

CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND
Order of Friars Minor

Report Summary 2010/2011

The Custody of the Holy Land tirelessly continues its mission, begun several centuries ago, to conserve and protect the holy places in the Land of Jesus. This includes celebrating the liturgy, assisting Pilgrims, and carrying out multiple apostolic works, especially for the benefit of the Christian communities. In the year 2010/2011, particular attention has been paid to the planning and execution of projects in the following areas:

HOLY PLACES

I) PILGRIMS

1. Bethlehem

- **Parish Church of St. Catherine**

- Completion of work on the lighting system inside the Church of St. Catherine.

2. Jerusalem

- **Convent of St. Saviour**

- Renovation of the “Studio Teologico” and restoration of the Convent of St. Saviour.
- Work started on the Custodial Library.
- *Magnificat* – School of Music: renovation of bathrooms and entrance stairway.
- Renovation of bathrooms in the Sisters’ Convent.

- **Sanctuary of *Dominus Flevit***

- Completion of restructuring at the Convent of *Dominus Flevit*, including the sanctuary, gardens and areas reserved for the reception of pilgrims.

- **Gethsemane**

- Initial procurement needed for reconstruction of the exterior stone wall, supplies for and installation of steel fence, as required by the Environmental Authorities of Israel.
- Beginning restoration and maintenance of the roof of the Basilica of Gethsemane, in order to prevent water seepage.

- **Sanctuary of the Flagellation**

Studium Biblicum Franciscanum

- Concluding restoration of the “Hall of Crusaders” at the Convent of the Flagellation.
 - Completing the Library expansion of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*. The project includes the installation of an elevator for greater accessibility to the premises, as well as renovation of mobile and fixed shelving.
 - Designing the third phase of library expansion, regarding the upper level, which will be divided into two sections.
 - **Convent at Bethpage**
 - Restructuring the *Convento delle Palme* at Bethpage, with particular regard to the outer area where pilgrims are welcomed, especially for the Palm Sunday procession.
 - Designing the restoration of the Church at Bethpage and its environs.
- 3. Magdala**
- **Church of Mary Magdalene**
 - Continuation of work to preserve the archaeological area of Magdala, where important remains have been found. It was necessary to remove the mosaic floors, which must be adequately preserved from the elements. The establishment of a guided tour inside the site, to give pilgrims a deeper understanding of the city’s daily life at the time of Jesus, is underway.
- 4. Jaffa**
- **Church of St. Anthony**
 - Final phase of restoration of the convent and environs at the Latin Parish.
- 5. Mount Tabor**
- **Sanctuary of the Transfiguration**
 - Completion of the renovation of the electrical system in the Basilica and preparation for restoration of the entire complex, in coordination with the Israel Antiquities Authority and the National Parks Authority.
- 6. Nain**
- **Sanctuary of Nain**
 - Construction project at the Sanctuary, which commemorates the miracle of the resurrection of the widow’s son.
 - Completion of house demolitions near the Church, in order to begin construction of a new convent and to allow for the Church restoration project.
- 7. Tabgha**
- **Sanctuary of the Primacy of Peter**
 - Renovation and completion of new bathroom facilities and other necessary restoration work at the Shrine of the Primacy of Peter.
- 8. Monte Nebo (Jordan)**
- **Memorial Shrine of Moses**

- Second stage of reconstruction work and conservation of the mosaics at the memorial shrine of the Prophet Moses.
- Continuation of work on the project “*New covering for the Memorial of Moses*”.

II) LOCAL COMMUNITY

1. Works for the benefit of youth

- Scholarships. Financing of 420 university scholarships over a period of 4 years, distributed to different universities: Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Haifa, Bir Zeit, Amman and others.
- Handcraft Enterprises. Support for 10 small craft businesses including the acquisition of spare parts and production equipment, along with safety measure compliance.

2. Activities for families

- **Bethlehem**

- Continuation of support for the Parish Family Counselling Centre, which provides assistance for families with critical needs.
- Franciscan Boys’ Home. Continuation of the project for more than 20 boys between the ages of 6 and 12, who come from poor families in difficulty. The boys receive hospitality, assistance with studies, and the services of an educator, a social worker and a psychologist.
- Medical assistance. Continuation of the project providing medical assistance to families facing serious economic difficulties, including partial or complete coverage of medical expenses.
- Housing. Restoration of houses belonging to families in need. Local people without jobs carry out the restoration. In addition to helping families, the project provides temporary work on a regular basis.

3. Parish communities

- **Jerusalem**

- Completion of the rebuilding and restructuring of the Church of St. Jacob in Beit Hanina, its convent and related services.
- Begin procurement for the construction of new sports areas at the parish centre in Beit Hanina, including a soccer field, two basketball courts and an indoor dining room with related services.
- Restoration and maintenance of the infrastructure in residential complexes such as St. Anton Building Project, St. Paul Building Project, St. Francis Building Project, and St. James Building Project.

- **Bethlehem**

- Reconfigure bathroom facilities for use by tourists and pilgrims at the St. Francis Millennium Centre.
- Begin procurement for the creation of workshops for olive wood and mother of pearl at the St. Francis Millennium Centre.
- Renovation and maintenance of residential complexes: Jesus the Child Building Project, St. Catherine Building Project, St. Francis Building Project.
- **Nazareth**
 - Development of soccer fields and playgrounds for the children of the parish of Nazareth.
 - Completion of renovation of the hydraulic system at the Basilica of the Annunciation in order to protect the grotto from moisture.
 - Installation of a new organ in the Basilica of the Annunciation.
- **Cana**
 - Beginning construction of the parish centre and school for the local Christian population.
- **Jericho**
 - Construction of parish hall adjacent to the Sanctuary of the Good Shepherd and the first phase of construction of the new primary and secondary school.

4. Schools

- **Ramleh**
 - Expansion and renovation of existing school areas.
- **Bethlehem**
 - Completion of construction of the theatre at Saint Joseph – Terra Sancta Girls School.
- **Jordan**
 - Creation of a sports Centre near the Terra Santa School in Amman.

5. Construction of apartments for the poor and for young couples

- Bethpage. Final phase of construction of the new St. Francis Residence in Bethpage. Already 69 apartments were opened for Christian families from Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem. Restructuring of approximately 75 homes in the Old City.
- Bethlehem. Continuation of renovation and maintenance of housing for the poor on property of the Custody.
- Nazareth. *Housing Project in Nazareth*. Beginning of construction of a residential complex where, in addition to a chapel and social facilities, the construction of 80 apartments is planned for the benefit of young families.

6. Other cultural works

- Each year, the Custody of the Holy Land provides financial support to the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem. It offers approximately 30 scholarships to students from different dioceses, for the duration of their studies.
- *Franciscan Media Center*. Development of a new form of communication by means of a website updated with the help of television networks, in order to disseminate real-time events related to the Christian holy places.
- *Magnificat*. In a few short years, *Magnificat* has become a school of music capable of preparing students from a variety of cultures. *Magnificat* promotes research activities and cultural events both locally and internationally.
- Renovation and purchase of printing equipment for the Custody of the Holy Land in Bethpage – Franciscan Printing Press.

In addition to these works, completed or planned in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, activities were also undertaken in **Syria and Lebanon**.