

Meet the Modern-Day Joseph of Arimathea

She's not certified. She's not equipped. She just said yes.

Linda Znachko is a modern-day Joseph of Arimathea, the wealthy man who approached an elected official to ask if Jesus could be buried in his own tomb.

Znachko has her own plot of land at a cemetery where she buries her babies. Each of these children was abandoned by his or her birth mother, and Znachko claims them in death.

“‘We’re going on a walk,’” Znachko remembers the Lord telling her after she heard of her second abandoned baby in need of final resting arrangements. “He said, ‘I’m inviting you into something. I’m going to give you revelation after revelation. Nothing’s will be clear-cut, there’s no five-year plan. It’s going to be messy, but it’s going to unfold.’”

That was almost a decade ago.

In 2009, Znachko saw media coverage about a baby abandoned in a dumpster in her home state of Indiana.

She called the coroner and asked how she could help. Before Znachko would be granted the legal rights to bury the boy she’d named Nicholas, an investigation must occur.

Znachko thought it was a one-time thing, but during the investigation of Nicholas’ abandonment, Znachko heard about baby Zachary. His mother was homeless and had no resources to bury her son. Znachko stepped in.

“As I stood over baby Zachary’s casket, I remembered God had given me a vision that I was going to stand over a little white casket,” Znachko says. “I thought it was Nicholas, but those senses and impressions weren’t panning out. I thought

that none of this makes sense, but when you try to makes sense of the supernatural, you miss out. ... This opportunity God was giving me in this little window of time was to rescue children in His name, to claim them in His name, because they are his little children.”

Now, Znachko has claimed more than a dozen babies in death. Three were found in the wilderness, so she had no legal paperwork to adopt them. Nine were born in hospitals and their families left them dead. These babies have birth certificates. Other babies come to her because someone knows someone who knows someone who knows someone.

What started with one baby became a ministry: He Knows Your Name. Driven by the words of Isaiah 49, Znachko says the ministry has no specific target or vision, just to say yes when Jesus calls.

“I feel like (the ministry’s goal is) making sure every baby has name in life and dignity in death,” Znachko says. “It’s very broad. The way I go about it looks different every day.”

Nothing special separates the average person from Znachko, save one: She says yes to God.

“In worshipping God in my life, I give testimony for what He’s done. I tell these stories (about the babies), and watch the transformation come over people,” Znachko says.

“In the world’s eyes or the church’s eyes, I’m not qualified or equipped. I have no training, no certification. I’m not licensed. I’m an ordinary person who heard the call of God. ... This is the specific thing God asked me to do.”

God asked her to use her resources from kingdom living to care for these abandoned children and those affected by their deaths. More than money, she gives her time. She lends her ear. She wants others to do the same.

"I want people to choose the courageous invitation of Jesus to walk through suffering with these people. The greatest miracle that ever occurred was at the grave. We will be surprised at the blessing we have when walking through suffering."

Each child, each family, each relationship has a calling and a purpose—an Easter weekend, Znachko says.

"We meet people on their Good Friday," Znachko says of relationships built during suffering. "I bring them the hope of Easter morning, one way or another."

And at the grave, she says, her light shines the brightest of all.

Like Joseph of Arimathea, she meets with an elected official—the coroner—on a regular basis to offer her cemetery plots for the children. She works with prosecuting attorneys in wrongful death investigations and has been in the mayor's office to discuss her ministry.

In politics, she says, Christians often feel they've been silenced by the culture. But in dealing with death, the opposite is true.

"No one's telling me to be quiet," Znachko says in regard to speaking openly about her faith. "What I'm doing is not against the law, and we're working with what we have. My wish is that Christians don't believe the lie that we have no voice. Especially at the grave, no one's telling me to be quiet. We must speak boldly about life and loving our neighbor." {eoa}