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N.C Catholic greet Democratic delegates with banners

SueAnn Howell Catholic News Service | Sep. 5, 2012

CHARLOTTE, N.C. -- Mere steps away from the site of the Sept. 3-6 Democratic National Convention, the Catholic Diocese of Charlotte has posted two larger-than-life messages about the sanctity of life, marriage and religious liberty.

The diocese has suspended two banners on property at St. Peter Catholic Church in Charlotte: one on St. Peter's administrative building and another on a large brick wall adjoining the church.

A 6-foot by 10-foot banner hangs from St. Peter's administrative building, stating: "A Message from the Catholic Church: Religious Liberty, The Soul of Democracy."

A 6-foot by 27-foot banner posted on a large brick wall behind the church reads: "A Message from the Catholic Church: Protect the Unborn, Defend Marriage, Safeguard Religious Liberty."

This wall faces an area designated as The Legacy Village, where Charlotte Mayor Anthony Foxx was to host special guests during the convention to highlight community efforts to support Foxx's Legacy Projects. Some of the topics discussed in programs there included children, families, youth employment, civic education, the economy, energy, technology and sustainability.

The banners were meant to provoke dialogue and encourage evangelization, diocesan officials said, during a time when the national spotlight will shine on Charlotte like never before -- and where attention will especially be drawn near St. Peter Church, the oldest Catholic church in the diocese and located in the heart of the convention area.

Careful planning went into the initiative, diocesan officials said, and the wording of the banners was thoughtfully selected. The banners meet all of the City of Charlotte's sign ordinances, and were erected Aug. 25 in order to be visible throughout the duration of the Democratic National Convention and related events.

Bishop Peter J. Jugis of Charlotte was personally involved in the planning for the banners, along with diocesan respect life director Maggi Nadol, diocesan spokesman David Hains and St. Peter's pastor, Jesuit Father Pat Earl.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for evangelization," Bishop Jugis said.

Nadol said she is excited about the banners and what impact they might have on visitors to Charlotte.

"The ability to express our beliefs as Americans is a right we treasure, and it must be protected," she said. "As Catholics, we have a responsibility to witness to the truth and share that with others."

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