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Pray and fast to end abortion

Tanya Watterud

"We pray for those whose lives will be ended today," Deacon Stu Longtin of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Fargo said with faith and courage while green-vested escorts - volunteers who lead women into the abortion facility - stood behind and on each side of him. "We ask that this abomination be ended in our time, in our culture."

Dozens of prolife people gathered Sept. 28 for the opening prayer service for 40 Days for Life North Dakota, a campaign of prayer, fasting, peaceful vigil and community outreach. From that day until the 40-day campaign's conclusion on Nov. 6, prayer volunteers are needed to pray on the sidewalk outside the Fargo abortion facility for an end to abortion.

Rev. Steve Berntson of Messiah Lutheran Church in Fargo spoke of the Bible story of Abraham's near sacrifice of his son, Isaac. "Abraham had his arm poised over Isaac. He had a knife in his hand," the pastor said.

Thirty years ago, Berntson said, he was in the same situation. His girlfriend told him she was pregnant. He asked people for advice and said he was saddened to say that Christian people told him, "You guys aren't ready to get married. You should abort this child." They made an abortion appointment. But the baby's mother, who is now Berntson's wife, would not go through with it. "Every day of my life I'll remember this," she told him in an impassioned letter that explained "in no uncertain terms" that an abortion was not an option. Her words made him ask himself: "Who am I . . . to take this life? This is a human being here."

They decided to marry and raise their son. "God provided for us," Berntson said. "Were we ready? No. Was it easy? No." But, he said, he has been thankful for their decision every day. He noted that his son, now grown, prayed outside an abortion facility before. "Now it's time for Dad to get involved," he said of himself, a comment that brought applause from the prolife people on the sidewalk.

Rev. Doug VanderMeulen, pastor of Community Baptist Church in Fargo, told the crowd, "We're not down here because we hate something or hate someone. We're here because we love God and we love our neighbor, which includes these people wearing green jackets," he said of the abortion facility escorts. "We come to love God and everyone associated with this building and to pray. . . . Praying for all of the escorts and the abortionists and the attendants, and all the mothers and fathers and babies who will lose their lives."

He noted by name one of the escorts standing nearby whom he remembered from the previous year. "Wouldn't it be wonderful," he said, "that I could pray for him and one day he would pray for me?" The prayer service continued with songs of praise. During one song, Tim Mosser, who was leading the singing, directed the attention of participants to the sky in the northwest. Wispy clouds had formed the shape of a cross against the deep blue autumn sky.

"You are my all in all," the people sang, some lifting their hands toward heaven, some cuddling their children. A mother snuggled her blond-haired little girl against her shoulder. Another mother gathered six or more children around her. Some of the escorts held

conversations as the prolife participants sang, but the notes drowned out their discussion. "We cry 'holy, holy, holy is the Lamb,'" the singers proclaimed. Then Rev. Dave Motta, pastor of Calvary United Methodist Church in Fargo, said, "Anytime innocent blood is shed we need to cry out for mercy. . . .Continue to cry out to God for mercy."

To volunteer to pray outside the abortion facility or to learn about other ways you can help bring an end to abortion in North Dakota, visit www.40DaysForLifeND.com, call (701) 356-7979 or (701) 284-6601 or email phc@polarcomm.com. The website also includes an online prayer volunteer schedule.