



FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND

# FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND NEWSLETTER

FALL #52

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The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is a tax-exempt non-profit organization pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All gifts to the Foundation are tax deductible. Please remember us in your will.



Empty streets in the Holy Land | CR: Renee Mills

## “WALK WITH FR. PETER”: A THREE-PART PANDEMIC VIDEO SERIES

In his three-part video series, “Walk with Fr. Peter,” Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM shares how the pandemic has affected Christians living in the Holy Land. Produced in collaboration with the Catholic Media Center, this series walks the viewer through the streets of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and along the Via Dolorosa in an effort to bring awareness to the need for supporting and funding the basic human rights and continued presence of the Holy Land Christian minority.

### Part 1: Jerusalem



▲ Father Peter F. Vasko, OFM walks through the streets of Jerusalem and visits the iconic Holy sites during the COVID-19 pandemic. CR: Christian Media Center

COVID-19 devastated the Holy Land, forcing residents into deeper poverty as tourism came to a halt. Pilgrimages were cancelled, holy sites stood empty and silent, echoing only the memories of footsteps from past visitors. The economic devastation the Holy Land faced was unprecedented in more than 1,600 years. To further explain the gravity of the pandemic, Father Peter stood in front of the vacant Church of the Holy Sepulchre. To view this video, please visit <https://bit.ly/3aTzJhM>.

(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.

## LEARN MORE

24

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT

[WWW.FFHL.ORG](http://WWW.FFHL.ORG)

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EMAIL: [INFO@FFHL.ORG](mailto:INFO@FFHL.ORG)

## LETTER FROM THE CUSTOS

**Rev. Francesco Patton, OFM**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

**Our world is still facing so much uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, yet we have come far in our healing journey together. As followers of Christ, we have so much to be thankful for. He continues to bless us abundantly.**

**As Thanksgiving season nears, may we find within these challenging times opportunities to unite in prayer and serve our dear neighbors. Let us continually seek our Lord for wisdom and guidance as we bring the light of Jesus our King to others.**

**Our programs and services that provide critical resources for the Living Stones of the Holy Land continue to operate because of the faithfulness of our supporters. Without you, our mission would not be thriving.**

**FFHL wishes to express our sincerest thanks for your sacrificial gifts. May God grant that you be abundantly blessed this season with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Please continue to offer up prayers for the Living Stones of the Holy Land. Have a blessed Thanksgiving!**

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

**Rev. Francesco Patton, OFM**

**Chairman of FFHL.org  
Custos of the Holy Land**



(Continued from Pg 1: "Walk with Father Peter" Three Part Pandemic Video Series)

### Part 2: Bethlehem



▲ Father Peter F. Vasko, OFM walks through the streets of Bethlehem to visit with local merchants and Holy sites during the COVID-19 pandemic CR: Christian Media Center.

The streets of Bethlehem were empty. Gone were the thousands of tourists who filled the city visiting restaurants, hotels, shops and contributing to the economic health of the city. Christmas and the holy traditions surrounding the celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior looked much different than in the past. Watch as Fr. Peter tours some of the historic Holy Sites and speaks with prominent leaders of the Holy Land. To view this video, please visit <https://bit.ly/3G2aKXL>.

### Part 3: Journey Along the Via Dolorosa



▲ Father Peter F. Vasko, OFM visits the stations of the cross in this epic prayer journey through the Via Dolorosa. CR: Christian Media Center

Embark with Fr. Peter on a prayerful journey along the Via Dolorosa, the route Jesus carried His cross after being condemned to death. The Via Dolorosa begins at the Roman fortress, the Antonia, and ends at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where Jesus was crucified and eventually rose from the dead. For centuries, Franciscan friars, as well as millions of pilgrims from around the world, have been making their Way of the Cross. The Franciscan Foundation for

the Holy Land hopes this prayer journey along the Via Dolorosa is a great reminder of the sufferings that our Lord endured for our transgressions and sins. As He suffered for us by carrying His cross, let us learn to offer up our own suffering and pain, so as to unite them with His. To view this video, please visit <https://bit.ly/2Z6Eq5j>.

**As the Holy Land begins re-opening and travel restrictions are lifted, we ask for your continued prayers and financial assistance for the suffering Christians in the Holy Land. May God bless and keep you.**

## Good Shepherd Society Offers a Way to Leave a Lasting Legacy

Good Shepherd Society member Leila Dibsy Giries' faith has always been an integral part of her life. She was born in 1940 in Ein Karim, Palestine to John and Mary Dibsy, and when she was eight years old, they were forced to flee during the Nakba. They were given refuge in Iraq, where her sister was born a few years later. This time was extremely heart wrenching for the family, but their faith in God gave them the strength to persevere during those difficult years. Eventually, they were able to come to the United States and rebuild their lives. Leila remembers how her parents' tireless work ethic and their devout faith helped them survive (Continued on Pg 3)



and even thrive. Because her parents were committed to helping the Christians of Palestine, Leila has been a member and faithful supporter of FFHL since 2000. One of the ways she honors her parents is by providing a scholarship in their name for the deserving Christian Palestinians of the Holy Land. She was recently inducted into the Good Shepherd Society when she informed FFHL of her plans to permanently endow the scholarship through an estate gift.

Leila shares, “I believe in the mission of FFHL to provide education and housing for our Christian Palestinian families, and I would like to see the foundation expand their efforts to safeguard Christianity in the lives of ordinary Palestinians. For the Christians in the Holy Land, financial support is a tangible way to carry out Christ’s mission, as well as building bridges of understanding with the neighboring Palestinian Muslim community who also suffer the injustice of the occupation. At my core is a thirst for social justice as there can be no peace without that very foundation. I believe FFHL provides the opportunity for building such bridges and providing real and needed assistance to many deserving Christians in occupied Palestine.”

Leila wishes to encourage other FFHL supporters to consider adding FFHL to their estate plans to help leave a legacy of support for vulnerable Holy Land Christians for years to come.

## Magnificat Music Scholarship Program

Since 2004, FFHL has been financially assisting the Magnificat Institute in its endeavors to promote a well-established educational school of music in Jerusalem. To date, FFHL has funded over \$300,000 for the Institute’s musical scholarships. New Vice Director, Fr. Alberto J. Pari, OFM is from Italy and entered the Franciscan Custody in 2007.



▲ All Photos: Student performances led by Fr. Alberto Pari, OFM

### GET TO KNOW FR. ALBERTO

**Father Alberto J. Pari, OFM**

*Vice Director, Magnificat Institute of Music*

**Q: Fr. Alberto, tell our readers about yourself, your vocational story and what additional duties you have been assigned to as a Franciscan friar?**

**A:** I am Italian and my family lives in the north part of Italy, in Lombardia. I grew up in a Christian family with a simple but strong faith, but I never thought of religious life. At age 27, I felt that something was missing, so I started searching for the answer. I traveled in Europe, and arrived in a very special place called Taizé. There I was welcomed as a volunteer for two years. Living in a Christian community of brothers, I understood I was called to a religious life with an open heart and mind to multicultural and interfaith dialogue. I then discovered the Franciscans of the Holy Land and finally found answers to my research. In the Custody of the Holy Land, I have been responsible for Gregorian singing for several years, and I have been asked to continue studying. I just concluded my second degree in Archaeology and Holy Scriptures. I am also responsible for the Communication office and the ecumenism and interfaith dialogue.

(Continued on Pg 4)

**Q: How did you get involved with the Magnificat Institute of Music? Did you have any musical talents before you entered the Franciscan Custody?**

**A:** Seven years ago I was appointed as Vice Director of the Music School of the Custody, the Magnificat Institute, and a helper for Br. David Grenier, the Director. I studied music when I was a teenager. My instrument is the flute, but I also sing and play a bit of piano.

**Q: Tell us about the Institute: The history, courses and its activities?**

**A:** The Magnificat Institute was established in 1995 by a decision of the Custodial Chapter of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land. The Magnificat has an agreement with the Conservatory of Music "A. Pedrollo" of Vicenza (Italy), whereby the Institute has adopted the programs of the Conservatory. In 2010, the Conservatory created a foreign branch abroad in cooperation with the Magnificat Institute, for providing academic level education in specific musical disciplines. Academic classes have been created at the Magnificat in this context. Presently, the school has about 200 students and 28 teachers of different backgrounds: Christians, Muslims and Jews. Three of its students have recently obtained the Academic and Master's Degrees at the Conservatory of Vicenza; other students have graduated from other international and local universities. The Magnificat Institute of Music, operating in the Old City of Jerusalem, provides a high academic education and practice in music for the local individuals regardless of their gender, race, language, or religion. In the accomplishment of its mission, the Magnificat Institute offers its students the opportunities to pursue a career in musical professions.



▲ Student performances led by Fr. Alberto Pari, OFM

**Q: How has the pandemic affected the school? How did you resolve the problem of teacher/student interaction?**

**A:** Music didn't stop, even during lock-downs. It has been a very challenging year, but the creativity of our teachers, families and having technology helped a lot. Video lessons were held during the period it was forbidden to meet in person. As soon as it was possible to return to school, music flourished even more than before.

**Q: How long are the courses, how many students have graduated since it's beginning, and how many students are presently attending the Institute?**

**A:** There are two main programs for our students. It takes years of preparation for the real beginner, starting at age four or five. Five years in the pre-academic program earns a high school diploma in music. There is a three-year academy for the very talented – the University of Music. Only three students have graduated from the Academy and five are currently completing their education. An estimated 50 students have completed their studies at the Magnificat Institute. Before it was possible to conclude academic preparation in Jerusalem, the Magnificat sent its best students to Italy to get their diplomas. Since then, four of them have taught at the Magnificat and three still currently teach here.

**Q: What are some of the accomplishments that the Magnificat Institute of Music can be proud of?**

**A:** Some of our students concluded their studies in music and have become teachers in our Institute, along with other schools in the city. One teaches as an organist in the United States, and others have continued their careers in Europe. We are very proud of one of our best students, Mohammed Alshaikh who is already a pianist of international acclaim.

**Q: How has the Institute contributed in bringing people together in a land filled with many conflicts and difficulties?**

**A:** Our students and their families have grown and lived together in our Institute for at least eight years, experiencing concerts, tournées abroad and daily life at school. Nobody feels judged or uncomfortable with their cultural background or belief, and everybody is welcomed as a member of a huge family--the family of God.

**Q: What are the greatest needs that the Magnificat Institute of Music faces today?**

**A:** For over 26 years, the classes have been located in the basement of the convent of St. Saviour in the old city. Although this is a nice place to meet, it is getting small and uncomfortable. There is a very nice project for a new building, but the costs are very high. The school needs new spaces and economical help to cover the costs for the families who cannot pay the scholastic fees. We never refuse a talented student because s/he is unable to cover the costs.

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## FFHL Welcomes New Board Member Joseph Paresi

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Joseph Paresi is the President of TASK Technical and Management Consulting, Inc., helping start-up companies establish products and markets. In addition, Mr. Paresi also leads the financing of several companies looking to raise funds, acquire new businesses or cash out through a company sale.

Previously, Joseph Paresi was founder and Chairman and CEO of IDSS Holdings, Inc., operating as Integrated Defense and Security Solutions (IDSS). He has 40 years of experience in engineering designs and manufacturing along with executive level management in the security and defense fields. At IDSS, he developed the DETECT 1000 TSA Certified Explosives Detection System and established markets with the TSA, the US Secret Service and internationally, as well as with US Customs for automated detection of narcotics. As part of these efforts, Mr. Paresi also designed and patented a Cargo Pallet Scanner for Aviation and Customs applications.

Mr. Paresi has served on numerous boards, including the International Association of Airport Executives and the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies and is presently a Westchester County Police Board Commissioner. He holds a Bachelor's and Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering from Manhattan College, a Program Management Degree from the Defense Systems Management College and an MBA in Finance from Pace University. Mr. Paresi is Top Secret, Special Compartmentalized Information (SCI) Clearance Eligible.

Joseph Paresi has been married to April Holer Paresi since 1988, who is also an Engineer and Senior Vice President of ATSG, an IT services company. The Paresi's have three children: TJ, Stephen and Kristin.

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## Treasurer Jay Lynagh Retires from FFHL Board of Trustees

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Father Peter F. Vasko, OFM awards  
Jay Lynagh with a plaque of  
recognition in honor of his retirement  
from FFHL Board of Trustees.

Jay Lynagh grew up in Washington D.C. as the oldest of nine children. After high school, he served on active duty in the U.S. Navy and following his honorable discharge, he went on to earn a degree in computer science at Montgomery College and a degree in Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland. He retired from the Department of Defense as a civil servant in 2002. After losing his first wife of 37 years, Jay married Monica Mary Lynch. Jay says he enjoys spending as much time as possible with his four grandchildren and supporting his local parish.

Here, Jay shares his personal experience with Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land as a supporter and retired treasurer of FFHL's board. Upon his retirement, he was presented with a plaque of recognition.

(Continued on Pg 6)



The plaque reads:

**In appreciation of your commitment and dedication during your 17 years of service as the former Treasurer of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. During these years you demonstrated outstanding service as well as rendered extraordinary service to many of our donors. I, along with the Board of Trustees, wish to thank you for such dedication.**

**-Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, President, FFHL**

**Q: Why did you join the board and how did you originally get involved with FFHL?**

**A:** My selection to the FFHL Board came as a result of my long affiliation with the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, D.C. As a former employee of the Franciscan Monastery before I entered the U.S. Navy, I worked while in high school in the print shop, as the switchboard operator and as a tour guide. I was honored to meet and get to know many friars over four years. I have many fond memories of my time at the Franciscan Monastery. Br. Callistus Welch was a friar that I met in 1965 while I worked at the Monastery. After I retired from the Department of Defense in 2002, I looked for a job that provided me the opportunity to serve in some capacity with the Catholic Church. During my search, I called Br. Callistus, who hired me to work in the FFHL Treasurer's Office. I worked with Br. Callistus for 11 wonderful years. Regrettably, Br. Callistus passed away in Oct. 2013. Subsequently, I was selected as the FFHL Treasurer by Fr. Peter F. Vasko.

**Q: What does FFHL's mission mean to you?**

**A:** I have been very fortunate to work for an organization founded to help the Christians living and working the Land where Jesus Christ lived, died and rose from the dead. The experience has strengthened my Catholic faith by giving me insights into the needs of the Christians where Jesus once preached. I believe it is the relationships built with friars, board members and others that stands out to me as collective memories garnered over nearly twenty years.

**Q: Which program of FFHL is most important to you?**

**A:** Although all FFHL programs are very important, I see the education of the young as the program with the greatest return. Through a rigorous education, these students can participate fully in the economic, political, social and spiritual challenges of life. Through the generosity of many sponsors, these educational programs are made possible.

**Q: What do you think other people should know about this organization?**

**A:** The primary goal of FFHL is to keep Christianity alive in the Holy Land. Founded by Fr. Peter Vasko, FFHL has been very successful in supporting the Christians and in maintaining the Christian shrines. The administrative overhead for FFHL is very small with the vast majority of funding going directly to the Programs, e.g., scholarships. It has been an honor and pleasure to support Fr. Peter Vasko and FFHL in some small way.

## Journey to Israel

Trinity Broadcasting Network featured a new series, Journey to Israel, on Thursday Nights at 9 pm ET beginning May 27, 2021. In this series, Dave Stotts, historian, filmmaker, and host of the weekly TBN documentary series, Drive Thru History, explores the lands of the Old & New Testament, recounting powerful stories from Scripture in the very regions in which they happened. Samuel Smadja, Owner and President of the Sar-El Group, interviewed Fr. Peter F. Vasko in the Journey to Israel episode, "Insights: Israel & the Middle East." We invite you to view the full episode here: <https://watch.tbn.org/insights-israel-and-the-middle-east>.



# High School Graduation in the Holy Land



▲ The Bethlehem Terra Santa High School graduation ceremony

Elementary, high school and college education for Holy Land Christians has always been a priority for the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. FFHL provides financial assistance for college scholarships, as well as some assistance to elementary and high schools students.

Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, President of FFHL attended recent high school graduation ceremonies at Terra Santa School in Bethlehem and Terra Santa School in Ramleh, a suburb of Tel Aviv.

The Bethlehem Terra Santa School ceremony for 28 graduates was held in the newly renovated sports center with 800 people in attendance. Fr. Francesco Patton, Custos of the Holy Land and Fr. Ibrahim Faltas, OFM, Superintendent of the Terra Santa Schools gave principal addresses, and some graduates also gave remarks. The graduation ceremony was followed by a reception.

Twenty-five students graduated from Terra Santa School in Ramleh. The graduation ceremony took place at an outside compound connected to the school. The Mayor of Tel Aviv gave the principal address, followed by a message from Fr. Abdel Masih, OFM Principal of the Terra Santa School. During the graduation, diplomas were given out by Fr. Ibrahim Faltas, OFM and Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM. An estimated 500 people attended this event.

Ramleh High School is very thankful to The Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem who has been sponsoring large numbers of students from the school since 2010. Similarly, FFHL has also sponsored over 400 students in the elementary grades since 2013.

Fr. Peter F. Vasko of FFHL received a plaque of recognition which read,

**“Thank you and all the donors of FFHL for their generous donation for our students. It is a great help for them. Our students will benefit significantly. Please accept our sincere appreciation for their generosity.”**



▲ Fr. Abdel Masih, OFM, Principal of Terra Santa School gives commencement speech at 2021 graduation



▲ (Left to right) Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, Fr. Ibrahim Faltas, OFM and Fr. Abdel Masih, OFM present diplomas to graduates.



▲ University scholarship student receives diploma

## Holy Land Pilgrims Reunite

In June 2021, a group of twenty-five past pilgrims gathered together for a reunion at the home of FFHL supporters, Bill and Cheryl Russell in Dallas, Texas. During this time of food and fellowship, Fr. Maguire led a prayer as the group remembered the pilgrims that were not able to attend, followed by a delicious meal of chicken and steak fajitas. After months of COVID lockdown restrictions, the group enjoyed gathering together in person for good food and conversation. The group from St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, honored all of the students at FFHL, including their sponsored scholarship recipients George Haddad and Bashar Samar Jarayseh.



▲ Bill and Cheryl Russell host a pilgrimage reunion gathering in their private residency.

The evening featured a wonderful video album prepared by Deacon Ken Reisor, highlighting each day of the pilgrimage. Following the film, each person spent time reflecting on their days in the Holy Land. It was a memorable evening for this group of pilgrims to gather together to reflect and share their Holy Land experiences.

## VATICAN BENEFIT DINNER, WASHINGTON, D.C.



The bi-annual Vatican Benefit Dinner in Washington, D.C. is a main source of donor funding to provide Holy Land Christians new hope for their future through FFHL's various programs. This vital support also serves to encourage and strengthen their ability to remain in their homeland - the homeland of Christ.

Given the sensitivity around travel during the pandemic, FFHL felt it was best to postpone the October 2, 2021 Vatican Dinner to a future year.

We humbly ask that you prayerfully consider a donation in lieu of the cancelation of this important event. Thank you for your continued generosity and kindness. For more information on how to make a donation, please contact Shawn Lurie at [slurie@ffhl.org](mailto:slurie@ffhl.org).

## FFHL Ground-breaking for New Pilgrim Center at Shepherds' Field Holy Site



▲ Breaking grounds prayer at the new construction site for the Pilgrim Center



▲ Pilgrimage Center 3-D rendering



▲ Fr. José María Falo, OFM (Superior) along with Guardians of Shepherds' Field.

The official ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a Pilgrim's Center in Bethlehem took place on July 22, 2021 on the property of Shepherds' Field. Fr. Dobromir Jasztal, Vicar Custos of the Franciscan Custody was the presider, along with Fr. José María Falo, Guardian of Shepherds' Field, Fr. Peter F. Vasko, President of FFHL and Fr. Manuel Lama Dominguez, Assistant Guardian. Other friars attended along with the architect and contractor, as well as the local faithful including the Mayor of Bethlehem, Anton Salman.

The Pilgrim Center was greatly needed due to the large number of pilgrims visiting this Holy Site. Prior to the newly constructed addition, there wasn't a place to host lectures, serve refreshments, or maintain enough modern restrooms.

The authorities of the Custody approached FFHL for financial support with this endeavor, to which we agreed. Additionally, there are several altars and grottos on the property that are in great need of repair. Fortunately, other donors have offered up donations to help with the restoration.

# The Bible Brought to Life

In November 2019, just before the Holy Land shut its doors to tourism because of the outbreak of COVID-19, FFHL led a Holy Land tour that included first-time pilgrims Kris and Dee Pellissier. Although they joined the tour not knowing anyone, they were anticipating that their faith and relationship with Christ would be deepened.

After he returned from the pilgrimage, Dee shared with us, “We will return to the Holy Land because this trip far exceeded our expectations. Our tour guide led us upon a fantastic voyage through the rebirth of our faith.” Dee and Kris walked us through the many highlights of their pilgrimage experience.

## ***A Personal Reflection by Kris and Dee Pellissier***

*We departed the United States on our international flight to Israel, excited to embark on this extraordinary journey. Nine months of anticipation was finally over. After arriving, we drove along the shores of the Sea of Galilee to the Baptismal site on the Jordan River, where we had the opportunity to renew our baptismal vows. What a sacred moment to partake in. Every site we visited set the stage, in word and history, for what was yet to come.*

*We drove to Cana of Galilee, where our Lord performed the first miracle – transforming water into wine at the wedding feast. This was a special day as we witnessed fellow pilgrims renew their wedding vows. We, along with our new friends in faith as witnesses, followed suit in a very emotional ceremony.*

*What a spectacular view we encountered from the top of the Mount of Olives. Later we walked the “Palm Sunday Road” to Dominus Flevit, where our Lord wept over Jerusalem.*

*We walked along the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to visit Golgotha and the Tomb of Our Lord. The highlight of our entire journey was attending holy mass inside the Tomb of Our Lord. Finding appropriate words to describe this emotional experience is virtually impossible.*

*We will remember this trip for a lifetime as it has indeed changed our lives and rekindled our faith. We left our new friends in truth and in faith to return to our community as changed human beings; with hopes of becoming a voice to share the importance of the Holy Land and how we can join together to preserve this sacred land and help Christians who are being persecuted for their faith. Our personal pilgrimage now directs us to “spread the good news” as it is our obligation as Catholics and Christians and support our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.*

To see a full sample itinerary and to learn more about our upcoming pilgrimages, visit [www.ffhl.org/holy-land-pilgrimages/](http://www.ffhl.org/holy-land-pilgrimages/).



▲ Kris and Dee Pellissier renew their vows in the Holy Land on their 2019 Pilgrimage trip.

## **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**



FFHL is pleased to announce that Dee and Kris Pellissier have graciously offered to chair the 2022 Cradling Christianity fundraising event to benefit the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. Cradling Christianity (Columbus, Ohio-based nonprofit), has proudly hosted these fundraisers since 2006, and have raised more than \$1 million to date for full college scholarships for young Christians in the Holy Land. FFHL is grateful to Dee and Kris Pellissier for their leadership, and to all of our incredible volunteers for their support of our mission.

## New Accommodations for Friars at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre



▲ All Photos: The start of construction of the new living quarters of the Holy Sepulchre Convent.

Recently, the Custodial Discretorium asked FFHL to help support the reconstruction of new rooms for the friars serving and ministering at the Holy Sepulchre. After speaking with one of FFHL's major benefactors about the request, he graciously agreed to fund the project to which we are most grateful.

In the last 65 years, the friars experienced great personal sacrifices and inconveniences as they ministered to the faithful. The rooms where they lived were very small and up to seven friars serving there shared only one bathroom. Needless to say, it posed many concerns and inconveniences for so many living under one roof. At the start of construction, the friars moved out and demolition began. The new plans will accommodate 10 new rooms on two levels, with each room having its own private bathroom.

Fr. Francesco Patton, Custos of the Holy Land, Fr. Sinisa Srebrenovic, Member of the Custody Board, and Fr. Peter F. Vasko, President of FFHL, recently visited the construction site to speak with the architects and the engineers responsible for the project. The project is expected to finish within 10 months. Rev. Patton expressed his thanks for the great help that FFHL is doing for the Custody.

## FFHL's 2021 College Scholarship Recipients



▲ Fr. Ibrahim Faltas, OFM and Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM celebrate the graduate achievements of the class of 2021



▲ Fr. Ibrahim Faltas, OFM, Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM (Custos of the Holy Land) and Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM pose for a group photo with the graduate students of 2021.

Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, Custos of the Holy Land and Chairman of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land recently announced the names of the 42 recipients who will be receiving a four-year scholarship from FFHL which includes full tuition and books.

The Custody's foundation says,

**“Fr. Patton has done a marvelous work in laying the groundwork for these young scholars by providing them concrete hope for their generation of Christians in the Holy Land.”**

Providing an education has given our young Christians an opportunity to improve themselves. The foundation also wishes to thank our many benefactors who support this great program and who stand at the forefront of this educational endeavor. Congratulations to each of these new students for their determination to be the best that they can be.

*Please see our recently awarded students in the accompanying 2021 Student Awards insert attached in this newsletter. If you would like to receive additional copies, please contact [info@ffhl.org](mailto:info@ffhl.org) with your request.*



# Together we give.

## SAVE THE DATE

### GIVING TUESDAY

November 30, 2021

### HELP US ACHIEVE OUR GOAL!

## \$20,000



Help us raise even more funds this Giving Tuesday so that we can offer critically needed services to those who have suffered great hardship due to the pandemic. More than ever, families in the Holy Land need access to resources like mental health, medical care and basic necessities in order to remain in their homeland.

**Thank you for  
supporting our mission!**



# 2021

# UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS

# AWARDS

[FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS/EDUCATIONAL-PROGRAMS/UNIVERSITY-SCHOLARSHIPS/](http://FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS/EDUCATIONAL-PROGRAMS/UNIVERSITY-SCHOLARSHIPS/)



*Through your generosity, FFHL is holding the doors of educational opportunity open for the Christian community in the Holy Land.*

Help extend an olive branch for:

- » Masters and Bachelors Equivalent
- » Associates Equivalent
- » Vocational Programs
- » Technical Programs
- » Continued Education

## THE PROGRAM

Since 1997, FFHL has given full, 4-year university scholarships to over 615 students who were economically marginalized but had strong academic talent. With specific guidelines to protect your investment, the scholarship program pays for 4 years of college tuition and books.

## THE GOAL

This program provides academic scholarships to talented but underprivileged Christian students with high initiative and a desire to remain in the Holy Land, thus giving them the necessary skills for successful employment and stability needed to thrive.

We thank all of our sponsors for their continued dedication to these students. Learn about how you can become a sponsor today!



**"Education will be the key in keeping our young people in the Holy land."** –Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

*Preserving* THE LIVING STONES OF  
CHRISTIANITY IN THE *Holy Land*

**LEARN MORE**

[FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS](http://FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS)



**CHARITY  
NAVIGATOR**

★★★★★

**Four Star Charity**



# 2021

# UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIPS

# AWARDS

[FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS/EDUCATIONAL-PROGRAMS/UNIVERSITY-SCHOLARSHIPS/](http://FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS/EDUCATIONAL-PROGRAMS/UNIVERSITY-SCHOLARSHIPS/)

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS B.A



**Christine Abu Jaghab** - She resides in Ramallah, a suburb of Jerusalem with her parents. She will be attending Hebrew University in Jerusalem and majoring in Science. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Haya Akawi** - She lives with her parents and one younger sibling in Nazareth. She will be attending Tel Aviv University and pursuing a degree in the field of the Arts. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Hazar Abu Akleh** - She lives with her parents in Bethlehem and will be attending Bethlehem University, majoring in English Literature. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Daniela Anastas** - She lives with her parents and three younger siblings in Bethlehem. She is planning to attend Birzeit University in Jerusalem and major in the field of Architectural Engineering. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Munir Abdallah Atallah** - He lives with his parents and one younger sibling in Jerusalem. He will be attending Azrieli College of Engineering and pursuing a degree in Mechanical Engineering. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Khader Bandak** - He lives in Bethlehem with his parents and one younger sibling. He will be attending Bir Zeit University in Jerusalem and majoring in Software Engineering. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Stavroula Bazazo** - She lives in Jerusalem with her parents and two younger siblings. She is planning to attend the Jerusalem Academy of Music at Hebrew University and majoring in Performing Arts. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Kareen N. Edbaya** - She lives in Cana in Galilee with her parents and two younger siblings. She will be attending Hebrew University and will be majoring in Medicine. She is the recipient of the Candyce Tara Eoff Scholarship. **Her sponsor is Mr. Richard Kelly of Dallas, Texas.**



**Maria Eideh** - She lives with her parents in Jerusalem and is planning to attend American University of Madaba, Jordan and majoring in the field of Science. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Leann Elias** - She lives with her parents and two younger siblings in Bethlehem. She is planning to attend Bethlehem University and major in Nursing. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Aspina Emerzian** - She lives in Jerusalem with her parents and three younger siblings. She will be attending Hebrew University and wishes to major in Education. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Merail Ewies** - She lives in Jerusalem with her parents and two young siblings. She will be attending Abu Dis University. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Selina Gharo** - She lives with her parents and one younger sibling in Jerusalem. She plans to attend Bethlehem University and study English Literature. **Her sponsors are Mr. and Mrs. A. Schwertner from Armarillo, Texas.**



**Fadi Ghattas** - He lives with his parents and one younger sibling in Bethlehem. He is planning to attend Bir Zeit University in Jerusalem and majoring in the field of Engineering and Technology. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Ellen Habash** - She lives with her parents and younger sister in Beit Jala, a suburb of Bethlehem. She plans to attend An Najah National University in Nablus, Palestine and to major in Computer Science. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Therese Hadid** - She lives in Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv, with her parents and two siblings. She will be attending Tel Aviv University and majoring in Arts and Education. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Maria Ishaq** - She lives with her parents and two younger siblings in Jerusalem. She is planning to attend Hebrew University and majoring in Dentistry. **Her sponsors are Mr. and Mrs. John R. Landon of Dallas, Texas.**



**Sireen Kasabre** - She lives in Akko, Galilee, with her parents and one sibling. She will be attending Haifa University and majoring in Humanities. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Emily N. Kassichie** - She lives with her parents in Jerusalem and is planning to attend Hebrew University to study Engineering. **Her sponsor is the Robert Matejek Family Foundation in Dallas, Texas.**



**Jesiella Khalil** - She resides in Jerusalem with her parents and younger sibling. She is planning to attend Al Quds University in Jerusalem to study Medicine. **Her sponsor is M&M Group from Venice, Florida.**



# 2021

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## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS B.A



**Lamar J. Khamashta** - She lives with her parents and two younger siblings in Jerusalem. She is planning to attend Hebrew University and major in Computer Science. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Nicole Khoury** - She lives with her parents and one younger sibling in Jerusalem. She will be attending Hebrew University and studying Criminology. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Celina Kouba** - She lives with her parents and one sibling in Jerusalem. She will be attending Hebrew University and majoring in Chemistry. **Her sponsor is Mr. William Keifer of Georgetown, Texas.**



**Maria Mansour** - She lives with her parents and two younger siblings in Bethlehem. She will be attending Bethlehem University and majoring in Science. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Shada Mansour** - She lives with her parents and one sibling in Nazareth. She is planning to attend Hadassah College in Jerusalem and pursue a degree in the field of Behavioral Sciences. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Maram Marjeh** - She lives with her parents and younger sibling in Jaffa/Nazareth. She is planning to attend Ariel University and study Humanities/Social Sciences. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Dima Marjeh** - She lives with her parents and one younger sibling in Jaffa/Nazareth. She plans to attend Nedanga College and pursue a degree in Law. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Luna Massou** - She lives with her parents and one younger sibling in Jerusalem. She will be attending Jordan University of Science and Technology and majoring in Medicine. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Mina Mina** - He lives with his parents and two younger siblings in Jerusalem. He is planning to attend Hebrew University and will be majoring in Veterinary Medicine. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Henry Abu Mohor** - He lives with his parents in Bethlehem and will be attending Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. He will be majoring in Medicine. **His sponsor is Mr. William Keifer of Georgetown, Texas.**



**Kira Mousallam** - She lives with her parents and three younger siblings in Bethlehem. She will be attending Bethlehem University as a Psychology major. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Gabriel Rofa** - He lives with his parents and two other siblings in Jerusalem. He is planning to attend the Interdisciplinary Center/College in Herzliya and pursue a degree in Communications. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**Jeries Rofa** - He lives with his parents in Jerusalem and plans to attend Hebrew University and study Information Technology. **His sponsor is Mr. William Keifer of Georgetown, Texas.**



**George Abu Said** - He lives with his parents and one younger sibling in Jerusalem. He will be attending Azmieli College of Engineering in Jerusalem. **His sponsors are Mr. and Mrs. Frank Skalaf of Massillon, Ohio.**



**Katrina Abdallah Salameh** - She resides in Jerusalem with her parents and a younger sibling. She will be attending Hebrew University in Jerusalem and majoring in Engineering. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Angela Salem** - She lives with her parents and two younger siblings in Bethlehem. She is planning to attend Bethlehem University and majoring in Science. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Antoinette Srouji** - She lives in Jerusalem with her parents and two brothers. She is planning to attend Hebrew University and majoring in Mathematics. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Elias Tabban** - He lives with his parents in Jaffa. He is planning to attend The Academic College in Tel Aviv and major in Management of Human Resources. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



**George Terazi** - He lives in Ramleh, a suburb of Jerusalem, with his parents and two younger siblings. He is planning to attend Tel Aviv University as a Psychology major. **His sponsor is Mr. Patrick Carney of San Antonio, Texas.**



**Maria Al Youssef** - She lives with her parents and two younger siblings in Jerusalem. She is planning to attend Al-Quds University in Jerusalem and will be majoring in Pharmacy. **Her sponsor is Mr. William Keifer from Georgetown, Texas.**



# 2021

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## GRADUATE STUDENTS M.A.



**Nura Araman Abu Sada** - She resides in Jerusalem. She finished her B.A. in Social Work at Hebrew University in 2019. She is now planning to secure her M.A. in Social Work/Clinical. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



**Shahd Basil** - She resides in Beit Jala, a suburb of Jerusalem. She finished her B.A. in Business Administration at Bethlehem University in December 2018. She is now planning to secure her M.A. in International Cooperation and Development at Bethlehem University. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**

## CONGRATULATIONS!

Thanks to our loyal sponsors and generous community, FFHL awarded **42 University scholarships in 2021**. We are proud of our students and their dedication to building a future locally, and helping preserve Christianity in the Holy Land.

**42**

AWARDED  
SCHOLARSHIPS

**40**

UNDERGRAD/  
B.A.

**2**

GRADUATE/  
M.A.

**11**

FAMILY/GROUP  
SPONSORED

**31**

FFHL FUND  
SPONSORED

THE **AVERAGE YEARLY COST** TO ATTEND COLLEGE IN THE HOLY LAND IS **\$6,000**, COMPARED TO **\$34,000** IN THE UNITED STATES.  
(2018 STATISTIC)

IN THE 1950'S, INDIGENOUS CHRISTIANS REPRESENTED 25% OF THE POPULATION.

TODAY, **CHRISTIANS ACCOUNT FOR LESS THAN 2% OF THE HOLY LAND POPULATION.**



WE BELIEVE THAT OUR **UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP** PROGRAM IS THE CORNERSTONE OF **THE SOLUTION.**

### MOST POPULAR FIELDS OF STUDY

- ⊕ Business Admin
- ⊕ Engineering
- ⊕ Accounting
- ⊕ Law
- ⊕ Medicine
- ⊕ Pharmacy

## THE PROBLEM

Due to severe political and economic hardships, an estimated 300 Christian families leave the Holy Land each year. This steady emigration suggests that one day the Christian community and church may cease to exist in this part of the world. As the Christian population struggles to thrive, oftentimes survive, FFHL uses every available resource to connect Christians with jobs, education, housing, and other opportunities.

## THE SOLUTION

One of the pillars of FFHL's mission is to support access to education for young people. Without the assistance from generous scholarship donors, these deserving young scholars would have no ability to earn a marketable university degree and obtain a secure job. Over the last 21 years, FFHL has given over \$15 million in both university scholarships and special educational grants to Christian students. The current graduation rate is 97%, and to-date, *only one graduate has relocated away from the Holy Land.*



**WORK WITH US** TO BUILD UP MINDS, LIVES, AND HOPES IN THE HOLY LAND.

Call or Email Today! (855) 500-3345 (FFHL) | [info@ffhl.org](mailto:info@ffhl.org)  
Or start your pledge online at:

[FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS](http://FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS)



Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land  
P.O. Box 29086  
Washington, DC 20017-9086

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**GIVING  
TUESDAY**

NOVEMBER 30, 2021  
HELP US ACHIEVE OUR  
#GIVINGTUESDAY GOAL!

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<<Zip>>

### LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY WITH FFHL

Joining our legacy society is simple and easy. If you have made a planned gift of any kind and of any size to our mission, then you are eligible for membership. **Contact us to learn more!**



These **meaningful gifts** allow FFHL to **change the lives** of Holy Land Christians.

**LEARN MORE AT:**  
[FFHL.org/the-good-shepherd-society/](https://ffhl.org/the-good-shepherd-society/)



The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization pursuant to Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Our Tax ID Number is 33-0628775. Your gift is fully tax deductible to the extent of the law.

### PILGRIMAGE REGISTRATION IS OPEN!



**EXPLORE** a Fresh Journey of *Faith* **AS YOU**  
*Reconnect* WITH *Christ in the Holy Land*

**We Want To Hear From You!**

~ SHARE WITH US ~



What do you want to read about in FFHL's upcoming newsletter? Email your stories and ideas to [smartini@ffhl.org](mailto:smartini@ffhl.org). If you are interested in becoming more involved with FFHL, please contact [slurie@ffhl.org](mailto:slurie@ffhl.org).

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