

Helpers of God's Precious Infants

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November, Jubilee Year of Mercy

On November 20, 2016 the Jubilee Year of Mercy promulgated by Our Holy Father Pope Francis will draw to a close. During the course of the Jubilee Year the Helpers have, as we have always done, performed the works of mercy called for by Pope Francis. The Helpers Apostolate, since its' founding in 1989, has extended God's mercy to vulnerable women and their children through prayer, direct financial aid and other support. We are willing to help any woman we encounter who is willing to accept and nurture her child. This, of course, means the expenditure of quite of bit of money, and over the last 27 years donations and a few outright grants have sustained this vital ministry. Readers of this newsletter know that I have rarely, if ever, asked directly for donations. At this time, however, I am making an appeal for your help financially. I am being inundated with requests for financial aid from many women in Brooklyn and Queens who have chosen to keep their children. Besides baby clothes, wipes, and the like many need help with the rent on their apartments. As you may know, New York City is one of the most expensive cities to live in in the world. The main reason for that is the extraordinary rents people must pay to have shelter. I find it impossible to say no to these women when they come to me, knowing how precious their child is to God. As we read in the Letter of St. James we must be doers of the word, not just hearers. I believe with every fiber of my being that helping these women is essential to the Helpers Apostolate by showing that we love both the child and the mother of that child. I am very vigilant in keeping my own personal expenses to a minimum, for example flying coach whenever possible on my trips to establish or encourage Helpers affiliates in various cities and countries throughout the world. As people who know me will tell you, my only non-essential expense is my pet parakeet BJ, and he does not eat much. Whenever I have to fly I use my own personal funds. I am asking that you prayerfully consider a donation to keep the Helpers going. The Helpers receive no funds from the Diocese of Brooklyn, so I must reach out to you. I thank you for whatever contribution you feel comfortable in making. May God bless you for all that you do for His precious infants.

Very often in the press we read or hear that pro-lifers are only interested in the baby and do not care at all for the mother and the problems that may lead her to contemplate abortion. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Recently, Don Magnotta, a Helpers sidewalk counselor in Kew Gardens, New York, sent me pictures of himself and a small group of women, men and their children that he took to a recent New York Mets game. A benefactor of Don's gave him the money for the tickets, and a delightful time was had by all. A week later another benefactor of Don's gave him tickets to a New York Yankees game. Again the children and their parents had a wonderful time. Don also has arranged for, and in some cases paid for housing for these young women who have decided for life. Don has become so close with the mothers of two of the children that he was instrumental in saving that they asked him

to be the Godfather when they were baptized. One of the mothers was baptized as well! This is what the Helpers do. We are engaged in life saving and evangelization. When Pope St. John Paul II called for a “New Evangelization” by the church he envisioned an evangelization new in ardor, in expressions, and in method. The Helpers are very arduous in their commitment to life; they are praying and counselling in front of abortion facilities every Saturday and would be loath to miss. Our expressions of the faith are not all that new, but we are bringing back the best of the old; the Helpers prayer book includes The Precious Blood Way of the Cross, several litanies, and all 20 mysteries of the rosary. The Helpers method was totally new at the time it was first adopted. Most pro-lifers at the time were engaged in civil disobedience, blocking doors to abortion business, and getting arrested for destroying property when the Helpers were founded. We found a new and better way: the way of prayer, counselling, and bringing Jesus to the place where He most wants to be, on the streets of our cities. The gratitude I have received over the years for bringing the love of Christ to vulnerable women astounds me. Recently I received a phone message from a woman who decided for life who was crying tears of joy that her child was born. I have been approached repeatedly over the years by extremely grateful women and their now grown children who would have never been born without the assistance of the Helpers.



Recently Pope Francis canonized Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and I think no one in my memory is more deserving. She also brought Jesus to the streets, caring and loving the poorest of the poor. Mother was also very pro-life, telling her listeners in a speech delivered when she received the Nobel Peace Prize that she felt that the greatest destroyer of peace in the world was abortion. How can there ever be peace in the world, she reasoned, if a mother is allowed to destroy her child? She also spoke forcefully at the 1994 National Prayer Breakfast when she told the assembled guests, which included President and Mrs. Clinton that if they did not want the babies to please give them to her, she would find loving parents for them. Talk about speaking truth to power! What a courageous woman. Following the canonization in the papers and on television brought back many fond memories of my meeting now St. Teresa. I met her when she first came to New York and I was rector-principal of Cathedral Prep High School seminary. She had been informed about my efforts for life and she agreed to meet with me and then she spoke with some of the seminarians that I brought with me. I had a profound sense of peace in her presence. She later sent me a prayer card on the occasion of my 25th anniversary of my ordination.

Another early supporter of my ministry for life was Terence Cardinal Cooke of blessed memory. Cardinal Cooke was the Archbishop of New York from 1968 until his death in 1983. He was a fierce advocate for life and offered encouragement to me on many occasions. Following the disastrous Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision in 1973 Cardinal Cooke offered this thought in a homily: “We plead with you to recognize the terrible consequence of legalized abortion. Once innocent life at any stage is placed at the mercy of others, a vicious principle has been legalized. Thereafter, a simple majority may decide that life is to be denied to the defective, the aged, the incorrigible, and granted only to the strong, the beautiful, and the intelligent. The day may come when lawmakers could set standards which people must meet if they are to remain alive. Already one standard has been set; who can say what will come next? For, once respect for human life has been undermined, the murderous possibilities are endless.”

How prophetic Cardinal Cooke was. Today, with the advent of prenatal genetic testing, we find that the unborn must pass a test in order to live. About 90% of pre-born children diagnosed with Down’s Syndrome are aborted. There are stories in the media of parents aborting their children for such things as cleft palate, and club feet. Indeed, the age of the “designer baby” is here. Parents (particularly those of the same sex variety) are choosing donors to meet the expectations that they have for their children, and if the child does not measure up, it is destroyed. Pre-born embryos are routinely experimented on and then destroyed. The aged are being urged to “shuffle off this mortal coil” by their doctors and in some cases their own children. In many hospitals treatment is being denied to the elderly as a matter of course. The disabled are encouraged to commit suicide, and will be helped along by their doctors in many countries and some of our own states. The Culture of Death has triumphed all across the world. However, the Helpers remain as a lonely voice crying out in the wilderness: “All human life is precious, we must protect it in all its stages.”

At the beginning of his papacy, Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, spoke of his vision for the Church. He stated that the Church should be poor and for the poor. The Helpers have followed Pope Francis in this, his desire for the Church. The Helpers have focused their attention on the unborn and their mothers. Who could be poorer than an unborn child? The mothers are often driven to contemplating abortion due to their poverty; the Helpers have always sought to help them materially whenever possible. Pope Francis has also asked that all members of the Church “go out to the peripheries” and become a “field hospital” for the spiritually ill. The Helpers are there on the streets of many cities bringing the Gospel of Life to all who would listen. The Helpers are not primarily concerned with saving the unborn children, rather they are concerned with saving the souls of those who participate in abortions. The Helpers will talk to anyone involved in this most gruesome industry, the doctors, nurses, and staff of these abortion facilities as well as the mothers and fathers seeking abortions. At times the children will be saved, and we are grateful to God when that happens. At other times we will see a conversion of heart on the part of the doctors or nurses. Over the last few years four doctors at one facility in Kew Gardens, New York have told us that they will no longer perform abortions. We have seen entire clinics close permanently, particularly Ambulatory Surgery in Brooklyn which closed in 2012, where I counselled for the better part of 20 years. Recently Liberty Medical Clinic in Flushing, New York was closed after the doctor and operator of the clinic had a conversion of heart. The saving of souls is at the heart of the Helpers Apostolate.

Schedule of Vigil Masses from December 2016 to April 2017

Date	Church	Abortion Site
Saturday, 12/17/16	St. James' Cathedral,	Brooklyn 14 DeKalb Avenue
Saturday, 1/14/17	St. Catherine of Genoa,	Brooklyn Kings County Hospital
Saturday, 2/18/17	St. Paul/St. Agnes,	Brooklyn, Planned Parenthood
Saturday, 3/18/17	Queen of Martyr's,	Forest Hills, Qns. All Women's Medical
Saturday, 4/22/17	Presentation,	Jamaica, Queens Choices

News and Notes

On October 1, 2016, my nephew and leader of the Helpers in Chicago, Illinois, Philip Moore, organized a prayer vigil in conjunction with the people of 40 Days for Life to kick off their campaign. Despite having almost no time to prepare or advertise about 20 pray-ers came to a Mass offered by Fr. Stephen Lesniewski, who visited me for training purposes this summer. Although blasted by heavy rain, Fr. Lesniewski, escorted by the Knights of Columbus and students from the Chesterton Academy of the Holy Family, carried Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance to a nearby abortion facility where he blessed all present: the Helpers, those working in the building, the escorts, and the Moms and Dads.

Later in October I hosted a retreat for about ten students from Franciscan University of Steubenville at the Monastery. These students are very ardently pro-life and all informed me that they learned very much from my talks. The president of the university graciously provided the transportation from Ohio to Brooklyn in order that these fine students could attend the retreat.



In the latest issue of "Columbia", the magazine published by the Knights of Columbus, there is an interview with NYPD Detective Steven McDonald, who has accompanied me on many occasions over the years at large prayer vigils in Brooklyn and Queens. As some of you may know, Detective McDonald was shot while on duty in 1986 and was left paralyzed, but this has not prevented him from going out to the streets and praying for the unborn. In the interview Steven tells of how he came to forgive the young man who shot him, and how that was instrumental in freeing him from negative thoughts and motivating him to reach out to others to prevent them from getting caught up in the cycle of violence so common on our streets today. Is it any wonder that Detective McDonald is a Helper? The violent destruction of unborn children calls all of us to respond to this injustice. Steven's story is also featured in a documentary produced by the Knights, entitled "The Face of Mercy".

I am entreating your prayers for Mary Murray, the longtime treasurer of the Helpers who was recently released from the hospital. Mary is not only the treasurer, she spent many a Saturday morning

in front of All Women's Medical Clinic located at that time in Forest Hills, New York. In fact, one morning she asked the doctor entering the building "Does your mother know what you are doing here?" The doctor soon left the business and never returned. I would also ask you to pray for both Humphrey Manza and Maryanne Mazzella two Helpers of long acquaintance who are ill and for the Helpers in San Diego, who have been prevented from sidewalk counselling and praying by police who have ignored 20 years of Supreme Court decisions upholding the right to free speech on the sidewalks of this country. Finally, I would ask you to pray for the repose of the soul of my dear sister Anna Reilly Celentano, who died on September 11, 2016 as she was praying the rosary with her daughter. Anna had suffered a stroke and was in a rehabilitation facility in upstate New York when God called her home. She and I enjoyed many good times together, she would often meet me for lunch in Brooklyn when she resided in Garden City, New York. May she rest in peace. As we approach the Christmas season, I wish to offer to you my prayers and best wishes for a happy and Holy Christmas.

Until we meet at Calvary,

Msgr. Philip J. Reilly