

Saving Lives in New York State

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A nun from the Missionaries of Charity holds a prayer card with an image of Mother Teresa. (Gary Cameron/Reuters)

The Mother Teresa Home is an antidote to the culture of death.

The last few days have been something. I go to a powerful, uplifting March for Life – overflowing with young people and their precious, confident smiles – and the main notice it gets is this heart-sickening episode involving the Catholic kids from Kentucky. I can't imagine the onslaught suffered by the high school students and their families. And then if you live in New York State, abortion was expanded yesterday by the statehouse and governor – **a doubling down on death.**

I had some inspiration and consolation being with the Sisters of Life last night at a vigil in Manhattan, at St. Patrick's Cathedral (which happens to be the closest Catholic Church to National Review's offices). I was reminded that we all have a role to play in the solution and people do step up to the plate; the **Sisters of Life** were started by the late Cardinal John O'Connor, who wanted any woman who needed help to know she could find it in the Church.

The Sisters of Life are about 100 women religious dedicated to God and the charism of life. They change conversations by their mere presence, but once you begin to know their actions and motivations, everything begins to change. People living the Beatitudes often can affect great change.

Cheryl Calire is a woman very similar to them, though she is a married mother, not a religious sister. She founded the **Mother Teresa Home** in Buffalo and is the director of the pro-life office in the Catholic archdiocese there. She's another beacon of light and life in the Empire State. So, in the wake of the 46th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, the March for Life (which she was at, as she is every year), and the grim day in New York Tuesday, I knew she would have a few things to say that ought to be heard and heeded. –*Kathryn Jean Lopez*

Kathryn Jean Lopez: What is the Mother Teresa Home all about?

Cheryl Calire: It is program designed to support and accompany those who have found themselves in an unplanned or unsupported pregnancy. The goal is to empower, not enable, women to be the best they can be!

Lopez: Are there stories of mothers that keep you getting up in the morning? That most inspire you? That most challenge you?

Calire: Many, many stories and many texts, emails, and invites to birthday parties keep me going. They are from moms who were going to choose to terminate their pregnancy yet found the hope we have to offer. The most challenging thing is all of the things you are not thinking about when having five women and children under the same roof. Consider: All the hormones that go along with pregnancy! There are good days. There are the challenging ones. We have early morning feedings for some of the moms; there's keeping all the schedules running efficiently and effectively; cooking, cleaning, parenting, curfew, gardening. You get the picture. It is truly a home!

Lopez: What do you do beyond birth for a woman and her child?

Calire: We help connect them to all the services that are available to them. We put a plan together with them to finish school, find employment, housing, etc.

Lopez: What do you think about foster care and adoption?

Calire: Catholic Charities has a foster to adopt program and we also work with attorneys who work in the field of private adoptions. We are not an adoption agency, but we certainly know pregnant women.

Lopez: Where do you send a pregnant mom interested in the adoption option for her child? What do you say to her?

Calire: Due to New York State laws and our Church, we in the Diocese of Buffalo do not offer direct adoption services. Again, most see private attorneys and agencies for this.

Lopez: Tell us about the painting there that I **posted** the other day. What do you pray it conveys to people?

Calire: I pray it conveys the “Mother of the World” that I see every time I look at that picture. I see something different each and every time that I look at it. I am so inspired by her works and her approach: one person at a time. Love them where they are at. Let them see Christ in me and I see Christ in them.

Lopez: When it became clear that the abortion expansion Andrew Cuomo has been pushing all these years was going to become reality, were you tempted to despair and surrender?

Calire: Aren't we all tempted by the devil? For a brief moment, I said to myself: we are defeated. Then I remembered we are called to serve, not to worry about the who and how. God will take care of the rest.

Lopez: January 22 was an especially dark day in New York this year — the 46th anniversary of *Roe* and Andrew Cuomo's win. What did you find yourself thinking about and clinging to for hope?

Calire: I thought of the many who rely on us for help and hope, and those who do not yet know we are there for them. To educate and to bring abortion to the unthinkable is my hope and prayer.

Lopez: What would you recommend that a person in New York, who is pro-life but realizes there's more walking-the-walk to do, consider? What are some immediate things people can do to help cultivate a culture of life?

Calire: Pray. Fast. Get involved in *something* to promote the dignity of all human life at all stages. It becomes second nature if you allow Christ to use you as a vessel.

Lopez: What are some longer-term things to think about or make baby steps toward?

Calire: More services that will empower women to make choices so that they can see the light and feel the hope from within. We need others to find those abandoned rectories, convents, schools that we have throughout the entire country and consider opening their doors to life!

Lopez: Why are you pro-life?

Calire: Because God is the author. He has a unique plan for each and every being who is made in His image and likeness. I also personally, was very motivated in my life to bring this good news to others.

Lopez: What's your pitch to anyone who is unbothered by or even celebrating what happened in New York Tuesday?

Calire: I hope that they would take the time to visit a pregnancy outreach center and talk to women and men who are post-abortive. I learn some of the greatest lessons from those I work with in Project Rachel.

Lopez: Is it hard to work for the Catholic Church right now?

Calire: I think everyone who is a Catholic is struggling right now, one way or another. We must remember the Church has survived all these years because of faith, hope, and love, not because of bricks or any one person other than Christ.

Lopez: What is your dream for the Mother Teresa Home?

Calire: My dream is that we can attract some religious from her order, the Missionaries of Charity, to come work and serve with us, and that I may be able to fulfill some of the interest of others in other parts of the country to have me come and help them get a Home started in their diocese.

Lopez: How can people support the Mother Teresa Home?

Calire: First and foremost: prayer. It is how we have gotten to where we are today. We are solely supported by the community and donations. The diocese has our annual budget for basic expense for the home, but all the rest is for the moms, the babies, and an eventual director to live there. (My husband and I currently live there and will, God willing, for five more years until we have our replacement. We are on the website of the diocese <https://www.buffalodiocese.org/mother-teresa-home> and have our own Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Mother-Teresa-Home-Buffalo-NY-370239006505251/>.