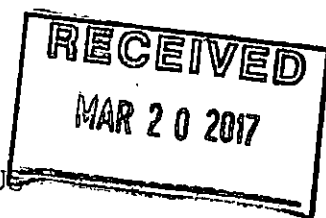




CONGREGATIO
PRO ECCLESIIS ORIENTALIBUS



March 01, 2017
Ash Wednesday

00193 Roma
Via della Conciliazione, 34
Indirizzo postale: 00120 Città del Vaticano

Prot. N. 1/2017

Your Excellency,

The Lenten Journey, which we are traveling, invites us to raise our eyes to the goal: we are following Our Lord Jesus Christ first to Golgotha and then, having descended with Him into the tomb, to experience the ever new and life-giving power of His Resurrection. The Holy Places of our faith are eloquent witnesses of this extraordinary event, which has changed the course of history and opened up a new hope for humanity.

From those places, the Easter proclamation has spread throughout the world, and it continues to spread. A Christian community has remained in those regions down through the centuries, even at the cost of great sacrifice and martyrdom. Since the first Pentecost, it has bravely shown the universal face of the Church to the world.

Our sense of communion in the suffering and risen Christ moves us again this year to undertake the important initiative that is the Collection for the Holy Land. Indeed, this effort manifests the bond of brotherhood that unites the universal Church to the Mother Church of Jerusalem, as the Holy Father has indicated. On the occasion of the Assembly of Organizations for Aid to the Oriental Churches (ROACO), on June 16, 2016, while referring to the ongoing restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Shrine of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Pope Francis recalled the value, not only of the presence of the Church in the Holy Land, but also of the "[maintenance of] the holy places and shrines, also with the help of the yearly Good Friday Collection providently instituted by Blessed Paul VI". Thank to the generosity of so many, including non-Catholics, the restoration of these two sites, which are the common heritage of Christianity, is proceeding with remarkable results.

Today, as we know, living the Christian faith in the Middle East is not at all easy. Especially in Iraq, Syria and Egypt, where Christian communities have experienced an "ecumenism of blood", individuals are daily pressured to abandon their land, or even their faith. Nor does freedom reign in the other countries of the region, where Christians are often subjected to forms of oppression and discrimination that undermine their living conditions.

Keeping hope alive in such circumstances is both difficult and vitally important. Consequently, the small Christian presence in the Middle East has great need of the support and attention of the entire Church. Constant prayer is the first and greatest assistance they seek. Also required, however, is concrete economic aid, taking into account what St. Paul wrote at the time of the first collection for Jerusalem: "Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

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His Excellency the Most Reverend
Msgr. Frederick Bernard HENRY
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Encl.

Once again, from every part of the Church, expressions of solidarity come together effectively in the Good Friday Collection. This enables the Catholic communities of the Holy Land - the Latin Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Custody and other jurisdictions, especially Eastern ones (Greek-Melkite, Coptic, Maronite, Syrian, Chaldean, Armenian) along with religious communities and organizations of all kinds - to help, in their turn, the poor and suffering of every ethnicity and every faith, without distinction.

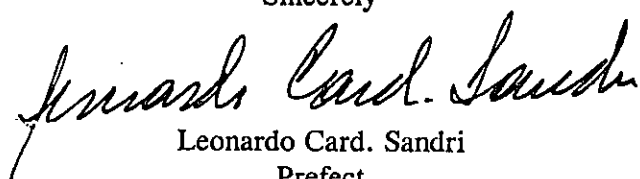
Parishes will continue their pastoral service with preferential attention to the poor. Schools will enable Christians and Muslims to prepare together a future of respect and partnership. Hospitals and clinics, hospices and community centers will continue to host the suffering and the needy, refugees and asylum-seekers, people of all ages and religions hit by the horrors of war. The unforgettable faces of thousands of children and teens, fleeing violence and persecution in Syria and Iraq, continue to challenge us, even as these young people, thanks to our Collection, are being welcomed by Christian schools in neighboring countries.

The *pilgrimage*, which is an important element of the vitality of the Church in the Holy Land, is an initiative always to be promoted. A journey to the Sacred Places in the footsteps of Christ can not only lead the pilgrim to a revival of his faith and a rediscovery of his origins, but it can also serve as a powerful instrument in the New Evangelization. In addition, pilgrimages are an essential resource for the Christian population of the Holy Land. In fact, according to recent statistics, at least 30% of the local community - in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem - live and work thanks to the presence of pilgrims.

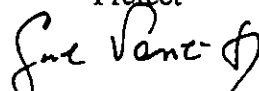
As we prepare for Easter, let us renew our commitment to becoming *artisans of peace*, praying and working that peace may dwell in the heart of every person, especially of our brothers and sisters of the Holy Land and the Middle East.

To You, and to the Priests, Consecrated men and women and to the Faithful, who are helping to insure the success of the Collection, I have the joy of conveying the sincere gratitude of the Holy Father Francis, together with that of the Congregation for Eastern Churches. Finally, as I invoke on behalf of You, Your pastoral ministry and all the faithful of Your jurisdiction abundant divine blessings, I send You wishes for a very Happy Easter and my most fraternal greetings in the Lord Jesus.

Sincerely



Leonardo Card. Sandri
Prefect

+ 
Cyril Vasil', S.J.
Archbishop Secretary

CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND
Order of Friars Minor

Summary Report 2015/2016

The Custody of the Holy Land has for centuries been committed to the conservation and revitalisation of the Holy Places of Christianity in the Land of Jesus and in the entire region of the Middle East. Among the various objectives of the Franciscan mission are the sustaining and progress of the Christian minority that lives in these regions, the conservation and care of the archaeological sites and sanctuaries, the interventions in emergency cases, the liturgy in the Places of cult, the apostolic works and assistance to the pilgrims. During the two years 2015/2016, the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land has been manifested in the projection, programming and carrying out of the following projects and works:

- I. Works aimed at the benefit of pilgrims
- II. Works aimed at the benefit of the local community
- III. Other works – Syria and Lebanon
- IV. Ordinary wages of the Custody

1. WORKS AIMED AT THE BENEFIT OF PILGRIMS

1.1. JERUSALEM

Holy Sepulchre

- Collaboration with all the other Oriental communities present in the Basilica and with the civil authorities for the restoration of the Tomb of the Risen Christ.
- Partial restructuring of the convent.

Garden of Olives in Gethsemane

- Upkeep and restoration of the convent and site (covering of the Grotto, PA system, hot water installation, cleaning of the mosaics).
- A new organ for the Basilica.
- In course of realisation: tunnel for pedestrian communication between the area of the Basilica and the parking lot on the side of the Kidron Valley.
- In course of realisation: a centre for the service of pilgrims.

Sanctuary of the Flagellation of the Lord

- Realisation of a new kitchen for the convent.

VII e VIII Stations of the *Via Dolorosa*

- Restructuring and requalification of the existing premises.

Convent of Saint Saviour: seat of the Custody of the Holy Land and of the seminary

- Remaking: of the waterproofing system and pavementation of the roof of the right aisle of the parish Church; and of part of the floor tiles of the parish hall.
- Realisation: of a new ecological area of the convent (Phase II); of the new offices of the *Associazione di Terra Santa*, of a new covering of the old dovecote, of a storehouse in the mezzanine of the new laundry, and of the place of the workshop-carpentry.
- Infirmary: Changing of the beds with hospital beds with electric handling equipment donated by the hospital of Bergamo; remaking of the water system and of some bathrooms.
- Restructuring of the premises of the seminary, of new office, and of the premises of the archives in the ex-office of the Secretary.
- Cleaning and consolidation of the facades of some courtyards.
- Projection to regain an area (ca. 1600m²) to be destined to various uses, including new offices, library, refreshment area, new spaces for the *Magnificat* Institute, parking lots and *Auditorium* underground.

***Terra Sancta* Museum**

- Realisation of a modern museum centre for the valorisation of the artistic, archaeological and cultural Franciscan heritage. Within an area of circa 2500m² are included: Museum *Via Dolorosa*, Flagellation (works concluded); Archaeological Museum, Flagellation (works in progress), Historical Museum at Saint Saviour (works in progress).

House of welcome *Maria Bambina* for pilgrims and volunteers

- Termination of the restructuring of the bathrooms on the second floor for the welcoming of pilgrims at reduced prices.
- In the course of projection and realisation are the works on the floor destined to be the convent of the Elisabethine Sisters.

Terra Santa College

- Project for the realisation of rooms for volunteers and residents, with bathrooms, kitchen and dining hall.

Christian Information Center

- In course of realisation are the works of complete restructuring of the centre in which a new refreshment area for pilgrims will be installed, together with a multimedial didactic hall dedicated particularly to the Holy Sepulchre.

Franciscan bookshop

- Complete restructuring of the Franciscan library for pilgrims

Sanctuary of Bethany: House of Martha, Mary and Lazarus

- Restoration and developing of the Byzantine and Medieval remains of the convent of Bethany through: the recovery of degraded areas; the formation and employment of 10 young Palestinians in the restoration; sustaining of the business activities of the local feminine association; didactic project with primary schools for the knowledge of the local religious and archaeological sites.

Sanctuary of Bethfage: Entry of the Lord in Jerusalem

- Realisation of new parish halls and new bathrooms for pilgrims.

1.2. AIN KAREM: BIRTHPLACE OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Sanctuary of the Nativity of Saint John

- In course: works of the remaking of the roof of the church of Saint John; restructuring of the premises of the seminary and convent of Saint John.
- Concluded: consolidation of the ancient small convent of Saint John transformed in a new convent for the "Sisters of Catechism"; hall/dining hall for pilgrims and the terraces in the garden.
- In phase of programming the works of the restoration of the church, which shows static problems.

Sanctuary of the Visitation

- Restructuring of the facades of the courtyard of the sanctuary of the Visitation.

Sanctuary of Saint John in the Desert

- Concluded the restructuring of the chapel at the Tomb of Saint Elizabeth.
- Reconstruction of a hermitage, as a result of the forest fires of 2015.

1.3. BETHLEHEM

Basilica of the Nativity

- Collaboration with the other ecclesial communities present and the ANP to the restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity.

Milk Grotto

- Revision of the sanitary water system and waterproofing of the roof of the convent.

1.4. EMMAUS QUBEIBEH

Sanctuary of Saints Simon and Cleopas, disciples of Emmaus

- Concluded the restructuring of the roofs and the realisation of the maintenance of the lattices.
- Programming of some interventions aimed at improving and renewing furniture in the kindergarten.

1.5. NAZARETH

Basilica of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary

- Access for disabled: construction of a lift and acquisition of two automatic slides.
- Restructuring: sacristy of the lower basilica and of the foundations of the sanctuary.
- Installation of a multimedia centre for television transmissions of the *Christian Media Centre* and *Canção Nova*.

1.6. CAPERNAHUM: THE TOWN OF JESUS

Archaeological zone

- Concluded: restoration of the mosaics of the byzantine church; the works of adjustment of the system of videocameras to control the site.
- Realisation: alternative access to the sacristy and recovery of the underlying premises; guest lodgings (ca 10 places).
- Phase II soon to be realised: the accessibility of visitors to the archaeological site through routes and wooden passageways across the archaeological zone.
- Remaking of the pavementation of the parking lot for coaches.

Memorial of Saint Peter

- Complete replacement of the air-conditioning system.

Convent

- Conclusion of the internal maintenance works (pastering, electrical system and air-conditioning).
- To be realised shortly: works of maintenance of the facades.
- In course: the realisation of a storage area in the premises underneath the sacristy.

1.7. MOUNT TABOR: SANCTUARY OF THE TRANSEFIGURATION

- Concluded the realisation of a new parking lot adjacent to the principal entrance – Phase I.

- In phase of programming: the internal parking lot of the monastery (600m²), of the principal road linking the external and internal parking lots, and bathrooms for pilgrims – Phases II and III.

1.8. MOUNT NEBO (JORDAN): MEMORIAL OF MOSES

- Concluded: the project of the new covering for the roof of the basilica of the Memorial of Moses; an exhibition route for the mosaics discovered during the excavations, works of restoration and conservation of the mosaics and of the external walls; restructuring of the bathrooms for pilgrims; archaeological storeroom.
- The whole project has been inaugurated on 15 October 2016.

2. WORKS AIMED AT THE BENEFIT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

2.1. WORKS FOR THE BENEFIT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Scholarships and subsidies

- Financing: 390 scholarships for university studies for a period of 4 years, distributed in the various Universities (Bethlehem, Hebrew University, Bir Zeit, Amman); 178 subsidies for students in difficulty

Sustaining artisan enterprises

- Acquisition of spare parts, machines for production, auxiliary equipment for the safety of the activity of 10 small artisan activities.

Bethlehem: Laboratories for ceramics

- Concluded the realisation of laboratories for ceramics in the premises of the *Saint Francis Millennium Centre* adjacent to the laboratories of wood, mother of pearl and ceramics which are ready and functioning.

Jerusalem: Handcrafts & local Art products' center

- In phase of realisation: a centre for the selling of products of local artisanship (wood, mother of pearl and ceramics) produced in Bethlehem, a space of circa 250m² within the Old City of Jerusalem.

2.2. ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

Bethlehem

- In continuation: the projects to sustain a parish family counselling centre; the project aimed at more than 20 boys (aged 6-12) coming from families in difficulty; medical assistance for families in serious economical difficulties; restructuring of houses of the most needy families.

2.3. WORKS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PARISH COMMUNITIES

Jericho

- Concluded the realisation of a building that will guarantee around 460m² for the activities of the parish.

2.4. SCHOOLS

Amman

- Concluded the realisation of a new wing of the Terra Sancta School for students of the secondary cycle..

Jericho

- Terra Sancta School: Concluded the realisation of new wings for the secondary cycle.

Jerusalem

- Terra Santa School for girls: Concluded restructuring and recovery of premises underneath square.
- Terra Sancta School for boys: Concluded part of the restructuring (renewal of the internal spaces with the reallocation of some of them, the realisation of new spaces for kindergarten, remaking of the systems).
- Programming of two basement levels underneath basket-ball field, to serve as a sports centre.

Cana: Sanctuary of the First Miracle of the Lord

- In course of realisation: the works for the construction of a new school (structural works concluded). The whole complex will also include a parish centre and a covered parking lot covering an area of 5000m².

Haifa

- Extraordinary maintenance of the whole complex, which is now being run by the Franciscans.

2.5. APARTMENTS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES AND YOUNG COUPLES

Jerusalem

- Old City. Continuation of the works of restructuring of the houses of the Old City with the aim of improving the conditions of life of the residents: complete restructuring of 7 houses (4 in 2015, 3 in 2016); partial restructuring of 6 houses (2 in 2015 and 4 in 2016); restructuring of the external shells of 5 buildings.
- Dar al Consul renovation project. In course the restructuring of the residential complex in the Old City, with 41 apartments and a ground floor which is currently not in use. The area of the project covers circa 2500m².
 - Class A restructuring with Major interventions of 14 buildings (in course of which 5 completed).
 - Class B restructuring with Medium interventions of 16 buildings (in course of which 8 completed).
 - Class C restructuring with Minor interventions of 11 buildings (in course of which 5 completed).
 - Restructuring of external shells of 6 buildings in course (of which 2 completed).
- Dar el Kbire: Programming of the extension of the edifice of 300-400m² and intervention on 19 deteriorated existing houses (6 are ready). The total area interested in the project is ca. 2500m².
- Tumian Palace: In programming the extension of the building with the realisation of 3 extra floors and 800m² for residential use.

- Abu Geries: In phase of programming the intervention of the enlargement of the edifice with the realisation of 750m² destined to become offices, restaurants and shops.
- Saint James housing project of Beit Hanina: this is a complex of 6 buildings with a total of 42 apartments divided on 3 levels. After having gained permission to build an extra two floors in each of the edifices, for a total of 24 apartments. In course of programming the executive projection for the upper floors.
- Bethfage (Mount of Olives): programming of new apartments, an extension of circa 750m² of the residential complex consisting of 10 houses; realisation of a boundary wall to protect the entire property.
- Pisgat Zeev housing project: Programming of a new residential complex with 70-80 dwelling units and 300m² for commercial use.

Jaffa

- The Franciscan Neighbourhood: Acquired permits to build 124 apartments destined for the Christian families of the parish. The total area of the apartments will cover circa 10.000m².

Nazareth

- Housing Project in Nazareth: Project for the realisation of a residential complex, where besides the Chapel and some premises for social use, we plan to build 80 apartments to be destined for young families.

2.6. OTHER CULTURAL PROJECTS

- *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*. Each year the Custody of the Holy Land sustains economically the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem. It offers circa 30 scholarships for students coming from various dioceses, covering the entire period of their studies.
- Christian Media Centre. The Custody has given a new name to the *Franciscan Media Centre*, and from December 2014 it is called *Christian Media Centre*. The services offered include: Website, completely renewed, simplified in its use and now mobile friendly; *Terra Sancta News*, a weekly news bulletin which presents faith, history, current events in the Holy Land; transmitted by ca. 35 broadcasters in the world in 6 languages; documentaries on social and religious themes in various languages; direct transmission of liturgical celebrations and events.
- *Magnificat* Institute of Music. In a few years of activity the *Magnificat* has become a school of music, in grade of preparing various students coming from diverse cultures (Christians, Jews and Muslims). The *Magnificat* promotes activities of research and cultural manifestations on the local and international level.

3. OTHER WORKS

In Syria, Jordan and Lebanon we have intensified the continued the aid to the Syrian and Iraqi populations, both Christians and non-Christians, who live in a situation of extreme need, through the presence of the Friars of the Custody of the Holy Land with the financial help and collaboration of the *Associazione di Terra Sancta*.

3.1. IN JORDAN

- We have placed some halls of the Seminary adjacent to the Terra Sancta College for the use of a group of women refugees from Iraq.
- Aid to some families in the refugee camps.

3.2. IN LEBANON

- 35 families are being welcomed and sustained on a temporary basis at Deir Mimas and Harissa, while waiting to obtain visas in order to emigrate. When these families leave Lebanon they will be substituted by new families.
- 50 Iraqi and Syrian children and young people are helped to be able to go to school.

3.3. IN SYRIA

- In the parishes of the Custody in Aleppo, Damascus, Knayeh, Yakoubieh and Latakiah we have continued to strengthen the activities in the emergency centres. The aid is principally directed to the emergency centre of Aleppo in the parish of Saint Francis, where the needs of the Christian and non-Christian population have been greatest. In overall terms the aid to the population has been realised thus: 120 houses repaired; 85 families helped every month to pay their rent; 1.650 families have received every month food and other items of first necessity; 540 families each month have received water in their houses; 440 persons each month have been helped to buy items of first necessity 840 families every month have been given economical aid to be able to have electricity; 480 students of the primary and secondary school have been helped to be able to go to school and pay their school fees.
- We have supported the hospital Al Rajaa of Aleppo, which can hold 60 beds and which belongs to the Custody of the Holy Land, through: rehabilitation of the second floor (12 rooms with 24 beds); providing necessary medicinal equipment; sustaining the medical care and hospital expenses for 90 patients.

3.4. RHODES KOS

- Aid through food supplies and first assistance to refugees who pass through the centre of temporary welcome of Rhodes and Kos.

4. ORDINARY WAGES OF THE CUSTODY

- Wages of circa 1300 employees in 80 shrines, 15 schools, 25 parishes, 4 Case Nove for pilgrims and various other activities.