

DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

St. Vincent

Bethlehem

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07 May 2008.

Church of The Risen Saviour
Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Attn: Linda Strasburg

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Rami, Shaed and Mahmmoud welcome you and they warmly greet you

Dear benefactors and friends,

We have received your generous donation for our deprived children; it is a gift from heaven. All alone it is impossible for us to continue our work toward these innocent angels. Your kind gesture encourages and enforces us to hold on in these difficult days.

We would like to give you a brief rapport about our situation in the occupied territories. It is only to give you an idea about our situation and not to ask for any participation from your side. As for the Guest House; it was constructed to be a source of income to help us to cover the running costs of the crèche, we hope that in the near future we will benefice from it.

1) General situation ... disastrous results

Like all situations of war, occupation, poverty and growing fanaticism, the mission of the Sainte Famille is extremely difficult to implement, and for certain families in Bethlehem, survival is difficult. The situation in the occupied territories continues to deteriorate and the strict military measures continue to humiliate the local population. The wall is still being built and is separating people while violating the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people.

The two months of March and April 2008 are catastrophic and hopeless. The result of the latest confrontations and incursions is 200 dead on the Palestinian side mainly in Gaza. We know from experience that conflicts such as this one (besides the loss of life and the disproportionate violence which is unjustifiable) more families are and will be thrown out of their homes. Many children are innocent victims but pay the price of human madness.

Shortly after these massacres, an explosion in Jerusalem killed 8 young Jewish students. This escalating violence is carried out by people who do not desire peace, and for whom human life has no value. But at the same time, these are people who have meaningless and desperate lives, without rights and liberty.

The Holy Land cries, weeps and bleeds from the military and civil occupation that has martyred the people. Enough! This dear Land cannot be divided into one free and joyous society in the west, and another society that lives in a prison humiliated in the east. There is no reason why some lives are more valuable than others.

In Bethlehem, 8km to the south of Jerusalem, unemployment has now reached 60-65 percent. We are feeling it daily with the families who want to be heard, helped and comforted. The town of Bethlehem is always in a state of uncertainty, but we have to continue our mission of welcome, security and love with a glimmer of hope, and with your help.

The conference of Annapolis is already forgotten and hopelessness now feeds these determined people. How can someone live in despair, without security and without future... and with children? How long will this desperate situation last?

2) The Sainte Famille, its history, its responsibilities, its life activities (the nursery, the crèche, the social services clinic, the dental clinic and the guest house)

Therefore, it's in this environment that the crèche of the Sainte Famille grows. The crèche is now more important than ever, in the midst of broken families. During this risky situation, we try to answer to all the children's miseries regardless of religious affiliation.

The Sainte Famille is born out of the responsibilities of the Filles de Charite (Sisters of Charity) of the order of St. Vincent de Paul, and in accordance with the bishop's appeal in Bethlehem in 1884. The sisters started their mission by supplying aid directly into homes, under tents, and in clinics. In 1895, the sisters opened the hospital of the Sainte Famille. The crèche was created during the same period to host abandoned children.

Today, the hospital is a maternity ward and is managed by the Ordre de Malte (Order of Malta) with 3,200 babies born each year.

In 2008, the crèche is home to 110 children; 1 day old to 6 years old, poor or orphans from the Palestinian territories. Our structure is well known, has been a social necessity for hundreds of years and works regularly with the government's social services. Yet we do not receive any subsidy, not a single shekel from the government. We operate only through donations.

The crèche offers love, security, care and education to children who are under nourished and abused. In order to provide the best care possible, our system is based on an educational program developed specially for children who of social injustice.

Our goal is to care for the physical, intellectual and emotional being of the child. This is

accomplished through various activities including crafts and arts, music and dance; theatre and imagination, in addition to outside trips when possible.

This program is essential to the child's growth and fosters maturity, curiosity and confidence in the future. The results of this program have been very encouraging and sometimes surprising, which encourages us to continue whatever the cost.

The structure implemented by our staff believes in the next generation of children who will be responsible for their future.



The Sainte Famille is also a social service for the weak that are received, heard and evaluated by priority. We help more than 200 families in distress. We recently started a dental clinic offering gratuitous care to the needy.

3) Our needs, difficulties and the project in need

In order to function properly, the crèche is in constant need of funds. Faced with climbing cost and expenses, we have Guest House that we operate since 2000. The guest house hosts pilgrims. **The main objective of this hosting facility is to generate a regular financial resource for the crèche; therefore providing for the security and well being of the children.** This is now still very difficult; the guest house barely pays for its expenses. After much thought and planning, we have built 16 additional rooms so we can host two different groups of visitors at the same time. This project was completed last week. We have encouraging results; this week we hosted around 100 people in one night. The entire month of April is almost reserved which is very encouraging. But we are not totally covered since we still have two large expenses for two upcoming projects:

- a) Since we increased the number of rooms in the guest house, the consumption of water has increased. In the territories, water is controlled and distributed by the Israeli government; it is severely rationed and cut off regularly. This commodity is rare and precious, but it is vital. Therefore, we have to quickly secure a reserve of 160 cubic meters (160,000 liters) so we can continue to accept visitors. We have to build a storage facility like the two facilities that already exist today. These underground storage facilities have the advantage of collecting rain water which would be the equivalent of 3 facilities. This is an enormous way to save money and not use the public water system for 6 months.



(one of the storage facilities, exterior and interior view)

- b) The main entrance of the guest house needs to be enlarged so we can receive 2 buses in the courtyard, or about 100 people. The insurance companies do not cover tourist buses that are parked outside the property. This leaves us open to liability. Therefore, 2 buses have to be parked inside the property of the guest house. This construction project will cost approximately 30,000 dollars that are not yet secured.



(street view of the entrance)



(view fro, the guest house)

Once again thank you for the generosity you offer to our children.
Please accept our most sincere greetings.
In prayers,

« Dieu se cache à l'esprit de l'homme, mais il se révèle à son cœur ».

Sister Sophie Bouéri,
Daughter of Charity.