



From the Director

Dear Friends of Life,

March for Life

Bishop Sartain's Trip to the March for Life in Washington, DC, inspired many young people to deepen their commitment to the Gospel of Life and the young people on the trip inspired many of us, old folks, to renew our commitment to the Gospel of Life. Bishop Sartain's consoling and encouraging words to the group on behalf of life at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes set the tone for the trip, and his words at St. Paul's Church in Damascus, Maryland, sent us forth to March for Life. The Eucharist was the food that fed our souls the night we arrived at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception with 10,000 young people, 60 bishops, and over a thousand priests, deacons, and seminarians from around the country.

I personally would like to thank Joliet Catholic Academy, Montini Catholic High School, Driscoll Catholic High School, and Bishop McNamara Catholic High School for their support of the March. We had nearly 200 participants. The vast majority were young people from every corner of our Diocese. We had 15 from St. Mary in Paxton, over 40 from Joliet Catholic Academy, and many more.

Although the 15-hour bus ride home was grueling, it was a wonderful chance to hear from the young people on the trip. The overwhelming theme was that, seeing the throng of 300,000 people, they realized that they were not alone and that it was okay to believe that a child in the womb is a human person. One young woman had the courage to stand up and profess that she was confused about where she stood when she began the trip, but by the time the March was over, she knew that she was unequivocally pro-life. Everyone on the bus

congratulated her and rejoiced with her.

We had one bishop, six priests, two deacons, high school teachers, campus ministers, youth ministers, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, friends, Catholics, and non-Catholics from the seven counties of the Diocese of Joliet. It was a difficult trip at times, making the long trip cross country, but there was also a sense of exhilaration, peace, and joy. All were moved when Bishop Sartain and representatives from St. Mary Paxton, Joliet Catholic Academy, and Montini Catholic High School placed the wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier to honor those who have fought so gallantly for our freedom—the freedom to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.



If you would like to see video and photos of this amazing trip, please log onto the Life Office webpage: www.dioceseofjoliet.org/life. Additionally, please watch for information on next year's March for Life Trip with Bishop Sartain in the lead!

Freedom of Choice Act

The Life Office distributed nearly 150,000 postcards to parishes, and so many of you responded generously with your time and effort. The postcard campaign was a success in that the U.S. Legislature seems hesitant to introduce FOCA as such. Unfortunately, it is being introduced piecemeal. You may already be aware that a State of Illinois version of the legislation has been introduced into the Illinois House of Representatives (House Bill 2354). Please contact your State Representatives and Senators and ask them to vote against it (<http://www.ilga.gov>). Please also contact Governor Quinn and ask him not to sign the bill should it get to his desk.

Thank you for all of your work on behalf of life. May Almighty God bless you and your family.

In Christ,
Fr. Thomas A. Milota
Director
Diocese of Joliet Life Office



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God's Grace

By Marilyn Skarbek

I recently was watching a news program in which the host was interviewing a pro-choice activist. The host referred to a portion of the Freedom of Choice Act which states a woman would have the right to choose "to terminate a pregnancy after viability where termination is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman" and asked the activist to identify a situation when an abortion would be needed to protect the life or health of a woman. The activist responded with surprise saying, "Are you kidding me?"

"No," responded the host, "because all the physicians that I have interviewed say that abortion is not necessary to protect the health of a woman." The activist mumbled and bumbled through a response but never answered the question. The reason is simple. There is NEVER a situation in which aborting a child will save a mother's life. I know this, because I was a mother whose life was seriously threatened due to my pregnancy.

On December 23, 2003, I was experiencing complications associated with my pregnancy. I was 25 weeks into the pregnancy at that time. I called my doctor and explained what I was experiencing. Her response to me was "Get in the car and get to the hospital right now." I got my two children, ages 4 and 18 months, in the car and drove to the hospital. After a short time, my doctor came in and informed me that I would be transferred to another hospital by ambulance. My situation was so serious that they felt it was best that I was transferred to another hospital to another group of doctors, who specialized in difficult pregnancies. A short time after I arrived at the second hospital, my situation significantly worsened. My husband, who had left to take care of our other two children, was called back to the hospital. There was a very good chance that one of three things might happen that night: 1) I would be

lost, 2) the baby would be lost, or 3) the baby would have to be delivered at 25 weeks to save either one or both of our lives. We were informed that the odds of the baby surviving outside of the womb at 25 weeks was about 50%. Of the 50% that survive, about 50% of those will experience lasting physical and or mental deficiencies that can range from mild to very severe. This was a very devastating reality. Luckily, we made it through the night. Two days later, on Christmas night, I had a repeat episode of the situation from the 23rd. This time, I required a blood transfusion. The next day, the doctors informed us that I would not be allowed to leave the hospital until the baby was born. It was just too risky. I spent the next nine weeks in the hospital. During that time, the doctors would tell us the same thing every day. This was going to be a balancing act. They

*"Every day I tried
not to break
down and cry.
Every day I
failed."*

would constantly weigh my health against the baby's health. If there ever came a time where my life was in danger or the baby's life was in danger, the baby would be delivered. There was no discussion about this. They also told us that if we needed to deliver the baby early, they would do everything they could to save the baby's life and help the baby thrive. In fact, one of the very few times that I was allowed to leave my room was for a visit to the intensive care nursery. We were encouraged to visit the nursery in order to prepare ourselves should the baby need to be delivered prematurely. The doctors wanted us to

see what very premature infants looked like and how they were taken care of. They also wanted us to see how these infants can thrive. At the same time that the doctors were preparing us for the worst, they gave us hope. Never—not one time during this whole ordeal—was it even suggested that abortion may need to be considered in order to save my life.

Okay, you may say, but what about the mental and emotional health of the mother? If you think we did not experience severe emotional distress during this time, you're wrong. Every member of my family was emotionally affected

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God's Grace

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by this situation. I was not able to work which created months of financial hardship for us. In addition, we had two young children at home. My husband had to care for them, work full time, and find time to visit me, all while dealing with the fear that at any moment something terrible might happen to the baby or me. I was confined to a hospital room for nine weeks. I was only allowed to get out of bed once a day to take a shower. I saw my children once a week. For a few weeks, they did not want to come near me. It was very lonely. I was terrified of dying. Every day I tried not to break down and cry. Every day I failed. On top of this, my husband and I had to deal with the possibility that we may have a child with severe physical



or mental disabilities. Again, abortion was never suggested. Instead, the doctors encouraged us to discuss our concerns with them. The nurses encouraged me to meet with social workers and clergy at the hospital. Everybody tried to keep me busy with books and crossword puzzles. They tried to support my husband and children as best they could. Looking back, my husband probably needed more emotional support than he got. I give him credit. He was a rock. By the grace of God, we made it to 34 weeks before the baby was born. Appropriately, we named her Grace. She is four-years-old now and has no lasting effects.

My story is a direct repudiation of the idea that abortion may be necessary to protect the life or health of the mother. Yes, there are times in which it may be necessary to deliver a baby to save a mother's life, but there is never a time in which killing a



baby will save a mother's life. Never. I hope my story will help people understand how this idea has been so grossly misrepresented. I hope people can take comfort in the fact that there are options other than abortion for a woman whose pregnancy is causing her physical complications or mental and emotional distress. And I hope my story can be used to support the idea that choosing life is the right thing to do. ■

Teachable Moments in Chastity Education

By Coleen Kelly Mast, M.S., D.H.L.

When my first son was 7 years old, he came running home one day and said, "Mom, am I gay?" I replied, "Why do you ask?" He said, "Larry and I were running in the backyard, and he said that the last one on the swing set is gay, and I was the last one." Pausing to remember my education in human sexuality age-appropriateness lessons, I turned from my kitchen duties to say to him, "Do you know what gay means?" He said, "No."

Scrambling for my Master's Degree knowledge in Health Education mixed with my Catholic formation, I realized that the simplest answers do not come from those thick textbooks but from the 'grace of state' of being a parent along with a good knowledge of morality and some prudent common sense to use the right words.

My son said, "What is gay anyway?" Thinking of his innocence, I had to come up with something at his simple knowledge level, and I answered, "Years ago, it used to mean 'happy' or 'joyful' like in the Christmas Carol, 'Deck the Halls' where we say 'don we now our gay apparel.' But lately people have been using the term for 'a man who wants to marry a man.' My little son looked horrified. I said, "Do you want to marry a man?" He said, "No way, mom." So, I told him one of my husband's favorite punch lines, "Remember that God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." Then my son said, "Mom, I don't think I even want to get married at all, and if I did, I would never marry a man." To that I responded, "God's plan is that a marriage is supposed to be between a man and a

woman, so I am glad that you agree with God. He knows everything, and He's always right."

I figured that this lesson had gone on long enough for a 7 year old, so I left him with two thoughts: "Son, always think first about God's plan before deciding something. And for now, please just stay in our back yard and run around it 10 times a day until you are faster than Larry."

How many teachable moments do we receive in our children's first 12 years of life? Are we prepared to lead them step-by-step to a true understanding of God's plan? Education in human sexuality and chastity is first the responsibility of the parents who are present and important in their children's lives. There are so many opportunities today to use those teachable moments to bring our children to the knowledge of God's plan for marriage and family. For more stories on teachable moments, I have a talk available for parishes, schools, and parent groups called "Raising Love-Wise Kids in a Lustful World," which is especially for parents of primary and elementary age children. ■



A popular parish speaker, Coleen Kelly Mast is the author of the *Love and Life* workbooks for Catholic parents, teachers and teens. She also wrote the first public school abstinence curriculum to be approved and studied by the Federal Government, *Sex Respect: The Option of True Sexual Freedom*. Mrs. Mast has 5 'almost-all-grown' children and serves on the Joliet Diocesan Culture of Life Board. She is a talk show host on "The Doctor Is In" in 120 cities nationwide for Ave Maria Radio and EWTN Radio. Coleen can be reached through her website www.sexrespect.com.

Just to be Born Alive

(Continued from page 1)

to develop correctly, as well as a heart defect. My husband and I wept in the doctor's office upon hearing the devastating news. The doctor then informed us that Madeline would probably not reach full-term and would most likely be stillborn sometime during the pregnancy. We have modern medicine—how could this be happening? Upon hearing the news, we told the doctor that we would do whatever we could to give Madeline the best possible life she could have. Our doctor asked us if we wanted to terminate. We immediately refused, and our doctors never brought up aborting again. I felt an instant bond and protectiveness for my baby. If God wanted her, he could have her, but no one else could.

I believe God chose Jeff and I to be Madeline's parents for reasons I did not know. It was a very difficult and emotional time. I woke every morning wondering if this day was going to be the day our baby died. I prayed constantly for Madeline just to be born alive. I wanted her to hear me tell her that I loved her, to be baptized, and to die in the loving arms of her parents. It was the daily recitation of the rosary that brought me the most peace, hope, and comfort. After all, Mary buried a child.

Madeline continued to move and grow, even though we were told that she would not. We planned for birth. We had our priest on standby and enrolled in a perinatal hospice. It is a program that supports the family and tries to create as many memories for them as possible.

Approaching the end of the pregnancy, a whole other set of problems arose so that normal delivery options were not available. We had to choose between risking my life and our future children's lives and risking Madeline's life. This was very difficult for me. I would beg God to take my life and save my baby. How was I supposed to make this choice? Our priest told us to pray. It was in the quiet of prayer that we were answered, and we knew without regret what to do.

God blessed us with a full-term baby and about 30



minutes of perfect, precious life. During which time, Madeline was loved, baptized, and confirmed. She was welcomed into life surrounded by family, friends, hospice, and our priest. The love in the delivery room was palpable. We

knew God was present.

My pregnancy with Madeline and her short life were very difficult but changed everyone she encountered. Some people changed their minds about the sanctity of life, while others truly understood what it meant to submit freely to God's will. God was so generous to us that we decided to donate Madeline's heart valves with hopes that two other families would not feel our sorrow. Losing a child is painful beyond words, but I can honestly say that having Madeline was a true gift from God. I go to Mass on Fridays, the day she died, to thank God for her short life and unblemished entrance into eternal life. ■



Post-Abortion Healing

The Joliet Diocese recognizes and encourages post-abortive women and men to attend the **Rachel's Vineyard Weekend Retreats** held twice yearly at the St. Charles Borromeo Pastoral Center in Romeoville. The next scheduled retreat will be held September 18-20, 2009, beginning Friday evening at 6 P.M. and continuing through Sunday early afternoon. **Contact Kay at 1-866-99-4-GIVE (4483)** for additional information. Additional information and registration brochures are available on the Joliet Diocesan Website: <http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/life/documents/RachelVineyardBrochureB2008.pdf>

The Diocese of Joliet welcomes and invites you to return to wholeness following an abortion. It is not the unforgivable sin. If you know of anyone suffering from an abortion in the past, there is help a phone call away. Urge them to make that call today. Strict confidentiality is always observed.

Umbert the Unborn by Gary Cangemi



No Matter How Small

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other life. To borrow a line from Dr. Seuss, "A person is a person no matter how small." How many of us Catholics really believe this? It has been estimated that on average, eight embryos are sacrificed for every one successful IVF pregnancy. This clearly shows that the ends do not justify the means. Then, there is the problem of what to do with all the unused embryos. Should they simply be discarded as though they were just biological material, or because they are going to be discarded, should not some good come out of them by making them available for embryonic stem cell research? If we as Catholics believe that life begins at conception and that all life is worthy of respect, then the answer to

these questions is a resounding NO! Human life must never be treated as a commodity to be traded, but as a gift to be respected. God alone decides who should receive this gift, not man!

The cross of infertility can be a heavy one to bear, and the Church is aware of the suffering of couples trying desperately to conceive. There are many acceptable options to help a couple conceive, and these should be offered to and considered by all couples. Some examples of acceptable options would be medications to help with ovulation, surgical correction of blocked fallopian tubes, surgical correction of male infertility, and surgery to correct anatomical defects in females. There are a few fertility specialists who will abide by the teachings of our Catholic faith and do everything short of IVF to help couples achieve a pregnancy. These doctors need our support. In the end, it comes down to respect for all human life, the very young and the very

old. God has a calling for each of us, and we must never lose faith that He knows what is best for us. This at times can be very difficult to accept but very true nonetheless.

I would encourage those couples that are struggling with infertility to read both *Dignitas Personae* and *Donum Vitae* and then discuss them with their priest. If this article has generated questions, please feel free to contact me directly. May God continue to bless you. ■

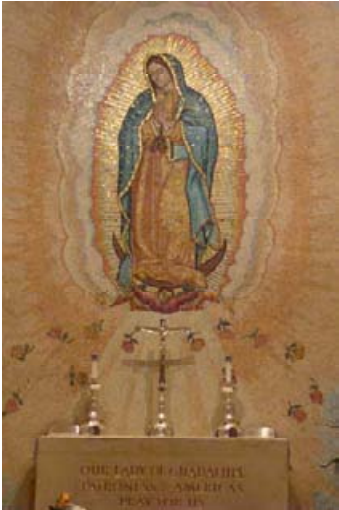


Dr. Robert Lawler is a board certified, fully pro-life Obstetrician/Gynecologist. His practice is located in the professional building at Good Samaritan Hospital in Downers Grove, Illinois. Dr. Lawler has been in private practice for 15 years.

He can be contacted at (630) 968-2144.

Saint Spotlight

By Dr. Richard W. Pugliese, D.D.S.



Our Lady of Guadalupe Protectress of the Unborn

The lies of the "Prince of Darkness" have been with the human race since the beginning of time. One of those deceptions has been the inclination of humans to engage in the ritual killings of men, women, and children as sacrificial offerings to pagan gods and devils. Moses was warned of the evils of the Canaanite custom of offering human immolations to the god Molech (Leviticus 20).

In the Americas 500 years ago, human sacrifice was rampant among the indigenous civilizations, the Aztecs, Olmecs, Toltecs, and the Mayans. Archeologists estimate that some 50,000-250,000 persons were slaughtered in numerous, horrific ways at the Mexican shrines and temples. Children were considered pure and unspoiled offerings to the gods, and it was a "good" omen if the child suffered and cried out in severe pain during the sacrifice. Estimates say that one out of every five children in Mexico became a ritual sacrificial victim. The Aztec sacrificial temples and altars were fully adorned with multiple symbols and images of serpents. Satan, the serpent, must have delighted in the human sacrifice of this native culture of death. In 1487, during a four-day celebration of the new temple at Tenochtitlan, some 80,000 persons were sacrificed in rituals that included cannibalism and severe desecration of the sacrificial human beings.

In 1521, the Aztec capital fell under Spanish colonial rule and within 20 years, over nine million native inhabitants were converted to Christianity. The miracle of the conversion of this culture of death can only be attributed to the apparition of the Holy Virgin Mary in 1531 at Tepeyac, a hill northwest of the present Mexico City. She identified herself to a peasant, Juan Diego, as the Mother of the True God, who is the Creator of all things. She requested that a church be built on the apparition site, and to convince the local bishop of her message, Juan, her messenger, was sent to the top of Tepeyac in mid-December to gather a bouquet of roses, which were out-of-season.

The Virgin left an image of herself on Juan Diego's poor quality cloak, and to this day, no deterioration of that cloth garment has occurred. Mary's image at Guadalupe shows her crushing

the serpent-devil while she appears in her glorified pregnant condition. She is often shown surrounded by cherubic infants and holding aloft an infant as an inspiration for all people, young and old. Many believe that the Virgin used the Aztec word "Coatlaxopeuh" (pronounced Quatlaxupe) which sounds like the Spanish word, Guadalupe, a town in Spain, to identify herself. "Coa" means serpent; "tla" means the; "xopeuh" means to crush or stamp out. Our Lady is the one who "crushes the serpent."

Our Lady of Guadalupe's message was a universal promise of love, compassion, help and protection for all of humankind. In our "modern" times, when millions of unborn children are killed worldwide and where some 50 million pre-borns were slain in the United States alone in the 40 years after the 1973 Roe vs. Wade decision, the Virgin of Guadalupe must be our inspiration to work for a Culture of Life. Conversion occurred with the Aztecs in the 1500's and conversion of the culture of death of the 21st century can occur through the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

In 1999 Pope John Paul II designated December 12th as a liturgical holy day and entrusted to her care and protection the Cause of Life, and the lives of all innocent children, especially those in danger of not being born – our modern day Holy Innocents. Devotions and prayers for Our Lady of Guadalupe's assistance should become an important part of the daily prayer life of every Culture of Life supporter.

LIFE *around* TOWN

APRIL

April 9—Holy Thursday

April 10—Good Friday

April 11—Holy Saturday

April 12—Easter Sunday

April 19—Divine Mercy Sunday

MAY

May 1—Memorial of St. Joseph the Worker

May 1-3—The one million rosaries for unborn babies prayer event. The intention for this Rosary will be for the end to surgical and non-surgical killing of unborn human persons. For further information or to register visit www.SaintMichaelTheArchangelOrganization.org.

May 10—Mother's Day

May 13—Memorial of Our Lady of Fatima

May 24—Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

May 31—Solemnity of Pentecost

JUNE

June 7—Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity

June 14—Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

June 19—Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

June 20—Memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

June 21—Father's Day

June 24—Solemnity of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist

JULY

July 4—Independence Day

AUGUST

August 1—Respect Life Packets sent to parishes

August 15—Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

August 22—Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary

SEPTEMBER

September 8—Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

September 18-20—Rachel's Vineyard Post-Abortion Healing Retreat, St. Charles Borromeo Pastoral Center, Romeoville. For more information contact Kay at 1-866-99-4-GIVE.

OCTOBER

Respect Life Month

If you know of any pro-life events happening in or around the Diocese of Joliet, please contact the Life Office at (630) 718-2121.

If you or someone you know is suffering and struggling with the emotional and/or spiritual pain following an abortion, please contact one of the following organizations:

Rachel's Vineyard/RETURN Ministries
1-866-99-4-GIVE

A Time to Heal
1-866-Time 2 Speak

RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is considering an abortion, please contact one of the following organizations:

Birthright of DuPage (630) 355-9888
Birthright of Joliet (815) 725-3411
Birthright of Kankakee (815) 937-5881
Woman's Choice Services (630) 261-9221
Project Gabriel (888) 446-7341

Websites:

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
<http://www.usccb.org/prolife>

National Catholic Bioethics Center
<http://www.ncbcenter.org>



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If you know someone who would like to receive the Life Office newsletter, "Life in Focus," please contact us.

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Pictures from St. Petronille's Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA) Postcard Campaign



Pray For a
Greater Respect
for Life!

If you are not aware of FOCA and would like more information about this pro-abortion legislation or about how to get involved in our campaign against it, please contact the Diocese of Joliet Life Office for more information.