

# Central Illinois Life News

## A CIRTL Member Shares

O

n a bright, cool October morning I made the decision

to go pray the Rosary with a group of Catholics at an abortion clinic. It was a decision made with the encouragement of my spiritual director, and not one that I took lightly. Being the mother of three young children (5, 2, and 1) it took some serious maneuvering on my part to be able to get out without them on a Wednesday morning at 8:00. Having figured out the logistics of my outing I took a deep breath and stepped out the door. Off for what I hoped would be a simple morning of prayer.

Upon setting out I was seized immediately by horrible pains in my stomach. I began to ache as soon as I pulled out of my driveway. Only one block away from my home I began to weep uncontrollably. My hands were shaking and I felt them clenching the steering wheel. Every muscle in my body it seemed, was urging me to turn the van around and go home to safety. But my resignation to this outing won out, and I continued to drive. I knew with every fiber of my being that the Lord wanted me to make this trip. I knew for me it had to be my turn to carry the cross for awhile - to feel the weight of the sin of abortion upon my shoulders. For you see I know first hand the sin of abortion, because I have had one.

Eleven years ago, when I was merely 16, in the midst of an abusive teenage relationship I became pregnant. Through the fog of despair and hopelessness I was steered towards abortion as my only solution. I was born and raised Catholic, and yet in the panic of the moment all of that was forgotten. Feeling too weak fight what I saw as the inevitable I took what seemed me the only option. That decision forever changed my life. Very shortly after the abortion I fell into deep despair, and used drugs as a means to escape my guilt and pain. I found myself in treatment center upon treatment center, until I was finally able to grasp the fact that drugs were not helping me. Once I was clean I began to make my life better. I got out of the abusive relationship, and even applied to and went away to college. Even with all of this great self-help



## Coming Events

During Sanctity of Human Life week, January 20 - January 28, 2002, the following events are scheduled:

**Forty Hour Prayer Vigil**, January 21 - January 24, 2002, in front of the abortion center on North University Street in Peoria. Call Dan Smith at 691-3611 to volunteer to stand for an hour of prayer.

**Family Resources Center Open House**, Tuesday, January 22, 2002 from 5:30 - 6:30 PM, 321 Main Street, Peoria, before the Walk and Sanctity of Human Life Rally.

**Walk for Life**, 6:30 PM on Tuesday, January 22, 2002 at the Peoria County Courthouse. After prayer we will walk together to the Rally carrying signs showing our support for the sanctity of all innocent human life.

**Sanctity of Human Life Rally**, 7:00 PM on Tuesday, January 22, 2002 at Sacred Heart Church across from the Peoria Civic Center. The rally will feature special music and prayer along with reports on local Pro Life efforts. Ed Szymaowiak, Director of STOPP International, will give the keynote address.

**Sanctity Of Human Life Sunday**, January 20, 2002 is the Sunday on which many Churches in our nation make a special effort to remember unborn children and women in difficult pregnancies. Encourage the leadership of your church to boldly speak the truth this year.

"Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion." (Mother Teresa addressing The National Prayer Breakfast in Washington D.C., February 3, 1994.)

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that was going on I still could not face the horror of what I had done, so I stuffed it deep down inside of me.

In college, I felt the only way I could justify myself was to become an active member of the Pro-Choice movement. I even minored in Women's Studies, so that I could learn all I needed to know to make a good case for Pro-Choice arguments, and ultimately for myself. I spent three years actively endorsing abortion.

When I was a sophomore in college I met the man I was to marry. He went against everything I stood for. He was very conservative, very Catholic, and very Pro-Life. Despite all this, I fell deeply in love with him, and we were married my junior year. I learned to "tolerate" his views, and I'm sure he learned to pray for mine. Each of us was sure we would change each other's mind. It was when our first daughter was born that everything began to change for me. When I held her in my arms I could not believe the miracle of life that I was given the chance to be a part of. I immediately thought of the baby I aborted, and suffered through serious post-partum depression. But remembering that all I had to do was merely to stuff it inside- I was able to once again move forward. I did however feel this incredible need to be the perfect mother to Paige. I had to do everything right, and she had to be perfectly happy in order for me to make amends for my past wrongs.

When Paige was only 18 months we found ourselves pregnant once again. This time however we found out 5 months into our pregnancy that our baby had a severe birth defect known as Anencephaly, and that he would not live. He lived for only 2 hours after his birth, just long enough for him to be baptized, and for us to tell him goodbye. It was his short, and beautiful life that made me realize that life is precious no matter what. I began to suffer greatly, not only from his death, but from the loss of my baby at my own hands. I became seriously depressed, and began to believe that God had taken Ryan away from us to atone for what I had done at 16. I had no idea that God's mercy was infinite and powerful. I became fearful of God, and turned my back on him completely. Four months later we became pregnant again, only to miscarry. I saw this as a reinforcement of God's vengeful nature.

Fifteen months after Ryan's birth I gave birth to our fourth child Isaiah. Isaiah was my first glimpse into the loving heart of God. From the first moment Isaiah was a happy joy-filled child. He laughed very early on, and today he is still a constant source of laughter in our house. Isaiah restored my faith in miracles and my sense of Joy. Maria Rose was born just fifteen months after Isaiah, and as I held her in my arms I knew that I could not continue on the road I was on. The pain was too great, and for my children's sake, both living and in heaven I needed to become reconciled with God and with myself. My soul needed rest.

I was put in touch with the world's most wonderful therapist, and we began the long hard work of repairing the wounds of my abortion. He made me go back and tell my experience, I needed to take responsibility for what I had done, and at the same time see how there were others who needed to shoulder some of that responsibility. He had me face the fact that my child was in heaven and that she did not hate me, or blame me, that she had forgiven me. The hardest part was for me to feel forgiven by God. It was here that my therapist introduced me to the most loving priest I had ever met. He helped me to make my first confession in years. To confess not only the abortion, but also all those sins that led up to and made it possible for me to have an abortion. He helped me to finally see God's mercy.

The most difficult aspect of the whole process was when we all decided that it was time for me to release this baby to God, and to put some closure on it. You see I had lived with this pain and guilt for ten years, and I was reluctant to let it go. That would mean I would have to forgive myself and I did not know if I could do that. We decided to have a Mass of forgiveness in honor of my baby. I wrote her a letter to read at mass, and I named her Faith, for the gift of my Faith that she gave back to me. During that mass I could feel her presence as well as the presence of Jesus, and I knew that forgiveness was taking place. That night I was able to release Faith as well as Ryan, and the baby I miscarried to God. I no longer saw Ryan as my punishment, rather I saw his life as a gift. It was an incredible moment, and one that will stay with me always. I knew that I needed to go forth and do something with my experience, so that I could bring honor to Faith's life.

The priest became my spiritual director, and under his care I went through a major conversion experience. I was able to find my faith in a way that I never could before. Because of my abortion I had separated myself from God, convinced that I could have no salvation in him. I also found a great source of hope in the mother of God, Mary. I knew that if she could watch her son being crucified, I could offer up my losses for

*“Let me say plainly that no man’s blood can be laid at my door, for I did not shrink from declaring all God’s message to you. And now beware! Be sure that you feed and shepherd God’s flock— His church— purchased with His blood— for the Holy Spirit is holding you responsible as overseers.”*

*The Apostle Paul to The elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:26-28 (Living Bible)*

### Heart of Illinois Life Chain 600 Strong

Prolife members of many of the churches in the Peoria area gathered to form the twelfth annual human life chain which stretched almost four miles in Peoria on Sunday, October 7. The Life Chain is the largest nationwide prolife event. American Christians gathered in more than 800 cities and towns during this hour of prayer. This year Life Chain participants displayed new signs with the message, Pray to End Abortion, as well as six other messages displayed in previous years.

This year we were especially mindful of the message on other signs: Life – The First Inalienable Right. At our nation’s conception 225 years ago, the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that Life is the first inalienable right, given by God, our creator, to each of us at our creation, not just after birth.

Our founding fathers held this conviction not as mere opinion, but rather as self-evident truth. An attack on innocent life, wherever situated, is an attack on our freedom everywhere.

The 9-11 attacks on more innocent lives remind us that for our nation to survive, we must likewise hold the truth that life is an inalienable right and constitute our government to secure the right to life to all, born and preborn. Preborn children depend upon us for their safety and protection. As they grow up, we will depend on them for our safety and protection too. They will become the citizens and soldiers, firefighters and peacekeepers who safeguard us. In solidarity, we, born and unborn, are interdependent.

Plans for next year’s Life Chain on Sunday, October 1 , 2002 are already underway. To help promote the Life Chain, contact Dan Smith at 691-3611.

### **Central Illinois Right to Life: Membership and Volunteer Drive**

If you would like to help defend life in Central Illinois, become a member of Central Illinois Right to Life and continue receiving our quarterly newsletter by returning this form and enclosing the annual dues of \$10.00.

Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Address : \_\_\_\_\_

City : \_\_\_\_\_

State : \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code : \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone : \_\_\_\_\_

MEMBER DUES : \$10\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

DONATION : \$5\_\_ \$10\_\_ \$15\_\_ \$25\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_ Thank You!

VOLUNTEER HELP : Please put my name on your list of volunteers.

*Central Illinois Right To Life, Inc.*

*Presents*

*The Annual Sanctity of Human Life*

# **Walk and Rally**

**Tuesday, January 22, 2002**

*with the following events included*

*Open House at the Family Resources Center*

**321 Main Street in Peoria, IL**

**5:30 pm to 6:30 pm**

*Walk for Life*

**Peoria County Courthouse**

**6:30 pm**

Prayer, singing, and walk to the Church for the Rally to follow

*Sanctity of Human Life Rally*

**Sacred Heart Church** (by Peoria Civic Center)

**7:00 pm**

**Key Note Speaker : Ed Szymaowiak,**

**Director of STOPP International**

**[www.stoppinternational.org](http://www.stoppinternational.org)**

## 40 Hour Prayer Vigil and Walk for Life

Sanctity of Human Life Week begins on Sunday, Jan.20. There will be a prayer vigil at the abortion center running from 7 am to 5 pm on Mon. through Thurs., Jan. 21-24. We need volunteers to pray for an hour at a time. Although any and all prayer is greatly appreciated, we especially need the following times filled: 7 am- 1 pm on Mon. and Tues, noon-5 pm on Thurs, 7-8 am and 3-5 pm all days. Call 691-3611 to sign up and get details. Don't forget the Life Walk and Rally, starting at 6:30 at the courthouse on Tuesday., Jan.22, across the street from the Family Resources Center where an open house will be held from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. Thanks for your help!! Jeanne and Dan Smith

all unborn babies. It was because of this new devotion to Mary that the thought of saying the Rosary at the clinic appealed to me. I felt deep

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within me that I had come so far, and was healing so quickly that I would have no problems going to the clinic. I was wrong.

As I was saying it was a physically painful thing for me to drive to that clinic. Not to mention the emotional turmoil I was experiencing. I realized that the last time I had driven to an abortion clinic was for an entirely different reason. This would be my first time back. As I pulled into the parking lot, anxiety seized me. I could not get my hands to release the steering wheel. I kept willing myself to open the door and get out. I found it difficult to catch my breath. I finally managed to open the door and get out of the van, but when I did I doubled over in pain. You see I knew exactly what was going on in there. I knew what the women would be feeling. I knew what the "counselors" would be telling them. I knew physically what they would be going through, and emotionally. Above all else I knew that babies were going to die, and souls were going to be lost, and that women would walk out of there with less of themselves than they had gone in there with. It was almost unbearable for me. I begin to pray, and to offer up the pain I was feeling for each mother that went in there. I prayed that my children in heaven would intercede for those babies that were to be killed, I asked them to watch over them. For each step I took closer I could hear the sound of the vacuum, I could see the doctor with the rubber glove, and the mask hiding his face. I felt the shame of getting dressed in the cubicle after. I tasted the lemonade and cookies the made you eat before you could leave. It was all there in front of me, a parking lot away. I knew for the very first time, a mere glimpse of what that cross must have felt like to Jesus, the weight of all that sin. His body being beaten, he was so weary, and yet he walked on. So I too walked on, taking on all the sin of those who would enter. I gave it all to God, and begged for his mercy. I joined the group of people who were praying, and I prayed with them through my tears. Each one I shed, I shed for the mothers. It is so hard when you are in a desperate situation to see the whole picture of it all. I feel nothing but love and compassion for these mothers. They do not realize fully the evil that they are a party to. But believe me when I tell you truly that they suffer afterwards. They suffer.

I went home that day feeling exhausted and empty. It wasn't until weeks later that I began to realize the weight of what I had done. I have to believe that through my going there in spite of my sufferings, that God will accept my sacrifice and use it for some good. It is that which I wish to do for Faith, and for the greater glory of God. I wish to help even one woman find the incredible mercy of God. I find myself very willing to do whatever God wishes of me to help end abortion, and to help ease the suffering of those effected by it. I asked my therapist if he thought I needed to go back there. He told me I needed to go back at least once. I understand now that the first time I went ten years ago, I lost my soul. The second time I went back was an offering to God for all the women. I need to go back one more time to reclaim myself. To fully realize that I am no longer that 16 year old girl who was so very lost. I need to find her, and hug her, and help her to find rest in the heart of Jesus. I know she is there, and maybe I will see a young girl who is about my age when I went, and maybe I can do something to help, if only to

***During and following the awful events of September 11, 2001, we have all witnessed and sympathized with, the much publicized suffering of the victims of terror and the pain endured by their families and friends. Because of what we have seen, we will never be the same again.***

***Regrettably we are often much less aware of the private pain of those around us. After 29 years of legal abortion, millions carry the brokenness and loss it has brought to our land. Many bear this burden alone, for fear of rejection by family and friends. Sometimes a person reaches out to share their experience. Then, as the reality of the damage caused by each abortion becomes unmistakably clear, no one who hears is ever quite the same. Such is the power of the story we print above - with gratitude to this courageous woman who has cared enough to give so deeply of herself to each of us.***

**CIRTL**

*Central Illinois Right To Life, Inc.  
is planning again this year*

# **A 40 Hour Prayer Vigil**

**to be held in front of the abortion center  
at 7405 North University Street  
In Peoria, Illinois**

**The Prayer Vigil will be held over 4 days  
during the annual Sanctity of Human Life week  
from January 21, 2002 to January 24, 2002**

**Call CIRTL board member, Dan Smith  
at (309) 691-3611  
to volunteer to join this effort**

**If every Church could be represented there - for  
just one hour, the testimony for life to our  
community would be overwhelming!**

*... could you not watch with me one hour?*

Matt. 26:40b

HELP!!! Single? Children Grown? Semi-retired?  
WE NEED YOU!!! Do you have an hour or two now  
& then to help Central Illinois Right to Life's board  
members with a project? Can we put you on a list of  
prospective volunteers to contact in the future.  
Remember, the "Pro-Choice" i.e. the pro-abortion crowd

has countless workers and millions of dollars. We  
operate on a bare-bones budget and are dependent on  
willing volunteers. If you could help a little in any way,  
it would be greatly appreciated and immensely  
gratifying. Please fill out the coupon on page 3 and

## Bioethicist Conference In Peoria

Founding editor of "Ethics and Medicine" and chairman of the London based Center for Bioethics and Public Policy, Dr. Nigel Cameron, presented a day-long conference on October 20, in Peoria to more than fifty persons of diverse backgrounds ranging from physicians to students. Dr. Cameron, also Dean of the Wilberforce Forum, gave three presentations: a bioethics overview, an explanation of cloning and stem cell research with emphasis on public policy, and the current state of euthanasia.

The conference was sponsored by the Illinois Federation for Right to Life, St. Francis Medical Center, the University of Illinois College of Medicine, the Peoria Christian Medical Association and Central Illinois Right to Life.

The theme of the event was "Life is More Than Science". The Wilberforce Forum is a Christian worldview think tank in Washington, DC, founded by Charles W. Colson. As Dean of the Wilberforce Forum, Dr. Cameron's primary responsibilities are to direct educational and fellowship programs and to guide the development of publishing programs and The Wilberforce Forum and BreakPoint websites.

Dr. Cameron, former Provost and Distinguished Professor of Theology and Culture at Trinity International University & Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, is a recognized spokesman for Judeo-Christian and Hippocratic perspectives on medicine and bioethics.

On August 1, 2001, Dr. Cameron testified before a US Senate hearing on stem cell research, saying, "The question that confronts us today is whether we should use members of our own kind, homo sapiens, in whatever stage of biological existence, for a purpose that is other than the good of the individual concerned; whether we should sanction the use of ourselves, in however early a form, as experimental subjects whose final end is destruction . . . Let me share my sense of dismay at the degree to which this debate has sometimes degenerated into an iteration and reiteration of the potential benefits of this kind of experimentation, as if those who oppose public funding for what they consider unethical research are either ignorant of or heedless toward disease and its sufferers. . . For the question we face is distinctly ethical in character. At the heart of our conception of civilization lies the principle of restraint: that there are things we shall not do, shall never do, even though they may bring us benefit some things we shall never do, though the heavens fall."

Thanks especially are due to Kay Grilliot of the Illinois Federation Right to Life for establishing the conference and to Dr. Jim Barnett and Dr. Richard Frederick of the Peoria Christian Medical Association for obtaining continuing education credits for physicians attending the conference.

Contributed by Dan Smith, chairperson of CIRTIL Outreach Committee

# Central Illinois Life News

## “ Pro Life Billboard Campaign Continues With 24 Hour Hotline ”

Four billboards with Pro Life and crisis pregnancy help messages have now been up for over a year in the Peoria area. These boards are strategically located on S. Adams, N.E. Jefferson, and Willow Knolls in Peoria, and on Main Street in Creve Coeur. We need additional funds, in order to maintain these boards and hopefully to put up more.

The phone number on each board is manned 24 hours a day so that anyone needing help can talk to someone without delay and without cost. Babies have been saved from abortion through contacts made over this hotline. The message on each board reaches hundreds of motorists each day with a clear and simple truth - a much needed message which, once seen, is hard to deny and harder to forget.

The donations that you send are reaching your community with the truth about the Sanctity of Human Life in many ways, including these boards, and our rallies, newsletters,



*Unity on the essentials of the Sanctity of Human Life is our objective. We are not seeking uniformity of opinion on all matters.. Therefore, some ideas advocated by the authors of articles in Central Illinois Life News or on the Central Illinois Right To Life website may not necessarily reflect the the personal views of all the members and officers of Central Illinois Right To Life, Inc.*

**Central Illinois Right to Life, Inc.**

4100 N. War Memorial Drive

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