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## ABORTION'S TOLL ON MEN



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### Fathers ignored in discussions

Sitting in the living room of his home, the young man recalled what his late father, who died of cancer last year, used to tell him.

"Life is 10 percent what happens to you, and 90 percent how you react," the young man remembered his father saying.

When faced with his girlfriend's unplanned pregnancy last year, the young man — who asked to remain anonymous — dwelled on his father's words and decided to shoulder the responsibility of fatherhood. He figured he and his girlfriend were on the road to marriage anyway and began to warm to the idea of holding his own child in his arms.

"I know it's an embarrassing thing," he said of his girlfriend's out-of-wedlock conception, "but you're dealing with a human life, and, to me, that goes beyond what friends think and what the family thinks."

However, his girlfriend, he said, thought that abortion was the best route to take. Still, he was so fiercely opposed to ending his unborn child's life that he contemplated going to the doctor's office where his girlfriend had made an appointment for an abortion and attempting to stop her himself.

"I was very unsure if I could keep my composure," he remembered.

So he asked a friend of his family, a noted pro-life and pro-peace activist, to intervene on his behalf. For doing so, Carol Crossed, a parishioner at Corpus Christi Church in Rochester, wound up being charged with third-degree criminal trespass at the office of Dr. Morris Wortman in Brighton last September. She pleaded guilty to the charge and spent the last week of November, including Thanksgiving Day, in Monroe County Jail.

"I'll have great respect for that woman to the day I die," the young man said.

But he has no respect for the society that gave him no legal say in his girlfriend's decision to have an abortion — which she carried out.

"It takes two to have a baby," he said. "I feel that the man should have some type of say."

According to experts on fathers and abortion, the young man's anguish and sentiments may be common these days. Fathers are the forgotten element in the abortion debate, overlooked even by many activists in the pro-life movement who still see the abortion issue as one that primarily concerns women, observers said. Men compound the problem by denying and repressing their feelings about abortion, experts contend.

"In a certain sense, men don't have a right to talk about (abortion) because they're the bad guy who got her pregnant," said David Reardon, Ph.D., director of the Eliot Institute in Springfield, Ill., in a phone interview with the *Catholic Courier*.

Through his institute, and prior to its founding in 1988, Reardon has researched the effects of abortion on women, men, siblings and society for 14 years. He currently publishes *The Post-Abortion Review*, a quarterly newsletter, and recently authored a book titled *Making Abortion Rare: A Healing Strategy for a Divided Nation*.

Men whose girlfriends or wives have abortions often fear that they will aggravate the pain of their mates by talking about what happened, Reardon said. Meanwhile, society tells men that fathers have no choice in an abortion, relegating them to the status of pained onlookers, he said.

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Story by Rob Cullivan • Photograph by Matthew Scott