



MEET THE HOSTAGE NEGOTIATORS

By Stephanie Hopping

Some hostage negotiators visited American Life League in January—but they are not your typical negotiators. They are the Messengers of Hope, led by Mark Hall through his group Pregnancy Outreach Missions, and the hostages they work to free are preborn babies held captive for execution in abortion centers.

Mark, a cradle Catholic, experienced a dramatic deepening of his faith in the aftermath of his wife divorcing him in 1988. Then in 1994, health problems forced him to give up his boat sales and repair business and he heard God calling him to become a warrior in the battle for life. In 1995, Mark launched Pregnancy Outreach Missions and became a full-time pro-life missionary in Melbourne, Florida when he received a \$15,000 startup grant from Orlando's Bishop Norbert Dorsey on October 13, the Feast of our Lady of Fatima.

Although Pregnancy Outreach operates with diocesan permission, it is an independent self-supporting nonprofit Catholic apostolate working to battle abortion on the front lines. Mark puts all faith in God, operating much like a mendicant order on donations of money, supplies and manpower. A number of volunteers have helped Mark over the years and he currently works with one other full-time pro-life missionary, Sue Bock. An additional 15 to 20 volunteers help on a part-time basis as needed.



Above: Pregnancy Outreach Missions' mobile ultrasound center
Previous page: Vinny Mathew, Mark Hall and Greg Wittekind

Greg Wittekind began helping Mark part-time after a personal turning point in 2003. "God spoke to me, 'Give everything up and give me 100 percent,'" Greg professed. "Since then, God has been providing for me 100 percent. When I fully surrendered to God's will, I have seen things that I never thought could be possible. It's been a real joy being with Mark and his endeavors. The perseverance of this man is just outstanding."

Just one day before the Messengers needed someone to drive one of their two mobile units to the March for Life, professional truck driver Vinny Mathew suddenly showed up to make the week-long trip. Mark recalled, "Greg's poking him to see if he's real and said, 'This is an angel sent from heaven to drive for us.'" Vinny hails originally from southern India and continues as a part-time volunteer for Pregnancy Outreach.

For Pregnancy Outreach, the Messengers use a 33-foot motor home and a 20-foot truck as mobile pregnancy resource centers/Rosary chapels for direct intervention at abortion clinics. The mobile units are outfitted with

ultrasound equipment that can be used to provide 2-D sonograms for abortion-minded women. While at the clinics, the Messengers also try to facilitate healing for those wounded by abortion and unchaste relationships.

The Franciscan spirit

In 2001, Bishop Dorsey gave Mark and three other volunteers permission to start the Messengers of Hope as an independent pro-life

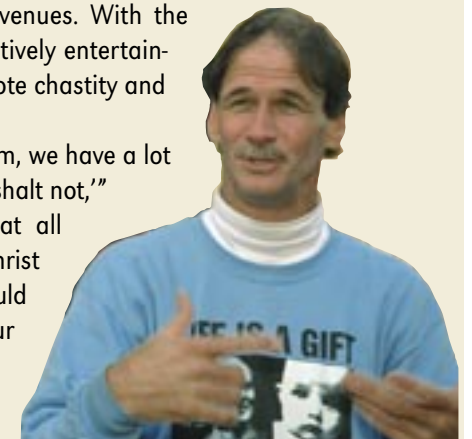
lay association "in the spirit of Saint Francis," to carry out the mission of Pregnancy Outreach and engage in Catholic evangelism. Mark is under priestly spiritual direction and the Messengers' daily spiritual regimen consists of Mass, Eucharistic adoration, the Rosary and the Divine Mercy Chaplet. "If you want to be called into [spiritual] warfare, you need to be going to daily Mass," Mark said emphatically.

"None of us are officially Third Order Franciscans or any of that yet; we're just following that spirit where Saint Francis recognized an evil of his generation, dropped what he was doing and lived humbly to serve the poor," Mark explained. They hope to find a priest who can further their Franciscan spiritual formation. The Franciscan spirit is evident in the Messengers and Pregnancy Outreach operating completely on faith to rescue those in the grip of the culture of death. "God has taught me complete abandonment and trust in Him," Mark explained. "We walk in divine providence."

The right kind of pregnancy prevention

The Messengers of Hope have a twofold apostolate. Besides working to save mothers and babies from abortion, they make presentations for youth and single young adults, mainly at Catholic parishes and schools as well as other Christian venues. With the help of youth teams, they use innovatively entertaining skits, dramas and music to promote chastity and strengthen faith.

"Particularly in our youth program, we have a lot of the whys behind it—not just 'Thou shalt not,'" Mark explained. He emphasizes that all Christians are spiritually wed to Christ and tells audiences, "Any spouse should be somebody that helps enhance your relationship with Christ."





Mark with Sue Bock

Freeing the hostages

The Messengers offer pregnant moms at abortion clinics \$100 each as a no-strings-attached gift for consenting to have an ultrasound. “Instantly they say, ‘What’s the catch?’” Mark said. “And I say, ‘The catch is this is the first of hundreds of dollars that are available if that’s the bottom line. I can’t promise you your greeds, but I can meet your needs. You tell me what has to happen today to save the life of this baby.’”

Mark explained, “I call out to that [abortion] building and you can hear me from 10 blocks away. I tell people, ‘We’re part of a hostage negotiation team. Tell me the one scenario in America where people stand outside of a building and call out to the people inside the building. What’s going on in that building? A hostage negotiation. And we’re standing out here begging you, Mommy—right now—to have a change of heart. You’ve signed your own baby’s death warrant. You tell us what needs to happen today to free the hostage.’”

Last year, they raised the funds to provide \$1,000 monthly for a year to a woman in dire circumstances who agreed not to abort her baby.

Pregnancy Outreach Missions has saved over 450 babies and the Messengers’ home base, Brevard

County, has been abortion-free since 2005. “My paycheck now is not made of paper; my paycheck is made of flesh,” Mark reflected. “When I get to hold a baby in my hands, that’s all I ever need to stay on that sidewalk as long as abortion is legal.”

City by city

Shortly after Pope John Paul II’s death in April of 2005, Mark felt inspired to work toward establishing mobile pregnancy centers and evangelization teams in other cities. Their yearlong “Power of Mercy Tour,” named in John Paul’s honor, took them to several other cities, mostly outside of Florida.

From June 2008 to June 2009, to honor the Pauline Year decreed

by Pope Benedict XVI, the Messengers will go on a multi-state “Be Not Afraid Tour” to seven cities, staying 40 days at each stop. “We want the survivor generation to rise up and be not afraid to be chaste, be not afraid to be pro-life and be not afraid to live out their Catholic witness,” Mark said. They are praying for more volunteers to come on the road with them and local volunteers to help them during their stays in each city.

Pregnancy Outreach Mission set up its first headquarters in Melbourne across the street from an abortion business, which was eventually closed down and bulldozed. Mark acquired the property, where he and his colleagues plan to build a memorial honoring the estimated 40,000 babies murdered there and provide post-abortion healing programs on site. They are praying for assistance from someone with marketing expertise for this project.

For more information, e-mail MessengersofHope@aol.com or visit www.PregnancyOutreachMissions.org. Pregnancy Outreach Mission’s mailing address is 132 East Osceola Lane, Cocoa Beach, Florida 32931.

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