The “Ensuring the Future” Campaign for the Latin Patriarchate Schools

In addition to the annual contributions that all Members send to the Grand Magisterium for the Holy Land, the North American Lieutenancies, with the approval of the Grand Master and the Governor General, have decided to launch an additional initiative to support the network of the 44 schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. This campaign aimed to raise funds for the necessary renovation work of classrooms and the school environment, as well as a fund for the salaries of teachers who do excellent and courageous work, but whose salaries are, to date, uncompetitive.

In April 2023, following a Holy Land Commission visit and review of its findings, Tom Pogge, Vice Governor for North America, made a request to the Grand Magisterium to launch an extraordinary capital campaign to address substantial repairs, renovations and upgrading needed in the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem schools. With the support of Cardinal Fernando Filoni, the campaign concept was approved. An $8 million goal was set based on a thorough review of the needs of all 44 schools in the Latin Patriarchate. In October 2023, the war between Israel and Hamas caused a pause in the launch of the campaign while the focus of the Latin Patriarchate turned to immediate humanitarian aid for those effected by the hostilities.

In January 2024, His Beatitude, the Grand Prior of the Order, Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, asked that the North America leadership consider raising the campaign goal by an additional $4 million to help support teachers’ salaries and enhance financial aid for parents in the face of record unemployment. Saying “The path to peace runs through our schools,” His Beatitude encouraged the North America leadership to begin the campaign as quickly as possible.

Under the leadership of campaign chair Tom Standish, the Ensuring the Future of the Latin Patriarchate Schools campaign was launched in September 2024. Brochures, presentations at

Investiture weekends, social media announcements, videos and other communications, were created to share the needs with all members of the Order in North America and ask for a generous response.

During the campaign it was emphasized that any pledge or gift to the campaign had to be in addition to the annual donations our members make to the Order. Our North American Members responded generously, as reported by Angeles Borrego, Treasurer for North America, at the North America Lieutenants meeting. Not only did the campaign raise additional donations, but there was also an increase in 2024 annual contributions from the North American Members.

In less than 6 months, the campaign has raised $6.3 million dollars in pledges and donations from just under 1,400 Members (couples and individuals). Donations were also received from non-Members who were moved by our social media campaign. The money is already being used for improvements.

As an example, one project already funded was for the Zarqa South School in Jordan. It had an urgent safety need for reinforcing the structural integrity of the building. The foundation was sinking causing stress cracks in the foundation columns and cross beam supports. The local officials were threatening to close the school until repairs were made.

The project required excavation of soil and replacement of columns and support beams to stabilize the building. Once structurally fixed, the classrooms in need of updates were renovated at the same time. The $175,000 cost was prohibitive and could never have been funded through normal Latin Patriarchate budget resources. Only through the success of the campaign was this project completed. The 200 students and the 22 dedicated teachers and staff are now benefiting from a safe learning environment.

The campaign has remaining work to do to achieve its $12 million goal. As a member of the Holy Land Commission, along with my wife Donna, I have been asked to lead the final phase of the campaign. The goals for this second phase include doubling the number of donating members, continuing efforts to secure major gifts from individuals and foundations and spreading the word of the campaign to touch the hearts of nonmembers of the Order. With the intercession of Our Lady of Palestine, we hope to reach the $12 million dollar goal and conclude the campaign by the end of 2025.

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Communications for North American Lieutenancies

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