



Bethlehem House has room

A local pregnancy center 'serves with love' in its new location

>> **Bishop Timothy A. McDonnell**, Bishop of Springfield

On the Sunday after Christmas, Holy Family Sunday, I had the privilege of blessing the new Bethlehem House Pregnancy Care Center at 33 Knipfer Avenue in Easthampton. It was truly a day when “no room at the inn” was turned around. With its ministry to women before, during and after crisis pregnancies, and its support for single fathers, Bethlehem House serves as a beacon of hope for many who don’t know where to turn. Its website (bethlehemhousewma.org) puts its work very succinctly:

“Bethlehem House is a non-profit organization located in Western Massachusetts which offers free pregnancy resources to women and men in crisis. We reach out to provide loving and nurturing support to all members of the family in this time of need.

“Since being founded in 2006, over 1,000 women have received services from Bethlehem House. Working with local college campuses, churches, hospitals and birthing centers, we offer many services, including gifts of baby supplies and all the necessities, educational programs, support and counseling as well as provide referrals for area service. 100% confidential.

“Services at Bethlehem House include a 24-hour crisis hotline, counseling and referrals, FREE confidential pregnancy testing, assistance in obtaining pre-natal care, financial/legal aid, job training, emergency food, maternity and baby supplies, childbirth and child care programs, breastfeeding classes, educational assistance, adoption information, and abstinence and STD education.”

Its many volunteers provide services to all four counties of western Massachusetts. Bethlehem House works closely with hospitals to identify clients in need; it delivers baby baskets to new moms and babies at four area hospitals. It raises funds through programs like the Baby Bottle Boomerang, baby showers and the “Sew For Us” program. It has a

24-hour crisis **hotline** (413.262.8517), as well as a line for information (413.527.2861).

Thanks to the generosity of Father Doug McGonagle and the parishioners of Our Lady of the Valley Parish in Easthampton, the former Sacred Heart rectory in Easthampton has become Bethlehem House’s new home, the site where the organization will now provide its services.

On the day of the blessing for the new facility, it was a packed house with volunteers, mothers and children, babies, single dads and a multitude of friends participating — a joy-filled day in the Christmas season in which an existing outreach in western Massachusetts expanded its services with joy and commitment. It truly was one of those days that exemplified Pope Francis’ call for all of us to “Serve With Love,” a theme which encapsulates this year’s Annual Catholic Appeal.

Bethlehem House is just one of more than 30 of those programs and ministries that help people in need and are assisted by the Annual Catholic Appeal. As the 2014 appeal gets underway, I hope you’ll remember it when you receive the request to be of assistance to “Serve With Love.” Your response can be by mail, on the web, or through your parish. However you choose to respond, please keep Bethlehem House and all the ministries, programs and services helped by the appeal in your prayers each day.