



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Holy Child Program bought a home



I bambini con problemi psicologici o mentali vengono assistiti con l'aiuto dell'Ordine grazie all'Holy Child Program di Betlemme.

In 2019, prompted by Cardinal Filoni, Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Mother Shaun Vergauwen, Foundress of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist (Meriden, CT), and the Bethlehem Holy Child Program Board, launched a fundraising campaign. The goal of this combined effort was to purchase the property in Beit Sahour, located near the shrine of the Shepherds' Field. Since 1995, this has been the place where the activities of the Holy Child Program, an initiative of the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist, have been carried out.

The *Holy Child Program* provides an intense therapeutic day treatment program and alternative education for children in the Bethlehem region of the Holy Land. These children suffer from untreated complex mental health issues, severe behavioural and emotional problems, and exposure to intergenerational trauma. It is clear and understandable how important this has been, and now more than ever. The mission of the Holy Child Program is to instil hope through healing and to build bridges of peace in a land that so desperately needs peace.

The property where the project is based has been rented from a private family since 2000. Over the years, the project has developed the building and the land to provide a healing environment for its students and their families.

The acquisition of the property was completed in July 2025. The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has graciously allowed the property to be purchased and held in its name, to safeguard it in perpetuity.

“Our Program is deeply rooted in the community. For 25 years, we have served families, even generations of families, as well as other institutions working with children. The program has a long history. We put a lot into the building, but we always lived with the awareness that the owners could

end the contract or sell the property to someone else. Now we do not have that worry," comments Iskander Khoury, Executive Director of the Holy Child Program, with joy and excitement.

A heartfelt word of thanks comes from the Franciscan Sisters of the Eucharist. They had the inspiration, invested resources, and worked for the children they educate and support, as well as for this project, over the past 30 years. We are grateful for the example they offer and for their commitment. "We are very grateful for the generous financial assistance of the various Lieutenancies of the Order throughout the USA and from the Grand Magisterium. We are also grateful for their continued encouragement, expressed by visiting the school and by praying for the children and families in need of its service."

Over the last three years, the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has contributed about 150,000€ to the project.

(October 2025)