



# FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION

## FOR THE HOLY LAND

No. 49  
SPRING 2020

### VATICAN EMBASSY GALA - WASHINGTON, D.C.

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▲ Formal Reception line (left to right) Fr. Larry Dunham, OFM, Superior of the Franciscan Monastery, Fr. Peter, OFM, President of FFHL, Bishop Frank Dewane, DD, Bishop of Venice, FL diocese, Dr. K.S. Joyce Babiak, Chairperson for the Vatican Gala, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, DD Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, Chairman of FFHL and Custos of the Holy Land.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land held its Seventh Biennial Black Tie Vatican Embassy Gala at the Vatican Nunciature in Washington D.C. in October 2019 attended by 81 guests representing 15 states. The event was designed to honor individuals who have made significant sacrifices to help the Holy Land. The keynote speaker was His Excellency, Most Reverend Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States and who is presently serving as the Special Advisor on the Franciscan Foundation Board of Trustees.

Guest were jointed by FFHL Board of Trustees members the most Reverend Frank J. Dewane, DD Bishop of Venice, Florida the head of the Franciscans in the Holy Land, His Paternity, Rev. Francesco Patton, OFM who serves as Custos and as Chairman of FFHL as well as Fr. Ramzi Sidawi, OFM Comptroller of the Custody of the Holy Land and Fr. Larry Dunham, OFM, Superior of the Franciscan Monastery in Washington D.C and Denise M. Scalzo OFS as Vice President of FFHL.



▲ Recipient of the 'Guardian of the Holy Land Award' (left to right) Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, Recipient William Keifer, Denise Scalzo, OFS, Vice President of FFHL, Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, President of FFHL



▲ Recipient of the "Guardian of the Holy Land Award" (left to right) James M. Cornelius, Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, Denise Scalzo OFS, Vice President of FFHL, Fr. Peter F Vasko, OFM, President of FFHL.

The Chairperson for the event was Dr. Joyce K.S. Babiak of Arlington, VA.

One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation of the Guardian of the Holy Land Award. This award is given to honor individuals who have made significant sacrifices to help and assist the work of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. These honorees have not only been spiritually united in guarding Christianity in the Holy Land, but their actions, vision, and service has brought about a new hope for the people of that land.

(Continue on page 2)

## 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 strengthen and support Christianity in the Holy Land through the preservation of holy Christian sites and the support of the basic human rights and continued presence of the Christian minority living in the Holy Land.

## LETTER FROM THE CUSTOS

Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM

*Dear Brothers  
and Sisters in Christ,*



Let us pause during this Lenten season to celebrate and give thanks for the opportunity to serve others and fight for justice each day.

Thanks be to our Lord for His wondrous creation. He has given us the responsibility to care for all things great and small. May we find the meaning of true gratefulness, and may we remember the sacrifice that our Savior made for us on the cross. Without His selfless act of love, we would be lost.

May we continue to love one another as Christ loves us. And, may we show this love to others through word and deed, as we do our best to live out a life of thanksgiving.

This season, as you discover ways to lovingly give, please know that your generosity is changing lives. Christians in the Holy Land will be afforded opportunities that may only be accessible through your prayers and gifts of financial support. Because of generous partners like you, the mission of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land continues to serve men, women and children who desperately need our help.

Our hearts are overwhelmed with thanks for those who believe in our cause and provide support. We know giving is a sacrifice, and we pray that your blessings will be multiplied because of your sacrificial gifts.

We ask you to please remember the Living Stones of the Holy Land in your prayers, that they may see and experience the fullness of the Lord's loving goodness and grace.

I remain a servant of God and yours, in the Spirit of St. Francis.

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

## (Vatican Embassy Gala - Washington, D.C. Continued)

FFHL Chairman Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, along with Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, and Denise Scalzo, OFS, presented the award to Mr. James M. Cornelius of Indianapolis and Mr. William Kiefer of Amarillo, Texas.

Also receiving special recognition was the Chairperson, Dr. Joyce K.S. Babiak for a wonderful and successful evening. Mrs. Susan Stanzel also was recognized for chairing the Vatican Embassy Fundraising event for 12 years before passing it on to Dr. Babiak.

His Excellency Bishop Dewane gave the Invocation followed by an exquisite three course culinary meal.

This was followed by an informative talk by His Excellency, Archbishop Pierre about the Christian problem of emigration from the Holy Land.

He praised the Franciscan Foundation's Scholarship Program which provides higher education to our young Christians in the Holy Land.

His Excellency, Archbishop Pierre stated, "while the Christian seeks the common good by making moderate use of God's gifts and sharing with one's neighbor, universities also provide the setting for the discovery and practice of justice, which means giving God and our neighbor their due.

By attending a higher educational institute one learns how to peacefully coexist, even with those of other faiths, while maintaining one's religious identity." He concluded by saying, "your support for the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land and your charity toward it, helps a young Christian become educated and formed.

In turn, he or she can give testimony to our God who is love. The Christian presence in the Holy Land, sustained by your prayers, solidarity, and an adequate formation through education is a true force for peace and reconciliation and the building of a more just and peaceful society."

After a standing ovation for the Nuncio's talk, Fr. Larry Dunham gave the Benediction, and upon departure small religious icons were given to the attendees. ■



▲ Welcome address of Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM



▲ Bishop Dewane with Maureen and John Lengyel, members of the Venice, Florida diocese



▲ Guest Speaker, Archbishop Christophe Pierre, DD, Apostolate Nuncio to the United States



*"The Christian presence in the Holy Land, sustained by your prayers, solidarity, and an adequate formation through education is a true force for peace and reconciliation and the building of a more just and peaceful society."*



## CURRENT EVENTS

### DALLAS, TEXAS

#### CATHOLIC FOUNDATION DINNER February 1, 2020

The Catholic Foundation hosted its 38th Annual Award Dinner on Saturday, February 1, 2020 at the Hilton Anatole in Dallas, Texas. Over 1,100 attendees gathered to honor the finest in community service and Catholic philanthropy in the Dallas-area community.

The Catholic Foundation presented Joe Dingman, a Dallas-based real estate investment manager, with its 38th annual award. Joe was recognized for his Christian example and significant impact made during the past three decades to provide access to affordable housing in the Dallas area. In addition to honoring Mr. Dingman, the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land was highlighted in the program as a Visionary Donor. The Catholic Foundation administers many scholarship funds inspired by the generosity of its supporters. Each fund is different, uniquely shaped by the focus, vision and charitable passion of each benefactor. The Holy Land Scholarship Fund benefits Catholic college students with funding for scholarships through the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land's University Scholarship program. Thanks to those scholarships, bright young minds are able to continue to pursue their higher educational goals in the Holy Land.

*If you're in the **DALLAS AREA**, we would love for you to join us at one of our upcoming regional events below.*

*For more information, please contact (855) 500-3345.*

#### REGIONAL FUNDRAISING DINNER

September 12, 2020

On September 12, 2020, hundreds will gather at the Dallas Country Club in Highland Park where the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land leaders will recognize the service of outstanding members and to raise money for the foundation's efforts. The dinner and reception begin at 7 p.m. featuring an award ceremony,

keynote speaker Father Mitch Pacwa, S.J., Founder and President of Ignatius Productions, and a video presentation. Father Peter Vasko, OFM, FFHL President, will recognize generous donors and educate attendees on strategic foundation efforts. Funds raised from this event will support the University Scholarship Program, providing higher education scholarships for marginalized youth in the Holy Land who otherwise would not be able to pursue a college degree without the incredible support of our Dallas community. For information on attending this event, please contact our regional co-chairs Julie Summerville at (909) 374-8447 or Terry Lynch at (214) 924-8683.

#### INAUGURAL GOOD SHEPHERD SOCIETY LUNCHEON Spring 2021

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land will host its Inaugural Good Shepherd Society Luncheon in Spring 2021. The luncheon will honor those who have already included FFHL in their estate plans, as well as provide an opportunity to join for those who share an interest in becoming a Good Shepherd Society member. Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, Father Peter F. Vasko, OFM and Denise M. Scalzo invites you to join them at this informative and inspirational affair to enjoy a delicious meal and learn more about the crisis in the Holy Land.

Planned gifts have the power to change lives for generations to come. These meaningful gifts allow FFHL to change the lives of Holy Land Christians. Individuals who are interested in learning how to include FFHL in their estate will be welcomed to join the Good Shepherd Society and their impact will live on through the organization. Today, there are schools, scholarships, homes and programs in the Holy Land that exist because of past donors who have included FFHL in their estate planning.

To register for this event, please RSVP by email to [info@ffhl.org](mailto:info@ffhl.org) or call (855) 500-3345. If you would like to learn more about the Good Shepherd Society please visit our website at [FFHLlegacy.org](http://FFHLlegacy.org) ■



## THE GOOD SHEPHERD SOCIETY

The GSS was created to recognize donors who have included the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land in their estate plan or have established a deferred gift with FFHL.

Did you know you can leave a wonderful legacy to benefit your family, friends and missions like ours through various means? No matter what the size of your gift, every amount makes a difference in preserving the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

#### ☛ CHARITABLE BEQUEST

Make a gift to support our efforts that costs you nothing today. A written will or trust can help you care for your loved ones as well as our struggling Christian brothers and sisters long after you are gone.

#### ☛ GIFT OF SECURITIES

Gifts of appreciated capital like stock can benefit FFHL's mission and programs while helping you avoid the capital gains tax on the increased value of that stock.

#### ☛ IRA ROLLOVER GIFT

If you are 70 1/2 or older you can avoid extra income this year by making a gift to FFHL from your IRA.

#### ☛ LIFE INSURANCE GIFT

You can gift FFHL an old or unneeded life insurance policy by contributing the cash balance, gifting the policy to FFHL or naming FFHL as the beneficiary of your policy.

#### ☛ LIFE INCOME GIFT

Invest in a charitable gift annuity or remainder trust and receive lifetime payments while supporting the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land.

**If you are interested in leaving a lasting legacy by remembering the Franciscan Foundation in your estate, will or trust, please contact Denise M. Scalzo, OFS at [dscalzo@ffhl.org](mailto:dscalzo@ffhl.org) for more information.**

# SCHOLARSHIPS: COURAGEOUSLY SUPPORTING A LIFE OF FAITH



▲ Dr. and Mrs. Barry Purdom of Lexington, Kentucky are meeting with their student, Francis Mityr who is majoring in Pharmacy.



▲ Mr. William Kiefer meets with two of his students, Georgina Elawwad (center) who is majoring in Medicine and Miri Saliba who is majoring in Business.

There are several positive developments regarding Christians in higher education in Israel, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) special Christmas 2019 report. The CBS report provided detailed information on the success of the Christian community in higher education including the finding that Christian Israelis had the highest percentage of students meeting university entry requirements at 70.9%.

Access to education is a proven way to ensure economic prosperity and success for the Christian youth of the Holy Land. Helping them thrive in their homeland is central to the mission of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. We support these efforts through a variety of programs, and perhaps most notably our scholarship opportunities. With the help of our many generous donors, we are able to invest in the education of more and more deserving Christian scholars so that they can earn their undergraduate and graduate degrees. Over the last 22 years, FFHL has sponsored four-year scholarships for over 530 students who showed tremendous academic talent, yet lacked the financial resources to pursue their higher education goals.

Thanks to these valuable scholarships, these FFHL scholars are able to open the 'door of opportunity' for a promising career. Not surprisingly, higher degree attainment also leads to their upward mobility in the Holy Land. Your donations toward scholarships provide them with the ability to realize their dreams and to courageously pursue a life of faith, prosperity and fulfillment in the birthplace of our Lord. ■

## PROGRAM GROWTH

Over the last 22 years

**FFHL has given in both university scholarships and special educational grants to Christian students in the Holy Land**

**\$6 Million**

**The current graduation rate**

**97%**

**Business Administration  
Accounting  
Medicine  
Engineering  
Pharmacy  
Law**

**MOST  
POPULAR  
FIELDS OF  
STUDY**

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land has been able to provide excellent opportunities for Christian young people in the Holy Land through the generosity of people like you.

But there are still many more students who need your help! If you are interested in learning more about the University scholarship program or want to make a donation to support education, please visit [ffhl.org](http://ffhl.org).



# STUDENTS AWARDED SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2019

Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, Chairman of Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land announced the winners of the foundation's University Scholarship program for 2019.

This past fall 2019, some 44 Christian students were recipients of FFHL Scholarship Program of which 37 were applying for a B.A. and 7 were applying for an M.A.

Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, Chairman of FFHL congratulated the new winners by saying that "some

wonderful educational opportunities have been given to each of you because of your academic talents and abilities. Hence it is important to study diligently so as to achieve your goals.

But always remember that you are, not only, the future leaders of our Christian community here in the Holy Land but that your allegiance to God for these educational opportunities that He has given you must always be steadfast and long-lasting."

**We thank all of our sponsors for their continued dedication to these students.**

**To learn more or become a sponsor, visit [www.ffhl.org/programs](http://www.ffhl.org/programs)**



## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS B.A



**Firas Abdallah** is from Ramallah and lives with his parents and one younger sibling. He is studying at Al-Quds University in the field of Medicine. *His sponsor is Cradling Christianity of Columbus, Ohio.*



**Rozalia Ramzi Albabish** is from Bethlehem and lives with her parents and two young siblings. She is presently studying at Al-Quds University in the field of International Law. *Her sponsor are Mr. and Mrs. Robert Cadrecha of Tampa, Fl.*



**Danielle Alawi** resides in Jerusalem with her parents and one younger sibling. She is planning to major in Science at Bir-Zeit University in Jerusalem. *Her sponsor is FFHL.*



**Hanna Maher Abu Amsha** resides in Beit-Jala, a suburb of Bethlehem with his parents and one younger brother. He is majoring in Occupational Therapy. *His sponsor is FFHL.*



**Rania Ajrab** is residing in Jerusalem with her parents and has three older siblings. She is attending David Yellin University and majoring in Education. *Her sponsor is FFHL.*



**Marin Andria** resides in Nazareth with her parents. She has two older siblings. Marin is presently attending Haifa University and majoring in Nature and Environmental studies. *Her sponsor is FFHL.*



**Olga Bajjali** is residing in Jerusalem with her parents. She has no siblings. Olga is presently attending Birzeit University and majoring in Journalism. *Her sponsor is FFHL.*



**Joulaine Bannoura** is from Jerusalem and lives with her parents and two siblings. She is studying medicine at Naggah University in Nablus, Samaria. *Her sponsor is Anonymous.*



**Angie Bazzazo** is from Jerusalem and lives with her parents and two younger siblings. She is attending Bezalel University in Jerusalem and majoring in Engineering. *Her sponsor is Cradling Christianity of Columbus, Ohio.*



**Georgina Dar Elawwad** is from Jerusalem and resides with her parents and one younger sibling. She is attending Hebrew University and is majoring in Medicine. *Her sponsor is Anonymous.*



## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS B.A



**Amal Dides** is Jerusalem and lives with her parents and two younger siblings. She is studying at Hebrew University and majoring in Science. **Her sponsor are Dr. and Mrs. C. Domingue of Monroe, Louisiana.**



**Edmon Edmon Janineh** resides with his parents and one younger sibling. He is planning to major in Hotel Management at Bethlehem University. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Yazan William Giacaman** is from Bethlehem and lives with his Dad and three younger siblings. He is studying at An-Najah National University in Nablus in the field of Medicine. **His sponsor is St. Paul's Methodist Church in Monroe, La.**



**Natalia Gharo** is living in Jerusalem with her parents and three younger sisters. She is presently attending Hebrew University in Jerusalem and majoring in English Literature. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Mirna Elias Ghneim** is from Bethlehem and resides with her parents. She has three older siblings. She is majoring in Accounting at Bethlehem University. **Her Sponsor is FFHL.**



**George Issa Haddad** is from Bethlehem and resides with his parents and one younger sibling. He is studying at Bethlehem University in the field of Nursing. **His sponsor is St. Thomas Aquinas 2019 Pilgrimage in Dallas, Texas.**



**John Handal** lives in Jerusalem with his parents and one younger brother. He is attending Al Najah University in Nablus to study Medicine. **His sponsor is the Matejek Family Foundation of Dallas, Texas.**



**Miral Luay Handal** lives in Bethlehem with her parents and three younger siblings. She is attending Bethlehem University and majoring in Occupational Therapy. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Lourd Hanania** is living in Bethlehem with her parents and two younger siblings. Lourd is majoring in Accounting at Bethlehem University. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Narineh Hsesian** is from Jerusalem and lives with her parents and one younger sibling. She is attending Hebrew University and majoring in Pharmacy. **Her sponsor are Mr. and Mrs. B. Murchison of Dallas, Texas.**



**Jeries Charli Hosh** resides in Jerusalem with his parents and three other siblings. He is presently attending Hebrew University and majoring in Engineering. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Bashar Jarayseh** is from Bethlehem and lives with his parents and two younger siblings. He is studying Biology at Bethlehem University. **His sponsor is St. Thomas Aquinas 2019 Pilgrimage in Dallas, Texas.**



**Noor Kharouba** resides near Netanya in northern Israel with her family and has three older siblings. She is attending Al Quds University in Jerusalem and is majoring in Medicine. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Marian Khoury** is from Jerusalem and is the only child in her family. She is attending Bethlehem University and majoring in Business. **Her sponsor are Mr. and Mrs. Rick Tromble of Cheboygan, Michigan.**



**Sohila Kalak** is from Ramla and lives with her parents. She has two older married sisters. She is studying at Tel Aviv University in the field of Science. **Her sponsor is the M&M group from Venice, Florida.**



**Serene Karam** presently resides in Nazareth with her parents. She has one younger sibling and three other siblings. Serene is attending Tel Aviv University and majoring Nursing. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Talin Katanasho** is from Jerusalem and lives with her parents and one younger sibling. She is attending Hebrew University and majoring in Nursing. **Her sponsor is Cradling Christianity of Columbus, Ohio.**



**Miral Moubarak** is living in Jerusalem with her parents and one younger sibling. She is attending Hebrew University and majoring in Psychology. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Michel Mansour** resides in Jerusalem with his family and two younger siblings. He is attending Hebrew University in the field of Biomedical Engineering. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Miri Saliba** resides in Jerusalem with her parents and four younger siblings. She is attending Hebrew University and majoring in Business. **Her sponsor is Anonymous.**





**Simon Siniora** is from Jerusalem and is a only child and lives with his parents. He is attending Hebrew University and majoring in Computer Engineering. **His sponsor is Cradling Christianity of Columbus, Ohio.**



**Lourd Shahin** is living with her parents and three younger siblings in Jerusalem. She is presently attending Hebrew University in Jerusalem and studying engineering. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Nicol Shahin** resides in Jerusalem with her parents and three younger siblings. She is presently attending Bethlehem University and majoring in the Hospitality Industry and more specifically in Hotel Management. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Wadi Shunarah** is living with his parents in Ramallah along with three siblings. Wade is presently attending Birzeit University in Jerusalem and majoring in Business. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Andreas Skafi** lives in Jerusalem with his parents and two other siblings. He is presently attending Birzeit University and majoring in Law. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Albert Totari** is from Ramleh and resides with his parents and two siblings. He is presently attending Tel Aviv University and majoring in Engineering. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Wadie Quaquadah** resides in Ramallah with his parents and is three younger siblings. Wadie is presently attending Al-Quds University and majoring in Medicine. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Rami Zeiad** is living in Jaffa near Tel Aviv with his parents and one younger sibling. He is attending Technion University in Haifa and majoring in Medicine. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Yousef Zacharia** is from Bethlehem and lives with his parents and two younger siblings. He is studying at Bethlehem University in the field of Business Administration. **His sponsor is 2018 Pilgrimage Group from Monroe, La.**

## GRADUATE STUDENTS M.A.



**Jamil Al-Zoughbi** resides in Beit Jala near Bethlehem. He finished his B.A. in Theology in 2011 at Bethlehem Bible College and is planning to secure a M.A. in Social Work from Bethlehem University. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



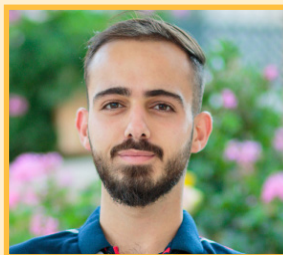
**Reem Dahdal** presently reside in Jerusalem. She finished her B.A. in Arts in 2016 at Bethlehem University and is presently attending Ono University in Jerusalem for his M.A. in Business Management. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Josef Salim Hodali** also resides in Bethlehem. He received his B.A. in Science from Arab American University in Jenin in Palestine in 2017 and is presently attending Bethlehem University for his M.A. in Biotechnology. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Fares Edmon Janineh** lives in Bethlehem and received his B.A. in Nursing from Bethlehem University in 2017. He is presently attending Al-Quds University in Jerusalem for his M.A. in Psysio/Orthopedic Therapy. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**George Issam Salman** resides in Bethlehem and received his B.A. in Arts in 2019 from Bethlehem University and is now attending Al-Quds University in Jerusalem for his M.A. in the field of Education Management. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Basil Siriani** presently resides in Jerusalem. He received his B.A. in Business Administration in 2019 from Bethlehem University and is now attending Hebrew University to secure his M.A. in Banking and Finance. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Nadeem Msallam** lives in Bethlehem and finished his B.A. in Science at Bethlehem University in 2018. He is now planning to attend Al-Quds University in Jerusalem for his M.A. in Physics. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



# PALM SUNDAY IN THE HOLY LAND



▲ Palm Sunday in the Holy Land

Days before He was to be crucified, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on Palm Sunday - the last Sunday of Lent and the beginning of Holy Week.

His appearance on a donkey for the Jewish holiday of Passover proclaims His modest and peaceful arrival as soldiers and other leaders of that day would have arrived in a chariot or ridden a horse. He “came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilled an important prophecy: “behold, your King comes to you, humble, and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” (Matthew 21:4-5) The crowds that welcomed him laid palms down

in his path and shouted, “Hosanna to the son of David!” The word “hosanna” comes from a Hebrew word that means “please save us.”

In remembrance of His triumphant return to Jerusalem, each year Christians from around the world travel to Jerusalem. They participate by waving palms--a symbol of peace and victory--and singing “Hosanna --in a procession that has been a tradition and consistently celebrated for the last 87 years. The celebration starts with a mass in the Basilica at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and is presided over by local clergy from different communities in the Holy Land. Attendees walk around the Edicule, the holy site of resurrection, and then journey to Bethphage on the Mount of

Olives. This small village is where Jesus mounted the donkey he triumphantly rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Each year, the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land facilitates pilgrimages where you can walk in the steps of our Lord and Savior, visiting historical holy sites and enveloping yourself in the strong presence of His Spirit. Previous FFHL pilgrims describe the experience as “the Gospel stories brought to life” and “truly a gift from God.” You can join Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, President of FFHL on a pilgrimage of faith this year. Explore the holy sites of Jesus Christ’s life and begin a new chapter in your personal relationship with God.

Mark your calendar for the 2020 fall pilgrimage dates: November 29 - December 8, 2020. Pilgrims on this tour will get a chance to see the places where Saint Peter preached and the prophets Elijah and Elisha lived. Journey to Galilee, where Jesus performed his first miracle turning water into wine. Explore Jerusalem, where you can visit the Mount of Olives, walk along Palm Sunday Road and enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These are only a few of the life-changing moments you will experience during your visit to the Holy Land with FFHL. If you are interested in attending a pilgrimage and would like more information, or want to reserve your spot today, email us at [info@ffhl.org](mailto:info@ffhl.org). You can also call 855.500.3345 or visit our website [ffhl.org](http://ffhl.org) for more details.



◀ Father Ed Krucera, Pastor of St. Mary’s Church in Plantersville, TX and some of his parishoners had the opportunity to meet Tamer Hanania while on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

St. Mary is sponsoring Tamer and paying for his college studies. He is majoring in Business Administration at Bethlehem University and will be graduating this June 2020.



# WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO SUPPORT CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND



By Joyce K. S. Babiak, PhD  
(FFHL Board of Trustees Member)

**M**y parents raised me to have loyalty and dedication to God, country, and family in that order. Those are the principles that I have pursued my whole life. I don't know a stranger, and everyone I meet is important to me.

In 2009, I went on my first pilgrimage to the Holy Land. I was eager to see the birthplace of Jesus and Christianity. While I was on the pilgrimage, I met Father Peter and he shared with me the function of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. When he explained the work that they were doing to support Christians in the Holy Land and how desperate the situation was for these Christian men, women and children, I knew I had to do all I could to help.

A lot of people don't realize that Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the

world, and in the middle East it's even more so. I made a decision while on that trip that I was going to leave a trust to the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land.

You can't visit the Holy Land without being spiritually and personally moved by what's happening there, and it's imperative to me that I help God's children survive and remain in the Holy Land. Ever since that pilgrimage, I've tried to do everything I can to help not only raise money, but personally contribute money to this important mission.

This world can be hard and brutal, but it is also filled with some of the most glorious things you can experience.

God is present everywhere. You can't help but wake up and marvel at a beautiful sunrise. Or smile when you see a child laugh and play. Or celebrate when someone who was sick gets better.

You can't experience these things without feeling the presence of God. Not

to have Christians in the Holy Land would be a travesty. I am dedicated to helping those less fortunate and feel like I'm one of the luckiest people in the world to be born in the United States – the best country in the world. Our jobs as Christians is to defend the hopeless and downtrodden and push them forward.

I hope to encourage everyone to help our

Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. I feel honored to work with the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land as a Board of Trustees member and to be able to assist in any way I can. What makes me happy is seeing life for others improved. All the donations go directly

to helping support Christians in the Holy Land through a number of important programs.

One of the programs--the Bethlehem Boys Home--cares for Christian children in need because of serious social, psychological, and economic problems. The FFHL also gives full, 4-year university scholarships to students who are economically marginalized but have strong academic talent. Another primary goal of FFHL is to provide housing for Christian families.

The Foundation partners with Christian construction companies to develop two- and three-bedroom apartment buildings. Employment help is also a major focus on FFHL. Many Arab Christians need job placement assistance. These are just a few of the different programs that donations to FFHL support, and I would love to see them expanded even more. If we neglect our Christian brothers and sisters, it's like neglecting God. It's so important that they survive and thrive in the Holy Land, and we need to do whatever is humanly possible to make things better.

How can we NOT protect the cradle of Christianity? How can we NOT protect God's Children? When we meet God on our Judgment Day and he asks, "what did you do to help my children," what will your answer be? ■

*How can we NOT protect the cradle of Christianity? How can we NOT protect God's children? When we meet God on our Judgment Day and he asks, "what did you do to help my children," what will your answer be?*

Joyce K. S. Babiak holds a Bachelor and Masters of Science, and a Doctorate in Business. She is a business founder, president, and CEO. Dr. Babiak retired from the Air Force, having served in many executive roles in science and technology during her career. She earned the honorific title of Dame Commander with Star in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, and has been a member of the order since 2007. Dr. Babiak received the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice honor from Pope Francis in October 2017 – the highest award a layperson or religious person can receive from the Catholic Church. Dr. Babiak is extremely active in her local parish church and community, serving in multiple leadership roles for decades.

# CRADLING CHRISTIANITY FUNDRAISER FOR FFHL 2019



▲ Gene and Judy Alfonsi, a major contributor for the dinner event being recognized by Fr. Vasko, OFM.



▲ The committee members for the event.



▲ Ron and Barbara Rowland, Chairpersons for this evening event being recognized by Fr. Vasko, OFM.

Some 210 participants attended Cradling Christianity's fundraiser for the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land in Columbus, Ohio at St. Charles Preparatory School- Walter Student Commons on September 18, 2019. The purpose of the event was to raise funds to provide free college scholarship grants for beleaguered young Christians in the Holy Land.

Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L. Rowland chaired the event and were joined by a planning committee including Judy and Gene Alfonsi, Venetia and Chuck Bramlage, Barbara and David Garick, Carol Gillespie, Ardith and Chuck Mers, Kathie and Garry Rupp and Fran and Ken Weise.

The Guest Speaker was Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, USMC (H), President of FFHL who came from Jerusalem for the occasion. The title of his talk was 'Christian Turmoil in the Holy Land'. He gave a background of the 72-year history of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians Muslims, how it has impacted the indigenous Christians living in the Holy Land and what FFHL is

doing to ease the difficulties facing the Christian population. Fr. Peter stated that 16 peace accords and agreements followed the Madrid and Oslo accords and yet peace still does not exist due to the fact that the two warring parties never carried out the good will measures leading to peace.

He went on to say that there is a tendency for most Israelis to look upon Christians first as Arabs, then as Palestinians and hence a possible enemy. However, militant Muslim neighbors look upon their Christians neighbors as pro-West and traitors to the Islamic cause, thus placing our Christians in the middle between a rock and a hard place. A major crisis has ensued for the last century and a half, namely the on-going exodus of our young Christians from the homeland of Christ. Right now, there are only 170,000 Christians out of a population of 11 million living in Israel proper or the West Bank. Fr. Peter stated that the ultimate solution in slowing down this exodus has been providing any young Christian an opportunity to secure a free college or vocational education in the Holy Land

based on economic background and academic acumen. Some 926 college and vocations grants have already been awarded and upon graduation, 99% of these graduates have decided to remain in the Holy Land.

He concluded by thanking all those who have supported and continue to support this great mission of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land and especially congratulating them on exceeding a million dollars raised since the inception of Cradling Christianity. Fr. Peter stated that as followers of Christ we must, once again, be willing to walk that extra mile in making sure that there will always be a Christian presence in the Holy Land.

He expressed his belief that the good people of Columbus continue to walk that extra mile. A video was then shown of the various Christians students that Cradling Christianity has been supporting over the years and later, awards were presented both to Mr. and Mrs. Rowland as Chairpersons for the event as well as to Mr. and Mrs. Gene Alfonsi as a major underwriter for the dinner. ■



▲ Mass was held prior to the fundraising dinner.



▲ Attendees at Cradling Christianity Benefit Dinner.



▲ The Guest Speaker for the evening, Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM President for FFHL.



# CRADLING CHRISTIANITY FOR FFHL 2019

During the Cradling Christianity Benefit Dinner for the Franciscan Foundation of the Holy Land, Fr. Peter met with the new Ordinary in Columbus, Ohio Bishop Robert J. Brennan, DD to discuss the great work Cradling Christianity is doing to assist in the maintenance and preservation of the Christian presence in the Holy Land.



▲ Standing left to right Mr. Gene Alfonsi, Mr. Ronald Rowland, Bishop Brennan, DD and Fr. Peter F Vasko, OFM.



▲ Fr. Peter spoke at a special luncheon hosted by The Catholic Foundation of Columbus on the plight of the Christians in the Holy Land and the crisis that is facing, namely, the exodus of our young people leaving the Holy Land.



▲ Standing together is left to right Mr. Ronald Rowland, Coordinator for the Cradling Christianity Benefit Diner, Fr. Peter and Mr. Loren P. Brown, President and CEO of the Catholic Foundation of Columbus.

## SUPPORTING THE CHURCH IN THE HOLY LAND ORLANDO REGION



▲ FFHL executive committee Orlando region with Fr. Vasko, OFM (P) and Denise M. Scalzo, OFS (VP).



▲ Crowd listening to Br. Bray with student picture on giant TV.



▲ Bishop Dewayne during the invocation.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land's Orlando region gathered for their formal gala dinner on September 14, 2019 to raise funds in support of FFHL's work in the Holy Land.

Keynote speaker, Christian Brother Peter Bray, vice chancellor of Bethlehem University, addressed the 120 attendees at the Marriott in Maitland, Orlando. He shared stories about the hardships the university students endure each school day. To these university students, metal gates are their norm. They face a 25-foot wall surrounding Bethlehem, built by the Israeli government, and must always be ready to show proof of identification and residency.

Many religious leaders and dignitaries attended the event to show their support. Most Reverend Bishop Frank J. Dewane, Bishop of the Diocese of Venice, and member of the FFHL board, graced us with his presence. Many pastors, priests and sisters of the Orlando diocese also joined the festivities and listened attentively to the keynote's address. Both Faith Libbe and Selim Ayoub, Co-chairs for the event spoke about FFHL's important mission and thanked all of the attendees for their presence and their support. The dinner was able to successfully raise the necessary funds to provide eight college-bound students individual four-year scholarships.



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