

Sarai Pays It Forward

By Patsy Gonzalez, JDS Volunteer

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- Sarai Pays It Forward
- Sharing in God's Love
- From the Desk of Willie Lopus
- A Sidewalk Counselor's Prayer

Donate online: jdwcenter.org



Staff and Volunteers

Willie Lopus
Executive Director
Patsy Gonzalez
Lead Counselor & Editor
Laura Reyes
Counselor
Fr. Joseph Homick
Spiritual Advisor

Board of Directors

Ana Aspinall
Chairman
Olivier Lemaigen
Vice Chairman and Secretary
Tom Wagner
Patsy Gonzalez
Evelyn Reynolds

As you read this, many of you may have remembered Sarai who gave her testimony with Perla at our banquet or may have read the remarkable story in a past issue of her last minute decision to choose life for her son, Aldo. Perla, our post aborted mother that has become an invaluable counselor at our center, intercepted Sarai on her way to Planned Parenthood to schedule her abortion outside at our parking lot when their paths crossed "by chance". Perla was planning to pray outside an abortion mill in memory of her baby that was lost to an abortion on that date five years before. The happy miracle altered the sad significance of Perla's abortion anniversary forever. Instead, it became a day to celebrate a new life. Many women that have gratefully found forgiveness for their abortions "pay it forward" to spare other women from the heartbreak of their abortions. Perla is no exception.

We count almost 800 babies saved at our Juan Diego Center with God's grace but many more babies have possibly been saved by our grateful mothers that have chosen life over the years. Many new mothers that come in, unsure of keeping their babies are brought by mothers that were assisted at our center in the past. Their gratitude moves them to influence other women to choose life.

Sarai is no exception. Our family atmosphere at our center encourages mothers to stay in touch, often visiting or dropping by to have lunch with us, sometimes bringing us baby clothes that their children have outgrown. She comes in often to visit with her children, delighting at how we fuss over Aldo and how eager we are to show him off to other women that come in for pregnancy tests.

Recently, a mother came in with her husband for a pregnancy test and indicated she was planning to have an abortion because they were going through some difficult times. While Veronica sat with Margarita to show her the Miracle of Life video, encouraging her with resources that might help ease some of their financial pressures, Sarai walked in for a visit. It didn't take long at all for her to assess the situation and moved in to help the mother find the courage to have her baby. The video brought tears to Margarita's eyes when she compared the stage of her baby's development to the images on the screen. Sarai found the perfect reason for the discouraged woman to choose life. She held up her own Aldo to show her this beautiful, innocent child that would have been lost had Perla not been around to defend her baby. Seeing this precious little boy melted Margarita's heart and breached her defenses. Sarai and Veronica succeeded in transmitting the hope that helped her overcome her fears.

Our mothers are our greatest advocates, they "pay it forward", sharing their experiences that moved them to choose life with other women. We have often expressed the fact that changing the culture of death in our nation will not be won in the halls of government but rather by changing hearts one woman at a time. Incrementally, as mothers "pay it forward", a new Culture of Life will emerge as real possibility with the grace of God.



Sarai and Aldo

Sharing in God's Love

By Laura Walsh Lau, 40 Days for Life, Sidewalk Counselor

I enjoy going to the sidewalk of Planned Parenthood on The Alameda and to the PP that shares the parking lot of Juan Diego Center to pray the Holy Rosary with friends where we offer support to those who will listen. God's love can be felt as we gather. It isn't always easy to do this, but with a strong prayer life, anything can be done! Working as sidewalk counselors, we encourage people to listen to the words of Life: "Choose life, you have a miracle inside you!" "Twenty one days the heart begins to beat." "We are praying for the end of abortion." "We can help you. Please take some information."

One day last year, I found myself wanting to share my experience on the sidewalk with a friend in the hospital. Father Alex Affonso was having cancer treatments at El Camino Hospital, so my husband and I thought we would visit him one Sunday morning and leave him a goody bag including a copy of Patsy's *An Encounter with Angels: Tips on Sidewalk Counseling*. To my surprise when I got back, Fr. Alex was so intent on finding out about the booklet's back cover picture and how I got it. I didn't really know much about it except that on a good sidewalk counselor day, we would begin with the prayer below that picture from Patsy's booklet. It looks like Jesus offering a helping hand to a woman who is in despair. Father had a twinkle in his eye getting ready to tell me a good story about that picture. With the help of his pen because he was unable to speak clearly, I was given a circle of life story about how Fr. Alex had acquired this original painting in Pakistan.



Laura, Christina and Fr. Alex

According to Fr. Alex, this watercolor painting reaching four foot wide by two-feet tall was given to him years ago in Pakistan. In this far away country, a Muslim artist asked a local high school principal, Fr. Max, for a bible. Of course, Father Max supplied this interested man with a bible, and the artist proceeded to read the Gospel of John about the parable of the adulteress (John 7:53-8:11). The artist was overcome and cried after reading this story of forgiveness. He picked up his paintbrush to show us all Jesus offering his hand to the woman as a loving commemoration of the bible story he had just read. This artistic man gave his watercolor of Jesus and the woman adulteress to Fr. Max, who in turn, gave it to Fr. Alex.

During Fr. Alex's priestly life, he worked with and helped lepers, drug addicts, youth, seminarians, prostitutes, postulants and women who had unwanted pregnancies. Father Alex told me by writing on his paper in the hospital room that he first became a priest on January 6, 1968. He had been a priest in Pakistan for 25 years by the time of the painting. Fr. Alex gave this special painting to an admirer of it, Mother Superior, from the Good Shepherd Sisters in Pakistan. The last location for the painting that Father knows about was at the Good Shepherd House in Karachi, Pakistan where these good sisters are busy with their ministry of helping fifty or sixty girls at a time with unwanted pregnancies.



Jesus and the Adulteress

I asked him if they still stone people in Pakistan. He said, "Yes," with a definitive nod of his head. I thought, "Wow, Jesus is an exquisite example for each one of us to lovingly help others in crisis." We are all human and all sinners; let us offer our outstretched hand as Jesus did in the painting towards women in crisis. I am so thankful to this artist and to Fr. Alex Affonso for telling us this story of God's loving forgiveness through art. I loved hearing this story and reading his notes that explained all. I loved praying the rosary with him, his sister Christina, and his family at our potluck rosaries and visiting him in his backyard with my kids one summer day. I loved bringing good friends to him to spend time with him to talk and pray. He always had that twinkle in his eye even when he was hurting. My family, friends, and I will never forget his generous giving spirit as a friend and as a priest.

The common link between Fr. Alex's painting and Patsy's picture is the ministry of assisting women in unplanned or crisis pregnancies. Patsy explained to me after I heard Father's story that she received a copy of the picture from her brother in New Mexico who found it on the internet when she was writing her booklet on sidewalk counseling. Discovering the source of that profoundly moving painting was nothing short of a miracle.

Fr. Alex has since joined our Creator in Heaven the 13th of December, 2013. He will be greatly missed as his life on earth was a song of goodness to all who were lucky enough to know him. Father read the first draft of this story in his convalescent hospital bed and told me with a little nod of his head that it was, "Perfect." Thank you to Father Alex, Patsy, and all of the prolife family for your work and diligence. Father said, "What you give will be returned to you thousand fold!"

We wish to thank you for all the prayers and support you have given the St. Juan Diego Women's Center. Since our inception in 28 years ago, 748 babies have been confirmed saved and nearly 11,000 families have been assisted.

2013 has been a momentous year for the center. Our Lord and Our Lady have blessed us in numerous ways. Thanks to our very active board, the 27th Anniversary Banquet, "Seeds of Hope" was extremely successful. The goodwill and support generated exceeded our expectations.

The total number of babies saved in 2013 was up by 56% (from 25 to 39). We have successfully teamed up with other pro-life organizations all over the Bay Area resulting in babies being saved as far as San Antonio, Texas. The St. Juan Diego Women's Center has also been giving seminars for sidewalk counselors and helping in the start up of three other Catholic crisis pregnancy centers.

The center has published the third edition of "Encounters with Angels" and has distributed more than a hundred of the life saving video, "The Miracle of Life". Four abortion-bound mothers decided to keep their babies after watching this video. A Spanish version of this video is now available.

Finally, the St. Juan Diego Women's Center is the driving force for the RU-486 Reversal Campaign in the Bay Area. Dr. George Delgado and Dr. Mary Davenport developed the RU-486 reversal protocol last year. We have been working hand in hand with them to have a reversal team ready in the Bay Area. We are also sharing our resources to help continue the development and acceptance of the reversal protocol.

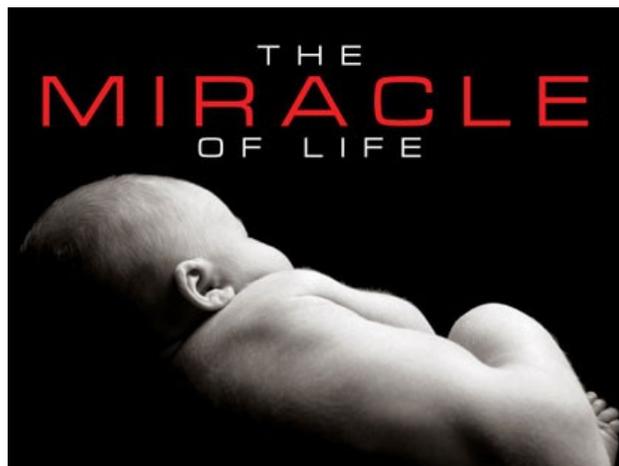
With your support, we aim to continue our life saving mission in 2014. Our goal this year is to save more babies by:

- promoting and having the reversal protocol available to mothers who regret taking the abortion pill.
- being the support and resource center for other pro-life organizations.
- raising awareness of the sanctity of life through seminars and educational activities.
- focusing our attention on the Hispanic community.

All these and more, we hope to accomplish with Our Lady's guidance and your support.

Mission Statement

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.



Now Available In Spanish. Download at our website: jdwcenter.org

Please download this inspiring video that has saved babies.

The opening video that was presented at our banquet to show our guests
"just who we are fighting for"

Juan Diego Society

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

12 North White Road #5
San Jose, CA 95127

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #4473

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



A SIDEWALK COUNSELOR'S PRAYER By Patsy Gonzalez

O my Jesus, I consecrate to You today my efforts to intervene on behalf of Your unborn babies. Enlighten me with the right words to change a mother's heart, to dispel the fears that hinder her from welcoming her precious child. Give me Your heart to love her unconditionally, without judgment, that she may see in me Your infinite mercy. Let my presence be a sign of Your hope which will reverse a decision which will bring her untold suffering. If she does not choose life for her baby, let my presence be a sign of Your forgiveness so that in her pain, she will discover Your merciful love and forgiveness.

Like Your Mother who stood at the foot of Your cross, I stand at the foot of the cross of these babies that will die today. I entrust them to Mary, Your mother, who will lavish them with her maternal caresses that they did not receive from their earthly mothers. I desire Baptism for these little ones so they may enjoy eternal happiness with You.

Grant me the grace, dear Jesus, to never falter in my mission to defend Your unborn children and help me to grow in the virtues that will assist me in turning the hearts of these mothers in crisis towards Your truth. Expand my capacity to love so that not only mothers and babies will be the focus of my concern but also abortionists, pro-choice legislators, clinic workers and all those who perpetrate abortions because they are the ones in most need of the grace of Your conversion.

I offer to You all the persecutions, discomfort, humiliations and discouragement I may suffer. Allow them to humble me so that I may be more fruitful. Surround me with Your heavenly angels and saints to protect me from all harm and temptation to earthly pride.

And lastly, purify my intentions, dear Lord, that I may do all and suffer all for Your glory. I thank You for the gift of my life— and help me to make my life a gift to others. Amen

Ed. Note: This was the back page of our sidewalk counseling handbook that caught Fr. Alex's eye. He was the original owner of the painting..