

How to Participate in 'Empty Manger' Caroling Day

Each Christmas since 2003, Eric Scheidler and other members of the Pro-Life Action League have gathered around an empty manger outside several Chicago abortion clinics to sing carols.

Ranging in age from 5 to 87, the carolers sing standards such as "Away in a Manger," "The First Noel," "O Come All Ye Faithful" and "Silent Night." Often, the group unfurls a 10-foot banner that reads, "All I want for Christmas is an end to abortion."

The idea behind the annual event is to bring the hope and joy of Christmas to these places of misery and despair. As the "Empty Manger" Christmas caroling day has expanded to cities nationwide, many mothers—deeply touched by "Silent Night" and other carols—have reconsidered decisions to abort their babies, saving countless lives.

The empty manger is a powerful symbol demonstrating God's love for humanity and the carols touch women's hearts, Scheidler explains.

"The shepherds, wise men, Joseph and Mary and the empty manger are a sign of anticipation and glee—hopeful expectation that the birth of the Christ child brings—but that really the birth of any child should bring, and for many parents it does," says Scheidler, executive director of the league.

"But the symbol has another side, which is the emptiness—the vacuum that is left in the human family, in the human heart, when that child is aborted. The crèche and the manger become a symbol of joy when we hope the child will be born, but becomes a sign of mourning when the child is aborted, so it operates on two levels."

Scheidler was inspired to start the Empty Manger caroling day more than a decade ago following lunch with a woman who is an expert on the theology of women's bodies.

"She said she thought it would have a big impact on a woman if you sing Christmas carols at abortion clinics," Scheidler says. "Wouldn't that connect Christmas and the mystery of Christmas to the experience of abortion? She talked about how difficult it would be to have an abortion at Christmas."

"It's particularly sad to think of someone getting an abortion during the time of Christmas, but on the flip side, it can be a means of reaching out to those women and helping them decide to not go through with the abortion."

For more information about participating in, or starting, an Empty Manger Christmas caroling day, visit [.](#)