Father Peter Vasko, OFM, Escorts President Trump to Visit of the Holy Sepulcher During Recent Trip to the Holy Land

Father Peter Vasko, OFM, President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, also serves as the Holy Land liaison and guide for the White House through the U.S. Embassy. As such, one of his responsibilities is to escort United States diplomats who visit the Holy Land.

Father Peter was, therefore, called upon to act as a guide to President Trump and First Lady Melania Trump during their recent trip to the Holy Land on May 22, 2017.

He met with the President and First Lady outside of the Holy Sepulcher. When the President asked how we know it is really the location of Christ’s tomb, Father Peter explained that, in 132 AD, the Roman emperor became very upset by the Christian traditions, and by the people who came to pray at both the site of Christ’s crucifixion and His resurrection. In an attempt to conceal the sacred locations, the emperor had pagan temples built. The emperor’s plan backfired, however, as Father Peter shared: “It labeled it for many centuries, because people – through oral transmission – Christians, families came and said, ‘Underneath this pagan temple is where Jesus was crucified, and under this other pagan temple is where he was resurrected.’”

Father Peter took the President and First Lady up to Calvary, the place where Christ was crucified, and then to the stone where His body was anointed and wrapped in linens, before going to the tomb where Christ’s body was laid and where He resurrected three days later. Father shared the history of the present aedicule over Christ’s tomb.

Our Mission

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is a worldwide organization founded in 1994 under the auspices of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. The foundation was created to safeguard the basic human rights and continued presence of the Christian Palestinian minority living in the Holy Land by providing academic scholarships, subsidized housing, and employment opportunities.
Letter from the Custos

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It has been an honor and a pleasure to work together with the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land since I first became Custos of the Holy Land in June of last year. Everywhere I go – from Bethlehem, to Jerusalem, to Nazareth – I see the hard work and dedication of the Foundation, and the fruit that is borne from the generosity of people living in a land far away who have not forgotten their Christian brothers and sisters.

Our Lord said, “whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:35). Truly, when you help the people of the Holy Land through your generous support, you minister to Christ himself.

We will continue to pray daily for you – that Christ will bless you abundantly with the peace and joy that only he can give. Please pray for all of the Franciscan Friars in the Holy Land, and – most especially – for the young children, men, and women to whom we minister every day.

We remain exceedingly grateful for your support as we pray for you and your families,

Fr. Francesco Patton, ofm
Chairman, FFHL
Custos of the Holy Land

Where Are They Now?

Gabi Abu Rakabah

Because of the scholarship, Gabi felt motivated to work harder and to study more. He says about his sponsors, “I have to thank them. I don’t know what to do for them. They gave me hope to start and begin and to get better. I want to thank them from my heart.”

His sponsors had the opportunity to travel to the Holy Land and meet Gabi in person. It was there that he told them, “when I work, I will give half my salary to the Church. I will do that. Maybe in the future I shall open a company. I’m looking forward…I will do what I promised.”

Gabi would like to encourage others to sponsor students because he sees the hope and motivation it instills in others. He believes this will ensure the continuity of Christianity in the Holy Land that has existed since the time of Jesus. “When we have someone to help us, we will see our path. By helping us, we are still here. I see the hope; I see the new beginning to another life.”

Gabi Abu Rakabah is the oldest of two brothers raised by his parents in the Christian Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem. He recognizes the blessing of living just steps from the Holy Sepulcher in the land where Jesus himself lived. However, he also admits the challenges of living in Jerusalem, saying “it is nice to be a Christian here, but we are maybe half a percent of the population. We are alone and we are working harder than other people. We have a great faith and hope, but it’s hard here, of course.”

Gabi always planned to go to University, but without the scholarship through the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, his life would have been very different. “I would be in school, but it would be harder. I’d have to take a loan, I’d have to work, and have to do more things than learning.” He also admits that before the scholarship, he was planning to move away from the Holy Land, to seek better opportunities for his future. “By chance, I thought I would go and ask about the scholarship, and I was accepted. It was a great experience. It gave me hope so I could learn more and work harder. Now, I am looking forward to a better life here.”

After five years, Gabi graduated from Birzeit University in May 2016 with a degree in Computer Systems Engineering. Gabi is currently working in online services in Tel Aviv. He chose his field of study because he saw the interest in technology and the need for more trained computer systems engineers. He is currently learning Hebrew in order to open up even more opportunities in this field.

Fr. Francesco Patton
which is actually the third aedicule built over the spot. The first was built by Helena in 335 but destroyed by Hakim in 1006. The crusaders built the second aedicule in 1140, but it was destroyed by a fire, leading to the construction of the present-day aedicule, which was completed in 1810, and recently renovated by the FFHL.

The Trumps entered into the aedicule and prayed for about two minutes. Father Peter said the President remained very quiet, and he could see that “the President was spiritually touched.” After that, Father Peter led them to the Greek Orthodox Catholicum, and then into the office where the Greek Orthodox keep a piece of the True Cross.

Father Peter shared, “It was only 25 minutes, but it was a very successful visit. I believe he came as a pilgrim. Both of them came as pilgrims to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He came also as a world leader, but the most important thing is coming to the tomb of Christ and coming to the site of his resurrection. And both were quite pleased with the entire affair.”

Regarding the President’s visit to Israel as a whole, Father Peter reflected, “I think the involvement between the Israelis and the Palestinians through the visit of President Trump made quite a bit of difference. He was very positive in both areas. This is a very complicated situation here in the Holy Land between the Palestinians and the Israeli government, but hopefully through people of good will on both sides, peace will ensue.”

FFHL Builds New Housing Units for Senior Citizens

Amid the 25 acres of land located in Bethpage where the Custody built some 68 apartment units for needy Christian families, known as the St. Francis Housing Project, ten additional units are being developed for senior citizens. At the various complexes in Bethpage the FFHL, the humanitarian arm of the Custody, has provided the funding for this project.

There were empty basements at each of the complexes. These basements will be converted to smaller apartments for Christian senior citizens. Each unit will have two small bedrooms, a bathroom, along with a living room and kitchen area. The size of the unit is about 700 square feet, enough room for an older couple. Each of the units will cost roughly $45,000, or $450,000 in total.

Today in Israel, the monthly rental fee for a similar unit would be $800.00 a month. The Custody plans to charge a monthly rent of only $200 a month. When finished, the St. Francis Housing Project will house some 78 families or roughly about 600 Christians. These ten apartments should be completed sometime in the fall of 2017.

Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, Custos and Chairman of FFHL praised and thanked the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land for its generosity and great assistance to the Christian families in the Holy Land.
FFHL Regional Groups Change Lives Through Inspirational Fundraising Dinners

The FFHL Regional Groups play a vital role in the work of the Foundation. Among their many valuable contributions, fund-raising dinners offer an opportunity to increase awareness of the plight of Christians in the Holy Land and raise money to support the Foundation’s efforts. Attendees of the dinners benefit from inspiring speakers, gathering in community with other faithful Christians, and the blessing of knowing that they have contributed to an important and life-changing mission.

We hope that you will be able to attend one of these dinners, and that you’ll invite family and friends to join you in your support of the Christians in the Holy Land.

Upper Arlington, OH
Thursday, September 7, 2017
St. Agatha Parish
5:30 to 7:00 PM
Mass with Fr. Peter Vasko
Featured Speaker: Fr. David Meconi, SJ
About Fr. Meconi:
Fr. Meconi is an Associate Professor of Theological Studies at St. Louis University, and Director of the Catholic Studies Center there. He studies the convergence of holiness and God’s word, and is an expert in the classical writings of the Church Fathers, especially St. Augustine of Hippo.

Indianapolis, IN
Saturday, October 21, 2017
JW Marriott
Featured Speaker: Monsignor Frank P. Lane
About Msgr. Lane:
An engaging and inspiring speaker, Msgr. Lane has been a military chaplain, a pastor, a teacher, and a professor. Now retired, he resides in Cincinnati, Ohio and continues to assist in the parishes of the Eastside Parish Region, provides spiritual direction, and offers retreats.

For more information or to register, visit http://www.ffhl.org/home/regions

Prominent Texas Law Maker Joins FFHL Board

The FFHL is pleased to announce that former Texas lawmaker Will Hartnett has recently joined our Board of Trustees.

He and his wife Tammy have three sons, and the family has made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land with FFHL President Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM. In 2006, Mr. Hartnett was awarded the Pope Leo XIII Gold Cross of Honor from the Custos of the Holy Land in recognition of his great love for the Holy Land and philanthropic efforts towards its support.

Mr. Hartnett is a prominent Texas lawmaker, having served in the Texas House of Representatives from 1991 to 2013, including 14 years as Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. During his legislative career, he received numerous awards, including the 2011 “Ten Best Legislators” award from Texas Monthly, which called him “the epitome of fairness.” Mr. Hartnett authored 159 bills which became law, and received widespread recognition for his authorship and support of pro-life legislation.

Mr. Hartnett graduated as Valedictorian of his class at Cistercian Prep School in Irving, Texas, and went on to graduate cum laude from Harvard University in 1978. He received his law degree from the University of Texas, and was admitted to the Texas Bar in 1981. He has been a partner at the Hartnett Law Firm since 1988, where he works alongside his father, several siblings and a niece. He has been listed in “The Best Lawyers in America” since 2003.
Orlando’s Pilgrimage Group Meets with Christian Youth

Faith Libbe, our Regional Representative for the Orlando Chapter of FFHL, recently brought 43 pilgrims to the Holy Land along with Father Mark Wadja, who is a pastor in the Diocese of Orlando, Florida and a long time friend of the foundation. Father Peter was a reception line and greeted us as we entered, shaking our hands with huge smiles. It is most obvious that the boys are very happy to be there.”

Faith was struck by the spirit of joy and camaraderie amongst the boys. “They are “typical” boys – joking and laughing and being mischievous at same time.” She was also deeply touched by Father Marwan, Director of the Boys Home. “It is very obvious that Father Marwan is extremely dedicated to the well-being of all the boys and cares about them very much.”

Later in the week, the pilgrims attended a get-together where they were able to meet graduates who received a college education through the FFHL. The three young adults are professionally employed in their respective fields. Father Peter then gave a talk on the plight of the Christians followed with a DVD outlining the success stories of our students. The graduates then spoke about their personal lives here as Christians, the difficulties they face, but also the joys of being part of the very land where Christ founded the Church. They also expressed their thanks to the work of the Franciscan Foundation which has given them hope for the future.

The pilgrimage group made a visit to the Franciscan Boys Home in Bethlehem, a project supported by the Franciscan Foundation, and met a good number of the thirty-three boys residing there. The group was shown around the home. “It was such a great joy to visit the Boy’s Home!” Faith Libbe shared. “The boys had formed their guide.

The New Graduates of FFHL - (l to r) Carine Koussa, recently received her BA in psychology and will be going on for her MA in social psychology; Naseem Soufan, presently employed as a pharmacist in an Israeli pharmaceutical firm; Michline Mansour, employed at the Israel Ministry of Justice as an internal auditor.

College Sponsorship - Faith Libbe, Regional Representative, with the student, Carine Koussa, whom the Orlando Chapter of FFHL is sponsoring for college.

Franciscan Boys Home - Fr. Mawran, Director of the Boys Home, Fr. Wadja , Faith Libbe and Fr. Peter posing with some of the youngsters residing at the Home.

New Graduates of FFHL - (l to r) Carine Koussa, recently received her BA in psychology and will be going on for her MA in social psychology; Naseem Soufan, presently employed as a pharmacist in an Israeli pharmaceutical firm; Michline Mansour, employed at the Israel Ministry of Justice as an internal auditor.

College Sponsorship - Faith Libbe, Regional Representative, with the student, Carine Koussa, whom the Orlando Chapter of FFHL is sponsoring for college.
The Magnificat Institute: Planting Seeds of Solidarity and Hope Through Music

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land recently had an opportunity to speak with Fr. Alberto Parri, the director of the Magnificat Institute of Music in Jerusalem, which is funded by the FFHL. Fr. Parri shared the history and mission of the school, and school’s unique opportunity to plant seeds of solidarity, hope, and peace through its instruction in the musical arts.

Can you tell us about how the Magnificat Institute was first established?

The school started twenty years ago as the dream of an old brother, an organist, who saw that in Jerusalem, and specifically in the Old City, there was no music and no art. Until now, in Israel they didn’t teach music and art at school. Each school can organize something extra curricular after school in the afternoon, but it’s something that is not completely important. So it started with a few kids that were taken from the streets, and it was first of all to give them a safe place to spend the rest of the day around the piano. The school started with the piano, a brother, a few kids and then another teacher of piano. And slowly the word spread that there was a possibility to learn piano or singing, without spending money. So many families, they wanted to have children with this education.

They started to search for a place, and they found a basement under here in the convent that was not used… They started with a few pianos and now after twenty years we have a real conservatorium that belongs to the conservatorium in a town in Italy. So it is like we have another school abroad from Italy, Conservatorium of Vicenza. We have all the classes of a conservatorium – violin, cello, viola, percussion, voice. We have three choirs, two orchestras and two hundred and seven students; twenty-seven teachers.

What plans do you have for the future of the Magnificat Institute?

Now it’s getting clear to everybody that we cannot remain in the basement with this many people. Every year we have to say no to some families that apply, because we have no space. We want to go on with the huge project that was thought of many years ago, and became more clear in the last two years with planning, rendering, and numbering. So now we know more or less what we need to spend, and a new building will be built inside the compound of this convent, in a place that now is used for storage and some other places that we are not using. The hope is to have a real school, not underground, but with windows and light, that could welcome many, many more children.

You are teaching children of many different faiths. Can you tell us more about what that is like?

Yes. This is one of the great opportunities that children can have in Jerusalem. They live all their life in a melting pot of cultures and religions, but often they are divided. Christians study in Christian schools, Muslims, Muslim schools, Jews, in Jewish schools. In the Magnificat Institute, they have the occasion to study together. We don’t label anyone, so we barely know who is Christian, who is Muslim and who is Jew. After some years we know, because we are a big family, but we don’t ask. We have Christians of all denominations:

(Cont’d on Page 7)
Orthodox, Armenian, Cops, Syri, Protestants, Catholic, together with the Muslims and Jews, both among the students and teachers.

This is also, I think, a great gift for these children and their families. In a place where many conflicts are going on, and still we haven’t found the solution. Peace is like a dream, a hope for the future. But, in the Magnificat we live already something that everybody wants. Together the students come to study, but parents, they are waiting for the children and they sit together, they speak to each other, they can take a coffee, and concerts; we are all together. For example, for the Christmas concert we have every year, it’s the big feast of the school, and everybody wants to come, even if we are singing about Christ and His birth. Muslims and Jews, all together.

What levels of course work are offered through the school?

The students start at the age of three to have games with music, and then they start to decide which instrument they want to study, and after seven to eight years, according to the instrument, they receive a degree in music. Two years ago we opened also a master class and university for music, so students after high school can apply to this. Of course they need the background in music that they can have received in this school or in other schools, and at the end of three years they receive a BA in music. They can become teachers or musicians officially in our school or in other schools. And because we got the diploma from Europe, this is recognized all around the world.

When someone chooses to support the Magnificat Institute, what are they providing for the people of the Holy Land?

When we receive people here, that come to visit the school, or we go abroad for vacation or concerts… The people remain very surprised that in a small school inside Jerusalem there is such a great opportunity and gifts. Someone who wants to help can be sure that the donation will be to have a better future; because people here will grow up in a very healthy way: music, art, friendship and being together without boundaries, without labels, without differences. They will help a new society, new artists, both a musician or teachers. I think it’s a great opportunity to plant a seed that can become a big tree of solidarity, collaboration, humanity.

What would you say to the donors to the Franciscan Foundation who have helped support the Magnificat Institute?

I want to express all my gratitude, and to say a big “thank you,” because for years without your help it would not have been possible to continue. These students continue to hope and to have a future because you helped a lot. For many students, it was possible for them to have the opportunity to study in these schools because of the scholarships of all these donors. Yes, thank you very much!

“Thank You”

The FFHL would like to extend a huge “Thank you!” to the Student Council of St. John’s Parish in Lincoln, Nebraska for their generous donation. Efforts of students like these mean a great deal to the Friars and the children whom we help.

Did you know that you can donate securely online using your credit card?

Visit: https://www.ffhl.org/donate-now
Shelter is among the most basic of human needs. And yet, for many Christians in the Holy Land, it is a need that is barely met. Whole families live crammed together in tiny one-room apartments. Running water – if there is any – is channeled through rusty, leaky pipes. Wood is rotten, bathrooms and kitchens are moldy, and the structures themselves are unstable, threatening to cave in upon the very people they shelter.

Unfortunately, few Christians have the necessary means to provide better living accommodations for their families. Unemployment rates are extremely high, and those who are employed are often paid very little. Land costs are exorbitant, making a 600 square foot home a “palace” in the eyes of many. In addition, building permits are often delayed for years and can be extremely costly. The expense of renovating even a tiny home can quickly become insurmountable for the average family.

FFHL’s Housing Renovation Program seeks to remedy this problem, and to provide clean, modern accommodations for Christian families in need. During a tour of a recently renovated apartment, Isaa Shaden, Project Supervisor for the Housing Renovation Program, shared, “The first reason the Custody does these renovations… is to help the Arab Israeli Christian so they never think to leave this country…. To keep the Christianity in this land. So the Church started to help them.”

The Program employs a variety of experts in their fields, from an architectural engineer to many plumbers, electricians, tile workers, and other professionals. “Some of [the workers], they came as professionals, and others – they learn with us, from our professionals,” Shaden stated. “This is the second reason, for what the Custody does. They are helping the one family to remain in this country, as Christians, and helping the other family to learn and to work as well.”

In this ancient land, housing renovations can be extremely tedious and complicated, and yet the Foundation has become known as “the best” in the business. Not only are costs half that of what it would cost to hire contractors, the Foundation teams renovate with integrity and an eye to preserving antiquity.

Whenever possible, teams strive to maintain as much of the original structure as possible. “We try to keep the taste of the stone, which is very important,” Shaden stated. “We try to show the old stones, the old building, the taste of the old house.”

At times, the buildings might be 1500 years old, and often the structures have been tampered with, expanding arches and hollowing out walls in an effort to create more space. Though well-intended, these changes create serious safety concerns. The Program’s on-staff architectural engineer assesses the situation of each home, and develops and guides the implementation of plans to reinforce compromised areas.

Winding, narrow streets add another layer of complexity to the work, and preclude the possibility of bringing supplies in by truck. Instead, materials must be carried along roads and up long stairways. Huge steel beams, in particular, must be carried across the rooftops – after first gaining permission from the owner of each building – and lowered into the home by cable.

In addition, there are many unknowns to be addressed, brought about by the nature of cramped living quarters and ancient construction. For example, a Foundation crew will oftentimes dig under the existing floors of a home, in order to gain more space. Frequently, they discover that another, neighboring family has illegally expanded their own living space into the area beneath the Foundation-owned home.

Other complexities include the need to reinforce columns, having no knowledge of how deep those columns go, and – not infrequently – the discovery of ancient artifacts, such as pottery or coins. These must be carefully extracted, preserved, and presented to the Israeli Antiquity.

The rewards are great, however, and exceed the basic human requirement of safe shelter. Families are further blessed as children who once crowded into one sleeping area receive bedrooms of their own, and as kitchens are expanded from an area in which only one person could stand, to a space that allows the family to congregate and even share a meal. Pipes that were rusted and leaky provide clean, efficient, running water, and windows look out upon areas where neighborhood children – of all faiths – play together in innocence, harmony, and peace.
The Church of the Multiplication, Rebuilt After Fire, Illustrates Christian Spirit and Determination

In most parts of the world, it was a Sunday like any other. But here, in Tabgha, at the Church of the Multiplication, it was a very special and historic day.

Not nearly as historic a day as the one nearly 2,000 years ago, when Jesus Christ sat down on a mountain near the Sea of Galilee, and, looking out, grew concerned for the great crowd of people who had followed him to this mountainside. Philip scoffed when he asked, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” Andrew spoke up, however: “Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?”

Instructing his disciples to have the people sit down, Jesus “took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed it to those who were seated... He did the same with the fish.” And, having fed 5,000 men, the disciples collected the remains of those five loaves and two fish – and filled twelve baskets. (cf John 6:1-13)

No, the history that was made on Sunday, February 13, 2017 was nowhere near as significant as the feeding of the 5,000. But it did testify to the resiliency of Christ’s people, to God’s unerring Providence, and to His limitless ability to make good come from bad.

You see, only 20 months before, on June 18, 2015, arsonists set fire to the church that stands over the holy place where Christ multiplied the loaves. Their torches may have destroyed a few offices, a souvenir shop, Bibles and prayer books, but it did not destroy the spirit of the Christians who live in the area and worship in this sacred space.

Indeed, their spirit does not waver, supported as it is by a generous and loving Lord, who comes to his people in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, a sacrament that was prefigured by the multiplication of the loaves. With that multiplication, which took place on this site two thousand years ago, Christ demonstrated, in a very physical manner, that God always provides for his people. And on this day in 2017, Christ once again provided his Eucharistic flesh for the glory of God and the sanctification of His people.

And thus, undeterred by violence, Catholic Christians of the Holy Land gathered again to celebrate the Holy Mass. In doing so, they showed their strength, their commitment to remaining in the Holy Land, their commitment to maintaining these holy sites as great Christian memorials, and their commitment to remaining strong in the Faith.
FFHL Subsidized Housing Helps Family Fulfill a “Sacred Mission”

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land seeks to alleviate the struggle to find affordable housing through the development of subsidized housing communities. Recently, Shoukri Meo and his wife Luma sat down with the FFHL to share their experience living with their three young children in one such community.

**FFHL: What is it about Jerusalem that has kept you here?**

Luma: For us as Christian Palestinians, it’s a sacred mission to stay here. This is the Holy Land, where Jesus was born, and it’s a mission for us to raise our children here and to let them follow the steps of Jesus where we live. It’s easy to say that we are going to emigrate and to leave this place, but our presence here is a great sign that there are still Christians who are facing difficulties in this area. We are now only two percent of the population here, so we have to stay in this Holy Land, and to raise our children, and follow the steps of Jesus. It’s a mission, a sacred mission—to me—to stay here in this land.

Shoukri: For me, it’s difficult to think about starting life from zero in another country. We were born here, we studied here, we got married here, my work is here, my children have classmates and family. Sometimes, with problems, we might think, “If I go to another country it will be better.” But if you think deeply, it will not be better, it will be worse. We hear from people that left the country who started from zero. They did not find good work and a good living. Here, it’s making a difference that we live the birth of Jesus, we live the crucifixion of Jesus, in the place where it actually happened.

**FFHL: How has living in this community changed your lives?**

Shoukri: Well, the difference here is that it’s a private neighborhood and all the families are Christian. The atmosphere for us is more comfortable and we feel safer. We feel almost like a big family, a huge family. It’s about seventy-two apartments—about three hundred people—and it makes a difference in the atmosphere of living.

Luma: Yes, I also feel secure when the children go outside to play with other kids, because we are, as he said, like a big family. They all like each other, they all know the parents, they know everybody. They are happy to be here and to play outside.

**FFHL: What does this home mean to you as a family?**

Luma: It’s like heaven on earth. We like it, we enjoy being together, and we share everything here. Together we also pray at night together, we do everything together, and the cost here makes a big difference. We now have extra money to pay for activities, for school, for clothes, for food, for extra things. It’s great for us to have a house like this.

**FFHL: What would you like to say to the people who support programs like this one?**

Luma: We would like to express our deepest gratitude and sincere thanks to all those who support us, providing housing like this. They help the Christian Arabs living here a lot, so we do not think of emigration.

Shoukri: I would like to thank them for the opportunity to have a house which is built through the Church, that helps us to raise the children better, in a community as Christians.

Shoukri: We would tell them not just to see the picture from the outside, but to come and see how people actually live, because it’s different from hearing the news, or people saying what’s happening here. There’s a difference being here and meeting local people, knowing what they think, how they live, what are their problems, and what are the benefits of being here. I think it would be a benefit for people to know another culture, to see the reality of living this other culture and the benefit of people staying in the Holy Land.
Christian Families in the Holy Land Struggle to Provide for Basic Needs

“But the most beautiful thing God made was the family. He created man and woman. And he gave them everything. He entrusted the world to them: “Grow, multiply, cultivate the earth, make it bear fruit, let it grow”. All the love he put into that marvelous creation, he entrusted to a family.” –Pope Francis

Whether working, praying or playing together, families have a very special place in society.

Today, Christians in the Holy Land are facing a crisis. Aside from the Christian exodus, family life is being threatened. Many Christian families are facing both a physical and spiritual poverty. This is a hard reality to face in the land the Holy Family called home.

As jobs and decent work become harder to find, parents are not always able to provide for their families. In many cases, some Christians are not able to pay their rent or feed their families healthy and nutritious food everyday.

For Christians in the Holy Land, family life is particularly important because it is within the family that the mission to be the living stones of our Christian faith is taught and lived out.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is dedicated to help these Christian families face adversity and grow together in faith. Parents are vital for the health and spiritual life of their children. The FFHL recognizes it is difficult for parents to be home and present to their children if they are working multiple jobs to pay rent or to provide nourishing food for their families.

With programs such as Children without Borders, the Franciscan Boys Home, family centers in Bethlehem and Nazareth, and the Children’s Christmas Program, the FFHL works to instill the hope and virtues parents and children need to have bright futures to continue to be the living stones of the Church in the Holy Land.

These programs offer families and children resources such as after school programs, homework assistance, recreational activities, and opportunities for families to come together as one Christian community.

The threat to families is not solved with just programs and opportunities for children. The FFHL also offers assistance for Christians seeking education, vocational training, housing and jobs. Education, housing and employment are all essential for spiritual growth and the livelihood of families in the Holy Land.

It is with these programs that the FFHL hopes to see families thrive and continue to be a vital part of the society in the Holy Land.

This family crisis is real and growing in the Holy Land. We ask you to consider supporting the FFHL in its efforts to help provide empowering opportunities for these Christian families. Your gift will help fund these essential programs for families in the Holy Land.

For more information, or to donate, visit www.FFHL.org.
Pilgrimages to Benefit the Work of the Franciscan Foundation

Join Fr. Peter Vasko, ofm, on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

- November 28 – December 8, 2017
- November 27 – December 7, 2018

These pilgrimages exploring the Holy Land will provide you with an opportunity to open a new chapter in your own journey of faith. Now is the time to reach out in support of the Christians in the Holy Land. Your presence can make a difference.

For more information or to receive a brochure for any of the pilgrimages call toll free (855) 372-0580.