

# Baby Gabriel was testimony to life's sacredness then and now

*Editor's note: Archbishop Flynn's column this week is reprinted from a previous column written for Sept. 9, 1999. It is a strong statement about life at a time when we observe the 29th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision, which legalized abortion.*

**O**n a late Sunday afternoon in August, I was sitting on the patio that looks out over the city of St. Paul. Actually, I was reading the Sunday newspapers.

Sister Maria, one of the sisters who takes care of my residence, came out to me and told me that there was a man at the front door speaking about a baby who was very ill and needed to be baptized.

I went to the front door, and the gentleman who was there explained to me that his sister-in-law had given birth to a child and that the doctor had indicated that the child would die within hours. They wanted a priest to baptize the child. Would I come?

Of course I would come. To go to the hospital and be with those parents would be a great privilege for me, a priest.

I went in and got dressed and then was driven to the Children's Hospital in St. Paul. The gentleman who came to my door brought me to the room, and the scene will be seared in my mind and in my heart for as long as I live.

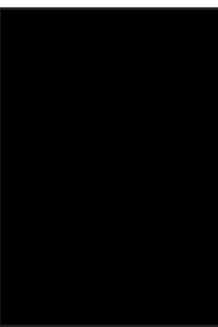
There was the mother on the bed holding and cradling her child. The child had died. The father had his arms around the mother and the child — cradling both of them.

**T**hey were crying and the father looked up at me and said to me, "Archbishop, I baptized the child just moments before he died."

The scene of the father cradling the mother and the mother cradling the dead child touched me very, very deeply.

Three and one-half months before the child was born, the parents learned of his fatal heart condition, hypoplastic left heart syndrome. Even with this condition, the pregnancy was deceptively normal, and the

## 'COME, LORD JESUS'



By Archbishop Harry J. Flynn

baby was fine until birth, when the heart needed to adjust to circulation outside the womb.

The parents knew that the child would not live long after birth. They could have terminated the pregnancy. They did not. They believed in life and believed in eternal life. They wanted this child to experience life even for that short period of time.

The parents, of course, were devastated.

I touched the child, who seemed to me to be sleeping. He was warm and beautiful.

I said to the father, "Not only have you given that child natural life, but through the waters of baptism you have given that child an eternal life in Christ."

**T**he parents had the Mass of the Angels celebrated by Father William Baer, the rector of St. John Vianney Seminary. Of course, it was very sad for them, but their faith-filled hearts could see beauty in it. The card that came out announcing the child's entrance into heaven read:

Born August 8, 1999, 4:42 p.m.  
7 lbs. 9 oz., 22 inches  
Perfect except for his heart  
Died peacefully in our arms 7:10 p.m.  
Surrounded by people who love him.  
HE KNEW ONLY LOVE.

The parents of this beautiful child named Gabriel have given a strong and vibrant testimony concerning the gift of life. They wrote to me after and said, "Our baby's birth and death has brought us great sadness but also many blessings."

One of those blessings was the strong testimony of a young husband and a young wife about their belief in human life and their belief in eternal life.

May God bless them. Gabriel, their child, is in God's life now. Gabriel is now in God's love. Gabriel, one day, will greet his beautiful parents as they make their entrance into that same life where God, who is in all, will embrace us all, in an everlasting love.

## READER AID

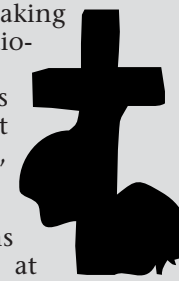
### Send Lenten events for our activities list

The Catholic Spirit would like to publish a comprehensive list of Lenten activities taking place in the archdiocese.

Please send us information about Stations of the Cross, concerts, speakers, meals or special Lenten programs that are planned at your parish.

We need: The event or activity, time, day, date and place, with an address and telephone number for more information. Please do not include Ash Wednesday services, as the events will be published Feb. 14, after that observance.

Send the information by Friday, Feb. 1, by mail to The Catholic Spirit, 244 Dayton Ave., St. Paul, MN 55102; by fax to (651) 291-4460 or by e-mail to catholicspirit@archspm.org. Please write "Lenten activity" on the envelope, fax or in the e-mail subject line.



## BRIEFLY

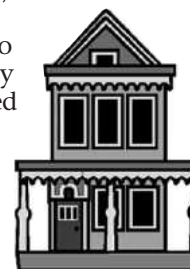
### Discuss housing crisis at Nativity on Jan. 31

Five St. Paul churches will present a reflective evening to discuss the housing crisis from 7 to 9 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 31, at Nativity of Our Lord, 1900 Stanford Ave., St. Paul.

Several people who have been affected by homelessness or worked on the issue will speak. A photo exhibit also will be on display.

The event is sponsored by Nativity, St. Mark, St. Peter Claver, the Cathedral of St. Paul and the University of St. Thomas.

Free childcare and refreshments will be provided.



## WE'VE HEARD

**John Kupris** of St. Paul has been named director of major gifts at The College of St. Scholastica in Duluth. He is responsible for planning and implementing individual major gift development in St. Scholastica's Institutional Advancement Department. He also will serve as the college's U.S. East Coast representative, providing a personal link to alumni, parents of current students and friends of the college.



Kupris

**The Catholic Community Foundation** has awarded 19 grants from its Community Priorities Fund totaling \$48,500 to support non-profit agencies within the 12-county area of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

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