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# News Letter

ORDO EQUESTRIS SANCTI SEPULCRI HIEROSOLYMITANI

## MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND MASTER

**I**n January 2008, I had the privilege of returning to the Holy Land after an absence of thirty years.

*The changes I observed were both disheartening and encouraging.*

*The disheartening changes included the terrible wall, still under construction, which divides Israel from the West Bank and which is a vivid reminder of occupation and indeed of distrust; a second change was the shrinking number of Christians in the Holy Land as too many continue to leave the land where their ancestors have lived since the time of Jesus for greater economic, political and professional opportunity elsewhere; a third change was the evidence of growing Islamic and sometimes anti-Christian fundamentalism.*



MESSAGE FROM  
THE  
GRAND MASTER

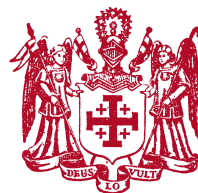
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GRAND MAGISTERIUM OF THE  
EQUESTRIAN ORDER  
OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF  
JERUSALEM  
00120 VATICAN CITY



## MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND MASTER

*The encouraging changes I observed included the continued strengthening of Christian institutions, especially schools, which serve all members of the community, not just Catholics; the increasing spirit of ecumenical cooperation among the Christian churches; the untiring efforts at inter-religious understanding and cooperation.*

*I was profoundly impressed by the marvelous work done by His Beatitude Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, who will be retiring this year from administrative responsibility but not from his outstanding priestly work, and by the obvious spirit of service and dedication of his coadjutor and designated successor Archbishop Fouad Twal. May God continue to bless both Patriarch Sabbah and Archbishop Twal in their truly apostolic work!*

*Finally, I was moved at and grateful for the evidence of the generosity and dedication of the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulcher in Israel, the West Bank and Jordan. I did not yet have an opportunity to visit Gaza. The parishes, schools and medical and social facilities supported at least partially by our Order continue to make an essential contribution not only to our fellow Christians but also to the welfare of the entire community and -- it is to be hoped -- eventually to that peace so much needed and desired in that land sacred to so many.*

*John Cardinal Foley*



On 1 March 2008 H.B. Patriarch Michel Sabbah published a pastoral letter – indeed, his farewell letter prior to his retirement – of which a few extracts are reprinted in this Newsletter as an invitation to all Members of the Order to read the whole text. The letter not only provides excellent insights into the situation of the Christians in the Holy Land and the problems faced by the Latin Patriarchate but also presents considerations and challenges for the Catholics in our own dioceses.

The complete text of the pastoral letter is available on the Order's website

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/institutions\\_connected/oessh/en/subindex\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/institutions_connected/oessh/en/subindex_en.html)

or [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/institutions\\_connected/oessh/subindex.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/institutions_connected/oessh/subindex.html)

as well as on the Latin Patriarchate's site

<http://www.lpj.org/newsite2006/index.html>

# PASTORAL LETTER FROM HIS BEATITUDE PATRIARCH MICHEL SABBAH LATIN PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

*“the time of my departure has come...  
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”.*  
(2 Tim 4:6.7)

**INTRODUCTION**

**MARCH 1, 2008**

*To my Brothers Bishops, to the Priests,  
To the Men and Women Religious, to the Deacons,  
and all the beloved Faithful*

*“Grace to you and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 1:3)*

I am writing this letter to you as I am approaching the end of my patriarchal ministry and as we approach Easter together. ...



**O**n March 19, 2008, I shall reach the age of 75, the age of retirement according to the Church's tradition. I am placing my mission into the hands of the Holy Father, who entrusted me with it 20 years ago, with a feeling of gratitude for the trust I was given. I thank the Lord for all the graces that he granted me during the whole time of my ministry as patriarch and as priest. With Saint Paul, I can say that "*the time of my departure has come... I have finished the race, I have kept the faith*" (2 Tim 4:6.7), even though my race is not yet entirely finished and the end remains in God's time. By retiring, I am freed of the administrative responsibilities, but I shall continue my prayer and my journey in God's mystery in this holy land. I shall continue to accompany the sufferings and the hopes of the men and women of this land, of all the believers, of all religions, who dwell in it. ...

### Gratitude

**1.** I thank all the men and women who gave themselves in the service of the diocese, first of all the Apostolic Delegates and Nuncios who represented the Holy Father, my Coadjutor Bishop, the Auxiliary Bishops and General Vicars in Jerusalem, Palestine, Jordan, Israel, for the Hebrew-speaking Community, and in Cyprus. I thank all the priests and the employees who gave me their direct help in the various curial offices. ...

### The Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem

**5.** I thank the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem, the Grand Master, the Governor General and all the Lieutenants whom I have known during these past twenty years, for their love and support of the Patriarchate, of its clergy and of all its works and its faithful. Pope Pius IX wanted to renew the Order when the Jerusalem Patriarchate was re-established, so that it might give spiritual and material support to the new diocese. In 1848, he entrusted its re-organization to the first Patriarch, Joseph Valerga. Since then, from generation to generation until this day, the Order has never ceased to fulfill its mission for the Patriarchate. I thank all the members and those responsible for the Order, and I implore God's grace and blessing upon them.

### Pastoral Life

**6.** ...During this past period, the diocese's pastoral life was marked above all by the Synod of the Catholic Churches in the Holy Land, which began in 1993 and ended in the year 2000 with the visit of Pope John Paul II.



### **Ecumenical Life**

7. Jesus prayed for the unity of his disciples. He foresaw the difficulty of the mission he was entrusting to them. ...

In Jerusalem, we are 13 different and separate Churches. There were frequent, almost monthly meetings with the Patriarchs and the Bishops of the various Churches of Jerusalem, Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants, and through these more fraternity and mutual help developed between our communities. ...

At the level of the Christian Churches, in 1990 the Catholic Churches in the region became members of the Council of Churches in the Middle East, which never ceases to create a place of fraternity, of encounter and of collaboration among all the heads of Churches in the Middle East and through them, among the 15 million Arab Christians in the region....

### **The Holy Land's universal Vocation**

8. The Holy Land is a land with a universal vocation. God wanted it thus, since he wanted to manifest himself here not only to one people, but to the whole of humankind. Still today, this land certainly belongs to all its inhabitants, but also to the whole of humankind. This is true at the political level for the two peoples who live in it, Israelis and Palestinians, and for all the believers, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Druzes. ...

### **The small Number**

9. The Christians are few in number in this Holy Land and in the Church of Jerusalem. ...

Every society counts on the number of its citizens, its soldiers, and on the quantity of its weapons. We Christians, with or without numbers, count first of all on the faith of each one of us. Jesus says: with faith you can move mountains. ... That is why, while respecting all the useful human means, we try to strengthen and increase our faith in Him in whom we have believed.

In addition to the formal institutions of formation in the Church – the various institutions for teaching, for religious education, the various apostolic movements for formation and the many lay organizations of a social nature – some faithful, clergy or lay people, have begun to pay particular attention to this formation, which makes the Christian capable of assuming his and her responsibilities in society, in spite of the small numbers. ...

### **Christians in Society**

10. A Christian must accept himself as Christian. ...



To be a Christian means simply to know one's faith, one's holy books, one's tradition and the Church's teaching; it is to know in whom and in what one believes. It is to know and to live Christian morality; it is to pray, it is to live the life of the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, and to take care that those prayers and that sacramental life be not only formal acts ...

To be a Christian is to live the commandment of love in the midst of one's own community, but also with all human beings. To love is first of all to see the face of God in every human person, ...

### **A Land of the status quo**

**11.** We are in a country of the *status quo*, which is to say: "Everything remains today and will remain tomorrow as it was in the past." That law was adopted before the Crimean War in an Ottoman *firman* of 1852. It was then ratified in two international congresses in 1855 and 1878 in order to govern the situations of conflict in certain Christian holy places. ...

### **Denominational Communities**

**12.** In the Holy Land, the small Christian community is divided not only by the theological differences, but also between denominational communities. ...

It is together that we are great or small. No one can become great without the other or at the other's expense. In our relations with one another as different Churches or denominational communities, we should follow this principle: "On the one hand, fidelity to ourselves, to our own rite, to the Church in which God has given us the grace of baptism, and on the other, love for all the brothers and sisters who belong to a different rite and are outside of our denominational community, but who belong to the large family of God." The attitude of the Christian from every community and every denomination, is to love with a love as great as that of God. ...

### **Christians in the Conflict**

**13.** In our society, there is armed conflict due to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories and the Israeli demand for security and recognition. Like all the inhabitants of this land, Palestinians and Israelis, the Christians, both Palestinian and Israeli, are involved in this conflict. ...

but we also believe in the commandment to love, and thus in a resistance that enters into the logic of Christian love. A non-violent resistance, but one that is capable of leading the two peoples to enjoy in equal ways their freedom, their sovereignty, and their security.



In our land, the conflict seems interminable and not allowing for any solution. In this conflict, in addition to what we said above, the Christian vision is the following: here, it is our land and it belongs to two peoples. But it is first of all the land of God. The history that human beings make here with blood and hatred or with dialogue and collaboration is made knowingly or unknowingly under the watchful eyes of God, the master of history, who gave this land a particular sanctity. Here, everyone has to do with the mystery of God. Our holy places tell us that. Our Holy Places indeed are one of the major reasons for the conflict; here, believers of the three religions refer to God. ... Peace in the land of God will be a gift of God. ...

### Emigration

**14.** Today, the Christians are emigrating from the Holy Land and from all the countries of the Middle East. They are not alone in emigrating. The Muslims and the Jews are also emigrating, and the reason is the same for everyone: the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, which causes political, economic and social instability in all the countries of the region. ...

But we also have to draw attention to the following fact : the Christians here and in the Middle East are the first victims of world political plans that ignore or give the impression of ignoring the Christians because there are only a few of them ...

### Christians and Muslims

**15.** Just as every Christian all over the world normally belongs to his or her people and country, the Christians in the Arab countries and in Palestine and Israel also belong to their country and their people. Where the Arab Christians in Israel are concerned, we have already defined the elements making up their identity: they are Arabs, they are Christians, and they are in the State of Israel. In view of these three elements, they have decided themselves what positions to take in their daily life. ...

Interfaith dialogue does not deal with dogma. Its subject is social themes with the aim of fostering better coexistence and better collaboration. ...

The religious political movements in Islam see the solution for all problems in the strict implementation of Islam as a religion and as a system of political and social life in all of society, both as regards Muslims and non-Muslims. In the face of this tendency, the Christian position is the following: first of all, to unite with the Muslims themselves, as was said above, in order to face together an extremism that threatens both Muslims and Christians. Secondly, if one day these religious movements succeed in imposing themselves onto society, a margin of dialogue would remain also with them. And if the dialogue proves to be useless, there remains only one thing for the Christian to do: not to give him- or herself up to fear, but to demand his and her rights as a citizen and to proclaim his and her Christian faith as a believer. ...





### Christians and Jews in the Holy Land

**16.** In spite of the current conflict, in spite of the daily death and hatred, there is also a more human reality of dialogue and of contacts between persons at various political and religious levels. Many initiatives happen at the local and international level with meetings of young people, Christian and Muslim Palestinians and Jewish Israelis within the school context. Many associations of dialogue between Jews and Christians also exist in the country. ...

### Demands of Dialogue

**17.** The local interfaith dialogue that began with frequent contacts between Muslims, Jews and Christians, ended with the creation during these years of the Council of Religious Institutions in the Holy Land, in which the three religions are represented at the highest level. A dialogue that drew the attention of political leaders and that created a new reality in the Holy Land: religious leaders from the three religions met for the first time in history and reflected together on the peace that must be brought about. ...

### Towards the Future

#### To my Priests

**18.** I thank all of you, dear priests, for your love and your prayers. God will reward your zeal, which is great. May God accompany us with his grace in our seminary, which has faithfully continued its journey and its mission from its founding in 1848 until today. With God's help, we shall continue to have regular vocations, first of all from Jordan, in second place from Palestine, and finally from Israel. ...

#### The Future

**19.** The future of the priests depends on the fear and reverence they keep towards the sacred things with which they deal every day. The future of the Christians depends on what their parish priests give them.





## CONCLUSION

I am coming to the end of my mission as Patriarch of Jerusalem for the Latins and shall soon pass it on to my successor, Mgr. Fouad Twal. I ask God to grant him every grace and blessing so that he might continue to carry the mission of this venerable Patriarchate. Once again I thank the Lord and all whom he has placed on my path in order to serve them or to receive a grace through them. I shall continue to live in Jerusalem. As has been the case until now, the demands of my daily life will still be in the context of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. ...

For all this, I thank the Lord, and I ask everyone to accompany me with their prayers. I entrust myself to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And for everyone I ask the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one and only God. Amen.

+ *Michel Sabbah, Patriarch*  
*Jerusalem, March 1, 2008*



# 2008 PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

## Latin Patriarchate Projects

<b>Tabarbour Land (Jordan) (1<sup>st</sup>Phase)</b>	<b>€ 372,000</b>
.....	<b>(\$ 586,000)</b>

The town is located 7 km away from Al Hashimi in West Amman, where there are a Parish and a school of the Latin Patriarchate. Most families are relocating from Al Hashimi and other parts of Jordan to Tabarbour. At present 158 Christian families are living there and the arrival of other 400 families is expected in the next five years. No Christian church of any denomination exists or is planned to be built in this area. For this purpose the Latin Patriarchate has decided to buy a plot of land of 5,195 m<sup>2</sup> in order to build a new Church in the near future, followed by a school and a convent. The total cost of the land, which amounts to JOD831,000 (€ 744,000) will be paid by the Order: half in 2008 (1<sup>st</sup> phase) and half in 2009 (2<sup>nd</sup> phase).

<b>Fuheis Al Balad school (Jordan) (2<sup>nd</sup> Phase)</b>	<b>€ 136,000</b>
.....	<b>(\$ 214,000)</b>

This is the second financing phase of the project. The first was fully financed in 2007 by the Lieutenancy of England and Wales, in the same amount. Work will soon start, immediately after the tender to select a general contractor that is expected to be held in the next few weeks.



**Bir Zeit school extension (Palestine) (1<sup>st</sup> Phase)** € 290,000  
 ..... (\$ 457,000)

The school has 434 students, mostly Christians, some also from Jifna and Aboud and other zones surrounding Muslim villages. The extension will provide the necessary space for classes for the upper school (level 11 and 12). The project consists of building a new wing on the present sports field (a covered playground, a two-storey block providing 6 additional classrooms, a science lab and a multipurpose 50 m<sup>2</sup> hall). The extension includes the purchase of an adjoining 1,919 m<sup>2</sup> plot of land for outdoor activities. The total cost of the project of \$913,000 (€ 580,000) is divided into two phases of equal value of € 145,000. The first phase should be completed in 2008; the second by the end of 2009.

**Al Wahadneh Priest's house (Jordan)** € 50,000  
 ..... (\$ 79,000)

The house was built together with the Church in 1948 and needs refurbishing and enlarging since it is also used for catechism and social meetings. A first floor – that will be the new priest's residence – will be built over the existing ground floor, which also needs to be restructured.

**Deir Rafat Sanctuary (Palestine) (1st Phase)** € 36,000  
 ..... (\$ 57,000)

The road used by the procession on the feast of Our Lady of Palestine needs to be properly paved and a drainage system has to be installed at the lower end, near the entrance gate. This is the first phase of the works. Rearrangement of the yard at the side of the church, removal of the old school playground and relocation of external toilet facilities for visitors will follow next year.

**Hogar Nino Dios (Palestine)** € 15,500  
 ..... (\$ 24,000)

The Argentinian Sisters of the "Verbo Encarnado" live in the (340 m<sup>2</sup>) building the Order bought in Bethlehem in 2005. The nuns assist severely handicapped children who live permanently in the house. The project is to install central heating, which is absolutely necessary to provide adequate care of the children during the winter.



**Misdar, Christ the King Church (Jordan)** € 62,000  
 ..... (\$ 99,000)

This is the contribution requested by the Patriarch, H.B. Michel Sabbah, for the restoration of the Parish Church in Amman Misdar.

## **R.O.A.C.O.**

**(Riunione delle Opere di Aiuto alle Chiese Orientali) Projects**

**St. Joseph's Hospital Maternity Centre (Jerusalem)** € 1,500,000  
 ..... (\$ 2,363,000)

There is an acute shortage of medical structures for gynecological and maternal care in Jerusalem East and in Palestine, which results in a high rate of mortality among new born babies in the region (20 deaths/1000 live births).

A new 4,370 m<sup>2</sup> maternity center will be constructed for St. Joseph's Hospital – the only Catholic hospital in Jerusalem – with an in-patient department of 36 beds, a modern delivery unit, an emergency unit, a nursery and additional facilities. The project has been strongly recommended by the Apostolic Delegation and the Patriarchate.

The Grand Magisterium's commitment for 2008 is € 1,500,000.

**Daughters of St. Anne (Haifa)** € 9,000  
 ..... (\$ 14,000)

The Daughters of St. Anne run a nursery in Haifa for around 300 children. The works consist of enlarging the courtyard and replacing the current structure by a reinforced concrete structure.

**Church of Our Lady of Grace (Haifa)** € 20,000  
 ..... (\$ 32,000)

The "House of Grace" in Haifa is a social welfare center belonging to the Greek Melkite Archdiocese of Akka. The Center organizes activities for peace and justice in Israel and supports homeless people in the Haifa area. In the same compound, very close to the sea, there is the Church of Our Lady of Grace. This church, built in 1862, is in need of external restoration because of the high level of humidity and salinity which have caused severe damage.



**Greek Melkite Church of Our Lady of Grace (Arrabeh) ..... € 25,000 (\$ 39,000)**

This small church is unable to accommodate all the people participating in religious ceremonies and needs extensive restoration work. The parish council has decided to add a 50 m<sup>2</sup> extension to the existing 150 m<sup>2</sup> in order to have more space for people, plus a modest bell-tower.

**Greek Melkite Schools at Beit Sahour, Ramallah, Beit Hanina ..... € 20,000 (\$ 32,000)**

The schools in Beit Sahour and Ramallah and the Beit Hanina kindergarten are owned by the Greek Melkite Exarchate of Jerusalem. The total number of pupils is around 1,200, of whom 900 are Christians. The work consists mainly of reinforcing the building's foundations, rainwater drainage and roof replacement above the covered courtyards.

**Rosary Sisters' School and Convent (Gaza) ..... € 20,000 (\$ 32,000)**

In June 2007, the school and the convent of the Rosary Sisters in Gaza suffered great damage caused by the conflict between Hamas and Fatah. Looters broke down the entrance door to the school compound and the Sisters' house; they also desecrated the chapel and burned several pieces of furniture.

**Community Canção Nova (Bethlehem) ..... € 9,000 (\$ 14,000)**

The Maronite Archdioceses of Haifa and Holy Land submitted this project. The Community Canção Nova, a well known Brazilian Catholic non-profit organization working in the area of mass media communication, has established a community in a small apartment in Bethlehem. The Community needs to renovate and enlarge the present location with new rooms and a chapel.



**Syrian Orthodox Parish Community hall (Jerusalem) € 50,000**  
 ..... (\$ 79,000)

Within the complex of Saint Mark's Monastery in the Old City of Jerusalem, the community hall is the only place for events related to religious ceremonies, social and educational activities for members of the Parish, official meetings with religious leaders and other visitors. The hall is now in dire need of rehabilitation.

**Bethlehem Arab Society Hospital € 11,000**  
**for Rehabilitation (Beit Jala) ..... (\$ 17,000)**

The Bethlehem Arab Society Hospital, founded in 1960 for rehabilitation and orthopedics surgery, was transferred from Bethlehem to the Beit Jala hills 15 years ago. The hospital's board of trustees decided to increase the range of medical services and create new medical departments and it now needs to purchase some medical machinery for the cardiology department.

.....

**The priority of the projects presented by the Latin Patriarchate and by the Apostolic Delegation in Jerusalem is to consolidate the medical, social, religious and educational infrastructures that support the Catholic and Christian Communities in the Holy Land.**

**All Lieutenancies intending to participate in financing the above projects are invited to contact the Accounting and Administration Office of the Grand Magisterium.**

