THE FRANCISCAN RESPONSE

Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM Chairman of FFHL stated that, “The mission of the Franciscan Foundation is quite simple... Love God and be of service to the poor and needy”. It was the Seraphic Father, St. Francis of Assisi, who admonished his friars to always follow those two precepts. St. Francis himself never wavered in this resolve and today, some 800 years later, the Franciscans remain steadfast with faith and commitment in the face of old and new challenges.

They continue to strive to fulfill that mission of love and service particularly to the Christians in the Holy Land.

This mission is being fulfilled in the directive given by Pope Clement VI who in 1342, mandated the Franciscans to become the official custodians of the Holy Sites of Christendom, to help maintain and preserve them while at the same time, ministering to the faithful of the Holy Land. Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, previous Custos of the Holy Land, remarked, “It was through the Incarnation that Christ took on our human form and lived among us here in the Holy Land. We friars who minister in this land have been given an example. We have become witnesses for Him in the very place which Christ made holy. It is by assisting and helping our fellow man in this land and from these Holy Places that we ourselves become incarnate in Him.”

Today the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land is a constant in the life of the Christian community. The friars are obliged to give peace, love, pardon, faith, and hope to suffering Christians in the Holy Land who now find themselves in a great dilemma and are reluctantly leaving their homes and land to live in other parts of the world. As Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S., and board member of FFHL recently stated, “We don’t fight for an idea. We fight for the future of the human being,” – and so, FFHL fights the good fight for our Holy Land brother’s and sister’s ability to stay in the land of Christ.

FFHL ACTIVITIES IN THE HOLY LAND

Bishop Giuseppe Nazzaro, OFM, DD, the founding Custos of FFHL explained, “The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land was created as yet another Franciscan response to a ‘new crisis,’ the Christian exodus from the Holy Land. Our focus is to keep a Christian presence, the Living Stones of our Christian faith, in the Holy Land by providing education, employment, and housing.”

UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS

Since 1997, FFHL has awarded over 500 scholarships to marginalized Christian students. With a higher education, students are more likely to secure employment and remain in their homeland.

Subsidized Housing

FFHL established the Housing Development Program. The program provides subsidized housing to Christian families who would otherwise be forced to reside abroad. Through charitable contributions, FFHL has gifted 26 apartments since 2001, valued at $260,000.

Child Sponsorship Program

FFHL awards grants to Christian children who come from families who cannot afford a substantial religious education. Many of our donors sponsor a high school or elementary school child and pay for their yearly tuition.

Services to the Poor

Counseling, medical assistance, socialization, summer camps, marriage preparation and prayer help Palestinians not just cope with their present reality, but learn how to thrive and prosper, thus improving their quality of life.

Preserving the Living Stones of Christianity in the Holy Land

32% Unemployment Rate for Palestinian Men

Many Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza have been banned indefinitely from entering Israel proper to earn a living. Thousands of foreign workers have been hired, replacing Palestinians who previously held these jobs. Through its many humanitarian programs, the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is able to create positions in administration, clerical, custodial and construction.
There is no way I can express my feelings... no words which can tell how blessed I am. Who knows what I would be doing if the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land did not give me this scholarship. The situation here is very difficult. I owe them a lot.

- University Scholarship Student