

News Letter

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Reflections of the Grand Master

ANOTHER WORLD DAY OF PEACE, ANOTHER NEW YEAR OF HOPE

In the Middle East, renewed prayers for peace but there is no peace, rather tens of thousands of innocent dead.

In the Holy Land, continuing prayers for freedom but there is no freedom but high, lengthy walls separating families. Prayers as well for justice, where Arab and Christian minorities still suffer limitations of their human rights. There is no peace but great suffering on all sides.

It has been said that the challenge of faith is to know why God is permitting evil and suffering without losing faith in God. What an inspiration it should be to us to witness Christians in the Holy Land tenaciously clinging to Faith in sometimes desperate circumstances. And what a source of satisfaction it should be for us as members of the Equestrian Order, to realize that it is our solidarity with them in prayer, pilgrimages and financial help that strengthens faith of Christians there and offers them hope.

Through increased communications such as the Newsletters, Annual Annales, an updated website and our personal visits, we are striving to convince you, each of our motivated members, of the essential role you play in keeping faith and hope alive among



OSSERVATORE ROMANO

The Grand Master of the Holy Sepulchre in the company of the Holy Father, on the occasion of the Mass of the Nativity of the Lord in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

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IMPRESSUM GRAND MAGISTERIUM OF THE EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM
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Christians in Israel, Palestine and Jordan. And through the committed leadership of our Patriarchate and its allies on the ground there, we can be confident that our sacrifices are keeping churches and schools open, shelters for refugees and orphans are opened and food provided for the hungry of every and no faith.

The 18th century French bishop and theologian Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet suggests that "actions that seem most ordinary are secretly directed by the order of God, and serve his designs without our noticing it, in such a way that nothing comes to pass by mere coincidence."

We can be sure that what we do in the name of God is somehow being ordered by God's designs in bringing about extraordinary results.

Edwin, cardinal O'Brien



The Order offers regular support to the institutions of the Latin Patriarchate in the Holy Land, in addition to some specific projects that are presented by this same diocese. Discover the diversity of our work of solidarity, especially in the service of peace, on our website.



The Order in Union with the Universal Church

“NONVIOLENCE: A STYLE OF POLITICS FOR PEACE”

It was January 1, 1968 when Blessed Pope Paul VI gave the world the first message for the World Day of Peace, addressing himself to all peoples and not just to the Catholic Church to proclaim that peace “is the only true direction of human progress”. This January 1, 2017, Pope Francis published the 50th message for this important Day showing how the call for peace never goes out of fashion, it does not age, and it does not lose its relevance. This should not discourage us rather it should encourage us to greater responsibility as Christians.

Yes, as Christians, as Pope Francis forcefully reminds us, because “to be true followers of Jesus today also includes embracing his teaching about nonviolence”. The Holy Father continued: “Jesus himself lived in violent times. Yet he taught that the true battlefield, where violence and peace meet, is the human heart [...]. He unfailingly preached God’s unconditional love, which welcomes and forgives. He

taught his disciples to love their enemies”.

After paying tribute to the commitment to promote peace through non-violence of people like Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King but also Mahatma Gandhi and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the Pope invites us all to “follow the path of non-violence in the first place within the family”: it is there that we learn to listen, to dialogue, to give ourselves and to live in forgiveness and mercy. If within our families we can make

peace reign, then we can really be the leaven in the dough that will ferment our societies.

May Pope Francis wish for this 2017 resonate strongly in our communities: “I wish peace to every man, woman and child, and I pray that the image and likeness of God in each person will enable us to acknowledge one another as sacred gifts endowed with immense dignity. Especially in situations of conflict, let us respect this, our ‘deepest dignity’, and make active nonviolence our way of life”.



The Pope invites us to “tread the path of non-violence first and foremost within the family” (artistic representation of a dove of peace at Bethlehem University. Picture taken during the visit of the Grand Magisterium’s Holy Land Commission).



“FOR SOME OF US, HOW FAR JERUSALEM IS FROM BETHLEHEM!”

With this Newsletter at the start of the year, we recall the illuminating papal teachings that accompanied Christmas and Epiphany, to help foster the “spirit of Bethlehem” in our commitment to the Holy Land.

“**L**et us allow the Child in the manger to challenge us, but let us also be challenged by all those children in today’s world who are lying not in a crib, caressed with affection by their mothers and fathers”, said the Pope during Christmas Mass in the Basilica of St. Peter, drawing our gaze towards children who are lying “in squalid ‘mangers that devour dignity’. Children who hide underground to escape bombardment, on the pavements of large cities, in the hold of a boat overladen with immigrants...”.

The Holy Father’s insistent appeal is echoed by the Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre during this season, who has called for a greater spiritual engagement

by our members in favor of the children of migrants in the Holy Land, physically backed by our pontifical institution. The Pope has urged us to continue to think of them with the same feelings of the Mother of God, bowing over them, lowering ourselves to them, becoming small in front of their fragility, far from the “power of appearance” which he denounced during celebrations for the Nativity of the Lord.

During the feast of the Epiphany, Francis returned to this mystery: “God wanted to be born where we least expected, or perhaps desired, in a place where we so often refuse him”, emphasizing the attitude of Herod who was sleeping while the Magi were traveling ... “Jerusalem slept. It slept in



THE POPE REITERATES HIS CALL FOR A STABLE AND LASTING SOLUTION OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

“**P**eace to the women and men of the beloved Holy Land, the land chosen and favored by God,” the Pope said in his *Urbi et Orbi*, at Christmas. “May Israelis and Palestinians have the courage and determination to write a new page of history, where hate and revenge give way to the will to build together a future of mutual understanding and harmony,” he added.

During his speech to diplomats, at the beginning of the year, he reiterated his “urgent appeal” to resume dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians to arrive at “a stable and enduring solution that guarantees the peaceful coexistence of two states within internationally recognized borders.” “No conflict can become a habit impossible to break!” Francis insisted before the ambassadors accredited to the Holy See. “Israelis and Palestinians need peace. The whole Middle East urgently needs peace”, he said again, before receiving Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in audience at the Vatican, in mid-January. On that occasion, the President gifted the Pope a rock from Golgotha from the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, before inaugurating the embassy of the State of Palestine to the Holy See, one year after the entry into force of the bilateral agreement between the two States.



collusion with a Herod who, rather than seeking, also slept. He slept, anesthetized by a cauterized conscience" said the Holy Father, putting us on guard again against "worldly rules" or even "the cult of power, appearance, and of superiority". "For some of us, how far Jerusalem is from Bethlehem", he cried, inviting each of us to have "hearts open to the horizon" as the Magi "were open to something new." "The Magi did not set out because they had seen the star, but they saw the star because they had already set out..."

OSSERVATORE ROMANO



A poignant moment during the Christmas celebrations in Rome: Pope Francis worships the Child Jesus calling for greater humility and simplicity in human relations in the heart of the Church where "worldly laws" have no reason to exist.

“SO THAT GOD’S CARESS MAY REACH EVERYONE”

During the Jubilee of Mercy, more than 21 million pilgrims passed through the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica while, worldwide, more than 800 million believers experienced this spiritual exercise of crossing the Holy Doors open in diocesan churches or in sanctuaries. And this Holy Year was a form of spiritual training, an exercise to welcome mercy and to become its instruments to bring it everywhere, as the Pope explained in his Apostolic letter *Misericordia et misera* - Mercy with misery - publicly signed on the last day of the Jubilee Year, November 20, the feast of Christ the King, after Mass in the presence of the new cardinals, in St. Peter’s Square. Among the people drawn from all walks

of life who symbolically received this document from the hands of Francis, to transmit it to the world, the two chosen bishops are members of the Order: Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, archbishop of Manila, and Monsignor Leo Cushley, Archbishop of Edinburgh.

This letter points out "the path that we are called to follow in the future," remaining faithful to the teachings of Christ. "Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church," explains the Holy Father at the beginning of this letter, which was officially made available on Monday 21 November, the Feast of the Presentation of Mary. "Let us trust in her maternal assistance and follow her perennial counsel to look to Jesus, the radiant face of God’s mercy" so that we can realize once more that





OSSERVATORE ROMANO

Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle of Manila – member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre – while receiving the Apostolic Letter Misericordia et misera from the hands of Pope Francis which opens the future to a culture of mercy in all areas of our personal and social life ...

Mercy is thus an urgently needed remedy for a moral and spiritual poverty linked to "the culture of extreme individualism" in the West which "has led to a loss of a sense of solidarity with and responsibility for others."

The Holy Father develops the ideas that Mercy must be celebrated, most notably in the sacraments, and that Mercy is lived in the everydayness of our lives, in our encounters with others.

With regards the celebration of Mercy, the Pope wishes that the word of God is above all taken more deeply into the

"everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father."

"Like a gusting but wholesome wind, the Lord's goodness and mercy have swept through the entire world," wrote the Holy Father, and as "it has truly been like a new visitation of the Lord among us," that "we have felt his life-giving breath poured out upon the Church." The time has come to understand "how best to continue, with joy, fidelity and enthusiasm, experiencing the richness of God's mercy."

Poverty, *misera* in Latin, which is the second important word in the title of the Pope's letter, is found above all in the fact that "God himself is now a stranger to many" "and this represents the greatest poverty and the major obstacle to the recognition of the inviolable dignity of human life" (*Misericordia et Misera* 18)."

Christian community, and he proposes that one Sunday in the liturgical year be entirely devoted to this, on the theme of mercy, something which will hopefully lead to concrete charitable actions and works.

Socially speaking, he indicates that, "We are called to promote a culture of mercy based on the rediscovery of encounter with others". "The culture of mercy is shaped in assiduous prayer, in docility to the working of the Holy Spirit, in knowledge of the lives of the saints and in being close to the poor".

"This is the time of mercy", repeats Peter's successor five times at the end of his letter – perhaps a reference to the five wounds of Christ – "since no one can think that he or she is cut off from God's closeness and the power of his tender love", for it is through the testimony of believers that "God's caress may reach everyone".



DIPLOMACY OF SMALL STEPS TO BUILD TRUST

The Secretary for Relations with States of the Secretariat of State, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, gave an interview to the Communication Service of the Grand Magisterium. In this Newsletter we publish an excerpt from this conversation, inviting our readers to read the article in full on our website www.oessh.va

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre works hard to be at the service of education and peace in the Holy Land, notably through supporting schools and universities where Muslims and Christians study together in a tangible dynamic of interreligious dialogue. In your view, what does this pontifical institution represent and what do you expect of it during the coming years?

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre continues a great mission of support, both

practical and spiritual, for the works of the Church and the Catholics present in the Holy Land. Through the activities of its members over the years it has shown the Church's concern for the faithful in the Holy Land. In the current context, we all know how much interreligious dialogue is essential. In particular, it is crucial to educate towards a serene dialogue and coexistence to ensure a durable peace for the generations to come. The educational efforts which enable both young Christians, who already come from diverse ecclesial



Archbishop Paul Gallagher with Msgr. Antonio Franco (behind), Assessor of the Order, and Msgr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, during the reception last autumn in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Palestine, at the headquarters of the Grand Magisterium in Rome.



realities, as well as young people from other religions, to grow-up together, to learn, to share and to evolve in a dynamic of harmony, are the true seeds of hope. Without doubt these efforts do not make the headlines, but they lay the foundations for the future and already witness to true fraternity in diversity.

The Palestinian State was recognized by the Holy See one year after the historic visit of Pope Francis to the Holy Land. How could this recognition tangibly stimulate peace in the Middle East?

For many decades, the conflict in the Middle East has not ceased to cause suffering, doubt, and lack of understanding, division and isolation. Time only worsens the situation and its wounds. Yet stability and peace must necessarily lie in justice, the recognition of the rights of each person and the security of all. The two States solution has presented itself for a long time as the best remedy to the conflict and to guarantee a future and a stable peace for the people who are directly affected. It is based on safety, justice and the rights found at the heart of the internationally recognized borders. Enacting such a resolution certainly demands courage, "the courage of peace", as Pope Francis says. It also demands determination and consistency. In the long and difficult Israeli-Palestinian peace process, it entails, above all, recognition of the fundamental needs of individuals and peoples. Evidently, the resolution of such a conflict will constitute a fundamental step in favor of peace in the Middle-East.

Personally, as a man of the Church, where do you draw hope in these

obscure times of "a piecemeal war", and what promising signs can you give regarding a "peace in little pieces" which advances as well, without making the headlines?

That's a very beautiful question! At times, it can seem difficult to cultivate hope whilst we are witnessing multiple acts of violence, touching most often innocents, children, families, people who cannot defend themselves. The blind violence, which characterizes this "piecemeal war", according to the term used by Pope Francis, has dramatic consequences, as well as causing suffering and injustice. The Apostle St Paul exhorts us to be men and women of hope, hoping, like Abraham, "against all

hope". And so he charges us to work humbly in our daily life, through little acts of peace, of fraternity, of humility and of reconciliation which are seeds that are indispensable to the construction of a true and enduring peace in which we must never

cease to believe in and aspire to. Peace is a gift to patiently look for and which "becomes handmade in the hands of men" – as Pope Francis recently said. The Holy Father himself often makes reference to "diplomacy of small steps". To some extent, we already have encouraging signs in recent events relating to Cuba, the Central African Republic or Colombia. Here we can certainly also speak of a "peace in little pieces", a peace which is rooted in the communal consciousness that we are all brothers in humanity and which is fed by faith in Christ Redeemer and Prince of Peace.

Interview by François Vayne
(translation from the original interview in French)

“ *It is crucial to educate towards a serene dialogue and coexistence to ensure a durable peace for the generations to come* ”



MSGR. ADAM PARKER APPOINTED AUXILIARY BISHOP OF BALTIMORE (USA)



On 6 December 2016, the Holy Father has appointed two new auxiliary bishops of Baltimore (USA), one of which is Msgr. Adam John Parker, Commander with Star of the OESSH, former special assistant and secretary to the Grand Master of the Order, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, from 2012 to 2013. Pope Francis has assigned him the titular see of Tasaccora. On the occasion of his episcopal ordination, which took place on January 19 at the Mary Our Queen Cathedral of Baltimore, our Grand Master was one of the co-consecrators.

We congratulate Mons. Parker and accompany him in prayer in this new service within the Church.

Proceedings of the Grand Magisterium

AMBASSADOR IVAN REBERNIK APPOINTED HONORARY CHANCELLOR

On 12 December 2016, the Grand Master, Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, appointed Ambassador Ivan Rebernik Chancellor of Honor. Member of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre since 2000, Ambassador Rebernik fervently served the Order as Chancellor from 2012 to 2016. During those years he has closely chaired the work of the Order's Commission on Appointments and Promotions and supported the communications development of the Grand Magisterium of the Order that led to the opening of the new site in five languages and entry into the world of social media. In addition, he promoted the reorganization of the Grand Magisterium archive given his valuable and long experience in the library sector.



THE GRAND MASTER'S CALENDAR

In November, the Grand Master celebrated two Investiture ceremonies in the United States: on November 5 in Boston and on November 18 in New York. On December 3 in Anagni (Italy), Cardinal O'Brien received the International Boniface VIII Prize "... for a culture of Peace", City of Anagni 2016 and the International Prize "Misericordes sicut Pater" for his work as Grand Master of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre and his intense episcopal activity.

Again in the United States in December, the Grand Master presided at Mass in Shreveport, Louisiana, for the 150th anniversary of the apparition and the miracle of Saint John Berchmans, a seventeenth century Belgian Jesuit who appeared supernaturally to a dying American novice who was then miraculously healed. During the liturgy it was possible to venerate the relic of the heart of the Saint. On that occasion, he met a delegation of members of the Order.

On his return to Rome, Cardinal O'Brien participated in the celebrations of the Christmas season in the Vatican with the Holy Father. After the holidays, he celebrated the Investiture of four new members of the Order at the North American Pontifical College in Rome on January 11 in the presence of Cardinal Blase Joseph Cupich from Chicago and Cardinal Donald William Wuerl from Washington D.C., and on January 19, he was one of the co-consecrating bishops at the episcopal consecration ceremony of Msgr. Adam Parker.

In the coming months, the Grand Master will celebrate Investiture ceremonies in Sweden (11 February), in Palermo (February 18), and South Africa (March 18).

Cardinal Edwin O'Brien, along with Cardinals Blase J. Cupich (to his left) and Donald Wuerl, respectively Archbishops of Chicago and Washington D.C., as well as the Governor General of the Order, Agostino Borromeo, and the Chancellor Alfredo Bastianelli. Behind them, the new members: Father John Bateman (Secretary of the Grand Master, at the top left in the picture), Father Austin Vetter, the Very Reverend Father Peter Harman, rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome, and Father John Cush.



The Order and the Holy Land

THE HOLY LAND COORDINATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF FACE TO FACE MEETINGS

An interview with David Smith, Lieutenant of England and Wales

The Holy Land Coordination, comprising representatives of Episcopal conferences from different countries, was established at the invitation of the Holy See at the end of the twentieth century in order to visit and support the local Christian communities of the Holy Land.

Three key words guide the action of the Coordination: Prayer for and with local communities, Pilgrimage and Persuasion, this last aspect concerns the important work that the bishops are called to carry out with institutions on their return home to support the Christian communities and the entire population of these lands. Another word is often added to these: Presence, to help our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land feel close to communities in other countries.

In 2017 the Coordination traveled to the Holy Land January 14 to 19, preceded by a small delegation that visited Gaza on January 12 and 13 (read the final statement of the Coordination after their visit on our website). The general program began on the eve of the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in Jaffa with the "Mass of the Peoples", animated by the various national communities living in Israel, and then Tel Aviv with a visit to the Centre for Migrants.

The theme that dominated the following days was that of 50 years of occupation with visits to Bethlehem, Hebron and East Jerusalem. Wednesday, January 18, was dedicated to ecumenical dialogue, to celebrate the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, closing with a prayer service at the Anglican Cathedral of St. George in Jerusalem.

The Lieutenant for England and Wales, David Smith, has been part of the Holy Land Coordination for years, and in this short interview tells us about his experience.

How did your work with the Holy Land Coordination begin?

I have been attending the Coordination since 2010. The previous Lieutenant used to go and when I took over the role of



Since the late 1990s, every year a group of bishops from various continents – which form the Holy Land Coordination – visits the territory mainly to ensure the support of the universal Church for local communities (Copyright: Catholic Church of England and Wales).



Lieutenant they invited me because of the work of the Knights in the Holy Land. Every year it is interesting to be with the bishops during their visit. Our Lieutenancy also gives some financial support to the initiative.

What is the Holy Land Coordination's mission and activities?

This initiative was established at the invitation of the Holy See as a way to give support to the Holy Land and England was invited to organize it. The majority of the group is bishops from different countries, involved in the Middle East in some capacities, with the Commissions for Justice and Peace or representatives of national Bishops' Conferences. These people have a role and when they go back home they are able to support a change through their voices. The bishops create a statement at the end of their visit and publicize it within their sphere of influence. There are also some lay people in the group, for example the trustees of Bethlehem University and people from Caritas.

Is there a particular place, community,

situation that you bring back home in your prayers after your visits?

The most powerful experience I had during one of my last visits was the meeting with Iraqi Christian refugees in Jordan. In 2016 we met them every day for three days and they told us how their life used to be. 140.000 Iraqi Christians were expelled from the Plain of Nineveh and we also met people from Mosul. Many of them were very well educated and used to run their own business. They told us that when ISIS came along, they knocked at their door telling them: either you become a Muslim; you pay a tax, or don't be here tomorrow.

When they arrived in Jordan they lived in parishes. Now they are moving to semi-permanent accommodations and Caritas Jordan helped this process a lot. Nevertheless, the Kingdom of Jordan is experiencing heavy pressures. The bishops managed to meet refugees face to face and meetings always deepen one's own perspective.

Elena Dini

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CHRISTMAS IN COMMUNION WITH THE CHILDREN OF MIGRANTS IN THE HOLY LAND

This Christmas the Grand Master Cardinal Edwin O'Brien wants to remind us of all the activities that the Order supports on behalf of the children of migrants in Israel so that all our members may celebrate the festivities in communion with these children who today give an African or Asian face to the Baby Jesus, thus well representing the universality of the Church. Through the regular contributions of members, each year the Grand Magisterium of the Order is able to send a sum of money to support these facilities for migrant children and thus support their whole families.

The situation of migrants in the Holy Land is critical and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is committed to supporting them through the activities and facilities offered by the Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew speaking Catholics. In fact, more than 60,000 migrants are Catholics and they represent an important part of the face the Catholic Church has and will have in Israel.

Legal issues, poverty, the need to work but nowhere to leave children, contribute to creating a complex framework pushing parents to put their children into dangerous "baby warehouses". Here, up to 60 babies from one month old to three years old, are



“deposited” in darkened rooms, crammed together, wrapped tightly in swaddling clothes so they do not move and can be looked after by one or two untrained adults. The children are underfed and not looked after properly. Lack of proper nutrition keeps them quiet. This storage of young lives permits mothers to work and so to make the whole family stay alive.

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre wishes these children may have a start in life that will allow them to lead lives devoid of suffering and that will promote their right to flourish as human beings. In order to make that happen we support the promotion of day care units that guarantee an

acceptable environment for babies from the age of three months to three years. At present 90 babies are being looked after daily, giving these children a chance in life but also applying a model of healthy child care that can be adopted by others. We also promote after-school programs where more grown-up children can receive adequate help in coping with the load at school and also providing a safe haven, where children can come when their parents are still at work.

To inform all the members of these activities a pamphlet is available on the Order's website at this link.

THE RESTORATION OF THE “AEDICULE” THAT PROTECTS THE HOLY SEPULCHRE



The aedicule (shrine) that protects Christ's Holy Sepulchre, in the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre is being restored. This restoration funded by the three main Christian denominations that guard the Holy Sepulchre (the Latins, represented by the Franciscans, the Greek Orthodox and the Armenians) and by public and private donations – such as the gift of the King Abdallah of Jordan – aims to ensure the preservation of this construction. The Order is contributing to this work thanks to a financial contribution sent from the USA Northwestern Lieutenancy. Msgr. Jacques Perrier, who previously served as Grand Prior of the Lieutenancy for France, offers us a historical clarification regarding this structure so dear to the heart of all Christians.

The angel announced to the women who had come to embalm the body of Jesus, “Why look for the living amongst the dead?” The fact remains that: the believer keeps the place where the body of Jesus was deposited, for veneration. It appeals to the concreteness of the faith. Particularly



for the members of the Order.

During the second half of the 20th century, the basilica was restored. The cupola was once again opened to the sky and light came down on the "aedicule", according to the term which refers to what the Greeks constructed at the beginning of the 19th century on the tomb itself.

Alas, the light showed that the aedicule was in very bad condition. The three principal communities, co-guardians of the edifice (Greek Orthodox, Latin Catholic and Armenian Apostolic) decided to restore it. Works started at the end of the summer.

In Constantine's basilica, the tomb had been excavated from the rock slope out of which it had been dug. But the tomb itself was conserved. On October 19, 1009, the Caliph Al-Hakîm decided to destroy it. The

pics of those charged with demolishing it wiped out all that was in relief and halted at the funeral layer carved in the rock. A few years later, the basilica was restored, with much difficulty, until the arrival of the crusaders, which now leaves us with the current building.

Since this time, the original rock has been put on top of a marble slab, that which the pilgrims venerate, which protects it. It was in 1810, during the construction of the current aedicule, that the original rock appeared for the last time. Since an identical reconstruction has been planned for the restoration, there is a risk it will disappear, once again, for several centuries.

Msgr. Jacques Perrier
Bishop emeritus of Lourdes

PRAYING FOR THE UNITY OF CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND

Father David Neuhaus, a Jesuit, responsible for the pastoral care of migrants and Hebrew-speaking Catholics for the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, has agreed to enrich this newsletter with a reflection on the theme of Christian unity. His meditation helps us to extend the dedicated Week of Prayer in January to this essential intention according to Christ's will: "May they all be one" (Jn 17:21)

"For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them" (2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

Throughout the Christian world, ecumenism, the attempts to promote Christianity unity and heal the wounds of separation, are afoot. In the Holy Land, there are many forms of division among Christians. The most visible is the

division among different Christian denominations, Eastern, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical. However, one of the deepest divides is among Christians who identify with different sides in the ongoing wars that tear the Holy Land apart. The challenge of unity is not only to bring the denominations together but also to foster awareness that Christians have a unique role to play because they are situated on all sides.

There are different kinds of ecumenism in the Holy Land today:





ANDRES BERGAMINI

The week of Christian unity, which is held every January, is particularly important for the "living stones" which together form the Church of Christ in Jerusalem and in the territories in which the Son of God carried out his redeeming ministry (Pictured, ecumenical prayer vigil in the Armenian cathedral St. James in Jerusalem, Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem archives)

- **Ecumenism of solidarity:** A strong motor in ecumenical relations among Christians in the Holy Land is their shared circumstances. Whereas theological, religious and historical causes for division often seem abstract and distant, the need for unity is underlined because of the shared struggle to survive. Ecumenical encounter often deals more with occupation, discrimination and religious fundamentalism than it does with the causes for Christian division. This type of ecumenism has led to the weaving of closer relations among Christians as awareness grows that what we have in common is much greater than what divides us.

- **Ecumenism of piety:** A very different kind of ecumenism is inspired by the focus on specifically Christian themes. Some see

their faith as a refuge from the world outside. Christians come into the religious space to escape conflict and submerge themselves in religious language and practice in order to create distance from their surroundings. This is often the tendency within traditional Christian communities that see the world as a threatening kingdom of darkness and the Christian community as shedding some light and offering some consolation.

- **Prophetic ecumenism:** Some Disciples of Christ are engaging in a new form of ecumenism that might be called "prophetic ecumenism". "For (Christ) is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments



and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it" (*Ephesians 2:14-16*). We are beginning to reflect on the fact that God has planted the seed of faith in Christ deep in the soil of both Palestinian and Israeli societies. Does this have significance for the vocation of Christ's disciples who, though separated by walls of enmity because of the ongoing conflict, are united by their faith in the Christ who is our peace?

In conclusion, I would like to quote a man who has repeatedly reached out to all his brothers and sisters in Christ, calling them to contemplate the scandal of Christian division, Pope Francis. At his

“ *Every time we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the resurrection* ”

meeting with Greek Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew before the Tomb of Christ in the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem on May 25, 2014, he declared: "Every time we ask forgiveness of one another for our sins against other Christians and every time

we find the courage to grant and receive such forgiveness, we experience the resurrection! Every time we put behind us our longstanding prejudices and find the courage to build new fraternal relationships, we confess that Christ is truly risen!

Every time we reflect on the future of the church in the light of her vocation to unity, the dawn of Easter breaks forth!" It is this dawn that disciples of Christ are called to witness to in his beloved land that is also ours, torn for too long by conflict.

David Neuhaus, SJ



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Order of the Holy Sepulchre
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The Life of the Lieutenancies

“A GATE OF LIFE”, TO HELP YOUNG DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE WEST BANK

“Lifegate” is a German Christian organization located in Beit Jala, near Bethlehem. It helps disabled children and youth in the West Bank as part of a project initiated in 1991. With its team of Palestinian and German collaborators, Lifegate addresses this challenge. Its work is based on hope and love for all men that has its roots in the Christian faith and permeates the work of all its employees.

On the initiative of two of its members, Frank and Rita Deiters, permanent delegates to the Holy Land of the Lieutenancy for Switzerland, this Lieutenancy Order has supported a Lifegate project. These two members came to know about Lifegate and were deeply impressed by its work during a trip to the Holy Land with their family in 2010. Frank Deiters, the couple’s son, had accompanied them and had decided to stay on as a volunteer for three months. He was so impressed by their work that he offered his services as a volunteer from 2011.

250 children and young people with

disabilities participate in weekly support programs. These include support for young children, with a kindergarten for children with physical or mental disabilities, a specialized school and a vocational training workshop for disabled young people, who are prepared in twelve trades. Lifegate helps with the integration of disabled children into regular schools, and its staff provides home care to elderly and those in need of support. Lifegate provides comprehensive medical and therapeutic care for children and young people because there is no statutory social insurance system or a specific allowance for disabled persons.



We learn more about Lifegate Rehabilitation and the situation for disabled children in Bethlehem with Burghard Schunkert, director at Lifegate.

Can you tell us more about the development programs Lifegate Rehabilitation offers?

Lifegate has been working for 26 years in the field of Rehabilitation for children and young people with disabilities. Our everyday work is carried out with a holistic approach. We look into all the areas of a person’s life and start to

develop them where we identify a need. We offer education in kindergarten, school and vocational training center (we teach 14 professions), medical intervention and therapies, intensive work with families and siblings, home visit programs. Our statement: Every child and every person is a wonderful creation of our God and has right for love,



Art features among the many activities offered by Lifegate: this beautiful plate was painted by Kholoud, a young and highly talented artist!



65 Palestinian Christians work for Lifegate. In the overall population of the Holy Land, Palestinian Christians represent less than 1%, and by giving them a permanent job, Lifegate wants to encourage them to remain.

Burghard Schunkert, founder and director of Lifegate, describes its current activities:

"One of the specific programs our institution offers is to help prepare children of different age groups to integrate into a regular kindergarten and regular schools: this has allowed five children to leave Lifegate and access local schools. We were able to set up in the new wing of our school a new special needs class that allows us to teach 60 children divided into 6 classes. We are pleased to be able to allow children of the Lifegate kindergarten to continue their studies and we have some external children who are on our waiting lists".

"In 2016 - he continues - about 50 young people were prepared by Lifegate for their future profession and in doing so helped to find their place in society." Most of the young people trained by Lifegate have already found a job in businesses in and around Bethlehem. Apart from professional training, these young people have learned to read and write Arabic and have followed courses in mathematics and general knowledge. In addition, a new course in our



acceptance, development and access to development and education.

Beside our daily program for up to 200 people with disabilities, we offer with our disabled people a laundry service for the public, a dental clinic for specific difficult children and young people (but also for everyone who likes to come), a catering and food service, a leather and shoe repair workshop for outside customers. Our therapy department with all the necessary therapies is also open for the public (outpatients) from Monday to Saturday. We have a very skilled helping aid and wheelchair

department and we deployed our team and services several times to aid the Syrian refugees in Jordan, Egypt and Iraq.

We start our week with a devotion from the bible, we have a weekly prayer meeting and we share the love of Christ in our everyday thoughts, actions and words. We are working for the people and for peace and understanding and against no one.

We believe in reconciliation between Arabs and Jews and we Christians can act as a bridge between them. Our faith is our source for love and power.



workshops for occupational therapy students from Bethlehem University was one of the highlights of this summer."

Mr. Schunkert also noted the support that Lifegate offers to Syrian refugees in Jordan, which describes as follows: "This spring we were able to help many people with disabilities thanks to medical equipment that we built ourselves at Lifegate or which were

donated to us. Our employees, accompanied by therapists, traveled to a refugee camp in Jordan, to deliver much needed wheelchairs and medical equipment. Meanwhile, the Lifegate team that takes care of medical equipment was also requested in neighboring countries. We respond to these requests, when we can, with joy. "

The work of Lifegate is funded by



donations, the sale of the products and services available in their workshops, such as shoe repairs. In the future, a dental clinic, a laundry service and a catering service should help generate even more funds.

Jean-Pierre de Glutz
Lieutenant for Switzerland
Donata Krethlow-Benziger
Chancellor

Do you have any specific activities in support of families with disabled children?

At Lifegate we help the families to help themselves with income generating projects, like: Second hand clothes stores, sheep breeding, greenhouses, chicken and egg production, etc. We prefer when the idea comes from the family in fields they have already experience. We encourage families a lot to become our partners in the development of the child. Therefore we have mother and father programs at Lifegate where parents learn more about their children and how to help them.

What is life like for a disabled child in Bethlehem?

Better than anywhere else in the Palestinian area, as Bethlehem has some institutions and places to support children and families. At Lifegate we try our best to cooperate with other institutions and not to duplicate services. Wheelchair users have a hard time and we discuss with the municipalities the need of safe street crossings for wheelchair drivers, blind people and people who walk very slowly. We receive promises but no action.



BEING A FAMILY IN THE ORDER OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

The witness of Giuseppe and Angela Casamassima, Knight and Dame of the Order of the Holy Sepulchre, Central Italy Lieutenancy.

Although we have always nourished strong bonds with the Holy Land, our history with the Order begins in 2015, with the Investiture on December 19 in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, a day we will always treasure. From the very first meeting, we were welcomed into what has seemed like a big family, where the values ??of the Christian community are fused with the principles inherent to membership in the Equestrian Order.

We are from Naples and Palermo, and we share the same profession as members of the Italian Police Force, but with different roles. We were married on August 3, 2013 and on that day our journey through life together and our spiritual journey as a Family, in its broadest sense, began. This is why we decided together to join the Order, to enhance our practice of Christian life and to support charitable and social works in the Holy Land.

We believe that the family, understood in the unity of a couple, represents the primary and original cell in which one experiences human sociability and makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society. With this in mind our bond with the Order has strengthened the foundation of our married life, providing us with a new vision of the social subjectivity of the family, which must be expressed through works of



service and demonstrations of solidarity. The Order also involves us in first person in many charitable works, reminding us of one of the most important lessons that the Lord has left us: the importance of loving our neighbor.

This also propels us to turn our thoughts and prayers to the Holy Land, discovering the importance of the role entrusted to Knights not only as a peace bearer but also as a tangible supporter of works. Beyond that, we are tied to the Order by its bond with Blessed Bartolo Longo, founder of the Shrine of the Virgin of the

Rosary of Pompeii, a place we have made pilgrimage to for years with great devotion. The image of the Blessed, wrapped in his white cape, has allowed us to approach the Order and to discover the values ??that are its foundation. This is why we strongly believe that our participation in the Order represents a blessing for our family that will accompany us in this wonderful journey that we have undertaken together.

Giuseppe e Angela Casamassima

“ *Our bond with the Order has strengthened the foundation of our married life* ”



