



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Palestinian Christians in Gaza supported by the whole Church of the Holy Land



Archbishop Pizzaballa in front of the ruins of Gaza last Spring.

The Governor General of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is in constant contact with the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem in order to respond to the latter's appeal to help the Christians of Gaza after the eleven-day Israeli-Palestinian conflict that devastated Gaza last May. In the meantime, solidarity has been organized locally, according to the wish of the Patriarch himself, who first of all intends to support the formation of future Christian generations and prepare "a new secular leadership" capable of planning political and economic solutions in the Holy Land.

On the occasion of his visit to Rome at the end of June to participate in the 94th meeting of the Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO), Archbishop Pizzaballa returned to the root causes of the ever "incandescent" situation in the Holy Land, stating that it is a priority for the Catholic Church to form lay Christians capable of finding their place within society, in order to overcome rancor and resentment, as well as to promote longterm solutions in Palestine and Israel. Concretely, to resolve the most pressing issue, he had issued an appeal on May 25, asking parishes and churches to donate their Sunday collections to the Christian community in Gaza.

"The appeal I sent has borne fruit," said Patriarch Pierbattista Pizzaballa. "More than \$60,000 has been sent from the regions of Palestine and Israel." Half of the funds will be allocated to repair damage caused to the school and spaces around the Sisters of the Holy Rosary's convent. The needs are immense, as the Patriarch was able to see Palestinian Christians in Gaza supported by the whole Church of the Holy Land for himself after making a pastoral visit to the Christian community of the Gaza Strip from June 14 to 17, 2021.

In the school of the Rosary Sisters, he inspected the damage suffered by the building and some solar panels. Repair costs currently total \$340,000. Following his visit to the Missionaries of Charity, who lovingly care for disabled children, the Patriarch met with recipients of the Employment Creation and Skills Enhancement Program. More than 70 young people benefit from this program, working in religious, educational, social, health and development institutions.

The Patriarch also attended some meetings at the Caritas medical center and the Thomas Aquinas training center, the latter organizes courses in English, in computer science and personnel management for young Christians. Archbishop Pizzaballa also met with professors, staff and students of the Holy Family School, authorizing a 15% reduction in tuition fees for 2020-2021, as well as a contribution to offer psychosocial support to teachers, students and parents before the start of the next academic year.

Later, the Patriarch visited the sick and the elderly, verifying the damage inflicted on their homes. He was able to see for himself the destruction of the city's infrastructure and spend time with those affected by the war. Fifty Christian families have suffered considerable damage to their homes, but fortunately 32 of them are already being helped by the Latin Patriarchate.

The visit ended with Archbishop Pizzaballa administering the sacraments to twentythree children in the Church of the Holy Family: nineteen received their First Communion, three were confirmed and one child was baptized. "I touched with my own hands the weariness of the people... the wounds of the war are still open, especially at the psychological level. I noticed that the word 'trauma' is used a lot and I had never heard it before. Very strong trauma. So I tell you not to lose courage, do not lose hope," said the Patriarch.

(July 2021)



Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, was received at Palazzo della Rovere – on the sidelines of the ROACO meeting –

by Cardinal Fernando Filoni, Grand Master of the Order itself. The talks, which were also attended by the Governor General, Ambassador Leonardo Visconti di Modrone, focused on the situation in the Holy Land and in particular in the Gaza Strip – visited in the previous days by Archbishop Pizzaballa – and on the initiatives to be undertaken to remedy the damage caused by the bombings. Particular attention was also given to upcoming major events, including the planned visit of the Cardinal Grand Master to the Holy Places, as well as the coordination of numerous initiatives promoted by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Palestine, Israel and Jordan in agreement with the Latin Patriarchate.