



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS  
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## Appeal for the Collection for Christians in the Holy Land

Letter from the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches

The “pro Terra Sancta” Collection

Summary Report of the Custody of the Holy Land on the projects and works realized with the 2022/2023 Collection

Letter from the Prefect of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches

Ash Wednesday, 2024

Dear brother in the episcopate,

“And now our feet are standing within your gates, Jerusalem.” How we wish the words of Psalm 122 were a description of what is happening in our days! Instead, many pilgrims remain far from the city of their dreams, while the inhabitants of the Holy Land continue to suffer and die. Throughout the world, the roar of weapons that bring death resounds. And there is no respite, even though God has assured us that “For every boot that tramped in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for fire.” This is the prophecy of Isaiah (9:4). We have seen and continue to see men in arms shedding blood and killing life itself. Yet, in the next verse, Isaiah announced that “A child is born to us [...] the Prince of Peace.” For us Christians, that child is Jesus Christ, God made man, God with us.

Pope Francis has never ceased to express his closeness to all those affected by the conflict in the Holy Land and to cry out to men and women of goodwill, urging them to work for peace and to respect the sanctity of every human person. In recent times he expressed these words: “I am close to all those who are suffering, Palestinians and Israelis. I embrace them in this dark moment. And I pray for them a lot. May the weapons be

stopped: they will never lead to peace, and may the conflict not widen! Enough! Enough, brothers, enough!" (Angelus, November 12, 2023).

The pilgrimage to Jerusalem has a history as ancient as Christianity itself, and not only for Catholics. This is made possible even today by the generous work of the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land and the Eastern Churches present there. They maintain and animate the holy sites, a living memory of Jesus' steps and actions, a visible testimony of the God who made Himself flesh and blood to save us, mud animated by the breath of His Spirit. Thanks to their dedicated work in those places, we continue to pray unceasingly for the whole world.

Since its origins, the Church has continuously and passionately cultivated solidarity with the Church of Jerusalem. In the late medieval and modern era, the Supreme Pontiffs intervened several times to promote and regulate the Collection for the Holy Land. The Collection was last reformed by Pope Saint Paul VI in 1974 with his Apostolic Exhortation '*Nobis in Animo*'. Pope Francis has also often emphasized the importance of this ecclesial gesture.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is not merely a pious tradition for a few. Everywhere in the Catholic Church, the faithful have an obligation to offer their contribution to the so-called *Pontifical Collection for the Holy Land*, which is collected on Good Friday or, in some regions, on another day of the year. We will do the Collection again this year, hoping in your particular generosity.

And do you know why? Because, apart from the custody of the Holy Places that saw Jesus, there are still Christians living and operating in the Holy Land, amid many tragedies and difficulties often caused by the selfishness of the powerful of the world. Over the centuries many died as martyrs so as not to see their Christian roots cut off. Their Churches are an integral part of the history and culture of the East.

But today, many of them cannot take it anymore, and abandon the places where their fathers and mothers prayed and witnessed the Gospel. They leave everything and flee because they see no hope. And ravenous wolves divide their spoils.

The Christians of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and many other lands turn to us and ask, "Help us to spread the sweet aroma of Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:15) again in the East.

I address you so that their cry does not go unheard and that the Holy Father can support the local Churches in finding new ways, opportunities for housing, work, and educational and professional training, so that they may remain and not get lost in the West, a world they don't know, which is so different from their feelings and their way of witnessing their faith. If they leave, if they leave their small businesses serving pilgrims who no longer come to Jerusalem and Palestine, the East will lose part of its soul, perhaps forever.

Make them feel the solidarity of the Church!

I express Pope Francis's gratitude to the local Churches, to the Franciscans, to the many charity volunteers, true children of peace, witnesses of the Prince of peace, and also to all of you for your prayer and your contribution for the Holy Land and for all those who dwell there.

May the Lord bless you and reward you. Thanks also to each of the Bishops who will take to heart this blessed initiative.

Thank you on behalf of those who cry and those who die because of the madness of war. Thank you especially on behalf of those who have lost their children or see them horribly mutilated. Help us to help them!

May the Lord bless you with abundant blessings and consolation.

The “pro Terra Sancta” Collection**DICASTERY FOR THE EASTERN CHURCHES****2023 A.D.****Introduction**

The Collection “*Pro Terra Sancta*” was born out of the desire of the Popes to maintain a strong bond between the faithful across the world and the Holy Places. It is the main source of material support for Christian life in the Holy Land and a tool for the universal Church to express solidarity with the ecclesial communities of the Middle East. In recent times, Saint Paul VI gave a significant boost to supporting the Holy Land with 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 its many pastoral, educational, welfare, health and social facilities.

The territories that benefit 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 Dicastery for the Eastern Churches, which is used for the formation of candidates to priesthood, the support of clergy, educational activities, cultural formation and for subsidies to the several ecclesiastical Circumscriptions in the Middle East.

This report is a synthesis of what the Dicastery received in 2023 and how it was distributed.

Donations received in 2023 for the Holy Land Collection	€ 6,571,893.96
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**Academic, Spiritual and Human Formation of the Seminarians and Priests of the Churches under the Jurisdiction of the Dicastery for the Eastern Churches**

Thanks to the Collection, contributions can be made to seminaries, religious houses of formation and cultural institutions in the relevant territories and even in Rome, supporting in various forms (scholarships, university fees and health care) young seminarians and priests, men and women religious and, depending on the funds available, some lay people. The college, which was opened five years ago to host nuns who come from various Eastern countries, this year welcomes 27 consecrated women, out of a total of 252 students, who benefit from the scholarship, and are hosted in all 7 colleges under the jurisdiction of the Dicastery.

In addition, the Dicastery contributes to the support 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 the Grand Chancellor, as well as to supporting the Committee for Cultural Collaboration, which develops activities in the ecumenical field.

Formation of seminarians, priests and nuns in Rome, Maintenance of Colleges, Cultural Collaboration	€ 2,376,167.17
Pontifical Oriental Institute (PIO)	€ 1,000,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 3,376,167.00</b>

### 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.

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 in the hope they will engage in building 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 highly appreciated.

Secretariat of Solidarity	€ 961,363.42
Schools of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem	€ 824,459.43
Bethlehem University	€ 460,774.87
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 2,246,597.72</b>

### Ordinary and Extraordinary Subsidies

The Dicastery contributes to supporting the Churches under its jurisdiction with subsidies drawn from the Holy Land Collection: they contribute to the daily life of all the Circumscriptions.

After the earthquake of February 6 last year – which hit the northwestern regions of Syria hard, with buildings collapsing in Aleppo, Lattakia and Idlib, as well as the southern and central regions of Turkey – Syria and Turkey are recovering. The Episcopal Conference in collaboration with Caritas Turkey has already started some projects with contributions received from various benefactors, especially for the reconstruction of homes, restoration of churches and religious houses.

In Syria, the situation is much more serious, given the precarious condition of the country even before the earthquake. The Dicastery, in collaboration with the Apostolic Nunciature in Syria, made an appeal to support the population affected by the earthquake. The Emergency Committee of the Church in Syria has prepared a project to support families in difficulty to face the winter in the best possible way. The regions that will benefit from it are those of Aleppo and Lattakia. The total beneficiaries of the project are approximately 7000 people and the total budget is \$1,000,000.00 for a duration of 9 to 12 months. The Dicastery, at the request of the Papal Representative in Syria, has so far transferred US\$600,000.00 for this purpose.

The outbreak of the War in Gaza, after the events of October 7, paralysed the Holy Land. The lack of pilgrims and tourists has put thousands of families in difficulty. The Dicastery is following the development of the situation, demonstrating its closeness through the Apostolic Delegation in Jerusalem, the Latin Patriarchate and the Custody of the Holy Land. The Holy Father intends to carry out a project with humanitarian purposes in Gaza or the West Bank, which can help the population resume a more dignified life and create job opportunities once the war is over. This project could be realised with the offerings of the faithful from all over the world who participate in the Collection for the Holy Land.

### Ordinary Subsidies

Jerusalem	€ 222,986.16
Jordan	€ 18,582.18
Iraq	€ 90,123.57
Lebanon	€ 114,280.41
Turkey	€ 106,568.80
Syria	€ 185,821.80
Iran	€ 32,518.81
Egypt	€ 85,570.94
Ethiopia	€ 218,340.61
Eritrea	€ 185,821.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 1,260,615.08</b>

#### Extraordinary Subsidies

Jerusalem	€ 10,000.00
Lebanon	€ 28,194.54
Syria	€ 44,105.11
Egypt	€ 2,000.00
Ethiopia	€ 10,000.00
Eritrea	€ 13,313.59
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 107,613.24</b>

#### Summary Report of the Custody of the Holy Land on the projects and works realized with the 2022/2023 Collection

##### **Custody of the Holy Land**

##### **Order of Friars Minor**

##### **Summary Report 2022/2023**

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 we mention the support and development of the Christian minority that dwells in this region, the conservation and valorisation of the archaeological zones and of the sanctuaries, interventions in cases of emergency, the liturgy in the Holy Places, the apostolic works and the assistance to pilgrims. For the biennium 2022/2023 the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land has continued to manifest itself in the projection, programming and execution of the following projects and works:

X. Works geared towards pilgrims

XI. Works geared towards the local community

XII. Rhodes

XIII. Jordan

XIV. Syria

XV. Lebanon

XVI. Egypt

XVII. Italy

XVIII. Ordinary wages of the Custody of the Holy Land

The works listed here have already been realised thanks to various kinds of economic contributions, and in the first place thanks to the Good Friday Collection, and then thanks to fundraising activities of the *Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land* (FFHL) and the Association *Pro Terra Sancta* (PTS), but also thanks to other private and institutional donors, as well as from other entries ensuing from other activities.

We thank God that here, in Jerusalem, as well as in the rest of the world, Covid-19 has reduced to a great extent its destructive potential, and its effects do not constitute an impediment for the circulation of persons any longer. This fact brought about a progressive revival in the number of pilgrims, with a certain economical respite for the Christian families and also for the Custody. However, the recent worsening of the war between Palestine and Israel, from 7 October 2023 (in the Gaza Strip in a particular way, but with consequences in the entire West Bank and in Jerusalem, and regarding pilgrims, the entire country of Israel), has brought a sudden cancellation of all pilgrimages that were taking place or that had been planned, with the closure of all check-points with the impossibility of workers from the West Bank to enter Jerusalem, and with the difficulty for everybody to move with security in the entire territory. In spite of all this, we still continue the mission that has been entrusted to us, knowing that Divine Providence, that has willed our presence in this Land, will never cease to take care of us.

## I. WORKS GEARED TOWARDS PILGRIMS

### Acre: building of the ex-kindergarten

§The ongoing project of the works of restructuring of the “Kindergarten” building, in view of rendering once more habitable the apartment in which the sisters who took care of the school used to live.

### Acre: friary of Saint Francis

§Ongoing study for works of restoration of the windows and facades in order to solve problems of humidity infiltration.

### Ain Karem: Sanctuary of Saint John the Baptist

§The completing phase of the works on the security of the electrical system of the building that comprises the friary, church and seminary.

§Programming of the works of restructuring of the friary kitchen.

§Still ongoing phase of projecting the works of excavation/restoration of the church.

### Ain Karem: Casanova

§Phase of completion of the work on the security of the electrical system of the Casanova for the welcoming of pilgrims.

#### **Ain Karem: Sanctuary of Saint John in the Desert**

§Near completion of the urgent interventions for the conservation of the sanctuary, based on a masterplan that includes the regimentation of rainwater in the area surrounding the friary.

#### **Ain Karem: Sanctuary of the Visitation**

§Completion of the works of installation of a new bell.

§Ongoing interventions of maintenance for the conservation of the sanctuary.

#### **Beit Sahour: Sanctuary of the Shepherds' Field**

§Definition of a masterplan of interventions for the conservation and the development of the site, which includes new internal and external chapels for celebrations, the restoration of the grotto of the shepherds, new bathrooms and other infrastructure.

§Completion of the works on a new "Pilgrims Centre", which will include bathrooms, a souvenir shop, space for restaurant and a multifunctional hall for conferences.

§Ongoing completion works for the building of three of the five internal chapels for the celebration of pilgrims (the Croatian, Spanish and Arab chapels). Ongoing work on the first one of the external chapels (chapel of Guadalupe).

§In course of elaboration of the project of the layout of the archaeological zone with a new excavation campaign in collaboration with the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology (PIAC) and the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (SBF).

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

§Final phase of the restoration and valorisation of the Byzantine and Mediaeval remains of the friary of Bethany through the rehabilitation of degraded areas.

#### **Bethlehem: Friary of Saint Catherine**

§Planning of the substitution of the lift of the friary to make it in line with security norms.

§Planning of the second phase of works for the solution of problems of humidity in the sisters' convent, by substituting the pipes that gather and direct rain water towards the ancient cisterns present underneath the friary.

#### **Bethlehem: Boys Home**

§Renewal of 5 bathrooms in service for the entire structure.

§Internal redecoration of the corridors and rooms of the boys.

#### **Bethlehem: Catholic Action**

§Launching of an important work of planning for the rehabilitation and valorisation of the Catholic Action Centre of Bethlehem, comprising an area of 9.000 m<sup>2</sup>, open for the local community, and endowed with external and roofed spaces for games for children, a recreation hall for the elderly, a reception hall, a cinema, a sports centre with gym and a roofed basket-ball court, an open-air swimming pool, etc.

§Completion of the maintenance works of the recreation hall for the elderly.

§Completion of the interventions of security in the external games area for kids (Pro Terra Sancta).

§Renewal of the lighting system of the basket-ball pitch with installation of energy saving lights.

§Ongoing maintenance of the sanitary water facility with the rehabilitation of the ancient cisterns.

§Programming of the restructuring of the gym with the renewal of the sports facilities, the restructuring of the internal games area for kids, and the opening of a cafeteria/restaurant.

### **Bethlehem: Casanova**

§Renewal of the system of hot sanitary water with the adoption of solar panels with high efficiency and brand new boilers.

§Planning of the substitution of the generator in order to guarantee the functionality of the structure also during the frequent blackouts in the area.

### **Capernaum: Sanctuary of the Divine Promise**

§Continuation of the works of maintenance in the entire area.

### **Cana: Friary of the First Miracle**

§First Miracle Complex and Parish Centre. Completion of the works for the construction of the new school. The complex comprises the pastoral centre and a roofed parking lot extending for a total land surface of 5.000m<sup>2</sup>.

§Renewal of the automation system for the church bells.

### **Emmaus Qubeibeh: Sanctuary of Saints Simeon and Cleopas**

§Ongoing planning of extraordinary maintenance for the conservation of the structures of the church, friary and ex-seminary.

§Ongoing elaboration of the project to build a shaft for the lift in the building.

### **Jericho: Site of the Baptism of Jesus on the River Jordan**

§Ongoing interventions of conservation of the property following upon the demining of the area.

§Realisation of the communicating walkway between the sanctuary and the baptism site on the Jordan (layout of the land surface, levelling of the terrain, placing of gravel to drain water and the delimitation of the walkway).

§Realisation of a master plan of interventions for the valorisation and development of the site.



§Ongoing initiatives to obtain permits for the building of bathrooms for pilgrims and the layout of the rooms beneath the church in order to transform them into a chapel for celebrations.

#### **Jericho: Friary of the Good Shepherd**

§Realisation of the external works of art of the church which recall the figure of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

#### **Jerusalem: Basilica of Gethsemane**

§Completion of the structural works for the building of a tunnel and of the lifts in order to link the area of the basilica with the Kidron Valley by means of a walkway for groups of pilgrims.

§Completion of structural works for the centre for services to pilgrims in the Kidron Valley.

§About to commence the works for the new system of lighting of the basilica from outside, promoted by the Municipality of Jerusalem.

§Installation of light roofing for the 3 external chapels of the “Garden of the Apostles”.

#### **Jerusalem: Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre**

§Ongoing works of restoration of the pavement of the Basilica, in agreement with Greeks and Armenians and in collaboration with the Università La Sapienza (Rome) and the Centro di Restauri of Venaria (TO).

§Completion of the restoration works of the crusader chapel, adjusting the illumination and ventilation of the areas and solving the problems of water infiltration from the street.

#### **Jerusalem: Friary of the Holy Sepulchre**

§Phase of completion of the restructuring of the second floor of the friary in order to provide them with bathrooms. Ongoing realisation of the third floor in order to increase the number of rooms.

§Planning phase of the interventions of restructuring of the first floor of the friary with the kitchen, refectory and rooms.

§Phase of realisation of the interventions of adjustment of the electrical system and the adoption of air-conditioners and hot sanitary water with high efficiency.

#### **Jerusalem: Parish Centre in thr Old City**

§Completion of the interventions to rationalise the spaces of the parish centre.

§Ongoing planning of interventions related to the providing of equipment of systems and adequate services.

#### **Jerusalem: Christian Information Center**

§Completion of works for the realisation of five didactic multi-medial halls for pilgrims dedicated to information on the Holy Sepulchre.

#### **Jerusalem: Christian Media Center**

§Completion of works for the layout of a studio for recording of programmes and of halls for video editing.

### **Jerusalem: Friary of Terra Santa College**

§Ongoing planning for new rooms on the second floor of the west wing of the building.

§Ongoing study of the structural verification of the entire building.

§Ongoing study for the external illumination of the building promoted by the Municipality of Jerusalem.

### **Jerusalem: Friary of Saint Saviour**

#### **Offices of the Custody**

§Ongoing reorganisation of the offices of the Custody starting with the Economato, Legal Office and IT.

#### **Friary**

§Completion of the works of restructuring/maintenance of some rooms of the friars.

§Completion of the works of maintenance of some rooms in the guest quarters.

§Completion of the works of maintenance of the refectory.

§Ongoing adoption of a system of measurement/monitoring of electrical consumption.

#### **Infirmary**

§Completion of works of internal maintenance of the rooms.

§Renewal of the air-conditioning system in order to render the infirmary independent from the rest of the building.

#### **Laundry hall**

§Renewal of the system of maintenance of the laundry hall in order to improve the service.

§Study phase on the adoption of more modern, trustworthy and efficient washing machines.

§Ongoing adoption of a system of measurement/monitoring of electricity consumption.

### **Jerusalem: ex-Siniora premises**

§Ongoing study for the rehabilitation/valorisation of the premises along New Gate Street in order to convert them for office/commercial use.

### **Jerusalem: Maria Bambina, house of welcome for pilgrims**

§Completion of a masterplan of interventions for the improvement of the welcoming of pilgrims.

§Completion of the interventions of securing the electrical system.

§Ongoing realisation of the works of maintenance of the rooms while we wait for the beginning of the works of renewal as foreseen in the masterplan.

#### **Jerusalem: Casanova**

§Ongoing works for the changing of the furniture of 40 bedrooms.

#### **Jerusalem: Sanctuary of Dominus Fleuit**

§Ongoing elaboration of a master plan of interventions for the improvement of the welcoming of pilgrims and visitors in the sanctuary.

#### **Jerusalem: Terra Santa Museum**

§Ongoing realisation of a modern centre for the museum in order to exhibit the value of the Franciscan artistic, archaeological and cultural patrimony. The area of around 2500 m<sup>2</sup> will comprise:

- Archaeological Museum: *The places of the Bible in Palestine* (Flagellation Monastery)
- Historical Museum: *The Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land* (Saint Saviour Monastery)

§Completion of the interventions of structural consolidation and final touches for the installations in the areas which will complete the museum at the sanctuary of the Flagellation. The installations are in the phase of being concluded.

§Ongoing works of structural consolidation of the museum area in the Friary of Saint Saviour.

§Phase of completion of the projection of installations, finishing touches and setups of the area of the museum in the friary of Saint Saviour.

#### **Jerusalem: Friary of the Flagellation**

§Completion of the works for the improvement/enlargement of the space of the courtyard which welcomes pilgrims.

§Completion of the works for the adoption of a new system of hot sanitary water with high efficiency.

#### **Jerusalem: Friary of Saint Francis Ad Coenaculum**

§Various interventions of internal and external maintenance for the conservation of the building have been realised.

#### **Jerusalem: Dar al Consul/Moussa Afendi**

§Completion of the restructuring of the complex of Dar al Consul in the Old City, by the rehabilitation of the disused basement with a total surface area of circa 1200m<sup>2</sup>, with the valorisation of archaeological finds and the predisposition of the spaces for pilgrims and for cultural activities on the local level.

§Launching of a project of collaboration between the institute of music Magnificat and the Foundation Andrea Bocelli (ABF) for the institution of a new choir in Jerusalem. The rooms of Dar al Consul are used for the weekly music rehearsals of the choir, whereas in the rooms of Moussa Afendi, in front of Dar al Consul, there is the seat for the foundation for activities of coordination, musical laboratory, etc.

§Dar al Consul is also open for visits of pilgrims and also hosts cultural events and temporary exhibitions.

### **Jerusalem: Sanctuary of Betfage**

§Ongoing study for resolving humidity problems in the frescoed rock in the church

### **Jerusalem: Friary of St. James Beit Hanina**

§Completion of the works for the new access to the church.

§Completion of the works for the layout of the entrance hall of the cafeteria.

§Ongoing study for the installation of a new lift in the building.

### **Jaffa: Friary of Saint Peter the Apostle**

§Ongoing works of extraordinary maintenance of the bells of the church.

§Ongoing study for the restoration of the facades of the building that suffer damage from the aggressive effect of the sea-spray.

### **Jaffa: Friary of Saint Anthony**

§Ongoing works of extraordinary maintenance of the bells of the church.

§Ongoing works of general maintenance of the friary.

### **Magdala:**

§Ongoing archaeological excavations of the site.

§Installation of altars for celebrations for pilgrims.

§Ongoing study for the realisation of a parking lot for buses in agreement with the Municipality.

### **Mount Tabor: Basilica of the Transfiguration**

§Completion phase of the works for the restructuring of part of the Casa Nova, destined to become a small friary to welcome sisters who will collaborate in the welcoming of pilgrims.

§Ongoing study for the rehabilitation of spaces for lodgings of volunteers who collaborate in the carrying out of the service in favour of pilgrims.

§Ongoing study for the enhancement of the capacity of the electricity system on the part of the public firm.

**Mujeidel: Friary of Saint Gabriel the Archangel**

§Ongoing study for the rehabilitation of the existing structure as lodging for temporary guests.

§Ongoing study to determine the feasibility of the reopening of a secondary entrance to the property.

§Completion of works of construction of the containing wall and driveway within the property.

**Nain: Sanctuary of the resurrection of the widow's son**

§Ongoing study for the completion of the perimeter fence of the property.

§Ongoing study for the building of bathrooms for groups of pilgrims.

**Nazareth: Basilica of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary**

§Ongoing study on the feasibility for the restructuring of the ground floor of the friary.

§Completed study for the consolidation and rehabilitation of elements built in concrete which are damaged by humidity in the upper plaza of the basilica.

§Completed study for the consolidation and rehabilitation of elements built in concrete in the portico of the lower plaza of the basilica.

**Nazareth: Casanova**

§Ongoing study for the feasibility of the adaptation of the old "Catholic Action" as lodgings for CasaNova.

**Nazareth: Home for the elderly**

§Ongoing works for the demolition and reconstruction of the perimeter wall and fence of the property.

**Nazareth: Mary of Nazareth Centre**

§Ongoing works for the resetting of the use of the building as a centre of welcome for groups of pilgrims.

§Completed work of extraordinary maintenance in the water supply system.

**Ramleh: Friary of Saint Nicodemus**

§Completed works of the connections adjustments of the internal drainage pipes to the principal public collection system.

**Tabgha: Friary of the Primacy of Saint Peter**

§Ongoing study for the internal restructuring of the friary building.

**NB:** In the realisation of these works, although it entails a factor of complication regarding the requests for permits, the Custody gives priority to workers coming from the West Bank, in order to offer work opportunities for Christians hailing from a territory that does not benefit from a welfare system or from social security. During

these last years, these workers would have remained totally deprived of economic resources, as a result of the conflict situation and the various lockdowns.

Other complications have now been added during the recent conflict. These have been the result of the closure of the checkpoints for nearly two months. Wherever possible, the workers have been employed in the Sanctuaries and in the friaries in the West Bank.

## **II. WORKS GEARED TOWARDS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

### **Boys Home in Bethlehem**

Home for 27 boys coming from families facing social difficulties

§10 boys welcomed on a 24-hour basis

§17 boys welcomed during the day

### **University Scholarships**

Financing of 546 university scholarships for the length of period of 4 years, distributed in various universities (Bethlehem, Hebrew University, Bir Zeit, Amman).

§306 scholarships financed by the Custodial Economato.

§240 scholarships financed through the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL).

### **Assistance for handicraft activities**

Assistance for securing 10 small handicraft activities.

### **Assistance for families**

In Bethlehem and in Jerusalem, on various occasions, the Custody has offered economic assistance to meet the health costs of families and for their basic necessities, through the local parishes.

### **Terra Santa School**

§Acre – Terra Santa School

§Bethlehem - Saint Joseph School

§Bethlehem - Terra Santa School

§Cana – First Miracle Complex

- Completion of the works for the building of the new school. Certifications are being issued.

§Jerusalem - Saint Joseph School (Jaffa Gate)

§Jerusalem - Terra Sancta School (Damascus Gate)

- Completion of works in the new sports structures underneath the large courtyard of the school, which include a swimming pool and a sports ground on the roof of the building.

- Ongoing works on the restructuring of the auditorium.

§Jerusalem - Hellen Keller School (Beit Hanina)

- Completion of the restructuring of the elementary school.

- Completion of the restructuring of the school for visually impaired persons.

§Jaffa – Terra Santa Elementary and Secondary School

- Completion of works of structural consolidation of a part of the elementary school.

- Renewal of the structures and finishing touches at the same time.

§Jericho - Terra Sancta School

§Haifa - Elementary School

§Nazareth - Terra Sancta School

§Ramleh - Terra Sancta School

§Jordan – Amman -Terra Santa School

§Cyprus – Nicosia - Terra Santa School

### **Apartments for needy persons and for young couples**

The Custody of the Holy Land is proprietor of numerous houses in which the tenants pay symbolic rents. In general, these houses are found in overcrowded areas, where different family nuclei often live in small apartments. Each year the Custody intervenes to maintain and improve the conditions of these dwellings, while at the same time it tries to create other dwellings to support the local community.

During the biennium 2022-2023 the Custody has worked on the following dwelling units:

- complete restructuring of 8 houses;

- partial restructuring of 3 houses;

- extraordinary maintenance of the facades (front walls, roofs, etc.) of 2 hosh.

- ordinary maintenance or emergency interventions in numerous houses.

§Jerusalem – Old City

The apartments in the Old City are 426, with a medium dimension that does not arrive at more than 60m<sup>2</sup>.

§Jerusalem – Beit Hanina – St. James Housing Project

42 apartments divided into 3 floors of 6 building units.

Jerusalem – Beit Fage – Saint Francis Village

90 apartments divided into 4 floors of 10 building units.

§Bethlehem – Jesus the Child Housing Project

4 apartments divided into 6 floors of 2 building units.

§Bethlehem – St Catherine Housing Project

24 apartments divided into 6 floors of 2 building units.

§Bethlehem – St Francis Housing Project

20 apartments divided into 10 floors of the building.

§Ram – St. Antony Housing Project

12 apartments divided into 6 floors of the building.

§Ram – St. Paul Housing Project

10 apartments divided into 5 floors of the building.

**Cultural activities**

§Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (SBF) – Jerusalem

- Every year the Custody of the Holy Land supports economically the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem.

- Formation of 62 students in the biblical sciences at the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*. The students hail from various parts of the world and from poor religious provinces and dioceses. To them the Custody guarantees board and lodging plus a scholarship. They are destined to teach Holy Scripture in various countries of the world.

§Christian Media Center (CMC) – Jerusalem/nazareth

The services offered comprise:

- A Website, which is completely renewed, simplified for use and now also mobile friendly.

- Terra Sancta News, a weekly news bulletin which features faith, history and current events in the Holy Land; it is transmitted by around 35 transmitting stations in the world in 10 languages (from this year also in Chinese).

- Documentaries on social and religious themes, in various languages.



- Live transmissions of liturgical celebrations and events.

#### §Music Institute Magnificat – Jerusalem

- The Magnificat Institute is affiliated to the Conservatorio di Vicenza. It promotes activity of research and cultural manifestations on the local and international level.

- The Institute welcomes more than 220 students who are Christians, Muslims and Jews. They are followed by 30 professors who are also Jews, Christians and Muslims.

#### §Welcoming of young seminarians – Jerusalem

- Young seminarians are welcomed in the Franciscan International Seminary of Saint Saviour in Jerusalem.

- They are also welcomed in the Seminary of Ain Karem.

#### §Formation of young seminarians – Jerusalem

- Theological formation at the Studium Theologicum Jerosolymitanum (STJ) of 31 young seminarians coming from various Provinces of the Order of Friars Minor.

- Formation of around 60 young men from the aspirancy to specialised studies.

### Works/projects supported by Pro Terra Sancta

#### **Jerusalem**

#### §Support and Works of Christian Charity

7) **Franciscan Sisters School (Jericho)**: the school falls under the care of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is one of the most frequented schools of the city of Jericho. Today it welcomes more than 500 male and female children (from 4 to 14 years of age), who attend the kindergarten, the elementary school and the secondary school. The children of the kindergarten and elementary school attend mixed classes, while the secondary school is open only for female pupils.

#### *Description of the Project*

ProTS has supported the school, which falls under the care of three Sisters and a Staff of around 42 persons, with the restructuring of the external games area of the school.

#### *Beneficiaries who have been reached*

More than 500 children and adolescents from 4 to 14 years.

8) **Convent of Saint Vincent De Paul (Mamilla, Jerusalem)**: within the Monastery of St. Vincent de Paul, 4 Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul take care of a kindergarten and of a centre for disabled persons. The kindergarten welcomes more than 200 children aged from three to four years. The families of the children pay a school fee which is much lower than the one they would have to pay in other kindergartens in Jerusalem. They also create a lively and multicultural environment, since they represent eight different nationalities. This activity is important for the families of the surroundings since the kindergarten is open 7 days a week, respecting the Christian, Muslim and Jewish festivities. The ground floor of the Convent is the seat of the Nursing Home

Rehabilitation, a residence which welcomes around 30 persons who have physical disability and/or mental problems, plus elderly persons who cannot receive care and assistance in their families.

### ***Description of the Project***

In 2019 ProTS has restructured some areas which were in a dilapidated state within the Convent, and it has opened the *Dar Mamilla Guesthouse*, whose objective is not only that of welcoming visitors from all over the world, but also to help the work of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul. A part of the entries of Dar Mamilla Guesthouse has always been destined to support their activity and the works of restructuring of the areas of the Convent.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 200 male and female children from three months to four years of age.

Around 30 persons with physical disabilities and/or mental problems.

4 sisters and 74 members of the staff of the Convent of Saint Vincent de Paul.

9) **Jerusalem African Community Center (JACC) (Jaffa Street, Jerusalem)**: is a centre of support and community for around 3000 immigrants who request asylum and who hail from Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia, among whom are many families with children, who stay in Jerusalem. The centre provides support to refugees through legal and psychological support, the organisation of courses of formation and the distribution of goods of prime necessity for those families most in need. The conditions in which the families who request asylum in Israel live are of an extreme socio-economic vulnerability, since these persons are blocked in a limbo in which their request for asylum is neither accepted nor rejected, and therefore they do not enjoy any rights or protection.

### ***Description of the Project***

ProTS supports the community of JACC for many years. It contributes to cover the salaries of the staff in the centre and it provides support in the writing and presentation of projects. In 2023 a project has been presented through the ordinary call of the Waldensian Evangelical Church, which has been approved and is in the phase of implementation for the organisation of courses of professional formation, among which there will be courses for tailoring, courses in English and Hebrew languages, acquisition of competencies (CV writing, computer, etc.) and sessions of legal assistance and psychosocial support.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 3000 members of the community, principally women and children.

Around 7 members of the staff and around 100 volunteers and external collaborators.

10) **Saint Louis French Hospital (New Gate, East Jerusalem)**: is a hospital that belongs to the Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition. The hospital specialises in providing palliative care for terminal patients, with a total capacity of 57 beds, divided between the geriatric ward; the complicated geriatric ward; and the oncology ward. The hospital also offers treatment for persons who are HIV positive.

### ***Description of the Project***

In collaboration with the staff and the Director Alex Hadweh the project of restructuring of the hairdresser's hall has been concluded, and this service is now available to the patients of the hospital.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

More than 55 patients.

11) **Notre-Dame Des Douleurs Home (Abu Dis, East Jerusalem):** the Congregation of the Daughters of the Sorrowful Madonna takes care of the House Notre Dame des Douleurs, which welcomes persons coming from the margins of society. It takes care of them, and provides services, meals and recreational activities (physical exercises, walks in the garden, handicraft laboratories and social games). The majority of the guests are Palestinians. However, there are also present guests of Syrian, Lebanese and Ethiopian nationalities. Today (data of 2022), in Notre Dame Home, live 4 Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Sorrowful Madonna, who welcome around 40 guests. Besides, there is a doctor of Saint Joseph Hospital who regularly visits the Notre Dame Home once a week.

***Description of the Project***

In collaboration with the staff and the Director a *Course for Social Health Care Assistance* has been implemented, and is geared towards the workers of the structure for socio-sanitary professional formation.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 40 guests.

12 workers who have benefited from the formation.

**12) Latin Parish of Jerusalem (Old City, East Jerusalem) and Latin Parish of Bethlehem*****Description of the Project***

ProTS supports poor families in situations of socio-economic difficulty through the support for the payment of rents, expenses for medical operations and medicines, and other various needs in support of family members who go through a social emergency since they are burdened with the care of elderly and disabled persons who are not self-sufficient.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 50 families.

§Support PSS to children and adolescents in Jerusalem

***Description of the Project***

In collaboration with the *Spafford Children's Center* it was noted that there is a necessity to activate an integrated programme of protection of treatment of trauma; it entails a psycho-social support and help in handling of anger and stress for children, young people and parents. The programme lasts for 12 months. In Jerusalem, as a result of the dangers inherent in many quarters of East Jerusalem and because of fear experienced by families, children and adolescents often find themselves closed in for weeks at home and isolated. To this one adds the growing episodes of violence and abuses. The activities in this phase of implementation include sessions of treatment of trauma and handling of anger and stress. They are carried out within the centre itself, and within some schools of East Jerusalem.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 20 families of Jerusalem and surroundings, for a total of circa 100 persons.

§Project Terra Sancta Museum

### ***Description of the Project***

*Terra Sancta Museum (TSM): A Community Living Museum for Palestinian Youth:* the project affronts the vulnerability of children and adolescents in the Old City of East Jerusalem, which is totally separated from its Palestinian surroundings. The objective of the project is the creation of a space where one guarantees total protection for the cultural and identity growth of Palestinian young people in East Jerusalem, who find themselves in a situation of cultural isolation. In the space of the archaeological section of the Terra Sancta Museum, and through its collections, the project develops educational activities geared towards schools, towards families and towards local young people. The project is realised in partnership with the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum and the Cultural Office for the Patrimony of the CTS.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

780 male and female children of East Jerusalem, who benefit from the socio-educational activities on cultural patrimony.

509 adults, between parents, women and families of East Jerusalem.

## **Sebastia Samaria**

§Support to young people of Sabastia - Mosaic Centre

### ***Description of the Project***

In the absence of tourists who can be welcomed as guests in the guest-house, and with the road-blocks that prohibit people to go out of the village to look for work, the community of Sebastia, and especially the youngest age-groups of the population, are living in a situation of extreme uncertainty and vulnerability because of the war going on in Gaza and the growing violence of Israeli settlers who live in the settlements around the village. In this context, ProTS wants to offer to young people the possibility to carry out recreational and educational activities, in order to continue to hope in a future in which dialogue and coexistence will still be possible. The action foresees the organisation of a course of football training to help young people prepare themselves for sports competitions. The project is realised in partnership with the Mosaic Centre.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 20 young people form the villages of Sebastia and Nisf Jubeil.

## **Bethany**

§Bethany, House of Friendship

### ***Description of the Project***

The project foresees the formation and the conservation of the cultural patrimony, in service to the academic institutions and to the Palestinian community: this project is financed by the Cooperazione Italiana (AICS) in partnership with the Mosaic Centre, the Al Quds University, the Università degli Studi di Palermo, the Università di Torino and the Al Hana Women Association. The project has the objective of contributing to the protection and safeguarding of the cultural patrimony of Bethany in order to favour an inclusive social and economic

development which can promote culture, sustainable tourism and local products.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 250 male and female children of Bethany have been involved in educational activities and experimental archaeology.

Around 10 workers from Bethany are involved in activities of restoration.

**Betlemme**

§Centre for Listening and Orientation for job creation Pro Terra Sancta

***Description of the Project***

In Bethlehem there is a centre for listening and orientation for job creation in order to provide medical assistance (access to basic medical treatment, operations and hospitalisation, and specific medical treatments) as well as social assistance to the most vulnerable population of the area, in collaboration with other organisations that form part of the same network. The centre for listening employs a senior and a junior social assistant, and the requests for assistance are evaluated monthly by a predisposed committee of which one member has to be external to the organisation.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

444 persons have gone to the centre for listening and have been welcomed and their cases evaluated by the personnel of ProTS or else referred to organisations which are part of the network.

250 persons have benefited from support for medical and social assistance.

25 young people have participated in vocational training and 27 young people have been supported through the programme of orientation for work, in collaboration with 15 institutions and small and medium firms.

15 young people have benefited from activities of psychological and group support.

70 poor families have been supported through the granting of a contribution for the Christmas festivities.

§Emergency Houses and Water

***Description of the Project***

The centre for listening also welcomes requests for interventions of rehabilitation of damaged buildings, or unhealthy buildings, and of the installation of water tanks and solar panels.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

65 families have benefited from interventions of restructuring and security of their dwellings.

36 families have benefited from the installation of water tanks and solar panels.

72 families have been visited by our staff after having come for the first time to the centre of listening.

## §Support for Education

### ***Description of the Project***

Sponsorships in order to guarantee the instruction of some children who frequent the Terra Sancta Schools (Saint Joseph and Terra Sancta College), Rosary Sisters School and SIRA School. Besides some families have been supported in order to be able to pay the school or university fees.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

250 children and adolescents aged between 3 and 17 have been supported in order to continue their studies.

## §Socio-Entrepreneurial activities

### ***Description of the Project***

Pro Terra Sancta in Bethlehem directs two guesthouses (Dar al Majus and Dar Essideh), both in the historical centre. Besides these, a fair trade bazaar is active. It is based upon a net of 30 providers who are principally organisations which guarantee work to vulnerable women or disabled persons.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

34 micro-entrepreneurial realities and institutions supported through the selling of their own products.

737 pilgrims have been welcomed.

## §DAMJ creative lab

### ***Description of the Project***

In the old buildings ProTS has activated a creative laboratory that supports some small entrepreneurial realities in the development of products and the identity of brand and logo. Besides this, it supports the institutions and the works that want to develop productions in order favour their sustainability.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

9 institutions have been supported in the development of their business and new products (eg. Effetà).

## §Cultural Activities – Dar Al Majus Community Centre

### ***Description of the Project***

At Dar Al Majus, and in collaboration with other local realities, ProTS organises cultural activities geared towards the community of Bethlehem and made up of various types: literary presentations, writing laboratories, concerts, kitchen workshops, performance for theatre, etc.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 600 members of the local community who have taken part in activities and cultural events.

Around 350 children who have taken part in cultural activities and workshops.

15 organisers and artists who are partners of the events and activities which are organised (eg. Bethlehem Academy of Music, Bab Eddir Gallery, OpenMic, Alliance Française, Diyar Theatre Group, Willy Brandt Center, etc.).

§Support to other works of charity

8) Support **Hogar Nino Dios** – remaking of the swimming pool and beginning of water physiotherapy.

***Description of the Project***

In collaboration with the religious of the Incarnate Word a project of rehabilitation of the swimming pool has been concluded, with the aim of organising physiotherapeutic activities in water. The showers have been restructured, a boiler for water has been added and equipment for physiotherapy has been bought. In the context of the project of orientation to the work the figure of a therapist has also been inserted, in order to support the staff and the sisters for a period of six months, as from October 2023. Besides this, ProTS has also offered the services of a volunteer for 11 months.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

36 disabled children and adolescents from 2 to 18 years of age.

9) Support **Società Caritatevole Antoniana** and **Suore dell'Hortus Conclusus**

***Description of the Project***

The collaboration consists in realising the works of restructuring and improvement of the institutes, in the support of the staff through training, through the provision of medicine and equipment, in the support of current expenses. In this situation of emergency there are works to reactivate the Day Centre which, before the Covid-19 pandemic, used to permit to 60 elderly persons to receive a warm meal and to take part in group activities. The sisters of Hortus Conclusus take care of the kindergarten in Artas, always in the Governatorate of Bethlehem, and to them have been donated equipment and didactic material.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

33 elderly persons who live alone, of whom 28 are women.

51 children who frequent the kindergarten.

10) Support **Boys Home** – language courses and psychological support

***Description of the Project***

ProTS has activated at Dar al Majus for the boys living in the Boys Home a language course in Italian and Spanish, as well as activities of psycho-social support in order to face the continual traumas which they undergo.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

20 boys of 8 to 17 years of age, who are orphans or who come from families which are socially at a disadvantage or with problems of dependence and/or violence.

11) Institute for the deaf **Effetà**

***Description of the Project***

ProTS is supporting the school with the participation and payment of some school fees for some children coming from the poorest villages, and with the support of acquiring new equipment for autistic cases. The majority of the students, in fact, do not succeed in covering the costs of the annual school fees, even though these are very low. The figure of a teacher has also been inserted in the sphere of the project of orientation to work.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

200 students with hearing impairment from 2 to 18 years have access to a medical clinic equipped for their needs.

4 children from 9 to 14 years have received a scholarship.

12) **Franciscan Sisters Aida Camp** – rebuilding of the drainage system and support to the sisters

***Description of the Project***

ProTS is supporting the Sisters who at Aida Camp have a guesthouse and a kindergarten. They support them in the payment of some urgent expenses and in the rebuilding of the drainage system. Besides this, through the programme of orientation to work, they guarantee help care to one of the sisters who is not self-sufficient.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

4 sisters who live in the community.

40 children who frequent the kindergarten.

13) **Catholic Action** – rehabilitation of the playground and centre for elderly persons

***Description of the Project***

ProTS has contributed to the rehabilitation of the playground in the building of the Catholic Action and in the meeting Centre for the elderly. Besides this, they support the Catholic Action through the programme of orientation to work.

14) **Teaching of Italian and Latin to seminarians and aspirant friars**

***Description of the Project***

ProTS has offered some volunteers for teaching Italian and Latin to some seminarians of the Seminary of Beit Jala and to some aspirant friars of the Custody.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

12 seminarians.

5 aspirant friars.



## Gaza

§Support to the Latin Parish

### ***Description of the Project***

ProTS supports the Latin parish of Gaza City, offering support for parochial activities and the necessities of the community. With the breaking out of the way the aid has been intensified in order to support the basic and primary needs of the population exhausted by the bombardments and overcrowded within the compound of the buildings of the parish.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

135 persons who make part of the community of the Latin Parish of Gaza.

600 persons who became homeless within the Parish at the beginning of the war.

§Butterfly Children of Gaza

### ***Description of the Project***

ProTS, in collaboration with Caritas and with the Latin Parish, leads the project of medical assistance to “Butterfly Children”, guaranteeing the basic treatments and home assistance to around 30 children who live in the Gaza Strip and who suffer from Epidermolysis Bullosa, a genetic and rare intrusive illness, which provokes blisters and lesions on the skin and on internal mucous membranes. In the entire Gaza Strip 65 patients have received a diagnosis of Epidermolysis Bullosa (37 males and 28 females), in the Governorate of Gaza City 19, in the North 9, in the Centre 15, at Khan Younis and Rafah 22 (Source: Catholic Church).

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

33 children affected by Epidermolysis Bullosa.

## III. RHODES

### **Works/Projects supported by Pro Terra Sancta**

#### **Greece – Rhodes/Kos**

§Support to immigrants and refugees

### ***Description of the Project***

In collaboration with the Franciscans present in Rhodes, ProTS helps to distribute goods of prime necessity (food and medicines) to the immigrants and refugees coming from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

### ***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

700 food packets distributed every week.

A total of circa 2000 families have been assisted during the year.

## IV. JORDAN

### Works/Projects supported by Pro Terra Sancta

#### Jordan – Amman

§Education project Amman: scholarships for young people and support to schools.

#### *Description of the Project*

In collaboration with the Latin Apostolic Vicariate, ProTS has donated scholarships to support young students in a network of schools in Jordan.

It has also supported the public school of Jabal Weidbeh called 'Balat Al-Sheehadah' of Amman.

#### *Beneficiaries who have been reached*

100 students have been helped with scholarships and scholastic material, with a special aid given to 10 orphans.

50 poor families supported with social help.

## V. SYRIA

### Works/Projects supported by Pro Terra Sancta

#### Syria - Aleppo

§Centre of assistance – Azizieh

#### *Description of the Project and activities*

Distribution of food, medical assistance, vouchers to acquire fuel for electricity and heating, clothes, soap powder and products for hygiene, nappies and milk powder for babies. Continuation of the activity of the social kitchen, with circa 20 among staff, cooks and volunteers, who take collaborate to prepare and offer hot meals, trying to meet the needs of the people created by the high rise in the cost of food and by the near total absence of electricity that can permit people to cook in their homes. The aid has been increased after the earthquake.

#### *Beneficiaries who have been reached*

3.000 families receive food backs and non-food items, electricity and water (including 500 families with new-born babies and infants + 100 Muslim disabled children).

1.200 persons per day receive a hot meal, prepared and distributed at the Franciscan social kitchen of the centre.

4.500 persons have been helped with medicines and medical assistance.

250 students have been economically helped with scholarships, and 120 students have been directly supported with extra-curricular activities.

70 houses have been repaired after the earthquake (zone Midan, Azizieh, East, TSC).

§Light and heating for families, Solar Panels – Azizieh

***Description of the Project***

Installation of solar panels for electricity and heating.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

120 families receive the installation of solar panels.

Cost of one water solar panel pump + Cost of 1 solar panel for energy = 2.500 EUR.

§Franciscan Care Center – Aleppo TSC

***Description of the Project***

The centre for psychological rehabilitation for children, called Franciscan Care Center, is functioning in some rooms of Terra Sancta College and on the outside, in the large spaces that have been arranged during 2023: laying out of two football fields and one basket-ball court, covering of two fields, large space for activities for young children and the maintenance of the swimming pool. The activities include the arts-therapy, music-therapy, sports, face to face assistance, teaching of English and French.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

700 children and adolescents who enrolled and were assisted at the centre of rehabilitation of Terra Sancta College; 270 children enrolled in the Terra Sancta Academy.

24 local specialised persons are involved in the centre (educators, teachers, psychologists, trainers, artists).

§Franciscan Care Center – Centres of east Aleppo

***Description of the Project***

Three centres for helping and welcoming have been opened in the area of East Aleppo, in collaboration with the Mufti and the Mukthar of the area, in order to assist: children and orphans in the poor areas and in areas of great social degradation; children who are between 9 and 10 years of age and who are compelled to leave school in order to work; support and help to women and mothers of East Aleppo.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

4.000 children/orphans of East Aleppo are helped and followed in 3 centres.

600 women of East Aleppo are supported and formed, and 150 adults are helped with formation and other aids for work.

90 specialised persons involved in 3 seats of the centre (educators, teachers, psychologists, trainers, artists).

§Help to the sick of Aleppo

***Description of the Project***

Reparation of buildings and machines for radiology that have been badly damaged after the earthquake of February 2023.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Circa 400 patients have made use of the repaired machinery in a period of 5 months.

**Syria – Hama**

§Franciscan Care Center

***Description of the Project***

The centre for psychological rehabilitation for children, called Franciscan Care Center, has continued its activities even during 2023 in Hama, in the building of the church of the Immaculate Virgin of the Catholic Syrians in Hama.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

200 children enrolled and assisted at the centre for rehabilitation in Hama, the majority of whom are Muslims.

15 local specialised persons are involved (educators, teachers, psychologists, trainers, artists).

**Syria – Damascus**

§Centre for assistance Damascus

***Description of the Project***

The Pro Terra Sancta has activated a social emergency centre, which is occupied with the distribution of vouchers for acquiring food, medicines and support for medical prescriptions, for fuel for electricity and heating, for clothes, soap powder and products for hygiene, nappies and milk powder for infants. The centre has come to an agreement with ten food stores and pharmacies for the acquisition of goods through vouchers and the successive monthly payment. The beneficiaries are picked up by following these criteria: their financial situation and the number of component members of the family; the number of children present in the family and the number of elderly persons; widows having kids under their care; wives whose husbands are on military service during war.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

650 families are supported with food and non-food items each month, and 800 persons are helped with medical/sanitary assistance and medicines; 200 families with new-born babies have been helped for the expenses of milk/nappies.

250 students have been supported with scholarships and scholastic material.

§Project WIP and formation, development and work Damascus

***Description of the Project***

At the Pro Terra Sancta centre there is a window of opportunity for work, which foresees the offering of a course of formation for care-workers, with successive insertion in a job, and a course of formation of business start-up offered to young people who are chosen with successive grants of support for the most original and sustainable ideas.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

40 young people formed in the context of business start-up and 15 helped with a fund to launch their own activity.

20 young caregivers formed and who work in families of elderly and hospice structures in Damascus.

§Centre of welcome and medical assistance - Tabbaleh

***Description of the Project***

Support and help in the activities of assistance for sick persons welcomed in the Franciscan centre at Tabbaleh. The building is made up of 24 rooms, and since some years it has been welcoming persons with serious illnesses who have to undergo long periods of medical treatment in the hospitals of Damascus: the covering of part of their medical treatment; the acquisition of medicines and the covering of the expenses for the rooms in the building; the expenses to guarantee one meal a day. The intention is that of increasing the number of sick persons who are helped and assisted.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

100 sick persons have been welcomed every year in the centre.

120 persons have been helped with distribution of medicines and covering costs of operations and hospitalisation.

§Support to the children of Damascus: Refuge at the Memorial of St. Paul - Tabbaleh

***Description of the Project***

Support and help to the refuge of Tabbaleh of the Custody of the Holy Land, directed by the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CIM). The refuge is found in the rooms of the building of the Franciscan friary. It is made up of 6 classes for children aged between 2.5 and 5 years, for a total of 140 children, 10 teachers and 2 employees for office/cleaning.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

140 children and their respective families.

10 teachers and 2 local employees of the school.

§Franciscan Music Center - Tabbaleh Damascus

***Description of the Project***

The Franciscan Music Centre is a school of music born and structured in the disused premises of the building of the friary of the Custody of the Holy Land. The centre was born in collaboration with a local pianist and director

of the “Centre for harmony and for musical education of Damascus”. To Syrian children and young adolescents are proposed courses of guitar, pianoforte, violin and battery. ProTS supports the current costs, the acquisition of musical instruments and part of the salaries of the teachers.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

136 children + 8 local music teachers.

§Psychological support for children and young people – Tabbaleh Damascus

***Description of the Project***

In collaboration with CRS, in some rooms of the refuge and of the friary are offered activities of PSS and art-therapy for young people and adolescents.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

100 young people from poor quarters of Damascus.

§Saint George Kindergarten - Maaloula

***Description of the Project***

Maaloula is a small village in the Governorate of Rif Dimashq some 56 km to the north-east of Damascus. The kindergarten of Saint George lies within the building of the Greek-Melkite Catholic church of Saint George and represents the only educational reality geared towards the young which is still functioning in the area. The building is very modest and nowadays the kindergarten consists of 5 classes and their adjacent bathrooms. Also in 2023 the current costs of the structure have been shouldered, as well as the covering economic costs for some families who do not manage to pay the monthly school fee.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

30 children enrolled in the kindergarten with their respective families; 3 teachers.

§Project of the Quarter and Sanctuary of Saint Hananias - Damascus

***Description of the Project***

ProTS has contributed to the relaunching in the area of Saint Hananias, with the recovery of 7 dwelling houses and of the main square in front of the sanctuary. A study has been launched regarding the restructuring of the area of the Sanctuary.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

The population of the Christian Quarter of Damascus and potential future pilgrims.

**Syria – Knaye and Yacoubieh**

§Centre for assistance - Knaye and Yacoubieh (province of Idlib)

***Description of the Project***

In the friary of Knaye has been activated a social/emergency centre, which is occupied with the distribution of food, medicines, vouchers for the acquisition of fuel for electricity and heating, clothes, soap powder and products for hygiene, nappies and milk powder for children. Besides, a project of help and assistance after the earthquake has been activated, and it oversees the covering of the costs of reparation of the churches of Knaye and Yacoubieh, and the repairing of many houses.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

240 families have been supported with water, electricity, heating (Christian and Muslim families).

60 children with their respective families; 65 students and 11 local teachers.

80 houses have been repaired.

**Syria – Latakia**

§Centre for assistance – Latakia

***Description of the Project***

In the Franciscan friary of Latakia has been activated a social/emergency centre, which is occupied with the distribution of food, medicines and medical assistance, vouchers for acquiring fuel for electricity and heating, clothes, soap powder and products for hygiene, nappies and milk powder for infants.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

420 families have been helped with food and non-food items, monthly rent of the house; 45 receive milk and nappies.

130 persons each month are helped with medicines and medical assistance.

150 students and their respective families.

§Centre of assistance and Medical dispensary – Latakia

***Description of the Project***

In collaboration with AVSI and the Apostolic Nunciature of Damascus, in the centre premises has been activated a medical dispensary, with the distribution of medicine and a system of referrals to other medical structures and doctors.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

500 persons have been helped with free medical visits and with the distribution of medicines every week.

§Centre of assistance and support for women – Latakia

***Description of the Project***

A programme geared to favour new entrepreneurial activities promoted and directed by women, and aimed at favouring the sustenance of poor families.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

50 women have been helped in the formation of life skills and insertion in work, through a programme of support of activities and business start-ups.

40 women have frequented the 6 months' course of tailoring and sewing and afterwards they were helped to insert themselves in a stable work.

§Education and assistance – recreational and psychological support centre for children

***Description of the Project***

Up till now this project has been geared towards children coming from internally homeless families, and has proposed activities of recovery and rehabilitation through laboratories of art, sports and kitchen, involving also teachers and specialised personnel.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

200 children/young people have been helped during the year + 22 teachers and specialised staff have been involved.

20 orphaned children are assisted annually.

**VI. LEBANON**

**Works/projects sustained by Pro Terra Sancta**

**Lebanon – Beirut**

§Centre of assistance and development Pro Terra Sancta – Gemmaize

***Description of the Project and activities***

The social/emergency centre is found within the building of the friary of Gemmaize, where 5 rooms and a hall have been fitted in order to become offices Pro Terra Sancta. Around 10 persons work there, among fixed staff and collaborators. The general project includes various social activities.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

700 families of Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre, Deir-Mimas, Harissa have been reached by distributions and offers of goods of basic necessity.

200 persons have been helped with medicines and the covering costs of medical expenses.

70 scholarships for needy students in the area of Beirut + 50 scholarships for needy university students in the area of Beirut and Harissa.



§Franciscan Care Center – Centre for psychological rehabilitation of children

***Description of the Project***

The centre of art-therapy for the psychological rehabilitation of children, called Franciscan Care Centre, is functioning also in Beirut since November 2021. 4 rooms and a large hall have been fitted for the purpose.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

120 among children, young people and elderly persons participate in the activities proposed.

8 local specialised persons are involved (educators, teachers, psychologists, trainers, artists).

§Project WIP

***Description of the Project and activities***

Selection, formation and support of young people and non-Lebanese persons with entrepreneurial and business ideas, with accompaniment and formation by Italian and Lebanese coaches and tutors, with a community made up of circa 25 persons.

***Beneficiaries reached***

35 young people formed on the theme business start-up and 7 young persons directly helped with a loan and grants to launch their commercial and entrepreneurial-social activities.

**Lebanon – El Mina, Tripoli**

§Centre of assistance and Medical dispensary

***Description of the Project***

Within the building of the friary of Tripoli, 3 rooms have been renovated and fitted as a medical dispensary, which is active for two days a week with 3 doctors who are available (including a paediatrician) and the distribution of medicines.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

200 persons and children are received and helped each month, with medical visits and distribution of medicines and vaccines.

§Saint Francis Sports Centre

***Description of the Project***

In the friary of Saint Francis, in Tripoli, there is a spacious sports centre composed of: a football field, a basketball court, a playground. The sports centre is of great importance in the city quarter and is presently frequented by Christian and Muslim children and youngsters coming from Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian families. An effort is being made to continue to support the improvement of the centre and to make it bigger, by continuing the works to arrange the spaces for games, to cover the fields and renew the dressing rooms, and to organise sports competitions and courses.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

300 children and young people coming from poor Lebanese families and Palestinian and Syrian refugees have made use, as much as possible, of the fields and of the training sessions organised and proposed by the centre.

During 2023 it has moreover been possible to install solar panels for the entire structure, and also to finish the work of construction of new buildings and spaces for the gym, for judo, for dance and for ping-pong.

§Education and Formation

***Description of the Project***

During the year a study was made to support students and the families most in need.

In collaboration with an art teacher, a cycle of courses for art and design has been introduced.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

120 scholarships for children and most needy families.

35 children in Tripoli are involved in the project.

**Lebanon – Tyre**

§After-school project for children

***Description of the Project***

Within the building of the friary of Tyre, the first works of rehabilitation of two rooms has been completed. These are aimed at the activity of distribution of food, medicines, welcoming and also the education of children. The expenses of works for the creation of a guest-house have also been paid.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

25 children have been helped by after-school activities.

**VII. EgYPT****Works/projects supported by Pro Terra Sancta****Egypt – Cairo**

§Project of conservation and enhancement Musky - Cairo

***Description of the Project***

Support to the Franciscan Centre for Christian Oriental Studies in order to renew the structure and to study and catalogue the collections, and to support the organisation of events to involve the local community, in particular university male and female students of Cairo. The principal aim of the Centre is the development of oriental sciences regarding the Christian communities of the Middle East and the documentation on the life and history of

Franciscans in the Holy Land.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

Around 200 students who visited the centre and were supported for their studies and research. To them are offered basic courses in Latin, Greek and Italian.

§Project to help the poor and for the education of young people

***Description of the Project***

Distribution of food and medicines in support of the poor of the quarter of Musky, Cairo, where the Franciscan friary of the Custody of the Holy Land is situated, and in partnership with the Franciscan Sisters Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (CIM) at their own convents of activity in Port Said, Alexandria, El Dhahereya, Assiut, Minya, Towirat, Qena, Deir Dronka, Kafr el Dawar, Haram. The assistance includes works of an educational character like payment for the school fees of the children who are welcomed in orphanages, for the medical expenses of families, and for paying essential commodities. Assistance is also given to young couples.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

284 children and young people have been supported.

**VIII. Italy**

**Works/projects supported by Pro Terra Sancta**

**La Verna**

§Project Novices: Support to the formation of the Novices of the Custody in la Verna.

***Description of the Project***

Support to the novices of the Custody of the Holy Land, through payment of food and lodging, health insurance and medical expenses, residence permits for citizens who come from outside the EU.

***Beneficiaries who have been reached***

8 friars novices have been helped to complete their formative iter during the novitiate.

**IX. ORDINARY WAGES OF THE CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND**

Monthly wages of circa 1.044 employees in Israel (69%) and Palestine (31%) divided between 14 schools (63% of the total number of employees), 4 Case Nove for pilgrims (10% of the number of employees), 80 sanctuaries, 25 parishes and many other various activities.

During the COVID pandemic, the employees who have residence in Israel have been able to benefit from a form of redundancy fund (*halat*) until October 2021, which the State paid for them, and which corresponded to 70% of the salary. The workers from the State of Palestine, instead, were totally deprived of any welfare. For this reason the Custody has chosen to continue to pay half of the wages of the employees of the Palestinian territories who had to remain at home, and obviously 100% of the wages of those who could come to work. The Custody has also tried to have as workers in the friaries and in the works of restoration especially the Palestinian Christians

hailing from the West Bank, in order to guarantee a support to their families. This choice has obviously been a burden on the economy of the Custody during a time in which there were no entries from the sanctuaries and because of the total lack of pilgrims from the end of February 2020 till April 2022.

When the pandemic emergency ended we have had one year and some months of progressive return to normality (April 2022 – 7 October 2023). With the present conflict we have once again found ourselves thrown into a situation of suffering and uncertainty, even on the economic level. During the recent conflict, the workers hailing from the West Bank who daily come to work in Jerusalem, cannot enter the checkpoint, since these have been closed by the Israeli Authorities for almost 2 months. The Custody has continued to provide equally for the payment of wages in order to support the families in a moment of general difficulty.

Jerusalem, 31 December 2023

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