

Juan Diego  
Society, Inc.



Silver Anniversary  
1986-2011

Dedicated to: Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Unborn

## St. Juan Diego Society Women's Center NEWSLETTER

Website: <http://www.jdswomenscenter.org>

*Celebrating 25 Years of Caring: 1986 - 2011*

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### JOURNAL OF A PRO-LIFE ACTIVIST by Patsy Gonzalez, JDS volunteer

As the Juan Diego Society's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary approaches, memories of the 22 years of my pro-life journey and 20 years as volunteer/counselor at the center begin to flood my mind. How have the years flown by so quickly and what has this experience that has played such a huge part in my life define me as a person?

Upon arriving in the United States almost 23 years ago from the Philippines, my children and I faced the dismal reality that abortion was legal in this country. The Philippines is one of the world's last countries left standing that has not legalized both abortion and divorce. At the time, my own daughter was facing a crisis pregnancy that devastated our family. The thought that my daughter could so easily have opted to have her unborn child aborted without my knowledge had she faced the decision here made me think about getting involved with the decision that other young girls may be making.

I remember taking the first step by donating money to pro-life causes that reflected my own sentiments but as many who read this may have experienced in their own pro-life journeys, the Holy Spirit was not satisfied with my taking the easy way out. The call to do more began to haunt me constantly, until I packed up my children with picket signs to walk the sidewalks outside abortion mills. The harsh environment was surreal outside those mills and the sight of rabid escorts way back then, some of them practicing witches was something that my convent school breeding had never prepared me for. Evil is something everyone believes in, but actually being in the presence of palpable evil is something one can never describe. It has a look. Blasphemy and profanity directed at us were a part of the whole experience and negative reactions of people driving by taught all of us that defending what was right would not be comfortable. My children learned very early that persecution was part of practicing their faith, my teenagers learned by what they saw that true love never leads a couple to an abortionist's door.

Our local abortion mill in Redwood City did late term abortions up to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester. I joined a small band of pro-lifers who were out there to pray and counsel. I was very happy being prayer support but was totally unwilling to talk to the women and men going in. We can be resolute about what we are willing or unwilling to do, but God will have His way when the time comes. When my friend and mentor, Tom, went to jail for his pro-life activities, I couldn't just stand and pray in his absence while women were walking in. On the very first day I decided to step into his place in fear and trepidation, a baby was saved. A Polish girl who was working as an *au pair* walked in on the last possible day she could have her abortion, with her pregnancy at such a late stage. Our presence was her lifeline (interestingly, she was wearing a miraculous medal on a chain around her neck). It gives me such pleasure to say that I was with her and her son three years ago when he celebrated his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Her gratitude has bonded our friendship for a lifetime.

Isn't it like the Lord to entice us with sweet success when we do something we don't really want to do? The initial euphoria of saving a baby gave way to many discouraging days and months in the heat and the cold with few results. It taught me that success is measured by our faithfulness and not by results. Towards the end of the three years I was outside the late term mill, I was arrested by a pro-choice police officer for defending myself against an aggressive lesbian escort who was making an unbearable noise in my ears with castanets. I was charged with "assault" for simply pushing her arm away. This was the same officer who responded to my complaints of the escorts' excessive harassment of us with, "If you don't like the heat, get out of the kitchen". We eventually found out that he was a Catholic.

Needless to say, the Lord takes care of His own and the case was dismissed. Just a few short months after the incident, the mill closed. When we least expected it, when we thought it seemed to be doing more business than ever before, when we thought it was too powerful to go away, it quietly closed. To this day, we will never know how it happened.

(continued on page 2)



Patsy Gonzalez

*Isn't it like the Lord  
to entice us with sweet  
success when we do  
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really want to do?*



*Feast of the Assumption  
August 15th*

JOURNAL OF A PRO-LIFE ACTIVIST (continued from page 1)
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It was a great day for us when we stood outside the closed mill in thanksgiving led by Fr. Leo McCaffrey in prayer. We held signs with oversized photos of some of the babies that survived the killing at that location. What a dramatic witness that presented to the passersby and cars driving by seeing God's little ragtag band of faithful celebrating their victory outside the fallen Goliath.

Fear was very much a part of my early activism; fear of facing evil, fear of persecution, fear of getting arrested, fear of failure—but Randall Terry's (of Operation Rescue) words always rang in my ears, "Courage is not the absence of fear but doing what you have to do *in spite* of your fear". I was just a cowardly soul that could do brave things with God's grace. In truth, if the Lord had shown me what lay ahead when I took my first step, it is likely none of it would have ever happened for me. Saying "yes" to the call means being available to all possibilities that the Lord permits, but one can be certain that His grace will provide all that is needed to see all the challenges through.

Countless encounters with the mothers outside the Redwood City abortion mill will always remain deeply etched in my heart and from them I have learned so much. We also opened our home to some of those mothers or paid for their counseling sessions because our family wanted to personally contribute towards something we deeply believed in.

Sidewalk counseling outside an abortion clinic in Santa Clara after the one in Redwood City closed brought me in direct contact with the Juan Diego Society and Robert Rodriguez, its director. He was always at his post like life depended on it (which it did). It was sheer relief to hear Robert's voice at the other end of the line when an intercepted mother needed to get to a resource center immediately. It was so crucial to get her away from the environment when she was open to other options lest she lose her nerve with lost time. "Leave a message and we'll get back to you" are words sidewalk counselors never want to hear! Robert's cool, reassuring manner never failed to calm a distraught and frightened mother. He had resources at his fingertips to direct her to the loving places that would help her through her crisis. Having grown up in the tough neighborhoods in the Bronx, he could get tough with cowardly boyfriends or husbands who would shirk their role of fatherhood. He could easily deflate macho egos with his words, "*Real* men take responsibility!" He was rather like a pit bull with the fathers but provided the protective male image that the women so badly needed. He will always be my hero.

Most babies that are precariously in danger of being aborted are saved at pregnancy resource centers where a mother's pregnancy is first confirmed. In a gentle, caring environment, she is equipped with information on her baby's development, spiritually and emotionally encouraged, shown the devastating consequences of an abortion and given resources to carry her pregnancy to term. She is given material help for her baby's arrival and financial assistance, if necessary. The center provided a marvelous opportunity for me to help mothers away from the hostile abortion mills—so I decided to become a part of it. Little did I know then, on the eastside of San Jose at the time, I would be encountering tattooed gang members with pregnant, body pierced girlfriends and bullet holes in our windows. If the nuns could only have seen me then!

The St. Juan Diego Center has been my second home for 20 years. My heart is filled with gratitude towards the countless women who have trusted me with their life changing decisions. They have given courage a new face and have taught me things I could never learn from books. I could write volumes about the many cases I have been involved in, each story so different because every woman is unique and unrepeatable. It is always a miracle of grace to be able to breach a mother's fears, to breach the differences that divide us—culture, age, economic differences, experience or social levels. In fact, the only thing we have in common is the truth which God has planted in every human heart.

Their stories are ever present to me and have provided inspirations for new mothers in similar situations. Some even offer to "give back" by encouraging our moms to choose life. One post-aborted mother who did not respond to our support has become our best counselor to those who are grieving their abortions or intending to have one. She is our Magdalene who found the healing touch of God's mercy.

Answering the call to defend life does not come without cost. A counselor puts her heart on the line; she risks getting it broken when she suffers the sorrow of a baby lost to an abortion in spite of her efforts or shares the pain of a mother who did not choose life. She carries the burdens and worries with women beset with problems and bad relationships. But the counselor heart also swells with happiness when a mother shows off her newborn after the storm has passed. She learns to love without judgment, bias, or conditions. If she ever loses her ability to serve in such a manner, she will cease to be fruitful. Pride has no room in pro-life work because it is only God that can cause the miraculous. A counselor is only an instrument-- vulnerable and dispensable.

I could have spent the last 20 years traveling the world and meeting powerful and famous people, but how would I ever have found such a profound opportunity to live the Gospel values? Passages like Lk 9:23 *If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me*, Mk 12:31 *You shall love your neighbor as yourself* and obliquely Jn 15: 13 *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* come alive when lived in the context of pro-life work. A counselor's heart, as it expands and ebbs, becomes like the bellows that stokes the fires of faith and hope in others. It also gives her a vision beyond the present that takes her to the eternity she will share with babies, born and unborn, she intervened for, their mothers and all those touched by her concern. As our wonderful Deacon Peloso from Nativity Church remarked:

***"The only things we take to Heaven are what we have given away".***

*From the desk of Willie Lapus, director*

## 25th Anniversary Banquet

The St. Juan Diego Women's Center request the pleasure of your company at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Banquet to be held on Saturday, Oct. 1, 2011 at the Biltmore Hotel in Santa Clara, CA. Please join us in celebrating 25 years of caring for mothers and their unborn children and in thanksgiving for the loving care our patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe, has shown the center for the past quarter-century.

As the only Catholic crisis pregnancy center in the Bay Area, the St. Juan Diego Women's Center has been helping women in crisis pregnancies for 25 years. Through the generous support of private donations, we have helped almost 10,000 families with material needs and have saved close to 700 babies from abortion. The JDS center has also provided needy mothers with material help, mentoring, counseling, resources and referrals.

Our 25th Anniversary is a big milestone for us. Fr. Michael Pintacura, Vice Postulator for the Cause of Canonization for Bl. Anna Maria Taigi, will lead the opening prayer and invocations.

Our keynote speaker is Lila Rose, president of Live Action and champion for Life. Her organization has conducted several nationwide undercover operations against the largest abortion provider in the US, Planned Parenthood, exposing its illegal activities that resulted in a congressional investigation and calls for de-funding.

Fr. Kevin Joyce, pastor of St. Lucy Parish in Campbell, CA, is also one of our main speakers. His presence is a testament to his commitment to the Pro-life movement and the Gospel of Life. Fr. Kevin has been a friend and a strong supporter of the center for many years.

Elizabeth Campisi, Immaculate Heart radio hostess and Christian music performer, will be providing musical entertainment for the night. It promises to be a blessed night!

Let us know if you would like to reserve a VIP table for your group or individual seats as soon as possible. **Seating is limited.** Please contact the St. Juan Diego Women's Center if you have any questions, or would like to reserve a table. Send the attached RSVP card before Sept. 15th.



*Join us on Oct. 1, 2011 at the Biltmore Hotel in Santa Clara for our 25th Anniversary Banquet*

### Share the Joy !

*Join us in celebrating 25 years of caring for mothers and their unborn children and in thanksgiving for the loving care our patroness, Our Lady of Guadalupe, has shown us.*

## St. Juan Diego Women's Center

12 North White Road #5 San Jose, CA 95127

### RSVP CARD

Registration/Dinner: 5 PM - Saturday, Oct. 1, 2011 at the Biltmore Hotel - 2151 Luarelwood Road, Santa Clara, CA 95054

Please indicate the names of the guests attending and circle their meal choice:

**Name:**

**Phone, e-mail or address**

_____	_____	1	2	3
_____	_____	1	2	3
_____	_____	1	2	3
_____	_____	1	2	3
_____	_____	1	2	3

**MEAL CHOICES: 1. Chicken Cordon Bleu 2. London Broil 3. Cashew Crusted Mahi Mahi**

I cannot attend, please accept my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to sponsor a priest, religious or youth attendee.

**Anniversary Table : \$100/ person. Each table seats 10 guests.**

*VIP Tables are available: To reserve a VIP table for your group, call John Wilhelmsson (408) 853-8783*

**\*\*Guadalupe Table: \$2000**

**\*\*Juan Diego Table: \$1750**

**\*\* Msgr. Sweeny Table: \$1500**

**\*\* Each table seats 10 guests.**

**Please mail completed RSVP card before 9/15/11** Make checks payable and mail to: Juan Diego Women's Center - 12 North White Road #5, San Jose CA 95127  
To pay by Credit Card or PayPal visit our website: [jdsomenscenter.org](http://jdsomenscenter.org)

*Juan Diego Society*  
(St. Juan Diego Society Women's Center Newsletter)  
12 North White Road #5  
San Jose, CA 95127

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## *Silver Anniversary Banquet*

St. Juan Diego Women's Center cordially invites you to their  
**Silver Anniversary Banquet and Fundraiser.**  
25 years of service and hundreds of babies saved  
are great reasons to celebrate!



Special Musical Guest:  
**Elizabeth Campisi**



**Lila Rose**

**Guest Speakers:**

**Lila Rose**  
**Rev. Kevin Joyce**  
**Rev. Michael Pintacura**

### **Banquet Features:**

- **Dynamic Speakers**
- **Silent Auction**
- **Raffle**
- **Music and Fellowship**
- **Special Awards!**

***Let's Share the Joy!***

**Saturday, October 1, 2011**

**Registration/Dinner 5:00 PM**

**Venue: Biltmore Hotel**

(Saratoga Ballroom)  
2151 Laurelwood Road  
Santa Clara, CA 95054

**Seating is Limited**

**Send in your reservations early**

For more information please contact us or go  
to our website: [www.jdswomenscenter.org](http://www.jdswomenscenter.org)