




Catholic Diocese of Belleville Respect Life Ministry

2620 Lebanon Avenue Bldg #2
Belleville, IL 62221
e-mail: ledwards@diobelle.org
www.respectlife.catholicweb.com



Phone: 618-235-9601, x. 1332
Fax: 618-257-2969

 **Project Rachel:** 1-888-456-HOPE

March for Life 2010

Sounds and Signs ... Healing and Wholeness

The bus hadn't been on the road toward Washington DC for very long before the rain began in earnest. Sitting near the front of the bus (the youth staked their claim farther back) there was an agitating air pressure sound from the wiper blades that, though muffled, remained a background sound all day. While we were praying the rosary the wiper sound was a reminder of the rain forecasted for the next day when we would be exposed for hours to the weather. When we got to the mystery of Jesus turning water into wine I prayed that the rain spilling down on us may in some way invite an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the late night hours, when the talk and other sounds were quieted, the sound of the wipers continued and I recognized why they had been an agitation.

The wiper's sound and steady rhythm were the same as the ventilator from my mother's hospital room. And now in the late night hours the sound produced the memory of that image and a range of feelings stemming from ill-advised medical treatment decisions leading to her rapid decline and death. The experience is not unique.

At the March for Life, women on the Supreme Court steps from "Silent No More," have told of the struggle with the same experience of a sound or smell or image causing them to revisit an event which in their case they endured trying to put a crisis behind them, but that still returns unexpectedly to haunt them. The sound of suction or the smell of disinfectant could make them pause, even cringe; they would turn from signs with images that undeniably showed the truth of a human person, just like their child, developing in the womb. For a woman who has had an abortion, a range of emotions - grief, guilt, shame, and anger - may linger just below the surface for years before being fully recognized and confronted. She doesn't have to confront them alone.

Christ offers hope for the grief stricken, and forgiveness for the repentant. The Church's embrace is extended to replace the shame she (or he, remembering that providers, friends, and parents may regret their role in an abortion) fears from the judgment of people in the pew. The anger may be calmed as she learns to forgive those who remained silent, or even suggested abortion as a solution; as she begins to more clearly and consistently hear, and is invited to add her voice, to the message that abortion is wrong; and as she sees evidence that there is help, there are real options.

Calling Project Rachel at 1-888-456-HOPE(4673) may be a helpful step toward healing. Though sadness and regret need time to heal, guilt serves only the purpose of turning a heart toward repentance. After forgiveness it has no place. The truth of what takes place in abortion is hard, but the goal of exposing it isn't to pass judgment or cause pain for women who have made that choice. Rather the goals are to make that choice unthinkable, to remember the lives lost, to protect those yet to be born, and to extend hope for healing to those left wounded. As we approach Lent it may be a good time for those who are hurting to walk the journey towards healing and wholeness.

As it turned out, the Washington forecast for rain was wrong. By the time the March began the clouds had broken and the sun warmed the air. The rain had stopped, but there was still an outpouring of the Spirit in unity, compassion, and hope.