
Pro-Life Movement Blessed with Martyrdom

(Monday, 21 September 2009) - Contributed by Cal Zastrow - Last Updated (Wednesday, 23 September 2009)

It was another routine morning in Owosso, Michigan, on Sept. 11, 2009. Kids were going to school. Adults were going to work at stores, businesses, and the local Planned Parenthood. Madison hugged her beloved grandfather, Jim Pouillon, as he dropped her off at high school. Jim's routine next included sitting across the street from the school to pray, read his Bible, and show large images of live babies and babies murdered by "abortion." Everyone who lived in Owosso and who ever went out of their house had seen Jim and his signs. He prayed and showed the signs daily around town, for twenty years. Whenever there was a festival, political rally, or home high school football game, there was Jim, crying out for the murdering of babies to stop. Sometimes other pro-lifers stood with him, but he was often alone. The days Jim wasn't on Owosso's streets, he was doing the same thing in front of the death pits in Saginaw, Flint, or some other place with Missionaries to the Preborn or Operation Save America. At age sixty-three, Jim's health required he walk very little and be on oxygen at all times while using a nasal tube and carrying a canister.

It wasn't a routine morning for Harlan Drake in Owosso. The anger and unforgiveness in his violent heart were expressed through the muzzle of his gun as he drove to the public high school on North Street and shot Jim four times in the chest. As his soul departed to God, Jim's body died and fell face-first into the grass. Some of the bullets went through the cute baby picture Jim was holding. Before Harlan sped away to the local gravel pit where he likewise murdered the owner sitting in the office, an alert motorcyclist wrote on his palm the shooter's license plate number and contacted police.

The national news quickly announced the shooting death of an anti-abortion protestor in Owosso, Michigan. Knowing that my kids and I have literally been there and done that, my cell phone kept ringing and ringing while we were ministering outside of the death pit in Jackson, Mississippi. It wasn't my family, so I didn't answer. It was literally life or death for the babies during that time. There was one turnaway amidst the thirteen murders while I was pleading with people to stop the violence against children. As my kids and I finished and got in the van, my heart was heavy. I flipped open at the next ring to hear a trembling voice who exclaimed, "Oh Cal! You're alive! Thank God."

When they told me on the phone what had happened to a "protestor" in Owosso, I knew that one of my closest friends was now martyred and in the presence of Jesus.

Thanks to the heroics of the motorcyclist, the shooter was caught before he could go find and murder a local realtor whom he likewise hated. Harlan confessed his plan to the police and that he had shot Jim and why. It was the signs. It was Jim's witness.

Through tears we packed up and drove north for two days. We went straight to Jim's home to see his daughter and son.

Two days after the violence, we were praising Jesus in church (Abba's House) with Mary Jo Pouillon, Jim's daughter, and two of Jim's sisters. I can testify that those of us who loved and worshipped Jesus had the joy of the Lord while grieving over Jim. We really meant it when we sang, "I'm trading my sorrows, I'm trading my shame, I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord..."

I figured that a couple of dozen pro-lifers would show up at a prayer vigil we quickly scheduled for Sunday afternoon at

the spot where Jim was slain. We got there an hour early to cry in private, but a few others were there. Jim's two-year-old grandson, Casey, was not understanding why the neighbor lady had brought him here to place pretty balloons. Casey didn't understand, but he kept asking, "Where's Papa?"

Jim had been an alcoholic before he got saved twenty-two years ago. Part of his devotion to his grandkids was making up for lost time.

Instead of a few dozen pro-lifers, 270 people showed up at the vigil Sunday afternoon. Two of Jim's daughters came out, and three of his grandchildren. We prayed, cried, sang to Jesus, and more than a dozen people testified of how Jim loved them, and they Jim. Mary Jo read from Jim's Bible: "Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

When the media asked if she'd like to make a comment, Mary Jo said, "It's all about Jesus. It's all about the babies."

One news station actually played what I said, "Harlan, we love you. Jesus loves you. We invite you to confess your sins, repent, and trust Christ for forgiveness and salvation. You can have the love of Jesus in your heart like Jim had."

The family had a private funeral on Monday and rented the local high school football stadium for the public memorial on Wed., Sept. 16th. Jim's pastor, David Knox, delivered a fitting tribute and Gospel sermon. There were about 500 people (or more) that attended.

Afterwards, pro-life leaders and activists from Operation Save America, Missionaries to the Preborn, Flint Right to Life, American Right to Life, and Personhood USA held a "Stop the Violence - Stop Planned Parenthood" rally in front of the local P.P. office. Dan Brewer was one of the local Christians who had stood at times with Jim. Dan testified that at times he has witnessed in Owosso with only Scripture signs. People abused and threatened him, like they did Jim. Others spoke of Jim. One driver going by us shouted, "You should all be dead."

I asked the pro-lifers how many of them had ever been threatened while ministering. About fifty raised their hands. I asked how many were inspired by Jim's martyrdom to live more zealously for Christ and to end "abortion." All raised their hands, especially the children present. As the three truth trucks drove away and the crowd dispersed, my heart overflowed with thankfulness, especially for the local teenagers I had just met who pledged to take Jim's place in showing pro-life signs outside of their next home football game.

Most local people condemned and ridiculed Jim, treating him like he was crazy for crying out about babies being murdered. He had asked every pastor in town to do something about stopping abortion, to tell the truth and show the pictures. All pastors/priests, except one, could live comfortably with Planned Parenthood in town, but not with Jim Pouillon's voice and signs, "What about the babies? Babies are being murdered! Come and stop this abomination!"

Jim's murder has gathered some media attention, most of it inaccurate, and some of it ugly. Some folks were celebrating

that Jim was gone. Pro-lifers have contacted Operation Save America and Missionaries to the Preborn and expressed how Jim's martyrdom has strengthened them to spend more time ministering on the streets until all of the killing stops.

I have seen it firsthand now - the blood of the pro-life martyrs will be the seed of the pro-life church. I'll never forget it when my children stood where Jim Pouillon was gunned down as they pledged themselves to Christ and to peacefully ending the slaughtering of American children. Nothing would honor Jim more than Christians loving Jesus enough to love their preborn neighbors.

Cards and encouraging letters may be sent to Jim's family in care of his church:

Abba's House

P.O. Box 201

Owosso, MI 48867

The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace.
Numbers 6:24-26

Recommended links:

"Jim Pouillon ran his race," said Cal Zastrow, chairman of Michigan Citizens for Life. "It's our turn to run for the Lord and sacrifice for the babies."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/17/us/17abortion.html>

Video of Memorial Service.

<http://www.connectmidmichigan.com/news/video.aspx?id=350834>

Jim Pouillon addresses friends in video.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bSW2oNJvcQk>

Congressmen Camp and Kildee introduce resolution to honor James Pouillon.

<http://camp.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=146069>