



NEWS ARCHIVE:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon

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Exodus 40 Days for Life: hour of public prayer for end to abortion offered during Lent

BY ANNE-MARIE HUGHES

A Lenten "Exodus" of 40 hours of prayers for life held for an hour each day outside Saskatoon City Hospital, ended Palm Sunday.

"We are a happy group," said Forty Hours for Life organizer Denise Hounjet-Roth. "I have seen such praying, dedication and commitment every day."

Hounjet-Roth, President of the Campaign Life Coalition, organized the annual walk in front of City Hospital from Ash Wednesday, March 9 to Palm Sunday, April 17. "It's different from other walks as we are in front of an abortuary for 40 straight days. Our focus is to pray to end abortion."

The group holds that the continual nature of the prayer makes a difference. "We are here every day at the same time for an hour. People who use this road regularly see us for 40 days and get the message more than once. They see a real persistence," says Hounjet-Roth.

There are about 10 volunteers who have come faithfully every day and often there were 20 people walking back and forth praying with signs.

On the day of the Campaign Life Coalition Saskatchewan Provincial Conference in Saskatoon, 47 people came out to pray. But the all-time high was a Friday in April when the Conquest Catholic Boys Club came with their families and 63 people were counted.

Three priests also came by to bless those on the walk during the 40 days.

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Hounjet-Roth said she is excited about a new development this year. "We had groups who picked a day and came consistently once a week... It has been so encouraging. We are hoping more groups will pick days next year. Anyone who is part of a group like a Knights of Columbus Council or CWL could pick a day and come out and pray. That would be great."

The response from those on the streets is always mixed. "We have people honk in support. We also have people drive by and swear. We are a non-violent group here to pray, so we don't respond," says Hounjet-Roth.

Volunteers have also had the chance to engage with protesters going by. A cyclist who went by and yelled 'It's all about choice!' stopped to talk to volunteers. "After a sidewalk discussion he said that they had really got him thinking."

Some drivers responded negatively to children being on the walk. Gerald Lashyn who brought his own children to the walk and a group of boys from Conquest Catholic Boys Club responded that "it's important our youth become part of this battle."

Matthew Fahlman talked about his thoughts after a driver yelled at him saying, "Way to indoctrinate your children." Fahlman asked: "Is it indoctrination to let children know that they are precious and their life is precious? It is a beautiful thing to see families out here."

City Hospital staff are sometimes surpris-ed to find out abortions go on at their work-place. As well, people often have no idea how many abortions take place in Saskatchewan. "Thirty-six babies a week are aborted in the province. I have met MLAs who had no idea of the number of abortions," says Hounjet.

She finds the lack of knowledge concern-ing, but she is adamant about whose respon-sibility it is to educate politicians. "The onus is on us to clue them in... we need to visit our MLAs and MPs and set them straight about what is going on."



