



FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND NEWSLETTER

FALL #54

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(Left to right) Co-Chairs Nick and Julie Summerville, Honorary Chairs Martha and Kip Rolland, Sister Deirdre Byrne, Keynote Speaker, Bishop Gregory Kelly, Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, Bishop Frank Dewane, and Co-Chairs Terry and Ed Lynch

2022 DALLAS FUNDRAISING DINNER

By Susan Stanzel, FFHL Board Member Emeritus

The 113th Biennial Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land Benefit Dinner was held on September 10, 2022 at the Dallas Country Club. The black-tie optional dinner was attended by 260 guests.

Honored Guests included the Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane, D.D., of Venice, FL, the Most Rev. Gregory Kelly, Auxiliary Bishop of Dallas, Sister Deirdre Byrne, POSC, Keynote Speaker, Rev. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, President, FFHL, Jerusalem and Jonathan J. Sanford, Ph. D., President, University of Dallas.

Master of Ceremonies, Deacon Kenneth Reisor, welcomed all the guests on behalf of the honorary dinner chairs, Christopher and Martha Rolland, dinner co-chairs Nick and Julie Summerville and Ed and Terry Lynch and the host committee.

The Patron Reception was attended by 150 guests preceding the dinner and featured the Versa String Quartet, Champagne, wine, hors d'oeuvres and complimentary photos with the two attending bishops, the keynote speaker and Fr. Peter Vasko.

The dinner invocation was given by Bishop Frank J. Dewane, D.D. followed by an excellent video featuring Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM, and six graduate students of FFHL University Scholarship Program who are now successfully employed in the Holy Land in their chosen fields. Fr. Peter then recognized the many Dallas University Scholarship Program donors who had given multiple scholarships, 13 individuals or couples for 41 scholarships and 33 individuals or couples who had given one scholarship by asking them to stand for a round of applause. All donors were also recognized in the elegant dinner program.

Fr. Peter presented awards to the dinner co-chairs and to Tom and Susan Stanzel for their on-going dedication to the mission of FFHL. He then presented the Pope Leo XIII Gold Cross of Honor, a Papal Award, to Dennis and Kay Walo for their outstanding commitment and zeal for the Holy Land. Bishop Dewane and Denise M. Scalzo, SFO, Vice President, FFHL, joined Fr. Peter to present the prestigious

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**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

Rev. Francesco Patton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Around the world, many countries set aside a special day each year for giving thanks for our many blessings. For Christians, every day can be a day of thanksgiving as we are "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). It has been a challenging few years, yet we have come far in our healing journey together.

As followers of Christ, we have so much to be grateful for. The Lord continues to bless us abundantly. Thanksgiving is a time to remember the gifts we have received and an opportunity to bless others. This season, may we be a vessel of His love to those in need.

With the pandemic mostly behind us, let us continue to faithfully pray for economic stability and a return to steady work for our Christian brothers and sisters. We remain steadfast in our mission to continue the Lord's work in the Holy Land, which is only possible by your generous support.

On behalf of FFHL, I offer my sincerest thanks for your sacrificial gifts. May God richly and abundantly bless you this season. Please continue to pray for God's strength for His children who are weak, comfort for those hurting, and help for those in need. May you and your family be blessed this Thanksgiving.

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



Rev. Francesco Patton, OFM

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

(Continued from Pg 1: 2022 Dallas Fundraising Dinner)

Guardian of the Holy Land Award to Robert R. Matejek whose actions, vision and service has brought about a new hope for the people of God in that land.

Sister Deirdre Byrne, POSC; Surgeon, Soldier, Sister, Servant, gave an inspiring talk, "Military Medicine to Missionary: How my love for Terra Sancta Deepened". Sister Dede shared her personal journey of falling in love not only with Terra Sancta but also with the Living Stones in the Holy Land, especially our Palestinian brothers and sisters. In prayer she felt the Lord saying, "If you want to know who I am, go to the desert." She volunteered to join the MRO (Army Medical Team) headed to the Sinai. She arrived as a young Captain in Israel and with her team drove through the desert to the North Camp in El Gorah, Sinai. Throughout her early intro to the Middle East as one of two doctors caring for more than 1,000 soldiers in the international mission, she met "Living Stones" from many traditions, the Greek Monks of St. Catherine's Monastery, the multinational soldiers and the Bedouins. Her first visit to Jerusalem was through an American doctor friend who was volunteering as a missionary at a medical clinic in the Old City which cared for all people, especially the Palestinians.



Sister Deirdre Byrne at the podium

Every trip back to Jerusalem gave her the opportunity to be part of a mission to help care for those in need in the Old City by providing food, medicine, clothing and more. By the end of her 13 months deployment, with several trips to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth, she could not get enough of the Holy Land. Being a doctor opened doors to many opportunities. She was able to return as a missionary working in East Jerusalem at St. Joseph's Hospital, Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jenin. She met many outstanding people including Europeans, Orthodox and Catholic missionaries. Sister Dede also met Denise Scalzo and Fr. Peter Vasko, who were working with Marine soldiers in the U.S. Consulate. These soldiers dedicate their lives to serving the Palestinians, especially the Christians. Her eyes were opening wider and wider to the truth. For many who see misinformation and are unable to see the plight of the Christians, all one has to do is "Come and See" as Jesus said to Zacchaeus. In closing, Sister praised the Franciscan Friars who are the enduring presence and support to those struggling to stay in their homeland.

Renowned harpist Juliette Buchanan played throughout the dinner. Bishop Gregory Kelly gave the closing benediction. The beautiful flower arrangements at each table were given to the person whose birthday was closest to August 12, the birthday of St. Clare of Assisi.



Susan Stanzel, pictured with Fr. Peter F. Vasko, received the City of Jerusalem plaque for ongoing dedication and service to the mission of the FFHL



Pope Leo XIII Gold Cross of Honor Awardees: Dennis and Kay Walo



Guardian of the Holy Land Award: Robert Matejek, (Left to right) Sandie Hightower, Bishop Frank Dewane, Robert Matejek, Brenda Smart

2022 Good Shepherd Society Luncheon

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) hosted its premiere Good Shepherd Society Luncheon on April 26, 2022, at the Dallas Country Club in Dallas, Texas. The luncheon honored those who have already included FFHL in their estate plans, as well as provided an opportunity to join those who share an interest in becoming Good Shepherd Society members. Guests enjoyed a delicious meal while Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, President of FFHL and Denise Marie Scalzo, Vice President, FFHL shared an update about the important work happening in the Holy Land.



Attendees seated at Good Shepherd Luncheon in Dallas, TX on April 26, 2022

Mr. and Mrs. Benny and Noni Barrett were among some of the guests attending the luncheon. At the event, the Barretts announced their estate gift, indicating their gift will come from a retirement plan. Fr. Peter thanked and recognized the Barretts with a special Good Shepherd Society ceremonial pinning.

The Barretts had the opportunity to travel to the Holy Land in 2018. It was there that they witnessed firsthand the great need to help Christians in the Holy Land. They were able to meet Christian students who had received scholarships to Hebrew University through FFHL's University Scholarship Program.

“How could anyone that loves Jesus not want to help keep a Christian presence alive in the Holy Land? It is a privilege to be a part of FFHL’s work in spreading the Gospel of Christ in the Holy Land.” -Mr. and Mrs. Benny and Noni Barrett

Fr. Peter concluded his presentation by explaining how planned gifts have the power to impact lives for generations to come. Meaningful gifts like the Barrett’s allow FFHL to change the lives of Holy Land Christians. “They will know we are Christians by our love. If ever there is a place that desperately needs the love of Christ, it is there in the place where he was born, ministered, crucified, and rose again to redeem,” Benny said. The Barretts were proud to wear their GSS pins when they attended the Dallas Fundraising Dinner in September.

In April 2022, FFHL received two other generous legacy gifts. The first gift, from Jim Cornelius through the Cornelius Family Foundation, is earmarked for the restoration of Christ’s tomb. The second, from the Manuel Linan Estate, is an unrestricted gift to be used for the greatest need. While Jim Cornelius is a member of the FFHL Board, FFHL was previously unaware of the Linan gift. For that reason, we were unfortunately not able to personally thank Mr. Linan during his lifetime for his generosity in support of our mission. We are humbled by his gift and have thanked his family.

Individuals who include FFHL in their estate plans 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 thanks to the past donors who have included FFHL in their estate planning.



Fr. Peter F. Vasko pinning Mr. and Mrs. Benny and Noni Barrett



Beautiful luncheon table settings



Ft. Peter F. Vasko speaking to the attendees of the luncheon

2022 Cradling Christianity Annual Fundraiser

By Dee Pellissier, 2022 Event Co-Chair



(Left to right) Fr. Peter F. Vasko, Dcn. Frank Iannarino, Bishop Earl K. Fernandes, Dcn. Tom Berg, Msgr. Frank Lane

Cradling Christianity is a Columbus, Ohio-based nonprofit that was founded by a small group of Catholics to support the work of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL). Since 2006, we have held fundraising events, supported by Father Peter F. Vasko, OFM, for 14 consecutive years until they were suspended in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our members have taken pilgrimages to the Holy Land through the years and thanks to our fundraising events, we have raised more than \$1 million to provide funds for FFHL's university scholarship program.

We held our first in-person fundraising event since the pandemic on September 22, 2022 at Our Lady of Victory Church in Columbus. My wife Kris and I were the co-chairs this year and we believe that one of the important ways to slow down the exodus of Christians from the Holy Land is by providing a college or vocational education at no cost for deserving young Christian scholars who are economically disadvantaged through no fault of their own. Our own FFHL Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2019 changed our lives and we hope to help change the lives of the Christian youth there by our work here through Cradling Christianity. The result of these scholarships has been overwhelmingly positive as 99% of recipients decide to remain in the Holy Land.

This year's event began with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl K. Fernandes, Bishop of Columbus, prior to the dinner. He was one of the honored guests for the event along with Father Peter F. Vasko, OFM. The event also featured keynote speaker Msgr. Frank Lane, a retired priest from the Columbus diocese who now lives in Cincinnati. Msgr. Lane has served as a parish priest, an instructor at the Pontifical College Josephinum, a military chaplain and as a spiritual director at The Athenaeum of Ohio – Mount St. Mary's Seminary of the West in Cincinnati. He also hosts a weekly series on St. Gabriel Catholic Radio in Columbus and southern Ohio. Msgr. Lane's presentation was entitled "Christianity in the Holy Land: An Epic Tale."

During his remarks, Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM expressed his gratitude to the past chairs and many supporters from Cradling Christianity saying:



Msgr. Frank Lane, Keynote Speaker

"I would like to thank each of you in the Columbus area for the generosity that you have given over these many years through Cradling Christianity. You have made a difference in so many ways for the beleaguered Christians in the Holy Land. It only takes one candle to light the darkness and you have certainly lit many candles to lighten the darkness of so many of your brothers and sisters in the Land of Christ. Our Lord is very pleased with you for your charity." -Father Peter F. Vasko



(Left to right) Dan Fusco, Jenny Fusco, Edward Sprigler, Pamela Sprigler, Fr. Peter Vasko, Rita Wanner, Rick Wanner, Suzanne Davalla, Andy Davalla, Kris Pellissier, Dee Pellissier; Missing: Gene and Judy Alfonsi, Frank and Pegi Courtney, Gary and Becky Owens, and John and Lisa Schechter

Kris and I would like to thank our planning committee including: Gene and Judy Alfonsi, Frank and Pegi Courtney, Andy and Suzanne Davalla, Dan and Jenny Fusco, Gary and Becky Owens, John and Lisa Schechter, Edward and Pamela Sprigler, and Rick and Rita Wanner for all their efforts that culminated in a great success.

We would also like to thank Cradling Christianity's past Chairpersons for their service and continued support since it's foundation in 2006: Gene and Judy Alfonsi, Charles and Venetia Bramlage, Don and Monica Brown, Russ and Pat Howard, Chuck and Ardith Mers, and Ron and Barb Rowland.

Reduce Your Taxes With an IRA Gift

Did You Know...

That you can reduce your taxes by making a gift from your IRA to charity? An IRA rollover is a simple and easy way for you to use your IRA to help us fulfill our mission.

Help Us in the Future

If you are not ready to make a gift to us from your IRA this year, consider making a charitable bequest. A bequest of part or all of your IRA permits you to make full use of your funds during your lifetime. We benefit in the future from what remains. Your plan custodian can provide you with a form to designate us as a beneficiary of your IRA. Please contact us if you wish to learn more about making a bequest.



What is an IRA Rollover Gift?

Congress has reauthorized the IRA charitable rollover. This means that if you are 70½ or older you can make a charitable gift of up to \$100,000 from your IRA. Your gift will qualify for your required minimum distribution and you will not have to pay federal income tax on the amount given from your IRA to charity.

An IRA Rollover Makes Sense this Year!

If you are like many donors, with the new tax law, you could be paying higher taxes this year. By transferring some of your IRA required distribution to us, you can lower your taxable income. With lower taxable income, you could reduce your income and capital gains taxes this year. Check with your advisor to see how an IRA rollover gift could impact your taxes while helping our cause.

How to Make an IRA Rollover Gift to Us

To make an IRA rollover gift, simply contact your custodian and request that an amount be transferred to us. Your gift could be \$1,000, \$10,000, \$50,000 or even \$100,000. Contact us to learn more about how you can redirect unneeded IRA income to FFHL, help further our mission and enjoy valuable tax savings this year. A scholarship can help future generations make a lasting impact on the world. Without the generous help of the good people who gave with love, many students wouldn't have been able to continue their education. Their lives were changed because of this program. Without a university scholarship, these students would still be relying on the church and society for social help and donations.

This information is not intended as tax, legal or financial advice. Gift results may vary. Consult your personal financial advisor for information specific to your situation.
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**TOGETHER
WE
GIVE.**



**GIVING
TUESDAY**

\$20,000 Matching Gift – Give Now to Double Your Impact

Join us in helping Holy Land Christians through GivingTuesday, a global giving event. Your donation to the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) will support Holy Land Christians who face severe economic challenges making it difficult for them to remain in their homeland. More than ever, our brothers and sisters need access to resources like counseling, medical assistance, employment and affordable housing and prayer.

Our Board of Directors has committed to matching all donations, dollar for dollar, up to \$20,000.

Don't miss this opportunity to have your tax-deductible gift go twice as far, with twice the impact.

Thank you for being a faithful and generous supporter. You are making a profound difference in the lives of our Christian brothers and sisters, giving them a future of hope.

The Exhibition of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre



Woman praying at the Holy Sepulchre | CR: Renee Mills, Pilgrimage Nov. 2019

On July 2, 2022 the Exhibition of the Holy Sepulchre was officially dedicated at the Christian Information Center in Jerusalem by Fr. Francesco Patton, OFM, FFHL Chairman and Custos of the Holy Land. Accompanying him was Fr. Tomasz Dubiel, OFM, who designed and carried out this project, along with Fr. Peter F. Vasko, President of FFHL, and a group of clergy, religious and laity.

The exhibit consists of six rooms where participants wear state-of-the-art virtual reality (VR) devices describing the historical overview and the environment during Christ's earthly life. It moves us through Christ's last days, through the physical and spiritual aspects of what it was like in Jesus' time and brings scriptural memories alive.

The first room is a historic overview of the city of Jerusalem. The second room depicts the Garden of Gethsemane, the scourging and the crucifixion of Christ. The third room covers the historical sequence of the region, Roman rule, the Jewish uprising and the destruction of the Temple, the Byzantine period, the Crusader period, the Ottoman period and the British period. The fourth room

describes how the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre was first erected and how it was destroyed and rebuilt during the Crusader period. The fifth room addresses the Status Quo under the Ottomans where each Christian stakeholder was able to perform their liturgical norms and customs. The sixth room shares the actual dimensions, location and scale of the Tomb of Christ.

FFHL was one of the principal donors in establishing this very unique and educational project. Pilgrims are now welcome to participate in this tour located at the Christian Information Center at Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem.

University Scholarship Letter

Dear Fr. Peter Vasko,

My name is Luna Jamal Massou from Jerusalem. Last year I was selected for a Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land scholarship. Currently, I am a student at the Jordan University for Science and Technology studying medicine.

I have completed my first academic year very successfully and I have scored high grades with A+ and A on all topics.

I'm writing to thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me this chance and would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your support with my education fees.

This scholarship has allowed me to study what I love and I have never been more motivated to not only make myself and my parents proud of me, but to also make you proud as well.

Financing my education is a heavy weight on my parents and this scholarship will help me very much to continue my educational journey.

Many Thanks. Best regards,

Luna Jamal Massou



Luna Jamal Massou, 2021 University Scholarship Recipient

Get to Know Us – Denise Marie Scalzo

Denise Marie Scalzo, SFO, DGCHS, Vice President and Founding Member of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land

Denise Marie Scalzo is the Vice President and founding member of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL). She is also a lay Franciscan, and for the past 30 years she has served the Custodia di Terra Santa headquartered in Jerusalem. She works with religious communities, cardinals, bishops and priests in addressing the needs of the poor in the United States, Latin America and the Middle East. Denise Marie is the Holy Land Councillor of the Western Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, a board member and treasurer of the Pope Leo XIII Institute, a board member and treasurer of St. John Paul II Institute for Healing and Deliverance and is a recipient of the Papal Award: Pope Leo XIII Gold Cross of Honor for her many years of work in the Holy Land. She is also an international speaker on the Holy Land and a published author of seven volumes of "Love Letters from Gethsemane." In March 2022, Denise journeyed on a remarkable 100th trip to the Holy Land.



Denise Marie Scalzo

Denise Marie shares how FFHL is making a difference in the Holy Land thanks to valuable donor support and what it means to her personally to witness and be part of this vital effort:

"I think every Christian would like the chance to see the Holy Land, having read the Bible. To understand the Christian plight and to secure them in their homeland. They, as all people, are looking for the basic needs, a job, safe home, food and a brighter future for their children. Christians look to the church for help. To be able to partner with them, pray with the community brings hope to these people we call the *Living Stones*. We educate them, help them secure jobs, and provide a better life for them and their families. I am now seeing first and second generations thrive and give back to the community." -Denise Marie Scalzo

"As Christians, we should feel the obligation to help maintain the Christian presence in the Holy Land. FFHL has the capacity to be 'boots on the ground.' With the 800-year history of the Franciscan presence, they are immersed in the culture and lives of the people in the Holy Land. Having the Franciscan organizations in place with the parishes, schools, family centers, elderly homes, orphanages and more, we have better access into their life. It's a more natural immersion, not outsiders interrupting their daily lives. They feel a sense of family, which is very important to their culture. People know that when they give to support the work of FFHL, their contributions will be well spent on the many projects and needs of the people. We become partners on the quest to keep Christians in the Holy Land."

***We Want
to Hear
from You!***

If you are interested in joining one of our regional volunteer groups, contact Shawnie Lurie at ***slurie@ffhl.org***.

To share story ideas, contact Sarah Martini at ***smartini@ffhl.org***.

***To Learn More
About FFHL***

*Or to Receive
Educational Information
about Our Foundation*

Call: 855-500-FFHL (3345)
Email: info@ffhl.org
Website: ffhl.org





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Join Us as We Follow in
HIS FOOTSTEPS

The Scriptures will
come alive as you
experience Our Lord's
homeland.

Renew and affirm your faith in a life-changing way.
START PLANNING YOUR 2023 PILGRIMAGE

Price Includes: Roundtrip Airfare • Hotel Accommodations • Breakfast and Dinner
Sightseeing Fees & Gratuity • Taxes & Surcharges
(Lunch, alcohol and additional sightseeing outside of the itinerary are not included.)

REQUEST MORE INFORMATION | VISIT: ffhl.org | EMAIL: info@ffhl.org
TOLL FREE: 855.500.FFHL (855.500.3345)

*FFHL would like to
celebrate YOU
on your birthday!*

Please email your
birthday to **info@ffhl.org**
so we can remember
you in a special prayer.