

(Excerpts from)

WOMAN TO WOMAN

**Personal stories about romance, sex,
AND UNWANTED PREGNANCY**

SHALL I HAVE THIS BABY?

**An Anthology
By Father John Catoir, J.C.D.**

+++++

EMBRACING THE BABY WITHIN

MEDICAL EXPERTS ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

BY

JOHN T. SCULLY M.D. AND KIMBERLY SCULLY, R.N.C.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

PART ONE

Chapter One Woman to Woman

Chapter Two Fear is Useless - What you need is Trust

Chapter Three Do Not Be Afraid

Chapter Four Think About Your Future Needs

Chapter Five The Adoption Option

PART TWO

Chapter One Pregnancy

Chapter Two Delivery

Chapter Three Post Partum

(left side of the page)

We wander
anonymous, naked, lost.
In the morning, we dress in haste
identity of coat, gloves, hat.
It is cold on the planet.
Where are we going? Who are we?
Who remembers our work?
Can we find the way back
to the safe house: bread on the table
laughing children and, by the open window
the language of birds, of rustling leaves.

We notice people in the street
hurrying, running, trying
to catch up with their departing lives.
Trains in the distance, boats in the harbor
the perpetual motion of traffic, of people
meeting us, shaking hands, asking
over and again “what is your name?”

Shall we tell the secret?
Yes, God whispered in stillness and silence
our true name, more enduring than all the stars:
“Beloved.”

-Catherine deVinck

Introduction

by Father John Catoir

Women have been helping other women to cope with life for ages and ages. The thought came to me that I could bring women together to tell their stories to one another for the good of all.

I've been writing a syndicated column for more than forty years, and have asked my readers many times to share their stories. For instance, my book "God Delights in You," is full of stories from women who wanted to talk about their experiences of God.

It came to me that I could create another forum for women, who have gone through the pain and heartbreak of an unwanted pregnancy. I would ask them to share their story with other women who are in distress.

I wrote a column inviting them to offer their wisdom in the form of a brief essay to reach out to other women who are in living in fear. Amazing stories came pouring in from all over the country. Some were heart-wrenching, some were powerfully uplifting; all were fascinating.

Those who were able to overcome their early fears, and carry their child to birth were encouraging. Other mothers who were too overwhelmed to have their baby told of the experience of their abortion. The consequences of all those decisions still linger years later.

The women who gave birth tell how grateful they are today that they did. Many who had an abortion, now wish they had not succumbed to their fears.

This anthology tells how each woman dealt with the shock of their unwanted pregnancy. They tell all, without pulling any punches.

My syndicated column requesting written contributions appeared in the Catholic Press all across America.. In the very first week I received letters from Hawaii, Utah, Washington D.C., Florida and New Jersey. Women were eager to tell their stories. They spoke of the fear of drowning in a sea of never ending responsibilities. They also spoke of the joy of feeling the mystery of new life within them.

The fact that some of them could not find the strength to carry their child to full term is certainly understandable. Nemo dat, quod non habet, (*No one can give what they do not have*). We do not judge anyone. But we do want to give hope to those who are searching for answers.

A wider perspective sometimes makes all the difference in viewing one's future happiness. It is good to hear what others who have lived through the nightmare, have to say in order to make an informed judgment.

To save a life is a monumental moral victory. Not everyone can do it, but such heroism is possible with the help of God. No one has to go it alone, an amazing amount of love and professional help out there for anyone who asks. By exploring your options before you make a final decision, you may be giving yourself the most precious gift you'll ever receive, and you may be saving yourself from much emotional pain. .

Greater happiness awaits those who decide not to burden their future with guilt and regret. Abortion often leads to a lifetime of sorrow. On the other hand, standing up to

one's fears can bring exhilarating joy. Jesus said, "**In this world you will have many troubles, but take heart for I have overcome the world.**"

This book comes in two parts.

Part One is a collection of letters from mothers who aborted their baby, and mothers who were tempted to have an abortion, but did not.

Part Two is written by a husband and wife team of medical experts, John T. Scully M.D. and his wife Kimberly Ann Scully, R.N.C.

Dr. Scully delivered over 10,000 babies in his lifetime, with his wife Kimberly at his side for most of them. Together they wrote a little book to help expectant mothers and fathers, by answering many of the questions they most frequently ask.

Their aim was to alleviate needless anxiety. Calming the soul in preparation for a great event is important. Everyone knows that giving birth is not a walk in the park, but experienced mothers and medical experts tell us that there is no need to panic.

Billions of women have given birth, and have rejoiced at the first sound of their baby's voice breaking through the silence. The rewards of motherhood are extraordinary and eternal.

No pregnancy is an accident. Whatever the circumstances surrounding the origin of any human life, that babe in the womb has received an invitation to the banquet of life. Make room at the inn. Jesus said, "**Fear is useless, what you need is trust.**"

It takes a great act of faith for a trembling mother to trust her future to God, but God's loving presence is there, and He can never be outdone in generosity.

The stories you are about to read are from mothers who care about you and want you to be happy. This book is about love coming to the rescue.

May God give you the grace to see the miracle of love that awaits you. Trust the Lord when He says, "**Be not afraid,**" and all will be well.

Father John Catoir
Christmas 2011

(Left side of page)

DEDICATED TO OUR BLESSED MOTHER
CAUSE OF OUR JOY

HELPFUL PROGRAMS

Some wonderful programs exist to help pregnant women in distress. Healing emotional wounds is only part of the services they offer free of charge.

The Nurturing Network, a comprehensive program that will assist in finding a nurturing home during the pregnancy, compassionate counseling, and medical services, legal assistance, educational opportunities, and future employment. They will find a loving place for you to go and receive the care you need.

Founded by Mary Agee Cunningham their services are offered to woman all over America.

Address: P.O. Box 1489, White Salmon, Washington, 98672

Web site: www.nurturingnetwork.org

(You don't have to go anywhere far to receive their help.)

Birth Haven is a smaller facility, offering similar services including shelter prenatal and medical care, educational opportunities, life-skills training, and professional infant care.

Address: 4 Academy Street, Newton, NJ 07860

Telephone: 973-579-7979

Web site: www.birthhaven.org

Call the Catholic Diocesan Family Life Office of any Catholic Diocese for further information about services in your area. May God bless you always and forever.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Woman to Woman

(The followings letter was the very first reply that we received.)

1. I was so touched by the invitation to contribute some thoughts. I once had an abortion and suffered through the ordeal. If I had internalized then what I have internalized now (for it is never enough to know something intellectually), I WOULD HAVE NEVER TAKEN THE ACTION I TOOK.

There is an injury that results that is so monumental that you can scarcely wrap your mind around the magnitude of it all.

For one, you break the chain that links you to your ancestors. You, who are their hope of never being forgotten in this life.

Some women break it only temporarily, going on to have other children but leaving a weakened chain nonetheless. But for those who don't go on to have another child, reminders of such a formidable loss are a constant whisper for the rest of one's life. When other friends are running off to their children's graduations and weddings and births, you are on the outside looking in.

I am Carole Veronica, the eldest daughter of Clarice Xavier, the daughter of Lillian Veronica (I purposely left out last names here). But there is no one after me. No child looks to me for my smile, my comfort, even my correction. My sister's little grandchildren would waddle in to a room, give me a blank, almost passionless look that said, 'You're not my Grandma, where is she?' Very dismissive at times, the fickle little crumb snatchers whom I love dearly nonetheless.

But more importantly, to take "that" route is to choose not to trust God, who ultimately is the provider of our every need. People who worry about not having enough money or food or shelter are looking within their own strength. But if God permits a life, He will take care of it!

And worse still, we rob God of a life that could have been formed to realize that God desires a relationship with mankind, with each person, a life that could have joined the chorus of praise in His honor!

2. This is the first time that my story of abortion has left my lips and my heart. Besides God and my confessor, no one knows my story – I am still too ashamed. I had an abortion on August 21, 1969.

I was 23 years old, residing 500 miles from family, living independently and had been dating a man for over a year; marriage had been discussed several times. When my pregnancy was confirmed, his commitment to marriage waffled and from the onset his only solution was for me to obtain an abortion. At that time abortion was illegal in the US, so there was no pregnancy crisis centers or other counseling available to assist an unwed women in distress. Seeking family guidance was not an option because my father's health was fragile as he was recovering from a massive heart attack; my mother was busy working two jobs to help keep family finances afloat; a younger sibling was a rebellious teen; and an older sibling was busy raising three young children. My employer would have fired me if they had known my situation. I regretfully caved in to my boyfriends unwavering demands.

Six weeks after my pregnancy was confirmed, I was on a plane bound for a country where abortions were legal. Alone and in a land where the culture was totally foreign, I procured my own abortion that was paid for by my boyfriend. Upon my return, I ended our relationship. I suffered total amnesia of this event for the next 25 years. While attending a Marian Conference my mind and heart were opened and I saw for the first time the horrible atrocity that I had committed upon my child. Fortunately, the priest that heard my most passionate confession showed me the loving, compassionate and merciful heart of Jesus. I know that forgiveness has been granted to me, but the heaviness of my selfish act will always haunt me.

Today I am a mother of three living children and a grandmother of five. Ironically for the past 30 years my life's work and ministry has been serving and caring for laboring and delivered mothers and ill neonates in the capacity as a registered nurse. I am committed to the success of the pro-life movement and support our local hospitality house for homeless pregnant women. I thank God for the gift of grace and Mary for her motherly love.

Thank you for your ministry and your ability to share with others that life is a gift from God and not to be taken for granted nor destroyed

++ _____
_____ ++

3. I share the story of my 3 abortions and my healing from Post Abortion Syndrome for two reasons. First, I want to tell all post abortive people that there is hope and healing. Second, I want to make sure that anyone considering an abortion is aware of the horror that awaits them because the abortion providers will not give them all of the relevant information. Abortionists will not speak of Post Abortion Syndrome.

At 18, in 1968, I was sexually active and got pregnant and the father who was a one-night stand was long gone. I didn't want my parents to know about my promiscuity, so I went to some radical pro-choice friends who helped me get drunk and get an abortion in Mexico. Six years later, I was having an affair with a married man who insisted that I get an abortion when we got pregnant. And then in 1991, my married friend and I were pregnant again. Again, I was give a choice – him or an abortion. I had my third abortion.

After each abortion, I do remember a sense of relief at not being pregnant, but that relief didn't last very long. My drinking and my promiscuity increased dramatically; I discovered drugs; I started a deadly relationship with food and yo-yo dieting; and I fell in love a dozen times and couldn't make one of the relationships work, I was married and divorced twice. This spiral into hell lasted for 36 years.

My healing began in small ways – in 1981 with the birth of my son, in 1985 with God's gift of sobriety, and in 1997 with my return to my Catholicism. In the fall of 2003, I saw a box ad in a church bulletin for Rachel's Vineyard retreats for post-abortion healing. I went to the Rachel's Vineyard web site and wept buckets of tears as I read it. It was the first time in 36 years that I really looked at my abortions for what they were – the murder of my 3 children.

It took my awhile to get up the courage to call, but thank God I did. I attended a Rachel's Vineyard retreat in April 2004. What a remarkable, healing experience this weekend was. Word do not do justice to the love, compassion, and understanding I found during the retreat. Perhaps most importantly, I met and named my three children – Luke, Grace and Benjamin. I found forgiveness – from them and from God. I am learning to forgive my self. Each time that I share my story, I heal a little more. At my retreat, I promised my children that I would no longer hide them and that I would share our story whenever I could. I speak out and write whenever I'm asked.

Susan S.
Oregon

++ _____
____++

BEFORE YOU WERE BORN, I LOVED YOU.

4. It's mid December and the spirit of Christmas is upon us. Holiday music permeates the days and television shows outdo each other with Christmas spectaculars. Children can think of one thing: Santa Claus. My story began one December, many years ago. I had just undergone surgery and experienced complications. Progress is steady but slow, a steady but slow case of mental depression is taking over my days..

I've been a happy wife and mother before this affliction becomes my crisis; thankful for my five small children and often more content than I feel I have the right to be. We are a lucky couple. We have each other, security in our income, healthy children and alert

minds to carry us busily through our days. I am to know a different kind of existence in the year to come. An existence in which I feel unhappy, despair and a continual questioning “why?” I find myself desperately searching for private answers to my probing thoughts.

There are different kinds of depression I’m told. I only know how I am feeling. My doctors explain post-operative depression to me. A normally active, responsible person suddenly becomes incapacitated and fears she will not be able to carry on – plus the shock of surgery to the nervous system – plus a host of other factors that affect each individual case. Depression can set in.

Slowly I feel myself changing. I’m aware of it but helpless to control it. Sometimes I feel like a bystander watching a new me, a different me, not me at all. Tears become my constant companion, weeping, sobbing tears for no known reason. Patience is limited, children that were a joy are now a burden and no desire to be a wife. I feel no need to cook a meal, let alone eat a meal – to wash clothes or even care what anyone is wearing. Looking back, each day is an insurmountable mountain for me to climb and yet something keeps me going. A something I call “Faith,” a somewhat hidden but somehow present: confidence in God.

It’s during this time, against all conceivable odds, a baby is conceived. My mental anguish takes on new dimensions; physical exhaustion, nausea and a touch of hysteria.

A stunned physician discusses my “case” with me. Things are not good, he cautiously proceeds to tell me. My physical condition is weak, my mental strained and medications I’ve been on are not recommended for pregnant women. The doctors are not advocates of abortion but they hesitantly mention it to me. They say I am an extreme case. The thought rests within me.

I walk out of the office, sightless for the well of tears in my eyes, into a beautiful May day. Cherry blossoms frame the house across the street and new life is budding in every direction. New life is budding within me; a life I do not want.

Feeling shattered I walk for blocks and come upon a church. I enter it by compulsion, admitting only to myself that I am afraid. Within the tiny church a statue of the Madonna and Child looms into my teary gaze and I realize for the first time that a December 21st due date was given me’ a Christmas Babe. Still drained and numb, I question God and His Will.

The words “I believe” had always been a simple act of faith for me. Now I feel I’m being tested. The words seem to represent the impossible. They are simple words as brief as can be; no room for misinterpretation. They are my “all” in my concept of a Christian faith. I cannot ignore them even though I want to.

A pamphlet left in the pew seems meant for me. More words; comforting words. I am drawn to them and feel a sliver of courage, solace, understanding... a little hope instead

of hopelessness. I am carrying a child that I do not want to think of as an actual child. Yet it is indeed MY CHILD. I must love it and cherish its life even though I can't see it.

I can't convey the infinity I feel. In my depression I wish only for relief. I want an abortion and I feel no shame. I know I can never consent to abortion because I believe in the Commandment, thou shall not kill.

My days grow even darker yet I look for a star. I am angry with God because I am sorry for me. I won't relinquish fear. I am full of contradiction.

I leave the security of the tiny church and resume my day-to-day struggle with seven and a half months to go. Being the person I am, I don't give up. I fight it. I flail. I weep with despair but I search, continually search. I find comfort in books. One day piles upon another and summer slowly, ever so slowly become a hint of autumn.

Halloween is in the air, a Jack O'Lantern burns on our porch. My children pray for me and their new baby at mealtime grace. I want to trust and to accept the good will and love of my God but I can't FEEL Him. A poem stays with me: "I've called Him in sadness, I've call Him in despair, and though He's never answered, I will believe He's there." Above all things I want to know I will deliver safely, a healthy child. I want reassurance of my future, but I know no one can give this to me.

My future is one month away.

I skip Christmas shopping this year. My dear husband is and has been both mother and father in many respects for months now. He sees to it that holiday preparations are not neglected. He makes the children smile. Always, he is tender with me and so aware. He suffers and worries in a way that is concealed form me.

The pangs of labor begin this warm December noon. I'm frightened. I thought the day would never come and now it's here and I find myself wishing it away. I fear a deformed child, a difficult delivery, death. Anxious and full of apprehension, I'm driven to the hospital. I long to pray but no prayer comes. I seek joy, the joy I felt for five previous births, but joy is not mine.

"Oh God, My God I need you!" is the thought that consumes me as I'm wheeled into a pale green antiseptically clean room; a pleasant place for labor.

A kind nurse sees my tears and thinks I'm experiencing a new mother's jitters; she doesn't know my desolation and I don't tell her. She gives familiar instructions soothingly and with a pat on the shoulder she leaves me. I am alone.

Then a strange and wonderful thing happens. Birth is imminent and a picture passes quickly in front of my eyes. There is the name DAVID in a circle of bright, white light. It is my premonition of a change about to take place. My husband is now at my side and I tell him, "We are going to have a son..." He smiles as he looks up from his downward

gaze. The sorrow I suddenly feel for him overwhelms me for I now know how connected he's been; the worry is etched in his face today. For this day has occupied his mind for months. I do my best to reassure him that all will be well, that for some reason God wants this child to be... then David Gerard is born healthy and seven pounds.

I am restored in my motherhood. It is that simple. It is my miracle. What seems incomprehensible to me is the swiftness of my overall recovery, mentally and physically. Within the short span of pain and delivery the culmination of the past years ills dissolve in a matter of moments. Now I see clearly, the words, "I Believe" are without question, the most powerful in the world. I am once again MYSELF, aware of a unique rejuvenation slowly seeping into my bones. I feel lighter, I smile and hear myself laugh. Enthusiasm returns. I feel LOVE like I have never felt love before.

I gaze at you my son, as I hold you to my breast. As I have held five others before you and loved them every one. But you are different. You are the product of my belief. For YOU I bared my soul. For YOU I denied myself. For YOU I loved what I could not see. I allowed you to be born, but in your birth I have found a new self. During my pregnancy with you, I was at the bottom of an abysmal pit, but with your birth I am soaring in the clouds. This will pass, this soaring, I know it. But I will not soon forget what I'm experiencing nor what I have learned from you.

From this day on I am full of compassion for those so afflicted. From this day on I understand a distraught mother in search of an abortion for her own private reasons. From this day on I feel pity for non-believers, for what is there to cling to if we have no belief in God. From this day on there is something more sacred about the meaning of the word LIFE.

As I take you home, David, and show you off this Christmas, I wrap you in my own swaddling cloth and cuddle you and nourish you. A blue spruce tree is beautifully decorated in the corner of our living room, more beautiful than I have ever seen. Evening comes and quiet Christmas carols lull happy children to sleep. Sweet dreams await them; peace is upon us, good will overflows in our hearts.

I see you smile, think of your first tooth, your first word will be recorded into your baby book. A babe in arms this summer, a toddler next. As God will have it, you will grow, a boy into a man. But in my heart you ARE always my son. And before you were born, I loved you!

Right side of page

CHAPTER TWO

"Fear is useless, what you need is trust."

The Lord's words remind us that we have an amazing power at our finger-tips; we have the power to trust in God's love. We can let go and let God...He will do for you what you cannot yet do for yourself.

The following letters tell about the joy of motherhood and the agonizing ordeal that many women had to face in making one of the most difficult decisions of their lives.

++ _____
_____ ++

5. I am writing in response to your request for stories to aid in helping women who find themselves in a crisis pregnancy. I hope you get many as happy as mine.

In the fall of 1977 I found myself to be a statistic. I was 19 years old, unwed, pregnant and scared out of my wits. At the time I had many plans for my future, none of which involved a husband or baby. I KNEW I didn't want to be pregnant and was torn about my choices. However the thought of facing my parents with my pregnancy was bad enough. I realized I couldn't face them after having an abortion. And if I couldn't face them how could I face God?

My boyfriend and I decided to get married. It was not an easy road. We knew poverty and were far from our families so we knew isolation as well. There were many sacrifices over the years but far more blessings. We have never once regretted our decision. Our beautiful daughter is now married and a teacher with children of her own. She is also the older sister to four brothers. Over the years we have had much fun with our children, many laughs and moments of pride. Tears, yes, but through it all a strong connection of family. All because we said yes to life. God is so good!

After I read your article, I sat and watched my grandsons playing in the yard and thought, "I could have wiped out generations with my fear." It is so true – "fear is useless. What is needed is trust." My greatest sins have happened when I didn't trust Jesus and my greatest joys have occurred when I left all to Him.

It's been thirty-two years since that fall and I have not had one day go by (yes, even the tough ones) when I didn't feel grateful deep inside for my family – the family I might not have had. I have discovered that with a humble gratitude to God comes true and fulfilling joy. Nothing here on earth can give me that.

Thank you for trying to help others make the decision for life with your book. I hope it brings blessings to all who read it.

Carmel
Quincy, IL

++ _____
_____ ++

6. Thirty plus years ago, I was 19, had a boyfriend that I thought I was in love with and thought he was in love with me. I found myself pregnant and was happy. I thought I would marry this person that I was so in love with and have his child. He wasn't thinking

the same thing. He wouldn't talk about The baby or any future plans for us. I got discouraged and felt so alone. I was afraid to tell my parents and family. Instead I listened to a girl that I worked with and she gave me the number to call Planned Parenthood. I called them and they gave me a number to call about abortion. I was directed to talk to a priest. I did that and surprising he wasn't very compassionate and didn't try to convince me not to have the abortion. So, I went through with it. After that I was at a very low point in my life, the sadness was overwhelming.

Four years later I was in a new relationship and found myself pregnant even after using protection. I didn't tell the baby's father. I didn't listen to my heart, or confide in God or my family once again. I listen to friends who encouraged me to have an abortion. Once again feeling empty, sad, insecure, and not caring about myself. Two years went by and once again I was with child. I wanted this baby and told the father I wanted this baby. He gave me a choice, either him or the child. The third stupid mistake I made again.

I did finally learn from my mistakes. I turned to God, my heart and my family. I have 2 beautiful children now and am about to be a grandmother. But there isn't a day that goes by that I wonder what those children would have looked like and what kind of people they would have been. I long to hold them, have conversations with them, I ask them for forgiveness. I live with guilt, regret and a heartache daily. I ask God to help me with this anguish. I also thank God every day for all of his blessings and thank him for pulling me out of that darkness.

Now maybe this letter can help young girls not to make the same mistakes that I did. My message is please turn to the people who truly love you and God for guidance. Also, I would tell them that everything will work out with yourself and your child. Just trust in God and yourself and give your baby a chance for a wonderful life.

7. Dear Father Catoir,

I am enclosing a letter I received from a patient twenty years ago. I don't know why I saved it for so long, but maybe it can be of some use to you.

I was a nurse in the OB-GYN office for thirty years, and although the wonderful doctor I worked with did not perform abortions, we were faced every day with the task of counseling patients who were looking for this service.

I have crossed out any names, and I wish to be anonymous.

Dear Nurse,

This is a "thank you" letter to my nurse. It was last summer, 4 months after my son was born, that I went to my doctor's office and found out I was pregnant again! What a shock it was for me. I remember I started crying. I didn't want another child, I was already so tired from my son, and my marriage was on the rocks. You took me into a room and consoled me. I looked you straight in the face and asked you where I could go for an abortion. Very calmly, you took my hand and told me a story. The story was about a neighbor of yours who had just bought a new house, when she found out she was

pregnant. Then you went on to tell me that she felt the need to have an abortion but she was so happy she had the baby. Her story had a happy ending

I remember you spent a least 30 minutes with me that morning (it was unusually slow). When the doctor came in, he told me to think about it for a few days although I told him I was sure I did not want the baby. As you know, my story had a happy ending too. My baby girl will be one year this June 13th, and from the moment I looked into her eyes, I can never stop looking! When I lay in the hospital I know on her 1st birthday I was going to thank you. Because of you and your story, I decided you were right. What could I have been thinking? I must have been crazy! I wanted you to know, you made a difference in my life. You are a wonderful nurse, and my baby is living proof!

God bless and keep up the good work,

P.S. My marriage is better than ever!

++ _____
____ ++

8. Dear Father John,

We were married young (eloped at 19 and 20 years old) and had our first child ten months later. My husband was a high school drop out and was in the military. I came from a poor family and his family didn't help. So we already had a record of questionable decisions. We had little to go on but youth, love and good family values. Out of anxiety over his family responsibility my husband started night school. Two years later, when he was discharged, he went on to finish college and graduate school. We also had a second child. My husband finished high school and two years of college in the service.

Several years later we had our third child and my husband was beginning to make his way nicely in his career. We were starting to enjoy the American dream, a night out and a trip here and there. Things were looking good. Then, it happened, I got pregnant with the fourth.

I didn't want another child. The third one was finally out of diapers, I was happy and I knew abortion was legal. None of my friends had more than three children. Some of them were encouraging me to terminate the pregnancy. What a struggle! You would have to be in my situation to appreciate the dread I felt, nevertheless I couldn't bring myself to have an abortion.

Now I will fast forward a few years. Our caboose (the fourth) turned out to be a very good child. He really never was the teenage problem that some of his siblings were and he went on to become a Marine Corps officer and pilot. He now has his own family including a wife and three beautiful boys (2, 3, and 4 years old). They too bring immense joy to our lives.

My husband and I often wonder what would have happened and how our lives would have turned out had I made that dreaded decision. I can only imagine. I thank God every day and pray that other young women can find the strength, courage or whatever it takes to let God lead them.

Sincerely,
Margie A
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

++ _____
____ ++

9. November 6, 2007, is a day I can never forget. That was the day I found out that I was about to become a mother. I remember having so many emotions running through my head I was feeling excited, scared, and worried all at the same time. At first it was just unbelievable. I never thought not even for a second that I could become pregnant at the age of 18. Instantly, I knew I was going to have to put all my hopes and dreams aside so I could put all my focus and attention towards the child I was going to have. When it came time to let my boyfriend and my parents know I just didn't know what to say to them.

First I told my boyfriend and after discussing what we were going to do, we came to the conclusion we were going to keep our baby and do whatever it took to love and support our child in the best way we possibly could. Abortion was not an option for us. We just knew God had planned this for us.

Then I told my parents and they were immediately very angry, disappointed, and shocked. They just couldn't believe what was happening. After some days, my parents came to me and told me that they thought it would be best if I got an abortion.

After I told my parents I wasn't going to get an abortion, my relationship just got worse and worse every day. I felt like I was alone. When I needed them the most they just weren't there to give me the comfort I needed. They just couldn't understand how I felt. They kept telling me over and over that my boyfriend wasn't right for me, that I should get an abortion and that I could never make it to be a good mother. The things that my parents were saying were really starting to put me down a lot and I got really depressed and was starting to believe everything they were telling me. I knew in my heart that I wanted to be the best mother I could possibly become. After arguing and fighting with my parents for weeks they told me I had to move out of their home. I moved into my sister's house and slept on the couch there, but knew I couldn't stay there because there was no room. I was devastated, I had nobody to turn to.

I knew I needed a stable place to live and I needed someone who was going to support my choice to have my unborn child. So I turned to Birth Haven on January 28, 2008. They welcomed me with open arms. They made me feel right at home. My first night there, they took away any fears I had about living there. Birth Haven's staff in Newton, NJ, really understood me and the goals I wanted to accomplish. I wanted to be a really

good parent to my child and wanted to avoid doing some of the things my parents did that I didn't like.

During my stay at Birth Haven I set a lot of goals that I wanted to accomplish. This included getting in touch with my inner feelings, getting housing for myself and my daughter and finishing my education. All the goals I set for myself I achieved. I did get my driving permit and now have my driver's license. I took my GED and received my high school diploma. Going to school 4 days a week at Project Self Sufficiency really helped a lot because now, in January, I will start college at Sussex County Community College studying medical coding and billing.

During sessions with Karen, the Social Worker, she really helped me connect with my inner self and understand my feelings and how to deal with certain situations so I didn't make bad choices.

Like skill classes helped me budget my money properly, how to clean and cook, and they taught me how to understand how to become the best parent I could be, and they also taught me that my first priority is always my daughter. I am now also CPR certified as well. Every class that Birth Haven offered really does make a difference. The courses are taught in a way that young girls can really understand and can connect with.

I am so glad that I had the labor and delivery classes – it helped me understand what was happening when my daughter was born.

My life now has changed so much and I give all my thanks to Birth Haven. They gave me all the support that I need to become a successful person and I will never give up any of my dreams. And my parents and I have a better relationship now – they love their granddaughter.

++ _____
_____ ++

10. I need help, day-to-day now. I don't have it. There is a void. I struggle more now than ever. I certainly made some hasty, rushed, decisions when I was young. I didn't realize what a life long, negative effect they would have, this the worst.

Women, girls, please think twice before you act. These days, there are many options for you beside ending an innocent, defenseless life. I realize this now. Don't try to play God like I did. He knows what's best. Babies are gifts. Amen.

From My Heart,
E.P.B.

CHAPTER FIVE
The Adoption Option

38. How fortunate we are to have adopted two loving and loveable sons! They have given us so so much joy. We don't dwell on the issue, but we often pray for those mothers who made our lives so sweet

39. I was in prison for the crime of theft and found myself pregnant. At no point in time, would I have considered having an abortion. My first two children were miracles, true miracles. I had never used birth control of any kind, and yet God chose me and my husband to be their parents.

This child had a purpose, I knew it, it was a miracle too, some how – I prayed that god would send me the answer, someone to help me with this. I prayed that he would protect all of my children. I asked him to look beyond the criminal I was, and help me to do the best for this child I was carrying, who was about to be born in prison.

Then on November 18, 2007, God sent an angel to me, a social service aide named Cathy Arends. When I was introduced to her she looked at me, handed me a box of Kleenex and asked, “what can I do for you?” I wept and fell to my knees. God had sent someone to help my unborn child even in prison.

I explained the entire situation to her in great detail. Abortion was out of the question. I also told her that to save my baby, I would not sacrifice the future plans of my older daughter who was becoming a nurse by asking her to raise my child. I told her that my entire family, 8 brothers and sisters, my mother, even my husband had given up on me. This was my problem, my burden and only God could find the solution.

Ms. Arends explained to me about adoption and that St. Elizabeth Adoption Group could come and talk to me. I agreed. I continued to pray, say my rosary and rely on my faith.

The following week, I met with St. Elizabeth's adoption group and they explained how their program worked. I also found out that they were not affiliated with the Catholic Church in any way. The representative left me with detailed information on 14 couples who wanted to adopt a child. She asked me to read them, think about it and let her know what I thought.

I took the information, read every heart aching work and continued to pray. On the next day, Ms. Arends came again to visit me. I expressed my compassion for the couples that I had been given to study. I told her it was important to me that any couple I would consider would be Catholic. I asked if she would contact Catholic Charities and request that they come to see me. The very next day Samantha Clarke came to see me. We prayed together and I told her my story. In talking to her, I felt a peace, a knowing that she, that moment, was destined.

A few days later, I received a packet with 8 stories from couples who were hoping to adopt a child. It was in reading the 6th of those 8th, I found the mother of my child. I was in total disbelief that before me, was me, only in the form, the likeness, the life of another

woman. In every way, I felt an overwhelming comfort that she was to be my baby's mother

My son was born on January 27, 2007 and as of today he is a happy, healthy protected, intelligent little boy.

I hurt in ways that only Jesus could understand and yet I am at peace knowing that a child, my son, an angel among us is alive.

He now knows that he is blessed with two mothers and I know his life has a purpose. My dream is to live long enough to see it and to hear him say to me, thank you for the life you helped me have, God knows, my part was limited.

It is in his life that I understand the gift of life. I am in prison, he was born in prison and yet his life means so much to two mothers.

My prayer is that every woman faced with overwhelming difficult odds of deciding whether to give life, to take life, or to share the life of her child with another woman – pray and believe that that life she's been blessed to bring into this world holds a wonderful future and purpose, I've been there

Carrie H
St. Gabriel, La

++

____++

40. My parents adopted me through Catholic Charities about 40 years ago when I was six weeks old - I have never met my birth mother and know nothing about her, but she consistently remains in my thoughts and prayers. In addition to wondering what she and her life were like (and is now), my primary thought has been a wish to say, "Thank you" for having the courage to carry me to term and give me up for adoption. Being pregnant has a lot of ups and downs and doing so without the fulfillment of watching your child grow must be particularly challenging. Since she loved me enough to give me up, I would like my birth mother to know that I became part of a wonderful family - and my parents and two siblings (who are also adopted) feel particularly blessed to have ended up together. And later, when pregnant with my own children, and looking at them now, I can't help but wonder what traits may have come from my birth mother (or my biological father). Nonetheless, I feel pretty certain that she as a very strong woman, and that is a trait I'm very happy to have passed down to my children. Also, I feel God is keeping close watch over all of us, as a big (although unknown) extended family. While I've wrestled with the thought of trying to track down my biological mother, I've not done so out of consideration of hurting the feelings of the mother who raised me. I feel you both very much contribute to the woman I am today, and feel lucky to have been blessed with two mothers. And, if ever our paths should cross, I would give my birth mother a hug and say, "Thank you, my life turned out very well, so you must have done the right thing."

Laura
Leechburg, PA

41. Bella's story

We raised our two daughters and two sons. Never, would my husband and I have thought we would be raising (helping our single parent son) raise another one.

She is six now. Before he got custody, her mother would allow us to have her for weeks at a time. It was hard to get her – picking her up in parking lots in different states, depending where the mother was and who she was with at the time. No matter what, I never stopped being thankful that she did not have an abortion life she was going to. I never condemned her. I wanted her to get help. I wanted all the other children she had to get help. We tired so many times.

We would go anywhere to pick her up when she was very little and take her with us to New York for a few weeks or months. Something was going very wrong. I noticed in the dead of winter, her fingernails, and toe nails were very dirty. I heard things from others who lived nearby. Her hair was dirty and matted to the point where it was hard to brush or comb. All of this got me.. but not as much as when in the crib... during the night, she would apparently dream dreams that made her scream. I would die to comfort her but it became worse. "Don't touch me, don't touch me." That was the turning point. I called upon every bit of Jesus I could get in me and beg for His help.

And it happened in one of my own dreams. I awoke crying to my husband that I vividly "saw" myself sitting in my old office and a girl came in and said three words: SAVE MY LIFE. For me that meant moving south to be closer to my little granddaughter.

My husband, a true New York Yankee Italian man would never want to move from New York. But he saw the need, and we moved for the sake of our new grandbaby.

Things began working out better for her now. There is a heartbeat of the baby. There is a heartbeat that only God gives. I delight in her laughter, her crying, her mischievousness, her reading, her swimming, her storytelling, her everything. Give a baby a chance. They grow up to bring you joy and comfort.

++

__++

42. My story goes back many years, I was a teenager in the 70's. While many of my friends drank and tried drugs, I was a good Catholic girl staying away from all that. Then, in my 20s, I made some bad choices - drinking and experimenting with recreational drugs. but that was not the worst of it, by my mid-twenties I was unmarried and pregnant. Marrying the father of the child wasn't an option because he was already married. What a mess I was in! Abortion seemed the "easy" way out.

How wrong I was the day we went in to the clinic. I felt sick to my stomach, not physically, but emotionally. Looking back now, I should have walked straight out of that clinic. When the "vacuum" sucked my baby out, I threw up. It was a huge mistake and the biggest regret of my life. I confessed years later after the birth of my first child, I was racked with guilt. To this day I think of my unborn child and work advocating adopting for women who are pregnant and not able to raise their baby.

Please don't let my regret become yours, it will be your biggest regret.

43 Don't be afraid of adoption

I wish to set forth a truth seen in my own family and would suppose many other unknowns. If a wife so fears her husband enough and a daughter trembles at "the look," from her dad, and should the daughter become pregnant, out of wedlock. both are caught in a type of abuse, not seen by others outside the home.

It does not take a lot of physical violence to become frozen in a situation, which seems impossible to solve. Even the adult in weakness may mentally race for a simple solution, or so she thinks – ABORTION. What an ugly word.

The wife must come to her senses, pray for God's strength to face her husband and defend her daughter and protect the unborn child. It's the only sane thing to do..

I have written to clarify the fact that there are a lot more situations perhaps not even thought of by most, to the thought of abortion rear its ugly head.

As I see it, legalizing abortion was indeed a sad day, as it put the ball in the female's court as she is left with the final decision. The male walks away free and perhaps unknown, with no respect for the female carrying his child. He does not care about what she will go through, mentally or physically. No thought of family or heritage.

True love is so misunderstood. When a women giver her all to her beloved before he makes a commitment of any kind bad things can happen. Education is golden, self-esteem a must.

If you can't handle the burden of this pregnancy yourself, please consider adoption. It can be a wonderful answer for you and your child. Some loving couple longs to have a child. Don't be afraid.

May the light of the Spirit help you. Amen

PART TWO

Embracing the Baby Within

Medical experts, John T. Scully M.D. who delivered 10,000 babies in his life, and his wife, Kimberly Scully, R.N.C., who served at his side for 27 years, answer your questions about the pregnancy, delivery and the post partum stages of child birth.

Introduction

When we begin a journey, either physical or spiritual, the unknown can be ominous, filled with trepidation, anxiety and fear. Many times knowledge and information about the future, its possibilities and probabilities, can lend a hand in calming these feelings. My goal in the introduction of this manuscript, which I co-authored with my late husband John T. Scully M.D., is to bring you a measure of peace through understanding.

Originally our goal in writing this book was to educate men involved with a loved one who found herself pregnant, and facing this new situation. The revised version, namely this finished book that you are now reading, is more geared to the pregnant woman herself. It is filled with factual medical information, as well as ideas we learned from our combined professional experience, to make you feel more comfortable.

Bringing this complex study down to earth in order to make it more readable has been a joy. It is my sincere hope that this revised presentation will reach women everywhere, women who are facing difficult decisions concerning their pregnancy. I pray they will be comforted and educated as to what their immediate future will hold for them, as “mothers-to-be”.

My late husband John was a true believer in the Right to Life movement, and his medical practice followed those guidelines. He was also a great admirer of Father John Catoir, both professionally and personally. They were friends since boyhood. Our collaboration on this project would have brought him great joy and satisfaction had he lived to see his dream fulfilled. It is my prayer that the following pages will alleviate some of the stress, answer many of your questions, and bring you to that place of contentment and joy known as motherhood.

I feel privileged to share in such an intimate part of your life. I can tell you, both personally as a mother, and professionally as a nurse, that motherhood is truly the most precious gift you will ever be given.

Delight in the knowledge of what God has in store for you, and use this book as a guide on your journey. Speaking

**for my husband John, and Father Catoir, I want add my own
thanks for allowing us to share
it with you.**

Kimberly A. Scully,

RNC

CHAPTER ONE

PREGNANCY

What happens to a woman's body when pregnancy begins?

Let's start from the beginning. It is a fact that a woman's body prepares itself for pregnancy every month of the year through a process known as the menstrual cycle.

It all starts in the brain, specifically the pituitary gland. This gland releases a hormone into the blood stream that stimulates the lining of the uterus to grow. This lining could be compared to the top-soil that gardener putting down before planting. Approximately fourteen days from the last menstrual period an egg explodes from the woman's ovary into her abdominal cavity, leaving behind a small cyst, which makes the hormone, progesterone. Progesterone, in turn, enriches the lining of the uterus to make a well-nourished layer for the implantation of the fertilized egg. You could compare this to a farmer adding fertilizer to the top-soil before planting his seed. Within seven to ten days the lining of the uterus is ready to accept the fertilized egg for implantation. If there is no sexual intercourse, no fertilized egg, the lining is shed. This is menstruation, and the process begins all over again in the next month.

Please explain the way the woman's egg travels?

If you go back to the magical day 14, when the egg explodes from the ovary, we can follow its progress to conception or disintegration.

The egg is picked up at the end of the fallopian tube, much like a vacuum cleaner would pick up dust. The fallopian tube is just that, a tube that is connected at one end to the inside of the uterus. The other end lies near the ovary. The egg, unlike the sperm has no means of self-propulsion; however, in the fallopian tube there are millions of microscopic hair-like cells that line the inside of the tube. These cells wave back and forth so that the egg is moved along the tube to its final destination, namely the inside of the uterus.

If the sperm, which is deposited in the vagina during intercourse, manages to survive the arduous journey through the uterus and into the fallopian tube, conception may occur. But, the sperm must meet the egg at the proper time and place for this to occur. If the sperm arrives after the egg has moved out of the ovary for over twelve hours, the egg will be too old to be fertilized.

However, if the sperm arrives too soon, all is not lost. Sperm can live for a few days in the tube awaiting the arrival of the egg. Once fertilized, the egg, with its 23 chromosomes and the sperm with its 23 chromosomes, combine into one. We then have a cell with 46 chromosomes that will divide into two cells, and then four, and then eight, as it makes its way down the tube and into the uterus. The lining of the uterus is now

prepared and awaits the arrival of the fertilized egg, which is called the embryo. When the embryo implants itself into the wall of the uterus, the pregnancy has begun.

How long am I going to be pregnant?

It won't be exactly nine months. A pregnancy lasts approximately 280 days, or 40 weeks. The doctor will give a date that the baby is due to be born based on the first day of your last menstrual period, but that date is only an approximation. Babies are thought to be ready for birth sometime between 2 to 4 weeks prior to the due date, or 2 weeks after. They can be born anytime in that period.

What is going on inside of me during pregnancy? How am I going to feel?

How you feel will depend on your imagination. If you love your baby, you'll feel great. The poem by Elizabeth L. Gramman explains.

Baby of Mine.

*Warm little fingers, tiny toes,
What a marvel to behold!
Soft baby eyes, trying to see,
Trusting eyes, looking back at me.*

*Warm little fingers, tiny toes,
baby eyes, a world to see.
"Give me a chance to seal your heart,
To bring you joy, God's love impart."*

*Warm little fingers, tiny toes,
What a wonder to behold.
"Open your mind and heart,
won't you please,
to see God's plan set out for me."*

The joy so often spoken of in literature begins in your imagination. You are becoming a mother. Your self-awareness is changing. When you stop to realize that the baby in your womb is a real person, not a lump of cellular matter, your heart will guide you, your love will come alive. You are carrying a live human being inside of you. A person who will grow to love you, more than you know.

Now I will answer your question with some technical information. Pregnancies are divided into three trimesters. Each trimester lasts approximately 13 weeks. I'll explain these stages of gestation, one by one.

During the first trimester, the uterus grows from the size of a lemon to the size of a grapefruit. Its location is so close to the urinary bladder that it puts pressure on the bladder. During pregnancy, this pressure will cause an increase in urination, which isn't painful, but it can be annoying. The location of the uterus also causes pressure in the rectum, often resulting in constipation. Again, this is not painful, but you should increase your fluid intake, and increase the fiber in your diet to ease the distress.

Another common change in the body during your early stage is the growth and sensitivity of the breasts. Again, this is not painful, but it can be noticeable. The breasts are becoming prepared for the baby. Seeing your body change and imagining your baby sucking at your breast can give you a wonderful feeling; however, there may be some nausea at this time.

Morning sickness is also normal during this stage. It is caused by the hormonal and chemical changes going on in your body, and can range from a little nausea to occasional vomiting. Dehydration caused by the inability to absorb fluids can also be a concern. The remedy for this is surprisingly simple, eat small meals (6 to 8 times a day), and consume a lot of fluids, mostly water, in small amounts throughout the day.

The last major symptom of the first trimester is fatigue. Many hormonal and chemical changes are going on in the body during this time, therefore it is not uncommon to feel extremely tired. Learn to listen to your body's signals, and give yourself what you need. If you are tired – sleep, if you are hungry – eat, and if you are thirsty – drink. You can enjoy the ride once you decide to relax and pamper your body.

Even though you may not look pregnant yet, many changes are happening within you, which require your attention. It is really time to take care of yourself, and enjoy the precious life that is growing within you.

When should I go to the doctor?

You should seek medical care as soon as you realize you might be pregnant. The doctor will relieve your mind of needless fear. First there will be a physical examination given, and some routine blood tests will be administered, maybe even an ultrasound. An ultrasound is a painless test using sound waves that show you a picture of the baby inside the uterus. It can be helpful to the doctor in many ways. Ultrasound is used to look at the baby to see how pregnant you are, and perhaps to tell you how many babies you are carrying.

The knowledge and information gained in that first visit to the doctor is crucial for you and your baby. You will feel safer having a professional partner during this journey.

You can tell the doctor how you are feeling, and receive helpful advice. Remember: knowledge is power. It will always help ease your mind, and help you to cope better with the stress of pregnancy. The doctor will prescribe a prenatal vitamin supplement, and give you good advice to insure proper nutrition and good health habits.

What more can I do to help myself, and my baby?

It is very important that expectant mothers do not smoke, or drink alcohol, or use any drugs without the permission of the physician. Sleep more, get proper nutrition, and take prenatal vitamins. Medical attention during pregnancy is the most important gift you can give yourself and your baby. Also, keep in mind there is an invisible instrument at your disposal, namely the power of positive thinking. Imagine your baby in your arms. Mentally kiss and love your baby. Transferring this love to the baby in your womb, is merely a matter of gently rubbing your belly.

What happens in the second trimester of the pregnancy?

The good news is that you will begin to feel better. You'll be less tired and the nausea will have diminished. The baby has been growing for thirteen weeks, and is fully formed with all its necessary parts. He/she will spend the second trimester, or the next thirteen weeks growing from a few ounces to about a pound or more.

The baby's reflexes are becoming keen. They can suck their thumbs, hiccup, grab, punch and even kick. Most moms can attest to this. The baby also has sleep cycles, and is able to hear outside sounds at this time. You can sing to your baby or play soft music, and they will listen. Music tends to calm the baby in the womb. They are truly getting ready for the world around them.

Your physician may speak to you about more blood tests or additional tests, or another ultrasound, which can provide more detailed information about your baby's health and development. These tests are usually optional. You can decide what you will do to gain the additional information you will need to increase your joy, and reduce your stress. Developing a rapport with the medical professionals helping you is key at this time. Ask questions and obtain as much information from them as possible. Doing this can help you empower yourself, increase your basic comfort level, and minimize your stress level. Your pregnancy can be a happy experience if you take care of yourself, and your baby. This is a precious time in your life, enjoy it. The baby is now 26 weeks old.

Chapter Two

Delivery

As I get closer to delivery I find myself becoming more anxious. Is this normal?

Many women experience an increase in anxiety at this time of their pregnancy. It is brought on by the realization of the impending experience of labor and delivery. We all fear the unknown. The experience is different each time for those of you who have given birth before. But we know a great deal more than we give ourselves credit for.

Hopefully a few things that I'm going to share with you will help ease the anxiety. The idea is to help you to focus more on the joy of anticipation. You are going to have the greatest experience of your life. Hope for the best. Hope is defined as expectation with certitude. This hope then slowly translates into trust. Jesus said, "Fear is useless what you need is trust."

Where should the actual delivery be done and by whom?

Hopefully you have already decided to have the baby delivered in a hospital by an Obstetrician. There are many who feel that they might be better off having the baby at a Birthing Center, or even at home. Let me offer some advice.

You will be foolishly playing with your life and the life of your baby if you do not have your baby in a hospital. An obstetrician has gone through four years of college,

four years of medical school, and five years of post-graduate training, specializing in Obstetrics and Gynecology. His education does not stop there either. If he wishes to be Board certified he must pass a very extensive written exam, and a year or so later, pass an oral exam. When the doctor passes all these exams, the title of Board Certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology is conferred.

You will be much better off if you come to a hospital with a certified doctor taking care of you. At a Birthing Center all the warmth and coziness goes out the window when a life-threatening situation occurs. In that case, it might be too late to run to a hospital for help. All the so-called coziness of such centers is for naught when an emergency occurs, and you or your child is in danger.

I know you want the best and you deserve it. Any hospital is better than giving birth at home or at a birthing center.

Many of my friends and relatives are telling me things that upset me a little. Who should I listen to?

It has been my experience that a young woman with a pregnant belly is like a magnet for unsolicited advice. Your physician and his staff should be the first source of this kind of information. They have a wealth of experience and training to offer you. Don't hesitate to pick up the phone and ask questions. In fact it would be wise to plan ahead. Make a list of all your questions and bring them to you next visit.

Avoid relying on your computer for medical advice. Each case is unique, and you really don't need to know more than you need to know. Your best source for advice is your own doctor.

As I get closer to the birth, what changes can I expect in my body?

The cervix, which is the mouth or opening of the womb leading to the vaginal canal, contains a gelatinous substance that acts like a barrier to protect the baby from bacteria entering the womb, and possibly causing an infection. During the last weeks of pregnancy the cervix begins to soften in preparation for birth, and the "plug" as it is sometimes called, comes loose. It takes the form of a large amount of vaginal discharge, and is usually white or clear in color. It has the consistency of egg whites. This is not necessarily a sign that labor is starting, but it is a sign that the pregnancy will soon come to an end.

This entire process is quite normal and is usually painless. There is no need to worry, unless you experience pain, in which case call your doctor.

If the cervix won't stay closed during the pregnancy it is probably a sign of an "Incompetent Cervix." Special procedure would then be followed.

However the difference between a lost plug late in the pregnancy, which requires no urgent action, and the rupture of the water bag is significant. Call the doctor if the water breaks.

Sometimes I feel a tightening sensation across my belly. What is that?

The uterus or womb is an organ made up of muscle fibers. Its primary purpose is to provide a home for the baby, prior to delivery. The “tightening” sensation is caused by hormones being released into the blood stream, which in turn cause the muscle fibers in the uterus to contract. The contractions you will feel are not painful, and sometimes they are not even felt by the pregnant woman. Some women say it feels like the baby is rolling; some say it feels like the bladder is having a mild spasm; some think it is like a back spasm. If you have never been pregnant before, what you are feeling can be difficult to describe or identify. But it is all a normal part of pregnancy at this stage.

The rule of thumb about these “Braxton Hicks” contractions, which are considered “false labor,” is that they are not painful. If you do experience sharp pain at any time during your pregnancy it’s best to call your doctor. He will tell you if it is anything to be concerned about.

How do I know if I am really in labor?

Here are the early sings of real labor:

1. a regular pattern of contractions that can be timed; they gradually become more painful and last longer.
2. vaginal bleeding will occur as the mouth of the womb opens in preparation for a vaginal delivery. The baby is coming from the womb to the vaginal canal in order to reach the outside world. When the cervix opens, there is some bleeding. Any vaginal bleeding should be reported to the doctor, even if it occurs without any pain or contractions.
3. a leaking of water from the vagina. The baby in the womb is surrounded by a membrane, which is filled with water or “amniotic fluid.” At the end of the pregnancy the bag can tear and this fluid is discharged from the uterus, flowing out through the vagina. There is a lot of water around the baby during gestation, sometimes as much as a couple of quarts. So woman are very aware of the change when the water breaks. Call the doctor when this happens.

How long does the birthing process actually take?

The first time a woman delivers a baby it can take anywhere from 12 to 24 hours. This doesn’t mean that the whole time is filled with pain. In fact some woman are not even aware that the process has started until they begin to see blood flowing, or one of the signs mentioned above. The best advice is to call the doctor when in doubt.

Please tell me more about the labor process. I get the feeling that I won’t be in control of my body at this point.

You definitely won’t be in control. The process of labor and delivery is never in your control. However, knowledge is power. The more you understand about the things that are happening to you, the less anxious you will feel. This will allow you a greater chance

for experiencing more joy concerning the blessed event that is taking place. The exhilaration of being a mother is one of the greatest gifts you will ever experience.

Remember the testimony of Nancy, in the opening chapter of this book? Her words may help you to see the whole picture.

“It is a miracle. What seems incomprehensible to me is the swiftness of my overall recovery, mentally and physically. Within the short span of pain and delivery the culmination of the past year’s ills dissolve in a matter of moments. Now I see clearly. I am once again MYSELF, aware of a unique rejuvenation slowly seeping into my bones. I feel lighter. I smile and hear myself laugh. Enthusiasm returns. I feel LOVE like I have never felt love before.”

This mother’s happiness is quite common. Keep in mind that labor brings a glorious end to the ordeal of pregnancy. There is nothing so forgettable as yesterday’s pain.

What does the doctor do to help you during the labor period?

Labor is painful, but that doesn’t mean that Mom has to grin and bear it. We are in the 21st Century and great strides have been made in anesthesiology. The greatest stride has been made in a regional type of anesthesia, which allows the mother to remain awake through the delivery without feeling any pain. It is called **the Big E or an epidural** injection. Whether the birth be done vaginally, by Cesarean Section or by forceps, the epidural is a Godsend. The mother is made to be comfortable through out the entire process of labor and delivery. Pain is virtually eliminated.

The mother will be pricked and prodded during the labor period. Fortunately the old routine of giving a woman an enema is no longer in vogue. Blood will be taken, and IV’s will be started. There will be multiple vaginal examinations. If the baby comes out vaginally, and not by cesarean, she will probably have an episiotomy, which is a cut between the vagina and the anus. This is done to give more room for the baby to exit. It will heal quickly and with medications have limited pain.

If the baby delivers by cesarean section, the abdomen is cut. This takes weeks to heal, and can be quite painful, but here again, there are sedatives to ease the discomfort.

When the baby is born, a great deal of hormonal action takes place in the mother’s body to stimulate the breasts into producing milk. Even if a Mom does not intend to breast feed, she will still produce a lot of milk. The breast become engorged and can be quite uncomfortable. This will go on for days, but there are procedures to ease the discomfort.

Chapter Three

Post-Partum

What happens after the actual birth?

After the birth of the baby, the hollow muscle we call the womb squeezes down as tight as it can, and shears off the placenta (afterbirth) into the vagina. From there the

placenta, or afterbirth, passes out of the mother's body. The cord which connects the baby to the placenta is severed by the doctor. Then the doctor gives his full attention to any repair work that needs to be done. If there was an episiotomy, the repairs are done now. If the birth was by cesarean, the doctor closes the uterus and the abdominal.

What if the bleeding continues?

The womb contracts in order to expel the baby, but it is important to see to it that the mother does not continue bleeding after the birth. The uterus has a large blood supply during pregnancy in order to supply the fetus with nourishment and oxygen for its growth. These vessels are interlaced through the muscle fiber of the womb. Once the baby is born the uterus muscle contracts and squeezes these vessels down, and thereby causes bleeding, controlling it as well.

It is for this reason that after the baby is born, the mother is given a drug called pitocin to keep the uterus contracted. It helps the mother's body to take over and control the bleeding. If she continues to bleed, other agents can be given either by injection or by mouth.

Postpartum hemorrhage, if not treated, can lead to the removal of the uterus in order to save the mother. It is for this reason that the nurses keep sharp vigilance on the mother during her postpartum uterine contractions. A large amount of vaginal bleeding can be controlled.

When does the mother leave the operating room?

Once the mother is stable she is transferred to her bed in the postpartum unit, and the baby goes to the nursery for preliminary observation. Over the next few days the mother will have vaginal discharges called lochia. This discharge can be the color of blood or look brown, or be clear. Eventually it stops, but the process can last for weeks. Usually all bleeding and discharge is gone by six weeks when the mother comes to the doctor's office for her postpartum checkup.

What about breast feeding?

We highly recommend that the mother breast feed. First of all it makes the uterus contract and lessens the postpartum bleeding in amount and duration. Breast feeding mothers get to the point of no more bleeding and discharge sooner than non-breast feeding Moms.

From the baby's point of view, breast feeding gives them comfort, and antibodies to combat many childhood illnesses along with the best nourishment possible. Formulas can't compare with this natural high quality diet. This is not meant to make mothers who do not or cannot breast-feed feel guilty. There are reasons not to breast-feed. Some mothers do not make sufficient milk to adequately nourish the baby. Some mothers work. Some mothers have an aversion to breast-feeding, which must be respected. It's not as though we do not have an alternative. We have others means of nourishing the baby. Whatever works best for the mother and the baby. This is a decision that the mother alone must make for herself.

What is postpartum depression?

Most mothers have the “blues” after giving birth. It’s nothing more than a little let down after some very hard work. Just support her, and let her know you are there for her, and that you love her. The blues will be short lived, but stay alert. If a depression seems to get progressively worse call the doctor. True postpartum depression can be troublesome, but it is very treatable, if caught in time.

The mother has no control over these feelings. Don’t expect her to duke it out by herself. She needs help. Keep those well-meaning friends and relatives away. They all seem to think that they know the answer to every problem. They don’t!

When in doubt call the doctor.

How soon can one have sex?

Sexual intercourse is out until the postpartum checkup has been completed. The doctor will advise you of when it is safe to resume sexual activity. Respect this, and don’t rely on breastfeeding as birth control. A final word on this topic: the first intercourse after the birth of a baby can be painful for the female, especially after a virginal birth. The repairs to the episiotomy are still healing. Be gentle, and use a lot of K-Y Jelly. In time it will work out, but don’t expect to be free of discomfort for awhile.

+++++

Well you made it to the end. We want to thank you for taking the time to read this report. We hope that it will be of help to you in the days and months ahead.

Keep in mind, motherhood will be your greatest challenge and your greatest reward. Enjoy the gift of love and do your best to share it.

Hail Mary Full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou among women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary Mother of God
Pray for us sinners,
Now and at the hour
Of our death,

Amen