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Appeal for the Collection for the Holy Land

Letter of the prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

The “pro Terra Sancta” Collection

Summary Report of the Custody of the Holy Land on projects and works realised with the 2015-2016 Collection

Joint Press Release with the Custody of the Holy Land on the contribution of the Holy See to the restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

Letter of the prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

1 March 2017
Ash Wednesday

Your Excellency,

The Lenten Journey, which we are travelling, invites us to raise our eyes to the goal: we are following Our Lord Jesus Christ first to Golgotha and then, having descended with Him into the tomb, to experience the ever new and life-giving power of His Resurrection. The Holy Places of our faith are eloquent witnesses of this extraordinary event, which has changed the course of history and opened up a new hope for humanity.

From those places, the Easter proclamation has spread throughout the world, and it continues to spread. A Christian community has remained in those regions down through the centuries, even at the cost of great sacrifice and martyrdom. Since the first Pentecost, it has bravely shown the universal face of the Church to the world.

Our sense of communion in the suffering and risen Christ moves us again this year to undertake the important initiative that is the Collection for the Holy Land. Indeed, this effort manifests the bond of brotherhood that unites the universal Church to the Mother Church of Jerusalem, as the Holy Father has indicated. On the occasion of the Assembly of Organizations for Aid to the Oriental Churches (ROACO), on June 16, 2016, while referring to the ongoing restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Shrine of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, Pope Francis recalled the value, not only of the presence of the Church in the Holy Land, but also of the “[maintenance of] the holy places and shrines, also with the help of the yearly Good Friday Collection providently instituted by Blessed Paul VI”. Thanks to the generosity of so many, including non-Catholics, the restoration of these two sites, which are the common heritage of Christianity, is proceeding with remarkable results.

Today, as we know, living the Christian faith in the Middle East is not at all easy. Especially in Iraq, Syria and Egypt, where Christian communities have experienced an “ecumenism of blood”, individuals are daily pressured to abandon their land, or even their faith. Nor does freedom reign in the other countries of the region, where Christians are often subjected to forms of oppression and discrimination that undermine their living conditions.

Keeping hope alive in such circumstances is both difficult and vitally important. Consequently, the small Christian presence in the Middle East has great need of the support and attention of the entire Church. Constant prayer is the first and greatest assistance they seek. Also required, however, is concrete economic aid, taking into account what St. Paul wrote at the time of the first collection for Jerusalem: “Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Once again, from every part of the Church, expressions of solidarity come together effectively in the Good Friday Collection. This enables the Catholic communities of the Holy Land – the Latin Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Custody and other jurisdictions, especially Eastern ones (Greek-Melkite, Coptic, Maronite, Syrian, Chaldean, Armenian) along with religious communities and organizations of all kinds – to help, in their turn, the poor and suffering of every ethnicity and every faith, without distinction.

Parishes will continue their pastoral service with preferential attention to the poor. Schools will enable Christians and Muslims to prepare together a future of respect and partnership. Hospitals and clinics, hospices and community centres will continue to host the suffering and the needy, refugees and asylum-seekers, people of all ages and religions hit by the horrors of war. The unforgettable faces of thousands of children and teens, fleeing violence and persecution in Syria and Iraq, continue to challenge us, even as these young people, thanks to our Collection, are being welcomed by Christian schools in neighbouring countries.

The pilgrimage, which is an important element of the vitality of the Church in the Holy Land, is an initiative always to be promoted. A journey to the Sacred Places in the footsteps of Christ can not only lead the pilgrim to a revival of his faith and a rediscovery of his origins, but it can also serve as a powerful instrument in the New Evangelization. In addition, pilgrimages are an essential resource for the Christian population of the Holy Land. In fact, according to recent statistics, at least 30% of the local community – in Jerusalem and in Bethlehem – live and work thanks to the presence of pilgrims.

As we prepare for Easter, let us renew our commitment to becoming artisans of peace, praying and working that peace may dwell in the heart of every person, especially of our brothers and sisters of the Holy Land and the Middle East.

To you, and to the priests, consecrated men and women and to the Faithful, who are helping to insure the success of the Collection, I have the joy of conveying the sincere gratitude of the Holy Father Francis, together with that of the Congregation for Eastern Churches. Finally, as I invoke on behalf of you, your pastoral ministry and all the faithful of your jurisdiction abundant divine blessings, I send you wishes for a very Happy Easter and my most fraternal greetings in the Lord Jesus.

Leonardo Cardinal Sandri
Prefect

The "pro Terra Sancta" Collection**CONGREGATION FOR THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES**
Year 2015-2016Introduction

The Collection for the Holy Land originated in the wish of the Popes maintain the strong bond between all Christians throughout the World and the Holy Places. The Collection, which is traditionally gathered on Good Friday, is the main source for the support of the life of the Holy Places; it is also the instrument that the Church has provided to enable her to accompany the ecclesial communities of the Middle East. In more recent times, Pope Paul VI, through the Apostolic Exhortation "*Nobis in Animo*" (25 March 1974) gave a strong impetus to work in favour of the Holy Land.

The Custody, through the Collection, can support and continue the important mission to which it is called: safeguarding the Holy Places, the stones of memory, and promoting the Christian presence, the living stones of the Holy Land, through many activities of solidarity, such as the maintenance of pastoral, educational, welfare, health and social structures.

The territories which benefit from various forms of support from the Collection are the following: Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

Usually the Custody of the Holy Land receives the greater part of the proceeds of the Collection, while the remainder is used by the Congregation for the Oriental Churches for the formation of candidates to the priesthood, support for the clergy, school activities, cultural formation, and subsidies to various ecclesiastical circumscriptions in the Middle East.

The following is a summary of what the Congregation received in the year 2015-2016, and how it was distributed:

Offers for the year 2015-2016 for the "pro Terra Sancta" Collection	US\$ 5,275,601.56 + € 1,833,339.20
Total	US\$ 5,275,601.56 + € 1,833,339.20

Academic, spiritual and human formation of seminarians and priests of the Churches under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

As a result of the Collection, donations have been made to seminaries, houses of religious formation and cultural institutions in the territories within the jurisdiction of the Congregation, supporting in various ways (scholarships, university fees and all other healthcare needs), also in Rome, young seminarians and priests, men and women religious and, where compatible with the available funds, some laypeople. From this academic year onwards, this Dicastery will host in a college here in Rome women religious from various eastern countries. Around 300 students benefit from scholarships, residing in seven colleges under the auspices of the Dicastery.

In addition, the Dicastery contributes to the support of the Pontifical Oriental Institute, a higher academic institution with two faculties, Oriental Ecclesiastical Sciences and Oriental Canon Law, of which the Cardinal Prefect is the Grand Chancellor.

Formation of seminarians, priests and religious sisters in Rome	US\$ 3,181,000.00
Maintenance of colleges	€ 300,000.00
Pontifical Oriental Institute (POI)	€ 600,000.00
Total	US\$ 3,181,000.00 + €900,000.00

Subsidies for school activities

The Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Custody, the Oriental Churches of the Holy Land and the Religious Institutes are engaged in the scholastic education of young people in the Holy Land. Considering the particular circumstances in which Christian students find themselves, as well as the arrival in the Holy Land of thousands of school-age children from Syria and Iraq, the Congregation for the Oriental Churches has decided to increase the sum of subsidies in the year 2016-2017.

Of note, too, is the work of the Secretariat for Solidarity in the coordination and disbursement of subsidies to the school institutions managed by the aforementioned institutions.

One of the prestigious foundations that ensures academic formation is Bethlehem University. Almost 3000 young people, mostly Palestinian Muslims, receive an intellectual and human education with the hope of engaging in the building of a country where mutual respect prevails and where human dignity is preserved. The De La Salle Brothers make an appreciable effort in guiding the University.

Secretariat of Solidarity	US\$ 850,000.00
Schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem	US\$ 800,000.00
Bethlehem University	US\$ 1,400,000.00
Total	US\$ 3,050,000.00

Ordinary Subsidies

This Congregation contributes to supporting the Churches under its jurisdiction, with subsidies drawn from the Collection for the Holy Land.

Jerusalem	US\$ 330,000.00
Jordan	US\$ 85,000.00 + € 14,100.00
Iraq	US\$ 137,000.00
Syria	US\$ 281,000.00
Lebanon	US\$ 306,000.00
Turkey	US\$ 149,500.00 + € 5,000.00
Iran	US\$ 76,000.00
Egypt	US\$ 239,000.00

Ethiopia	US\$ 173,000.00
Eritrea	US\$ 175,000.00
Total	US\$ 1,951,500.00 + € 19,100.00

Extraordinary and Emergency Subsidies

The situation created as a result of the human folly and atrocities of the so-called Islamic State has forced many Christians to leave their countries, especially in Syria and Iraq. The Congregation is particularly attentive to the needs of the Christians who have remained in these countries, and at the same time guarantees the necessary means for a dignified life for those who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan. Furthermore, it also provides for the promotion of cultural and spiritual activities which in some way bring people closer, despite religious and ethnic differences.

Syria, for priests and deacons, men and women religious, seminarians	US\$ 569,000.00
Extraordinary subsidy in Iraq, particularly for refugees	US\$ 71,000.00 + € 8,854.00
Extraordinary subsidies Jerusalem	US\$ 148,000.00
Extraordinary subsidies – personal	US\$ 11,869.00
Extraordinary subsidies for cultural collaboration	US\$ 50,000.00
Total	US\$ 838,000.00 + € 20,723.00

Conclusion

It may be observed that the expenses exceed the Collection, and therefore greater cooperation and generous effort is required of Christians all over the world for their brothers and sisters in the Holy Land and the Middle East. The question the Lord posed to Cain: "Where is your brother?" should challenge us, on our Lenten journey, to open our eyes and heart in favour of our brothers in need.

Summary Report of the Custody of the Holy Land on projects and works realised with the 2015-2016 Collection

The Custody of the Holy Land has for centuries been committed to the conservation and revitalisation of the Holy Places of Christianity in the Land of Jesus and in the entire region of the Middle East. Among the various objectives of the Franciscan mission are the sustaining and progress of the Christian minority that lives in these regions, the conservation and care of the archaeological sites and sanctuaries, the interventions in emergency cases, the liturgy in the Places of cult, the apostolic works and assistance to the pilgrims. During the two years 2015/2016, the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land has been manifested in the projection, programming and carrying out of the following projects and works:

- I. Works aimed at the benefit of pilgrims
- II. Works aimed at the benefit of the local community

- III. Other works – Syria and Lebanon
- IV. Ordinary wages of the Custody

1. WORKS AIMED AT THE BENEFIT OF PILGRIMS

1.1. JERUSALEM

Holy Sepulchre

Collaboration with all the other Oriental communities present in the Basilica and with the civil authorities for the restoration of the Tomb of the Risen Christ.

Partial restructuring of the convent.

Garden of Olives in Gethsemane

Upkeep and restoration of the convent and site (covering of the Grotto, PA system, hot water installation, cleaning of the mosaics).

A new organ for the Basilica.

In course of realisation: tunnel for pedestrian communication between the area of the Basilica and the parking lot on the side of the Kidron Valley.

In course of realisation: a centre for the service of pilgrims.

Sanctuary of the Flagellation of the Lord

Realisation of a new kitchen for the convent.

VII and VIII Stations of the Via Dolorosa

Restructuring and requalification of the existing premises.

Convent of Saint Saviour: seat of the Custody of the Holy Land and of the seminary

Renovation of the waterproofing system and paving of the roof of the right aisle of the parish Church; and of part of the floor tiles of the parish hall.

Realisation: of a new ecological area of the convent (Phase II); of the new offices of the Association of the Holy Land, of a new covering of the old dovecote, of a storehouse in the mezzanine of the new laundry, and of the place of the workshop-carpentry.

Infirmary: Changing of the beds with hospital beds with electric handling equipment donated by the hospital of Bergamo; remaking of the water system and of some bathrooms.

Restructuring of the premises of the seminary, of new office, and of the premises of the archives in the ex-office of the Secretary.

Cleaning and consolidation of the facades of some courtyards.

Plan to regain an area (ca. 1600m²) destined for various uses, including new offices, library, refreshment area, new spaces for the Magnificat Institute, parking lots and Auditorium underground.

Terra Sancta Museum

Realisation of a modern museum centre for the valorisation of the artistic, archaeological and cultural Franciscan heritage. An area of around 2500m² includes: Museum Via Dolorosa, Flagellation (works concluded); Archaeological Museum, Flagellation (works in progress), Historical Museum at Saint Saviour (works in progress).

House of welcome *Maria Bambina* for pilgrims and volunteers

Completion of the restructuring of the bathrooms on the second floor for use by pilgrims at reduced prices.

The works on the floor destined to be the convent of the Elisabethine Sisters are in the planning and implementation phases.

Terra Santa College

Project for the realisation of rooms for volunteers and residents, with bathrooms, kitchen and dining hall.

Christian Information Centre

The works of complete restructuring of the centre in which a new refreshment area for pilgrims will be installed, together with a multimedia didactic hall dedicated particularly to the Holy Sepulchre, are in the implementation phase.

Franciscan bookshop

Complete restructuring of the Franciscan library for pilgrims

Sanctuary of Bethany: House of Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Restoration and developing of the Byzantine and Medieval remains of the convent of Bethany through: the recovery of degraded areas; the formation and employment of 10 young Palestinians in the restoration; sustaining of the business activities of the local women's association; didactic project with primary schools for the knowledge of the local religious and archaeological sites.

Sanctuary of Bethfage: Entry of the Lord in Jerusalem

Realisation of new parish halls and new bathrooms for pilgrims.

1.2. AIN KAREM: BIRTHPLACE OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST**Sanctuary of the Nativity of Saint John**

In progress: works of the remaking of the roof of the church of Saint John; restructuring of the premises of the seminary and convent of Saint John.

Concluded: consolidation of the ancient small convent of Saint John transformed in a new convent for the "Sisters of Catechism"; hall/dining hall for pilgrims and the terraces in the garden. In phase of programming the works of the restoration of the church, which shows static problems.

Sanctuary of the Visitation

Restructuring of the facades of the courtyard of the sanctuary of the Visitation.

Sanctuary of Saint John in the Desert

Completion of the renovation of the chapel at the Tomb of Saint Elizabeth.

Reconstruction of a hermitage, as a result of the forest fires of 2015.

1.3. BETHLEHEM**Basilica of the Nativity**

Collaboration with the other ecclesial communities present and the ANP to the restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity.

Milk Grotto

Revision of the sanitary water system and waterproofing of the roof of the convent.

1.4. EMMAUS QUBEIBEH**Sanctuary of Saints Simon and Cleopas, disciples of Emmaus**

Completion of renovation of the roofs and maintenance of the lattices.

Planning of several interventions aimed at improving and renewing furniture in the kindergarten.

1.5. NAZARETH

Basilica of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary

Access for the disabled: construction of a lift and acquisition of two automatic slides.

Restructuring: sacristy of the lower basilica and of the foundations of the sanctuary.

Installation of a multimedia centre for television transmissions of the *Christian Media Centre and Canção Nova*.

1.6. CAPERNAHUM: THE TOWN OF JESUS

Archaeological zone

Concluded: restoration of the mosaics of the Byzantine church; the works of adjustment of the system of video cameras to control the site.

Realisation: alternative access to the sacristy and recovery of the underlying premises; guest lodgings (c. 10 places).

Phase II soon to be realised: the accessibility of visitors to the archaeological site through routes and wooden passageways across the archaeological zone.

Remaking of the paving of the parking lot for coaches.

Memorial of Saint Peter

Complete replacement of the air-conditioning system.

Convent

Conclusion of the internal maintenance works (plastering, electrical system and air-conditioning).

To be realised shortly: maintenance works on the façades.

In progress: the realisation of a storage area in the premises underneath the sacristy.

1.7. MOUNT TABOR: SANCTUARY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

Completion of the a new parking lot adjacent to the principal entrance – Phase I.

In planning phase: the internal parking lot of the monastery (600m²), of the principal road linking the external and internal parking lots, and bathrooms for pilgrims – Phases II and III.

1.8. MOUNT NEBO (JORDAN): MEMORIAL OF MOSES

Concluded: the project of the new covering for the roof of the basilica of the Memorial of Moses; an exhibition route for the mosaics discovered during the excavations, works of restoration and conservation of the mosaics and of the external walls; restructuring of the bathrooms for pilgrims; archaeological storeroom.

The whole project was inaugurated on 15 October 2016.

2. WORKS AIMED AT THE BENEFIT OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

2.1. WORKS FOR THE BENEFIT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Scholarships and subsidies

Financing: 390 scholarships for university studies for a period of 4 years, distributed among the various Universities (Bethlehem, Hebrew University, Bir Zeit, Amman); 178 subsidies for students in difficulty.

Sustaining small enterprises

Acquisition of spare parts, machines for production, auxiliary equipment for the safety of the activity of 10 small artisan activities.

Bethlehem: Ceramics workshops

Concluded the realisation ceramics workshops in the premises of the Saint Francis Millennium Centre adjacent to the workshops for wood, mother of pearl and ceramics which are ready and functioning.

Jerusalem: Centre for Handicrafts & local Art products

In phase of implementation: a centre for the selling of products of local artisanship (wood, mother of pearl and ceramics) produced in Bethlehem, a space of circa 250m² within the Old City of Jerusalem.

2.2. ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES**Bethlehem**

Continuing: projects to support a parish family counselling centre; the project aimed at more than 20 boys (aged 6-12) coming from families in difficulty; medical assistance for families in serious economical difficulties; restructuring of houses of the most needy families.

2.3. WORKS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PARISH COMMUNITIES**Jericho**

Completion of a building to provide around 460m² for parish activities.

2.4. SCHOOLS**Amman**

Completion of a new wing of the Terra Sancta School (secondary level).

Jericho

Terra Sancta School: completion of new wings for the secondary cycle.

Jerusalem

Terra Santa School for girls: completion of restructuring and recovery of premises underneath square.

Terra Sancta School for boys: completion of part of the restructuring (renewal of the internal spaces with the reallocation of some, the realisation of new spaces for kindergarten, remaking of the systems).

Planning of two basement levels below basket-ball field, to serve as a sports centre.

Cana: Sanctuary of the First Miracle of the Lord

Implementation in progress: the works for the construction of a new school (structural works concluded). The whole complex will also include a parish centre and a covered parking lot covering an area of 5000m².

Haifa

Extraordinary maintenance of the whole complex, which is now being run by the Franciscans.

2.5. APARTMENTS FOR NEEDY FAMILIES AND YOUNG COUPLES**Jerusalem**

Old City. Continuation of the works of restructuring of the houses of the Old City with the aim of improving the conditions of life of the residents: complete restructuring of 7 houses (4 in 2015, 3 in 2016); partial restructuring of 6 houses (2 in 2015 and 4 in 2016); restructuring of the external shells of 5 buildings.

Dar al Consul renovation project. Renovation in progress of the residential complex in the Old City, with 41 apartments and a ground floor which is currently not in use. The area of the project covers circa 2500m².

- Class A restructuring with Major interventions of 14 buildings (in course of which 5 completed).
- Class B restructuring with Medium interventions of 16 buildings (in course of which 8 completed).
- Class C restructuring with Minor interventions of 11 buildings (in course of which 5 completed).
- Restructuring of external shells of 6 buildings in course (of which 2 completed).
- Dar el Kbire: Programming of the extension of the edifice of 300-400m² and intervention on 19 deteriorated existing houses (6 are ready). The total area interested in the project is ca. 2500m².
- Tumian Palace: In programming the extension of the building with the realisation of 3 extra floors and 800m² for residential use.
- Abu Geries: In phase of programming the intervention of the enlargement of the edifice with the realisation of 750m² destined to become offices, restaurants and shops.
- Saint James housing project of Beit Hanina: this is a complex of 6 buildings with a total of 42 apartments divided on 3 levels. After having gained permission to build an extra two floors in each of the edifices, for a total of 24 apartments. The executive plan for the upper floors is in progress.
 - Bethfage (Mount of Olives): programming of new apartments, an extension of circa 750m² of the residential complex consisting of 10 houses; realisation of a boundary wall to protect the entire property.
 - Pisgat Zeev housing project: programming of a new residential complex with 70-80 dwelling units and 300m² for commercial use.

Jaffa

The Franciscan Neighbourhood: acquired permits to build 124 apartments destined for the Christian families of the parish. The total area of the apartments will cover circa 10.000m².

Nazareth

Housing Project in Nazareth: Project for the realisation of a residential complex, where besides the Chapel and some premises for social use, we plan to build 80 apartments to be destined for young families.

2.6. OTHER CULTURAL PROJECTS

Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. Each year the Custody of the Holy Land sustains economically the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem. It offers circa 30 scholarships for students coming from various dioceses, covering the entire period of their studies.

Christian Media Centre. The Franciscan Media Centre was renamed by the Custody in December 2014 as "Christian Media Centre". The services offered include: website, completely renewed, simplified in its use and now mobile friendly; Terra Sancta News, a weekly news bulletin which presents faith, history, current events in the Holy Land; transmitted by approximately 35 broadcasters in the world in 6 languages; documentaries on social and religious themes in various languages; direct transmission of liturgical celebrations and events.

Magnificat Institute of Music. In a few years of activity the Magnificat has become a school of music, in grade of preparing various students coming from diverse cultures (Christians, Jews and Muslims). The Magnificat promotes activities of research and cultural manifestations at local and international level.

3. OTHER WORKS

In Syria, Jordan and Lebanon we have intensified the continued the aid to the Syrian and Iraqi populations, both Christians and non-Christians, who live in a situation of extreme need, through the presence of the Friars of the Custody of the Holy Land with the financial help and collaboration of the Associazione di Terra Sancta.

3.1. IN JORDAN

We have allocated some halls of the Seminary adjacent to the Terra Sancta College for the use of a group of women refugees from Iraq.

Aid to some families in the refugee camps.

3.2. IN LEBANON

35 families are being welcomed and sustained on a temporary basis at Deir Mimas and Harissa, while waiting to obtain visas in order to emigrate. When these families leave Lebanon they will be substituted by new families.

50 Iraqi and Syrian children and young people are helped to be able to go to school.

3.3. IN SYRIA

In the parishes of the Custody in Aleppo, Damascus, Knayeh, Yakoubieh and Latakieh we have continued to strengthen the activities in the emergency centres. The aid is principally directed to the emergency centre of Aleppo in the parish of Saint Francis, where the needs of the Christian and non-Christian population have been greatest. In overall terms the aid to the population has been realised thus: 120 houses repaired; 85 families helped every month to pay their rent; 1.650 families have received every month food and other items of first necessity; 540 families each month have received water in their houses; 440 persons each month have been helped to buy items of first necessity 840 families every month have been given economical aid to be able to have electricity; 480 students of the primary and secondary school have been helped to be able to go to school and pay their school fees.

We have supported the hospital Al Rajaa of Aleppo, which can hold 60 beds and which belongs to the Custody of the Holy Land, through: rehabilitation of the second floor (12 rooms with 24 beds); providing necessary medicinal equipment; sustaining the medical care and hospital expenses for 90 patients.

3.4. RHODES KOS

Aid through food supplies and first assistance to refugees who pass through the centre of temporary welcome of Rhodes and Kos.

4. ORDINARY WAGES OF THE CUSTODY

Wages of around 1300 employees in 80 shrines, 15 schools, 25 parishes, 4 Case Nove for pilgrims and various other activities.

Joint Press Release with the Custody of the Holy Land on the contribution of the Holy See to the restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem

The Custody of the Holy Land is pleased to announce that the Holy See has offered a contribution of 500,000 dollars for the restoration project being carried out in the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem. As noted, an important part of the restorations has already been achieved, and it is to be hoped that, in agreement with the interested communities, the project may soon be completed.

The Holy See wishes to contribute as well to the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, and to that end has allocated a corresponding amount of 500,000 for the new phase of the work, which will concern the area surrounding the Aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre. This second contribution will be dispensed after the communities named in the *Status Quo* have by common agreement constituted an appropriate Committee.

Both contributions are jointly granted by the Secretary of State and the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and will be made available through the Custody of the Holy Land.

Care and concern for these two Holy Places, which for centuries have nourished the faith of the Church and that of countless pilgrims, are a sign and expression of love for Christ Himself, such that *“the face of the Church reflect visibly the light of Christ the Word Incarnate. He is our peace, and He is knocking at the door of our hearts*

in the Middle East" (Pope Francis, *Speech to the R.O.A.C.O.*, 16 June, 2016).
