

aug 10

hand of hope

a picture began circulating in november. it should be "the picture of the year," or perhaps, "picture of the decade." it won't be. in fact, unless you obtained a copy of the US paper which published it, you probably would never have seen it. the picture is that of a 21-week-old unborn baby named samuel alexander armas, who is being operated on by a surgeon named joseph bruner. the baby was diagnosed with spina bifida and would not survive if removed from his mother's womb. little samuel's mother, julie armas, is an obstetrics nurse in atlanta. she knew of dr. bruner's remarkable surgical procedure. practicing at vanderbilt university medical centre in nashville, he performs these special operations while the baby is still in the womb.

during the procedure, the doctor removes the uterus via C-section and makes a small incision to operate on the baby. as dr. bruner completed the surgery on samuel, the little guy reached his tiny, but fully developed hand through the incision and firmly grasped the surgeon's finger. dr. bruner was reported as saying that when his finger was grasped, it was the most emotional moment of his life, and that for an instant during the procedure he was just frozen, totally immobile. the photograph captures this amazing event with perfect clarity. the editors titled the picture, "hand of hope."

the text explaining the picture begins, "the tiny hand of 21-week-old fetus samuel alexander armas emerges

from the mother's uterus to grasp the finger of dr. joseph bruner as if thanking the doctor for the gift of life." little samuel's mother said they "wept for days" when they saw the picture. she said, "the photo reminds us pregnancy isn't about disability or an illness, it's about a little person." samuel was born in perfect health, the operation 100 percent successful. now see the actual picture, it is awesome...incredible ... and hey, pass it on. the world needs to see this one!

- by michael clancy

Christian Story of Hope photo

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(excerpts from interview with samuel and his mother in 2015)

nearly 10 years after a stunning photograph of his tiny hand traveled the world, samuel armas has a firm grip on what "the hand of hope" means to him.

"when i see that picture, the first thing i think of is how special and lucky i am to have God use me that way," samuel told foxnews.com. "i feel very thankful that i was in that picture."

on aug. 19, 1999, photographer michael clancy shot the "fetal hand grasp" – his picture of a 21-week-old fetus grasping a doctor's finger during innovative surgery to correct spina bifida. nearly four months later, on dec. 2, samuel armas was "born famous."

samuel, now 9 and living in villa rica, ga., said the photo likely gave countless "babies their right to live" and forced many others to debate their beliefs on abortion, something he's proud of.

"it's very important to me," samuel said of the photograph. "a lot of babies would've lost their lives if that didn't happen."

julie armas, samuel's mother, said her eldest son has a "very strong sense of right and wrong" and understands the impact of his unconventional first baby photo.

"he identifies it more in terms of a pro-life message more than anything," she told foxnews.com. "this photo happened and God used it to show people that this baby in mom's tummy is alive. he's pleased that his photo conveyed that message."

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perhaps it is time to revisit this story in the light of the recent supreme court decision. all life is precious. anyone thinking otherwise should take it to the One who gives life to all - and perhaps read psalm 139 again, and again, and again.