



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

RESPECT LIFE ~ JUSTICE & PEACE ~ PARISH ORGANIZING ~ RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ~ CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
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PRESS RELEASE

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO TO HOST CONFERENCE TRAINING PARISHIONERS TO REACH OUT TO WOMEN IN DIFFICULT PREGNANCIES

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San Francisco, California August 31, 2009- The Archdiocese of San Francisco is hosting a Gabriel Project conference to train volunteers from across northern California how to support women in difficult pregnancies. San Francisco's archbishop has encouraged all pastors and parochial vicars to consider promoting the effort in their parish. The Gabriel Project uses signs, pamphlets, bumper stickers and a toll free hotline to alert pregnant mothers that help is available. Callers to the hotline are referred to the local Gabriel Project Coordinator, who connects them to a trained mentor.

The mentor, one of the parish's "Gabriel Angels," is responsible for ongoing contact with the mother throughout her pregnancy and somewhat beyond.

Through these mentors and the assistance of the parish community, mothers receive needed spiritual, material and emotional support during their pregnancy.

"Gabriel Project parishes embrace each pregnant woman who comes to them as their daughter, sister, friend," the Archdiocese of San Francisco said in a flyer about the event.

The conference will take place at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption in San Francisco on Saturday, September 12. It will begin with a continental breakfast at 8:30 a.m., while the program itself will last from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Cathy McConn, founder of the Gabriel Project in Houston, will train attendees in "every aspect" of the ministry and instruct them how to best implement it in their parishes, an announcement said.



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In an August 24 letter to pastors and parochial vicars of the archdiocese, Archbishop George Niederauer said clergy and parishes must reach out to women in difficult pregnancies with “real, concrete help.”

He endorsed the Gabriel Project as a practical and effective means to fulfill that task, explaining that it was first introduced into the Bay Area in 1997 under Cardinal William Levada.

The archbishop also encouraged the clergy to consider the ministry for their parish and to send a small team of interested parishioners to the conference.

He noted that the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ “Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities” says a parish pro-life committee should aim to develop a ministry to pregnant women and their children.

“The Gabriel Project answers this call. It embodies the practical support that the bishops promise pregnant women,” Archbishop Niederauer said.

Information about the conference is available from the San Francisco Archdiocesan Respect Life Program of the Office of Public Policy & Social Concerns, which is organizing the gathering.

To register call Vicki Evans at 415- 614-5533 or email her at evansv@sfarchdiocese.org