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Appeal for the Collection for Christians in 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 enabled by the Collection 2016/2017

14 February 2018
Ash Wednesday

Your Excellency,

The Lenten Season, which we are living once again, invites us to go to Jerusalem through the way of the Cross upon which the Son of God accomplished his redemptive mission. On this pilgrimage the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the meaning of the Word of God accompanies us. Besides the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are strengthened by prayer and almsgiving. It is the right time to get closer to Christ by recognizing our poverty and our sins and live the same emptiness and humility of the Son of God who "*he became poor although he was rich, so that by his poverty you might become rich*" (2 Cor. 8,9).

It is also an exceptional time to reach out to the others through the works of charity. Knowing that the Lenten journey is not a solitary act, but an itinerary of solidarity by which each one of us is called to pause and like the Good Samaritan accompany our brethren who for many reasons find it difficult to stand up and continue their journey.

Also this year, the traditional "Collection for the Holy Land" held on Good Friday, is a proper occasion for the faithful to be one with our brethren in the Holy Land and the Middle East. Unfortunately, from those territories, the outcry of thousands of persons who are deprived of everything, at times even of their own human dignity, continues to reach us, heart-breaking us and inviting us to embrace them through Christian charity, a sure source of hope.

Without the spirit of Christ who "*emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross*" (Phil. 2, 7-8), the outcry of our brother remains unheard to and the faces of thousands of less fortunate person remain unnoticed.

Which place could be the best to meditate this *Kenosis* of the Son of God, if not the same places where for more than 2000 years keep the memory alive of our redemption? I indicate with particular attention two Basilicas, the one of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, built on the grotto where Jesus was born and the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, built on the tomb of Jesus, which became the womb of life through His Resurrection. Last year, both Basilicas were restored, thanks to the collaboration and the generosity of so many persons of good will. Building the Church in the Holy Land, through the edifices of cult and the living stones - the Christian faithful, is the responsibility of all the Particular Churches of Christianity, recognizing that the Christian faith had its first impulse from the Mother Church in Jerusalem.

The Catholic Community in the Holy Land, with all its facets, namely, the Latin one of the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Custody and the other Oriental Circumscriptions B Greco-melkite, Coptic, Maronite, Syrian, Chaldean, Armenian - with all the religious families and every type of organism, has a special vocation to live the faith in a multi-religious, political, social and cultural context. Notwithstanding, the challenges and the insecurities, the parishes continue their pastoral service with a preferential attention to the poor. We hope against hope, that the schools serve as a place of encounter for the Christians and the Muslims, where they prepare a future of mutual respect and collaboration; the hospitals and clinics, the hospices and meeting centres continue to welcome the suffering and those in need, refugees and displaced, persons of all ages and religions struck by the horror of war.

We cannot forget the thousands of families who fled from the violence of the war in Syria and Iraq, among whom children and youth, a great number of them of schooling-age, who appeal to our generosity in order to resume their scholastic life and may dream of a better future.

One particular though, at this moment, goes to the small Christian Community in the Middle East, which continues to sustain the faith among the displaced persons from Iraq and Syria and among the refugees in Jordan and Lebanon who also are assisted by their Pastors, religious and volunteers from different countries. The faces of these persons question us about the meaning of being a Christian. Their strained lives inspire us. The Holy Father, Pope Francis in his Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace of this year affirms: "*In a spirit of compassion, let us embrace all those fleeing from war and hunger, or forced by discrimination, persecution, poverty and environmental degradation to leave their homelands*" (n. 1). Let us show them concretely our closeness, through our constant prayer and through our monetary aid, particularly after the liberation of Nineveh Plain. Most Iraqi Christians and Syrians want to return to their own land where their houses were destroyed, with schools, hospitals and churches devastated. Let us not leave them alone.

All of us are invited to resume the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, because the knowledge of, and the living experience in the places of our redemption: walking on the steps of Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the disciples, helps us to deepen our faith and also to understand the context in which the Christians live in the Holy Land. Besides, the pilgrimages are a form of sustenance for the survival of thousands of families.

During these days leading to Holy Easter, I fraternally invite you to commit yourselves to overcome hate by love, sadness with joy, by praying and working so that peace finds abode in every person's heart, and especially in our brethren's hearts in the Holy Land and the Middle East.

I am glad to transmit to you, to all the priests, religious and faithful who work for the success of the Holy Friday Collection, the sentiments of deepest gratitude of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, together with my own gratitude and that of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. Whilst I invoke upon you and your pastoral ministry and upon all the faithful entrusted to your care an abundance of Divine Blessings, I wish you Happy Easter and fraternal greetings in the Lord Jesus.

Sincerely
 Leonardo Card. Sandri
 Prefect

+ Cyril Vasil=, S.J.
 Archbishop Secretary

The “pro Terra Sancta” Collection

CONGREGATION FOR THE ORIENTAL CHURCHES

Year 2017

Introduction

The “Collection for the Holy Land” originates from the Popes’ wish to maintain a strong bond between all Christians in the world and the Holy Places. The Collection, traditionally gathered on Good Friday, is the main source for the sustenance of life around the Holy Places; it is also the tool that the Church has provided 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 decisive impetus in favour of the Holy Land.

The Custody, by means of the Collection, is able to sustain and carry forward the important mission to which it is called: to preserve the Holy Places, the stones of memory, and to favour 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 benefiting from different forms of support from the Collection are the following: Jerusalem, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

As a rule, the Custody of the Holy Land receives the greater part of the Collection, while what remains to the Congregation for the Oriental Churches serves for the formation of candidates for the priesthood, support of the clergy, scholastic activity, cultural formation, and subsidies to the different ecclesiastical circumscriptions in the Middle East.

In summary, the following is a report of how much the Congregation received in 2017 and how it was distributed:

Offerings received in the year 2017 for the Collection of the Holy Land	US\$ 5,531,899.22 + EUR 1,423,251.78
Total	US\$ 5,531,899.22 + EUR 1,423,251.78

Academic, Spiritual and Human Formation of Seminarians and Priests of the Churches under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches

Thanks to the Collection, contributions can be made to seminaries, houses of religious formation and cultural institutions in the areas of competence, supporting in various ways (scholarships, university fees and any other health necessity), also in Rome, young seminarians and priests , men and women religious, and where compatible with available funds, some lay people. The new boarding college, opened two years ago to accommodate women religious from different Eastern countries, hosts 27 female students. Approximately 300 students benefit from the scholarship, guests in 7 colleges under the jurisdiction of the Dicastery.

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

Formation of seminarians, priests and religious sisters in Rome, maintenance of Colleges	US\$600,000.00 + EUR2,236,810.00
Pontifical Oriental Institute (POI)	EUR 1,472,318.00
Total	US\$ 600,000.00 + EUR 3,709,128.00

Subsidiaries for educational activity

The Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Custody, the Oriental Churches of the Holy Land and the Religious Institutes are engaged in the scholastic formation of the young people of the Holy Land. Given the particular circumstances of Christian students and taking into consideration the arrival of thousands of school-age children from Syria and Iraq to the Holy Land, the Congregation for Oriental Churches has decided to increase the amount of subsidies for the current academic year too.

The work of the Secretariat of Solidarity in the coordination and distribution of subsidies to educational institutions managed by the aforementioned institutions is also noteworthy.

One of the prestigious foundations that provides academic training is *Bethlehem University*. Almost 3,300 young people, mostly Muslim Palestinians, are formed intellectually and humanely in the hope of committing themselves to building a country where mutual respect reigns and where human dignity is preserved. The commitment of the *De La Salle* Brothers in guiding the University is appreciable.

Secretariat of Solidarity	US\$ 1,030, 000.00
Latin Patriarchal Schools of Jerusalem	US\$ 1,200,000.00
Bethlehem University	US\$ 900,000.00
Total	US\$3,130,000.00

Ordinary Subsidiaries

This Congregation contributes to supporting the Churches within its jurisdiction, with subsidies drawn from the *Collection of the Holy Land*.

Jerusalem	US\$ 328,000.00
Jordan	US\$ 25,000.00
Iraq	US\$ 142,000.00
Lebanon	US\$ 293,000.00
Turkey	US\$ 203,070.00
Iran	US\$ 58,500.00
Egypt	US\$ 261,000.00

Ethiopia	US\$ 143,000.00
Eritrea	US\$ 158,000.00
Total	US\$ 1,611,570.00

Extraordinary and Emergency Subsidies

In Iraq and Syria the fight continues against terrorism and against the domestic wars that still destabilize the countries. Meanwhile, good news arrives of the liberation of some villages in the aforementioned countries, in particular on the Nineveh Plain, where Christians are returning despite insecurities relating to housing, schools and hospitals, and destroyed churches. The Congregation pays particular attention to the needs of these people and carries out restructuring works through the Eastern and Latin dioceses of the area and also by urging the Catholic Agencies involved in these countries. Ensuring the means necessary for a dignified life for those returning to Iraq and Syria and for those who are refugees in neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, requires the collaboration of all people of good will. In addition, cultural and spiritual activity is also encouraged, which in some way brings people together, despite religious and ethnic differences.

Syria, in favour of priests, deacons, men and women religious, and seminarians	US\$ 783,000.00 + 5,000.00
Extraordinary subsidies - Jerusalem	US\$ 27,500.00
Extraordinary subsidies for cultural collaboration	US\$ 50,000.00
Total	US\$ 861,000.00 + EUR 5,000.00

Conclusion

As can be seen, the expenses exceed the collection, and therefore greater cooperation and a generous commitment of Christians from all over the world to their brothers and sisters in the Holy Land and the Middle East is needed. The invitation of the Holy Father Francis in his Message for World Day of Peace this year still resounds in our ears, and appeals to us regarding the need and commitment to "welcome, protect, promote and integrate" our brother in need, especially migrants and refugees.

Summary Report of the Custody of the Holy Land on projects and works enabled by the Collection 2016/2017

The Custody of the Holy Land has for many centuries been committed to the conservation and renewal of the Holy Places of Christianity in the Land of Jesus and in the entire Middle East. Among the various objectives of the Franciscan mission we remember the support and development of the Christian minority living in these places, the conservation and valorisation of archaeological sites and sanctuaries, the interventions in cases of emergency, the liturgy in the places of cult, the apostolic works and the assistance to pilgrims. Also for the two-year period 2016/2017, the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land has been manifested through the projection, programming and execution of the following projects and works:

V. Works aimed in favour of pilgrims

VI. Works aimed in favour of the local community

VII. Other works – Jordan, Lebanon, Syria e Rhodes Cos

VIII. Ordinary stipends of the Custody

1. WORKS AIMED IN FAVOUR OF PILGRIMS

1.1. JERUSALEM

Holy Sepulchre

Collaboration with the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic communities present in the basilica and with the civil authorities for the restoration of the Tomb of the Risen Christ. The restoration of the Edicule was concluded in March 2017, and now the restoration of the surrounding floor is in the phase of being programmed.

Garden of Olives at Gethsemane

In course of being realised is the tunnel connecting the area of the basilica with the Kedron valley on the other side of the road. The intervention will permit pilgrims to reach the basilica from the parking area for buses without the need to cross the road, and in this way will realise a pedestrian zone which will constitute part of the visit of the pilgrims to the Holy Places. The realisation of new steps and lifts (elevators) has asked for an ulterior archaeological study. Now that the archaeological excavations have been concluded, the works proceed with the realisation of the rest of the project.

VII Station of the *Via Dolorosa*: Jesus falls for the second time

In the phase of completion is the area adjacent to the chapel, which has already been an object of a complete restructuring. Recently the front section facing the road has been liberated, since it was impeding the complete use of the space.

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

Remaking of the waterproofing and flooring in ancient stone slabs of the internal courtyard and adjacent to the ATS offices.

Restructuring of the ex-economato for the new offices of Cultural Heritage.

Remaking of the flooring in ancient stone slabs of the entrance walkway to the convent.

Maintenance works on the external windows of the Church of Saint Saviour.

Construction of a niche for the statue of Saint Francis in the vicinity of the Scout centre.

Terra Sancta Museum

In course of realisation of a modern museum centre for the valorisation of the Christian artistic, archaeological and cultural patrimony of the Holy Land. In the area of circa 2500m² are included:

- An archaeological Museum: "The places of the Bible in Palestine" (Convent of the Flagellation). After having concluded the first phase of the works (a multi-media museum), the project is now proceeding with the realisation of the necessary interventions on the halls which will house the archaeological museum.
- Multi-media Museum: "Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre" (Christian Information Centre). The structural works on the building are completed, and now the internal spaces are in the course of being programmed.
- Historical Museum: "The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land" (Saint Saviour): in course is the activity of a scientific committee of an international profile, constituted to define the guiding lines for the re-qualification and the restoration of the areas destined to house the museum.

House of welcome *Maria Bambina* for pilgrims and volunteers

Restructuring of the bathrooms for groups of Pilgrims on the ground floor of the female ex-orphanage, which has today become a house of welcome.

Casa Nova: welcome hostel for pilgrims

Renewal of the reception area, the administrative offices, the bar and the dining hall. A restaurant has been inaugurated on the panoramic terrace.

Terra Santa College

Consolidation of the beams supporting the structure of the chapel.

Realisation of the scenography for the recording of programmes in the areas used by the Christian Media Centre (CMC).

Christian Information Centre

Completion of the works of restructuring with the remaking of the waterproofing and stone-slab flooring of the terrace.

Restructuring of the areas of the upper floor for the realisation of a new cafeteria for groups of pilgrims.

Sanctuary of Bethany: House of Martha, Mary and Lazarus

Restoration and valorisation of the Byzantine and Mediaeval remains of the convent of Bethany through:

- the recovery of the degraded areas,
- formation and employment of 10 young Palestinians in the restoration works,
- support of the business activities of the local female association,
- didactic project with the local primary schools for the knowledge of the religious and archaeological sites *in loco*.

1.2 AIN KAREM: BIRTHPLACE OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST

Sanctuary of the Nativity of Saint John (San Giovanni in Montana)

Covering with stone slabs of the upper part of the external walls of the convent of the sisters.

In course of construction the new system of adduction of the gas for the heating system of the complex of Casa Nova, Convent and Seminary.

Construction of new bathrooms for guests in the area of the ex-kitchen of Casa Nova.

In course of programming the restoration of the Church.

Sanctuary of Saint John in the Desert

Realisation of the new convent for the sisters in the area of the ex-workshop/stores.

Cleaning, maintenance and restoration of one of the cisterns that gathers rain water for the system of irrigation of the gardens of the convent.

Remaking of the floor in ancient stone slabs of the entrance area to the chapel of the tomb of Saint Elizabeth.

In course of realisation, two bathrooms and a new external washroom for groups of pilgrims.

1.3 BETHLEHEM

Basilica of the Nativity

Collaboration with the other ecclesial communities present and with the Palestinian National Authority for the restoration of the Basilica of the Nativity. The works are in a very advanced state.

Milk Grotto

Installation of a new system of video surveillance cameras.

1.4 EMMAUS QUBEIBEH

Sanctuary of Saints Simon and Clopas, disciples of Emmaus

Restructuring of 8 rooms, public bathrooms, washroom, living hall and chapel of the convent (around 250m²).

Renewal of the equipment of the kindergarten adjacent to the convent.

1.5 NAZARETH

Basilica of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Maintenance of the waterproofing of the covering roofs.

1.6 CAPERNAUM: THE TOWN OF JESUS

Completion of the works of maintenance of the parking lot for buses with the installation of a cabin for the surveillance of the entrance.

In course of realisation, a welcome centre for pilgrims (around 12 beds).

In the phase of programming, the reconstruction of a part of the boundary wall that has recently been damaged.

1.7 MOUNT TABOR: SANCTUARY OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

We have obtained the permit for the realisation of a new chapel adjacent to the basilica.

We have obtained the permit for the realisation of a cabin for the surveillance of the entrance to the sanctuary and to the external parking lot that has recently been concluded.

1.8 JAFFA

Intervention of strengthening of some supporting beams of the elementary school.

1.9 MOUNT NEBO (JORDAN): MEMORIAL OF MOSES

Conclusion of the works of realisation of the new entrance to the memorial for pilgrims, with a system of electronic ticketing and a small cafeteria.

In phase of programming, the restructuring and widening of the chapel adjacent to the basilica, where two chapels will be realised in order to respond to the needs of the pilgrims.

In phase of programming, the restructuring of the areas where guests can be welcomed.

2. WORKS IN FAVOUR OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

2.1 WORKS IN FAVOUR OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Scholarships and subsidies

Financing of **390 university scholarships** for the length of four years, distributed in the various Universities: Bethlehem, Hebrew in Jerusalem and Haifa, Bir Zeit, Amman, and others.

Financing of **178 subsidies for students** in difficulty.

2.2 ACTIVITIES FOR THE FAMILIES

Jerusalem and Bethlehem

Parochial counselling centre for families. Continuation of the project of support for the parochial counselling centre on the assistance level in favour of the principal needs of the families

Franciscan Boys' Home. Continuation of the project aimed at more than twenty boys between six and twelve years of age, coming from poor families or families facing difficulties.

Medical Assistance. Continuation of the project of medical assistance in favour of families with great economic difficulties.

Commitment to the restructuring of the dwellings. A project of restructuring of houses belonging to the most

needy families. The restoration is being done by local unemployed personnel.

2.3 SCHOOLS

Jerusalem

Terra Santa School for girls: internal restructuring of part of the school.

Terra Santa School for boys: internal restructuring of part of the school. Restructuring of the entrance to the school on the side of the convent of Saint Saviour with the realisation of a new entrance and welcome area. In the course of realisation are two underground levels beneath the basketball pitch, to be used as a sports centre.

Cana: Sanctuary of the first miracle of the Lord

New school: still waiting for the conclusion of the finishing touches, after the termination of the works on the structure. The complex will also include the parochial centre and a covered parking lot for a total area of 5000m2.

2.4 APARTMENTS FOR NEEDY PERSONS AND YOUNG COUPLES

Jerusalem

Old City. Continuation of the work of restructuring of houses of the Old City with the aim of improving the conditions of life of the residents.

- Complete restructuring of 5 houses.
- Partial restructuring of 7 houses.
- Restructuring of the external coverings (façades, coverings, etc...) of 8 houses.

Dar al Consul renovation project: In course of restructuring, the residential complex with 41 apartments and an unused ground floor level.

- Complete restructuring of 33 houses (being realised, of which 18 are completed).
- Partial restructuring of 8 houses (being realised, of which 5 are completed).
- Restructuring of the external coverings (façades, coverings, etc...) of 6 houses (being realised, of which 3 are completed).

Tumaian Palace – Musrara: In the phase of programming is the widening of the building with the realisation of 2 added floors and 800m2 for residential use.

Abu Geries: In the phase of programming is the intervention of the widening of the building with the realisation of 750m2 destined for offices, restaurants and shops.

Saint James housing project di Beit Hanina: A residential complex of 6 edifices with a total of 42 apartments divided on 3 levels.

- We have obtained the permit to build an extra two floors for each of the residential blocks, adding up to 24 more apartments.

Beitpage (Mount of Olives)

- In the phase of completion is the widening of the present residential complex with 10 new apartments.
- In the course of realisation is the boundary wall to protect the property.

Pisgat Zeev housing project: In the phase of programming, the new residential complex with 70-80 dwelling units and 300m² for commercial use.

Jaffa

The Franciscan Neighbourhood: Gained permit to build 124 apartments. The total area of the apartments will be around 10.000m².

Nazareth

Housing Project in Nazareth: Project for the realisation of a residential complex, where besides the Chapel and other areas for social use, we are planning the construction of 80 apartments destined for young families.

2.5 OTHER CULTURAL WORKS

Studium Biblicum Franciscanum

Each year the Custody of the Holy Land supports economically the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and of Archaeology of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem. We have offered around **30 scholarships** to students coming from various dioceses, covering the entire period of their studies.

Christian Media Centre

The Custody has taken the initiative to give a new name to the *Franciscan Media Centre*, founded in 2008, which as from December 2014 has been called *Christian Media Centre*. The positive development arrives as a result of the vision of the Catholic Church, which believes in the importance to apply the global concept of religious and human integration between Christian communities living in the Holy Land. The services offered include:

- Website, completely renewed, simplified in the use and now compatible with mobile gadgets (smartphone and tablet).
- Terra Santa News, a weekly news bulletin which “narrates the story” of the Holy Land, its faith, history and actuality. It is transmitted by about 35 TV stations worldwide, in 6 languages (Arabic, Italian, English, French, Spanish, Portuguese).
- Documentaries on social and religious themes, in various languages.
- Live transmission of liturgical celebrations and events (via satellite and streaming). The Christmas Mass, transmitted live from Bethlehem every year, is now commented in 6 languages.

Magnificat Music Institute

In a few years of activity, the *Magnificat* has become a school of music capable of preparing students coming from different cultures (Christians, Jews and Muslims). The *Magnificat* promotes activities of research and cultural manifestations on the local and international level.

3. OTHER WORKS

In **Syria, Jordan and Lebanon** the aid to the Syrian and Iraqi Christian and non-Christian population, which lives in a situation of extreme necessity, has been continued and intensified through the presence of the Friars of the Custody of the Holy Land, with the financial support and the collaboration of the *Associazione pro Terra Sancta*. In particular:

3.1 JORDAN

Aid to families coming from refugee camps.

3.2 LEBANON

Temporary welcome and support to 35 refugee families at Deir Mimas and Harissa, while they wait for their visas in order to emigrate. When these families leave Lebanon they are substituted by other new families.

Aid in order to go to school to 50 Iraqi and Syrian children and young people.

3.3 SYRIA

Activity of emergency centres prepared in favour of the population, in the parishes of the Custody in Aleppo, Damascus, Knayeh, Yakoubieh and Latakieh. The aids have principally been directed to the centres of emergency of Aleppo in the parish of Saint Francis, where the needs of the Christian population, but not only Christian, have been greater.

Activities of support to the population. The interventions have interested the following areas:

- Restoration of the damaged dwellings;
- Economic aid for the payment of rents of the dwellings, of the medical expenses for medicines, visits or medical care in hospitals, to be able to pay electricity bills and school fees;
- Distribution of food and other articles of first necessity;
- Distribution of water in dwellings, through small auto-cisterns.

3.4 RHODES COS

Aids in food and first assistance to refugees who pass through the centre of temporary welcome in Rhodes and in Cos.

In the phase of programming, the restoration of the Church damaged by the recent earthquake.

4. ORDINARY STIPENDS OF THE CUSTODY

Stipends of around **1030 employees** distributed in 80 sanctuaries, 15 schools, 25 parishes, 4 Case Nove for pilgrims and various activities (cultural, communications, social assistance, assistance to pilgrims, construction,

administration...).
