

Central Illinois Life News

Pastors Speak Out

In this column, we share reflections of Pro-Life Pastors from Central Illinois. The following was submitted by Fr. Jeff J. Windy, Associate Pastor of St Mark Catholic Church in Peoria.

This year on January 22, I will again join several thousands of people from various religious denominations and cultural backgrounds in a common cause, *the defense of human life.*

For the past five years I have walked the streets of the Nation's Capital in prayerful protest of the killing of millions of innocent children. However this year will be different from all the others. This year I will march as a priest. I was ordained on May 25 for the diocese of Peoria with ten other men. I attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary, a seminary which has trained future priests well in defending all the issues concerning life. The entire seminary with its students and faculty attend the March for Life each year. I am thankful for the educational and priestly formation given to me at this seminary.

Three years ago during the march I watched as the Rector of our seminary was spat upon by some "pro-choice" protesters. Now as a priest more than ever I wonder how women can feel so strongly about the right to have an abortion, when abortion ultimately hurts them so deeply.

During my first seven months as a priest, working near

a university campus, I have heard and seen the pain of abortion up close. I listen as women and men cry as they experience the pain of abortion. Some of them have held unto their pain for more than thirty years.

We hear constantly from the media that women want control over their bodies, yet what I see time and time again is that many women continue to be controlled and manipulated by others. All you have to do is stand outside the abortion "clinic" in Peoria and watch the faces of the women that are driven into its parking lot. You can see fear and anger as they are pressured by family or husband or boyfriend into aborting their children.

Most women who have chosen to have abortions themselves did not do it because they felt it was their "right" or because they wanted to control their own bodies. They chose it out of desperation, because they were in a crisis. Abortion seemed to be their only choice and there were no other alternatives or support given to them.

Women feel relieved immediately after having an abortion and sincerely believe they made the best choice, only to find later that emotional scares often remain along with the physical. Some examples from doctors I have spoken with are sterility, due to having multiple abortions or excessive bleeding or infections caused by their abortion, along with miscarriages--which have also been linked to the use of the pill--and other reproductive problems. And no one warned them, not even their doctors, until after the abortion.

During my first seven months, I have seen abortion scar too many lives, lives of both men and women. This January 22 I ask each of you to stand for **Life** inside and outside the womb. Many have no voice but ours and if they do have a voice it is muted by those who financially profit by an industry that is destroying our nation one life at a time.

I believe that because of the millions of abortions being performed today, there are more women dying from and being physically, emotionally and psychologically hurt by abortion than when it **was illegal**. I am unsure if the legality of abortion has hurt women as much as the attitude people have taken towards it. Adolescents use abortion as a type of birth control, totally unaware that multiple abortions can leave them sterile. Boyfriends send their girlfriends to abortion clinics as if they were having a cyst removed or a tooth pulled. I think such language as "procedure," or referring to the child as "tissue" or a "cell mass" used in abortion "clinics" have contributed to this attitude.

We must begin to realize that abortion is not this wonderful right, as the right to vote, or equal rights. There is nothing wonderful about abortion. There is nothing wonderful about a dismembered child. Abortion brings pain sooner or later, and in some cases, severe consequences. **Stand up for what is right! Stand up for life and protect the most innocent among us.**

Rebecca's Story

It is my pleasure to share the story of our daughter Rebecca, a story that took an unexpected turn in July, 1993, when I was almost five months pregnant. An ultrasound discovered that our baby had a large hole in her diaphragm and because of this her abdominal organs were moving into her chest cavity. The worst problem was that her left lung did not have room to develop and her heart was shifting to the right, a condition called a diaphragmatic hernia.

I will never forget that day when the doctors told us our baby had a severe defect. The baby I could feel moving inside of me, whose heart I could see beating on the ultrasound screen, whose legs I could see kicking, was considered very high risk. That day I cried many tears.

Then the doctors told us the "options." Our options were these; we could have this baby at one of three area hospitals, all with different levels of machines available to care for our baby, or we could have an abortion. We only had a short time for an abortion in Illinois, or we would have to drive to Kansas for a later abortion.

So there they were- our options laid out before us, leaving us grieving over the present condition of our child and scared. For now we had no idea what was ahead for our baby and for us. But we were sure of one thing- we could not possibly end this child's life. After so much information was taken in, and so many questions were asked our thoughts shifted and we started to think about our baby and what she needed.

"There is another life here. I can feel you move. I'm your provider. Your protector. What do you need? A mother who is upset, nervous and in tears at all hours? No, so thank you Lord for peace throughout the rest of my pregnancy." When reports came in sonogram, after sonogram, after sonogram, with no encouraging news, *"Thank you Lord, for peace"*.

We decided to give our daughter every possible chance at life, so when November came we packed our bags and drove to the Children's Hospital at St. Francis Medical Center in Peoria. There the most extensive machines were available to help the daughter we now called Rebecca. She was about to be delivered when her heart rate dropped and she had to be taken by emergency c-section.

The room I was in turned to chaos. There must have been fifteen people, each rushing to do their job. *"Thank you lord, again for peace."* I didn't get to see or hold my baby on her birthday. She was rushed to intensive care. My husband was with her though, and when my anesthesia wore off, he didn't tell me that she had a lung tube, three monitors, IVs, and oscillator. Instead he showed me a picture he had taken and told me how very cute she was.

The doctors had quite a time getting her stable so they could perform the needed surgery. Her good lung collapsed and she had to be resuscitated. Her oxygen level dropped several times and her blood pressure went up. 24 hours after she was born, the doctors knew she needed ECMO, a type of life support that would do the work of her lungs.

"Oh, Rebecca, you can do it. Keep fighting, you're doing great. We love you and there is so much we want to show you outside this hospital. Your life is precious, Rebecca." All life is precious, our country needs a desperate reminder of this- that there is great value and worth in every human life, no matter the stage or condition.

During this time Rebecca had excellent doctors and nurses. They made sure she was comfortable. I remember her looking around, clasping our fingers, and sleeping a lot as all babies do. She did well on ECMO and at 5 days old, was stable enough to have surgery. The doctors explained the procedure, with all the risks. Then my husband and I went to be with our daughter until we had to leave the room. It was the hardest moment of my life leaving that room; and surely the longest hours waiting for the surgery to be over.

Good news came though- she did well through surgery and the complications never occurred. Over the next few weeks she fought to get off ECMO, then to be weaned from the ventilator- all major steps. When she was seventeen days old we got to hold her for the first time and when she was one month old she drank from a bottle for the first time. **You see, babies fight for life!**

Rebecca continued down the road to recovery until she was just on oxygen. One Friday, when she was almost two months old, Rebecca came home. The oxygen continued for another month. Now she lives a normal, healthy life- making us laugh with her singing and dancing, blessing us beyond words.

There are a lot of birth defects that can be corrected and we were constantly amazed at what medicine can do in this day. Unfortunately, not all babies can survive. Some babies born with a similar problem as our Rebecca only live a short time. To many, these babies' short lives may appear meaningless, but to those who love these children, their lives overflow with meaning.

If you hear anything that I've said, please hear this Life can be hard, but God is good. He loves you and wants to help you through your struggles. In conclusion, I would like to answer a question Rebecca asked me as I tucked her in one night. She surprised me by saying "Mommy, when I get big can I be you?" "Yes Rebecca, I will let you get big. I will let you have life and be whoever



Rebecca

By Rebecca's Mom, Rhonda Rhodes

Sanctity of Human Life Rally

The Annual Sanctity of Human Life Rally will be held at the Peoria Civic Center, 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, January 19, 1997. David Reardon will speak. The Rally will be preceded by Family Resources Center Open House from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. and the Walk for Life from the Courthouse to the Civic Center at 2:00 p.

“For unto us a child is born...” “Emmanuel... God with us!”

Come to the Sanctity of Human Life Brunch at the Pere Marquette Hotel on Wednesday, January 22, 1997 from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. The Speaker will be Dr. William Deegle, a former abortionist. Tickets are available from the Women’s Pregnancy Center at 688-0202.

A Prayer Service will be held at the Field of Innocents Beginning at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 25. Exit I-155 at Townline Rd south of Tremont. Go west 1 mile then left on Locust one mile then left on Scott Rd back to the Interstate.

Outreach Committee News: “... the babe leaped in my womb for joy!”

Do you wish you could accomplish something for the Pro-Life cause, but are not sure what to do? The third Monday of every month at 7:30 p.m., we have a meeting at the Christian Center in Peoria. We come together to share ideas and to renew our efforts to reach people with the Pro-Life message.

At our December meeting, we once again assembled Christmas packages for expectant mothers in several local homes for women in crisis pregnancy. At our January meeting we folded, stapled, and prepared for mailing this very newsletter which you are now reading. (We do this service from time to time.) There are many opportunities to serve and share and learn so please attend one of our monthly meetings and see for yourself!

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__

DONATION : \$5__ \$10__ \$15__ \$25__ Other_____ Thank You!

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Please Plan For These Coming Events in 1997

CIRTL Garage Sale

Please begin to collect good used items to donate to our annual fund-raising sale which will be held this Spring. A definite date will be announced as soon as plans are completed. If you can help organize this event, or can give of your time to work at the sale, please call

Run / Walk for Life

The annual Run / Walk for Life will be held in August at Bradley Park in Peoria. Please plan to participate. Trophies are awarded to male and female winners in several age divisions. Volunteers are needed to help with this event. Call us at CIRTL at 685-3034 for additional information.

Annual Life Chain

Central Illinois Right to Life will sponsor the annual Life Chain in October 1997. Participants will stand in witness to their commitment to the Sanctity of Human Life along University Street and Glen Avenue in Peoria. **Church Coordinators are needed to help organize this event.** If you can assist, call Dan at 263-2086.

Central Illinois Right to Life, Inc.

4100 N. War Memorial Drive

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