

Confessions of a 'Closet Catholic'

Why are more and more Catholics coming out of the "closet" to risk their time, treasure and talent in the effort to restore the Gospel of Life?

By Dennis M. Howard

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"Joe" is a typical Catholic in his mid-sixties, recently retired, a regular churchgoer, and a Knight of Columbus. He recently did something unusual for him -- witnessing in front of the Cherry Hill Women's Center, carrying a sign and praying the Rosary for Life with 30 other people who had come for the same reason.

He spoke as if he were surprised to be there. "I've been a closet Catholic all my life. I've never done anything like this before!"

Yet Joe was glad he came. A few days before in the first hour of this 40 Days for Life Vigil, five babies were saved -- including a set of twins -- as several Moms decided against abortions.

That was 10% of the 50 babies scheduled to be aborted that day at a clinic that performs 250 abortions a week.

An estimated 13,000 babies' lives are terminated annually here. That's 1% of all the babies aborted in the U.S. every year. . . at just one abortion mill in New Jersey!

These folks had come to pray and witness because they knew they could make a difference that more than made up for their sacrifice.

They also came because of the courage and example of one young mother named Jennifer who started this vigil as part of the 40 Days for



David Bereit, National Director of 40 Days for Life, leads the Cherry Hill Vigil in prayer.

Life campaign. She comes with her kids six days a week to pray, pass out literature, answer questions, and encourage women to make another choice besides abortion.

Thanks to others like her, miracles are happening all over the country. And they are happening to people of all faiths, not just Catholics.

In Lakeland, FL, another woman had recruited members of her church to join their prayer team. As they prayed, a young woman bolted out of the clinic, upset that her mother was trying to force her to have an abortion.

"It's horrible! It's awful!" she cried. "I can't do it, Mom. No, Mom. I won't!"

These life-saving miracles are happening because ordinary people are saying "yes" to God's call to bear witness to the Gospel of Life.

Their reward is mainly spiritual -- the comfort and satisfaction that comes with saving babies from abortion in an age when a great many people seem indifferent to the fundamental sacredness of human life.

At the Movement for a Better America, we're doing our best to encourage more Catholics like Joe to come out of the closet, but many are reluctant to do so.

Why? Generally, we Catholics are nice,

agreeable people. Part of our immigrant experience was joining the ‘melting pot’ and “blending in” with the rest of society.

However, some of us carry that idea so far that we risk losing our identity. We don’t want to be seen wearing our religion on our sleeves — except for days like Ash Wednesday when we go to church to get the sign of the cross on our foreheads. That’s a sign of our belief in an eternal destiny for ourselves and everybody else.

But put our religion on the line over a matter of public controversy?

That’s not our style. Most of us are not ready to make a fuss when we see America going to hell in a handbasket instead of living up to its role as a moral leader among nations.

For most of us, we’re happy to get to church on Sunday, come home, have dinner and watch the football game.

I was one of those “closet Catholics,” too, until Bill Clinton came along in 1992 and scared me out of it. He made clear that abortion on demand was his first priority. His first order of business on Day One in the White House was lifting major restrictions on abortion and fetal tissue research imposed by the prior administration.

That’s when I started looking at the terrible abortion toll. By 1992, the number had already reached 32 million. That was equal to the population of our 25 largest US cities.

It was as if we had been nuked. I was astonished at the awful damage abortion was already doing to our country.

That’s when I realized that abortion is not just taking a huge spiritual toll. It is also causing tremendous damage to our economy and to our children’s and grandchildren’s future.

Today the toll has reached 50 million, and keeps climbing. It’s now equal to the population of our 64 largest American cities.

That’s many times more lives than we have lost in all the wars in our history. It’s 13,000 times more than all the heroes who have died in Iraq. Yet the leftwing media and liberal politicians who complain about the cost of war remain silent about this far bigger war that is destroying our country from within.

I call it “the War against the Young” because it has exterminated 30% of the entire

generation under age 40.

It began in 1967 when Colorado, California, and New York began relaxing their 100-year-old laws against abortion. In 1973, Roe v. Wade imposed abortion on demand on the whole nation without even a vote.

That’s why I cringe when politicians cry about the sacrifices of our heroes in Iraq, but won’t lift a finger to end this war against our own next generation. Millions more will surely die if we can’t bring an end to abortion soon.

I feel that Roe v. Wade mocked every American who ever gave his life for his country. I lost boyhood heroes in World War II, a brother in Korea, and friends in Vietnam. Not one of them thought they were dying to defend our right to kill 30% of the next generation.

Did the Supreme Court – when they decided Roe v. Wade – have any idea that it would cost 50 million lives?

I soon realized that it wasn’t enough for me to just take care of my own family. If I wanted the same blessings of liberty for my children and grandchildren that yesterday’s heroes purchased for me, it was time to put my own commitment on the line.

Since then, I’ve devoted twelve years and 24,000 hours without pay in order to bring the pro-life message to people who are still hiding in the closet as I once did.

To some, it seems like a fool’s errand. Unquestionably, this has been the most difficult challenge in my long career as a journalist and innovative marketer.

My biggest career triumph was helping to introduce the smoke detector – a product that has saved nearly 2,000 lives a year since 1974 – a year after Roe v. Wade.

Ironically, our first ad was headlined “LIFE-SAVER.” If ending abortion was that easy, we could have saved 49,932,000 more lives.

Then John Cardinal O’Connor came into my life and challenged me to pursue my vision of a campaign that held the promise of ending abortion as we know it.

I soon found myself among the growing number of people willing to put their lives, honor, and treasure on the line to help in that cause.

They are the people who are unafraid to

speaking out. They are the prayer warriors in their homes and adoration chapels, in churches and at prayer vigils in front of abortion mills to protest the horror that goes on inside. At times, they seem like voices crying in the wilderness because of the hardness of heart of so many.

If they had lived in Germany during World War II, they would have been among the few who protested Hitler's concentration camps.

Today's challenge is no different except that here in America we have turned killing into a profit center. One abortion mill can make millions killing 13,000 babies every year.

Often leading the way are the devoted women who remind me of the women of Jerusalem wiping away Jesus' tears as He carried His cross while the apostles ran and hid.

Thanks to them, a change of heart is in the air. More bishops are speaking out. More priests are welcoming pro-life evangelization efforts in their parishes. More people are joining the vigil lines. And many more young people are becoming aware of the awful impact of abortion on their generation.

This year's March for Life demonstrated the gains being made among the young. For the first time, 60% of the Marchers were under 25 – just old enough to pick up the baton from old-timers who have been coming for 35 years.

Their response has inspired us to new efforts to nurture the pro-life movement on college campuses and in high schools across the country. We are actively reaching out to them through the many tools the Internet presents. The communications possibilities today are virtually unlimited. They include:

- **Bloggng, viral marketing, and social networking.**
- **Web public relations and enhanced networking with other groups.**
- **Posting stories on high traffic news and chat sites.**
- **Building web page traffic with search engine optimization.**
- **Employing the latest audio/video file formats.**
- **Launching a new online magazine**

We have just begun to tap the rich communications resources that are familiar to a new

generation that grew up with the tech revolution. It is no longer just a matter of ads and TV commercials and direct mail. It is a question of who can attract the greatest number of people through the vast Internet.

However, to put these new tools into the service of the Gospel of Life, we urgently need your help.

What we offer you in return is the greatest return on investment anywhere.

Right now, it costs us about \$30 to save one baby from abortion through education, prayer and public witness. On the other hand, it took 6,000 of those LifeSaver smoke detectors I used to market to save one life every 20 years . . . at a cost of \$150,000 per life saved. Yet I never heard anyone say that was too much.

Saving babies is a more compelling proposition. The pro-aborts often base their case on the economic factor, but their arithmetic is all wrong. Indeed, it is downright insane.

If it costs \$30 to save a baby, why spend \$500 to destroy one?

The reality is that every child born today contributes \$44,000 a year to per capita GDP, and that number keeps growing at a normal rate of 4% a year.

And it goes on for an entire lifetime.

Do the math. Compounded over an expected lifetime of 78 years, that adds up to a staggering \$23 million for every life saved

What a return on investment for the \$30 it costs to save a child from abortion!

On the other hand, every time we destroy an unborn child, we are committing economic suicide on a national and international scale.

I estimate that the 50 million babies we have slaughtered have already cost us \$30 trillion dollars in GDP losses. And by 2050, future losses will climb to \$400 to \$500 trillion even if abortions continue to decline at the current rate of 1% a year.

Look at the damage we have already done! If those 50 million babies had lived . . .

✦ There would be no looming crisis in Social Security and Medicare . . .

✦ There would be no real estate crisis like the one we face today . . .

✦ *America would still be a booming economy with no need to export jobs . . .*

✦ *We would still have a “youth market.”*

✦ *We would have plenty of people to fill all those jobs that the rest of our work force is supposedly “unwilling to take.”*

✦ *And there would be no shortage of men and women to defend our freedoms . . .*

All of that is why Roe v. Wade was the most insane thing we've ever done to ourselves, to our economy and to our country.

Abortion is not just a matter of “private morality” that has no consequences. The moral and spiritual consequences of killing the unborn are limitless. And the social, political and economic consequences are nearly limitless, too.

Indeed, they will almost surely mean the demise of the greatest political experiment in history unless we end abortion now.

How can we promote the general welfare, establish justice, provide for the common defense, and secure the blessings of liberty for ourselves and for our posterity while we keep destroying 1.3 million future citizens every year?

We are caught in a huge national hangup about abortion. Abortion strikes the American conscience to the core, yet we are so conflicted about it that our only way to hide is denial.

Look at the contradiction: Although most Americans oppose 92% of all abortions, a majority still think abortion should be legal under some circumstances.

That's like saying murder is wrong, but a little murder -- more or less -- is still okay. And all we have to do to rationalize it is to accept the big lie of “choice.”

Meanwhile, the polarizing political debate keeps us from resolving our national hangup. So we pass laws allowing for “exceptions” -- like the “health” exception -- that leave holes in the law big enough to fly a 747 through.

Until we can convince a majority of Americans that abortion is always wrong, ending abortion will continue to elude us. Politics as usual and polite statements from bishops won't do it.

If you want children to behave, you have to confront them with the inexorable consequences of their behavior. Like an alcoholic on a binge, America is destroying itself with its own denial. The only answer is to hit it between the eyes with the God's honest truth.

We also need prayer, prayer, and more prayer. At vigils around the country, the miracles are already taking place. When women change their minds and clinic workers quit their jobs, something big is happening.

We need both God's help and your help. And so we invite you to help us get this huge story out there by putting your money and your prayers where your faith is.

1. Consider making a Lenten sacrifice of \$25 . . . \$40 . . . \$60 . . . \$100 or more.

If you can help save just one life, think of the enormous return on your investment -- both spiritually and economically. It might get you into heaven and save your children's future.

2. Make a monthly pledge of any amount.

Remember, this struggle must go on until the battle is won. At MBA, there are no holidays from the battle against abortion.

3. If you have a car you no longer need, consider making a car donation.

Car donations are our biggest source of funds to expand our communications effort.

What priority should you give this?

That's your decision, but based on the damage abortion has already done to our children's and our grandchildren's future . . . such giving should be high on everyone's list.

It costs us about \$30 to save one life, but the return on that investment is infinite.

Life . . . there is no better investment!

The Movement for a Better America

P.O. BOX 470 / MT. FREEDOM, NJ 07970 / TEL. 973-895-7367 / EMAIL: mba4life@aol.com

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