

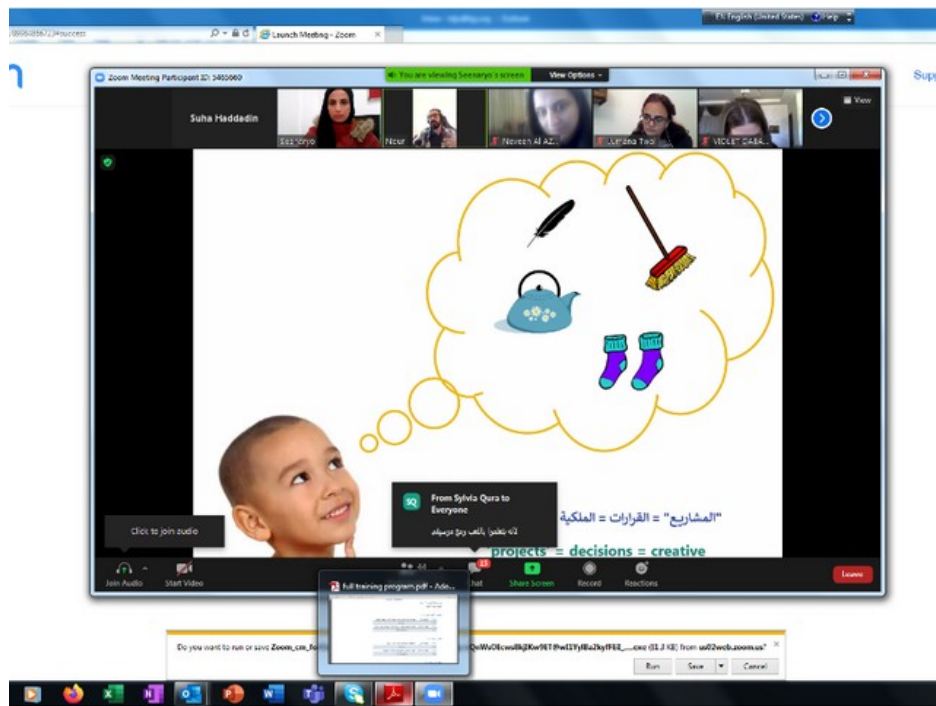


# GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

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

## Solidarity projects in the Holy Land

Report on the support provided by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in 2021



Teaching in the Holy Land continued virtually during the pandemic, with IT equipment funded by the Order.

After two very difficult years (2020-2021) due to the pandemic, the health situation seems to be slowly improving in Israel. On the economic side, unemployment remains an important issue.

Against this backdrop, pilgrimages have slowly resumed since December when Israel once again opened its doors to tourists. "The situation is volatile and could change at any time," Sami ElYousef, administrative director of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, rightly says. During the meetings of the Grand Magisterium and the continental meetings of the Lieutenants and Magistral Delegates, he thanked the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. He stressed the importance of the help brought by the Knights and Dames, as well as the support regularly provided by the Grand Magisterium, amounting to more than \$ 750,000 a month, which supports the daily life of the Patriarchate (schools, institutional expenses, seminary training, etc.).

Some 20 small projects were funded in 2020, such as the refurbishment of a school playground in Jifna, Palestine, and the purchase of interactive whiteboards for various schools in the Patriarchate. Several major projects were also completed. These included the construction of a new house for the Sisters of the Rosary in Beit Jala, in Palestine, the construction of a new floor for the house of the Sisters of Saint Dorothy who serve in the parish of Hashimi, in Jordan, and the renovation of the house of the Sisters of the Rosary in Marka, also in Jordan.

For 2021, the Lieutenancies adopted twenty projects, primarily investment projects such as building classrooms in Mafraq, Jordan, renovating a study centre in Al-Ahliyya, Palestine, and building a balcony for the sisters' house in Gaza, totalling approximately \$ 1 million. Humanitarian and pastoral projects benefitted from a considerable increase in funding. The former increased from \$ 650,000 to \$ 1 million for, among other things, medicines and health emergencies, subsidies for Iraqi refugees,

social assistance, women's empowerment and job creation in Gaza. Funding for pastoral projects increased from \$ 340,000 to \$ 500,000, for Summer youth camps, spiritual retreats and Christian Student Youth leadership training.

The appeal launched by Cardinal Filoni, which rasied more than three million dollars, to address the damage caused by Covid-19 made it possible to pay for tuition in about forty schools, support families in about forty parishes with food parcels and create jobs in collaboration with Bethlehem University. In total, relief sent by the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre has helped more than 20,000 people in need during these difficult times. In addition to practical help, more than \$ 1 million has been held in reserve to address the pandemic in 2022.

The Patriarchate's 44 schools have 1777 employees and nearly 19,000 students, but have lost more than 600 of those registered, mostly Christians. "The challenge is to be able to maintain these schools, bearers of the Christian values of dialogue and fraternity in our biblical territories," explained Sami El-Yousef, pointing out that, with approximately 2,000 employees, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem is the largest Christian employer in the Holy Land. Each year, the Order contributes nearly \$ 4,800,000 toward school expenses so that children can continue to benefit from a highquality education. This education offered in a Christian environment, is open to young Muslims giving everyone the chance to grow and develop in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.

Bartholomew McGettrick, president of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre's Holy Land Commission, which closely monitors activities and projects in the Holy Land, told the Order's international meetings that the Commission hopes to visit the projects in early 2022. "The general strategy of our support to the Christian presence in the Holy Land remains the same: we focus on education, humanitarian aid and pastoral support. It is through these activities," he concluded, "that we promote an encounter with Christ, in today's world, by being with the most vulnerable: the children, the sick, the elderly and the needy."

*(March 2022)*