

You have heard that it was said, “*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy*” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father... (Mt 5:43-45). Jesus suffered and died on the cross showing us how to love our enemies as all the while he prayed. He prayed to his Father in Heaven. He prayed for those who persecuted him. He invited the good thief into paradise. And he prayed for each sinner that his sacrifice would lead to our salvation.

Saint Stephen follows the example of Christ in loving his enemies and praying for them. “Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). In being so effective in loving his neighbor, Stephen stirred up the wrath of the those who “could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke” (6:10). He was brought before the Sanhedrin as his enemies made false charges against him. “All those who sat in the Sanhedrin looked intently at him and saw that his face was like the face of an angel” (6:15). Stephen challenged his enemies not to repeat history: “Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute” (7:52)? In their unrighteous anger, they had him stoned to death. “As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them’; and when he said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59-60).

A year ago in London, as many Londoners were demonstrating against racial discrimination, a counter protester chose to protest the protesters. Patrick Hutchison, who is black, saw a white counter-protester try to cause trouble. In the fight that broke out, the counter protester fell to the ground as the crowd moved in on him. He was about to be trampled upon. Patrick and several of his friends rushed up the steps to protect the man and bring him out of harm’s way. Using a fireman’s carry, Patrick lifted him on his back and brought him to safety. As they were doing so, some sought to lash out and add further hurt to the injured man. Together Patrick and his friends stopped the man from being killed. Patrick was there to protest against discrimination. By his actions, Patrick showed that he loved his enemy who vehemently disagreed with him.

In Texas where Abby Johnson ran an abortion clinic, prolife demonstrators prayed for her conversion. One day after Abby witnessed an abortion firsthand and became disenchanted with the industry, she left Planned Parenthood and looked to her former enemies for help. They welcomed her with open arms. Over time, Abby became an advocate for life and started her own healing ministry for the conversion of others in the abortion industry. **And Then There Were None** has helped over 550 abortion workers to leave the industry and find new jobs. They offer free counseling and healing retreats along with the practical help of finding a new job.<sup>1</sup>

You have heard that it was said, “*You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy*” But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father... (Mt 5:43-45). Who is your enemy? How can you love them and pray for them?

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<sup>1</sup> kentuckytoday.com/stories/abby-johnson-look-at-what-god-has-done,19385