

Sisters in solidarity: Praying for an end to abortion

Planned Parenthood clinics perform over a third of all abortions in the United States. They are known to schedule even more appointments during the March for Life, because those who usually show up to pray and offer women abortion alternatives are otherwise occupied. So before joining the march last week, I decided to pray in front of the massive Planned Parenthood clinic in Washington, D.C.

I was nervous, not knowing what to expect, except that I'd likely be alone. Upon approach, I could see that two police cars were parked on either side of the clinic. Not a pro-lifer in sight.

After praying to Our Lady of Guadalupe for courage – and a quick “Jesus, I trust in you!” – I walked past the first police vehicle and stood on the matted ground between the curb and the sidewalk – tamped down by faithful witnesses before me.

Were abortions being performed at that moment? Would any women approach the clinic while I was there? Would I have the chance to engage with them? I'm familiar with two pregnancy care centers in town and could offer support for life-affirming choices if needed.

I faced the entrance, closed my eyes, bowed my head and cupped my hands together, praying over and over: “For the sake of His sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world ... oceans of mercy ... pour out your mercy on this place. Cover everyone here with your love. Lord, have mercy!”

About five minutes later, I heard footsteps approach and stop

right in front of me: "Are you praying?" a woman asked. Not knowing whether she was a client, staff worker or police officer, I lifted my head, looked her in the eye and said, "Yes."

Before me stood a 20-something-ish woman I'd never seen before. "Oh, good; I'm here to pray, too!" she said, relieved. "I'm Jessaia. I didn't even know there was an abortion clinic here. I heard about it on a podcast this morning and was moved to show up and pray."

I was flabbergasted. God had provided companionship in the most beautiful and timely way.

"What's your faith tradition, Jessaia?" I asked.

"Baptist."

"Oh, that's great!" I replied, thinking that she'll pray boldly in Jesus' name with me.

Strangers before that moment, we were now sisters joined in solidarity with pregnant women and their unborn children.

So there we were, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, standing together in peaceful protest, Catholic and Baptist, holding one another's hands. She prayed out loud first, and I followed.

Weeping at times, we prayed for mercy, conversion of hearts and restoration. We prayed for all who passed through those doors, that God's love would suffuse and heal them in every way. We prayed for women being pressured to abort and for their vulnerable unborn children. We prayed boldly for a sea change in the culture, for deep conversion among all who perform, facilitate, fund or promote abortions, and those who advocate for permissive policies. We prayed, too, for the success of the pro-life movement and that we would always work in truth and charity.

I have no idea how long we were there – 15 minutes, maybe longer? We drew our prayers to a close, chatted for a bit, embraced and parted ways – she in one direction, and I in the other.

As I started to leave for [the March](#), I approached the police to ask why they were there. The officer in the driver's seat was friendly. He said they were “peacekeepers” to protect the protesters from harassment, but also to let Planned Parenthood “conduct their business.”

I was tempted to quip, “Well, peace begins in the womb, you know!” But the Spirit had other plans. Instead, I thanked them for protecting us, and then said, “You're totally right, it is a business – a blood money business, no?”

While they didn't verbally express agreement, their knowing smiles and nods spoke volumes. They were doing their duty, but not especially happy about guarding that ugly place. Perhaps they, too, are quietly praying while on the job.

Our Father showed his abundant providence that day. I had asked for mere courage to face the unknown alone. Blessing my tiny level of trust, he gave me so much more than I dared to ask for: a companion, a sister in Christ, and then the unexpected exchange with police officers, ending in a group selfie!

At the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple, Simeon prophesied that Mary's heart would be pierced. But Simeon's prophetic word was not the end of the story. She persevered and now reigns as Queen of Heaven.

We, too, are pierced with grief as we build the culture of life – but that's not the final word for us, either. Trust. Be encouraged. Our God is a God of abundance.

Deirdre A. McQuade writes from Maryland.