

Open Your Heart...



*To Infants
& Children
in Need*



Dear Friend,

This Valentine's Day, we invite you to share in a tender love story. PREPARES – Pregnancy & Parenting Support, launched by the state Catholic bishops with the promise of care from pregnancy to the child's fifth birthday to mothers and fathers – no matter their beliefs. The PREPARES program is a way we can “walk our talk” about celebrating the gift of life and making sure that no child – born or unborn – is ever abandoned or alone.

Over the past five years, PREPARES statewide has been embraced by 167 parishes, 873 parish volunteers, trained by local Catholic Charities staff, have participated in supporting over 10,000 vulnerable moms, dads and children with one-on-one family companionship, infant and child essentials and raising funds for the program to thrive.

The bishops' hope to expand this successful program in order to serve more families is why we ask you to join in this effort of love and compassion. Your gift, no matter the amount, will have real impact in fulfilling the promise to challenged families to provide life affirming, life changing support.

Please share a Valentine gift for these vulnerable families who have chosen life. They desperately need our love and our promise to walk the journey with them. If you choose, your Valentine gift can be made in honor of your own mother or another and will be included in the prayer intentions of the statewide bishops.

With profound gratitude for your caring support.





“There are no words to express my thanks for how you saved me and my baby. An unexpected pregnancy hurled me into despair and anger. A father that disappeared, a job lost, a family who shunned me from their love and support. I did think at one point that I would lose my mind...maybe even my life.

By chance, an acquaintance referred me to the PREPARES program at a local Catholic parish. I am not Catholic but I came to know true charity.

Without judgment, I was embraced by kind people who assured me that despite my bleak circumstances, the road ahead with my child would be paved with unconditional support. I could never have dreamed how my life would be changed. Small support with baby things turned into huge help finding a job and day care and a place for my baby and me to live.

I thank every helping hand and loving heart that gave me the confidence, strength and joy to become a good mother. You really did save me and my baby and I love you all for that.”



PREPARES

Pregnancy & Parenting Support

PREPARES is a parish based partnership with your local Catholic Charities. The PREPARES program provides, free of charge, the following essentials to marginal families which may include:

- **Food**
- **Diapers and Wipes**
- **Clothing**
- **Housing Referral**
- **Support Groups**
- **Parenting Classes**

Walking the Journey

PREPARES is a life-giving and life-changing experience for both the specially trained volunteers and the families they help. Volunteers engage in a variety of activities, including:

- **Assistance with support groups for Moms and Dads**
- **Donation of food, clothing and baby items**
- **Sponsorship of "Needs Drives"**
- **Collection of diapers and wipes**
- **Distribution of essential family needs**
- **Engaging as a Family Companion**

All families, regardless of beliefs, have access to both PREPARES volunteer services and professional social services through their local Catholic Charities agency.





Ways to Help



DONATE

Support PREPARES by donating to the **OPEN YOUR HEART** campaign by mail or online at **PREPARESforlife.org**



VOLUNTEER

Become a trained PREPARES volunteer at a local Catholic parish as a **FAMILY COMPANION** or **SUPPORT GROUP** member for Moms and Dads. Both opportunities provide practical, emotional presence and support to families in need.



ASSIST

Sponsor a parish based **NEEDS DRIVE** to collect and distribute food and household needs or a **CLOTHING CLOSET** accessible to PREPARES families. Establish a parish **TRAVELING CRIB** for the collection of baby essentials. Provide age appropriate **PREPARES BAGS** filled with infant and child items such as diapers and wipes, blankets, toys and books.

“As a volunteer with the PREPARES fatherhood support group, my faith has grown through this ministry and I have been blessed by God. I have received far more than I have given” - PREPARES volunteer