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Visitation Chapel to focus on prayer to end abortion

The Scripture passage from St. Luke's account of the Visitation — "the moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby leapt in my womb for joy" — evokes for Kyle Newman the recognition and dignity of human life in the womb.

A year ago this March, Kyle and Tara Newman, parishioners of Holy Cross Church in West Fargo, wrote to Bishop Samuel Aquila asking him to consider establishing a chapel for the celebration and exposition of the Eucharist in a building adjacent to the state's only abortion facility.

After much prayer, research and discussion, Bishop Aquila has given permission for the Newmans to work with the diocesan Respect Life Office to establish this special chapel apostolate on the third floor of the Gibb Building located at 502 First Ave. N. in Fargo. The chapel, which will be named the Visitation Chapel, represents the joy and gratitude of the Virgin Mary and St. Elizabeth in the gift of new human life. It will have as its special intention: prayer in reparation for the sin of abortion and the conversion of those who participate in abortion.

While meditating upon the Scripture passage of the visitation between Mary and her cousin, Elizabeth, one can easily draw parallels between their condition and our present day crisis with abortion.

Both Mary and Elizabeth unexpectedly found themselves with child. Yet, rather than despairing over Mary being seen as an unwed mother, or Elizabeth being a woman who was beyond her years to have children and, as we so often hear today, that because of her age there was fear that the child she carried might be disabled in some way, both women turned to God with confidence in his will for them. They recognized that the life within them is willed by their heavenly Father and that every life has a particular meaning and purpose within God's plan for salvation.

Prayer at the Visitation Chapel will also be for all women who find themselves faced with an unplanned pregnancy — that they may have the opportunity to visit with those who can show them sincere care and concern; that their lives will be touched by the presence of Christ in their midst, who can resolve the difficulties or struggles that may be causing them to consider an abortion.

Why do we need a chapel in downtown Fargo when we have churches in close proximity to the abortion facility?

Abortion has become the crucial social justice issue of our day since the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalized this crime against life in our nation. Since this decision, we find ourselves engaged in a spiritual battle for the lives of our country's unborn children that demands of us as church to be at the center of the human misery and sin that is caused by abortion.

We have at our disposal in this spiritual battle the greatest of all resources, that of prayer. By offering Mass and exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in close proximity to the abortion facility, we make Christ present to all those who are caught in the lie of abortion. Christ is present to the unborn child whose right to life is being oppressed. He is attentive to the

woman entering the abortion facility under the weight of human frailty. And he is calling all those who advocate and provide for abortions in downtown Fargo to be set free from the bondage the Evil One has on them.

We carry out one of the church's spiritual works of mercy by being present in the Visitation Chapel, with hearts engaged in prayer as we affirm the dignity of every human person by our faithful witness to the sanctity of human life.

Who is responsible for the chapel and who will celebrate Mass there?

While the Diocese of Fargo will be responsible for overseeing the operation and activities of the Visitation Chapel, the apostolic work of the chapel — praying for all of those involved in and affected by abortion — is a responsibility of and opportunity for all of the faithful in the diocese. Because of the location of the chapel, the parishes in the Fargo metro area will be more directly involved; however, the clergy and faithful from across the diocese are encouraged to join in prayer at the chapel when they are in the Fargo area.

The diocesan Respect Life Office director, Rachele Sauvageau, will work in collaboration with the dean of Deanery II, Father James Meyer, in scheduling priests in the metro area to offer Mass on a regular basis. The respect life director will also coordinate the scheduling of priests and deacons for Benediction and adorers for eucharistic adoration.

When will the chapel be available for Mass and eucharistic adoration?

Beginning June 1, Mass will be offered weekly on Wednesday mornings at 8 a.m. Eucharistic adoration will follow at 8:30 a.m. and continue until 3:45 p.m., at which time Benediction will take place. Individuals will be needed to pray before the Blessed Sacrament on an hourly basis from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy will be recited at the Hour of Mercy, 3 p.m. Other prayer in the chapel is intended for private devotion.

How can I sign up to pray at the Visitation Chapel?

You can sign up for an hourly prayer period either for a single day or on an ongoing weekly basis. (For instance, one could commit to pray Wednesday, June 1, from 9 to 10 a.m., or one could commit to pray every Wednesday from 9 to 10 a.m.) At least two persons will be scheduled for every hour. It is most helpful to those who are scheduling persons to pray if you do sign up.

Please contact Rachele Sauvageau at (701) 356-7910 or email pray@fargodiocese.org to sign up for an hour of prayer beginning and ending on the hour. Please provide your name, phone number, parish, email address and time you would like to pray. Further information will be provided when you sign up. We encourage people to continue to be present to those who are entering the abortion facility on Wednesdays. Your public presence and prayer outside the abortion facility is extremely important and a powerful witness to those entering the facility.

How can I make a donation toward the Visitation Chapel?

The chapel is not sustained by diocesan funds but reliant on the generosity of those in the community to provide support for its maintenance. If you would like to make a donation toward the Visitation Chapel, please contact Rachele Sauvageau at (701) 356-7910.