I then asked them a question that had troubled me most of the night, "**Why did it take so long for this woman to hear the Gospel of 'her Jesus' applied to her sin of abortion?**"



God corrected my vision on that trip. I have never looked at women considering abortion, or those who have had an abortion, the same again. Oh, I'm well aware there are women who, at least outwardly, do not seem to struggle with that decision. There is a place for the Law in all of this. But that

is not where I start. Just like in Romania, there is pressure on women to abort in our country. So often abortion is not what a woman wants but what she chooses when she sees no other choice.

Our message needs to be more than, "Don't do this." It needs to be, "You don't have to do this. We will help you." We can wrap the arms of Jesus

around them and share His forgiveness, love, and hope. We can provide ongoing care and assistance.

Likewise, our message to those who have had an abortion needs to be more than, "You have sinned," even more than, "You are forgiven." We need to say, "You have a Savior who provides objective forgiveness and a robe of righteousness." Christ's forgiveness does not depend upon feeling forgiven or upon being able to forgive yourself. Feeling forgiven and forgiving oneself are not precursors to Christ's forgiveness. They flow from Christ's forgiveness, but the forgiveness itself was paid for by Jesus upon His cross. His holiness covers sinners and they are pure in the eyes of God.

I have much to learn, but I pray I'm at least catching on to the lesson God taught me in Romania. I will never forget what that elderly woman told me. I will never stop encouraging pastors to preach and teach about the life issues. There are many reasons to do so, but if there were just one reason to address these issues in our pulpits it would be so that those sitting in our pews oppressed by a past abortion would hear that "their Jesus" died for that sin too!

(The author of this article, Rev. Dr. James I. Lamb, is executive director of Lutherans For Life.)