

Lead the faithful to knees Belleville chapel — 24, 7

Story and photos by Jeremy Ashley

The Intelligencer

Hidden in downtown Belleville is a tiny sanctuary of silence and inner peace — available to anyone, 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

Our Lady of the Blessed Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel opened its doors at the former St. Michael's convent on June 6, 1999, under the umbrella of St. Michael's Parish in Belleville.

"The ability to do this has come directly out of the love of people's hearts," explains Mary Smith, one of the founding coordinators of the chapel.

"Miraculously, every single thing that has to do with that chapel has been donated."

Since the first silent prayer was offered up from the chapel in 1999, 11,000 consecutive hours of worship have taken place in the refuge by more than 26,000 visitors, an astounding success for such a small location, Smith says.

"The response from members of the parish has been incredible," she exclaims.

After an initial appeal went out to the congregation for workers in 1999, "more than 400 volunteers

— one third of the people — have signed up."

"Right now we have 232 adorers (volunteers) from St. Michael's who take time every week to take a shift."

Eucharistic Adoration "means that we believe Jesus is really present at all times. A chapel of adoration is exactly that — a place where Jesus is always present and we are able to adore Him," Smith says.

The concept was presented to Pope John Paul II by Mother Teresa in 1980, Smith says, adding that "his dream was that there would be a chapel in every parish where people could pray 24-hours a day." There are about 15 chapels of its kind in Ontario and more are opening at a substantial rate, she adds.

"It is a place of peace to get away from all the noise and hectic of the world — and every adorer prays for the needs of the community and the world."

With the establishment of the location and round-the-clock volunteer staffing, Smith says "it has come time to invite the whole community to visit the chapel at any time. We're open anytime, so we can fit right into anyone's schedule."



The doors of Our Lady of the Blessed Perpetual Eucharistic Adoration Chapel has been open since June 6, 1999. So far 11,000 consecutive hours of prayer have been offered by more than 26,000 visitors.

At left, one of the founders of the chapel, Mary Smith, is deep in contemplative prayer.