



**St. Juan Diego
Women's Center**
Help for Pregnant Women and their Babies

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San Jose, CA 95127

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JULY/AUGUST 2013 NEWSLETTER

Dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn

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27th Anniversary Banquet*

Our mission at St. Juan Diego Women's Center is to help young women in unplanned pregnancies and their unborn babies. We uphold the sacredness of life through our caring counselors, who provide education, emotional, and material support in a safe and loving Catholic environment. At St. Juan Diego Women's Center, everyone who walks through our door is always welcomed and treated like family. As such, we offer continued support to help mothers not only during, but also after their pregnancy.

REMEMBERING FR. WILLIAM AHLBACH, BELOVED PRIEST & PRO-LIFE HERO

By Patsy Gonzalez

Reprinted with permission from Catholic San Francisco, July 5.

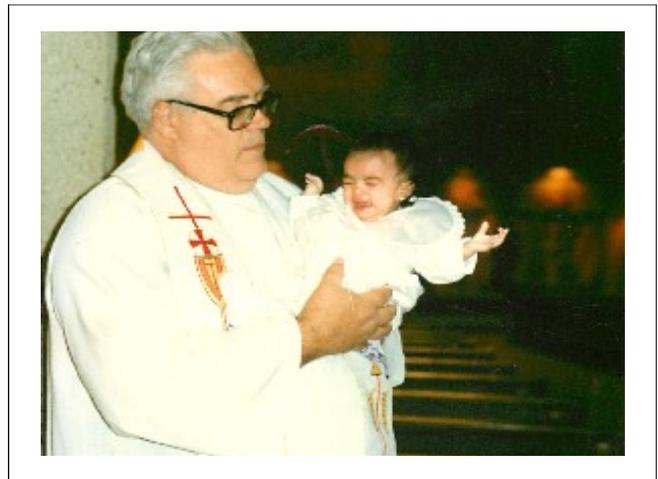
Editor's note:

Fr. Ahlbach spent his last 30 yrs. as an associate pastor at St. Matthew's in San Mateo. Shortly after Benediction and retiring the Eucharist at the Adoration Chapel at 9:00 in the evening, he passed on to eternity. It was his last act as a priest.

When I learned of Fr. Ahlbach's passing into eternity, I was filled with such a terrible sense of loss. Father has been my friend and pro-life hero for almost 25 years. We were specially bonded by our concern for the unborn and the plight of mothers that were fearful of bringing their babies into the world.

It was a rare homily when you didn't hear Father preach about the tragedy of abortion that has taken millions of lives since Roe v Wade. Often, his voice would crack when he came to this special issue regardless of how often, almost daily, he would preach it. They weren't idle words—there is no doubt in my mind that many who sat in the pews took them to heart and may have been instrumental in transmitting this message among family and friends, possibly saving lives.

He lived what he preached. Because he was aware of my involvement with a crisis pregnancy center in San Jose, he would enlist my help sometimes to assist an abortion bound mother; he comforted and absolved grieving post



aborted women in the confessional, and even helped financially when a needy mother came to him for some financial assistance. I knew of cases in all these situations, particularly the ones he referred to me from the confessional that needed to process their grief through post abortion counseling. Some years ago, Father gave us his blessing after an early morning mass before sending us off to save the unborn baby of a woman that had mentioned her intention to abort when she came to the church to pick up some food. She chose life.

He had my calling card in his confessional to give my number in case any of his penitents needed it. I would call to say, "Father, so and so called me for help and I just wanted to let you know that we are assisting her". He didn't have a clue who I'd be talking about because he never saw his faceless penitent through the confessional screen. He sought to go beyond her absolution to practical help in bringing her further healing.

Father Ahlbach is my idea of what it means to be a good priest. He

preached Life without judgment (though he once remarked that women would walk out sometimes when he brought up the subject in his homilies), loved and fed the poor, attracted children in spite of his formidable size, loved his priesthood that he humbly served. He was truly "In Persona Christi".

Father, I grieve over the loss of your earthly presence, but consoled in knowing that there was a symphony of little voices that appealed for mercy at your judgment. The silent voices of these babies that you fought hard to protect was replaced by your booming voice here on earth that will continue to resonate in the minds and hearts of the faithful that came to your masses. Your work has not come to an end, but will become even more fruitful in the presence of saints.

Until we meet again, Father, rest in peace.

Babies saved from abortion at
St. Juan Diego Women's Center



FROM WILLIE'S DESK: A CALL FOR HEROES

By Willie Lopus

"These are the times that try men's souls." - Thomas Paine, 1776

Once again our country is in crisis. Brave men and women need to stand up and be counted. Our freedom, life and liberty are being threatened not by a foreign power but by our own government.

"On July 25, 1968, Pope Paul VI's Humanae Vitae re-affirmed the Catholic teaching on life, love and human sexuality. In that document, he listed the consequences of life lived outside Catholic teaching. He predicted that:

1. *Contraception would lead to conjugal infidelity.*
2. *Contraceptive practice would lead to a "general lowering of morality."*
3. *Contraception would lead men to cease respecting women and would cause them to treat women as "mere instruments of selfish enjoyment" rather than as cherished partners.*
4. *And finally, widespread acceptance of contraception by couples would lead to a massive imposition of contraception by unscrupulous governments.*

In other words, Pope Paul VI predicted that contraception would evolve from "a lifestyle choice" into a weapon of mass destruction. How dreadfully his prophecy has been vindicated by population control and coercive sterilization programs, fertility reduction quotas, and the promotion of abortion literally everywhere in the world." - Fr. Paul Marx, OSB

The prophetic warning issued by Pope Paul VI is now coming to pass. Artificial contraception has led to abortion, infanticide and euthanasia. Our *brave new world* has now been turned upside-down. Animals now have more "rights" than humans. Men and women of courage and integrity are needed to turn back this wave of corruption.

The St. Juan Diego Center is not only on the forefront of the war on abortion, but is also sits in the front row of the battle. We are there when a mother changes her mind, leaving behind her fears and moving on to the joyful anticipation for her unborn baby. We are there when the tears of sorrow flow freely when a post-aborted mother's wall of denial comes down and she can trust in the Lord's tender mercy to forgive her. We are there when a teenager, relieved after a negative pregnancy test, makes a decision for chastity. We are there when a mother proudly shows off her new baby after she chose to keep her child. So long as God's grace continues to melt hearts, we are assured He has not turned His face from our noble mission.

Maybe we cannot change laws overnight, but we certainly can change hearts. This is the time we must become heroic in our efforts and fan the flames of hope and confidence in one another and in others. The Holy Spirit is endlessly creative. He will inspire in each one of us new directions to move to continue our struggle to defend life.

Deacon Dominick Peloso of the Church of the Nativity (Menlo Park) remarked, *"It is when times are darkest that our lights shine brightest"*. We must go the market places of our communities, families and workplaces and spread the truth with more fervor. We must pick up more intensely our spiritual arsenal of prayers, sacrifices, and our powerful Sacraments. We must not let up on our political struggles, but we must never keep our eyes off the prize—reclaiming our Christian legacy for this great nation and for God. The Church is blest with Pope Francis as the champion for the unborn children.

Brave men and women are needed now to stand up and be counted.

Defend the Unborn From Abortion Even If Persecuted
Pope Francis

FR. AHLBACH PUTS IN A WORD FOR US By Patsy Gonzalez

(Ed. note: The narratives of the success stories we feature in our newsletters are rarely written in the first person, but my friendship with this good priest moves me to write this as my personal story).

After the viewing and rosary on the previous evening, Fr. Ahlbach's funeral was scheduled for Thursday, the 20th of June. I was still reflecting on his rosary evening I had attended the night before, marveling at the never-ending stream of people that patiently formed lines at the center aisle to bid Father goodbye-- little children with their parents, teenagers, elderly people, friends, family and hundreds of others that were touched by him in one way or another. The viewing started in the late afternoon and stretched on through the night until 10 pm. A large Hispanic community that came to pay their respects warranted a bilingual rosary and the short vignettes of his life were also shared in Spanish and English.

Father was famous for his "food locker", a storage room that included countless items that held hunger at bay if someone may have needed something to tide him or his family over until the next paycheck or job. There were never any questions asked;

anyone that asked for help was "needy enough". His pastor, Fr. Anthony McGuire, described him as a 24/7 priest, a pastor's dream associate. Trumping all of that, however, was his love for children which included the most helpless of our human family, the unborn.

I had just enough time to get ready to get to church early to find parking for the funeral at 10:00 am, judging on how hard it had been the night before. I was almost tempted to ignore the insistent ringing of my cell phone because I hadn't much time left until I saw "Erika" on my cell phone screen. Erika Hathaway and her uncle, Ross Foti, are tireless, dedicated sidewalk counselors that spend their entire Thursday mornings outside an abortion mill in San Francisco. We had spoken about "collaborating" as a team in the event she had intercepted an abortion bound mother and needed some off site pregnancy counseling support at her fingertips. Sidewalk counselors that stand outside these facilities choose one of the most difficult fronts in the pro-life movement and even more so, on the streets of San Francisco. The probability of turning these mothers around after they process their deci-

sion to abort is extremely low, let alone getting the chance to talk to them on the phone. Erika and I got that chance. After Erika managed to reach a woman with some encouraging words, I spoke to her over the phone at great length; it felt like a lifetime. I remember thinking, with my heart pounding, "She's going to hang up on me any moment now if I strike the wrong cord". I organized my thoughts to find the right things to say. Slowly, slowly, we spoke of her fears, her dreams, how an abortion would affect her life and her compelling reasons to abort. I described to her what a chemical abortion was (which was scheduled for her that morning) and tried to dispel her fears. Then the phone went silent.

As I sped to the funeral that had already started, I prayed the rosary for the young woman and ended it with, "Father Ahlbach, please put in word for this baby and his mother. Please put in a good word for us". It didn't matter anymore if parking on the street involved a long walk to the church. As I entered the church, Erika called with very good news. She and the pregnant woman exchanged telephone numbers and a warm embrace before the young

mother left the facility without going in. (I would find out later that another mother who saw Ross' sign and heard his words of encouragement also changed her mind about an abortion). There were two less abortions that day.

Another week had passed. Once again, early on a Thursday morning, exactly a week to the day of that incident, Erika called once more to put another abortion minded woman on the phone on her way into the facility. Without going into any details, this mother, too, confirmed her decision to keep her baby. She walked away from her appointment that morning after exchanging telephone numbers with Erika. Later on in the morning, a couple left the mill after deciding to keep their baby when they saw the presence of the sidewalk counselors outside. There were two less abortions that day.

What appeared to be a coincidence on the day of Father's funeral didn't seem like such a coincidence after all the second time around.

WANTED: PRAYER WARRIORS AND SIDEWALK COUNSELORS!

What can you do for the pro-life cause that will have the greatest impact? What can you do that will affect the most change? Volunteer? Speak in public? Donate large sums of money? All three are great ideas, and if you are able and God has called you to do so, please contact us!

But if you want to really change your world...pray. God said in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, who are called by

my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

To make a great impact on the pro-life cause and for our center: **Volunteer your time to pray outside the Planned Parenthood center at Alum Rock.** This Planned Parenthood branch, located directly

beside our center, performs chemical abortions, and we need prayer warriors and sidewalk counselors to intervene. We will provide you with the materials, training, and support you need to touch hearts and provide women with an alternative to abortion.

Contact us to schedule your time to pray or sidewalk counsel today, and make a difference.

Call Willie: 408.258.2008



Juan Diego Society

(St. Juan Diego Society Women's Center Newsletter)

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SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 26

SEEDS OF HOPE

27TH ANNIVERSARY BANQUET

This October—Respect Life month—marks the 27th anniversary of St. Juan Diego Women's Center. Save the date for this wonderful fundraising event where our supporters gather to laugh, cry, and share a meal together as we present the Center's mission and celebrate our accomplishments.

October 26, 2013, 6–9pm

David's Restaurant, Santa Clara

\$50 per person

Call Laura Peredo to reserve your seat or table: 408.658-6398



Gianna Jessen, abortion survivor

Keynote Speaker: Gianna Jessen

Gianna Jessen's biological mother was seventeen when she had a saline abortion in her third trimester. After being burned *alive* in the womb by the saline solution for approximately eighteen hours, Gianna was delivered alive in a Los Angeles County abortion clinic. The procedure left her with what she refers to as the "gift" of cerebral palsy, but Gianna's amazing testimony is of a life lived not as a victim, but as a vibrant champion for the cause of the unborn. Gianna has overcome incredible odds to become an international prolife speaker, and has testified before both the United States Congress and the British House of Commons in support of various prolife legislative initiatives. Her story has been highlighted in many prominent publications, including *The New York Times*, and was the inspiration for the award-winning movie *October Baby*. Gianna shares, "The best thing I can show you to defend life is *my life*. It has been a great gift."