

# STORIES FROM THE STREETS



SISTERS OF LIFE



# THE ADVENTURE BLUE AND


**I** recently received a wonderful gift from the Sisters. They put together a book called “Stories from the Streets,” regaling me with encounters of grace from their daily lives. They were wonderful stories. All of them had elements of the unexpected; all of them witnessed to God’s love and all of them revealed the invitation the presence of a consecrated religious offers others.

Occasionally people will ask, “What do the Sisters do?” You may be familiar with our various apostolates but what you may not be aware of are the remarkable ways God makes Himself known in and through the public witness of our consecrated lives. Each time a Sister answers the doorbell or heads out onto the streets of New York there begins another adventure with the Holy Spirit. It is my joy to share a few of these adventures with you, our friends.

In Christ,

*Mother Agnes Mary*

(Names and details have been changed for anonymity.)



*On the Feast of the Presentaion Sr. Marija Joseph and Sr. Mary Karen professed perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and to protect and enhance the sacredness of a of human life.*

# ES OF THE WHITE



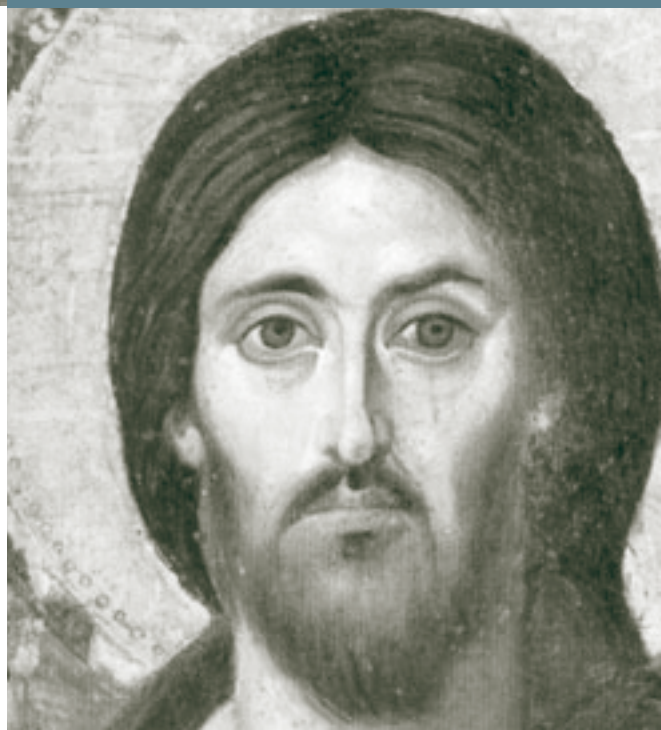
## Encountering Jesus everyday

by Sr. Elizabeth Ann

The doorbell, the phone, someone needing diapers, lunch was half prepared and the bell rang for prayer. It was one of the hottest days of the summer. I let out a heavy sigh scurrying down the hallway. "I wonder if I could disconnect the doorbell," I chuckled to myself. As I turned the doorknob it rang one more time. There stood Elizabeth and her grocery cart filled with a panorama of odds and ends collected from the streets of Manhattan. "Can I have a cup of water, Sister?" (for the third time today). I nodded, thinking of the Sisters waiting for me in chapel, and ran to the kitchen, returning a minute later. She smiled broadly, took the cup and thanked me. "God bless you, Elizabeth," I said as I slowly began shutting the door. Just before it closed, however, something caused me to pause; I watched as she slowly shuffled down the sidewalk, bent down and extended the cup to an old disheveled man slumped up against the wall. And then she said in the sweetest voice, "Here you go, Jesus."

## Seek His Face

We are all called to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ, witnesses to the loving and forgiving embrace of the Father, to be mercy, to be love, to be truth. Of course, in order to be authentic, effective instruments, we ourselves need to live with a contemplative outlook, with a heart that recognizes and marvels at the reality that every person is an icon of the living God, a reflection of His goodness and beauty. With this awareness we reach out to every person with openness and receive them with reverence. Through these encounters the Lord brings new hope, freedom and joy to those longing for His love.





# MIRACLE ON 66TH STREET

By Sr. Bernadette Maria and Sr. Myriam Caritas



It all began with a simple call. “Monica” was a single mother of three looking for housing. Nothing in her voice indicated that she was pregnant. She was in the process of being evicted from her apartment and had no place to go. After I gave her a few numbers, I asked, “Are you pregnant?” Her reply was a cool “I’m 8 weeks and 5 days pregnant and I’m scheduled for an abortion tomorrow afternoon.” She had been told that she could take a pill up until the 9th week; after that, the abortion would be surgical. Her decision was made. We talked for a while and I learned that her children are four, three and seven and a half months old and now she is “8 weeks and 5 days pregnant.”

I invited her to come to the convent to talk more about how we could help her and she agreed to come in the morning but reiterated that she was keeping her afternoon appointment. I sent out an urgent fax to all the convents asking our Sisters to storm heaven for Monica. The next day the morning passed and she didn’t arrive. At noon I went into prayer with a heavy heart. While we were in chapel Monica left a message on the answering machine saying that she wasn’t able to come to the convent, but she would call me later (meaning after the abortion).

**On the other side of town:** Monica rushed out of her apartment grabbing a slip of paper with the address of the abortion clinic on it. As she and her cousin drove up East 66th Street, they saw Sr. Myriam walking out the front door of the convent. Monica thought, “Oh No!” She had “mistakenly” grabbed the wrong address off her kitchen counter and now she and her cousin were sitting in front of the convent instead of the abortion clinic. By God’s grace, she got out and talked with Sister who then invited her in.

Sipping on a hot cup of tea, Monica began by explaining what had happened. Sr. Magdalene responded with, “I think the Lord wants you to have this baby.” Her cousin piped in saying, “That’s what I’ve been trying to tell her.” I was sitting in awe that this was actually taking place. It reminded me of

how Cardinal O'Connor would say that he believed that somehow, mystically, life-giving grace can radiate from each of us into the heart and womb of a pregnant woman tempted to have an abortion. He'd compare it to the grace that radiated from Mary to Elizabeth at the Visitation. We can experience that same power by receiving Jesus into our bodies in the Eucharist and carrying Him forth to all those in need of His presence.

We asked Monica what she would need to continue her pregnancy and to care for her children. When we spoke about the possibility of moving to other states, Monica became encouraged. She has two sisters in Florida and thought moving there might help. Over the next several days, we fervently searched for maternity homes, shelters, contacts, etc. in Florida. Prayers continued with great hope, that if Monica needed to go to Florida, God would open a door for her. During that time, we talked frequently and she told me that meeting the Sisters was the third time that God had intervened as she was trying to schedule an abortion for this child.

I decided to send out a mass e-mail to all of our Co-Workers of Life, entrusting to them a special mission of praying for Monica and helping us with any possible contacts in Florida. Fifteen minutes after sending out the e-mail, I received a call from Genevieve Matthews, sharing that she has an empty house near Tampa (in the same city in which Monica's sister lives) and that she would be willing to let her live there! Another Co-Worker offered a month's rent. Yet another Co-Worker offered a second month's rent. A gentleman in Florida offered to help Monica with furniture, household needs, job opportunities and even help finding a car. Others offered their time to pick her up from the airport and help her move into the house. Another has agreed to be a "handmaid" to her, walking with her and encouraging her throughout her pregnancy and afterwards.

Monica was prepared to leave everything behind since she had no way of getting her things down to Florida. A few weeks before her flight, I received a call from a pro-lifer in Florida, Mark Hall. He was going to be driving a moving van to Philadelphia and unloading it there. He offered to come to New York the day before Monica was scheduled to fly to Florida with her children, pack up her entire apartment, drive down to the Tampa area and move her into Genevieve's house! I was amazed at the providence of God so concretely revealed in this network of support.



It is a joy to walk with Monica. I am more and more in awe of God's extravagant love as He continually makes His presence known. With each conversation, Monica is opening up and asking many questions about the faith. Misconceptions have been cleared up and there is a greater receptivity in her to receive the graces that are being poured out. She has hope. In the midst of this all, Monica has become an evangelist herself, sending a pregnant friend to us and telling others about the work we're doing.

Truly God is present and active in our lives. If each of us opens our eyes and hearts to Him and responds by simply doing our part, then we will each participate in building a Culture of Life!

*"God is the foundation of our hope: not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; His kingdom is present wherever He is loved and wherever His love reaches us."*

-Spe Salvi, Pope Benedict XVI

Download the Holy Father's letter on Hope at:  
[www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).



# Everybody has something to give

Twice a year, people from across the U.S. pack into our Visitation Co-Worker trainings to learn how the gifts they have can build a culture of life one heart at a time. Countless pregnant women and single mothers in need have been helped by our Co-Workers, who offer practicals like jobs, housing and professional services within the context of a growing community of support. Knowing that people care about their circumstances enough to sacrifice gives the women what is most needed: hope for the future and trust in God's providence.

## Visitation Co-Worker Training

### The training includes:

- Understanding the heart of a vulnerable pregnant woman
- The language of Adoption
- Communication skills
- Testimonies of Co-workers and women served by the Visitation Mission
- Description of the various ways your talents can be placed at the service of life.

For more information please contact  
the Sisters at : **212.737.0221**  
**[visitationmission@archny.org](mailto:visitationmission@archny.org)**



# READY FOR COURAGE

by Sr. Marie Louise Concepta

**It was a crisp spring morning on the East side of Manhattan. I was headed out to pick up a donation of diapers when two young men approached as if they knew me.**

They had seen some of our Sisters on MTV News earlier in the week. "John" was fascinated by the crucifix on my rosary, wondering where he could get one, though he didn't strike me as the church-going type. At one point in our conversation, he had my crucifix in one hand and a cigarette in the other, as he questioned me about religious life. "So you only go home one time a year?" his friend "Freddy" asked, remembering many of the details from the brief 5-minute clip about our life shown on the news. As John chatted freely, accepting a Miraculous Medal while taking down details of where to get a crucifix, Freddy was much more reserved. He occasionally alluded to once being Catholic but said that he had "issues" with the Church now and didn't want to get into it. There was a sadness there, I could sense.

As I finished explaining where the Pauline bookstore was, Freddy asked me directly, "What does the Catholic Church think about homosexuality?" I sensed that the Lord wanted to speak to this young man's heart. We talked about everything from God's infinite mercy to the call of every Christian to chastity, to the hope of living with a pure heart by God's grace. I shared that in order to see God, to hear His voice, to know where the Lord is leading us, we need to be pure of heart and mind. It almost felt like I stepped out of the conversation in a way and the Holy Spirit took over.

We talked about the healing and forgiveness in Christ that is available to anyone no matter what their sins, if they approach our merciful God with a sincere and humble heart. We spoke about the infinite love God has for him personally, and how greatly Jesus desires him to come back to Church and bestow upon him the riches of His love and mercy. We also spoke of the Courage support group that meets weekly

on the West side and how the Church desires to help him live chastity in joy.

Honestly, I don't remember a lot of what we talked about, but I literally watched as the Holy Spirit opened this young man's heart to receive this message of hope and truth. All I had to do was stand aside and allow Him to work. At the end of our conversation, I offered him a Miraculous Medal which he gratefully accepted and looking at me sheepishly said, "I feel like I should give you a hug." As I gave him a hug, I remember saying, "You are a child of God." I have never said this to anyone with such certain knowledge of its truth as I did then, feeling the love of a mother for this

young man so estranged from the faith, yet longing to know God's love. Those were the words the Lord gave me to leave with him -- You are a child of God. They seemed to encompass all that God was inviting him to recall and live. The look in his eyes I will never forget. They were shining with a new hope. I pray that his journey home has begun.



## You are a child of God

**To learn more about COURAGE,  
a Catholic outreach to men and women  
dealing with same-sex attraction go to:  
[www.couragerc.net](http://www.couragerc.net)**



# understanding Jasmine

by Stephanie Ray (postulant)



## She was the first girl I saw as we walked into the Youth 2000 weekend retreat.

While all the other teens were inside adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, she was outside, smoking a cigarette and talking on her cell phone. I smiled to myself because I recognized her rebellion as something that I would've done when I was her age.

Two minutes earlier I had been complaining to Sr. Therese about having to lead a small group at the Youth 2000. I told her, "I'm not ready." Sr. Therese laughed and said, "Well God thinks you're ready. It's all about poverty...being vulnerable. He'll give you the words to say. But more than anything, these kids just need to see you - your joy, your light, your faith." As we passed the girl who was smoking and talking on her cell phone, Sr. Therese said, "See, like that girl. She's yearning for Christ but she doesn't even know it yet."

An hour later we met - her name is "Jasmine" and she was placed in my small group. I learned that her parents were alcoholics, and that she herself began to drink heavily and do drugs at a very early age. Although she was only in high school, she had already experienced a great deal of suffering and yet, she was determined to do whatever she could to create a better life for her younger siblings. That's why she was on the retreat - for them. Then she told me that she didn't believe in God.

I thought to myself, "If only she knew the love of Christ." Immediately I knew in my heart that Jesus was thirsting for her, yearning for her love, but at the same time I was feeling totally empty and helpless in the situation; I didn't know where to begin. I sensed her hurt and her need of healing. I recognized her passion to love but also her fear and lack of trust in others. I understood that her cynicism and anger were simply a cover to protect her gentle and kind heart. I knew that the evil one had been filling her with lies - so much so that she felt totally alone and isolated.

So I ended our first small group meeting with, "Whether you believe in God or not, He is real. He created you, unique and special. He loves you with an infinite merciful love. And He is present with us today in the Eucharist. So I'm asking you to just be open - open to Him and to His love. He is dying to love you and for you to love Him. Go before Him in adoration and tell Him all your hurts, your disappointments, your frustrations, your desires. Just be open...and listen for His response because He wants you to know Him."

After lunch our small group met again and we talked about God's mercy. I told them that no sin is too big for God to forgive. God is always faithful, no matter what. Even when the rest of the world lets us down, God keeps His promises. Then I invited all the girls in my group to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation sometime during the weekend. I felt that deep down Jasmine desired to believe in God, and I believed that Reconciliation would be the best way for her to receive His grace. Jasmine laughed at the invitation and said, "No way." After the small group broke up, I suggested that she talk to a priest and tell him her frustrations and why she didn't want to go to confession. She asked me why and I asked her, "Can you admit that you need healing?" She started tearing up, and I said, "Then a priest can only help. Christ heals us of all our sins, our hurt, and our anger."



Suddenly she made the decision to go to confession; she hadn't been since her First Holy Communion. She made me promise that it would help her. I promised that Christ would give new life to her soul in confession and healing grace. She held my arm and asked me to find her a priest.

She looked at me with longing eyes—full of fear, and sadness and hurt. I knelt down to pray as she followed the priest to the confessional. When she was finished and the priest gave her absolution, she hugged him and then started to cry. She cried for a long time, but the fear, the sorrow, the pain, and the anger were gone. I knew that the road ahead for her would not be easy—because there were many things that needed to change—but she would be okay because she would not walk alone; Christ would lead her.

God also gave me the grace to realize that He would guide me, too, if I would just open myself up to His love, and let Him lead me. In the vulnerability of not knowing how I could help Jasmine, I had to rely on Jesus completely. By the end of the day, I was amazed at how He taught me to live by faith, to trust in His mercy, and to open myself up to His love.



**Canada** Despite allegations to the contrary, our Sisters in Toronto have not received the mystical gift of bilocation! But they have been spotted at national conferences and on college campuses, at high schools and parish groups. The fire of evangelization has been burning as our Sisters eagerly spread the much needed message of life and love throughout Canada. After over 88 talks in just a five month span, the Sisters have found great hope especially among the young of Canada, who have particularly welcomed us with open arms and an earnest desire for catechesis and formation. Recently, twenty such young women spent a weekend retreat with the Sisters in Toronto.

**USA** Since the last issue of our newsletter, our Sisters have traveled to universities and vocations retreats in Texas, Nebraska, Virginia, Florida, Illinois and Washington, D.C., meeting with hundreds of young people seeking to follow the Lord's plan for their lives. Pray for them!

# Evangelization

**Australia** If you know of anyone traveling to World Youth Day this July direct them to visit us at the Love and Life site. There will be music, fun, a screening of the movie "Bella," along with tons of praying and adoration. Don't miss it! Find out more at: [LoveLifeLink.org](http://LoveLifeLink.org).

## Villa Maria Guadalupe

For a listing of upcoming retreats and seminars visit [sistersoflife.org](http://sistersoflife.org).



# I LEFT MY PRAYERS IN SAN FRANCISCO

by Sr. Marija Joseph

The first ever international conference on post abortion and men: “Reclaiming Fatherhood” held in San Francisco was winding down.

A woman approached us, eager to know who we were and why we were there. Sr. Lucy and I told her about our community and our mission to women and men who have suffered from the effects of abortion. “Catherine” seemed intrigued by our charism and was very eager to receive a copy of our post-abortion retreat manual thinking maybe she could get something going in her part of the country. She took our literature and went on her way.

After lunch Catherine asked to speak with me. She said when she saw the three of us at the conference, she was delighted. Her heart was filled with hope after learning that one of our missions was post-abortion healing.

For the next hour and a half, Catherine proceeded to tell me her story and how she came to have an abortion when she was fifteen. Nobody in her family knew, only her husband. Through many tears, she told me that the Lord has healed her little by little and that she has come to realize that He is the only one who can bring true healing. “Christ is the Divine Physician. Only He can heal,” she reminded me. She said that she liked that our retreats emphasized prayer and the sacraments. I invited her to attend our next post-abortion weekend retreat.

We left the conference renewed and strengthened in hope. With our bags and boarding passes in hand, we headed to the gate. San Francisco International Airport prides itself on having one of the strictest security checks around the country and the latest state-of-the-art technology and equipment. As we approached the guard flashing our photo ID’s, he directed us to get in the line on the right, saying anyone with headgear had to go through the machine that detects bombs. Imagine a glass telephone booth with a small sign on the front explaining the procedure. You are to stand still on the footprints and three puffs of air will be emitted.

Sr. Mary Teresa went first. Before we knew what was happening, a jet of air fluffed up her veil and then a second puff of air lifted up her cape and a third caused her skirt to balloon up as she tried to squelch it. Nervously, I read the directions on the small sign. But before I could finish, the guard had me step into the machine, place my feet on the footprints, and told me not to move. The glass door closed shut, and before I could even utter a “Lord, have mercy,” my veil, cape and tunic skirt were all flying up around me, not unlike Marilyn Monroe’s famous poster. Still in a daze and totally humiliated, I was ushered out of the machine. Sr. Lucy didn’t hesitate to tell me that everyone behind us in line was howling and bowled over laughing as I went through the bomb detector.

As if that were not enough, we still had to go through the regular metal detector. And as usual, I set it off. “Female assist,” the guard yelled as he directed me to a quarantined spot. As I’m waiting there in my holey socks (of all days to have holes in the toes), I notice a sturdy-looking Asian female guard patting down a fellow traveler. Something didn’t seem right to me - a little too aggressive and a little too thorough. I thought, it’ll be just my luck to get her.

# hope

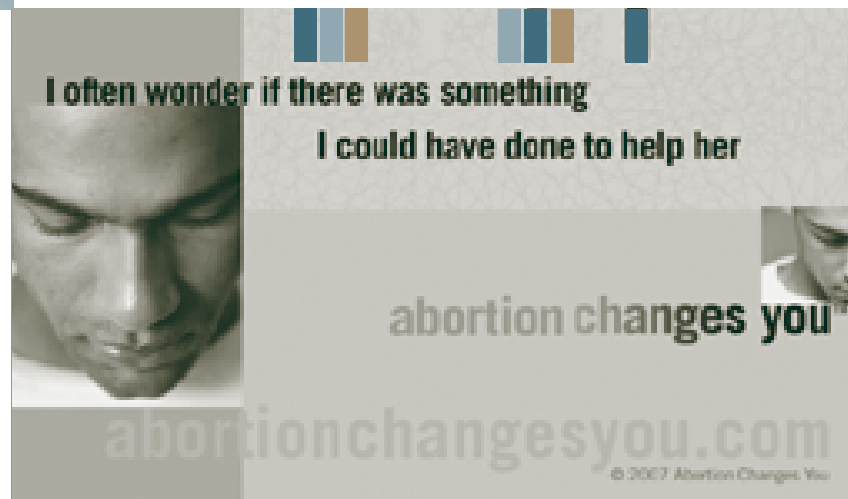
Where do you go for healing? ➤

"Okay, Lord, all for you." I muttered to myself. Finally, the Asian guard came to me and motioned me to follow her. I quickly asked if I could have a private room. "Of course," she said and had another female guard followed us.

I asked if she was Chinese. She said yes and asked if I was. I said yes. She asked what I was doing in San Francisco. I told her that we were in town for a post-abortion healing conference, mentioning the reality of the pain that many experience after abortion. She said in a low voice, "I know. I had two." I looked at her in the eyes and told her that we have retreats for women like herself. "I always think of China and what they do to men and women with their one-child policy," I said. "I know. China's the worst. The worst," she agreed. I gave her some information about our retreats, handing each guard our brochure saying, "We all know someone who is affected by abortion." The other guard cast her eyes downward and took the brochure. My new friend tucked the brochure promptly in her uniform pocket and said, "Maybe I'll come visit you in New York." "Please come," I urged.

As we were flying back to New York my mind turned to the thousands of women and men who silently and too often alone carry the burden of a past abortion. If my heart longs and aches for them to find reconciliation, how much more must Our Lord desire it? In San Francisco I learned that He will even use airport security to communicate His invitation to healing and peace.

**Everyone knows someone** who has experienced abortion. Too often, these women and men think hope and healing are out of their reach. But the mercy of Jesus and the compassion of others are waiting for each. Throughout the year, we have both Days and Weekends of Prayer and Healing which include testimonies of mercy, scripture reflections, opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, personal prayer time and Holy Mass. **To learn more about our upcoming retreats go to:** [www.sistersoflife.org](http://www.sistersoflife.org) or 866.575.0075 or [postabortion@sistersoflife.org](mailto:postabortion@sistersoflife.org).



## Abortion Changes You

**Abortion changes you**, a new national outreach powerfully illustrates the far reaching impact of abortion upon those it touches. Many women, men, grandparents, siblings, other family members and friends are seeking to make sense of their own or a loved one's abortion experience.

Whether you have personally experienced abortion, someone close to you has, or you are seeking to sensitively and compassionately communicate with others about abortion – *Abortion Changes You* is a place to begin.

The outreach includes the Web site **AbortionChangesYou.com** and the book *Changed: Making Sense of Your Own or a Loved One's Experience* by Michaelene Fredenburg. (Order at: [AbortionChangesYouResources.com](http://AbortionChangesYouResources.com) or 877/325.HEAL)

## SISTERS OF LIFE

St. Paul's Convent  
586 McLean Avenue  
Yonkers, New York 10705

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



From the mouths of babes:

“So, what did your mom say when  
you were born and she found out  
that you were a little nun?”

(An actual question asked by a kindergartener)

Children say the funniest things.  
They also touch us with their  
innocence and simplicity.

**Happy Mother's Day and Father's Day!**

### SV DIRECTORY

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**VISITATION MISSION  
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212/737-0221  
toll free: 877/777-1277

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450 West 51st Street  
New York, NY 10019  
212/397-1396  
Fax: 212/397-1397

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(Retreat House)

159 Sky Meadow Drive  
Stamford, CT 06903  
203/329-1492  
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**ST. FRANCES DE CHANTAL**  
(House of Formation, Vocations)

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Bronx, NY 10465  
718/863-2264  
Fax: 718/792-9645

**ST. AUGUSTINE CONVENT**

2661 Kingston Rd.  
Scarborough, ON  
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416/261-7207 (ext. 266)  
Fax: 416/261-0923

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[www.LoveLifeLink.org](http://www.LoveLifeLink.org)