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What is a Life Worth?

Remember Mattie

Remember Mattie. Born and raised in the Maryland suburbs of Washington DC, Mattie Stepanek became a poet, author, peace advocate and international celebrity before he died in 2004 at the tender age of 13.

He lived quite a life. He lived his life. But Mattie, before he was born, was in danger, like others diagnosed with a disability in the womb.

What the world would have missed if Mattie had never been born. What if, having been diagnosed in the womb with likely medical challenges expected to end with death in infancy, Mattie had not been allowed to share his gifts?

“Mattie was not an accident. He was not a mistake. He was a spirit meant to be,” said Jeni Stepanek, Mattie’s mother.

Jeni recalls that doctors and many she knew expected her to have an abortion since her first three children all had been born with medical challenges and two children already had died. But Jeni felt that Mattie was a gift from God.

She remembers repeating to herself while pregnant and afterwards, “I will do whatever I can to let this child know you matter; you have purpose. I will create the celebration of your life. I will make sure any moment you can be happy, you are happy. And whatever purpose you are here for, I will help amplify that purpose.”

We give thanks for Mattie and for Jeni’s decision to carry her child to term.

In 2001, when Mattie was 11, he spoke to young teens in Southern Maryland at a pro-life rally, explaining that the building blocks of life were hope, peace, courage, forgiveness and kindness. These building blocks, he explained, lead to the understanding that *life is a gift, not a choice*.

Mattie J.T. Stepanek (1990-2004) was a poet and peacemaker who invited us all to “Remember to play after every storm!” A cause for sainthood has been established to show how Mattie, prenatally diagnosed but also welcomed and valued by family, friends and his hometown priest, is a role model for living a life of faith, hope and charity.

Mattie’s brief life had many challenges, yet he accomplished a great deal in 13 years. He wrote six bestselling books of poetry, and one bestselling book on peacemaking, speaking sincerely about how peace was possible on television talk shows, inspiring everyone with his message that hope is real, and that life is worthy. At an early age, Mattie developed a profound relationship with God, and these spiritual conversations shaped his poems which he called his *Heartsongs*, which would later be published in his books.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter delivered the eulogy at Mattie’s funeral Mass and stated, “We have known kings and queens, and we’ve known presidents and prime ministers, but the most extraordinary person whom I have ever known in my life is Mattie Stepanek.”

[Jeni shares her thoughts on Mattie’s prenatal story in a video clip from June 2018](#)

[LINK HERE](#)

More information on Mattie is available at www.MattieOnline.com and information on his cause for sainthood is at www.Mattie4Sainthood.org