



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

*At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land*

## Some projects carried out in the Holy Land



Over the past two years, the Grand Magisterium, in agreement with the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, has decided to invest more on some small projects in the Holy Land compared to large construction projects. In 2018 the Grand Magisterium of the Order continued its support of those major projects already underway, such as the completion of the work in the new church in Jubeiha and the restructuring of a kindergarten in Hashimi (both in Jordan), but above all the important project that provides for the increase in salaries for teachers of the schools of the Patriarchate. This initiative allows students to continue to have a high-level education while respecting the skills of their teachers whose pay must reflect their abilities. In addition to these projects and the important monthly aid sent to support the institutional expenses of the Patriarchate – for example, the seminary or school fee subsidies for students who have difficulty paying – other smaller projects are outlined in the following pages.

Various projects involve minor renovations. Unless we understand the daily life of the structures that require them, these projects may seem far from urgent. Yet, we can all imagine how much more complicated normal activities become in a dilapidated environment.

The **Beit Afram elderly home in Taybeh** in Palestine is home to 28 elders from various Palestinian cities and Jerusalem. The mission of this centre is to offer a healthy place permeated by a family spirit that provides a better quality of life and medical care to the people who need it. In the summer months the hospice kitchen can reach 50° C, meaning it is impossible for the staff to prepare lunch. One of the small projects implemented in 2018 donated an air conditioning system to this structure.

Through another project that required help for an air conditioning system, we came to discover the story of a small Christian village in Jordan in a semi-desert area: **Smakieh**. The land on which the

village stands was donated to the Christian community by the progenitor of the Majali Muslim family in the name of good relations between this family and the Christian community. Today it is home to 300 Bedouin families belonging to two historical Catholic tribes, one from the Latin rite and the other from the Greek rite. Because of the location, summers are extremely hot and winters can be very cold. The **air conditioning system of the Latin church** of Saint Michael had to be repaired to allow the elderly and young children to participate in church functions.

To help cover electricity costs, **Ein Arik** (next to Ramallah, in Palestine) decided to build a **solar panel system for the church and the Catholic school** in the city. This system has already been tested in the schools of the Patriarchate in five other cities, with good results. Over time, what is saved on electricity will be reinvested in projects to the benefit of students and the population.

Additionally, the **school in Kerak** needed a **video surveillance system**. Unfortunately, in December 2016, the city was the target of a terrorist attack and the police requested the Latin Patriarchate provide security cameras for this school that welcomes a thousand students, some of whom live even 40 km away. These children face this journey every day to receive their education here.

The **Latin school of Beit Jala** with more than 700 students sought funding for **new equipment for their computer lab**, thus allowing the school to offer more computer stations for students. In today's world, the importance of being able to keep up with the technology to face the world of work is clear.

Students in the **school in Aboud** in Palestine have had to move to other villages to complete their education since the structure until now housed only up to year nine of compulsory education. The structure requires one more classroom to allow students to also attend the tenth year by taking advantage of the premises dedicated to the Christian educational centre. This is why the project would like to be able to build a **new room for pastoral activities**.

Some small projects have **renovated the houses where the Rosary Sisters live in Rameh (in Israel), Hashimi and Amman (in Jordan)**. The Sisters of the Holy Rosary of Jerusalem are the only religious female congregation of Latin rite of Arab origin in the Holy Land and are at the service of the diocese in many ways and in various structures, especially in schools and parishes. Pope Francis proclaimed the foundress, Mother Marie Alphonsine, a saint on May 17, 2015.

Another small structural project concerns the **headquarters of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem**. With the restoration of the Patriarchate in the 19th century, a building was built to house its headquarters and this occurred above six **water tanks** that have since been used as a precious source of water for priests living in the convent and employees, as well as for irrigation. Recent studies have shown that water quality is no longer good and poses a risk to health, thus requiring restructuring and cleaning work.

Staying on the subject of water, another project involves the disabled guests of the **Our Lady of Peace Centre next to Amman**. Opened in 2004, this centre offers day care for disabled people and their families. Every year, 2000 people are welcomed here and it is the largest, free of cost rehabilitation centre in Jordan. In the physiotherapy department, among the various equipment available, there is also a **hydrotherapy pool**. The ability to float and the warm waters reduce pain

and muscle spasms. The pool has been unusable for several months because of the need to restore its filters before it is fit to welcome its guests again.

In 2011, **Our Lady of Peace Centre** opened a second facility in Jordan, in **Aqaba**. One of the small projects carried out in 2018 has supported an initiative aimed at creating jobs for disabled young people and for some unemployed Syrian refugee women living in the area. Some large hotels, like the Hilton, have agreed to donate to the project used soap bars that are left in hotel rooms. In the Aqaba Centre, they are reworked to be recycled by disabled children, and women are involved in marketing these products. The loan requested was used to cover the purchase of machinery and costs for licenses.

Another project benefits the **Palestine Scouts**. To date 1500 young people are part of the Catholic scouts and they live their ecclesial membership with joy and dynamism. Among the many activities, the children go on excursions, camping, volunteering and contribute to the well-being of the society in which they live. To continue all this, adequate facilities are needed and, in some cases, the right equipment. This project, in fact, has allowed the purchase of 10 tents to allow young people to experience summer camps and 2000 badges not only for Palestinian children but also for international scout groups when they are on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

Another project focuses on the young people of **Gaza**. The parish priest of the only Catholic church in Gaza, the Church of the Holy Family, together with the other members of the church and the Patriarchate, wants to open a **Christian cultural centre for young people** in which young people can access a more specific formation that prepares them for the jobs market, given the very high percentage of unemployment in Gaza. The goal is to provide courses, for example, in English, IT, leadership and management.

The **employees of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem** were also asked to participate in **training courses** to increase their skills and knowledge.

Another project that closely touches the headquarters of the **Patriarchate** concerns the work necessary to **preserve, catalog and enhance its cultural heritage**. Since 1847, in fact, various objects have become part of its heritage: liturgical objects, sacred vestments, religious works of art, books and gifts received, as well as a collection of 3000 photos that need to be digitized and made available for exhibitions. The main goal is to boost awareness of the history of the diocese and the mission of the Patriarchate.

In **Jordan**, a request was received to support **pastoral work with migrants**. Unfortunately, foreign workers from Sri Lanka (20,000 of whom 8,000 are Christians) and the Philippines (45,000 of whom 85% are Catholics) remain a category vulnerable to abuses and exploitation. In 2016, the Lieutenancy for the Philippines of the Order committed to sending a Filipino chaplain to this community for their spiritual needs and this commitment continues through economic support in favour of pastoral activities that allow these migrant communities to organize initiatives, have spaces to meet and share their experiences and produce books and liturgical aids in their languages.

The last project supported in 2018 concerns **assistance to prisoners in Jordan**. Since 2008, the Patriarchate with a group of volunteers has started to go to visit the detention centres regularly,

together with the Caritas staff. There are about 200 Christians in the 13 Jordanian jails. A Sri Lankan sister says: "Very often, Sinhalese women are not guilty of important crimes, their crime is to have left their employer before the end of the contract, sometimes they were victims of abuse, and some have stolen but rarely is it about major crimes. Caritas helps them return home; without this help, these women would likely remain in prison for the rest of their lives because the embassies do not help them". Therefore, sometimes, this project covers the cost of airfare home, but also medicines, clothes, religious items and even food.

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