

# Our Lady of Guadalupe: Mother of Compassion

**T**ith our move to Kansas three years ago, my husband and I were shocked to learn we now reside within a half hour drive of our nation's abortion epicenter—our own “ground zero”— called Women's Health Care Services, P.A.

According to their website, the director, George Tiller *specializes* in “2<sup>nd</sup> Trimester Elective and 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Trimester Therapeutic Abortion Care.” Wichita, Kansas, is known as the abortion capital of the United States, not only because of its central location, but because women who cannot have a late-term abortion legally in another state can obtain one *legally* once they cross our state line.

Shock serves a purpose. It allows us to remain in a state of naïveté, believing that abortion is about other people. Only it *isn't*. After thirty-five years, we've all been touched by abortion—and touched by those who have been touched by it.

My shock soon wore off, giving way to anguish, an acute emotional pain I couldn't explain. My heart began to break. I often questioned what caused me to react so strongly to the fact of “Tiller” and his abortion mill. Signing petitions and writing letters to legislators and newspaper editors brought relief. Sometimes I just tried not to think about it. Besides, maybe it had everything to do with becoming a first-time grandmother.

When my son held his brand-new daughter up in the nursery window, I have to tell you I lost it! I went to pieces! I came undone! (Any grandmother reading this will

understand.) Later, Daniel brought Lilia out so my daughter and I could hold her. “Oh,” I sighed, watching Sarah with Lilia. “I love that weight . . . that buoyant weight of a newborn



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in your hands.” Sarah passed her to me. Together, we studied her sweet face, then moved to unwrap her, exploring her fingers and toes, her unique shape, and the soft, dense texture of her skin.

When I think about the depth of emotion I experienced those first hours following Lilia’s birth, I think also of that *other* weight. What weight of despair must be seared into the soul of one who intentionally ends a baby’s life? And into the soul of one who allows or condones it . . . into my soul? It is no small thing, this weight we are not designed to carry; a cumulative weight, the collective weight we bear as a nation. *A weight largely unacknowledged.* No wonder we behave as we do, immersed as we are, however unconsciously, in this culture of death!

### Novena

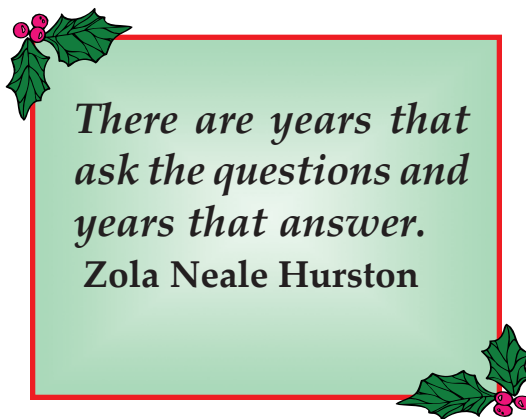
A short time after Lilia’s birth, I was on retreat at The Spiritual Life Center in Wichita. During a period of silence, I walked through the adjacent cemetery, and discovered an unusual memorial, a black marble bench, with verses from Psalm 139 engraved around the top . . . *you knit me in my mother’s womb* (v. 13). Stuffed animals, tiny shoes and other objects were placed on and around it—a shrine to the babies who had died through abortion. As I stood looking at the bench, a shuddering sorrow stirred my soul, and grief filled my being, a grief so great I could hardly stand upright.

I left that place and walked up a slight mound, where I’d noticed a sculpture of Our Lady, and sat on a bench to recover. As I sat gazing at Our Blessed Mother, a sudden realization dawned: *Wasn’t this Our Lady of Guadalupe?* I studied the details: the sun’s rays, the angel, and the stars.

*She* started showing up everywhere . . . Josh, who rinsed out

my hair at the salon, wore a 4" gold medal with her image, as did the receptionist at my doctor’s office when I went for my flu shot (hers was more discreet). Watching EWTN, I noticed her picture hanging on the wall over Johnette’s right shoulder on “The Abundant Life” program. Our Lady even appears embossed on a pair of cowboy boots in Carter Holman’s painting “Southwest Madonna.”

With a little research, I learned that Our Lady of Guadalupe is *The Protectress of the Unborn!* My question began to change from “Why the pain?” to “Is there something You want me to do, Lord?”



I started praying a daily Rosary, with a novena to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Praying the Rosary is a powerful means of confronting and subduing evil, primarily because it works to subdue the evil in our own hearts, bringing peace and healing to our souls.

What resulted from my prayers was not the “answer” I most wanted—that the abortions would stop. Instead, I began to envision the oppression that engulfs the lives of those who work in the abortion industry.

### Years that question . . . and years that answer.

The Beatitudes teach that the poor in Spirit are blessed, the poor in Spirit being those who, in a state of spiritual poverty, recognize their need for God.

Though he is wealthy by the world’s standard, George Tiller is spiritually destitute. Only he doesn’t know it. Thus, he remains outside the blessing, and in most need of God’s mercy.

The journey toward compassion is a journey taken with Our Lady. The more we learn of her, the more we love her. The more we love her, the more we love her Son. In response to that love, we begin to do the small thing we must do.

I stopped hating George Tiller. I began praying for him on a regular basis. And I wrote him a note, on a card depicting Diana Breyer’s beautiful oil painting on wood, *Virgin of Guadalupe*. I told him I am praying for him, for his family and his staff, and that even though I am opposed to abortion, I hope he will experience God’s grace. By this, I mean, of course, the grace to stop killing our innocent ones.

One Sunday in our church bulletin, two things caught my eye: Next Saturday, our church was to gather at George Tiller’s Clinic to pray the Rosary, “a peaceful, prayerful, life-saving witness to the sanctity of human life.” The following Tuesday, Kansans for Life would meet at another nearby church.

I believe Our Lady was aiding in answering my question, “Is there something You want me to do, Lord?” I have a feeling she’s not through!



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