

## **Gabriel Team Memo - Sep 12, 2011**

Dear Gabriel Team,

Today marks the second anniversary of The Gabriel Project of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

Now that this ministry has been established in the archdiocese for two years, I hope it will receive the attention and esteem it is deserving of among our clergy and faithful communities. You can help toward that end by speaking about your personal and/or your parish team's participation in this ministry to friends and family who are members of other parishes. Encourage them to implement the ministry in their parishes. Recommend our very informative website to them.

I appreciate your taking the time to read the entire content of this memo. Since we don't require our volunteers to attend regular meetings, I rely on these memos as a means to communicate essential information. You can think of them as an extension to your handbook. The same can be said of the information provided on our website. For those who are new to the team, previous memos are archived on our website; however since they are internal documents, there is no menu link to them. To read or print a PDF version of this or any previous memo, go to <http://sfgabrielproject.wordpress.com/memo-archive>. If you print the memos, you can put them in your project binder along with your handbook for easy reference.

I hope you will find the information below helpful in your work as Gabriel Angels.

*You and your works of love are much appreciated.*

*God bless,*

*Fredi D'Alessio*

### **Note to Parish Coordinators:**

Gabriel Team Memos are only sent to volunteers registered as coordinators, angels and auxiliary angels. If there are any assistant angels, supporters or clergy with whom you would like to share this memo, feel free do to so.

### **New Team Members:**

In addition to our new parish team at Sts. Peter and Paul in San Francisco, we have been blessed with a new angel at St. Matthew in San Mateo and another at Church of the Nativity in Menlo Park.

### **Events:**

St. Hilary (Tiburon) is having a baby shower for one of their moms on Sep 17.

St. Anthony (Novato) had a baby shower for one of their moms on Aug 28.

St. Andrew (Daly City) - one of their moms gave birth to Mathias Arroyo on Aug 19.

St. Raphael (San Rafael) will have a Baptism for one of their mom's twin babies on Sep 25.

Please pray for the parents of a child who was stillborn one week before their scheduled baby shower. They have thoughtfully requested their baby's gifts be donated to The Gabriel Project.

Thank you for your financial support and prayers for the parents of baby Jordon who died on April 17.

Please keep all of our client families and those who are assisting them in your prayers.

### **Policy on advertising pregnancy help organizations within our churches:**

Although we have a long way to go toward making this ministry flourish, we have reached a point in program development that assures us of a viable archdiocesan-wide ministry *if* we take seriously our responsibility to foster the ministry's well-being and potential.

Due to a recent inquiry made to the Archdiocesan Office of Public Policy by a board member of a pregnancy help center located within the archdiocese's boundaries, a consensus was reached regarding advertising and/or hosting speakers or baby showers for pregnancy help centers in our churches.

The consensus is that our efforts in promoting The Gabriel Project can be undermined if we introduce confusion among pastors and laity by advertising and promoting other pregnancy help organizations within our churches. Our preference is that The Gabriel Project be exclusively promoted in the parishes since it is an Archdiocesan-sponsored, parish-based ministry. Advertising or the hosting of speakers or baby showers for other pregnancy help centers in our churches can send the *false* message to clergy and laity that The Gabriel Project is not as important or as needed.

Many people fall short of understanding The Gabriel Project and its potential. To make it appear inferior to or indistinguishable from other pregnancy help organizations causes confusion and disinterest, and diminishes our capacity to help it flourish by attracting parish support.

I can personally add that I truly admire the work pregnancy help centers do and as a "[sidewalk counselor](#)" have attempted to refer thousands of pregnant mothers to them. However, the reason I became interested in The Gabriel Project a good number of years ago was my recognition that the pregnant mothers I encountered needed more help than what was available from these very fine organizations. My opinion hasn't changed the least bit over the years and now, having been intimately involved in The Gabriel Project over the past two years, has only been reinforced. The challenge is to help others become aware of this reality. The potential confusion mentioned above diminishes our capacity to do so. If you haven't read "Understanding The Gabriel Project", please do so to better understand the unique potential of this ministry (<http://sfgabrielproject.wordpress.com/understanding-the-gabriel-project>).

## **WE HAVE ONLY ONE APPROVED IMAGE TO REPRESENT THE GABRIEL PROJECT:**

### **UNDERSTANDING OUR ICON**

Our message to pregnant mothers is represented by word and image on our church signs and literature (see poster at bottom of page).

Our message is an offer of support and a sign of hope. In fact, we refer to our sign as a "sign of hope" rather than a "sign of life" and depict our message utilizing the *traditional* Gabriel Project icon rather than the *Madonna of the Streets* painting as some other Gabriel Projects do. The reasons why are important.

The purpose of our signs and literature is to reach out to pregnant mothers, not potential volunteers or supporters. It is only the mother's emotional reaction that is important. We need to be concerned with how pregnant mothers may perceive our message and with their impression of how we perceive their situation. We want them to feel a sense of hope and welcoming.

The angel in our icon not only represents the message Archangel Gabriel gave to Mary and we extend to pregnant mothers. He also represents the parish community and our individual parish "angels". He is a symbol of protection, ours and God's. The mother in the icon embraces her child *and motherhood* with confidence and she too is a symbol of protection. The child in the icon rests peacefully in the arms of mother.

Below is an excerpt of a critique I read of the *Madonna of the Streets* (also known as *Madonna of the Poor*)\*.

The focal point is the girl's face with its pleading and expressive countenance. It is wrapped in a gold colored headdress, the only warm color of the whole painting. The blues and grays and dirty whites of mother's and child's dress and of the whole backdrop suggest hardship, toil and poverty. There is a contrast between Mother and child: while the child is safely cuddled and asleep in the arms of his mother, the mother appears to be standing on somebody's doorstep begging for shelter and food.

You may see the painting differently, but I think there is enough truth in the above critique to avoid usage of this painting to represent our ministry. I don't think our potential clients would welcome being portrayed in that way or being perceived as someone whose personal circumstances should arouse pity. They might even be discouraged from calling the Helpline. Worse yet, they might think, "If I have this baby, I'll be like the girl in this painting. I really can't afford to have this baby". Many parents abort their children because they believe they can't afford to raise them. If a potential client is impoverished, we want our sign to elicit hope, not reflect her current situation which she may fear will worsen with the birth of her child.

*Please only use our approved icon on any literature, poster or webpage you prepare for advertising The Gabriel Project.*

\*Though many people have conceived this beautiful painting as portraying Mary and Jesus, this was not the artist's intention. It is actually a painting of an eleven year-old girl holding her one year-old brother. The artist called the painting *Madonnina* (Little Mother). It eventually gained world fame and came to be known as *Madonna della Strada* (Madonna of the Streets), also known as *Madonna of the Poor*. It is revered by many as a holy image of

Mary and Jesus and a spiritual interpretation could be made when viewing it in that way, however that is not the issue here.

### **When you receive a client referral from the Helpline:**

Quite a long time might pass before receiving your first client referral. Below are some helpful reminders.

If you are a parish coordinator receiving a client referral email from the Helpline, please *immediately* reply to the email with "reply to all" to acknowledge receipt of the referral - even if you won't be able to contact the client until a later time. It is important for the Helpline person and for me to know that you have received the referral. A prompt reply from you at the outset will avoid much unnecessary effort on my part. If I haven't received your acknowledgement email by the end of evening on the day the referral was sent, I will assume you haven't checked your email. I may try to contact you by phone and/or may email or phone your assistant coordinator or if there isn't one, some of the other angels on the parish team. If necessary, I will personally contact the client. Also if necessary, I will try to find an auxiliary angel to assist the client.

If you are unsure of how to proceed, please do not contact the Helpline; contact me.

In addition to the email from the Helpline, you might also receive an email from me if I have some comments or suggestions to contribute.

Remember that we can't fully assess the client's needs unless we visit her, fill out the client intake form and speak with her about her circumstances. Also, assessment of her needs should continue throughout her pregnancy as we build our relationship with her.

It is best to do little during the initial phone call because we want to be sure we can get to visit her (preferably in her home). We don't want to prematurely refer her to an agency and then lose contact with her.

Before angels visit the client, I suggest they review the handbook, including the section on conversation and listening skills on page 15.

At an appropriate time, the coordinator or assigned angel should send a prayer request to all of the team members. It is important for all team members to be informed about client referrals received and that, over time, they each be given opportunities to participate as angels.

I encourage you to have occasional parish team meetings and to pray together.

### **Our Website:**

Please make use of our website for **referral and mentoring/educational resources**. You can even read an entire book online: WHY CAN'T WE LOVE THEM BOTH by Dr. and Mrs. J.C. Willke (It's listed on the menu as "QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT ABORTION").

## **Outreach to pregnant mothers:**

As noted in my [memo of Feb 16](#), reaching out to pregnant mothers is an essential part of our ministry. I re-present the following suggestions for your consideration:

- Place our car decals on your vehicles and encourage your fellow parishioners and friends to do so (see "Car Decal" and "Car Decal Facts" on our website).
- Keep your parish literature rack stocked with our pamphlet (Pregnant? Worried? Need Help?).
- Distribute our pamphlet to community service providers and clinics.
- Have business cards made with our Helpline number and distribute them (to doctors' offices for example). I can provide an image of our logo.
- Advertise in your parish bulletin.
- Advertise in your local community newspaper.
- Ask local stores and service providers to tape our **car decal** or our **poster** (see below) to the inside of their storefront windows.
- Post our car decal, some notice you've made or a business card on community bulletin boards (you'll find them at some grocery stores, libraries and elsewhere).

Please consider collaborating with your parish teammates to determine what actions may be feasible for your group.

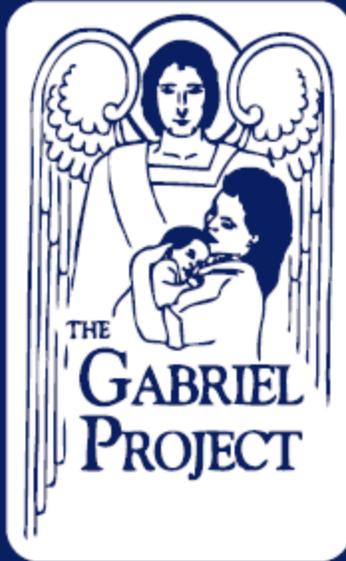
*Please only use our approved icon on any literature, poster or webpage you prepare for advertising The Gabriel Project.*

You can email me to order pamphlets and car decals. For posters, see below.

## **Gabriel Project Posters:**

As noted in my [memo of Mar 25](#), you can download a PDF file of our poster from <http://sfgabrielproject.wordpress.com/poster> and bring it to your local copy center for printing. They are fairly inexpensive to print and really come out beautifully. They can be made very large or as small as postcards. See the snapshot below. If you need instructions on how to go about having this file printed at your local copy center in various sizes, please let me know.

## **Snapshot of Poster:**



**PREGNANT?  
WORRIED?  
NEED HELP?  
800-910-0191**

[HTTP://ANGELFORME.WORDPRESS.COM](http://angelforme.wordpress.com)

**THE MEMBERS OF OUR CHURCH COMMUNITIES SEE IN THE  
CONCEPTION OF EACH CHILD A FRESH EXPRESSION OF GOD'S  
UNFAILING LOVE. WE OFFER IMMEDIATE AND PRACTICAL HELP TO  
ANY PREGNANT MOTHER EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES.**