

**May 6, 2012**

**Visitation House Annual Dinner**  
**Written by Marge Russell, Editor**  
**Published by the [Catholic Free Press](#)**

When he walked in to the crowded parish center at Our Lady of Mount Carmel-St Ann, he knew he was among extraordinary people. Raymond L. Flynn, former mayor of Boston and U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, was the featured speaker April 27 at the seventh annual benefit dinner for Visitation House.

To see the support for Visitation House puts a “heart and soul on an issue we all feel very strongly about,” Mr. Flynn said. It also makes him see that “all this matters ... it really matters.”

Visitation House is a home for pregnant women who need a place to live before their babies are born and a place to return to afterwards to get off to a good start in their new lives as mothers.

“Table hosts” provided appetizers, entrees and desserts for about 400 dinner guests in a fundraising event that has outgrown its modest beginnings in the Cenacle at St. Paul Cathedral. The Gene J. DeFeudis Italian American Cultural Center was so full, in fact, people were wondering if the event would have to move to an even larger venue next year.

Mr. Flynn, a long-time politician, said he has always had a strong feeling, like those present, about being pro-life. To him, being pro-life was not a political philosophy, “it was what I believed.”

He told a story of how Mother Teresa came to Boston and outsmarted a mayor (himself), a bank president and a labor leader into supporting her vision for a project to serve mothers and children.

He said that taught him “you can do anything with courage, determination, truth and God on your side.”

The small woman who never held a public office or had any other title than “Mother” did more good than “anybody I ever met in my life,” he said.

He likened her determination to that of the supporters of Visitation House.

Earlier in the evening, Father Richard F. Reidy was given the Ruth V. K. Pakaluk Award in honor of the woman who envisioned Visitation House, but never lived to see her vision fulfilled.

Joseph Williams, president of the Visitation House board of directors, introduced Father Reidy, pastor of St. Ann Church in North Oxford, as one of Ruth’s dearest friends and one of the founders of Visitation House. “He took Ruth’s dream and made it a reality,” Mr. Williams said.

Father Reidy praised Mrs. Pakaluk as someone who lived in pursuit of the truth and that led her to become a Catholic. He said she was a “powerful and persuasive witness to the truth” that all human life is sacred.

Those at the dinner watched a video-tour of Visitation House filled with the faces of grateful mothers and children.

“The most important thing we offer them is love ... with no strings attached,” Mr. Williams, said at the end of the evening. He noted that the ministry gets no federal or state funding and there is no endowment. “Our Lord asks us to rely on him,” he said.