

Stepping out of the darkness

Former abortion clinic guard talks about his change of heart

By **Julie Carroll**
The Catholic Spirit

Mark Bomchill, a former security guard at the Robbinsdale Clinic, sometimes lobbed snowballs at sidewalk counselors. In the summer, he poured honey where they stood to rouse the bees.

"When I first started there, I would consider my behavior abusive at best," he said.

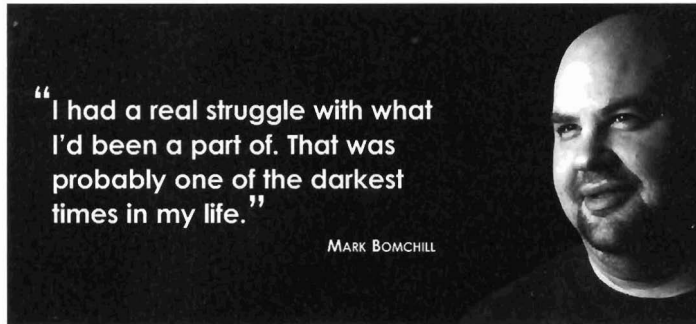
Bomchill even testified in court to win an injunction against Pro-Life Action Ministries that forbids sidewalk counselors from stepping onto the clinic's property.

Never in a million years did Bomchill think that that injunction would eventually be used against him. But that is exactly what has happened.

He now stands on the other side of the fence as a sidewalk counselor.

Bomchill worked at the clinic, first as a volunteer, then as a paid staffer, for four years during the mid- to late 1990s. At that time, he considered himself a liberal, which, in his mind, meant being pro-choice. But he now admits that he never thought much about abortion until he began working at the Robbinsdale Clinic.

"I saw more than my share of body parts, torn-up children, and that's kind of what got the ball rolling for me," he said. "I left the clinic because of a change of



conviction."

Bomchill believes prayer, an increasing awareness of what was happening inside the clinic, and the sidewalk counselors' words all contributed to his change of heart.

"Once I came to the realization that I'd been involved with something that was really bad, I felt horrible," Bomchill said. "I had a real struggle with what I'd been a part of. That was probably one of the darkest times in my life."

Accepting Christ

Six months after leaving the clinic, Bomchill joined Calvary Worship Center in St. Louis Park, whose members he had seen praying in front of Robbinsdale Clinic.

"I really did not know how I was going to be received," Bomchill said. "But they welcomed me in, and that was the begin-

ning of my Christian walk."

Today, Bomchill attends Praise Christian Center, an Assemblies of God church in Crystal.

Two years after becoming a Christian, Bomchill began speaking at banquets and churches about his experiences at Robbinsdale Clinic. A couple years after that, he attended a pro-life rally in front of the clinic where he once worked.

"It was horribly uncomfortable," he said. "I was very scared to be there. I was worried that I would run into people that I knew that worked at the clinic, so I kept a very low profile."

Now he sidewalk counsels and prays at the clinic almost every week.

Bomchill knows firsthand the impact sidewalk counselors have at the clinic.

"It's huge," he said. "It's beyond anything that I could ever express, and it's

beyond anything that sidewalk counselors see. . . . Every day when I worked at the Robbinsdale Clinic, . . . they overbooked significantly, 20 percent, because they knew that a large number of people would change their mind."

Bomchill said he and the other security guards at Robbinsdale Clinic routinely lied to sidewalk counselors to cover up when a woman changed her mind about having an abortion. But the truth is what set him free.

"The [sidewalk counselors'] presence at the clinic directly saves lives like nothing else we do saves lives," Bomchill said.

To receive periodic e-mail newsletters from Bomchill, who is writing a book, send him an e-mail at PROLIFEMN@GMAIL.COM.