



HOLY FAMILY HOSPITAL of Bethlehem Foundation

Delivering LIFE, PEACE, and HOPE in the HOLY LAND

Lest We Forget Bethlehem By Ambassador Michele Burke Bowe

In his recent remarks, His Beatitude Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa said, “The Church is not only European, the Church is universal, and we must find a common and shared language for all”. I believe this language is that of Caritas, true Christian Charity meaning love. This love or true Christian Charity persists today where the Order of Malta was founded serving the sick and the poor. Just a few miles away from the Order's first hospital in Jerusalem where Fra' Gerard and the Hospitallers served the sick and the poor, Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem delivers and cares for babies as small as one pound. In the spirit of true charity, our Catholic teaching Hospital continues the work of Fra' Gerard offering hope and medical treatment to the forgotten of Bethlehem; that is older women, families in isolated Bedouin villages, refugees and those who risk losing hope due to the persisting economic crisis in Bethlehem. Holy Family Hospital offers hope through employment, new life and restored health and dignity without regard to need or creed.



The eyes of the world are locked on the Ukraine and Eastern Europe. The humanitarian and economic needs of this region are growing. Further East, the town of Bethlehem is being forgotten as it slips into a persistent poverty. Pregnant women are arriving in labor without having eaten and with little prenatal care. Their babies are born with complications and low birth weights. Women are arriving with gynecological cancers already in stage III or IV because they have delayed care.



The NICU runs full, often with extra bassinets or incubators pulled in to care for an additional two to four fragile newborns. The babies stay longer and require more complicated procedures. Despite the extra work, the staff remains dedicated in their efforts to focus on each individual patient to provide the best care and to restore dignity to families, especially the fathers who are no longer employed.

While the rest of the world has begun to travel, go to gatherings and dine in restaurants, few pilgrimages have returned to Bethlehem. The hotels remain largely shuttered and many restaurants and businesses have failed. Those in the industry are now waiting for hope to arrive in spring 2023. They wonder if they can hold out that long with almost no income. The government does not have its own currency and must rent the Israeli Shekel, which they cannot print to issue stimulus checks for families in need. There are no safety nets.



A Primary Work of the Order of Malta

A grandfather came recently to the NICU head bowed and hands behind his back. He explained he was there on behalf of his son, somberly and tearfully stating theirs was a poor family and they couldn't possibly afford the specialized care of the NICU for his tiny grandson. He was unemployed, struggling to feed his family and medical care was a luxury far out of reach. He asked to take the baby home that day knowing his chances for survival at home would be little to none. When we told him about the social work office and the sliding scale fees, his eyes widened, filling with tears. He could not stop blessing us. He grew at least 4 inches as he left the NICU to see Mary, our head social worker, in the company of a reassuring Neonatologist. You see his grandson was on a respirator without which, he would have surely died. This is a beautiful example of Caritas which flows through the halls of Holy Family Hospital each day. It is care for the whole family- restoring both health and dignity.



We must not forget Bethlehem. The small town which had no room at the inn is struggling. Beggars are becoming commonplace in the streets. A new class of people has arisen which has never been seen before, it is the urban Christian. While the rest of the world focuses on Gaza, Eastern Europe and Russia, Bethlehem is suffering. The Christian community is planning its emigration. This economic crisis seems to be endless.

At this time of greatest need, Holy Family Hospital stands firm as a beacon of hope offering top quality employment, training and unique advancement possibilities.

The staff continues to receive those in need with open arms to deliver life, peace and hope. Holy Family Hospital embodies the Order of Malta's 900-year-old commitment of the best for the poor and welcome arms for all without regard for need or creed. Our Hospital helps to keep Christians in the Holy Land. Help us remember Bethlehem by sharing the "good news."

Contact our office at 202-785-0801 for information on our parish programs which you can ask your pastor to implement. Holy Family Hospital Foundation is grateful for your prayers and for your continued generosity.

