



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

When Lieutenancies visit the small projects they support

The pilgrimage of the Lieutenancy for Ireland and the visit to Taybeh and Mafraq



The pilgrimage of the Irish Knights and Dames included a visit to the parishes of Taybeh in Palestine and Mafraq in Jordan, where the Order's Lieutenancy for Ireland funded small projects, developing a bond of friendship with the local communities.

Lieutenancies and Magistral Delegations of the Order have the possibility of selecting small projects to support specific needs of local communities and thus establish a more direct link with a local community with which they keep stable and friendly exchanges while growing in the mutual knowledge. A list of projects is every year agreed between the Latin Patriarchate and the Grand Magisterium and Lieutenancies confirm their willingness to support one or the other project.

Here we read the moving experience of the Lieutenancy for Ireland which has supported a 2021 and 2022 small project (the building of new classrooms at the Mafraq Latin school in Jordan and the fire safety works at the Beit Afram Elderly Home in Taybeh, Palestine) and their joy in finally going on pilgrimage to the Holy Land and meeting the living stones that they have prayed for and interacting with throughout the past two years as well as rejoicing with them for the completed projects that offer better living and working conditions.

In September 2022, a group of thirty Knights, Dames and friends from the Lieutenancy for Ireland walked in the footsteps of Our Lord. This was the 14th Pilgrimage conducted by the Lieutenancy since its establishment in 1986. The pilgrimage itinerary included inter alia the Latin Patriarchate Parishes in Taybeh and Mafraq, where our Lieutenancy funded small projects and has developed a bond with those communities.

In Taybeh, the last remaining entirely Christian town in Palestine, we visited the Beit Afram Home for the Elderly, managed by the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara. Our Lieutenancy donated a substantial sum to finance urgently needed Fire Safety works to safeguard the residents and staff. On arrival, we were warmly greeted by Sisters Maria Pia and Maria Alma. Both retired Patriarch Michel Sabbah, who was visiting for a few days, and also Msgr. Kamal Bathish retired auxiliary Bishop, were there and we were honoured to have an audience with both and enjoy local Palestinian food and refreshments.

Sister Pia briefed us on the care provided to the residents and informed us of the challenges, faced daily, to provide such essential housing accommodation and medical assistance to the most deserving 'Living Stones', with whom we were then privileged to meet. To our great surprise, one of the residents introduced himself as a fellow Confrère of our Order, Knight Rowland Pickering, who had been invested by Cardinal Furno in 2003.

Our visit to Beit Afram Home for the Elderly was more than an assessment of the material works of a project that we contributed to financially. It was a blessing to being afforded an opportunity to engage and further strengthen our bond with these 'Living Stones' to whom we owe so much.

In Mafraq, a city in Northern Jordan 15 km from the Syrian border, we visited the Latin Parish of St Theresa of the Child Jesus. We were warmly greeted by Fr. Tareq Hijazin, parish priest who introduced us to Mr Hazem Haddad, the Vice Principal of the School associated with the parish church. We were delighted to meet with a classroom of kindergarten infants who had just commenced by a few weeks their educational journey. A number of members has brought bags of sweets for each child, which were enthusiastically accepted.

The Vice Principal brought us to the schoolyard to view the four classroom school extension that our Lieutenancy funded in 2021. This was urgently required to accommodate the senior cycle school children from the Latin community who otherwise would have had to leave to attend a public state run school.

The continued education of the school children in a Latin Church School is a priority of both the Patriarchate and the Grand Magisterium. Our visit evidenced this need and afforded us the opportunity to see how this very small community of 'Living Stones' (500 Latin Catholics over a population of 75,000) benefits greatly from the voluntary financial donations of our members. The aim of our mission was actualised and achieved.

Thomas Kilduff

Communications Officer

of the Lieutenancy for Ireland

(December 2022)