

40 Days for Life Changed My Life

By Tom Dalrymple

I have heard it said that people don't change their minds on important issues that people need to make up their minds for themselves, that we can't change people through facts and logical discussions. By the grace of God, I know this to be false; because I am not the man I was six years ago. Six years ago I was an avowed Protestant and mildly pro-life. I used to tell my wife that I would never become Catholic.

All that changed when my brother-in-law and mother-in-law began to be active in the pro-life movement. They would speak with powerful arguments that we know from science that the unborn are human beings, and we know from philosophy that they are not different in any way that justifies taking their lives by abortion. I found these arguments to be both compelling and consistent. If the unborn are human, shouldn't something be done to protect them? What happened next was a call to action: 40 Days for Life.

My mother-in-law announced that she planned to pray for a full day at the abortion facility in Kettering. I decided to spend the day with her – I was a bit worried of what might happen out on the sidewalk, and I was a bit curious as well.

What I found on the sidewalk that day is the side of the pro-life movement that most people don't see. There on the sidewalk, you witness life and death. In the parking lot you find mothers and fathers who are heading to an appointment for an abortion, many times out of fear and a lack of love. And what you find on the sidewalk is the call of life, the outpouring of love and prayers for the child, the mother, the father, the abortionist, and all those involved in the act of abortion. That is what 40 Days for Life is all about: prayer and fasting, peaceful vigil, and community outreach. It is about showing the love of Jesus Christ where love is so badly needed.

That day propelled me from mildly pro-life to passionately pro-life. The other thing it did was cause me to question everything that I believed about God. Just like abortion, I had reasons for what I believed about my Protestant faith, and I thought they were good ones. But were they true? This moment opened my mind to the Catholic faith. Within a few months of study, speaking with friends, and looking very closely at the Bible, I realized I was in trouble again! The priesthood, the Pope, the 7 Sacraments, Catholic teaching on morality, the saints, the Eucharist – you can find all of these in the Bible, and you find that the Catholic Church has been miraculously consistent for 2000 years.

That sealed the deal for me, and I joyously joined the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil five years ago. If I had to pinpoint one moment that changed my life, it was that day on the sidewalk outside the abortion clinic almost six years ago. There is another 40 Days for Life starting this spring on March 5. Come out to see what it is all about, and perhaps your life will be changed as well. I'll see you there.

—Tom Dalrymple, Holy Angels Parish, Dayton Ohio