

"It is easier for feeble straw to resist a mighty fire than for the nature of sin to resist the power of love. We must cultivate this love in our souls, that we may take our place with all the saints, for they were all-pleasing unto God through their love for their neighbor."

—St. Elizabeth the New Martyr

Love in Action



A NEWSLETTER OF THE MARTHA & MARY HOUSE
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Loving & Serving God in Our Neighbor

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

In winter new life is born—a wonder, a miracle, a child. Jane Merchant, a poet born physically handicapped with osteogenesis imperfecta, wrote in her 1971 “December Haiku”:

Bare trees, bare earth, bare
Room, where a new mother holds
Five rosebud fingers.

Jane died in January 1972, a year before the Supreme Court in *Roe vs. Wade* made the killing of unborn babies legal in the



United States. Since then, the silent genocide of 45 million unborn miracle babies bearing the image of God has added to the number of “holy innocents,” martyred saints. Each year in this country another 1.3 million are added and 46 million more around the world. Their memory is eternal. May God have mercy on us and heal the wounds of our souls, for we sin against Him and the least of His “little ones.”

Two thousand years ago, God the Word became flesh in the womb of His young Virgin Mother, the Holy Theotokos. Abortion was common, except among the Jews. Mary said “yes” to the Gift of life conceived in her womb. Joseph, her betrothed, took upon himself to protect and provide for the young mother and babe. Did they face shame and scorn? Mary was pregnant and unwed. Joseph, a God-fearing, respected carpenter and widower, trusted an angel in his dream who said the babe in Mary’s womb was the long-awaited Messiah. Did they think of what people would say? Or whisper? In the synagogue? At the well where Mary came to draw water?

They faced danger and hardship; the long journey to Bethlehem, the birth in a stable—no room in the inn. There was the strange story told by shepherds who had seen and heard a shining choir of angels in the night sky over the fields. And three

wise men bearing gifts from the East, who had been guided by a star and came to worship the newborn babe whom they called King. And then Joseph was warned in another dream by an angel who told him to flee with Mary and her child into Egypt. King Herod’s soldiers had orders to “put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under” to get rid of the infant Jesus, feared to be a rival to Herod’s throne.

“Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, / Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, / Rachel weeping for her children, / Refusing to be comforted, / Because they are no more’” (Matthew 2:17–18).

On the fifth day of the Nativity, December 29, we remember the fourteen thousand Holy Innocents of Bethlehem—the forerunners of the more than a billion aborted children around the world during the last 35 years. An incomprehensible number, but God knows each of them intimately:

“For You formed my inward parts; / You covered me in my mother’s womb. / I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; / Marvelous are Your works; / And that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:13–14).

To Love Is to Remember—Not a Single One Is Forgotten

“Will a woman forget her child, so as not to have compassion upon the offspring of her womb? But if a woman forget these, yet I will not forget thee,” saith the Lord. “Behold, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:14–16).

The Orthodox Church believes that aborted children are among the Holy Innocents, martyred saints who pray for us, and we may pray with them. Orthodox Christians remember their departed loved ones in every celebration of the Eucharist. Parental bonds are not severed by death, and we who lost our unborn children by choice may reconcile and find peace with God, with our children and ourselves. No longer is grief and pain our only link with our aborted children. As Father Alexander Schmemmann reminded us: “To love is to remember.” In joy we love our children by remembering them. May their Memory be Eternal! God is merciful, and in our Twelve Step Abortion Survivors Anonymous groups at Martha & Mary House, we see both the tragedies of abortion and the healing of abortion’s wounds in our lives and relationships.

Abortion—Choice or Coercion?

Martha & Mary House is here to provide an alternative to abortion for pregnant women in crisis who want to choose life for their unborn child. Each year approximately 25% of all pregnancies in the country are terminated before birth as 1.3 million women apparently “choose” abortion. And a fierce political battle is waged to protect a woman’s “right to choose.” It is presumed that this choice is made freely, and that there is more than one option available.

Conventional wisdom has it that abortion is a woman’s free choice and her “constitutional right.” But a special 21-page report on “Forced Abortion in America,” published this year by the Elliot Institute, makes the disturbing claim that up to 60% of abortions in America are coerced. Women report pressure from parents (including boyfriend’s parents), husbands, boyfriends, employers, doctors, counselors, pastors, and others. Eight of ten post-

abortive women surveyed would have given birth if given support. Over 70% believed that abortion is morally wrong. (Elliot Institute, www.afterabortion.org)

A study conducted by the Alan Guttmacher Institute (Planned Parenthood) of 10,000 women obtaining abortions in 2000–2001 in the U.S. showed some surprising trends: a majority of women (78%) having abortions reported a religious affiliation. And, while the overall abortion rate decreased by 11% from 1994 to 2000, the largest decline (35%) was among women with no religious affiliation.

Abortion is legal in the U.S. throughout all nine months of pregnancy. Most abortions are done before the twelfth week, but one percent (16,450 a year) are performed after the twentieth week (five months or later).

Perhaps not surprisingly, less than one percent of abortions occur because of rape or incest, and only six percent because of potential health problems for either the mother or child. The fact is that 93% of abortions are done for “social reasons” (i.e. financial reasons, or because the child is unwanted or inconvenient). (Abortion Statistics, Alan Guttmacher Institute www.agi-usa.org)

The catch-all “social reasons” listed in Planned Parenthood’s survey is likely to cover the overwhelming pressures to “choose” abortion reported by women in the Elliot Institute survey. Pressure from their families and friends, the media and society in general, even from doctors, counselors and pastors. As Zoe for Life notes, “It is disturbing that most of the Orthodox women who are in trouble do not turn to their church for guidance; perhaps because there are so few places to turn to within the Orthodox community.” Martha & Mary House is the first Orthodox maternity home they can turn to, and we hope there will be many more.

Please join us in prayer for pregnant mothers in crisis who may be considering abortion as their only available choice. As an Orthodox Christian Maternity Home, we are deeply concerned that women in the Christian community are in the majority of those who choose to or are coerced (persuaded) to have abortions. Some may feel that abortion is their only option to hide an illegitimate pregnancy.



“Little Anna” and “baby Jane”

Fifty years ago, women who found themselves pregnant out of wedlock could go away to a maternity home in another city, give birth, and place the child for adoption, thus keeping the pregnancy secret. I was one of those who gave birth in a maternity home in a city far from home, keeping my pregnancy a secret from my family and intending to place for adoption. After the legalization of abortion in 1973, maternity homes emptied and closed down. Today, there are only a few left—and many women who find themselves in a difficult situation feel forced by circumstances to make a choice they know in their heart is wrong.

But today you do have another choice. You can choose life—and still protect your privacy and keep your pregnancy confidential. That is why Martha & Mary House is here: to offer a safe, private, and confidential place for those who are pregnant with no place to go. If you are looking for a way to continue your pregnancy, give your child life, and make the best choice for your own future as well, we are here for you. We believe that both you and your child are unique and precious, created in the image of God and loved by Him. We pray that in seeking His will, you will discover your God-given personal resources and how to develop them. We are here to help you.

Martha & Mary House News

It has been a busy summer and fall for Housemother Sarah Elisabet, with traveling and speaking—sharing the work and vision of Martha & Mary House, meeting many who share a deep concern for pregnant women in crisis who may feel they have no other option than abortion—and for those who suffer grief and loss after an abortion.

♥ **In June**, speaking to clergy wives at the Antiochian Western Region Parish Life Conference in Garden Grove, California.

♥ **In late July** at the 2004 Parish Ministries Conference, “Faith in Action,” at Saint Vladimir’s Seminary in New York. Participating in a workshop on “Protecting the Unborn” with Kathy Kovalak from Zoe for Life and Dr. Leon Sheean.

♥ **In October** at the OCA Diocesan Assembly in Los Angeles.

♥ **Also in October**, conducting two workshops at the Orthodox Peace Fellowship 2004 North American Conference: “Salt of the Earth, Light of the World, Living the Similitudes in our Communities,” held at Saint Nicholas Ranch Conference and Retreat Center, Dunlap, California. (1) Healing the Wounds of Abortion, and (2) Martha & Mary House, an Orthodox Christian maternity home, an alternative to abortion, teaching God’s design for the nurture of children in a family with father and mother committed in lifelong marriage.

Martha & Mary House “daughter” and acting assistant “Anna,” with “Little Anna,” visited with Abbess Markella and the nuns at the Monastery of the Theotokos, the Life-Giving Spring. “Anna” is a catechumen and loved her first visit to an Orthodox monastery.

♥ **In November**, speaking at the 14th annual OCAMPR (Orthodox Christian Association of Medicine, Psychology and Religion) National Conference on “Christ in the Healing Community” at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts. One of the attendees at the conference sent a contribution to Martha & Mary House and

wrote: “I too share your hope in seeing this ministry replicated throughout the Orthodox community . . . fully championed officially and in actual practice.”

♥ **Upcoming, in January 2005** a visit to Saint Michael Archangel Serbian Orthodox Church in Saratoga—sponsors of our upcoming website.

♥ **Also in January 2005**, we will join the West Coast Maternity Home Association of greater Los Angeles, the only network of maternity homes and shelters in the U.S. We hope to network with other maternity homes scattered throughout the U.S. for the purpose of referring those who may need to relocate to another area during their pregnancy. We pray to establish a network of Orthodox maternity and host homes. Already parishes want to provide a host-home if needed.

♥ **Martha & Mary House** is the only maternity home and Orthodox member of the Association for Life of San Diego. Other members are the directors of San Diego’s Pregnancy Care Centers, Adoption Center and adoption agencies, Roman Catholic Diocesan Office for Social Ministry, Rachel’s Hope postabortion ministry, Life Resource Network, California Foundation for Women, and Concerned Women for America. At our suggestion the Association is addressing the need for adoption counseling in Pregnancy Care Centers, offering women the option of confidential housing and adoption as well as the option of parenting.

On the Home Front

♥ **Thank you** to individuals, parishes, and groups who have contributed with prayers, practical gifts, and financial help. Our new roof is beautiful and rainproof! Thanks be to God and Schiott Roofing, who did a great job at a great price!

♥ **Work on the bedroom/studio** behind the garage is progressing, with Steve Tetrake directing the volunteers and doing much of the work himself. There is still need for materials and labor to complete the job so Housemother can make room for the much-needed office. Sue Yingst, board member and treasurer, will set up and organize a database. “Anna” can do much of the work once it is established.

♥ **Our fifth baby**, “little Jane,” was born in late summer. Her mother “Jane” considered adoption, but changed her mind. She and her baby are now at home with her parents, but adoption may still be an option. Pray for them and the prospective adoptive parents. Pray for our next daughters, God knows who they are—that we may welcome and serve them in the name and love of Christ.

♥ **Thanks to “Jane’s” family**, who helped put in our vegetable garden this summer. What joy to have our own tomatoes, zucchini, and green peppers—enough to share with neighbors. Our grapevines gave abundant fruit. George Raha from Saint John of Damascus plans to put in a winter garden.



Need Confidential Help?

Pregnant? Feeling trapped, terrified, and alone? It wasn't supposed to happen, but it did. The test was positive and your world has changed. Perhaps no one knows yet, but what will they think when they find out? Perhaps some do know, and are pressuring you to do the "smart" thing and have an abortion. Even though you know it's wrong, maybe abortion seems your only choice. **But you do have another choice. Martha & Mary House is here for you. You are not alone! We are here to help.** Martha & Mary House can be your home away from home, a safe alternative to abortion, providing privacy and confidentiality for you to continue your pregnancy, choosing life and a future for your child and for yourself.

"I call heaven and earth to witness this day . . . that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, that both you and your seed may live."

(Deuteronomy 30:19)

How to Contact Us

Martha & Mary House needs your prayers, your labors, your donations, and your financial help. If God is leading you to help—or to let us help you, please contact us at:

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No child is conceived apart from the will of God, the very God who is forming your child in your womb right now. What may seem to you at this moment to be a personal disaster, God means for good. If you dare to believe that, and begin to trust Him—then this pregnancy can be a turning point and a new beginning. Not just the beginning of life for your baby, but also a new direction for you. We pray that if God wills that you come here for the remainder of your pregnancy, you will choose to come—and we welcome you in Christ's name. The choice is yours. May God bless and direct you.

If you have suffered pregnancy loss by choice in the past, we provide a Twelve Step program, Abortion Survivors Anonymous, for healing the wounds of abortion.

At a National Prayer Breakfast in February 1994, Mother Teresa of Calcutta said: "I tell you something beautiful. We are fighting abortion by adoption—by care of the mother and adoption for her baby."

We wish you a blessed and joyous Nativity Season! *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace"* (Isaiah 9:6).

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Our Wish List

- ♥ Firewood
- ♥ New twin boxspring and mattress
- ♥ Computer desk & chair
- ♥ Floor mats or rugs; small lamps
- ♥ Bookshelves ♥ Shower curtains
- ♥ Small trash cans with lids
- ♥ Toaster; coffeemaker; heavy-duty mixer
- ♥ Night lights and bulbs
- ♥ Laundry and dish soap
- ♥ First Aid kits
- ♥ Grocery coupons
- ♥ Paper towels, napkins, toilet paper, Kleenex
- ♥ Food storage bags & containers
- ♥ HP printer cartridges: No. 96 black, No. 97 color
- ♥ Canned, dried, and frozen food, beans, rice, pasta (low sodium preferred)
- ♥ Volunteers: Drivers for grocery shopping and doctor's appointments. Mentors, big sisters. Teaching crafts, sewing, arts.

Martha & Mary House

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"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:18)