

What My Parents and Mother Teresa Have In Common

JOANNA WAGNER'S MONTHLY UPDATE

OCTOBER 2013



Dear Friend,

It was arguably the most important day in my life ... but I don't remember it at all.

My parents were dealing with a major emergency and my older siblings were looking after the younger ones. Many members of our church were praying and helping in any other way that they could. Everyone wanted to do his part to help me experience the big day, but I was utterly helpless to give back.

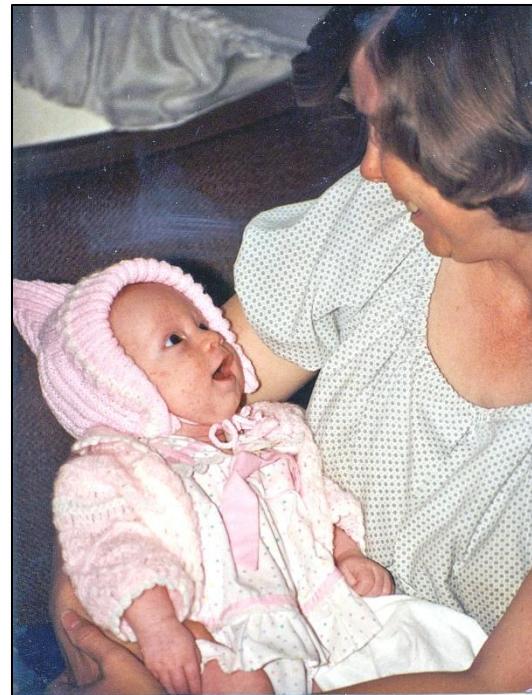
The day was October 4, 1990 – the day I was born. As I thought about what I would write this month, I began to think about this month twenty-three years ago. Though I have no memory of it now, it was the month when I first saw my mother's eyes, when I first felt my father's steady hand on my back, and when I first saw my brothers and sister playing with each other. It was also the month when I was formally accepted by my country into the human community.

My parents, however, had accepted me into their community much earlier than that October. So often, it's easy for us, as pro-life advocates, to focus on the negative things happening all around us. But I wanted to take my birthday to recognize two

exemplary individuals who have shown me what it means to treat all human beings with equal value. Over and over again, my parents have astounded me with their compassion and sacrificial service to those in need. Most notably they have shown this in their dedication to their own seven children, despite many obstacles along the way.

"Human rights are not a privilege conferred by government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of his humanity."

my mother was pregnant with me, an acquaintance suggested that she get an abortion. This woman was astounded that anyone with six children would even consider raising another. But my parents wouldn't hear of such a thing. They valued my life, even before my country did. They valued me when I was completely helpless, before I could reason, even before I could feel pain. They valued me because I was a living human being.



My mother, Grace Wagner, is pictured here holding me a few weeks after I was born. It is apparent from this photo that I adored her then, and she continues to be an inspiration to me now.

When they reared us, my parents were not well-off. They had little money and few possessions, but they certainly valued our lives. When

Joanna's JFA Events – October 2013 Edmond and Yukon, Oklahoma

- 10/4: Advanced Workshop at Trinity Baptist Church
- 10/5: Outreach at Czech Festival
- 10/19: Seminar at South Yukon Church of Christ
- 10/21: Seminar for Southwest Covenant High School
- 10/22: Seminar for Homeschool Students
- 10/23–25: Outreach to the Univ. of Central Oklahoma



JUSTICE FOR ALL TRAINS THOUSANDS TO MAKE ABORTION UNTHINKABLE FOR MILLIONS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

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Less than four years later, Mother Teresa filed an amicus brief with the United States Supreme Court (*Loye v. New Jersey*). Her words expressed concern for the way that abortion had affected the culture in which I was then being reared. Based on these words, I think she would've been proud of my parents for going against the grain:

*[Abortion] has portrayed the greatest of gifts – a child – as a competitor, an intrusion, and an inconvenience ... Human rights are not a privilege conferred by government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of his humanity.**

The week prior to filing the amicus brief, Mother Teresa spoke the following powerful words at the 1994 National Prayer Breakfast, with President Bill Clinton seated at the head table:

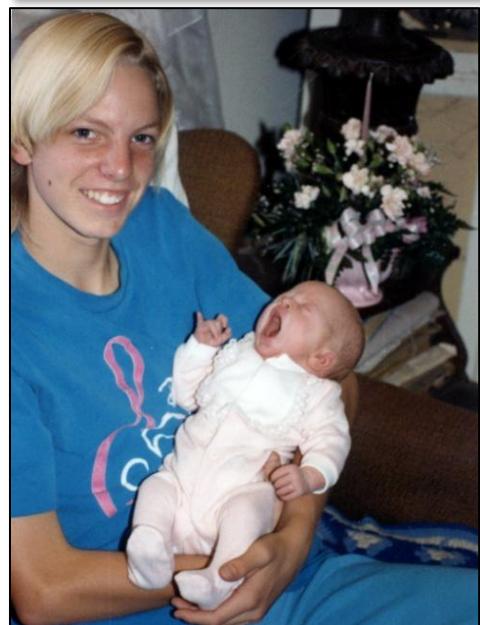
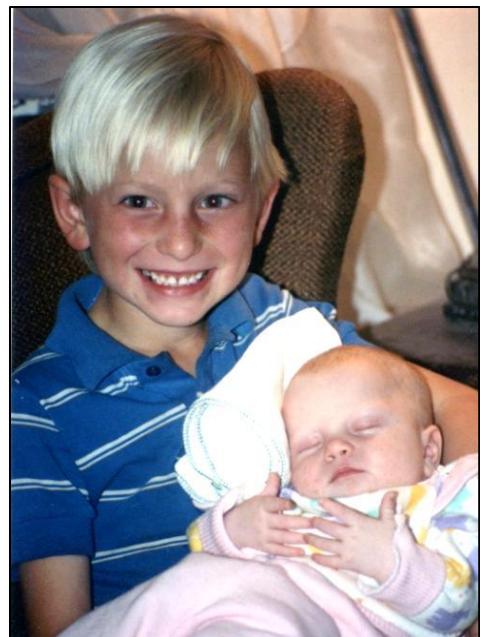
*... But I feel that the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a war against the child, a direct killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself. And if we accept that a mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another? ... And, by abortion, the father is told that he does not have to take any responsibility at all for the child he has brought into the world ... Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love, but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion ... Each child is created in the special image and likeness of God for greater things – to love and to be loved ... Please don't kill the child. I want the child. Please give me the child.**

In a future letter, I want to share with you the way Justice For All trains its volunteers to help others recognize the equal human rights for which Mother Teresa so passionately advocated. I learned how to train others to explain and defend human value through JFA, but I originally saw the idea lived out through my parents. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for twenty-three years and nine months of amazing care that I did nothing to deserve. I love you more than I have ever adequately expressed.

And to each one of you who prays for me or contributes financially to my work with Justice For All, thank you. By doing these things, you are acting on behalf of the weakest among us who are so often ignored.

Peace and joy,

Joanna



My brothers Jon (top) and Steve (bottom) are pictured here holding me just days after I was born. I now have the privilege of working with them at JFA. From the look of these photos, I had very different reactions to these two! Now that I'm a few years older, I am happy to report that I enjoy being around them both.

* I encourage you to watch Mother Teresa's speech at the prayer breakfast. I've posted the video to www.jfaweb.org/Mother_Teresa_Speaks_Truth. Also in that post, I included a link to the text of the speech and the text of the amicus brief. I think you'll appreciate both.