

The First Baby of Christmas in Bethlehem 2020

Holy Family Hospital's all-Palestinian staff of 172 have been eagerly awaiting the first Christmas baby as a sign of hope against the grim backdrop of Covid in Bethlehem. That first baby of Christmas was born at the Hospital at 2:05 am and was greeted by the peal of Bethlehem's Christmas bells.



Holy Family Hospital Bethlehem

Baby Gayth was expertly delivered into the arms of his parents by midwives Hanan and Ala. Linda, his mother, explained that Baby Gayth was the Christmas gift they had been awaiting since the beginning of the pandemic.

Unemployment and poverty have soared under the pandemic. Bethlehem, being the poorest Palestinian governorate after Gaza, has a fragile economy even in good times. Food insecurity is growing, disproportionately impacting women and children. Despite the difficulties, the staff of the Hospital have bravely been working twelve hour shifts with no days off to care for the mothers and babies and to keep the Hospital open and safe. Holy Family Hospital is committed to caring for the most vulnerable and making sure there is always room at our modern-day inn.

With the increased poverty, Holy Family Hospital has renewed its promise to care for all mothers and babies without regard to need or creed. Births do not stop for pandemics, and in 2020 the Hospital has delivered over 4000 babies to date and cared for over 400 fragile or premature babies in its state-of-the-art NICU. Holy Family Hospital, a Catholic teaching Hospital run by the Order of Malta, stands as a beacon of hope and of life, being the only Hospital in the region that can deliver and care for babies born before 32 weeks.

This year the Christmas season began quietly in Bethlehem. There were no festivities in Manger Square, and the Christmas Tree lighting was celebrated online. Normally thousands of pilgrims visit the city at Christmas, filling the hotels, shops and restaurants. This year the town is empty, and a curfew is forcing

the people to stay inside. One might think Christmas is cancelled in Bethlehem, but the spirit of Christmas remains strong. The Mayor, Tony Salman, insisted on decorating the square with a three-story tree and a life size creche. He said, “nothing can diminish the light of Christmas, we continue to light the Christmas tree in Bethlehem, the capital of Christmas, in order to send with its light hope all over the world.”



It is Christmas every day in Bethlehem, with the Christmas vigil Mass celebrated daily in the Grotto of the Nativity. The spirit of Christmas is also alive every day at Holy Family Hospital, as with each birth it brings renewed hope and joy to the families of Bethlehem.

Bethlehem needs Holy Family Hospital now more than ever before to keep the mothers and babies safe. Holy Family Hospital needs you more than ever before to keep hope alive and to allow our staff to continue to deliver lifesaving care for all..