

40 DAYS FOR LIFE CLOSING SERVICE STRESSES NEED TO CONTINUE THE FIGHT

SAN ANTONIO • For more than a month recently Christians from throughout the community conducted a prayer vigil in front of the Planned Parenthood Clinic at Babcock and Fredricksburg Road.

Many teams of people prayed almost every hour for the end of abortion and to change the hearts of those who perform abortions and are contemplating getting one. This peaceful demonstration was a powerful expression of faith and love.

On All Souls Day, Archbishop José H. Gomez participated in the prayer service/ceremony to bring the 40 Days for Life to a close.

The closing service took place Nov. 2 in the parking lot behind the "Original Donut Shop" at Babcock and Fredricksburg Road, across from Planned Parenthood.

This display of solidarity for the unborn was an expression of faith and respect for all human life, from the moment of conception to natural death.

"Tonight, I know that I am in the midst of people who both believe in the power of prayer, and know that God answers it," said Archbishop Gomez in his remarks. "I thank God for people like Amy Voorhees (40 Days for Life local organizer) and her army of 'Prayer Warriors' for the dedication and many sacrifices that have been made in order to save innocent lives and change hearts."

The archbishop recalled how, across the nation, for 40 days, hour after hour, men and women of faith stood together in peace and in loving prayer for the unborn, the pregnant mothers contemplating abortion and those who support and carry out this act.

"It is truly a blessing from God and an obvious answer to prayer that hundreds of babies have been saved during these past 40 days. May he continue to bless your faith and unselfish dedication," Archbishop Gomez said. "This witness of our faith in the power of prayer has been an example to the whole community that we are committed to a peaceful, but powerful strategy to change the hearts of those who support abortion in this country. We must continue to show the world that our prayers will never end until abortion ends."

He acknowledged that many are anxious about the future of the pro-life cause, as the law of our land today permits the routine and ongoing destruction of more than a million innocent human lives each year. However, the archbishop urged listeners to continue to believe that faith and prayers can calm hearts and turn anxiety into hope. He quoted St. Paul's letter to the Philippians, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Archbishop Gomez added, "St. Paul doesn't mean that we need only pray and then be silent and passive. No, prayer is 'the soul of discipleship,' and it is through our prayer that God will change the hardened hearts that no longer see the wonder and miracle of life."

The archbishop read from a column he recently authored for the San Antonio Express-News in which he stated, "Society should not insist that people of faith be silent in the face of grave evil. We live in a society that would like to privatize religion, to take it out of the public square. Privatizing religion would be, for all people of faith, an unholy compromise. We who profess to believe in God cannot allow him to be banished from the public square ... If our nation loses respect for life and true 'family values,' it will have lost its moral authority to lead the world."

Archbishop Gomez urged people of faith to continue to pray that the laws and leaders of this land will always reflect a humble awe and respect for the great gift of life and the God who has given it.

"Sadly," he lamented, "the stain of abortion will not be washed away from this nation overnight. Those who are blinded to the dignity of every human life will continue to seek them out or perform them."

The archbishop concluded by emphasizing the need to continue to pray for conversion. "Let us commit ourselves to perpetual prayer that our great nation will see the truth of God as it is written on the hearts of every man and woman ... Let us pray that they will hear his voice and harden not their hearts to the voiceless and defenseless unborn."



Among those speaking at the 40 Days for Life closing service were Rick Doucette, associate director of the archdiocesan Office of Social Concerns, left with Archbishop José H. Gomez and 40 Days for Life local organizer Amy Voorhees, standing to the right of the archbishop.

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