

May 2018



The Guadalupe Workers



I would like to begin by thanking a little girl named Eleanor for collecting contributions for us at her recent birthday party. Indeed, you have all been generous to us this year; and I constantly, constantly seek the best ways to bring fruit from the contributions we receive.

In that context, let me now clarify what we do.

First of all, we are sidewalk counselors—meaning that, at the heart of our work are weekly occasions in which we are present at the doors of one or the other of two abortuaries on Detroit’s west side. The abortion clinics try to label us as “protesters,” but that is not what we are. We are conversationalists, or dialoguers, as we attempt to engage the clients in real discussions about what they are about to do and why. The “escorts” who volunteer for the abortion clinics try to drown out our voices with babble; or sometimes they body-block us to prevent us from reaching the sides of the mothers approaching on the sidewalk.



When we speak to the mothers, we might use one or two basic approaches: Alicia likes to ask questions—what brings you to this place, how many children do you have, how can we help. Or else we might remind them of the violence, specifically the self-destruction, of abortion; mother after mother is told, through the act of abortion, that her creation is garbage and that she is incompetent.

If a mother hears and believes what we say, if she turns away from the temptation of abortion, then begins a long-term relationship. Usually we find that the mother has no permanent residence, and travels from friend to friend, or from relative to relative. It’s not unusual that we meet a mother and

children who are all sleeping in a car. A lot of our income, then, is spent in paying move-in costs for a mother and family; or, if we have known a mother for a reasonable amount of time, and are secure in our relationship with her, we will try to put her in her own house.

Increasingly important to our work is the meeting we have once a month with the mothers and children. These meetings, which last about four hours, begin with a talk or presentation for the mothers while the children are with volunteers who play with them or lead them in games. Everyone then has lunch, followed by time in which the mothers can pick up diapers or clothing.





The clinics, of course, over the years have taken countermeasures. When a woman calls to make an appointment, she is coached in what to say to us on the morning that she arrives. They have also recruited the “escorts,” who physically block us from reaching the mother.

Certainly, our work is locally, even nationally, unique. However, it is extremely difficult. The mothers with whom we work have been raised in Detroit—which is to say that they have been raised in an environment in which they have

been used by a welfare system and by multiple men. They don’t trust. Often they are ready to snatch what they can get as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

The most difficult times—even agonizing—are when a mother basically threatens to return to the abortion clinic unless we respond to her wants; or sometimes mothers who are referred to us are told to tell us that they are abortion-minded so that we will respond quickly and generously. We have to analyze constantly what is true, what is false, what is bluff, what is sincere.

And when I get discouraged and consider that I will never receive any substantial gratitude or payback for this work, that’s when I tell myself that I must continue. I could go love the cute, the grateful, the innocent, the honest—but what about these mothers, and what about these children?

In the spirit of that resolve, therefore, the Guadalupe Workers have decided to take one step deeper into Detroit. While we have purchased many homes for our mothers, we have never purchased a home for ourselves—a place where we can meet more frequently with the families, share dinners, have talks and instructional programs, and perhaps even house sidewalk counseling interns.

The house would have to be big, something like this:



This is a \$150,000 house—far more than we take in during an entire year. But beginning now, we are putting out the word that this is what we are after.

If God wants it, it will happen (then we’ll really be in trouble!)



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