



QUESTION AND ANSWER RESOURCE FOR PARISHES
DISCERNING PARTICIPATION IN
THE GABRIEL PROJECT IN THE DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES

*An Apostolate to Mothers and Their Unborn Children
Serving Women and Families in Southern New Mexico*



April 2010



Bishop Ramírez Blessing of Gabriel Project for Diocese of Las Cruces



**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF LAS CRUCES**

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October 6, 2009

Year for Priests

Dear Priests, Parish Life Coordinators, and Administrators:

I was recently approached by Richard and Janet Hinderliter concerning a parish based apostolate to help women who experience an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy. The purpose of the apostolate is to provide a reasonable alternative to these young mothers who may be tempted to consider abortion to terminate their pregnancy. The apostolate is called the Gabriel Project.

I see the Gabriel Project and a strong, parish based apostolate that will strengthen our Catholic outreach and presence in the communities we serve. A parish that implements and embraces the Gabriel Project has a wonderful opportunity to make a Christian witness in the parish community by demonstrating love for our neighbor, as Jesus taught us, while assisting these young mothers. I think the Gabriel Project is a simple approach that can have dramatic results. Results that will not only save lives of the unborn but may contribute to saving the souls of the young mother and father involved. The Gabriel Project National Office received the support and blessing of the USCCB Pro-Life Secretariat on December 12, 2002.

I give my blessing to implement the Gabriel Project in parishes in the Diocese of Las Cruces beginning at the Basilica of San Albino. When that implementation is completed, we will continue to implement the Gabriel Project in other parishes in the Diocese using the experience gained with San Albino. This apostolate will operate under the 501(c) 3 tax exempt organization Project Defending Life (POL), Albuquerque, and under the guidance of Fr. Stephen Imbarrato of POL.

Richard and Janet represent a group of Catholic pro-life parishioners of Las Cruces who are prepared to volunteer their time to work on the Gabriel Project and other pro-life activities. I will appreciate your cooperation and assistance in placing this apostolate in your parishes. The work will fall under Mrs. Mary Helen LIMiez of the office of Marriage and Family Life.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Ricardo Ramirez, C.S.B.
Bishop of Las Cruces

c: Mrs. Mary Helen LIMiez, Coordinator
Marriage and Family Life

Richard and Janet Hinderliter
5052 Apex Mine Rd.; Las Cruces, NM 88011-9334

For further information:
Gabriel@SanAlbino.org; <http://SanAlbino.org/Gabriel.html>

“United in Ministry”



GABRIEL PROJECT MISSION STATEMENT

The Gabriel Project provides emotional, material and spiritual support for pregnant women in need.

GABRIEL PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Gabriel Project is committed to:

- Offering hope and support to mothers and fathers faced with a crisis pregnancy
- Provide assistance in a confidential and non-judgmental approach
- Strengthening families so children can grow in a nurturing home
- Providing an example demonstrating a Respect for Life
- A life affirming alternative to difficult, unplanned pregnancies

GABRIEL PROJECT FORMS OF ASSISTANCE

The help we provide:

- Friendship and emotional support
- Transportation for appointments or shopping
- Material goods to help in caring for the newborn
- Mentoring for personal responsibility
- Mentoring for responsible parenting
- Referral for financial assistance
- Pastoral care or counseling

We offer mothers who come to us for help the love commanded by Jesus and the “Fear not” message delivered by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary.



WHAT IS THE GABRIEL PROJECT?

The GABRIEL PROJECT is a network of parishes standing together in their commitment to offer assistance to women and families facing crisis pregnancies. Participating parishes “advertise” this commitment by placing a Sign of Life on their church property. The Sign of Life, with its toll-free hotline number, assures any mother that this congregation cares for her and is prepared to offer immediate and practical help with her pregnancy. The GABRIEL PROJECT’s Sign of Life will be a sign not only for a Mom in need, but for the church community and for the community at large.

WHAT DOES THE SIGN ON THE CHURCH PROPERTY SAY?



Above is a picture of the sign in English. The parish must also place another sign in Spanish. The logo used is the image of Madonna of the Streets by Roberto Ferruzzi. The painting was first exhibited

in the Italian artist's hometown of Venice in 1897.

WHY SHOULD OUR CHURCH PUT A SIGN UP?

The sign has four main purposes:

- The sign is an advertisement that help is really available.
- The sign is a statement to the community that this church really does care about the struggles of women and families facing difficult pregnancies.
- The sign is a reminder to the church community that they have made a commitment to help.
- The sign is an invitation to other parishes to join the GABRIEL PROJECT.

WHO ANSWERS THE CALLS TO THE TOLL-FREE HOTLINE?

Volunteers in Albuquerque currently answer the hotline. They are trained to collect information from the caller and to locate the nearest GABRIEL PROJECT parish to the mother calling for help. They contact the GABRIEL PROJECT coordinators in that parish with the information and the parish coordinator arranges to meet with the mother.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A WOMAN OR FAMILY IN NEED CALLS THE HOTLINE?

The phone is answered “GABRIEL PROJECT. This is (first name).” The hotline volunteer assesses the caller’s situation and the caller’s home location and collects other information from the caller.

If the caller is abortion-minded, she (or he) will be listened to and helped to discern the fear that is driving her to the conclusion that abortion is her only option. She will be lovingly educated about abortion and abortion alternatives, including the GABRIEL PROJECT. With her permission the volunteer will pray with her. She might be referred to the nearest pregnancy resource center for a pregnancy test or ultra-sound. If assigned to a Gabriel church, a Gabriel Angel might be asked to take her to her doctor’s appointment or to WIC (Women, Infants and Children)—not always because she needs a ride, but because she needs a friend to encourage her and to be with her during this difficult time in her life.

Some women will express appreciation for the help they receive and others may be suffering from the trauma of their situation and not even be aware of the sacrifices being made for them. Still others may take advantage of the situation and ask for things that are not necessary or that through good planning might be handled better. Angles cannot take these situations personally. If you do, you might want to partner with someone who can counsel you

to better handle the needs of the Mother you are assigned to help.

Sometimes the initial telephone connection is continued and sometimes the woman will be assigned to a church immediately. If she has had previous abortions, she might also be invited to learn more about Rachel’s Vineyard, a post-abortive ministry for healing.

WHAT ABOUT EVANGELIZATION?

Participating parishes are also expected to do what they do best; namely, to give witness to Christ’s love for each woman, each unborn child, and each family. Very often, this may be the first time that this woman or family has experienced such unconditional love. When a church community emotionally, materially and spiritually “adopts” a mother or family, very often there will naturally be an attraction to the Church community, which offers such love.

The church community will welcome the Mom if she wants to attend their church. However, attending church is not a condition of our help and the Mom will be told this fact at the first phone call or at the first meeting with her. If she prefers to attend a different church, transportation will be offered. If she prefers not to attend church, that is also acceptable. In any case, an army of Angels will be praying for her, her baby and her situation.



HOW OFTEN WILL REFERRALS BE MADE TO OUR CHURCH?

The number of referrals that a church receives depends in part on the number of participating parishes in a given local area. Nationally, however, the load per church community has averaged 2 to 4 clients a year.

WILL WE ACTUALLY MEET WITH A WOMAN IN NEED?

Through the Angel volunteers the church community, in word and deed, lives the message of the Angel Gabriel:

"The Lord is with you... Do not be afraid... Nothing will be impossible with God." (Luke 1:26-37)

The goals of the first meeting are:

- To allow the mother to experience the grace of God during this meeting through prayer and the loving kindness of the people of the church.
- To listen compassionately to the concerns and needs of the mother and/or family in need.
- To help the Mother plan for her pregnancy-related needs.
- To encourage the Mother to seek God's pathway for her life.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PASTOR?

The Pastor has no assigned duties in the GABRIEL PROJECT. However, at their discretion, Pastors tend to participate in various ways, such as:

- To welcome the project into their parish.
- To pray for the mothers, babies, families and Angels of the project.
- To counsel client mothers, fathers and families as may be needed.
- To encourage participation in the work of the project.
- To recognize and treat the GABRIEL PROJECT as any other parish ministry.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE GABRIEL PROJECT TEAM?

The Team consists of a Coordinator(s) and a group of "Angels" whose role it is:

- To implement the plan decided upon by the coordinator and the GABRIEL PROJECT team including daily prayer for the Mom and family.
- To keep the coordinator informed about the condition and the well being of the mother and baby with weekly reports.



Each Mother should have her own angel(s) so that she receives individual care and attention. At the discretion of the pastor, aided by the coordinator(s) who administer the volunteer screening, anyone can be an Angel: male, female, young or old. We often refer to male Angels as Michaels. The Angel is a friend, whose job it is to walk alongside the Mother to accompany her, pray for and with her, and encourage her on her journey. The role of the Angel should be perceived as a great opportunity to evangelize through action and to display a missionary response to our neighbors in need. There will be times when we have to stretch and leave our comfort zone in order to serve the families who need us.

HOW DOES THE CHURCH COMMUNITY FIT INTO THIS?

The role of the church community is:

- To support the Mother, family and baby in love and prayer.
- To pray for and assist the Angel and the GABRIEL PROJECT Team in their specific ministry to the Mother and baby.

After identifying her needs, the church community simply responds in love by providing emotional, spiritual and some material support. For the many women who are abandoned by their family at the time of a difficult pregnancy, the church community lovingly fills the void left by the missing family. Each congregation develops its own, unique response to the needs of a Mother or family under its care.

Let's look at a simple example where a pregnant Mom requesting a baby crib is referred to a church. The GABRIEL PROJECT Coordinator might find a crib using local resources. However, if local resources are not able to fill the request at that time, the coordinator will make the mother's need known through a bulletin or pulpit announcement. Everyone together will be invited to respond to her needs in a whole-church response. The church will respond as the Body of Christ.

HOW ARE THE NEEDS OF A MOTHER OR FAMILY COMMUNICATED TO THE CHURCH COMMUNITY?

Most coordinators have used church bulletins and at times a vocal announcement is made at the weekend masses. The pastor will help decide the preferred method. For example, the bulletin might announce:

In rare cases the Mom may want to keep her identity confidential. It is critically important that any announcements and prayer requests respect this confidentiality. An assigned name can be used to make the situation more concrete and real to the church community. Most Moms don't mind if their first name is used.

Not every client that is referred to the church will have needs that require making announcements to the whole church. Frequently, the Gabriel Volunteer Team will be able to minister to specific needs from their own collective skills and local resources. In such cases, it is still



good to bring a pregnant Mom's prayer requests to the congregation as a whole so that they can see that the GABRIEL PROJECT really is working at their church. This technique also serves to elicit help from new volunteers so as to keep team membership at an effective level.

DOESN'T MAKING THIS KIND OF PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT LOOK LIKE WE'RE CONDONING SOME INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR?

Some of the clients seeking help from the GABRIEL PROJECT will be married women and others will be pregnant and unmarried. We have an obligation to unconditionally love each pregnant Mom seeking our help no matter what situation or behavior led to her pregnancy. As Jesus loves us so we must strive to love the Mom and see Jesus in her.

We can recall the response of Jesus to the woman caught in adultery. Jesus saved her life physically and spiritually. He forgave her and counseled her to avoid this sin in the future. He completely changed her life. The GABRIEL PROJECT should also be an opportunity to help people change their lives and behavior for the better. When the behavior is not changed, we have an opportunity to love unconditionally as long as we are not enabling illegal or unhealthy behavior.

WHAT KINDS OF ASSISTANCE CAN OUR CHURCH BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE?

Parishes in the GABRIEL PROJECT stand ready to provide a Mother with the kinds of assistance that she needs in caring for herself and her unborn baby. Married or unmarried, she also may bring additional family with her apart from the unborn. The help needed may include:

- Friendship and emotional support
- Transportation for appointments or shopping
- Material goods to help in caring for the newborn
- Mentoring for personal responsibility
- Mentoring for responsible parenting
- Referral for medical aid and prenatal care resources
- Referral for financial assistance
- Pastoral care or counseling

Not every Mom will need all of the above. Most Moms will need friendship, emotional and spiritual support. Each church will realize what kinds of commitments it can make in supporting Moms and their babies. Partnering with another church might be practical and necessary.

It is enough that each church simply and honestly gives support as best it can from the human and material resources that are available. A powerful aspect of the GABRIEL



PROJECT is that, on occasion, parishes can be linked together when a specific client's needs cannot all be met by one church.

More than anything else, GABRIEL PROJECT parishes embrace each pregnant woman who comes to them as their daughter, their sister, and their friend. They also realize that they may not be able to answer all needs. In these cases, prayer for guidance from the Holy Spirit and trust in the Providence of God is the answer. Living our faith is a worthy model for the Mom and her family.

THIS KIND OF HELP SOUNDS LIKE IT CAN GET VERY EXPENSIVE. HOW CAN OUR CHURCH AFFORD IT?

Limited financial support might be offered by a church, but the emphasis of this project is on prayer, mentoring and emotional support.

WILL OUR CHURCH BE EXPECTED TO PROVIDE HOUSING FOR PREGNANT MOMS?

Several generous individuals and families have offered a "shepherding home" to Moms in need within GABRIEL PROJECT parishes across America. A shepherding home family offers to take in a pregnant Mom as a "member" of their family. The shepherding family and the Mom usually meet at a neutral place to discuss house rules and decide if they will be a good match. A verbal or written "contract" specifying the expectations and

responsibilities of the family and their new "member" is suggested. While offering a shepherding home can be a great witness of Christian love, it can also be a great demand on a family making such a commitment. The GABRIEL PROJECT has witnessed wonderful situations in shepherding families and the Moms helped in these situations will be forever bonded to the shepherding family.

HOW MUCH HELP IS "TOO MUCH" HELP FOR A PREGNANT MOM?

The goal of the GABRIEL PROJECT is to help provide for a Mom's pregnancy-related needs—material, emotional and spiritual—using local referral resources whenever possible. She should be nurtured toward independence from and not dependence on the GABRIEL PROJECT church. Once in a while, there may be a client who is very skilled at manipulating the system in order to take advantage of those trying to offer help. GABRIEL PROJECT Teams will pray for wisdom and discernment and ask for guidance from the area coordinator. The overall goal is to help her, with the help of God, to help herself and her baby.

WHAT ABOUT LIABILITY?

In the litigious age in which we live, some people may be concerned about their liability when helping another individual. The GABRIEL PROJECT involves the same liability as any other direct assistance outreach. If a church can be sued for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, or welcoming the stranger, it can certainly be



sued also for offering assistance to a pregnant Mom.

For instance, a Mom might trip on the carpet of the church office and break her ankle. The general liability insurance policy for the church should provide coverage. When in doubt, contact your insurance provider. If a family within the church community offers their home as a “shepherding home,” they too should contact their insurance provider to make sure that their homeowner’s policy provides adequate coverage. Anyone giving a Mom or her family a ride must be licensed and have the necessary insurance coverage. The challenge before us in an outreach ministry such as the GABRIEL PROJECT is to conquer the fears of the world in which we live with the gift of faith, which Christ promises to those who are willing to risk living true Gospel love of neighbor. God will provide.

“And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everythin99993g, you may share abundantly in every good work.” (2Co 9:8)

HOW MUCH TRAINING IS INVOLVED FOR OUR GABRIEL PROJECT TEAM?

The basic training for the GABRIEL PROJECT Team can be handled in a single, six-hour session on a weekend or two three-hour sessions in an the evenings. Ongoing communication and additional training are also recommended two or three times per

year or during regular monthly GABRIEL PROJECT meetings.

WHAT WILL IT COST OUR CHURCH TO JOIN THE GABRIEL PROJECT?

There is little up-front cost for a church to join the GABRIEL PROJECT. The cost for the “Sign of Life” which is placed in front of participating parishes (one in English and one in Spanish) ranges from \$350 to \$500 depending upon the size of the sign chosen by the church.

Fund-raisers are encouraged. At this time project personnel are all voluntary.

HOW DID THE GABRIEL PROJECT COME ABOUT?

The original GABRIEL PROJECT began in Texas in the early 1990’s. Since then, thousands of volunteers have been trained and activated to serve God and neighbor as Good Samaritans. For more information about GABRIEL PROJECT history, you may visit <http://sanalbino.org/Gabriel.html>.

WHAT SHOULD OUR CHURCH DO TO JOIN THE GABRIEL PROJECT?

If your church is interested in becoming a part of the GABRIEL PROJECT, simply call or email Richard or Janet Hinderliter (575) 522-1207 email: Gabriel@SanAlbino.org.



WHAT IF WE STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about the GABRIEL PROJECT, please don't hesitate to call Richard or Janet Hinderliter (575) 522-1207 or email: Gabriel@SanAlbino.org.

SAMPLE BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Two or three weeks prior to Gabriel Sunday)

THE GABRIEL PROJECT IS COMING!

The Gabriel Project provides emotional, material and spiritual support for pregnant women in need. Many mothers faced with difficult, unplanned pregnancies feel abandoned by their families, the fathers of their babies and their communities. Many feel alone and afraid. For too many, abortion seems the only answer.

(your parish name) is joining other parishes in the Diocese to offer help to these women—the GABRIEL PROJECT! Keep watching for more information.

(One week prior to Gabriel Sunday)

THE GABRIEL PROJECT WILL BE HERE NEXT WEEK!

The GABRIEL PROJECT consists of a network of parishes standing together in their commitment to offer assistance to women and families facing difficult, unplanned pregnancies. A Mom who needs help, calls

a toll-free phone number or is referred by a local agency and receives compassion and assurance that a local church community cares for her and is prepared to offer her immediate and practical help.

Next weekend we will have our Gabriel Sunday. We will ask volunteers from our parish to offer support to a pregnant Mom's and their unborn babies. Consider becoming a Gabriel volunteer.

(To appear in the bulletin on Gabriel Sunday)

THE GABRIEL PROJECT IS HERE!

This weekend is the launch of the (parish name) GABRIEL PROJECT. The first "Angel" volunteer orientation/training will take place (day, date and time). If you cannot attend this training session, but want to be an Angel or have questions, please call (name) at (phone number).

Sign-up to be a GABRIEL PROJECT volunteer following Mass.



A GABRIEL MOM SAYS “THANK YOU.”

“I was referred to the GABRIEL PROJECT by a lady whom I had worked with for only a brief period of time. Already raising two children alone, I’d discovered that once again I was expecting. Another consequence of a bad decision. I knew that the child in itself was not a mistake, but I honestly didn’t believe that I could endure another pregnancy, another fatherless child. How could I, a mother who’d made so many wrong decisions in her lifetime give this child anything of value. How could I teach him or her to be something that I didn’t even believe that I could be. How could I as a woman teach a man to be a man. Or how could I give a little girl self-confidence that should come from the protection and love a father? And how could I possibly provide for another child when I was two months behind in rent and could barely keep my gas and lights on?

And even in my own selfishness I didn’t want to be looked down upon for already having two children and being pregnant again...without a husband. After considering all these things, I’d decided that I would get an abortion and that everything would go back to normal. Or at least I could continue to work on pulling myself out of this financial hole that I’d dug seeing as how another baby would seemingly make things even tougher than they already were.

Well even after making an appointment to have the abortion, I decided to call the GABRIEL PROJECT. It was then that I talked to (a Gabriel volunteer) and she helped me

to realize that my child was a gift and not a curse. And not only did she give words of encouragement, but I was amazed at how she and the GABRIEL PROJECT “Angels” were willing to go the extra mile for me just for choosing life. At a time when I’d allowed my emotions to throw me totally off track, through the prayers and support of GABRIEL PROJECT, I was able to look at life from a different perspective and once again I have hope for my future.

So now I’ve asked God to help me to see myself the way that He sees me and to help me to realize that the things in my past don’t necessarily define who I really am. I’ve made it a goal to make better decisions, and even though things are still a little tough right now, I believe that as I train myself to make right decisions that things can only get better.

Thanks GABRIEL PROJECT!”



LAUNCHING GABRIEL PROJECT

CHECK LIST—10 EASY STEPS

- ___ 1. Pray, pray, pray. Find prayer warriors and ask them to pray for the success of the GABRIEL PROJECT at your parish. Trust God and don't be afraid. The GABRIEL PROJECT is dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the unborn. God is in charge and Our Lady of Guadalupe helps us.
- ___ 2. Read this packet of information.
- ___ 3. Visit with others who have started a GABRIEL PROJECT in another parish or another apostolate in your own parish.
- ___ 4. Contact your pastor and gain his support.
- ___ 5. Share this material and a GABRIEL PROJECT brochure and rack card with individuals and/or groups in your parish to form a cadre of supporters for the project.
- ___ 6. Set a weekend to "launch" the project at your parish—this will be your Gabriel Sunday.
- ___ 7. Use the bulletin announcements on page 9 beginning two or three weeks before the launch. A GABRIEL PROJECT representative will speak at each Mass prior to asking parishioners to sign-up as volunteers.
- ___ 8. Collect the volunteer sign-up forms and send copies to Richard Hinderliter where they will be entered into the Respect Life Southern NM email database so that volunteers from your parish will receive email updates on the Gabriel Project within the Diocese.
- ___ 9. Attend the next available orientation/training session in your area. A leadership team for your parish will be formed at this session.
- ___ 10. Form a committee to erect a "Sign of Life" on your church property.

