News



In a Sept. 17, 2019, photo, the building of Dr. Ulrich Klopfer's abortion business is seen in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind. Pro-life supporters there are asking for a search warrant to determine if more fetal remains will be found in the building. The Illinois physician died Sept. 3, 2019, and the remains of fetuses he took from the now-shuttered Indiana clinic were found in his home. (CNS/Today's Catholic/Ann Carey)

Ann Carey

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South Bend, Ind. — September 23, 2019
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The Sept. 13 disclosure that the preserved remains of over 2,200 aborted babies had been found at the rural Illinois home of the recently deceased Indiana abortionist Ulrich "George" Klopfer has sparked outrage and demands for immediate investigations by authorities.

At an Allen County Right to Life news conference Sept. 16 in front of Klopfer's now-shuttered abortion facility in Fort Wayne, speakers asked for an immediate investigation by Indiana Attorney General Curtis Hill Jr.

That same day, Hill issued this statement: "The grisly discovery of these fetal remains at the Illinois home of a deceased abortion doctor shocks the conscience. Further, we have reason to believe there is an Indiana connection to these remains. This past weekend, I conferred with Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, and he and I have agreed to work together as my office coordinates an investigation."

The following day, St. Joseph County Right to Life and Lake County Right to Life held a joint news conference in front of the Women's Pavilion abortion facility in South Bend. The facility also was owned and operated by Klopfer. His Lake County facility was in Gary.

Klopfer was 75 when he died Sept. 3. He had performed abortions in Indiana since the 1970s but had his medical license revoked in 2016 after innumerable infractions over the years.

Pro-life volunteers at the South Bend event told Today's Catholic, newspaper of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, that they had observed Klopfer carrying out boxes from that building and placing them in his car on numerous occasions, even after he was ordered to cease doing abortions. Lynne Scherschel, vice president of Lake County Right to Life, reported the same incidents at Klopfer's Gary facility.

Speaking at the South Bend gathering, Jackie Appleman, executive director of St. Joseph County Right to Life, said that Klopfer had "committed" more than 30,000 abortions. She called for authorities to search Klopfer's three Indiana facilities to ensure that all the human remains are found and given proper burial, noting that women have been reaching out to her Right to Life organization, fearful their babies have been stored in Klopfer's garage.

Appleman also asked for an investigation into whether former employees of Klopfer were complicit in storing, hiding or selling the remains of aborted babies.

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An Indiana law requiring burial or cremation of aborted human remains was passed by the Indiana Legislature in 2016 but delayed by legal challenges until the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the law in May of this year. Even before that law went into effect, Klopfer's actions violated Indiana medical waste laws, according to Steven Aden, chief legal officer of Americans United for Life.

Fr. Glenn Kohrman, pastor of South Bend's Holy Family and St. John the Baptist parishes, said at the South Bend news conference that our culture's greatest need is "reverence for each other." He noted that "children are alive before they take their first breath, they really are: statistically, scientifically, all the rest."

Kohrman did not use a name, but he appeared to be refuting comments by South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg, a presidential candidate who recently tried to justify his support for a so-called right to abortion by claiming the Bible says life does not begin until a person breathes.

Kohrman, who also serves on the board of Catholic Charities, stressed that any woman who needs assistance in carrying her pregnancy to term will be helped by that organization.

Another speaker, Lisa Everett, director of Project Rachel for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, offered assistance in healing to any post-abortive woman or man through the Project Rachel confidential network of trained counselors, priests and companions.

Perhaps the most moving testimony at both news conferences came from Serena Dyksen of Elkhart. She related her experience of Klopfer giving her an abortion when she was only 13, the victim of rape by an uncle. She said she did not even know what abortion was and went through with it "out of innocence and trusting that adults had my best interest in mind."

She depicted Klopfer as cold and uncaring, and when she cried out in pain, his reaction was to "yell" at her to be quiet. Dyksen related she suffered physical repercussions and debilitating emotional pain that lasted for years until she began the healing process after an "encounter" with Jesus.

"Even after much healing and attending a post-abortive retreat, hearing the news of over 2,000 baby remains on George Klopfer's property stirred up so many emotions -- not only for me but many women reaching out to me. I feel like I have been violated all over again," she related.



Fr. Glenn Kohrman, pastor of Holy Family and St. John the Baptist parishes in South Bend, Ind., and a board member of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, speaks at a news conference Sept. 17, 2019, in South Bend. He announced that Catholic Charities there would help any woman struggling to bring her pregnancy to term. (CNS/Today's Catholic/Ann Carey)

Dyksen said she wants a full investigation to be done and for the babies to have a proper burial. She is working with attorneys to sue Klopfer's estate to obtain DNA testing to determine if her child is one of the babies found.

Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend said in a Sept. 19 statement that he joined his voice with those expressing "horror and disgust" over the discovery. He said the diocese would offer any assistance that might be needed in the days ahead, including use of Fort Wayne's Catholic Cemetery, "for the proper and dignified burial of the remains of these unborn children."

"I am glad that some abortion advocates have joined in expressing their shock and disturbance at the discovery of the remains of the aborted babies," he said, "yet I am amazed at their simultaneous deceptive and false affirmation that abortion is health care and serves and empowers women. Some promote an abortion agenda so radical that they support legal abortion even in the third trimester, without restrictions."

"Abortion is not health care. It is the intentional killing of innocent and defenseless human beings," he said.

"Abortion does not serve or empower women; rather, it harms and victimizes them. The wounds of abortion are deep, often resulting in emotional, psychological and spiritual suffering," he continued. "The church offers hope and healing to all who suffer from the pain of abortion and its aftermath through our post-abortion ministry, Project Rachel."

He urged any woman or man suffering "the wounds of abortion" to contact Project Rachel ministry at (800) RACHEL HOPE. "We feel especially at this time for those women who had abortions performed by Ulrich Klopfer who have been traumatized by the discovery of the remains of the unborn babies who were possibly their own."

Rhoades noted that after the 2016 closure of Klopfer's South Bend clinic, the diocese had been free of an abortion facility, and women in crisis pregnancies were being served "with care and compassion," especially through the Women’s Care Centers.

But a few months ago, the Whole Women's Health clinic in South Bend was opened by a federal court injunction, he said.

"Now we again have a place where the most vulnerable and voiceless among us can be killed in their mother’s womb. Let us pray fervently that our diocese will one day soon be again without an abortion clinic," Rhoades said. "And let us pray for a greater respect for all human life and for a greater respect for the true dignity of women."