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FROM A LUTHERAN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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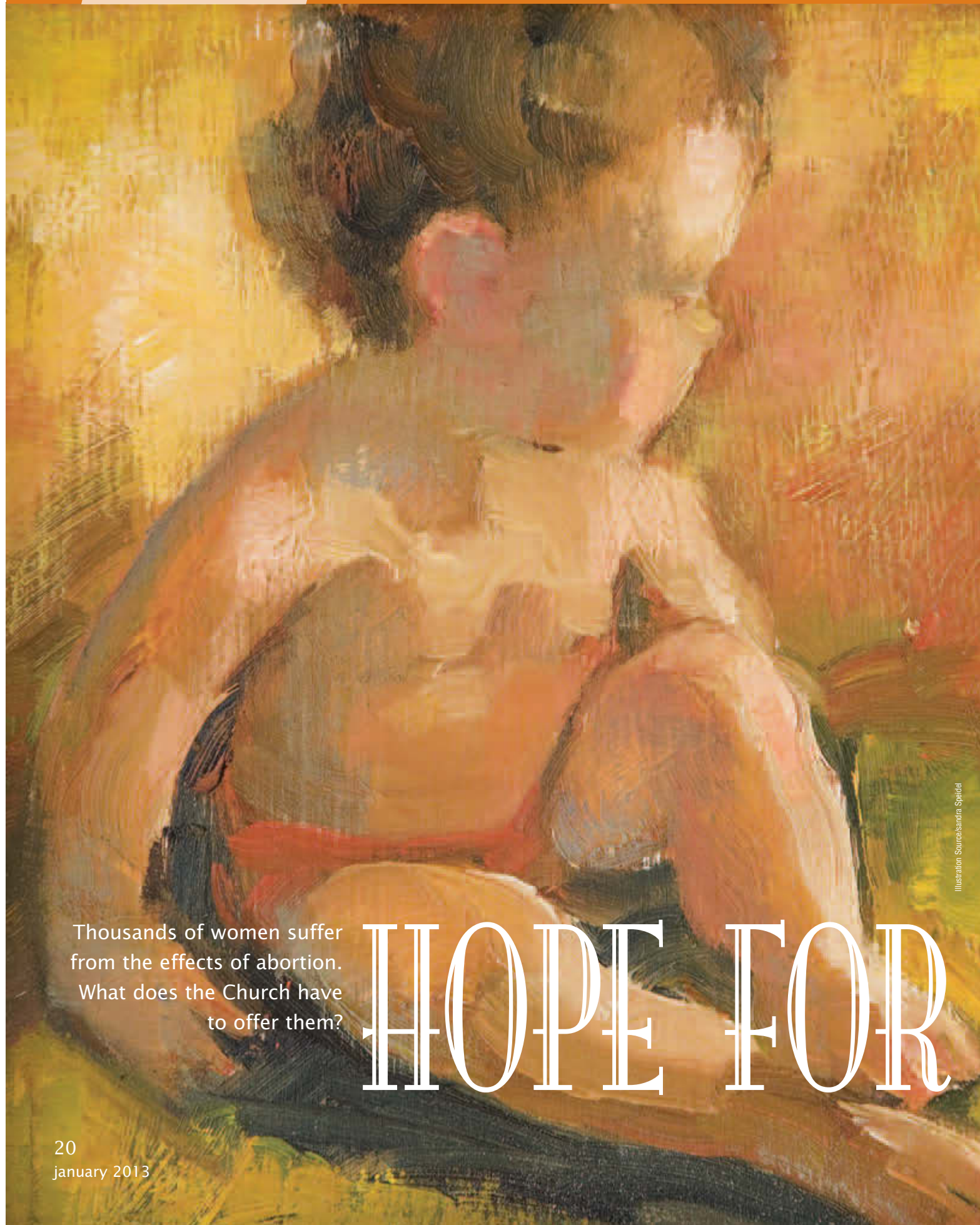


Illustration Source: Sandra Spelid

Thousands of women suffer from the effects of abortion. What does the Church have to offer them?

HOPE FOR

by JAMES LAMB

It seems to dampen the Christmas spirit if we observe the Holy Innocents on December 28. We joyfully celebrate the birth of baby Jesus and then must think about the tragic death of babies. Bring up such a text in an edition of *The Lutheran Witness* devoted to life, and people conclude you will talk about abortion.

But another tragedy cried out from the streets of Bethlehem that night: Rachel weeping. "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more" (Matt. 2:18). Rachel, who personified the sorrow of the Jews enslaved in captivity in Jeremiah 31, now personifies the loud weeping and comfortless sorrow of these Jewish mothers at the murder of their babies.

Along with the Herod-like tragedy of abortion occurring 3,200 times every day in our country, another tragedy cries out from our streets: Rachel weeping, the mothers and fathers of these dead children weeping in the darkness of grief, refusing to be comforted. Rachels today sit in an even deeper darkness. Unlike the mothers of Bethlehem, they participated in the choice to have their own children killed. When that reality strikes, it crushes the heart and numbs the soul.

Listen to their weeping. "You see, I didn't just kill my child that day. I was a victim too. I killed something inside of me, something that is now replaced

with the knowledge that I too, can do a very wicked evil," wrote one woman to the National Office of Lutherans For Life. "I caused the death of our little one. I listened to the lies of the devil that there was no way out. He had cleverly laid his trap for me and many other unsuspecting women," wrote another.

If this secret sin stays secret, it manifests itself in other ways. Women who have abortions are four times more likely to engage in drug or alcohol abuse and to have difficulty maintaining relationships with men. They have higher divorce rates and experience more physical and mental health problems. Over one in five report having attempted suicide. And there are spiritual consequences. Trapped in the darkness of sin, Rachels feel unforgivable and hopeless. A voice is heard in our land: "Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more."

But there is hope for Rachel! "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears . . . there is hope for your future, declares the Lord" (Jer. 31:16-17). There is hope for those sitting in the darkness refusing to be comforted because one Baby escaped Herod's sword that awful night: Jesus. Jesus, who said, "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5), and "I have come into the world as a light, so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in the darkness" (John 12:46).

No one needs to stay in the darkness. Jesus hung in the darkness. "It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole

land until the ninth hour" (Luke 23:44). Jesus hung and bled in the darkness of sin. He suffered the hopelessness and forsakenness of that darkness. He was buried in the darkness of the tomb and death. But the darkness of death could not contain the Light of Life! The Light shattered the darkness, giving us "a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3b). We find hope in our living God!

There is hope for Rachel because Jesus shatters the darkness of our sin. He enters the darkness to give us the light of living hope. As one Rachel wrote to Lutherans For Life, "I never really understood that Jesus Christ was willing to get down into my muck and mire life and pull me up out of the sewage of my problems. He has since shown me that He really is."

Satan would love us to believe that the Herod-like destruction of unborn children and the abuse of women through this destruction are political issues and do not belong in the Church. But that is precisely where they do belong! We have the Gospel, the *only* message that can shatter the darkness and bring hope.

If you sit silently alone in the darkness, know that God loves you. He enters the very depths of your darkness and shines upon you with the light of His forgiveness. In that light, you can find hope and begin the path toward healing. "Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears . . . there is hope for your future, declares the Lord." ❀

RACHEL

Lutherans For Life offers confidential and professional counseling for those wounded by abortion. Contact Word of Hope at 888-217-8679, www.word-of-hope.org/ or help@word-of-hope.org.