



FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND NEWSLETTER

FALL #56

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PLEA FOR CEASE FIRE IN THE HOLY LAND

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

On October 7, 2023, a horrific massacre took place in Israel by Hamas terrorists, resulting in the tragic loss of innocent Israeli civilians, including many children living outside the border of Gaza.

As of this writing today, the 17th day of the conflict, four hostages have been released by Hamas out of the more than 220 who were kidnapped. We fervently hope more will be released.

In response, Israel has taken a military stance and has been bombing Gaza, regrettably causing the loss of innocent Arab civilian lives. The question that weighs heavily on our hearts is, "When will this end?" Sadly, this cycle of violence has persisted for the last 75 years, and the prospect of peace between the two Semitic parties remains elusive. It is a very sad commentary on the situation.

Initially, Jerusalem resembled the days of COVID, but as of October 26, more and more people are once again filling the streets of Jerusalem. On a positive note, all schools and universities have now reopened after being closed for several weeks.

The majority of pilgrims have safely departed the country through Amman, Jordan, and it appears that all future pilgrimages are currently at a standstill.

The religious leaders of the Christian community have come together in prayer vigils, and a significant number of the faithful have attended. Exemplifying extraordinary courage, the recently appointed Franciscan Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, offered himself as a hostage to Hamas on the condition that all the children be released.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is committed to providing aid to those affected by this terrible crisis. Christians will continue to face economic marginalization as long as this conflict continues. Many Christians are employed in various positions in the hospitality industry, such as hotels and transportation, which have now been shut down. Many families will be coming to us for food supplies and medical needs.

There are Christian families and many of our students whom FFHL has put through college and have professions such as nursing, pharmacy, engineering, accounting and law, who will not be affected. But, when the needs become critical, the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land will once again do its part in providing humanitarian relief like food, clean water, shelter, medical assistance and more, just as we did during the COVID-19 pandemic. Your financial support will be needed more than ever at that time.

Please pray fervently for peace in the Holy Land. Pray for a cease-fire to halt further violence and prevent the loss of life on both sides.

May God bless you all,

Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM
President of FFHL

**OUR
MISSION**

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is dedicated to supporting and preserving the Christian community and heritage in the Holy Land. Our mission is to provide essential resources and opportunities to families, empowering them to thrive in their ancestral homeland. Through our unwavering commitment to preserving holy Christian sites and supporting basic human rights, we aim to be a vital resource for the community. Our donor-based humanitarian programs and independent projects are designed to help Christian families not just survive, but flourish.

LETTER FROM THE CUSTOS

Rev. Francesco Patton, OFM

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the midst of the current war and tragedy in the Holy Land, I pray that our Lord and Savior will give comfort to those who are suffering. The Bible says in John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

As custodians of this sacred land, we are called to be a source of hope and peace to others. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve our Christian communities. Even in the face of current events that are very difficult to bear, we find comfort in the knowledge that with Christ, we can overcome all things.

In times of uncertainty, we are reminded to give thanks in all circumstances, for it is through gratitude that we find the strength to persevere. We extend our hands in support and protection to everyone impacted by this crisis, ensuring that essential needs are met, and that the love of Christ shines through our actions.

Our communities are living testimonies to show how faith can transform lives, promoting love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

As we navigate these challenging times, let us be guided by the words of Saint Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." With hearts full of gratitude, we press forward, secure in the knowledge that God's love and mercy will prevail.

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



FFHL HOLDS ANNUAL VATICAN EMBASSY GALA IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land held its 8th Biennial Black Tie Vatican Embassy Gala at the Vatican Nunciature in Washington D.C. on October 14, 2023 chaired by Dr. Joyce K.S. Babiak of Arlington, VA. The event proceeds will establish a special educational endowment to provide college scholarships for young Christians living in the Holy Land.

Honored guests included His Eminence, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States and special advisor to the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, The Most Reverend Thomas Paprocki, D.D., Bishop of Springfield, Ill, Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane, D.D. Bishop of Venice, Florida, Ms. Denise Scalzo, O.F.S., Vice President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, Her Excellency, Ambassador Michelle Burke Bowe, G.C.M. Sovereign Order of Malta Ambassador to Palestine and James F. Bowe, Jr., K.M., Father Ramzi Sidawi, O.F.M., Guardian, Franciscan Monastery of Washington D.C and Father David Grenier, O.F.M., Commissary of the Holy Land.

The Master of Ceremonies was Reverend Mr. Kenneth E. Reisor, Deacon of St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Dallas, TX, and the invocation was given by the Most Reverend Bishop Thomas Paprocki of Springfield, Ill. His Eminence, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States welcomed the guests. Fr. Peter F. Vasko, O.F.M, President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land then spoke about The Guardian of the Holy Land Award. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have not only demonstrated an outstanding love of God in their personal lives, but have upheld the truth, the reality, the faith and the hopes of the Holy Land. This year's recipients were His Eminence, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, and Mrs. Maria Theresa Martter of Dallas, TX. Fr. Peter Vasko then presented a papal recognition called the Pope Leo XIII Gold Cross of Honor to Gabriel Gross Diaz.

Guests enjoyed an exquisite three course culinary meal, followed by an informative talk by Father David Grenier, O.F.M., Commissary of the Holy Land. After a standing ovation for Father Grenier's talk, Reverend Mr. Kenneth E. Reisor gave the closing remarks and the Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane, D.D. gave the Benediction. Upon departure each guest was able to view a stone from the actual Tomb of Christ from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.



(Left to right) Rev. David Grenier, OFM; Rev. Ramzi Sedawi, OFM; Bishop Frank J. Dewane, DD; Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM; Cardinal Christophe Pierre; Bishop Thomas Paprocki; Ms. Denise Scalzo, OSF



Attendees at the benefit dinner for FFHL



Presentation of the Guardian of the Holy Land Award to His Eminence, Cardinal Pierre by His Excellency, Bishop Frank J. Dewane, DD



Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, presenting a Papal recognition to Mr. Gabriel Gross Diaz, known as the Pope Leo XIII Gold Cross of Honor, for his dedication to the Holy Land



Presentation of the Guardian of the Holy Land award to Mrs. Maria Theresa Martter of Dallas, Texas by His Excellency, Bishop Frank J. Dewane, DD



Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, presenting Dr. Joyce K.S. Babiak with a recognition for her dedication and commitment in being the Chairperson for this evening's event

SECURING CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

It's hard to count on financial security in an uncertain world. FFHL offers three strategies that not only protect your financial future but also allow you to contribute to a greater purpose.

Boost Retirement Funds

Seeking financial security for the future requires new ideas. If you have underperforming assets such as CDs or stocks, think about moving them to FFHL through a Charitable Gift Annuity.

Another life income option is a Charitable Remainder Trust. This arrangement provides consistent payments throughout your and your spouse's lives, potentially offering tax advantages and contributing to FFHL's cause with any remaining funds. Alternatively, explore Charitable Remainder Trusts for enduring income, growth potential, and tax benefits.

Curb Capital Gains Taxes

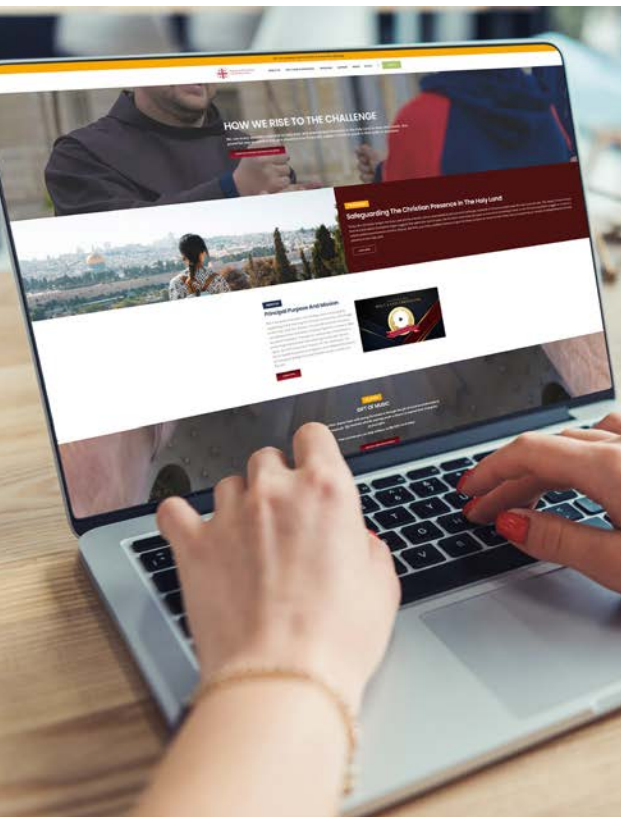
With higher capital gains tax rates, dealing with their effect on valuable assets is crucial. Consider Charitable Remainder Trusts which involve moving assets to set up a trust, avoiding capital gains taxes. This tax-free trust sells assets, reinvests for better income, and backs your goals over time.

Protect Cash Reserves

If you're focused on saving and preserving cash for upcoming needs, there is a way to support FFHL's mission without tapping into your current resources. By making a Charitable Bequest, you commit to giving us a future gift through your will. Your attorney can create a clause that designates an amount, asset, or portion of your estate for us. This contribution will sustain our work in the long run.

Because outcomes vary, seek advice from a professional for personalized direction. Ready to make a lasting impact? Join FFHL's Good Shepherd Society and contribute to a brighter future. Contact us today at (855) 500-3345 (FFHL) or info@FFHL.org to learn more about how your involvement can help shape our mission.

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.



FFHL HAS A BRAND NEW WEBSITE

Welcome to your one-stop resource hub.

Simplifying your journey through our mission, programs and resources, we are committed to providing you with up-to-date, informative content.

Discover Quick Links and Features

Sitewide Banner: Stay in the loop with important updates, just a click away.

Event Calendar & Blogs: These provide constant touch points for staying connected.

Media Resources: Dive into our digital assets, from videos to press releases.

Supporter Highlight: Get to know the incredible partners and supporters shaping our mission.

Donate Page: Experience a simplified, personalized donation process.

Contact Us: Reach out for inquiries or refer students in need of scholarship support.

We can't wait for you to explore the new FFHL website at FFHL.org. Your support and feedback are vital as we shape our online presence for the future. Together, let's make a lasting impact in the Holy Land.

CRADLING CHRISTIANITY HOLDS ANNUAL DINNER TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

Cradling Christianity held their annual Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) benefit dinner on Sept. 7 at Our Lady of Victory Church in Columbus, Ohio. The organization was founded in 2006 by a small group of Catholics in Columbus raising more than \$1 million since its inception to support the Franciscan Foundation's University Scholarship Program.

This year's event began with a Mass led by Bishop Earl K. Fernandes, Bishop of Columbus. During the dinner program, Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, provided the keynote address.

“

One of the ways Cradling Christianity has been so helpful is that, as a result of your giving throughout these many years, 40 college students have received tuition assistance and, upon graduation, all of them have attained professional employment. Your financial contributions have provided hope and opportunities to others.

– FR. PETER F. VASKO, OFM



Liturgy of the Eucharist, led by Bishop Earl K. Fernandes, Bishop of Columbus, Ohio, at Our Lady of Victory Church

Fr. Peter Vasko also encouraged the guests to join him on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. “Could you imagine being there, where Our Lord was crucified for our sins? Right there on Calvary?” he said, “You’re there, and you can touch Golgotha, a foot and a half away from where the actual cross was. Or to be in the place where He resurrected – in the tomb of Our Lord? Where He gave us life everlasting? To be in the place where Jesus was born – in Bethlehem – the very spot where he was born?”

Bishop Fernandes also thanked the guests for their presence that evening and asked them to consider not only giving financially but also spiritually.



Bishop Earl K. Fernandes, Bishop of Columbus, addressing the crowd at the Cradling Christianity annual dinner

“

Part of what we are doing tonight, and part of what the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land wants to do, is give a voice to the voiceless, to raise funds so that Christians can stay in their homes and be present in the Holy Land and be forces of peace rather than forces of violence. So, while your sacrifices and gifts are important, your accompaniment – your prayers, your solidarity – is also important because it's a way of communicating our love for the Christians in the Holy Land.”

– BISHOP EARL K. FERNANDES



Keynote Speaker Fr. Peter F. Vasko, OFM, President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, giving the keynote address

At the conclusion co-chairs Kris and Dee Pellissier expressed their gratitude to their 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 its 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.

PILGRIMS WITH A PURPOSE

When John Morris retired from New York Life Insurance Company in 2004, he spoke with his pastor at Jesus Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Monroe, LA who suggested he consider getting involved with pilgrimages. “I had the pleasure of meeting Fr. Peter F. Vasko at a friend’s home while he was visiting in Monroe. We discussed Holy Land travel and he offered to be my tour guide, an offer I could not refuse,” said Morris.

To date, he has completed 10 Holy Land pilgrimages with Fr. Peter. On each tour, the pilgrims had an opportunity to meet some of the students that FFHL was providing a college scholarship for. In 2018, Morris’ pilgrimage chose to sponsor a student named Jousef Zakarian and he has since graduated and is working in Bethlehem.



I encourage everyone to consider supporting a student in the Holy Land. They will never regret it. It will keep them deeply connected to the Holy Land. It is an honor to serve God by educating his children.

- JOHN MORRIS



(Left to right) Wanda Rougeau, Yousef Zakarian, John Morris, Elizabeth Harvey



(Left to right) Gay Morris, Yazan Giacaman, Dr. Randy Hall, Cathy Hall

During one of the group’s trips to the Holy Land, pilgrim Beverly Graham, talked to her church, St. Paul’s United Methodist Church in Monroe, LA about sponsoring a student. They were paired with Yazan Giacaman and plan to continue his support through medical school. “We have been corresponding by email with him for over four years now,” says Graham. “Members of our church and Jesus the Good Shepard have even had the blessed opportunity to meet with Yazan on several pilgrimages. I am so very proud of his hard work and dedication. We have been so blessed to have him as our student. We consider him as our rising star in Israel. He recently sent us a letter informing us that he has been ranked in second place in the Faculty of Human Medicine at his school. Thanks to this wonderful opportunity to support Yazan, Pilgrims with a Purpose has made our connection to the Holy Land personal and spiritual.”

THE POWER OF GIVING TUESDAY

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
**NOVEMBER
28, 2023**

Giving Tuesday offers a special opportunity to spread kindness. This global movement, following Black Friday and Cyber Monday, is all about generosity. This year, the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) has pledged to raise a minimum of \$10,000, and we want to do it together with our caring community.

Funds raised will provide essential aid, including food, clean water, shelter, medical assistance and other vital resources for those caught in the crossfire of the devastating conflict in the Holy Land. Your gift of any amount will help us bless as many men, women and children as we can.

Giving Tuesday is November 28, and invites donors to support the causes they care about. It is a day to emphasize giving back and making a positive impact. We are dedicated to bringing our faithful supporters together to help us meet an important fundraising goal.

Every contribution, regardless of its size, makes an impact. Mark your calendar, open your hearts and stand with FFHL on Giving Tuesday as we turn compassion into a \$10,000 reality.

To contribute, visit ffhl.org/donate-now.

**GIVING
TUESDAY**

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE: GRACE RABIE'S SUCCESS STORY

Education plays a vital role in preserving Christianity in the Holy Land. The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) is known for its exceptional University Scholarship Program, which has been a powerful force for changing lives.

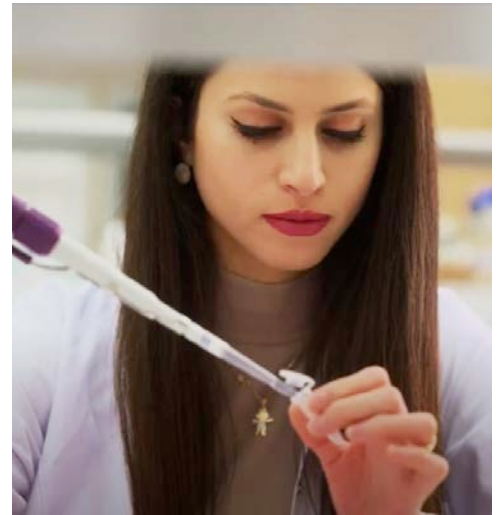
This program helps economically disadvantaged Christian students in the Holy Land who have demonstrated strong academic abilities. It has been instrumental in transforming lives, exemplified by the success story of genetic specialist Grace Rabie.

Coming from a modest background, Grace started her academic journey with the goal of helping her family financially and excelling in her studies. She pledged to maintain a GPA of 3.75 but exceeded her own expectations, earning eight certificates of excellence and honors, resulting in an outstanding average of 3.97.

Grace's accomplishments, fueled by her FFHL scholarship, were nothing short of transformative. As she pursued her graduate studies, a letter from Father Peter F. Vasko changed her life, offering acceptance into a scholarship program that covered all her educational expenses.

Since 1997, FFHL's University Scholarship Program has awarded over 600 scholarships to Christian youth in various fields including medicine, law, business administration, accounting, engineering and pharmacy. Impressively, 95% of graduates secure professional employment and choose to remain in the Holy Land.

FFHL invites you to consider becoming a sponsor to inspire minds, lives and dreams and help Christian youth remain in the Holy Land. Contact us today at 855-500-3345 or info@ffhl.org to be part of a future where education shapes lives, opportunities abound, and the Christian legacy endures.



Grace Rabie, Genetic Specialist and former FFHL university scholarship recipient

“

I wanted to participate and help my family with the expenses of my college education. I promised myself to always exceed 3.75 in order to get a scholarship, so I completed four years of study with eight certificates of excellence so my family did not have to pay my college tuition.

– GRACE RABIE

THE PRIORY OF PHILADELPHIA RAISES FUNDS FOR FFHL



Fr. Peter F. Vasko (left) receives the gift of a Priory medal from Chancellor Mark Gall (center) and Past Prior Andrew Scutti (right)



Members of the Priors of Philadelphia, the Delaware, and St. King Charles the Martyr in attendance to hear a presentation by Fr. Peter F. Vasko

The priory of Philadelphia of the Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem recently hosted an event featuring Father Peter F. Vasko, President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL), at the historic Jarrettown Hotel. The event supported FFHL's mission of preserving Christian sites and aiding the Christian minority in the Holy Land. Father Peter highlighted the importance of scholarships in sustaining the Christian presence in the region, providing education and job opportunities.

Guests purchased gifts and relics from the Good Shepherd Olivewood Company, with the proceeds benefiting the cause. The event successfully raised funds and generated enthusiasm for FFHL's mission. The Priory, along with the Delaware and St. King Charles the Martyr, united in support of preserving Christian heritage and empowering the Christian community in the Holy Land.

INTRODUCING NEW BOARD MEMBER NICHOLAS G. SANSONE



We are honored to introduce Nicholas G. Sansone, the newest member of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land's Board of Directors. Sansone's appointment is not only significant for our organization but also a perfect fit for our mission of preserving and supporting the Holy Land.

Sansone currently serves as Principal at Sansone Group, a real estate development and management company based in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. His journey with Sansone Group, which began as a high school intern, is nothing short of inspirational. From custodial work in high school, to marketing and brokerage during college, Nick's hands-on approach and relentless drive for excellence has been evident throughout his career.

Sansone's dedication to development emerged when he transitioned into brokerage and development roles, successfully orchestrating deals and establishing Limited Partner relationships. His visionary leadership led to the birth of the Development Partner Program, earning Sansone Group recognition as a Top 10 Development Firm in the U.S. in 2021.

He holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Webster University in St. Louis, Missouri, and a Juris Doctorate from The John Marshall Law School in Chicago, Illinois.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Sansone is actively involved in various charitable and civic organizations, including co-founding the Ten8 Project and contributing to The Mission Continues.

We welcome Nick Sansone to our board and look forward to his valuable contributions as we continue to support Christians in the Holy Land.

Board Announcements



Joseph Donnelly

FFHL gives heartfelt thanks to Board member Joseph Donnelly for his invaluable service. Donnelly will transition to a special advisory role, where his wisdom will continue to guide us.



Karen Carroll

FFHL extends our sincerest gratitude to Board member Karen Carroll for her dedicated service as secretary. Honorable Will Hartnett will continue her legacy as our new secretary.



Support Holy Land Families in Crisis

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) is a source of hope for men, women and children who are deeply affected by the war in Israel. FFHL is committed to providing help and support in this crisis situation as we collaborate closely with our dedicated partners in the Holy Land.

Join us in helping our brothers and sisters who are caught in the crossfire of this conflict.

If you wish to donate directly to the support of Holy Land families in crisis, visit ffhl.org/humanitarian-aid.



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We can't wait to hear from you!

For exciting updates and events,
visit ffhl.org/regions.

We Want to Hear from You!

***Let us know how we can
serve you better!***

Please take a moment to answer
our brief survey.



Scan the QR code or visit
surveymonkey.com/r/NL56-FFHL
to fill out the survey.