



FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION
FOR THE HOLY LAND

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 61 | SPRING 2026

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PILGRIMS RENEW THEIR FAITH

In late 2025, a group of pilgrims led by Father John, journeyed to Washington D.C., Rome and Assisi. The trip included many unforgettable holy sites and experiences. Several pilgrims were eager to share the impact of their journey and encourage other supporters to join one of FFHL's upcoming pilgrimages.



Having lived in Rome for a total of seven years and visited Assisi many times I wasn't sure what more I could gain from a pilgrimage with the FFHL, but I was wonderfully surprised. The small group who all got along so well, the excellent guidance of Sister Nancy and the spiritual leadership of Fr. John all worked together to make this an exceptional experience. The greatest impression on me was our visit to Greccio. From the climb to the sanctuary, to visiting the original Friary and immersing ourselves in the spirit of those humble men, ultimately to celebrating Mass in the chapel (where I could sing Tu scendi dalle stelle) followed by a delicious Christmas pranzo was deeply moving. Honestly, of all the pilgrimages I have taken over the years this one was the best!

- MONSIGNOR DENNIS MIKULANIS *Santee, CA, Diocese of San Diego*



Celebrating Christmas in Greccio where St. Francis frequented and walking through the hilltop village to a restaurant overlooking the valley below surrounded by snow-capped mountains was a special treat after a Christmas Mass led by Msgr. Dennis whose emotional homily reminded us that God loves us even with our imperfections. Renewing our baptismal vows in one of the churches in Assisi, seeing Pope Leo XIV and watching the Vietnamese contingent near us during the general audience paying homage to Fr. John in his Friar robes and each one asking for a picture to which Fr. John cheerfully consented. We were traveling with a rock star! Then Pope Leo arrived and the culmination of our trip became a reality!

- GISELE A *New York City, NY*



If I had to choose one very meaningful event it would be our experience at Greccio. It was an experience I will remember forever – the journey, the small chapel where the altar of the live Nativity was staged, Mass in the very beautiful Church, all the different Nativity scenes – it was like being back in time. Other experiences: the visit to the location of the leper colony which existed in St. Francis's time, with its very dear little chapel, the private tour of Santa Maria Maggiore given to us by Cardinal Makrickas, the Archbishop of the Cathedral, ending with a descent down the spiral Bernini staircase, and of course just being able to share in the Jubilee Year during Advent in Rome with so many fellow Catholic pilgrims.

- PATTY GARCZYNSKI *Poway, CA*



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.



A LETTER FROM THE CUSTOS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In this season marked by repentance and quiet attention to God, the Holy Land offers a sign of hope that has not been seen for some time.

After many months of absence, pilgrims have begun to return to Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth. Their presence brings encouragement to the Christian communities who have remained faithful while carrying the weight of uncertainty. Each pilgrimage is an act of trust that strengthens both the people and the places entrusted to the Custody.

As the Church looks toward the Jubilee inspired by Saint Francis, we are reminded that peace grows through humble presence and patient prayer. The Franciscan mission continues each day in the care of the holy places and in accompaniment of the living Christian communities who call this land home.

This penitential season invites us to make room for God by letting go of what distracts the heart. In that space, we are able to hear the quiet call to charity and to respond with generosity.

I ask you to continue praying for peace in the land of the Lord's birth. Please know that your support is received with gratitude and brings comfort to those who persevere in faith.

MAY THE LORD LEAD US TOWARD THE LIGHT OF EASTER.



Fr. Francesco Ielpo,
O.F.M.
Chairman, FFHL
Custos of the Holy Land



MEET WILL HARTNETT

BOARD MEMBER OF FFHL

Will Hartnett and his family have supported FFHL since 2006 after experiencing one of Fr. Peter's pilgrimages. He then joined the Board in 2017. Hartnett is a partner in The Hartnett Law Firm, which specializes in estate and trust administration and litigation. He served in the Texas House of Representatives from 1991 to 2013, including 14 years as Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. Hartnett graduated cum laude from

Harvard University and received his JD from the University of Texas. He and his wife Tammy have three sons and reside in Dallas, TX.

WHY IS SUPPORTING FFHL IMPORTANT? All the FFHL programs are vital to help the Christians in the Holy Land, including the scholarships for higher education and jobs training, housing assistance, multiple programs for children, and long-overdue restoration of the ancient Tomb of Jesus. Israel was Jesus' home, and we honor Him by sharing our blessings with the Christians who live today in His home. If we, who have so many blessings, do not help young Christians gain a solid footing in the Holy Land, they will move to more welcoming countries which offer them better lives.

HOW DO FFHL PILGRIMAGES HELP KEEP CHRISTIAN FAITH ALIVE IN THE HOLY LAND? Visiting the Holy Land helps us understand that Jesus' home is our spiritual home – the source of all our hopes. As we can see in this troubled time today, without the presence of the Franciscans and the Christian congregations who daily dwell there, the Holy Land would be an empty Christian museum. The Franciscans have selflessly carried out their papal assignment of caring for Christians in the Holy Land, amidst great difficulties, since 1342. I'm very grateful to Fr. Peter for leading my family and me on our deeply spiritual pilgrimage, and for our years of friendship, and to Fr. John for setting aside his powerful position with the Franciscan Order to take charge of the Foundation.

GOOD SHEPHERD SOCIETY MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

KAREN AND MICHAEL O'SHEA



Karen and Michael O'Shea proudly joined the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land's Good Shepherd Society (GSS) a few years ago as an expression of their faith and belief in the mission of FFHL. Their decision to make a planned gift to FFHL followed a luncheon in Naples where they heard more about FFHL's mission to keep the Christian presence and history alive in the Holy Land.

Michael grew up involved in a Franciscan parish in New Jersey and Karen eventually joined him there and came to love the Franciscan priests and their devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ.



Keeping our faith alive is paramount. Enabling future Catholics and Christians the ability to see and experience and *learn* more about our Lord Jesus Christ and protect the history of our faith is important to us. We encourage everyone to attend one of the luncheons and hear about the work of the Franciscans and how they are preserving the holiest of places in our World History!"

- KAREN O'SHEA



The Good Shepherd Society (GSS) is for donors who wish to keep contributing to FFHL's mission after they have passed and God has welcomed them into the Kingdom of Heaven. **To learn more about legacy giving and joining the Good Shepherd Society, please visit FFHLLEGACY.ORG.**



A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXHIBITION

In early March, FFHL joined the Custody of the Holy Land and the Terra Sancta Museum of Jerusalem for a private preview of To the Holy Sepulchre at the Kimbell Art Museum in Fort Worth, Texas. The exhibition presents sacred treasures, many unique, one-of-a-kind, and still used for liturgical celebrations, preserved by Franciscan Friars in Jerusalem and is open to the public through June 28.

For more information, please visit KIMBELLART.ORG/HOLY-SEPULCHER.

CRADLING CHRISTIANITY BENEFIT DINNER

RAISES NEEDED SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

The annual Cradling Christianity Benefit dinner was held on September 4, 2025, at Columbus' Our Lady of Victory Church. Guests enjoyed a Mass with Bishop Earl Fernandes, a gourmet dinner and an inspiring keynote address on the past, present and future in the Middle East by Father John Puodziunas, OFM, president of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL) and Father Peter F. Vasko, O.F.M., FFHL founding president. Event Chairpersons Dee and Kris Pellissier arranged to have two of the program's students, Ayman Awwad and Rosemary Haroun, speak virtually from the Jerusalem area. Ayman, who is studying to be a medical doctor, shared his gratitude for the support he's received from the University Scholarship Program. He said that his faith influences his daily life by giving him the ability to live in peace and love during troubled times in the region and the capacity to care for others.



Event Video Call: Ayman Awwad (left); Rosemary Haroun (center); Fr. John Puodziunas (right)



(L to R) Front Row: Rita Wanner, Kris Pellissier, Dee Pellissier, Sharon Hess, Shawnie Lurie; Back Row: Michelle McKenzie, Denise Scalzo, Patt Hardie, Edward Sprigler, Fr. Peter Vasko, Fr. John Puodziunas, John Rahm, Rick Wanner, John Schechter

Since 2006 when Cradling Christianity was founded by a small group of Catholics in Columbus, the annual benefit dinner has raised more than \$1 million to support FFHL's University Scholarship Program and has funded scholarships for 70 Christian students. Father John shared that support from groups such as Cradling Christianity plays an important role not only financially but in showing families in the Holy Land that someone cares and wants to help. Looking to the future, he hopes to build an endowment that will continue to support FFHL scholarships, schools, family centers and youth programs.

FFHL'S 2025 VATICAN EMBASSY GALA

IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

FFHL's 9th Biennial Black Tie Benefit Dinner was held at the Apostolic Nunciature in Washington D.C. on October 4, 2025 and chaired by Dr. Joyce K.S. Babiak of Arlington, VA. The event proceeds help to provide college scholarships for young Christians living in the Holy Land. "Our last three Pontiffs have stressed the importance of providing higher education as a strong motivator for those young Christians thinking of departing the Holy Land," said Father John Puodziunas, O.F.M., President of FFHL.



(L to R) Bishop Frank Dewane, Fr. John Puodziunas, Christophe Cardinal Pierre, Bishop Thomas Paprocki, Fr. Ramzi Sidawi

Honored guests included His Eminence, Christophe Cardinal Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States and special advisor to FFHL, the Most Reverend Thomas G. Paprocki, D.D., Bishop of Springfield, IL, the Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane, D.D., Bishop of Venice, FL, Father David Grenier, O.F.M., U.S. Commissary for the Holy Land, Father Ramzi Sidawi, O.F.M., Guardian, Franciscan Monastery, Washington, D.C., and His Excellency, Colonel Frederick R. Kienle, Grand Prior XXIV, Grand Priory of the United States of America, Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem.

The Master of Ceremonies was Father Gregory Jakubowicz, O.F.M. and the invocation was given by the Most Reverend Thomas G. Paprocki, His Eminence, Christophe Cardinal Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States welcomed the guests and introduced Father John Puodziunas, O.F.M., President of FFHL who then presented *The Guardian of the Holy Land Award* which recognizes individuals who have demonstrated an outstanding love of God in their personal lives, and upheld the truth, the reality, the faith and the hopes of the Holy Land. This year's recipient was Denise Marie Scalzo, O.S.F., DGCHS, a lay Franciscan and founding member of FFHL.

The inspiring Keynote Address was given by Lieutenant Colonel Allen B. West. Lieutenant West is a Christian constitutional conservative, combat veteran and former Member of the U.S. Congress.

The Most Reverend Frank J. Dewane, D.D. gave closing remarks and the Benediction. Upon departure the guests were able to view a stone from the actual Tomb of Christ from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. Special gratitude goes to event Underwriter Mr. William Kiefer, Patron Dr. Joyce K.S. Babiak and the New York Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of New York City, the Eastern Lieutenancy, who made a generous donation of \$25,000 to the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land.



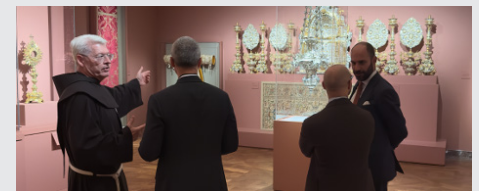
His Excellency Michael J. La Civita, K.G.C.H.S., Lieutenant of the Eastern Lieutenancy of the United States

THE FRICK COLLECTION

PRESENTS THE TREASURES OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

In partnership with the Terra Sancta Museum in Jerusalem, The Frick Collection in New York hosted a rare exhibition bringing the treasures of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the United States for the first time. Previously seen only in Lisbon, Compostela and Florence, these sacred works traveled to New York as part of a limited international presentation rooted in centuries of Christian history. The exhibit ran from October 2, 2025 - January 5, 2026.

FFHL donors were invited to a special reception and private viewing, beginning with an exhibition overview led by Xavier F. Salomon of The Frick Collection and Terra Sancta Museum Director Fr. Stéphane Milovitch, O.F.M. Guests then gathered for cocktails while the galleries opened exclusively for the evening, allowing time for reflection and conversation in an intimate setting.



The exhibition featured masterworks created for use at the Tomb of Christ, including monumental silver reliefs, richly jeweled liturgical furnishings and historic vestments still used in worship today. The gathering connected these historic treasures to the Franciscans' work in the Holy Land today.



UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

2025-2026



THE PROGRAM

Since 1997, FFHL has provided four-year university scholarships to over 700 students who were economically marginalized but had strong academic talent. With specific guidelines to protect your investment, the scholarship program covers up to \$6,000 per year for tuition and books.

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 25 years, FFHL has given over \$15 million in both university scholarships and special educational grants to Christian students. The current graduation rate is 94%, and to-date, only one graduate has relocated away from the Holy Land.

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.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

ROSEMARY HAROUN'S REASON TO SMILE

When I was fifteen years old, my orthodontic journey began. I sat in the orthodontist's chair, feeling shy about my crooked teeth. Over the months, I watched my smile transform, not just in the mirror, but in my confidence. From that day, I knew I wanted to become a dentist.

But my dreams felt heavy because my family struggled to afford even school fees. The cost of dental school felt like a mountain I could never climb. Still, I studied hard and never let go of that vision.

Then, in my last year of high school, something changed. The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land introduced me to a sponsor who supported me and other students, helping us achieve dreams we could not have reached without that support.

Years passed, and now I'm in my fourth year of working, wearing my white coat and a wide smile, thinking back to the shy girl with braces who dreamed of becoming a dentist and to the moment her sponsor stepped in and made that dream possible. Without that belief and generosity, she might never have walked this path. My heart swells with pride, not only for what I have achieved, but for the journey it took to get here, despite long nights with endless textbooks, moments of doubt when challenges felt too big and sacrifices that tested my strength.

Through every struggle, my dream kept me going because I knew helping others smile was worth every obstacle. With the support of those who believed in me, I turned difficulties into stepping stones. Today, I stand proud, knowing that my hard work and perseverance have brought me closer to the person I always wanted to be, carrying silently a message of gratitude:

"Thank you for believing in me. Because of you, I can give others a reason to smile."

– Rosemary Haroun

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OUR SPONSORS
for their continued dedication to these students. Learn more about
how you can become a sponsor at FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS.

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Education will be the key to keeping our
young people in the Holy Land.
POPE EMERITUS BENEDICT XVI



Legacy gifts through the Good Shepherd Society (GSS) provide access to quality higher education for economically-challenged Christian students. Donors who join GSS and make legacy gifts create lasting impacts, helping future generations benefit through faith-centered education and brighter futures.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS, B.A.



Lucianna Abed Rabbo

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, One Sibling
School: Bethlehem University
Major: Engineering
Sponsor: Leilia A. Gernies, CA



Lorina Abu Hamameh

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Estate of Anna J. Kunke



Jamil Abu Issa

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, One Sibling
School: Hebrew University
Major: Computer Engineering
Sponsor: Mr. Robert Matejek, TX



Anthony Abu Manneh

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, Four Siblings
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Medical Laboratory
Sponsor: Estate of Margaret McElroy



Juline Alama

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Bethlehem University
Major: Speech Therapy & Audiology
Sponsor: Estate of Edmund Morelle



Veronica Alaraj

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Bethlehem University
Major: Nursing, Occupational Therapy
Sponsor: Estate of Richard J. Noel



Katia Amaya

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Computer Engineering
Sponsor: Estate of Sharon Pfister



Amir Amsis

Hometown: Ramleh
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Hebrew University
Major: Pharmacy
Sponsor: Estate of Rosemary L. Phelps



Lara Ary

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Hebrew University
Major: Environmental Science
Sponsor: Estate of Clotilda Smith



Adelia Bullata

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, One Brother
School: University of Jordan
Major: Dentistry
Sponsor: Estate of Marguerite B. Stein



Carla Deldelian

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Sister
School: Hebrew University
Major: Psychology
Sponsor: The Carmel J. Vitale Living Trust



Nourine Dibsi

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Mother, Two Sisters
School: Al-Ahliyah University, Jordan
Major: Pharmacy
Sponsor: Mr. Robert Matejek, TX



Samir Dihmes

Hometown: Ramallah
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Arab American University
Major: Computer Engineering
Sponsor: Cradling Christianity, OH



Natalie Farah

Hometown: Ramallah
Family: Parents, Four Siblings
School: ONO Academic College
Major: Law
Sponsor: Mr. William Kiefer, TX



Natalia Freij

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Two Sisters
School: Hebrew University
Major: Law
Sponsor: The Doyle Family Estate



Angelina Ghanem

Hometown: Beit Jala
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Bethlehem University
Major: Nursing, Health Science
Sponsor: Estate of William & Clare Tareanor



Lamar Gharfeh

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Mother, Sister
School: Hebrew University
Major: Animal Science
Sponsor: Estate of Charles P. Weber



Maria Handal

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Mr. William Kiefer, TX



Trevina Hazboun

Hometown: Akko
Family: Parents, One Sibling
School: Tel Aviv University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Estate of Karinne Pevarnik Wolf



Melissa Hosh

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, One Sister
School: Hebrew University
Major: Nursing
Sponsor: Mr. William Kiefer, TX



Nicole Ibrahim

Hometown: Beit Sahour
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Dentistry
Sponsor: Mr. & Mrs. Bernie Skalak, OH



Zakaria Istephan

Hometown: Beit Jala
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Dentistry
Sponsor: Estate of Theresa R. Zawislak



Josian Khalilieh

Hometown: Beit Jala
Family: Parents, Four Siblings
School: Bethlehem University
Major: Speech Therapy & Audiology
Sponsor: Mr. William Kiefer, TX



Yazan Manneh

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Alexandria University, Egypt
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Estate of Wanda Bears



Angie Mishriqi

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Hebrew University
Major: Psychology
Sponsor: Estate of Helen Mary Bernard



Leen Qumsieh

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, One Sibling
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Mr. William Kiefer, TX



Samira Rantisi

Hometown: Ramleh
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: College Minahel
Major: Special Education
Sponsor: Estate of Kaximierz Blachut



Fadi Rofa

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents
School: American University of Madaba
Major: Computer Science
Sponsor: Estate of Stanley Borowski



Natalia Saed

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Bethlehem University
Major: Nursing
Sponsor: Estate of John C. Druding



Lamar Saeed

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Mother, One Sibling
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Dentistry
Sponsor: Estate of Michael J. Eivers



Elia Sahhar

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Estate of Palma Farr



Jennifer Saieh

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Bethlehem University
Major: Nursing
Sponsor: Estate of Raphael Hellman



Noha Shahine

Hometown: Ramleh
Family: Parents
School: Technion University, Haifa
Major: Physics
Sponsor: Estate of Anna J. Kunke



Maria Shamma

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Hebrew University
Major: Genetic Engineering
Sponsor: Estate of Margaret McElroy



Paulyana Sisserian

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Estate of Edmund Morelle



Mike Sleibi

Hometown: Bethlehem
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Al-Quds University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Cradling Christianity, OH



Zaven Tateossian

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Mother
School: Jerusalem Multidisciplinary College
Major: Biotechnology
Sponsor: Mr. Robert Matejek, TX



Samir Tawil

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Hebrew University
Major: Biomedical Science
Sponsor: Mr. Richard Kelly, TX



Jack Tourjman

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, One Brother
School: Hebrew University
Major: Dentistry
Sponsor: Estate of Richard J. Noel



Emil Tuma

Hometown: Haifa
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Technion University, Haifa
Major: Computer Science
Sponsor: Cradling Christianity, OH



Ranem Tuma

Hometown: Haifa
Family: Parents, Three Siblings
School: Technion University, Haifa
Major: Computer Science
Sponsor: Mrs. Janine Marrone and Dr. & Mrs. Noel Maun, FL



Francesca Zaatre

Hometown: Beit Jala
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Hebrew University
Major: Medicine
Sponsor: Cradling Christianity, OH



Loretta Zreineh

Hometown: Jerusalem
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Hebrew University
Major: Architecture
Sponsor: Patty Garczyński, CA

GRADUATE STUDENTS, M.A.



Farid Kirreh

Hometown: Jerusalem
School: Hebrew University
Major: Criminology
Sponsor: The Jean C. Arena Trust



Meray Morra

Hometown: Beit Sahour
Family: Parents, Two Siblings
School: Palestine Ahliya University, Bethlehem
Major: Accounting & Finance
Sponsor: Mr. Paul Schmidt, GA

CONGRATULATIONS

We are proud of our 2025 students and their dedication to building a brighter future. These young men and women are helping to preserve Christianity in the Holy Land by furthering their education locally.

45

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

43

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS, B.A.

2

GRADUATE STUDENTS, M.A.

Thanks to our loyal sponsors and generous community, **17 students were sponsored by individual, family or group donors.** Through the Good Shepherd Society (GSS), **28 students were sponsored by estate gifts and trusts** left to FFHL.

THE MATEJEK FAMILY FOUNDATION

SUPPORTS HOLY LAND CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS

“

An education will open so many doors throughout your life, and it's something that can never be taken away.

THE MATEJEK FAMILY FOUNDATION

The Matejek Family Foundation of Dallas, Texas, has become a key supporter of Christian students in the Holy Land through the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. As an education-based foundation, the Matejek Family Foundation saw FFHL as a way to support both academic and spiritual development for young Christians.

Their involvement began in 2012 during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. There, they met Fr. Peter Vasko and learned about FFHL's work to make higher education accessible to Christian students. Seeing the impact they could make, they began by funding one scholarship a year. That commitment grew and today, they fund three new scholarships annually. *"A four-year college education at a cost of \$6,000 per year was a great opportunity for these students,"* they shared. *"We began with one scholarship yearly and since then have expanded to three new scholarships each year."*

They stay connected with the students they support, receiving letters, photos and updates throughout the year. These communications offer a clear deeper glimpse at how the scholarships are truly making a difference. *"It is great to hear about their progress and journey toward graduation,"* they shared. *"Even though we are half a world apart, they have the same ambitions and dreams that scholars have in the U.S."*

The Matejek's say the most rewarding part is knowing they're helping students build not just careers, but lives rooted in faith and community.

“

This education will change their lives.

THE MATEJEK FAMILY FOUNDATION

THROUGH YOUR GENEROSITY, FFHL IS HOLDING THE **DOORS OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY** OPEN FOR THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE HOLY LAND

HELP US EXTEND AN OLIVE BRANCH

Masters and Bachelors Equivalent
Associates Equivalent • Vocational Programs
Technical Programs • Continued Education

In the 1950s, 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

Work with us to build up minds, lives and hopes in the Holy Land.

LEARN MORE ABOUT SPONSORING A STUDENT AND START YOU PLEDGE TODAY
(855) 500-3345 | Info@FFHL.org | FFHL.org/Programs/Educational-Programs/University-Scholarships/



FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20017-9086

POSTAGE
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<<City>>, <<State>>
<<Zip>>

CHRISTMAS AT THE BOYS HOME



The Franciscan Boys Home in Bethlehem is a Holy Land program that FFHL supports. It gives young boys from difficult backgrounds a place where they feel safe and known.

At Christmas, Fr. Francesco Ielpo, Custos of the Holy Land, visited the home and celebrated a holiday Mass with the boys in the city where Jesus Christ was born.

TO WATCH THE VIDEO BY CMC, VISIT FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS/HUMANITARIAN/FRANCISCAN-BOYS-HOME/

CHILDREN'S MARCH FOR PEACE CARRIES HOPE THROUGH BETHLEHEM

After a two-year pause caused by war, the annual Children Without Borders for Unity and Peace March returned to the streets of Bethlehem.

This annual march is organized by the Children Without Borders Academy to give young people a way to express peace through faith. It has become a sign of continuity for Christian families who remain rooted in the Holy Land.

TO WATCH THE VIDEO BY CMC, VISIT FFHL.ORG/PROGRAMS/HUMANITARIAN/CHILDREN-WITHOUT-BORDERS/




JOIN FFHL ON A SPIRITUAL HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE

Galilee • Petra • Amman • Jerusalem

FALL 2026
10 Nights | 11 Days

To request more information, please email Info@FFHL.org.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Have ideas or topics you'd like us to cover in a future newsletter? Interested in an upcoming pilgrimage? Have feedback or questions?

EMAIL US AT [INFO@FFHL.ORG](mailto:Info@FFHL.org), WE LOOK FORWARD TO CONNECTING WITH YOU!

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