

A flourishing life

“Please stop.”



“Please shut up.”

“I ... can't ... take this.”

Under a mask and a winter cap, a young Black woman stood across the street from Planned Parenthood in lower Manhattan. She has been directly outside the front door after her time inside, but there were two men there with a megaphone talking about babies dying and slaughter. She looked like she wanted to be anywhere else on the planet other than outside the building where she just started to do something that maybe she didn't at all want to do, but felt she had to.

When she saw me standing, she slowly came my way. Perhaps she thought we were in the same boat. I had to look a little lost, too. I wasn't showing my rosary, but goodness was I praying.

I didn't talk to her. Maybe that was cowardly, but I didn't know what to say. At first, I had taken some consolation in the fact that people were pointing out that grave evils taking place inside Planned Parenthood. It's jarring whenever you see it. It just looks like any other building in the city.

But then when I saw her pain – isn't it only being increased with the graphic yelling about her most intimate life, and the life within her that is now in the process of being eliminated? This particular woman seemed to be clearly amid a chemical abortion. Even with the mask, her heart was so heavy, and the words were the confirmation I didn't need. I prayed

for her. And tried to smile at her with my eyes above the mask.

I begged God to let me be his peaceful presence socially distanced from her. When a man finally came with New Jersey plates to the lower Manhattan clinic, she was furious it had taken him so long. Is her existence feeling like she's surrounded by men who are just making things worse?

Which got me thinking about the women who aren't helping. No one of us can end abortion today, but what more can we do?

I think about the need for "women impregnated by the spirit Gospel to aid mankind from falling," as a letter to all the women of the world from Pope Paul VI and then Pope Benedict XVI again reads.

How many more people might see and know God if we showed love as much as we engage in [polemics and politics](#)? How many more women would know that there are women like the Sisters of Life who would help them in their time of need – and not only to give birth but to choose the best plan and have the supports and skills and relationships necessary for a flourishing life.

During the first shutdown this year, sisters from their Visitation Mission in lower Manhattan delivered food to families they serve, some of whom were frightened to go out to a supermarket, some who were truly struggling with the loss of income and the other stresses of the pandemic.

The charism of the sisters is something uniquely [suited to life](#) in our times – not only valuing the most vulnerable human life, but also knowing the value of your own. How many people today do not know that God loves them, truly and uniquely? I fear the answer sometimes. But I also really don't have to wonder, because I can see it on people's masked faces. There is so much miserable suffering. We need to show hope. That's only possible if we show more than the correct political position. That's only possible if we are seeking ever-greater

communion with God.

I pray that those women can stop living with the pressure to abort, the feeling of abandonment. They need to know we want to help. We do, don't we? As we gaze on the Christ Child this Christmas, let's ask him to show us how to love a civilization into life with him.

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