

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF CHILDREN

October 2, 2006, was a dark day for the Amish community of Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. That morning, a local milkman named Charles Carl Roberts barricaded himself inside the West Nickel Mine Amish School. He was armed with three guns, knives, and over 600 rounds of ammunition. When police attempted to intervene less than half an hour later, Roberts opened fire on 11 girls—all less than 14-years-old—killing 5. After these brutal acts, he turned his weapon on himself and committed suicide, according to the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review (10-6-06).

It was a dark hour, but as more news became available in the days that followed, a new story began to emerge—one full of courage, faith, and love. According to two of the survivors, when 13-year-old Marie Fisher began to understand what Charles Carl Roberts intended to do, she made a request. "Shoot me first," she said, "and leave the other ones loose." As the oldest child in the group, she hoped that her death might somehow spare the other children or provide more time for their rescue.

Immediately after this request, Marie's younger sister Barbie added one more. "Shoot me second," she said.

News of the girls' bravery and sacrificial love impacted millions of people across the country after the story broke. But according to Rita Rhoads, a local midwife close to the family of the two girls, their faith also affected their attacker. "He asked them to pray for him," Rhoads said. "I think that's amazing. He recognized they had something he didn't."