

## Tear Away the Labels

Bouncing up and down on my knee, Matt giggles and shrieks with laughter as I coo and babble to him. No matter what his true age is, every single person I've seen meet Matt has bent over backward and unabashedly appeared to be a two-year-old in public to make him smile. At three and a half months old, my little brother is the happiest, chattiest, most joyful baby I've ever met. I can't imagine a world without such a beautiful little wonder, a world closer than I'd like to think.

After a devastating miscarriage shook my parents, two younger brothers, and me down to the core, we thought deeply about God's plan for our future and decided to begin the adoption process. My mom was adopted by her dad, as her biological father had deserted her and her mother when she was just a baby, so she always felt a strong conviction towards adopting.

Although we had been told we could wait for months on the bottom of the list unless we were specifically requested, we soon got a call from a prospective birth mom in September. The notice revealed almost no information, just that we had been bookmarked by this potential family, but in the months that followed, my parents received more details. The birthmother, Nicole, and her husband, Bobby, were a sweet married couple who, poor and uneducated as they were, found themselves in way over their heads. Matthew was the seventh child of his birth parents, two of whom had been adopted by extended family members, and the other four lived with their parents in Nicole's mom's house, always cramped and struggling to make ends meet. After six kids, Nicole and Bobby weren't really planning on having more children, but God blessed them with one more life. I thank Him every day that Nicole chose to keep that unexpected baby and place him for an

adoption rather than to abort him. As the mother of many children, children she was straining to care for, Nicole could have easily given in to the immense pressures coming from family and friends to abort her baby, but she and her husband refused and decided on an adoption. Now, as I tickle my little brother and gaze into his ice blue eyes, I giggle along with him, praise God, and pray that others will realize that the unborn have the right to life.

Protecting the sanctity of life for the unborn is the most pressing life issue, as all atrocities against human dignity seem to stem from the legalization of abortion. If murdering innocent infants is legally and morally acceptable, then who is to say without hypocrisy that the elderly should be allowed to live during their debilitation? Or that the disabled, mentally and physically, or the terminally ill may not be euthanized in the same fashion? Once abortion is acceptable in society, the right to life goes from falling down a slippery slope to careening and crashing down an icy, jagged mountainside. Because the unborn can't defend themselves, they need our voices to be their voices, our hands their hands, our hopes their hopes. We need to take action for them, to stand up, to sing our song to the mountains. "If we are the Body, why aren't His arms reaching? Why aren't His hands healing? Why aren't His words preaching?" proclaims the song "If We are the Body" by Christian group Casting Crowns. If we are the body of Christ here on Earth, then we desperately need to come together as one Church, one people, and take a stand against abortion.

Through my brother Matt, my sensitivity to abortion and motivation to speak out against it have been greatly increased. I've said rosaries outside of an abortion clinic and seen the scared, desperate expressions on the faces of mothers as they approach, and the

softened expressions on their faces as they walk away without entering after hearing us pray. A little light of hope is on their faces that wasn't there before. At places like camp or volleyball where some of my friends have different views than me, I try to explain the holiness and dignity of human life, no matter what form, including the unborn. Even though it's difficult to stand for what I believe in when those around me may ridicule me, Jesus told us in the Beatitudes that we will be blessed if we are mocked because of Him. Finally, I pray every night for all aborted babies, mothers who have had abortions, and mothers considering abortions. I pray for families like Nicole and Bobby who had the strength to keep their child and even give him up for adoption when they knew it was best for him. In the future, I want to participate in Teens for Life clubs, Promise to Keep, and the March for Life in Washington, D.C. Whenever I see the smile on Matt's face or hear the bell peal of his laughter, I say a prayer of thanks, a prayer of hope: a prayer that more families will get to experience this joy, and that abortion will be illegal.

As a society, we love to label things. In sixth grade, I received a miniature labeler that would print clear, capital-letter tags. Like any twelve-year-old, I let the power go to my head and ran around slapping labels on just about everything: Caroline's magazines, Luke's junk, Zeke's footballs, you name it. As a society, we label differently: embryo, neonate, fetus, blastula, zygote, incipient. Tear away the labels. Society tells us that unborn babies are disposable, with thousands of throw-away labels. If you peel away the term meant to cover emotions of care and compassion for aborted babies, you find yourself looking at another human. Another person. We're all just people, and in order to truly protect the unborn, we need to recognize that they're just people, too. When we

do, maybe more families waiting, just waiting, to adopt a baby can experience the joy we've had with Matt.