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Appeal for the Collection for Christians in the Holy Land

Letter of the Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches

Your Excellency,

Every Holy Week, we spiritually become pilgrims to Jerusalem and contemplate the mystery of our Lord Jesus Christ, Dead and Risen. In his Letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul, who had a living and personal experience of this mystery, goes so far as to say: “The Son of God loved me and gave Himself up for me!” (*Gal.* 2:20). What the Apostle lived is also the foundation of a new model of fraternity that derives from the work of reconciliation and pacification among all peoples carried out by the Crucified One, as St. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians.

In 2020, Pope Francis wanted to remind us of the consequences of this gift of reconciliation and he did so through the encyclical “*Fratelli tutti*”. With this text, the Pope, starting from the prophetic witness proposed by St. Francis of Assisi, wants to help us to consider all our relationships – religious, economic, ecological, political, and communication – in the light of the principle of fraternity. The foundation of our being all brothers and sisters is precisely on Calvary. There, through the greatest gift of love, the Lord Jesus halted the spiral of enmity, broke the vicious circle of hatred and opened for every one the way of reconciliation with the Father, among us, and with the creation itself.

The deserted streets around the Holy Sepulchre and Old Jerusalem echoed the empty and wet Saint Peter’s Square, which the Holy Father crossed on 27 March 2020 on his way to the Crucified One, before whom the whole world fell on its knees, imploring an end to the pandemic, and making everyone feel united by the same mystery of pain.

It has been a year of trials and so too for the Holy City of Jerusalem, for the Holy Land and for the small Christian community that lives in the Middle East that seeks to be the salt, light and leaven of the Gospel. In 2020, the Christians of those lands suffered an isolation that made them feel even more distant, cut off from vital contact with the brethren from various countries of the world. They suffered the loss of work, due to the absence of pilgrims, and the consequent difficulty in living with dignity and providing for their families and children. In

many countries, the persistence of war and sanctions compounded the effects of the pandemic. In addition, part of the economic aid that the collection *pro Terra Sancta* guaranteed every year also fell short, due to the added difficulties involved in carrying it out in many countries.

Pope Francis presents the figure of the Good Samaritan to all Christians, as a model of active charity, of enterprising and supportive love. He also encourages us to reflect on the different attitudes of the characters in the parable to overcome the indifference of those who see their brother or sister in difficulty and pass on: "Which of these persons do you identify with? This question, blunt as it is, is direct and incisive. Which of these characters do you resemble? We need to acknowledge that we are constantly tempted to ignore others, especially the weak. Let us admit that, for all the progress we have made, we are still "illiterate" when it comes to accompanying, caring for and supporting the most frail and vulnerable members of our developed societies. We have become accustomed to looking the other way, passing by, ignoring situations until they affect us directly" (*Fratelli tutti*, 64).

May this year collection *pro Terra Sancta* be an opportunity for everyone not to ignore the difficult situation of our brothers and sisters of the Holy Places but rather to lighten their burdens. If this small gesture of solidarity and sharing (Saint Paul and Saint Francis of Assisi would call it "restitution") fails, it will be even more difficult for many of them to resist the temptation to leave their country, more demanding to support the parishes in their pastoral and educational work and harder to sustain the social commitment to the poor and suffering. The sufferings of the many displaced people and refugees who have had to leave because of war call for an outstretched helping hand to pour the balm of consolation on their wounds. We must not give up on taking care of the Holy Places that are concrete proof of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the offering of His life for us and for our salvation.

In this unusual scenario, marked by the absence of pilgrims, we feel the duty to once again make our own the words that the Apostle of the Gentiles addressed to the Corinthians two thousand years ago, inviting you to a solidarity that is not based only on philanthropy but rather on Christological motivations: "Indeed, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: though rich, He made Himself poor for you, so that through His poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). And after recalling the principles of equality, solidarity and the mutual exchange of material and spiritual goods, the Apostle adds words, as eloquent then as now, which do not need any comment: "Keep this in mind: he who sows poorly will reap poorly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Let each one give according to what he has decided in his heart, not with sadness or by force, because God loves those who give with joy. Moreover, God has the power to make all grace abound in you so that, always having the necessary in everything, you can generously perform all good works." (2 Cor. 9:6-8).

To Your Excellency, the Priests, the Religious and the Faithful who in various ways strive for the success of the Collection, in fidelity to the participation that the Church requires of all her children, we have the joy of transmitting the deep gratitude of the Holy Father, Pope Francis.

Finally, as we invoke abundant Divine blessings on your Diocese, we offer our most fraternal greeting in the Lord Jesus.

Sincerely,

+ Leonardo Card. Sandri
Prefect

+ Giorgio Demetrio Gallaro
Archbishop Secretary

CONGREGATION FOR THE EASTERN CHURCHES

2020 A.D.

Introduction

The Collection "*Pro Terra Sancta*" was born from the desire of the Popes to maintain a strong link between all the faithful and the Holy Places. It is the main source of material support for Christian life in the Holy Land and the privileged instrument that the Church provides her children in other parts of the world to express solidarity with the ecclesial communities of the Middle East. In recent times, Saint Paul VI gave a decisive boost in favour of the Holy Land through the Apostolic Exhortation '*Nobis in Animo*' (March 25, 1974).

Through the funds traditionally collected on Good Friday, the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land is able to carry out the important mission to which it is called: preserving the Sacred Places, the stones of memory, and promoting the Christian presence, the living stones, through many pastoral, educational, welfare, health and social structures.

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

As a rule, the Custody of the Holy Land receives 65% of the Collection, while the remaining 35% goes to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, which uses it for the formation of candidates for the priesthood, the support of the clergy, educational activities, cultural formation and subsidies to the various ecclesiastical circumscriptions in the Middle East.

This report is a synthesis of what the Congregation received in 2020 and how it was distributed.

Amount received in 2019 from the Collection	US\$ 7.165.603,58
Amount received from the Custody for previous years	US\$ 2.610.000,00
Total	US\$ 9.775.603,58

Academic, Spiritual and Human Formation of the Seminarians and Priests of the Churches under the Jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches

Thanks to the Collection, contributions can be made to seminaries, religious houses of formation and cultural institutions in the territories of competence and in Rome, supporting in various forms (scholarships, university fees and health needs) young seminarians and priests, men and women religious and, depending on the funds available, and some lay people. About 300 students benefiting from scholarships reside in 7 colleges under the jurisdiction of the Dicastery in Rome. The new college that opened four years ago for nuns from different Eastern countries hosts 32 female students this year.

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

Formation of seminarians, priests and nuns in Rome, Maintenance of Colleges	US\$ 1.064.142,00
Pontifical Oriental Institute (PIO)	US\$ 1.227.100,00
Extraordinary subsidies for cultural collaboration	US\$ 50.000,00
Total	US\$ 2.341.242,00

Subsidies for Educational Activities

The Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem, the Franciscan Custody, the Eastern Churches of the Holy Land and Religious Institutes are committed to the education of young people in the Holy Land. Keeping in mind the particular circumstances faced by Christian students and taking into account the arrival into the Holy Land of thousands of school-aged children from Syria and Iraq, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches has decided not to reduce the subsidies also for the current academic year.

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 ensures academic formation is Bethlehem University. Almost 3,300 young people, mostly Palestinian Muslims, are trained intellectually and humanly with the hope of engaging in the construction of a country where mutual respect reigns and where human dignity is preserved. The commitment of the De La Salle Brothers in running the university is much appreciated.

Secretariat of Solidarity	US\$ 898.000,00
Schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem	US\$ 900,000,00
Bethlehem University	US\$ 1,200,000,00
Total	US\$ 2.998.000,00

Ordinary and Extraordinary Subsidies

This Congregation contributes to supporting the Churches placed under its competence with subsidies drawn from the Holy Land Collection.

The Middle East continues to live in instability and tension. Those who have no food, medical treatment or school cry out for help, as do the orphans, the widowed and the wounded. The Congregation pays particular attention to the needs of these people and works to rebuild social structures through the local Eastern and Latin Dioceses, as well as by coordinating the Catholic agencies involved in the aforementioned countries. Ensuring the means necessary for a dignified life for those returning to Iraq and Syria and for refugees in neighboring countries, such as Lebanon and Jordan, requires the collaboration of all people of good will. Furthermore, cultural, spiritual and psychological activities are encouraged that in various ways bring people closer, despite religious and ethnic differences.

The 5-8 March 2021 visit of Pope Francis to Iraq was a great encouragement for the Churches of that land. It is where salvation history began, with the calling of Abraham, seen as the father in faith by Jews, Christians and Muslims, and was also an occasion to spread the much-needed message of human brotherhood in the region.

Jerusalem	US\$ 328.829,35
Jordan	US\$ 25.000,00
Iraq	US\$ 181.000,00
Lebanon	US\$ 368.000,00
Turkey	US\$ 180.406,00
Syria	US\$ 769.000,00
Iran	US\$ 53.000,00
Egypt	US\$ 241.450,00
Ethiopia	US\$ 177.000,00
Eritrea	US\$ 168.000,00

Total	US\$ 2.491.685,85
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Subsidies for the COVID-19 emergency

The year 2020 was particularly marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. When the first cases were reported in various countries, accepting the invitation of the Holy Father not to leave the suffering – especially the poorest among them – alone in dealing with the emergency, the Congregation for the Eastern Churches established an emergency fund, by withdrawing US \$ 500,000.00 from the Holy Land Fund. On 18 April 2020, the Press Office of the Holy See communicated the initiative. The Pontifical Representatives in various countries coordinated the requests and updated to this Dicastery about the situation in the countries of their competence. Thanks also to the active collaboration of various catholic aid agencies which are part of ROACO (Reunion of Aid Agencies for the Eastern Churches), **303 projects were financed in 24 countries under the jurisdiction of this Dicastery, without counting the support given to priests and religious, for a total of 9.574.907,74 US\$.** In December 2020, an account of the aid allocated was presented to the Holy Father, a copy of which can be found on the website of this Congregation. The table below shows only the contributions that this Dicastery distributed:

Palestine	US\$ 136.781,00
Iraq	US\$ 50.000,00
Lebanon	US\$ 80.000,00
Turkey	US\$ 10.000,00
Syria	US\$ 200.000,00
Ethiopia	US\$ 40.000,00
Eritrea	US\$ 50.000,00
Total	US\$ 566.781,00

Conclusion

The words that Pope Francis on 27 March 2020 addressed to the faithful connected by television, radio and social networks from all over the world still resound. Standing next to a Crucifix from the Church of St. Marcellus, which in the 16th century stopped the plague in Rome, and the icon of the *Salus Populi Romani*, the Pope said: “We were caught off guard by an unexpected and furious storm. We found ourselves fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and necessary, on the same boat, called to row together and to comfort each other. We are all on this boat. And we realized that we cannot go on each on his own. But only together. Nobody saves himself alone”. Each small offering of the faithful from all over the world is destined to support a family in difficulty, a child in search of a future, assistance to refugees and displaced persons, the training of priests and religious, and above all the preservation of the Holy Places. The generosity of the Catholic faithful, expressed by the Collection, towards their brothers and sisters in the Middle East can solve many problems, but prayer and moral support are even more necessary. Therefore, I ask you to remember your brothers and sisters in faith who live in the Land of Jesus.

Summary Report of the Custody of the Holy Land on the projects and works realised with the proceeds of the 2019/2020 collection

Custody of the Holy Land

Order of Friars Minor

Summary Report 2019/2020

For many centuries the Custody of the Holy Land has been committed to the conservation and revitalisation 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, one should keep in mind the support and development of the Christian minority that lives in these places, the conservation and enhancement of archaeological sites and sanctuaries, the interventions in the case of emergency, the liturgy in the places of cult, the apostolic works and assistance to pilgrims. Besides, for the biennium 2019/2020, the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land has been manifested through the planning, programming and execution of the following projects and works:

V. Works addressed to pilgrims.

VI. Works in favour of the local community.

VII. Other works – Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Rhodes Kos.

VIII. Ordinary stipends of the Custody.

The underlined works have been realised thanks to various kinds of economic contributions, among which the Good Friday Collection comes first, followed by the activities of fund raising of the *Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land* (FFHL) and the *Associazione pro Terra Sancta* (ATS), as well as by other private and institutional donors, besides the entries coming from activities that have been carried out.

At the moment of writing this report (January 2021), here in Jerusalem, as in the rest of the world, Covid-19 is afflicting ever larger sections of the population, with grave repercussions on the health and economy systems, and also on society at large and on the life of the Church. At this point in time we have been without pilgrims from the end of February 2020. This means grave economic difficulties for the local Christian communities, for the families of our Christian faithful and also for the Custody itself. The collection *pro Terra Sancta 2020* was postponed to 13 September, upon request by the same Congregation and thanks to the benevolence of the Holy Father. This means that we are still not able of quantifying the result of the collection or of knowing when the resources will be made available. In the meantime, we are trying to continue the mission that has been entrusted to us, knowing that Divine Providence which has willed us to be here will continue to take care of us. Many of the works listed here have therefore had a slow progress and result “in a phase of planning”, while priority has been given to those interventions that have had a social scope and effect.

Works addressed to pilgrims

Ain Karem: Sanctuary of the Birth of Saint John

· Conclusion of the renewal of the roofing work of the church of Saint John the Baptist, which include the consolidation of the stone vaults.

· Work in progress on the restoration of the sacristy and the adjacent environments, which suffer from serious problems of humidity.

· Planning phase of the renewal of the roofing of the friary.

· Planning phase of the works of restoration of the church where archaeological excavations are foreseen.

· Planning phase of the security of the electrical system of the entire building, which includes friary, church, seminary and pilgrims' hospice.

Ain Karem: Sanctuary of Saint John in the Desert

- Planning of the intervention for regimentation of rain water in the area surrounding the friary.

Beit Sahour: Shepherds Field

- Completion of the works on a new entrance to the friary, independent from that of the sanctuary.
- Completion of a boundary wall that collapsed as a result of the rains of the winter of 2019-2020.
- Planning of the interventions for the conservation and development of the site, an extensive intervention that will include new external chapels for celebrations, the redevelopment of the cave, new bathrooms and infrastructure.
- In phase of completion the executive planning for the realisation of new bathrooms with some accessory environments that would include a small souvenir shop, a refreshment area and a multifunctional hall for conferences for small groups.

Bethany: Sanctuary of the House of Martha, Mary and Lazarus

- In phase of completion the restoration and enhancement of the byzantine and mediaeval remains of the friary of Bethany, through: the recovery of deteriorated areas; formation and work of 10 Palestinian young people on the project of restoration; support of the entrepreneurial activity of the local feminine association; a didactic project with the primary schools for the knowledge of the local archaeological and religious sites (supported by ATS).

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, by now in the phase of completion.
- Completion of the work on new sitting benches for the presbyterium of Santa Caterina.
- Completion of the reconstruction of the façade of the friary.

Bethlehem: Convent of the sisters

- Study phase of the finding of a solution for the problems of humidity affecting the convent of the sisters, which stands above ancient cisterns for the storage of rain water, which are no longer accessible.

Capernaum: Sanctuary of the Eucharistic Promise

- Concluding phase of the planning of new explanatory signboards and signposting of the sanctuary.

Emmaus Qubeibeh: Sanctuary of Saints Simon and Cleopas

- Working progress on the interventions of extraordinary maintenance for the conservation of the structures of the friary and of the ex-seminary.

Jericho: Sanctuary of the Good Shepherd

- Enlarging of a classroom of the school.

Jerusalem: Basilica of Gethsemane

- Concluded the archaeological excavations that have uncovered a ritual bath of the I century, a small byzantine church of the V century with a stone inscription, the perimeter walls of the mediaeval monastery-hospice and various finds of stone remains.

- Concluding phase of the tunnel and lifts for groups of pilgrims, in order to link the area of the basilica with the Kidron Valley by means of a pedestrian path.

- Ongoing works for the building of a centre for the service of pilgrims in the Kidron Valley.

- Planning of a new flood-lighting system for the basilica, promoted by the Municipality of Jerusalem.

- Ongoing planning of 3 external chapels for celebrations in the garden of the friary of the Agony.

Jerusalem: Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre of Our Lord

- Completed the works of structural consolidation of the grotto of the Finding of the Holy Cross as a result of instrumental investigations and in-depth analysis.

- Completed the substitution of the lift of the friary.

- Planning phase of the restoration of the floor of the Basilica and the relative infrastructure, in agreement with the Greeks and Armenians and in collaboration with the Università La Sapienza (Rome) and the Centro Restauri di Veneria (TO).

- Planning phase of the complete renovation of the second floor of the friary with the building of an upper floor, in order to increase the number of friars present in the community and to improve the conditions of life of the friars, by making the environment healthier and in line with contemporary standards of lighting and ventilation, and more hygienic.

Jerusalem: Parish centre

- Completion of the interventions of extraordinary maintenance for the arrangement of spaces of the parish centre.

Jerusalem: *Christian Information Center*

- Continuation of the work on five didactic multimedia halls for pilgrims, dedicated to their knowledge of the Holy Sepulchre.

Jerusalem: *Christian Media Center*

- Completion of the renewal of the offices of the editors.

- Planning phase of the renewal of the offices of journalists.

Jerusalem: Convent of Saint Saviour

Infirmery

- Replacement of the lift/stretchers for the sick brothers.

- Planning phase of a new system of air-conditioning and sanitary hot water.

Offices

- Completion of the renovation of environments for the transfer of the Souvenir Shop in view of the realisation of the new museum.

Convent

- Completion of the renewal of the kitchens of the friary.
- Concluding phase of the interventions of extraordinary maintenance of the roofs.
- Completion of the renewal of the ground floor of the sisters' convent.
- Completion of the renewal of closed-circuit video surveillance system.

Jerusalem: Friary of *Terra Sancta College*

- Phase of restoration of the chapel regarding safety, as a result of structural decay by water infiltration from the roof.
- Ongoing assessment of the state of static and seismic security of the entire edifice.
- Completion of a new IT communications office at Terra Sancta College.

Jerusalem: Maria Bambina, house of welcome for pilgrims

- Completion of the works of security of the electrical system.
- Ongoing extraordinary maintenance of a section of the building with 6 rooms.

Jerusalem: Sanctuary of *Dominus Flevit*

- Ongoing realisation of a master plan of interventions for the improvement of the way in which pilgrims and visitors to the sanctuary can be welcomed.
- Ongoing works of restoration of a small building adjacent to the friary, which will be used as a sacristy and external chapel, to be concluded soon.

Jerusalem: *Terra Santa Museum*

- Completion phase of the interventions of structural consolidation of the environments that will complete the museum area in the sanctuary of the Flagellation.
- Completion phase for the realisation of a modern museum centre for the enhancement of the Franciscan artistic, archaeological and cultural patrimony. Within the area of circa 2500 m2 will be included:
 - Archaeological Museum: The Places of the Bible in Palestine (Flagellation Convent) (Third phase);

- Historical Museum: The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land (Convent of Saint Saviour).

Mount Nebo (Jordan): Memorial of Saint Moses

- Repairing of some roofs that suffer from water infiltration.
- Realisation of a cemetery area for the burial of Jordanian friars who died of Covid-19.

Mount Tabor: Basilica of the Transfiguration

- Completion of the total renovation of an external chapel for pilgrims.
- Planning phase of general interventions for the conservation of the site, with the creation of an internal parking lot for the friary, works on the road linking the external to the internal parking lot, with pavements and walkways for disabled persons and with services for pilgrims.
- Final works on the intervention of structural consolidation and restoration of the bell towers.

Naim: Sanctuary of the resurrection of the widow's son

- Planning phase of the interventions for the re-opening and development of the site.

Nazareth: Basilica of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary

- Works of restoration and maintenance for the conservation of the Holy Grotto.
- Planning phase of the renovation of an internal floor of the friary with the adjustment of the electrical system, central heating and sanitary hot water, in order to make use of modern systems that consume less power.

NB: In the realisation of these works, in spite of the fact that they become more complicated because of the need to request permits and because of various lockdowns, we have given first preference to employ workers coming from the West Bank, in order to give work to Christians coming from a territory that cannot benefit from welfare or social security.

Works in favour of the local community

Works in favour of young people

- Bethlehem: Boys' Home; House for 27 male children, of whom 10 are boarders in social difficulties.

Scholarships and subsidies

- Financing of 490 university scholarships (227 from the Custody + 336 from the FFHL) for the length of 4 years, distributed in the various universities (Bethlehem, Hebrew University, Bir Zeit, Amman).

Support for artisan initiatives

- Financial help in order to secure the work of 10 small artisan activities.

Activities for supporting families

·In Bethlehem the projects for supporting a parish family counselling centre continue; the project is directed to more than 20 children (ages 6-12), coming from families in difficulty; medical assistance for families in serious economic difficulties (ATS); renovation of houses belonging to families which are most in need (supported by FFHL) .

·On many occasions supplementary economic aids have been sent to Bethlehem in order to meet the health expenses of families and the expenses for basic foodstuffs.

Works in favour of parish communities

Schools:

Amman:

- Creation of a platform **Terra Sancta School**, for Online Distance Learning.
- Modernisation of a computer Lab for classes 1-3 elementary level.
- 370 new compact disks for pupils of classes 1-4 elementary level.
- Covering of play grounds of the school with turf field and synthetic material.
- Covering of the roofs of the friary and of the gym with isolating membrane from atmospheric agents.
- Covering of the parking lot for school buses with asphalt.
- Conclusion of the works of renovation of the *Peace building* of 1976.
- Ongoing works of renovation of the small seminary, namely Saint Francis' house, adjacent to the college.

Bethlehem:

- Ongoing works of accommodation of the multipurpose *Millennium* hall.

Cana:

- Ongoing work for the construction of a new school (the structural works have been terminated). The complex will also include a parish centre and a covered parking lot covering an area of 5.000m².

Jericho:

- Conclusion of the installation of overhead projectors in the classrooms.

Jerusalem - Saint Joseph School (Jaffa Gate):

- Conclusion of the extraordinary maintenance of some of the classrooms.

Jerusalem - Terra Sancta School (Damascus Gate):

- Ongoing work of new premises for sport structures underneath the large courtyard of the school, which will include a swimming pool, a gym and playgrounds on the roof of the building. These premises will also be used by young people of the Old City.

- Completion of the renovation of the school premises.

Jerusalem - Hellen Keller School – Beth Hanina:

·Nearing completion the renovation of the elementary school after the opening of the kindergarten two years ago (80 pupils).

Jerusalem - Hellen Keller School (school for students with visual impairment):

·Completion phase of the renovation of the school after its recent acquisition.

Jaffa:

·Planning phase of the interventions of structural consolidation and seismic adjustment of a portion of the edifice which will include 6 classrooms of the elementary school.

Apartments for needy and young couples

Jerusalem:

·Old City. Continuation of the work of renovation of the houses of the Old City with the aim of improving the living conditions of the residents: complete renovation of 5 houses; partial renovation of 4 houses; renovation of external structures (façades, roofs, etc.) of 6 houses.

· *Dar al Consul renovation project.* Since 2013 this project includes the renovation of the residential complex of the Old City, with 42 apartments and a ground floor which was not being used. The area of the project covers circa 2.500m²:

o Class A renovation with the major interventions for 16 dwellings (ongoing, with 7 completed);

o Class B renovation with medium interventions for 10 dwellings (ongoing, with 10 completed);

o Class C renovation with minor interventions for 10 dwellings (ongoing, with 10 completed);

o External renovation of 6 buildings (ongoing, with 4 completed).

· *Dar el Kbire:* ongoing procedure for acquiring permits for enlarging the building of 300-400m² and planning of improvement intervention on 19 existent dwellings and external structures (façades, roofs, etc.). The total area included in the project covers circa 2500m².

· *Tumian Palace:* ongoing planning and procedure for obtaining permits for enlarging the edifice with the building of 3 extra floors and 800m² for residential and religious use.

· *Abu Geri:* ongoing planning and procedure for obtaining permits for enlarging the building with the building of 750m² destined to become offices, restaurants and shops.

· *Pisgat Zeev housing project:* ongoing planning and procedure for obtaining permits for building a new residential complex with 70-80 housing units and 300m² for commercial use.

Nazareth:

· *Karm el Sacheb housing Project:* ongoing planning and procedure for obtaining permits for the building of a residential complex (church, premises for social purposes, 80 apartments for young families).

Other cultural works:

· *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.* Every year the Custody of the Holy Land supports economically the Faculty of

Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* of Jerusalem. It offers circa 30 scholarships to students coming from various poor dioceses, for the entire period of their studies.

- *Christian Media Center*. The services offered include: Website, completely renewed, simplified in use and now mobile friendly; *Terra Santa News*, a weekly news bulletin which features faith, history and current events in the Holy Land; it is transmitted by circa 35 broadcasting houses in the world in 8 languages (from this year also in Chinese); documentaries on social and religious themes, in various languages; direct transmission of liturgical celebrations and events.

- The *Magnificat* Institute of Music. Affiliated with the Vicenza Conservatory the *Magnificat* promotes activities of research and cultural manifestations on the local and international level. It welcomes more than 250 Christian, Muslim and Hebrew students, led by 30 professors who are also Hebrew, Christian or Muslims .

- Formation of 54 students in biblical sciences at the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum* coming from various parts of the world, to whom the Custody guarantees food and lodging. They will be destined to become lecturers of Sacred Scripture in various countries of the world.

- The International Franciscan Seminary of Saint Saviour in Jerusalem and the Seminary of Ain Karem, and theological formation at the *Studium Theologicum Jerosolymitanum* for more than 30 young brothers coming from various Provinces of the Order of Friars Minor.

- Formation of 83 young religious in the Custody (from aspirant candidates to those on specialised studies).

Other works

In Syria, Jordan and Lebanon the work to help the Syrian and Iraqi Christian and non-Christian population is ongoing. These initiatives are geared to help those who are living in a situation of extreme need, through the presence of the Friars of the Custody of the Holy Land and with the collaboration especially of the *ATS* for fundraising.

In Lebanon

- Welcome and temporary support for 14 Iraqi families at Deir Mimas and more than 47 other families in the area of Harissa and Jounieh.

- School support for 28 Iraqi children and young people at Deir Mimas, besides other 35 in the area of Harissa and nearly 65 in Jounieh. Help for 40 Syrian young people in Jounieh and Beirut.

- Following the explosion of 4 August in Beirut:

- o 731 families have been helped with food packs and hygienic material. 68 of them live in Tripoli and all the others in Beirut. An average of 145 families receive help every month;

- o 14 houses have been renovated;

- o circa 20 families are helped to pay rent or to buy furniture;

- o 50 families receive help to acquire medicines;

- o 20 students are helped to pay their university fees.

In Syria: Aleppo

Help through the parishes of Aleppo, Damascus, Knayeh, Yakoubieh and Latakieh.

·Centre of emergency of Aleppo in the parish premises:

o distribution (monthly-every two months) of food packs for Latin families (€50 each);

o emergency health assistance (for a monthly cost of €30 thousand), for medical visits, medical exams, medicines, surgery, in favour of the parishioners.

·As a result of COVID during this year we have carried out interventions of complete assistance for all necessities, among which: medical visits, blood tests, radiography and PCR tests, medicines for sick persons, vitamins for all the family members with exams and medical visits, service of transport of oxygen tanks to houses, payment for hospitalisation, payment for service of intensive care whenever necessary:

o contribution to the expenses of surgery of Christians coming from all Christian communities, in collaboration with their own Churches;

o medical assistance for pregnancy, labour, post-natal assistance for both mother and child;

o care of cases of sterility for new Christian families of all the Churches;

o care for children and for their growth under all aspects:

§primary needs for milk and diapers for the children of the parish, with a monthly subsidy for each child;

§centre for post-traumatic cure from the effects of war for Christian and Muslim children;

§distribution of clothes, twice a year, to more than 1000 children;

§financial help for centres of catechism and summer camps in the poorest parishes;

§summer camps for more than 800 children; material, logistical and content adoption for 6 summer camps of five parishes;

§project for “after school” in favour of 50 children with learning difficulties;

§course of English and French at various levels in the city for 65 children, who are promising in study;

§economic support for children with particular gifts for music, singing and playing the pianoforte,

§scholastic support (monthly allowance) for students of schools and universities, for Latin students.

·Repairing / reconstruction of houses that have been damaged (with three levels of damage): this is an ongoing project since 2016 with 2000 houses that have been rebuilt until today in favour of all Christians of all Churches.

·Helping to launch new enterprises and working activities (1700 persons), in favour of all Christians of all Churches.

- Project to welcome 200 Christian soldiers who have been discharged after 10 years of obligatory military service: helping them by creating an opportunity for work for each one.
- Contribution in the payment of compensation for exemption of young people of all Churches who escaped from their Country in order to avoid obligatory military service.
- Project of wedding gift, in favour of Christian couples of all Churches, which includes: payment of the rent of the house for one year, and/or buying of domestic appliances, and/or furnishing of one or two rooms, and/or repairing of the house.
- Project of rents, with symbolic prices, of houses (15 have been rented on a total of 22), acquired or donated, during these years of war, to newly-wed couples and to poor families.
- Project of support for families of priests and of their poor relatives, for all Catholic and Oriental Churches.
- Project of support for Armenian-Orthodox priests, with a monthly salary and health care in case of need.

Syria: Damascus (Bab Touma, House of Ananias, Tabbaleh and Salhie)

- Help for young poor families.
- Medicines and medical interventions.
- Newly-born children and helping students in their study needs.
- Renovation of the internal spaces of the parish of Bab Touma, for youth activities.
- Renovation of environment that can be adapted to become a library for the benefit of the parish and of students.
- Help for welcoming and supporting sick persons.
- Education, and helping nursery for children in Tabbaleh.
- Centre for post-traumatic treatment for children and adolescents who experienced the war.

Syria: Lattakieh

- Monthly distribution of food packs to circa 300 families.
- Centre for post-traumatic treatment for children and adolescents who experienced the war.
- Help for refugees in the 3 villages of **Knayeh, Jacoubieh and Sjdeideh**.

Rhodes - Kos

- Help with foodstuffs and first aid for refugees who transit through the centre of temporary welcome in Rhodes and in Kos.
- Rhodes: weekly distribution of 500 food and health packs for poor Greeks and refugees.

- Beginning to repair the pastoral centre of Kos after the earthquake.
- As a result of the economic crisis in Greece since 2008, the Custody:
 - o helps in the psychological support of cancer patients;
 - o offers free lessons of English and Italian for the local population;
 - o offers scholarships for the young people of the parish.

Ordinary stipends of the Custody of the Holy Land

·Monthly wages of circa 1.020 employees in Israel and Palestine, divided between 15 schools (60 % of the total number of employees), 4 Case Nove for pilgrims (20 % of the employees), 80 sanctuaries, 25 parishes and many other activities.

·During the COVID pandemic the employees with residence in Israel could benefit from a kind of layoff (*halaf*) that the State pays for them and which corresponds to 70 % of their wages. In various moments of the year the Government has requested to reduce the personnel up to 30 %, but thanks to this form of welfare the residents in Israel have been able to continue living without too many problems. The workers from the State of Palestine, on the other hand, were totally deprived of any welfare. For this reason, the Custody has chosen to continue to pay half the wages of the employees in the Palestinian territories, who have had to remain at home, and obviously 100 % of the wages of those who could come to work. The Custody has tried to employ in the convents and in the works of restoration especially the Palestinian Christians in order to guarantee a support for their families. This choice is obviously an onus on the economy of the Custody in a moment when there are no entries from sanctuaries as a result of the total absence of pilgrims ever since the end of February 2020.

Jerusalem, 15 January 2021
