



# LIFE MATTERS

The Newsletter of the Respect Life Office of the Diocese of Rockford  
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## Abortions in Illinois during 2008: highest number since 1998

by Patricia Pitkus Bainbridge

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has released the number of reported abortions committed in Illinois during 2008. Based on the very nature of the abortion industry<sup>1</sup> and the reporting policies<sup>2</sup> of the IDPH, however, these figures should be viewed as a minimum and in some cases, very incomplete, picture of the procured abortions throughout the State.



The total number of reported abortions in Illinois for 2008 is 47,717. If accurate, it means that 2,419 more unborn babies were killed in 2008 than in 2007.

In 2007, five counties (Boone, DeKalb, Kane, McHenry, and Ogle) reported increases in the number of mothers procuring abortion. Only Stephenson and Winnebago reported decreases while Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, and Whiteside were listed as “unknown.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2008 four counties (DeKalb, Kane, Ogle, and Stephenson) reported increases in the number of mothers procuring abortion. The increase in Kane County (the location of the new Planned Parenthood facility) is 38%. Boone, McHenry, and Winnebago reported decreases and Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, and Whiteside continue to be listed as ‘unknown.’

The reported numbers of mothers from the 11 counties in the Diocese of Rockford who procured abortions in 2008 is as follows:

**Boone**— 77 (down from 82 in 2007)  
**Carroll**—“unknown” (“unknown” in 2007)  
**DeKalb**—207 (up from 198 in 2007)  
**Jo Daviess**—“unknown” (“unknown” in 2007)  
**Kane**—1,145 (up from 832 in 2007)  
**Lee**—“unknown” (“unknown” in 2007)

**McHenry**—562 (down from 564 in 2007)  
**Ogle**— 69 (up from 56 in 2007)  
**Stephenson**— 55 (up from “unknown” in 2007)  
**Whiteside**—“unknown” (“unknown” in 2007)  
**Winnebago**—593 (down from 623 in 2007)

According to these figures, a minimum of 2,708 2,355 women living in the 11 counties within the Rockford Diocese procured abortions in 2008. That is 353 more abortions than in 2007. The increase in 2007 was 92 over the previous year. At minimum, 7 preborn babies whose mothers lived in one of the counties in the Diocese were killed by abortion each day in 2008.

<sup>1</sup>Reported abortion figures must be considered as a minimum because of the nature of the business. It is not logical to assume that abortionists are totally honest. After all, if one is willing to kill tiny, defenseless human beings for financial gain, what assurance do we have that he or she will accurately report the number of abortions they commit. Due to the fact that abortion is so unregulated and so protected by law, as well as the fact that many abortionists insist on cash payment, there is simply no way to know for certain the exact number of abortions committed. We have to rely on the information provided by the IDPH recognizing its limitations. Bottom line, even one abortion is one too many.

<sup>2</sup>As I have reported in past years, Illinois has the unexplainable “51 rule” where abortions from a county are not reported if there are not at least 51. If 51 women from a particular county procured abortions in 2007, but “only” 50 from that county procured abortions in 2008, the figures for that county would be listed as “unknown.” These “unknown” counties could be as low as zero or as high as 50.

### What can we do?<sup>3</sup>

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* provides a comprehensive model for pro-life efforts by calling “upon all the resources of the Church—its people, services, and institutions—to pursue this effort with renewed energy and commitment in four major areas”: 1) public information and education; 2) pastoral care; 3) public policy; and 4) prayer and worship.

The *Pastoral Plan* also includes a reaffirmation of the Church's teaching regarding the dignity of human life and the responsibility of **all** living persons to protect life from its very earliest stage.

On occasion, those of us working to protect the unborn are criticized for focusing too much attention on abortion and not enough to other issues that violate the dignity of the human person.

The bishops clearly state in the *Pastoral Plan* that “**abortion necessarily plays a central role**” among the various life issues and that “it is imperative that those who are called to serve the least among us give **urgent attention and priority** to this issue of justice . . . Our concern is only intensified by the realization that a policy and practice that result in well over a million deaths from abortions each year cannot but *diminish respect for life in other areas.*”

That does not mean that the bishops' *only* concern is abortion, but it does signal the preeminence of outlawing abortion and other direct attacks on innocent human life including embryonic stem cell research, human cloning, and euthanasia/assisted suicide.

As Bishop Doran has said on a number of occasions, we need “kindness, gentleness, and persistence” in overcoming the “tremendous evil of abortion.” These are positive attributes that we must strive to emulate. And, we must not become discouraged. We are not called to success, but to faithfulness and we need to “do the right thing at the right time for the right reason.”

We must understand and learn to defend the Church's position on the life issues and all of us must live out our respect for life message. Mother Theresa said, “Holiness does not consist in doing *extraordinary* things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, what Jesus sends us. It consists in accepting and following the will of God.”

Just as there are many different pro-life organizations with different emphases and different functions, so it is with individuals—all have as the goal, the elimination of abortion and building respect for life at all stages of

development, but not all are engaged in the same activities.

While our focus of involvement may change over time, we need to pray and be open to what we believe God would have us do—and then do it!

We must embrace the totality of the Church's teaching on the dignity of each and every human life and, as with all the teachings of the Church, the way we live should reflect what we believe. We need to teach the next generation to respect all human life through word and deed.

This involves action—actually *doing* something. And whatever we do, we must begin with prayer. For without prayer, our efforts will fail. The Bishops recognized the importance of prayer in the *Pastoral Plan* when they wrote, “Parishes should include in the petitions at every Mass a prayer that ours will become a nation that respects and protects all human life, born and unborn, reflecting a true culture of life.”

While we must be opposed to all anti-life attitudes and activities, each of us may be called to different areas of pro-life service or activity. We must remember that not everyone will be called to activism for the same life issue or to the same activity. But surely there is *something* each person can do.

We must go into society with the love and the truth of the church—the whole truth, not just the truth we like or the truth we think others will like. The decision is yours, but don't underestimate the significance of that decision—someone's life may depend on it.

Why not contact your Parish Respect Life Coordinator (PRLC) and find out how you can be involved in building a culture of life.

<sup>3</sup> reprinted from the January 2008 issue of *Life Matters*

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For additional commentary on the life issues, check out my column, “Life Lines,” on the first Friday of each month in *The Observer*.

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