



A refuge for unborn-newborn babies and little children who will die and those who love them

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020

EDITORIAL

Dear Friends of Alexandra's House,

Since 1999, the volume of referrals to Alexandra's House has been exceedingly intense. Its earliest and sole staff member, Patti, served as full-time caregiver, housekeeper, gardener, business manager, and teacher. By 2006, the workload had become unsustainable, and that's when Kathy Tarbe, a respected community volunteer, came to help, thinking to spend 6 months there, getting the business office organized. Instead, she stayed 14 years, giving the community her deepest service throughout.

After starting out on a voluntary basis, a generous gift from a dear donor enabled the House to offer Kathy a paid position as Administrative Assistant. Initially, Kathy felt reluctant to accept, thinking that the role would be too quiet and isolating. In her article below, she explains why she ultimately said yes. When she did, both ladies cried: Kathy, because it went against her will and Patti, because of Kathy's sacrifice.

The two ladies, equally yoked, were a perfect match. Together they witnessed the impossible become possible too many times to recall. Kathy served Alexandra's House unreservedly, with integrity and fidelity: all who came experienced her warmth and her great care for every detail. Excitingly for Kathy (if sadly for us), she chose to retire in September. She well deserves this but will be sorely missed. She is one-of-a-kind, as is her whole family. We are thankful for all Kathy has done for and brought to Alexandra's House.

In the next issue, we will profile Kathy's replacements, Sister Anita and Lauren Jungen. Kathy has trained them up so there will be a seamless transition for that side of the mission.

Let us together hope and pray that Kathy's retirement is one filled with length, health, and many new adventures. You are much loved, Kathy! Thank you!

Patti Lewis and Hilary Stroh

On February 2nd, 2020, the chapel at Alexandra's House was dedicated in a beautiful ceremony, presided over by the Reverend Fr. Adam Johnson, pastor at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Westport. This was the culmination of many years of hope and prayer for Patti personally and for many in the community. Patti had two principles: the chapel must be beautiful and must be a special place for burdened souls to find rest. It is certainly both. It contains an abandoned and restored 100 year old gold tabernacle, a life-size Crucifix and a statue of Our Lady Mother of Sorrows. Steve Connolly, the House's accountant, attended the ceremony and brought away some very special memories.

“And they said one to the other: Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in this way...?” Lk 24:32

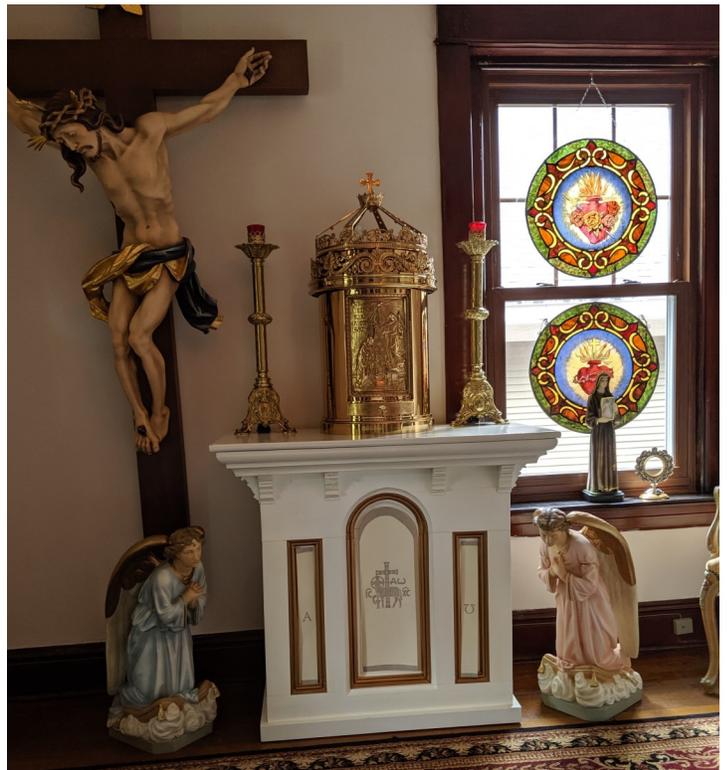
I hadn't been back since *the* day, and what a day it was. On a festival day traditionally dedicated to St. Blaise bishop and martyr, everything changed. In a way almost beyond one's imagination, heaven reached down, leaving with us Christ's very presence in our midst. Yes! Christ Himself was lying in a manger once again, only this time in even more humble circumstances.

Rushing against time, I hurriedly found a parking spot and walked briskly toward the door. Among those milling about on the porch and in the foyer, I quickly noted a common denominator of palpable joy on everyone's face. The long-anticipated day was finally here! Today the *Chapel of St. Simeon and the Souls of Little Children* would be dedicated.

Ascending the venerable, creaky-old, wooden stairs which led to the chapel, I could feel it: a wave of electric anticipation. It saturated the air, animating everyone's demeanor. Like the early church, a small but diverse panoply of Christians had gathered: various heritages of young and old, rich and poor, strong and weak, were there to witness this supreme act of Di-

vine Mercy. Like the early church too, the spiritual intimacy was enhanced by such tight quarters.

Sweet singing wafted through the air as Fr Johnson blessed and sprinkled the entirety of the chapel with holy water. After the Liturgy of the Word, he gave a touching homily, speaking of the meaning of the Chapel with Christ always present. Then came the dressing and preparation of the altar. When Bill and I gently



and solemnly laid the cloths, I fairly wondered, “Could this be true? Is it really so? Is the God of the Universe, the Creator of All Things, really coming to be with us here in this holy place for always?” What an amazing gift ... what an amazing God.

As Father conducted the Liturgy of the Eucharist, elevating Christ in his hands, I couldn't help but ponder whether this was how Simeon himself held the Christ-child in the Temple. It was surely the same loving touch, the same loving embrace as that offered to all the fami-

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lies and children that have been deeply touched by the apostolate of Alexandra's House.

The fervor with which those present received Jesus that day in the Blessed Sacrament was palpable: one could sense a quiet peace and tranquility descend as our hearts filled with His love. How does a Christian give adequate thanks for such a gift? We all try in our own little way: to know that the Savior accepts even these small acts of affection and adoration is truly humbling.

After spending extended time in deep silent prayer, united with one another, Father gave the final blessing and dismissal. Not wanting to leave, but needing to get back to work, I eventually departed the Chapel with a joy and thanksgiving so abiding it was transformative.

I have to admit: time got away from me then and it was a while before I came back. When I did enter this holy place again, I not only felt it, I saw it. From the days of remember-when,

the house has always had a certain feel for me, but this time it was different. Was I imagining things or was everything in the house more translucent? Why did the interior of the house sparkle in this way? Everything seemed to be glowing with an unearthly shine and everyone seemed specially radiant.

The whole of the house was singing with ethereal joy and I quickly realized why. It was calling to us, up those venerable, creaky-old, wooden stairs. Did He speak to us that day? He did indeed. And our hearts are still burning.



MY GOODBYE TO ALEXANDRA'S HOUSE by Kathy Tarbe

This is a place of peace for me. While I'm here, I'm surrounded by baby photos, saints' photos and statues, statues of Our Blessed Mother and of course, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, now housed in our tabernacle. I recall how every picture, icon, and statue, came to grace us and I am still amazed by the love and generosity of people who hear the story of Alexandra and Patti, and moved to hear about the journeys of our babies and families. I have been blessed. I was reluctant to move from the volunteer position to a more active, full-time job and struggled with the decision. I tossed and turned several nights, one night even asking, "Why me?" A voice (nothing I'd ever experienced before) said "Because I want you to!" My indecision ended.

sadness were all daunting in the beginning. But over the years, I think Patti and I have become a pretty good team! Our babies and families are the heart and soul of this organization. I always think of the importance of faith, hope and love. How many tears have been shed but faith in God, love between spouses, and the support of extended family, friends and mentors, such as Patti or one of our volunteers, and a good medical team, seem to bring about a glorious outcome. It may not have been the one parents imagined when they found out they were expecting, but it's the best one imagined, once they learned that a fatal anomaly was in their child's future. I'll never forget the father who shared how he cried

The financial situation, disorganized office, and

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when his child was born and died shortly after, and his friend said he was so sorry. This father said his tears were not of sadness but of joy, as he was able to meet his son. That's faith!

Hope and love go hand-in-hand here. I've seen our families maintain their marriages and go on to have more beautiful children. Some of our babies' siblings are now in high school or college. They'll be getting married and starting their own families in due course and I can't help but think that they are going to be the most loving parents, in good times and bad, because of the love they've witnessed in their parents.

EXPERIENCING LOSS AMIDST THE PANDEMIC

Jolene's daughter Willow was born sleeping, in the height of the pandemic. Here she tells her moving story.

At five months pregnant, my husband and I were told that our first child, Willow, was terminally ill with Trisomy 18. We had a 1 in 3,500 chance of this happening. That's a 0.03% probability. My OB compared it to being struck by lightning—we simply had bad luck. We grieved not only the loss of our baby and a healthy pregnancy, but all the things we'd already envisioned for her life. We prayed and took solace in God's confidence

that we're strong enough to bear this cross and, through a mix of tears and fears, we shifted our focus to the time we had left. We leaned on God and each other, and soaked in the moments that remained.

I reached 37 weeks gestation and Willow started moving less. Not even for her favorite things—sugar and rap. Our medical team agreed to induce labor. We went home to collect our things. By the time we returned to the hospital, she was gone.

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Hearing those words—"Your baby is gone"—will forever ring in my ears alongside the image of the doctor's sorrowful eyes.

All the while, the COVID-19 pandemic escalates. It creates a sense of unease that is felt by us and our medical team. Despite that, they grant us an exception to have visitors. A true blessing. Our pastor visits and tries to soothe our fears. I remember thinking, "I'm living a nightmare." It's



one thing to realize your world is crashing and will never be the same, it's another to realize that applies to the whole world too.

Two days later, I deliver Willow. For six hours, we experience the "normalcy" of other parents. Our family visited. Our pastor came and blessed our baby. We gave Willow her first bath and read her a bedtime story, while our photogra-

pher captured it all. At first it was easy to pretend she wasn't gone, but time served as a cruel reminder as Willow's body began breaking down. It was official.

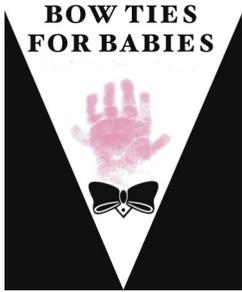
The time we'd been holding onto was coming to an end. We were on the last page of this chapter in our lives and I didn't want it to end. Forcing myself to leave the hospital without my baby was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. My heart truly broke in that moment. I cried the whole ride home while looking out onto empty streets caused by the pandemic. It felt like the whole world stopped alongside ours.

Five months later, there are good and bad days. Some days I sing and dance while I cook with a glass of wine in hand. Other days, I push through work with tears streaming down my face as I clutch her baby blanket. One thing I still struggle with is that we won't be able to have her funeral until 2021 due to COVID-19. Some don't understand why we're waiting. My answer to that is that it's the only celebration we'll ever be able to give her.

Through this journey, I've had to accept that many things are out of my control: the hand we've been dealt, Willow's condition, the pandemic, or the unfairness of it all. Instead, I try to focus on what I can control and on my blessings. Blessings like my loving, compassionate husband. The hospital's exception that gave us cherished memories with our daughter. The kindness and generosity of many people who've been there throughout this journey. People coming by to comfort us amidst a pandemic. Despite the storm we've weathered, I truly believe there's still joy ahead.

In parting, I'll leave you with a scripture quote that's brought me encouragement. "After you have suffered a little while, He will restore, support, and strengthen you, and He will place you on a firm foundation." There are indeed brighter days ahead for us all.

Friends of Alexandra's House - Bowties for Babies Update:



As COVID-19 continues to spread, the future has never felt so unpredictable. These are challenging times for us all, and we hope you're in good spirits and health! Right now, Alexandra's House is doing everything possible to sustain daily operations and provide services to our beloved babies and families. While there's a lot of uncertainty, we know that we need to adapt fast to our changing reality. Our community needs us and we need you. Given the current situation, we have had to cancel our 2020 Bowties for Babies Gala. We look forward to resuming our annual event once it's safe to do so.

Even though we will not be holding the gala, the need for support is still present.

If you're able, please consider making a tax-deductible donation to the Friends of Alexandra's House. This can be done either by mail or online.

<http://bidpal.net/FriendsOfAH>

If you're unable to donate at this time, there are many other ways you can support us! You can advocate for us by sharing our mission with a family member or friend. Even a quick mention on your social media would mean the world to us.

In times like this, we're reminded of how interconnected we all are. Thank you for being part of our community. Without you, none of it is possible.

Stay safe and well,
The Friends of Alexandra's House



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Alexandra's House

