

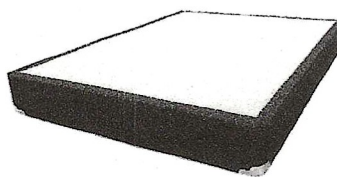
Walking with Moms in Need: Creating a Network of Support When It's Most Needed

by Cindy Cahill

Walking with Moms in Need is a national Catholic initiative that aims to create a network of support for expectant mothers and young families. The program was introduced by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in March of 2020, but then put on hold due to the pandemic. It was revived locally this past year by Catholic Charities of Louisville and the Family and Life Ministries Office. St. Agnes is one of eight parishes in Louisville that are piloting this new program. The St. Agnes Committee Chair is Pat Davis. Committee members include: Carolyn Pape, Cherie Hettinger, Debby Horn, Melissa Metzger, Nancy Brown, Maggie Faust, Jack Will, and Chris Walker.

St. Agnes received its first client a few months ago from Little Way Pregnancy Resource Center. She is a young woman who was referred to the program when she was eight months pregnant and living on her own. Once she was assigned to St. Agnes, committee members met with her to determine how to best assist her.

This young mother has a job in a local department store and was living in an apartment on her own without many basic necessities. She was sleeping on a mattress on the floor with no supplies for a baby, except for a Pack 'N' Play. The St. Agnes committee provided her with a box springs and bed frame for herself, a changing table, car seat, stroller, diapers, wipes, and gift cards for groceries. These were provided using funds appropriated from last year's St. Agnes Trivia Night. Additionally, the committee was able to collect from generous parishioners donations of gently used items such as a table and chairs, a rocking chair, and lamps.



This young woman had a baby girl in August, and mother and baby are doing very well. Fortunately, the girl's mother was able to travel to Louisville to help her daughter for a few months.

At the time of the birth, the St. Agnes committee members sent encouraging messages to help support her and let her know there are people who care about her and her child. The committee also provided some hygiene items the mother would need for herself, as well as a meal. Members of the committee also recommended a pediatrician for her baby and made sure the car seat was correctly installed in her car by qualified staff from Norton Children's Hospital.

The mother worked up until a couple of days prior to the time she delivered, but it was clear she was going to need assistance in paying her rent. The St. Agnes committee helped her with her rent payment for September and also provided the names of agencies that were available to help her financially for her October rent payment. She has since been financially assisted by Catholic Charities and St Matthews Area Ministries.

This grateful young mother sent a note saying, "I have no words right now. I never thought that you would be able to help me so much!! ... you people came as angels into my life. I'm so touched with your efforts for me and my baby. I can't thank you enough for your good deeds. Bless your hearts, and you all are definitely going to have a place in heaven! You are angels." The new mother has now returned to work and proven to be a wonderful mother. Nancy Brown, one of the committee members, shared that it has been a joy to help her during this time in her life.

The committee wants to thank all parishioners who supported Trivia Night, since the proceeds from that event allowed St. Agnes to support this young mother and her baby.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops included the following reflection in its October Prayer Guide, promoting October as Respect Life month and providing support for programs such as Walking with Moms in Need and those who join in service to others:

Shortly before he suffered his Passion, Jesus proclaimed to his disciples: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). The Church's entire social doctrine is guided by the fundamental principle that every human life has innate dignity and incomparable value. As disciples of Christ, we are called to make a sacrificial gift of ourselves for the sake of our neighbor.

Fulfilling Christ's command to love one another takes shape in our practice of solidarity. Solidarity means putting our love for others into action and making the good of others our own. Solidarity "is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people... On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good...to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (*Sollicitudo rei socialis* 38).

Radical solidarity compels us to be at the side of vulnerable mothers in profound friendship, compassion, and support for both them and their children, born and preborn. It requires us to address the fundamental challenges that lead an expectant mother to believe she is unable to welcome the child God has entrusted to her. This cannot be accomplished by laws or policy alone, but requires the continual transformation of our own hearts, so that we may recognize in every person the face of Christ and place their needs before our own. We each have our particular gifts, role, and obligation within the Body of Christ to help build a culture of life. May we work together to bring about a culture of life through radical, sacrificial, Christ-like love. (Reflection adapted from "Radical Solidarity.")

If anyone has questions or an interest in joining the Walking with Moms In Need committee, please contact Pat Davis at 502-641-1456 or patadavis@hotmail.com.
