



Thoughts on the Journey

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Each week for twelve years, I would wait in a large gathering space provided by the hospitality of the Broad Street United Methodist Church in downtown Columbus. I never knew from one week to the next who was going to come through the doors of that space. It was 'home' to Support for Birthparents group that I founded and facilitated under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The group was widely promoted through social service agencies, attorneys, and physicians throughout the city and there was no appointment needed. The mission of the group was to support birthparents who were considering adoption or who had already chosen adoption in an untimely pregnancy. We worked with women (and sometimes birthfathers) from confirmation of pregnancy to 30-40 years post-adoption decision.

Many of the women who came to us were in the early stages of their pregnancy and generally fearful and confused about their future and the future of their unborn infants. Many of them were still in the grip of trying to decide whether to carry their children to term or to terminate their babies by abortion. What worked in a support group setting, was that these frightened people had a chance to sit with other frightened people, faced with the same decisions, and work through their fears. Throughout those years, I met many women who, through the strength of their faith, carried their children to term under some very adverse circumstances. All of their stories should be told because of the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But, for now, I will recount the story of one such woman.

Her name was Liz. She was a bright, articulate, pre-law student at Ohio State University. I remember the first night she came to the support group meeting. Her story was typical in as much as it had the same cast of characters with different names and the same set of fears framed in different circumstances. Liz's story also had the same central figure – an unborn child whose life depended on her resolving her fears so that she would make a decision in the best interest of both herself and her child.

Each week, Liz had a different reason why she couldn't carry her baby to term: *“my family will quit paying for my college tuition; my family won't help me if I don't have an abortion; my family said they would never accept a bi-racial child; becoming a lawyer is important*

to me and my parents told me if I have this baby, I will never realize my dream – I should just have an abortion”. Week after week, as her baby grew inside her, Liz's resolve to abort her child diminished. Every problem she presented had a solution. Every fear had an answer of hope and life.

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus put a parable before the the crowds comparing the kingdom of heaven to someone who sowed good seed in his field. But while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So, when the plants came up and bore grain, the weeds also appeared as well. The slaves asked the master of the field if they should pull the weeds, but the master told them to leave the weeds until harvest so as not to uproot the wheat. Then at harvest, gather the weeds first and bundle them for burning, then gather the wheat and place them in the masters barn.

“The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy that sows them is the devil”

Throughout our lives we will face moral dilemmas and challenges that put our choices for good to the test. As part of the human condition, weeds of destruction and evil will often mingle with the struggle to do the right thing. In Liz's case, she struggled with the many voices encouraging her to do what she knew was wrong. But, she tapped the resource of faith that God had already given her. Liz struggled with the weeds of evil that attempted to choke her growth. But, when faced with the consequences of her own sinfulness, she cooperated with the grace of her faith and made life-giving decisions, rather than decisions rooted in fear. In the end, Liz carried her child to term and made the decision to parent her son. She embraced her role as a loving mother and today is a practicing attorney with a grown son.

We are warned in this parable that the advance of a life in Jesus will take place through a process of slow growth – which will include ups and downs. The subtle forces of darkness will be at play, but our trust in Jesus as we grow in a life with him, through prayer, good works, tuning our ear to his Word, and frequenting the sacraments, will help us persevere on our journey home.

