

The purpose of the Creche is not simply to take in children off the street, but to touch them with the healing power of love. Those who work at the Creche spend much of their time holding the children and playing with them, giving them a security and acceptance they may never have experienced before. "An abandoned child needs security and love more than anything else," Sr. Sophie said. "A child may come in malnourished and not begin to make any improvement until he realizes that he is loved." If love covers a multitude of sins, it also transfigures a rather Spartan life at the Creche.

The sleeping rooms are crowded, one bed nestling against the next. If they could fit in more beds, there would be children to fill them. The main corridor must do as the playroom. There is an outside play area for use when the weather is nice, but only a limited amount of play equipment. An old crib serves for a game of crib-packing: you can get almost as many children in one crib as angels on the head of a pin.

As Sr. Sophie has said: "You can only survive in Bethlehem if you have faith and can look beyond the current situation," she says. "It is good to pray at the Basilica but I look at the children and think that Jesus is here with us now."

- written by George Martin for CNA

to support the Holy Land

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Holy Family Children's Home "Creche"



If you would like to help the Sisters
in their mission
to love and protect the children,

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EOHSJ
Our Lady Queen of Palestine
555 W. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

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Holy Family Children's Home "Creche"

*where you will find the
Innocents of Bethlehem*



photo by: Samar Hazboun

Holy Family Children's Home "Creche"

At the Creche in Bethlehem, the Daughters of Charity dole out huge helpings of love to abandoned children. Past the courtyard of an old stone building in Bethlehem, up a flight of stairs, a door opens unto a corridor filled with young children and merriment: balloons are tossed and popped, giggles echo off the walls – a frenzy of fun. This is the Holy Family Children's Home, popularly known as the Creche, a place of refuge and love for abandoned children.

How did these children come to live at Creche? Where do they come from? Some were left anonymously at the hospital. Some have been victims of child abuse. Some were given up by unwed mothers. Some are orphans; others have parents who cannot care for them, psychologically or financially. Some come to the Creche from social service agencies: there is no other home for abandoned infants and toddlers on the West Bank.

Sr. Sophie Boueri, whose Daughters of Charity order founded a Bethlehem hospital in 1884, operates the home. She explains that an unmarried woman who becomes pregnant is typically expelled by her family or often murdered. Their babies are killed or abandoned, and she cites cases of police delivering babies to her that were found in



photo by: Samar Hazboun



photo by: Samar Hazboun



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alleys. In a land divided by racial and religious conflict, her doors are open to all because "they all are a gift from God, and who can reject such a gift? Their religion is not important." It is a typical day. The nursery is full of babies, and toddlers are scampering about the foyer. Visitors are encouraged to hug a baby. Sr. Sophie can feed and clothe them, give them shelter, but the babies need more affection than she and her small staff are able to provide.

Some of the children come to the Creche deeply scarred emotionally. A battered child will be frightened of all adults. It may take two or three months before he or she smiles for the first time, and begins to trust anyone. "But with enough love," Sr. Sophie said, "a person can survive anything. There is healing power in love."

"You can only survive in Bethlehem if you have faith and can look beyond the current situation..."

- Sr. Sophie Boueri