

News Letter



ORDO EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCRI HIERSOLYMITANI

Francis writes to the Christian communities of the Middle-East “THANK YOU FOR YOUR PERSEVERANCE!”

“In the midst of hostility and conflicts, the communion which you experience in fraternity and simplicity is a sign of God’s Kingdom. I am gratified by the good relations and cooperation which exist between the Patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic Churches and those of the Orthodox Churches, and also between the faithful of the different Churches. **The sufferings which Christians endure contribute im-**



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IMPRESSUM

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mensely to the cause of unity. It is the **ecumenism of blood**, which demands a trusting abandonment to the working of the Holy Spirit.

May you always bear witness to Jesus amid your difficulties! Your very presence is precious for the Middle East. **You are a small flock, but one with a great responsibility in the land where Christianity was born and first spread.** You are like leaven in the dough. Even more than the many contributions which the Church makes in the areas of education, healthcare and social services, which are esteemed by all, the greatest source of enrichment in the region is the presence of Christians themselves, your presence.

Thank you for your perseverance!

Your efforts to cooperate with people of other religions, with Jews and Muslims, are another sign of the Kingdom of God. **The**

more difficult the situation, the more interreligious dialogue becomes necessary. There is no other way. Dialogue, grounded in an attitude of openness, in truth and love, is also the best antidote to the temptation to religious fundamentalism, which is a threat for followers of every religion. At the same time, dialogue is a service to justice and a necessary condition for the peace which all so ardently desire".

Extract of the Letter of the Pope to the Christian communities in the Middle East for Christmas 2014

During the audience of 12 January, during his New Year address to the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, Pope Francis mentioned again the Christians in the Middle East. "A Middle East without Christians would be a marred and mutilated Middle East! In urging the international community not to remain indifferent in the face of this situation, I expressed my hope that religious, political and intellectual leaders, especially those of the Muslim community, will condemn all fundamentalist and extremist interpretations of religion which attempt to justify such acts of violence".

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The Order in Union with the universal Church

DIALOGUE, "SUBSTANCE" OF THE PONTIFICAL DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The communiqué of the Holy See after the Consistory which took place in the Vatican on 20 October 2014 stated: "The importance of Jerusalem was highlighted, in its role as "capital of Faith" for the three great monotheistic religions, and the need was emphasized for a solution to the Israeli-Palestine and Syrian conflicts". Together with the Pope, the assembly included many Cardinals, Patriarchs of the Middle Eastern Churches and Officials of the Secretariat of State. It was attended by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Grand Prior of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. During this Consistory, it was reiterated that no-one may kill in the name of God.

The need was underlined for Christians

to be given the same civil rights granted to other citizens, especially in countries where religion is not currently separate from the State. It was repeated that "a Middle East without Christians would be a grave loss for all", as they have a fundamental role in maintaining equilibrium in the region, especially through education for peace and a culture of dialogue. The Eastern Churches also asked the Churches of other countries to show their solidarity in particular by organising pilgrimages.

A month after the Consistory on the Middle East, and to continue the reflection as regards communication, the head office of the Grand Magisterium of the Order hosted an important colloquium on 5 December which



The speakers on the theme Digital Communication and Diplomacy, 5 December, at the headquarters of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.



was attended by many Ambassadors accredited to the Holy See, on the following theme: "Untying knots: Digital information, dialogue between peoples and diplomacy, in a world full of conflicts".

In collaboration with the Communication Service of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Andrea Torielli, Director of the website *Vatican Insider* and of the Italian newspaper group *La Stampa*, had solicited several speakers including Cardinal Piero Parolin, Secretary of State, Agostino Borromeo, Governor of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and President of *Circolo di Roma*, an association serving the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See and Antonio Spadaro, Director of *Civiltà Cattolica*.

More than just a means among others, a

dialogue that gives priority to time appeared to be the true substance of pontifical diplomacy, with an intrinsic value since God himself became dialogue. Social networks such as Twitter, by maintaining this ongoing dialogue, allow the Church to enter into conversation on current events and to maintain reciprocal relationships that go well beyond the immediacy, thus promoting understanding between cultures. In the case of the crisis in the Middle East, by resisting pressures created by diverging interests and manipulations of public opinion, it is necessary to keep building fraternal relationships and bridges between believers of different religions, whilst remaining constantly in search of peace.

THE POPE IN TURKEY: PEACE AND COMMUNION ARE BUILT IN ACTION

They had met a few months earlier in Jerusalem and already, at that time, they had signed a joint statement. For Pope Francis and Patriarch Bartholomew, the time shared in Turkey during the papal visit on 28-30 November 2014 was an opportunity to reaffirm their common intentions and concerns.

For Pope Francis the three intense days in Turkey were primarily for the purpose of encountering and furthering the communion with the Orthodox sister Churches, and also to call for a constructive dialogue and common commitment to peace with the Muslim political and religious authorities as well showing support for persecuted Chris-

tians whom Pope Francis asked to meet.

The words of condemnation of fundamentalism and terrorism that bathe the region in blood were very clear on the occasion of the meeting with the President of the Republic and with the Department for Reli-



gious Affairs of Turkey.

Pope Francis reiterated that peace must be "based on the respect of the fundamental rights and duties for the dignity and rights of every person". He continued: "It is fundamental that Muslim, Jewish and Christian citizens may enjoy the same rights and share in the same duties, either by statutory provisions or in their effective implementation".

However what probably most moved the hearts of those who followed the journey of the Holy Father were again his gestures, deep, prophetic gestures which spoke for themselves and provoked comments. At the

time of ecumenical prayer, Francis spoke of the relationship between Andrew and Peter, blood brothers and brothers in faith, in charity and hope. Then, jumping 2000 years, the Bishop of Rome continued: "What a grace, Your Holiness, to be brothers in the hope of the Risen Lord! What a grace, and what a responsibility, to walk together in this hope, sustained by the intercession of the holy Apostles and brothers, Andrew and Peter!" Pope Francis finished his address with a few words to Patriarch Bartholomew: "I ask a favour of you: to bless me and the Church of Rome".

THIRD SEMINAR OF THE CATHOLIC-MUSLIM FORUM

It is a tradition which begun in 2008 when a group of Catholics and Muslims met in the Vatican at the invitation of Pope Benedict XVI to discuss the "Love of God and neighbour: human dignity and mutual respect". Since then, the Catholic-Muslim Forum has become a permanent establishment, and a third Seminar took place from 11 to 13 November 2014 on the theme of "Working Together to Serve Others". The Catholic delegation was headed by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, President of the Pontifical Council for interreligious dialogue, whilst the Muslim delegation was headed by Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr from the George Washington University. On Wednesday 12 November, His Holiness Pope Francis gave an audience in which he greeted all the participants, and encouraged them to persevere on the path of dialogue.

In the final declaration, the first point states that: "The delegates unanimously condemned acts of terrorism, oppression, violence against innocent persons, persecution, desecration of sacred places, and the destruction of cultural heritage. It is never acceptable to use religion to justify such acts

or to associate such acts with religion". The other points of the document underline the importance of the education of young people for the promotion of a well-rounded identity which builds respect for others and of the culture of interreligious dialogue. In conclusion, "it was felt that dialogue should lead to action, particularly among young people. The participants encouraged Christians and Muslims to multiply opportunities for encounter and cooperation on joint projects for the common good".

After the terrorist attacks in Paris on 7 and 9 January 2015, the statements of Cardinal Tauran to the Press echo what was discussed in Rome during the Forum: "Religion is not the source of these crimes, as in the case of the various crises afflicting the Middle East. However religion cannot be excluded from the solution. Today's world cannot be understood without taking into consideration the various religions". The President of the Pontifical Council for interreligious dialogue continued by underlining the importance of education and the role of the Media in building solutions for peace.



FATHER LORENZO LORUSSO IS APPOINTED TO THE CONGREGATION FOR ORIENTAL CHURCHES

Pope Francis has appointed a new Under Secretary to the Congregation for Oriental Churches. Father Lorenzo Lorusso, 47, is an Italian Dominican. Up to now he was Rector of the Basilica of Saint Nicolas in Bari, which has an ecumenical vocation open to the Orient;¹ he was also Director of the Institute of Ecumenical Patristic Theology in Bari. Born in Bari in 1967, he is a member of the Order of Italian Preachers: he received the Dominican habit in 1989 and took his final vows in 1993. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1995, coincidentally, in the Basilica of Saint Nicolas. After studying theology at the Angelicum and in Toulouse, he obtained a doctorate in Oriental Canon Law at the Pontifical Oriental Insti-



tute in Rome. He was also lecturer at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum) and judge at the Ecclesiastical Tribunal for the region of Puglia.

(1) The Basilica of Bari hosts the relics of Saint Nicolas, also known as Saint Nicolas of Myra, a city in Asia Minor of which he was Bishop in the IVth century. Later, as Turkey was under the rule of the Seljukid Muslims, the people of Bari, who had a special devotion to Saint Nicolas, decided to shelter the bones of the saint: in 1087 sailors sailed to Myra to steal the holy relics. In many countries, Saint Nicolas is celebrated on 6 December, which would be the date of his death. He is especially revered among the Orthodox, including the Russians...

THE NEXT PUBLIC EXPOSITION OF THE HOLY SHROUD OF TURIN

The Archbishop of Turin and the Mayor presented the program of events which will accompany the public display of the Holy Shroud from 19 April to 24 June 2015, in parallel with the 200th anniversary of the birth of Don Bosco. Pope Francis announced his participation at the two events. This third Exposition of the century will focus on young people and all those who are suffering, subjects dear to Saint John

Bosco and the Salesians. Guides and reception areas will at the disposal of the public, run by the diocesan pastoral health service. On the occasion of the ceremonies, 3,500 volunteers will be available around the cathedral. Even though the visit in Turin will be free, a reservation, however, should be made to facilitate the management of the flow of pilgrims.

Contact on the official site: www.sindone.org



The Official logo of the exhibition of the Holy Shroud in Turin in 2015.



Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

THE ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE IS DEVELOPING AND PLANS TO PRESENT AN IMAGE OF GREATER SIMPLICITY

Members of the Grand Magisterium of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre met in the presence of the Grand Master on 21 and 22 October, celebrating also on this occasion the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine at the Palazzo della Rovere, the seat of the Institution. The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Grand Prior of the Order, attended the meeting during which he spoke in particular on the tragic situation of the Middle East.

In his opening speech, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, Grand Master, spoke particularly of the enthusiasm for the Holy Land displayed by the Knights and Dames he visits regularly throughout the world on the occasion of various investiture ceremonies, from Norway to Canada... At the beginning of October, in Honolulu, within the context of the annual meeting of the Western and North Western Lieutenancies of the United States, he organized a special meeting with two Cardinals and seven Bishops, Priors of the Order in this region of the world, to hear from them and discuss various issues more directly. A letter was sent to all the Lieutenancies to encourage the organization of such meetings between the Priors and the Grand Master, thereby giving more emphasis to the place of Church leaders in their role as spiritual directors. In this context, the Cardinal asked the Grand Magisterium to consider the image of the Order in particular in relation to the title "Excellency" attributed to the Lieutenants, which seems inappropriately conflicting with that of the bishops. Speaking next, the Governor General Agostino Borromeo said that no Grand Master before Cardinal O'Brien had visited Lieutenancies as much as he had for the past two

years. He added that the Order had been developing recently in Latvia and the Czech Republic, and probably also in Malaysia in the near future. The charity collection for the Holy Land was better this year than in 2013: in particular the special collection for Gaza enabled the Order to send an amount exceeding half a million Euros to the Patriarchate and the Pontifical Mission of Palestine. Having presented the agenda of the session, the Governor General handed over to the Latin Patriarch.

The Church could not survive in the Holy Land without the partnership of the Order

Mgr Fouad Twal commented firstly on the Pope's journey to Bethlehem and Jerusalem, which aroused great hope, and secondly noted the dramatic situation in Gaza after the war last summer, calling for the end to the blockade of this territory devoid of future prospects from a human point of view, and declaring that only the recognition of two States on the basis of the pre-1967 borders will bring peace to the Holy Land. The Patriarch also spoke of the Consistory of 20 October on the Middle East wished for by the





A kindergarten of the Patriarchate supported by the Order.

Pope, in which he took part with other Catholic Patriarchs concerned, noting, for example, the measures taken by the King of Jordan to accommodate persecuted Christians from Syria and Iraq. He also reiterated, before the Grand Magisterium, his call for the purchase of houses and buildings in Bethlehem where the Muslim presence intensifies, and similarly in Jerusalem as regards the Jewish presence, to allow long-term housing of Christian families in these two cities of prime importance to the Church.

The session continued with the intervention of the General Administrator of the Patriarchate, Father Imad Twal, who clearly stated that without the generous partnership of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre - an average of 600,000 Euros per month sent to the Patriarchate, excluding special projects - the Catholic Church could not survive in the Holy Land. His report on the financial management of the Patriarchate displayed a commitment to transparency and clarity as shown by the involvement of an auditor, still showing a deficit related to pension funds for teachers, which is to be deplored but tends to progressively decrease.

The financial accounts of the Grand Magisterium, presented by engineer Pier Carlo Visconti, highlighted the extent of the aid sent by the Order to the Holy Land, which already stands at nearly 8 million Euros and is expected to increase significantly by the end of the year.

The schools of the Patriarchate - in Israel, Palestine and Jordan - received one third of the overall amount, explained Father Imad Twal.

Give priority to people and communicate better

The meeting continued with the presentation of the report of the President of the Commission of the Grand Magisterium to the Holy Land: Professor Thomas McKiernan reviewed the projects for 2014, indicating the importance of legacies in favour of the Order, and introduced proposals for 2015, calling for more specific funding for one year, taking into account the psychological and humanitarian needs of the people, with particular regard to the suffering in Gaza, giving "priority to people on the rubble," according to an expression of Dr. Heinrich Dickmann. The Governor General emphasized that attention to people is attested in particular through monthly remittances to the Patriarchate. These also, in effect, are used to cover the expenses of the education system to the extent that education helps to improve the level of cultural and vocational training, and also exalts the dignity of the human person. Vice Governor Patrick Powers considered that the Order should communicate more about what is covered by the regular contributions in these areas, in addition to what is already done in the better known and publicized annual projects.

Communication within the Order was also on the agenda, with several proposals from the department in charge of these affairs in the Grand Magisterium, to effect better overall coordination: to this end, those in charge of communication in each Lieutenancy will be contacted in an effort to improve the flow of information and thereby highlight their various activities in the differ-



ent Media supports – the Annales, the Newsletter and internet site – and share their experiences in the field.

Dr. Paul Bartley spoke at the end of the session about the plan for a regional meeting of the five Lieutenancies of Australia, the Lieutenancies of the Philippines, Taiwan, and the Magistral Delegation of Southern Africa, which will be held in October 2015 in the presence of local Priors. Expressing his appreciation, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien announced that he was looking forward to his visit to the Australian bishops with responsibility within the Order, as he had already done in the United States.

Before the end of the session, Chancellor Ivan Rebernik gave precise figures on the actual number of Knights, Dames and Clerics

engaged in the 62 Lieutenancies or Magistral Delegations in 35 countries in total (28,291), noting that the number of new entries in 2014 (1,184) corresponded to more than double the number of deceased members.

After the concluding reflections of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, in connection with the Synod on the pastoral challenges of the family and the challenge it represents for the Knights and Dames – who could, for example, come to renew their marriage vows in Cana – the Grand Master opened new perspectives by wishing that contributions may be adjusted to suit young couples, renewing his commitment that the Order should present an image of greater simplicity in line with the evangelical dynamics of the pontificate of Francis.

A NEW MASTER OF CEREMONIES OF THE ORDER

The new Master of Ceremonies of the Order, Mgr Fortunato Frezza, was officially presented at the headquarters of the Grand Magisterium on Tuesday 20 January 2015. Mgr Frezza was born in Rome in 1942 and was ordained a priest in 1966. In these years he has brilliantly succeeded in combining his academic and pastoral activities. He obtained a degree in Theology and a Doctorate in Holy Scripture, and has taught at various Institutes. Chaplain to some religious associations or organizations, he currently holds several positions in the Vatican: Honorary Prelate of His Holiness as well as Canon of the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican since 2013 and "Primo Sindaco" of the Chapter of the same Basilica since 2014.

"I see a strong and beautiful link between my work in the service of a better understanding of Holy Scripture and this work for the Holy Land. In this spirit I shall serve the spiritual life of the members of the Order with all my heart" declared Mgr Frezza, commenting on his appointment.

This position had been vacant since the end of Mgr Francis Kelly's mandate. The Order is pleased to welcome the new Master of Ceremonies for a period of happy and spiritually fruitful service.



THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, QUEEN OF PALESTINE CELEBRATED FROM DEIR RAFAT TO ROME

On 23 October 2014, at the conclusion of the meeting of the Grand Magisterium, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien was pleased to invite several guests to the Rovere Palace, seat of the representative offices of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, to celebrate the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine. This celebration is particularly dear to the whole Order, and this occasion brought together representatives of the Roman Curia, civilians and military figures from

The Blessed Virgin Mary Queen of Palestine, honoured in Rome and Deir Rafat.



Italy and many friends of the Order. Everyone received a booklet giving the history of this Feast also containing the prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine.

In addition to the different Lieutenancies of the Order, the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine is particularly celebrated in the Holy Land

at Deir Rafat, where pilgrims from throughout the Patriarchal Diocese and the countryside attend in great numbers. The knights and Dames who are in the Holy Land also attend with joy and devotion. Carola and Henrique Abreu, Order members, volunteers in the Holy Land since February 2014 tell us about the Feast in which they participated with 2,000 other faithful. "Participating in the Feast in Deir Rafat has a special meaning, one encounters Knights there from other Lieutenancies, we exchange experiences, and we experience great fraternity. This year, His Beatitude Patriarch Fouad Twal stressed particularly the Synod of the family and messages of the Holy Father. A unique moment for all members of the Order who celebrated the Eucharist together in this blessed place".



THE GRAND MASTER REPRESENTS THE ORDER AT MAJOR MEETINGS

During the last three months the Grand Master of the Order, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, visited many Lieutenancies. In late October he was greeted by the Magisterial Delegation of the Russian Federation and a few weeks later he presided at the first investiture ceremony in Latvia. Regarding the Americas, in November the Grand Master visited the United States and Argentina. Shortly before Christmas, at the headquarters in the Palazzo della Rovere, the investiture of Mgr Charles Scicluna, Auxiliary Bishop of Malta, was held.

In addition to many activities directly related to the life of the Order, Cardinal O'Brien participated on 5 November at the ceremony and the blessing of the pastoral centre, named after him, in the Washington headquarters of the Archdiocese for Military Services (AMS). The cardinal was Archbish-

op for the Military Services of the United States from 1997 to 2007 and it was he who wanted to buy and restore the centre that houses the offices and the pastoral centre "Edwin O'Brien" of the AMS.

On 14 December, in remembrance of the period when he was chaplain in Vietnam in the years 1971 to 1972, and afterwards Archbishop for the Military Services, His Eminence celebrated Mass with US paratroopers from the 173rd Brigade stationed in Vicenza. In his address he stressed the importance of the military role and responsibility to fight injustice. And we cannot forget the liturgical celebration of 24 November at the Basilica of Our Lady of Grace and St. Maria Goretti in Nettuno, on the occasion of the translation of the relics of the Saint, and their exposition in twelve archdioceses in the United States in 2015.

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The Order and the Holy Land

“THE WORK OF THE ORDER IN THE HOLY LAND IS HUGE”

An interview with Father Imad Twal, the new General Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Father Imad Twal, what exactly does your new position involve, which areas does it cover, and where do you find the inner peace to accomplish it?

To be the General Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem is a new experience for me as a priest. It is such a vast mission incorporating many duties and responsibilities. The general administration has a major mission: that of managing the material side of the life and the works of the Latin Patriarchate. It involves receiving and distributing donations from benefactors to the Patriarchate, primarily from the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

It means supervising and processing requests for assistance in response to the vital needs of the faithful and of those who ask for the help of the Patriarchate. Based on the real needs and funds available to us, we bring humanitarian aid to those in need. For example, the decrease in residential areas is an acute problem in the Holy Land and the Patriarchate responds to it by supporting housing projects to stop the emigration of young Christians.

It is an important mission which has been entrusted to me, and to find peace and strength to accomplish it, I try to be constantly mindful of the invaluable objectives which our humanitarian help and projects can help our Christians to fulfil.

Can you give us a more comprehen-



Father Imad Twal, on the left, in deep conversation with the Patriarch Fouad Twad and Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, who recently visited the Holy Land.



sive view of the work of the Order in the Holy Land, in terms of the institutions of the Latin Patriarchate, the seminaries, the schools, the social and health services...? Our members hear about the annual projects of the Order, but very little is known about the assistance provided on a regular basis, whereas it is quite sizeable. Therefore we would like you to tell us about it, from your knowledge of the area and the people.

The work of the Order in the Holy Land is huge and is essential to the survival and life of the local Christian community. Firstly, the aid provided by the Order helps support the Palestinian community and the existence of Christian life in the Holy Land. In practice, most of the aid attributed is used for school development and the improvement of education in the schools of the Patriarchate. We also support local Christians through times of crises and the recent conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Gaza, and we look after the increasing number of Christians in Jordan.

The support of the Order also enables us to help the seminary and the programme for the formation of priests. Finally, aid is also used to finance various projects of the Latin Patriarchate, the rehabilitation of the institutions of the Church of the Holy Land, the

restoration works of presbyteries, vicariates, parishes, nurseries and schools, also the provision of centres for young people, for the disabled, for the poor and the refugees.

The future is gloomy in the Holy Land, as religious intolerance mostly penalizes the Christian community. In your opinion, are there any signs of hope and unity? If so, can you give us some examples?

Religious intolerance is a heavy burden for the Christians of the Holy Land who are now only a minority of the population (less than 2%), but fortunately the signs of hope are not lacking. We believe in the power of education, our schools are true centres of hope, we welcome children of all faiths without distinction, and there they learn to live together by being and playing together on a day to day basis. The various Feasts are also moments which rekindle our hope. Recently for the Feast of Our Lady of Palestine, Christians across the Holy Land gathered for a joyful and prayerful celebration, and together we prayed for peace with a united heart. Our strength is in knowing that our hope is not in vain, that our God is Peace and Love and that our faith believes in salvation and redemption for all men, not just for us Christians.

THE TEMPLE MOUNT IN JERUSALEM, THE EPICENTRE OF RELIGIOUS TENSIONS IN THE HOLY LAND

Because of tensions following the attempted murder of Rabbi Yehuda Glick in Jerusalem, on 29 October 2014, the Israeli authorities declared the closure of the *Haram al-Sharif* or Temple Mount site, a decision rescinded shortly afterwards to avoid disturbances in the place considered to be the third most sacred site in Islam

after Mecca and Medina.

During the last weeks, the different Christian denominations were quick to show their concern for the people and condemned all terrorist attacks and any attempt to breach the Status Quo. The Patriarchs and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem issued on 6 November a statement in which they claim:





A delegation of heads of the Christian Churches in Jerusalem and Muslim religious leaders of the Holy City, at the Temple Mount on 10 November.

"We condemn the threats to change the status of the Holy Places, whatever their origins. Holy Sites require constant vigil and protection so that reasonable access may be maintained as required by the Status Quo for the three monotheistic religions".

On 10 November 2014, a delegation visited the *Haram al-Sharif* as a sign of solidarity and peace. On this occasion, a joint statement was signed with the Council of the Islamic Waqf of Jerusalem, which ends: "Both sides have committed to pray for an end to injustice and for the restoration of security and peace in this town that should be a model of coexistence and peace".

On the legal side, on 7 January 2015,

shortly before the terrible attack that hit the city of Paris, the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, has accepted the Palestinian bid to join the International Criminal Court on 1 April. The first investigation by the Palestinians will probably be the investigation of the alleged crimes against humanity committed in Gaza last summer. For his part, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has said he will not stand by and "watch the lynching of his soldiers before the International Court in The Hague" and he blocked the transfer of about one hundred million Euros in customs duty which, according to the Oslo Agreements, would return to President Abbas.



TWO ARAB AND PALESTINIAN SAINTS SOON

Two Religious Sisters, born in the Holy Land, will soon be canonised. During an audience in December 2014 with Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the cause of saints, Francis authorised the promulgation of the decrees recognising the miracles attributed to the intercession of **Mariam Bawardi** and **Marie-Alphonsine Ghattas**.

The canonisation of Blessed Mariam Bawardi of Jesus Crucified, and Blessed Marie-Alphonsine Ghattas, two religious Sisters of the Holy Land, could take place this year 2015.

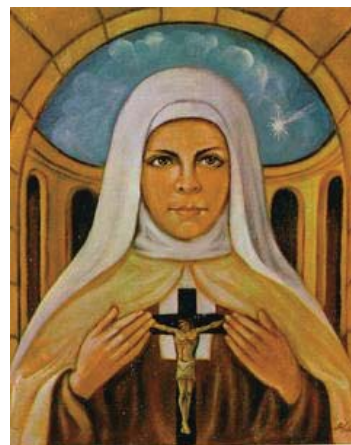
Mariam Bawardi (1846-1878) was born in the village of



Ibillin in Galilee. She is the founder of the Carmel of Bethlehem. During her life she received the grace of the stigmata. A mystique, she also had many dreams in which she conversed with Jesus.

Marie-Alphonsine Danil Ghattas (1843-1927) was born in Jerusalem. She is co-founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Rosary originally dedicated to pastoral work, and later on to helping the elderly and

young children, serving the poor, and also fighting against moral poverty. We entrust to these two future Saints all projects of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in the service of the people of the Holy Land.



THE VIRGIN MARY IN JERUSALEM: A SPIRITUAL GUIDE FOR EVERY PILGRIM

Our friend Father Artemio Vitores González, Franciscan monk, in his book "The Virgin Mary in Jerusalem" (original title in Spanish "*La Virgen María in Jerusalén*"), invites us to visit the Holy City with the Mother of the Lord who guides us in the light of her earthly pilgrimage to her heavenly destination. Her footsteps reveal the essential sacred places in the history of Salvation in which she participates with Jesus Christ.

Father Gonzales first leads us to the

Church of St. Anne, her birth place and sign of her Immaculate Conception, fundamental to understanding the Virgin in her mission of Mother of Christ and of the Church. Then he takes us into the Temple of Jerusalem, home of the Lord and "Heart of Mary". This is, indeed, the place that unites and identifies the Virgin with her Son. The Presentation of Mary in the Temple, in the arms of her parents, inaugurates the life of this young person elected by God in total abandonment to the Lord, and is the basis of the



fiat that she delivers in Nazareth in response to the announcement of the Angel. The Temple of Jerusalem also saw the Presentation of the Child Jesus and testifies to the prophecy of Simeon in the heart of Mary, confirming her function of "co-redeemer" with her Son.

Let us, therefore, follow Mary on the *Via Matris Dolorosae*, before the seven stations that remind us of the seven sorrows, on a journey of faith now identified as Jesus' Way of the Cross, which ends in the Holy Sepulchre. At Calvary we find the Virgin, *socia Passionis* with her Son at the foot of the Cross. It is here that Jesus entrusts his mother to the disciple John and gives a Mother to all mankind.

"She did not abandon Him in His suffering and will remain with all of us, her children, especially when we have most need of her", as the author reminds us.

The signs of the earthly pilgrimage of Mary lead us to the Empty Tomb of Christ and the Chapel of the Apparition to the Most Blessed Virgin. This is where every afternoon Franciscans begin and end the pro-

cession in the Basilica with the same hope and even joy of "She who believed" in her risen Son. On the day of Pentecost, the Apostles rejoice with Her when they receive the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room where today the Church of the Dormition of Mary reminds us of her *transitus* to another life.

The journey of faith with the Daughter of Sion ends before the empty tomb in the Valley of Kidron, a sign of the Assumption of her body to Heaven, place of the pilgrimage for Christians and Muslims. The gentle praise of St. Francis of Assisi salutes Her whom all generations call Blessed, projection of the heavenly Jerusalem where death will be overcome and we shall enter into Eternal Life:

Hail, the Robe of God!

Hail the Handmaid of God!

Hail the Mother of God!

And Hail, all holy Virtues, who, by grace and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are poured into the hearts of the faithful so that from their faithless state, they may be made faithful servants of God through you.



The life of the Lieutenancies

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A "NIGHT OF THE HOLY LAND"

On 15 November a night of the Holy Land took place in France, in the Diocese of Vannes in Brittany, with the participation of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre. Our newsletter highlights this great initiative because it could inspire others around the world, and why not every year, especially on the occasion of the feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine? The money raised at this event was intended for Gaza schools. Mgr Raymond Centene, Bishop of the diocese of Vannes, first celebrated Mass at the Shrine of Sainte-Anne d'Auray, in the presence of 1,500 people who came to pray for peace in the Holy Land.

After a picnic meal, Father Frédéric Fagot, president of the association of the *Veilleurs de la Paix* presented the movie "The garden of Jad", filmed in 2003 at the retirement Home of Our Lady of Sorrows in Jerusalem - during the construction of the

separation wall, showing the disastrous consequences of such a division. After the movie, Mgr William Shomali, Patriarchal Vicar in Jerusalem, spoke to the meeting via Skype to recall the challenges of the Christian community in the Holy Land: a demographic challenge, an ecumenical challenge, interreligious dialogue challenge and the challenge to peace. Returning to the local situation, he stressed that pilgrims are safe in Jerusalem and encouraged the young people to come as volunteers to the Holy Land. A couple of Palestinian Christians, Ghada and Tewfic Habesch, had come specially to testify during the evening, before a night of adoration available to all in the basilica. Other prayer initiatives were held at the same time in the Holy Land, including one in the Home of Our Lady of Sorrows, where a vigil was held in the presence of some Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre.

TOWARDS A CONTINENTAL MEETING IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

After the Consulta, the great assembly of the leaders of the Order, which took place from 10 to 12 September 2013, the five Australian Lieutenants reflected on and evaluated positively the idea of meeting at regional level before the next Consulta. This meeting is scheduled in Adelaide, South Australia on 17 and 18 October 2015. The Grand Master and the Governor General will participate in the same way as they participated in the meetings of the American and European Lieutenancies.

Born as an Australian initiative, the meeting has now assumed a regional character

and has already invited Lieutenants from Taiwan and the Philippines, and soon also those in charge of sections of New Zealand and North Queensland, the Magistral Delegate of Southern Africa (a region more vast than South Africa itself), and the Lieutenant of Guam. The Grand Master wished to have the Priors of Lieutenancies, sections and Magistral delegations among the participants. Following the regional meetings of the European and American Lieutenants, the first step has been taken to create an opportunity for exchange and fellowship also in the vast Asia-Pacific region.

