



DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

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OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

May 11, 2017

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

A couple of weeks ago news quickly spread that the Women's Health Specialists abortion facility in Sacramento was closing after 42 years. I want to offer a few words in the wake of this development. Year after year, on the sidewalk in front of this facility, there has been a steadfast presence of faith-filled people peacefully praying and offering a testimony of hope. Whether or to what extent this witness led to the closing of this facility should not be part of our Christian calculation. What matters is that those involved through these many years were patient. They persevered and they trusted that God would bring about His saving work in His own time. Paraphrasing a well-known dictum of St. Teresa of Kolkata, God does not ask us to be successful, only faithful.

It is clear, though, that whenever there is any prayerful sidewalk presence of even one person, the no-show rates at an abortion center will tend to increase. This presence, portrayed as a threat by pro-abortion proponents, is in fact a light of friendship and hope leading women away from the shadows of fear and desperation. There have been occasions when a mom would drive up to show her baby to the sidewalk team, assuring these patient, prayerful witnesses that their presence there a few months earlier was the sole reason her baby is alive. These are mustard seed moments of the powerful kingdom of God, which, though sometimes hidden in mystery, is always growing in unfathomable ways.

I want to offer my thanks to everyone who has ever stood, even once, in peaceful prayer in front of any abortion facility. Among these many people, special thanks are due to Wynette Sills and Susan Money for their years-long, year-round, rain-or-shine, loving presence on the sidewalk, as well as for their steadfast leadership and support of so many others.

In the same year this abortion center closed the Sacramento Life Center expanded to a new facility offering a life-saving alternative for women, children, and men, many of whom were referred to the Center by the sidewalk witnesses. I offer my grateful admiration to Marie Leatherby, the Board and staff of the Life Center who, together with the sidewalk prayer vigils, contribute to fashioning a seamless fabric of care for women.

Because of all these stalwart endeavors there are more women who will know the joy of Mother's Day. May the powerful intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary guide us so that we always work, pray and give witness together to the sanctity of all human life. May we continue to entrust this work to Her Son, Jesus. He is the one who will bring the dawning of that day when every mother and child is saved from the shadow of death to share in the fullness of life (cf. Lk. 2.78-79).

Respectfully,



+Jaime Soto
Bishop of Sacramento