

Christmas and the Society of the Innocents

Say the word Christmas and we think of presents, crackers, parties, decorations, trees, lights. All of these things immediately light up our lives. It is winter; the days are darker, shorter. We need to be cheered up and one way to cheer ourselves up is to have a party!

A little deeper reflection brings another image to our minds. This time of a mother and baby, a stable, a stranger's welcome. Shepherds and wise men crowd into the scene and always the angels singing, pointing, drawing us to the manger in Bethlehem. This is the reason for a Christmas party, a party beyond any other party. "A child is born for us; a son is given to us."

We know that in our world having a baby is not always an easy option.

Many babies are conceived and born in situations far removed from the glitter and joy of a party atmosphere. Yet it's our task, our mission to try to, make that bond of love and life real and possible for every mother. Our world speaks of unwanted babies. The child of Bethlehem found no welcome at many doors if the story of Mary and Joseph is to be believed. But in the clamour of the occasion, the indifference of a busy town, the politics of the Roman census, and one little piece of humanity stood out. The baby should have somewhere to be born; the mother and father were entitled to some support. And so the offer of the stable.

At the Innocents we try to offer the support a mother needs in order to bring her baby safely into our world. We try to make possible a phrase from our daily prayer, "that no child falls unwanted, no adult feels abandoned."

CHRISTMAS JOY TO ALL.

A Short History

Our Society grew from a seed sown by Mgr. Philip Flannigan. He was parish priest at Sacred Heart Parish in Bellshill where he also looked after the spiritual welfare of staff and patients of the then largest maternity hospital in Lanarkshire, Bellshill Maternity. This was around the time of The Abortion Act (1967) of David Steel and the Mgr. and his assistant priests experienced first hand some of its worst effects.

As a result of his concerns and with the support of Bishop Thomson, the Bishop of Motherwell, the Society of the Innocents was formed in Lanarkshire in 1977.

Two Sisters of the Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception were deployed to work alongside volunteer counsellors.

Bishop Thomson initially made available the old Parish house in Laird St in Coatbridge. Two moves later we find ourselves in Viewpark Rd. in Motherwell.

Thirty years on the Society continues to be supported by His Lordship Bishop Devine, Bishop of Motherwell; Fr Hugh Kelly, Chaplain; our Franciscan Sisters, Sr. Rosaria & Sr. Maria Goretti, and volunteer counsellors.

What we do!

A range of services is available to any women or girl who thinks they may be pregnant and for whom the pregnancy is likely to cause a problem.

These services include:

- Free pregnancy testing
- Confidential counselling
- Practical help

IN ADDITION:

Counsellors also speak in schools on the development of the baby in the womb and the long term effects abortion can have both emotionally and physically for the mother.

We are supported by Pro Life Cells which have been formed in schools, parishes & local communities. These groups offer support both practically, by providing layettes, and spiritually by praying for the pro life cause.

Training to be a counsellor

Counsellors receive training from our in house training team and with input from outside agencies including doctors, lawyers and moral theologians.

Counsellors come from all walks of life and various age groups.

All aspiring counsellors require to undergo a period of training, evaluation and supervised practice.

Counsellors are recruited annually for both counseling and educational visits.

If you are interested in joining us please call on

01698 262699

Or visit us at

Innocents House
17 Viewpark Rd,
Motherwell
ML1 3ER

Or email us on

theinnocents@btinternet.com

“The human body includes right from the beginning...the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person become a gift – and by means of this gift – fulfills the meaning of his being and existence”

(*Theology of the Body*, Jan 16, 1980) p.63

*“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
Before you came to birth I consecrated you.”*

Jeremiah 1:5

A child, more than all other gifts that earth can offer to declining men, brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts.

William Wordsworth

*The Society of the Innocents
Lanarkshire*

Grant us, Oh Lord, a new appreciation of the sanctity of human life.

Show us how to make our Society, one in which no child is unwanted, no adult feels abandoned, and the pressures which lead to abortion, no longer exist.

Grant Lord that those who acknowledge the sanctity of life, will be inspired by your son to lead a life of sanctity, Amen

December 2008

