

# Feelings of denial, guilt follow abortion

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The American Psychiatric Association does not yet recognize the existence of Post Abortion Stress Syndrome.

But Camille Taylor of Birthright does. She estimated that each year her agency encounters approximately 100 women who suffer from it.

And Father Robert Winterkorn knows it exists. He has come across the syndrome through his counseling of women who call the Puzzle Project — a volunteer network of counselors who provide a listening ear and a non-judgmental response to those suffering the effects of abortion.

And Sister Paula Vandegaer, SSS, is quite familiar with the syndrome and its effects. Years of work as a therapist have convinced her that the syndrome is quite real, and a problem that could potentially affect millions of women who have had abortion — and consequently their hus-

bands, boyfriends, families and friends.

In fact, Sister Vandegaer estimated that as many as 120 million people in the United States have been affected by abortion in one way or another. Of those people, approximately 20 million have had abortions and could potentially show signs of the syndrome — if they haven't done so already.

Sister Vandegaer was in Rochester Thursday, Oct. 26, to participate at a seminar on postabortion syndrome. The seminar on post abortion syndrome. The sem-Transfiguration in Pittsford, was intended to provide information about the syndrome, and to attract more volunteers for the Puzzle Project.

The problem of the effects of abortion was also addressed at Sacred Heart Cathedral on Sunday, Oct. 29, when Bishop Matthew H. Clark presided over a healing service for approximately 200 people affected by abortion.

In addition, early next year, women who have had abortions will also be able to join a Post Abortion Support for Today and Tomorrow group being organized at Corpus Christi Center. The group will enable women to share their experiences and difficulties resulting from abortions.

Sister Vandegaer, who lives in California, applauded these efforts in the Rochester diocese, and said that in many ways Rochester is at the forefront of the effort to provide healing for people suffering from the effects of abortion.

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*'I'm a mother who lost a child, even if I never held that child, and I was never able to mourn that child.'*

*'Marie'*



## One woman's mourning

By Lee Strong  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Even after eight years, Marie still thinks about her baby.

In Sept. 1981, Marie — who asked that her real name not be used — was 21, single, and four months pregnant.

Marie led a pretty wild life and, before learning that she was pregnant, had taken hallucinogenic drugs. When she realized she was pregnant, she feared the drugs might cause the child to suffer birth defects.

"I can't say there was any rational thought involved," Marie said. "My only sense was, 'I can't do this; there's no way I can have a child. There's no way I can bring this baby into this world to pay for my sin.'"

So Marie chose to have an abortion, even though she believed she was causing the death of a person. "It was always a baby, not a clump of cells," she said.

The abortion resulted in an infection, and Marie had to return to the hospital, burning with a fever of 105. She recovered, but "I think I walked away

from that knowing that I was the worst person that was ever made, that my infection was a punishment," she said. "I walked out of that hospital certain that I'd never be able to have children."

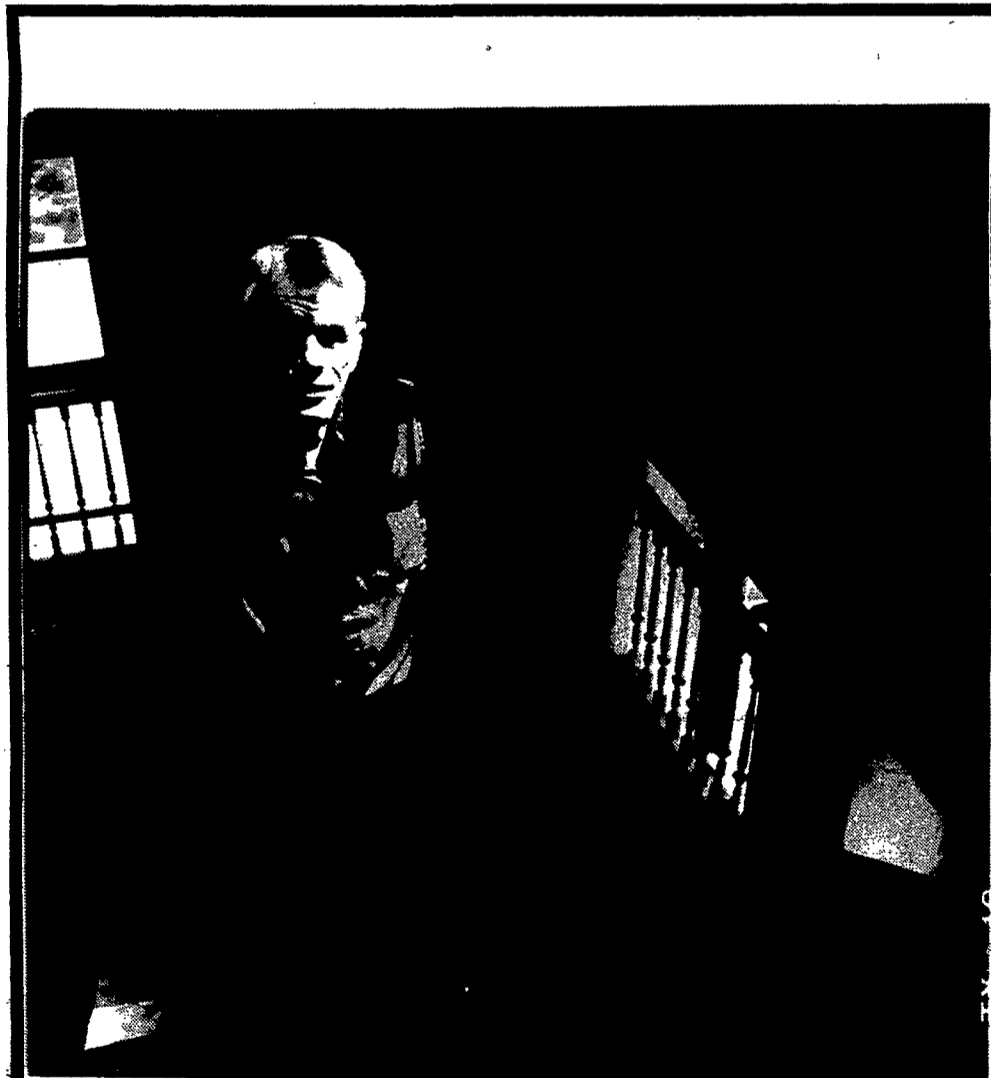
During the next few years of her life, Marie attempted suicide several times, and indulged in more drugs and drinking. But except for the tears she shed on the day of the abortion, she didn't cry. "I was out of touch with my emotions," she said.

Marie, a life-long Catholic, was also out of touch with the church and angry at God for not allowing her suicide attempts to succeed. One Christmas Eve she tried to go to Midnight Mass, but found she couldn't put her hand on the door.

Eventually, Marie stopped taking drugs and started in therapy. When she mentioned the abortion, however, her therapist told her she was fine.

On Easter Sunday, 1987, Marie went back to church. In the homily that day, the priest said that the worst sin a person could commit against God is not to like

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