



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Recent months in the Holy Land

A brief overview of the most important events that have touched the life of the Catholic communities in the Holy Land in recent months.



The beautiful icon created in 2010 on the wall that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem inspires in all ardent prayer for justice and peace.

The last few months have brought with them important innovations to the Catholic community of Latin rite present in the Holy Land with the appointment of the new Custos of the Holy Land, Father Francesco Patton; the end of the mandate of the Patriarch Fouad Twal and the appointment of Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa as Apostolic Administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Within the context of the Jubilee Year proclaimed by Pope Francis, on May 12, the **“Garden of Mercy” was inaugurated in Jordan** in the presence of the Undersecretary of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, Monsignor Segundo Tejado Muñoz. This is a sustainable farm that will provide jobs and will allow the trade of local products. This concrete initiative of mercy has been promoted and supported by Pope Francis, to help the many Iraqi refugees present in Jordan.

OUR LADY WHO BRINGS DOWN WALLS

On a sadder note, construction continues of the **separation wall in the Cremisan Valley**. On May 26, an EU delegation visited the site to see the situation firsthand and listen to the testimony of Issa Al-Shatleh, a land owner whose olive trees have been uprooted to build the wall.

Prayer is certainly of support to the local people and in this the **beautiful icon painted onto the part of the wall that separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem in 2010 by iconographer Ian Knowles**, comes to mind: Our Lady who Brings Down Walls. We share the prayer to her which reads: “We beg

you, through your ardent intercession, to bring down this wall, the walls of our hearts, and all the walls that generate hatred, violence, fear, and indifference between people and between nations”.

Regarding the **situation of Christian schools in Israel**, unfortunately we cannot report any significant progress over the past few months. The 50 million shekels (local currency) promised by the Israeli Government to offset the cuts in school support in the past few years have not been transferred to schools within the agreed deadline (March 31, 2016) and the schools are facing difficult economic conditions.

RESTORING THE FACE OF THE CHURCH

On June 16, Pope Francis received participants at the Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Oriental Churches (ROACO) in audience, who were gathered in Rome for their usual spring meeting. The Holy Father began by noting how the ongoing restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem (for more information www.nativityrestoration.ps) sends a strong message to the whole Church: “I have been told that in the course of restoration work in Bethlehem, on one of the walls of the nave a seventh angel in mosaic has come to light, forming with the other six a sort of procession towards the place commemorating the mystery of the birth of the Word made flesh. This can lead us to reflect on how the face of our ecclesial communities can also be covered by “incrustations” as a result of various problems and sins. Yet your work must unfailingly be guided by the certainty that, **beneath material and moral incrustations, and the tears and bloodshed caused by war, violence and persecution, beneath this apparently impenetrable cover there is a radiant face like that of the angel in the mosaic**. All of you, with your projects and your activities, are part of a “restoration” that will enable the face of the Church to reflect visibly the light of Christ the Word Incarnate”.

A few days after the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, it is nice to remember the moments of sharing between the Christian and Muslim communities of the Holy Land, such as the breaking of the fast meal (***iftar***) **organized by the Latin Patriarchate and by Abraham’s House on June 17**.

In the spirit of the call to fraternal and spiritual communion, the thirteenth edition of **Extraordinary Prayer of all the Churches in Jerusalem for reconciliation, unity and peace**, took place on June 19. This year it was organized by the Maronite Church.

Elena Dini

(July 27, 2016)