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Pro-Life Speech

I still remember that fateful day; September 8, 2008. It was a peaceful day on the farm. The warm sun was shining in the sky and a cool September breeze blew across the pastures. Coming home from daily Mass, sixty-six-year-old Tom, my papa, must have thought that it was a perfect day to get more work done on the new porch or to help the workman lay bricks on the side of the house. He could mow the grass, weed the garden, and close the pool up for the winter. Papa sure had a big day planned ahead, yet he had no idea just how big that day would actually be.

Since fall was drawing near, the leaves had begun to drop from their branches; so Tom's son, Joseph, my uncle who was born with Down-Syndrome, decided to skim the leaves from the pool so that the filter would not clog. Joseph, or "Josie" as we affectionately call him, began to walk around the pool, collecting leaves from the water with a net. But little did Josie know that there was an old septic tank on the side of the pool that was covered by a rusty piece of sheet metal. As Josie went about his job diligently, he unknowingly stepped on the sheet of metal, which suddenly gave way under his feet! He plunged into the tank which was full of suffocating muck and toxic fumes! He could not get out because the tank was ten feet deep and there was nothing to hold on to. The situation was dire and Josie's life was in danger.

Meanwhile, Papa, who had been helping a worker lay bricks on the side of the house, decided to go and check on his son and see how the skimming was coming along. You can imagine his horror when he found Josie had fallen into the septic tank and was struggling to keep

his head above the sewage. Papa did not hesitate, he saw his son in need, and jumped into the tank. Despite the tank's opening being only about two feet in diameter, he somehow managed to get under Josie and to elevate most of his son's body above the muck. After calling desperately for help, the house worker and my Nahnne, Mary Ellen, came. They tried to hold Josie up while Papa kept pushing from the bottom. However, the toxic fumes and the effort to keep Josie up were too much for Papa. Before he went unconscious, while he was selflessly struggling to save his son's life, Papa spoke his last words: "You pull, I'll push." After what seemed an eternity, the rescue team came and was able to get Papa and Josie out of the slime and into an ambulance. Josie was put on oxygen and was able to return home a week later. However, on the way to the hospital, the responders informed Nahnne that her husband had died. Papa had heroically given his life out of love for his special-needs son.

In today's world, there is a lack of self-giving love. Evils that terrorize our world today such as war, theft, murder, slander, euthanasia, and abortion (which is also murder) are all results of selfishness. Babies with Down-Syndrome often are the victims of this selfishness. According to the Lozier Institute, as of 2014, 61% -93% of babies diagnosed with Down-Syndrome were aborted. Promoters of aborting Down-Syndrome babies say that these babies will not live meaningful lives or that they are not as human as other people. This simply is not true, you cannot determine how meaningful another person's life is. Also, there are no levels to humanity, one is either human or not. Now, Josie was informed of Papa's death while he was still in the hospital. My Uncle Steve, who was there at the time, said that after he was told, Josie "sat back . . . he closed his eyes, his chin quivered, and he started crying." Sorrow is a very human emotion;

it is ridiculous to think that a man who can feel the pain of his father's death is not "as human" as you or I.

Papa chose life at Josie's birth and when he dove into the tank to save him. Papa *gave* his life for the sake of his son, others *take* their child's life for the sake of *their own* comfort. Papa said "I'll push," others say "I'll pass." In one case, the parents are motivated by self-giving love; in the other, by selfishness. Yet parents of aborted down-syndrome babies do not know what they are losing. Dr. Skotko of the Down Syndrome Program at Massachusetts General Hospital found in a study that 99% of parents with Down-Syndrome kids love their special-needs children. Personally, I know Josie has brought joy to my life. He loves to talk (in fact, he calls our house several times a day), he loves to hang out and to shoot hoops. Josie is always there to comfort someone in need and his smile is more contagious than the coronavirus.

And you better be prepared when you get a hug from Josie because he'll give you a squeeze that you won't forget!

Down-Syndrome babies are aborted because their parents are not willing to give of themselves. If these parents were in the habit of practicing self-giving love, they would not even question whether their baby is worth the effort, instead, they would see an opportunity to give of themselves and would do what it takes to raise the child. *Evils such as abortion, stem from selfishness. The way to counteract selfishness is with self-giving love.* Papa had many plans that fateful day, none of them were to save his son from drowning. Yet, he was in the habit of giving of himself for others, and when he saw Josie in need, he did not stop to wonder if Josie's life was worth saving; he made the loving decision and jumped in. Likewise, by practicing self-giving

love in the little circumstances, we too will be able to jump into society's septic tank of evil and selflessly "push" for life.

Works Cited

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My work is honest and I know of no cheating.