



# His mercy brings peace

*“I am living proof that Mary never gives up on anyone. Without hesitation, I would say it was Our Lady’s intercession and the fruit of many rosaries spoken boldly by my simple and faithful mother and others, that wrestled me from the greatest darkness, and saved me by the merciful blood of Jesus. Filled with deepest gratitude to Abba, my Daddy, here is my story ...”*

## An interview

with Dr. John Bruchalski, M.D.

- by Sr. Rose Patrick O'Connor, SV

*Dr. Bruchalski is a physician specializing in women's healthcare, the founder of Tepeyac OB/GYN clinic, and a dear friend of our community who has helped us serve pregnant women in need.*

### Dr. Bruchalski, could you share your story with us?

I grew up in a great, faithful, Polish home. During the 1970s and 1980s, I decided that you didn't have to quite follow the Church to be a Catholic. I thought that the Church was archaic with their morality, and I needed to bring it into the 21st century.

Once I realized that I wanted to be a doctor, I kind of moved away from God, and then I took over. I started thinking that, in time, all would recognize that abortion, contraception, and sexual liberation were necessary for women to flourish. "I have to liberate women," I thought. "I have to provide abortion on demand." And that's what I learned to do. Yet, as I bought into the lies of the world, I became irritated, confused, less at peace.

It was at that time, at the end of my medical school training, that a friend took me to Guadalupe, Mexico City, the hill of Tepeyac, [where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Juan Diego]. While I was there, I heard a voice internally that said, "Why are you hurting me?" And I blew it off.

When you begin to move away from Christ, you become sort of "schizophrenic" — you become two-faced, irritable, not peaceful. And so I went on to residency, where I learned to do first-, second-, and third-trimester abortions. We were a contraceptive research and development center, so I learned about IUDs, pills, and sterilizations. We were also an in-vitro fertilization center — the home of the first "test-tube baby" in the country. I learned to build embryos; [the way we saw it,] they really weren't human. They were "pre-human", or "sort of human", but they didn't quite deserve the same respect.

And it was in my internal chaos, in my irritated state, during this time that I was doing abortions, that a wonderful doctor challenged me and said, "You're better than this. I just got back from Yugoslavia where some people think the Mother of God is appearing — you need to go on retreat." I blew her off. And it was then that my mother called and said, "Hey, do you want to go to Yugoslavia with me?" Being a good Catholic lady, she just wanted to go see what everybody was talking about.

I went with her, and the reality was that my whole life came tumbling down. I had an engagement — heart to heart, so to speak, eye to eye, soul to soul — with our Lord and Savior, and our Blessed Mother. Mary said to my heart, "Go, show yourself to the priests," and even though I had left the Catholic Church many years earlier, I knelt down in a parking lot outside in the middle of the winter, and I went to confession.

### How did that moment change the trajectory of your life?

When I came off the hill in Yugoslavia, I realized I was serving two patients — the mom and the child. I began to believe health is based on relationships — sacrificial relationships — in the doctor-patient, in the patient-family, and between us and our Lord. Medicine was an act of mercy. It wasn't a business, it wasn't a service, it wasn't a job; it was sacrificial care of patients. It was mercy, like housing the homeless and clothing the naked.

So, in 1994, I started Tepeyac OB/GYN. We do 500-600 deliveries a year, and we partner with pregnancy centers. We are supported by Divine Mercy Care — an organization that tries to help us see women of all races, creeds, and economic statuses, whether or not they can pay. We've been able to talk at medical schools. We love our perinatal hospice program, and we work closely with children with Down Syndrome and provide real options.

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### What would you say to women who have experienced abortion in their lives?

I took innocent lives ... knowingly. Jesus took me back. He was waiting for me. He forgave me. He freed me from my guilt and anguish. He embraced me. He showed me His Abba's Heart. His mercy flowing from His open Sacred Heart gave me the peace to see myself as I am — His son, redeemed and beloved. It happened. At that moment I was changed forever.

Right now, I pray that you know deep in your gut God's closeness to you at this moment of pain, uncertainty, and chaos; that you know His unconditional love for you. He is offering you and me His forgiveness, His healing of our bodies, our emotions, and our memories.

You are His daughter forever, and He loves you — not for what you do or don't do — but for who you are, His baby girl. He desperately wants a real relationship with you, always desiring to meet your needs. His love is that He died for you, and His death offers you forgiveness for all the pain and sins you have been a part of. Ask for it. Cry out if you must. His Resurrection offers you healing and hope

because He gave you His Spirit, the fire and passion of His love and mercy. Nothing you feel or have done can change His love for you, His daughter, or the child He called into life inside you.

### How should we approach those with whom we disagree?

With those who promote abortion, you have to see they're trying to love, they're trying to do the right thing, but Father forgive them for not doing that. We are all children of the Father, we all have a glimpse of that light in us — every one of us — including those who persecute the Church. And Father, forgive me for not having the faith of Paul, or of Therese, or of Catherine, or of all the great saints, to love people, to make children welcomed again. Because we can love. We can love in the concentration camp. We can love in the hospital. We can love in the office. We can love in our families. We can love anywhere the Lord puts us, because that's what He did, and that's what His mother did.

And pray. Intercessory prayer I know saved me. I know my mom and dad never stopped praying. I know those pro-life warriors who are out there, they prayed for me. Intercessory prayer is far more powerful than we could ever imagine. People say, "How did you do it?" I didn't do any of this — I'm just a little kid that's trying to follow what Mom has told me to do. And Jesus has loved me so much that I now know that I can love others and everything will be okay.

### How does receiving God's mercy bring peace in the midst of suffering?

For me, it all revolves around returning to Cana (cf. Jn 2:1-12) and Tepeyac. Cana is about the truth that His mercy and miracles meet our needs and bring us hope and peace now and in the future. This is the peace that surpasses all understanding. It also involves looking to Mary as an advocate and mother and intercessor.

Tepeyac was where the Virgin Mother said, "Do not fear any illness, vexation, anxiety, or pain. Am I not your Mother? Are you not in the crossing of my arms, under the folds of my mantle? Am I not your fountain of life? Is there anything else you need?" This promise to St. Juan Diego, to me, and to all of us, was spoken by this woman, this mother of ours, who was there from Bethlehem to Nazareth to the skull that Friday evening. She is the Pieta, who lived the paradox of suffering and peace. Triumph involves pain and suffering, misunderstanding, abandon-

ment. But somewhere there's silence — that little place where the Spirit pokes through — and you still believe that Jesus loves you. And you still believe in all the promises, that He's overcome the world. And so you do what He

puts in front of you because that's what He's allowed or willed. You just embrace it. And it's not easy, but that's where it is — that's where love is found.

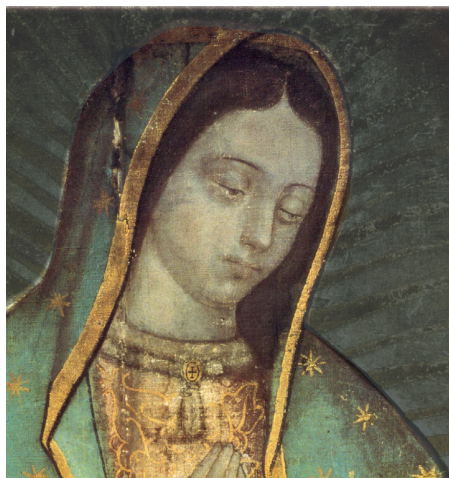
I know that suffering is an absence of some good, but you do your best as a clinician to provide opportunities for health. But in the end the common denominator of all of us is suffering. I think it's in compassion — suffering with — that we help each other here. That's how you build the Body of Christ ... walking with them, at least in my patients who have had challenges. It is not negating the pain, but walking with them through it that builds me up and gives me hope for the future.

### What would you say to people who are seeking peace in their lives?

Take a few moments every day in your busyness and try to be silent. (I needed silence, because in the midst of the chaos I was beginning to lose my mind.) Try to turn off your technology, your cell phones and things. Start at one or two minutes and just be present. In our practice we try to help people, body, soul, and spirit. The body part is the medication, the therapies, the herbs ... whatever we need to do to help the body. And then we tell them to forgive somebody — somebody in their life they have a hard relationship with — think about ways you can meet that person and improve the relationship, mostly through forgiveness. But then as we jokingly say — or not jokingly — "There is a higher power, and you're not it!"

You need to start praying, and you need to begin that prayer just by being quiet — silence. If you want to get on the path, really open yourself up to the love of Jesus ... do it for a few minutes every day and see what happens. I don't have a better answer for how to find peace in a world that is chaotic: It's the silence, a silence *with*.

*Tepeyac OB/GYN is a pro-life faith based obstetrics and gynecology practice serving the metropolitan DC/VA/MD area for over 25 years. Divine Mercy Care raises funds to provide charity care for Tepeyac OB/GYN patients in need.*



## Our Mother who never leaves us

*Mary is the Queen of Peace. She who bore Christ in her womb, knelt at His manger, and stood at His Cross, constantly intercedes for us and our loved ones, ever desiring to bring us to the peace of her Son. Her intercession, especially through the rosary, is powerful. When we pray to her, we should expect miracles! As she said to St. Juan Diego: "Do not fear any illness, vexation, anxiety, or pain. Am I not here, who have the honor of being your Mother? ... Is there anything else you need?"*