



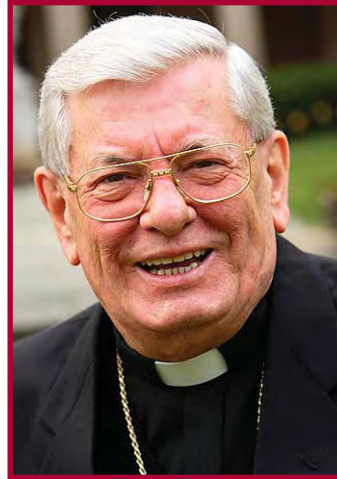
# FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION

## FOR THE HOLY LAND

### Vatican Diplomat becomes Special Advisor to FFHL

The present Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S., His Excellency, Archbishop Pietro Sambì, DD, has generously accepted to serve as a Special Advisor to the Franciscan Custody's Foundation in the United States.

Archbishop Sambì was born June 27, 1938, in Sogliano sul Rubicone, Forlì, Italy. He was incardinated in the Diocese of San Marino-Montefeltro and ordained a priest on March 14, 1964. He has a Doctorate in Sacred Theology and in Canon Law. He started his service in the Diplomatic Corps of the Holy See in April, 1969, in Cameroon.



true to the charism of St. Francis, take care of the Holy Places which are tied to the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and to our salvation. Many of them, during almost 12 centuries of presence and history in the Holy Land, have lost their lives in carrying out their mission and in commitment to the Pope.

Truly praiseworthy is the spirit of 'evangelical hospitality' with which the Franciscans receive pilgrims, who, from every part of the world, come to the Holy Land to trace the very steps of Jesus and to have a unique experience of a new, deeper and more personal encounter with Him.

He was nominated Pro-Apostolic Nuncio in Burundi on October 10, 1985, Pro-Apostolic Nuncio in Indonesia on November 28, 1991, and Apostolic Nuncio in Israel and Cyprus, and Apostolic Delegate in Jerusalem and Palestine on June 6, 1998. Archbishop Sambì speaks Italian, English, French and Spanish.

As Nuncio he represents the Holy Father to both the hierarchy and Church of a particular nation and to that nation's civil government.

As the former Apostolic Nuncio to Israel (1998-2005), Archbishop Sambì is very familiar not only with the problems facing the Christians in the Holy Land but with the work of the FFHL and their attempts to stem the Christian exodus.

Archbishop Sambì made these comments in a recent letter to the Foundation:

"My many years spent as Pontifical Representative in Jerusalem have made me a staunch supporter of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land! I have admired the love, the dedication and the faith with which the Franciscans,

I have seen the social commitment of the Franciscans to the local population, which continues to live under the cloud of endless conflict: schools, scholarships for poor but deserving students, dwellings for young families, care for the elderly, charity towards persons and families in need, and much more.

And it was in this land that the Lord said, 'In truth, I tell you, insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.' Indeed, I have reason to say to everyone that you can trust the 'Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land': for what is given to it is used for the love of Jesus Christ and for the service of His and our brothers and sisters."

"We are very honored," stated Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM, Custos and Chairman of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land, "to have the Papal Representative and the Holy See's Ambassador to the United States be with our Foundation. He will be a wonderful asset in our work of assisting the Christians in the Holy Land."

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#### OUR MISSION

THE FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION FOR THE HOLY LAND IS A WORLDWIDE ORGANIZATION FOUNDED IN 1994 UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE FRANCISCAN CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND. THE FOUNDATION WAS CREATED TO SAFEGUARD THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONTINUED PRESENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN PALESTINIAN MINORITY LIVING IN THE HOLY LAND BY PROVIDING ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS, SUBSIDIZED HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, WHILE PRESERVING AND RESTORING THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

# LETTER FROM THE CUSTOS

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*"Again I tell you, if two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by My Father in heaven. Where two or three of you are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst."*



Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballo, OFM

Matthew 18: 19-20

We have just concluded one of the most joyful times of the year - Christmas, Solemnity of Our Lady and the Epiphany. Together we gathered in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Nazareth and all over the hill country to celebrate in prayer our love, joy and thanksgiving for Jesus' birth.

The prayers of petition from the people here do not seem much different than from the time of the birth of Christ. The present day challenges that our Christian brothers and sisters face are much the same as the people of the 1st century.

As we now enter into the year 2007, we ask you to please help us sustain and give HOPE to the people. Your generosity through praying and your financial support has been an answer to their prayers. You have made a tremendous difference in many lives. Together we can continue to meet the very basic needs of the people. It is through the housing projects, scholarships and helping the young secure jobs that we are strengthening our society. Thank you for your generous heart!

On behalf of the Franciscan Friars of the Holy Land, the Board of Trustees and your Christian Brothers and Sisters thank you for being our partner in this most profound endeavor.

In the spirit of St. Francis, I remain a servant of God and yours,

Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballo, OFM  
Chairman  
The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land

## Where Are They Now?

Jack Amer

This energetic 23 year old graduated from Bethlehem University in 2005 with a BA in accounting while maintaining a solid B average throughout his tenure.

Today Jack is employed in the business/accounting office of the Latin Patriarchate in Jerusalem where he is gaining the much needed training and experience in this field. He plans one day to eventually open up his own accounting firm but is so grateful that he is working in his field.

This young man is very appreciative to the Franciscan Foundation for giving him an opportunity to attend a university so as to obtain a college education. He stated, "If it wasn't for the American Catholics and other Christians, I probably would have emigrated from the Holy Land. But now I have a degree, I have a job, and I have a future!" He asks the American faithful, "to continue to help the young Christians in the Holy Land. They have nowhere to turn and you are giving us an opportunity to better ourselves so as to make sure that there is always a new generation of young Christians to carry on the faith."



## Pride of Indianapolis



The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land is proud to welcome two enthusiastic men to the Advisory Board: William Demaree and Michael LeCuyer, from Indianapolis, Indiana. Ever since their first pilgrimage to the Holy Land in February of 2004 they have whole heartedly supported the mission of the Foundation – to maintain the Christian Presence in the Holy Land.

Mr. Demaree (pictured left) is the VP of Operations/Partner of a local car dealership and Mr. LeCuyer is a regional manager at Dow Chemical in Indianapolis. Although both

have full time jobs and families of their own, they work tirelessly to raise awareness and funds for the Foundation.

Bill and Mike know well the source of their love for these people. Bill recently commented at a local FFHL presentation, "I have such a passion for the works of the Foundation. I always knew I was being called to do some sort of work in another country. After returning to the Holy Land in 2005, I was able to meet and see first hand the true needs of these Christians and I felt right then that I needed to do more. I will never forget a project that we funded to help a family with their housing situation. They had no kitchen counters, bathroom facilities, hot water, sinks, stoves, etc. For a comparably small amount (\$5000.00) we were able to provide these basic needs and give the family a real sense of dignity. I went back and visited that family on my last trip and I will never forget the look in the Mother's eyes while showing me with pride her 400 sq. ft. remodeled house. I was still heart broken while she was joyful for what she now had thanks to the Foundation. This is what keeps me going! I hold a very special place in my heart for these people and the difficulties of life which they endure on a daily basis."

"Both Bill and Mike are dedicated and faith filled Catholics promoting the cause of the marginalized Christians in the Holy Land. They are truly an inspiration and example of how one can become involved in the Foundation," says Richard Sontag, PR Director for the Foundation.



# Pilgrims Host Benefit Dinner in Columbus, Ohio



Sponsor: Abraham and Marling Families



Sponsor: Stonecreek Development, Ltd.



Fr. Peter and Mr. Charles Madden, Board of Trustee for FFHL (lower left), with the Planning Committee for the "Cradling Christianity."

Members of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem along with other pilgrims who traveled to the Holy Land during Holy Week last year were so moved by the plight of the indigenous Christians and how FFHL, through its many programs and projects have helped to stem the Christian exodus, decided to form a core community to help and to assist the work of the Foundation. Bishop Frederick Campbell of the Diocese of Columbus gave his blessing to the "Cradle of Christianity Dinner."

On September 25, 2006, the first benefit dinner was held at the Clarion Hotel in Columbus with Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM as its speaker. Fr. Peter spoke about the conflict that broke out in late June and July 2006 involving the Gaza Strip and Lebanon and how it affected not only the people of that area but how it had affected the Christians living in those areas. He went on to speak about how the Palestinians feel that their history has been confiscated and prevented from telling their side of the story while Israel feels it has the history to prove that this land truly belongs to the Jews.

Major sponsors for the dinner were Stonecreek Development Ltd. and the Abraham and Marling families. Some 120 guests attended the event.

## Holy Land Custodian Emphasizes War's Human Factor -Says All Talk Is of Borders and Territories

JERUSALEM, JAN. 12, 2007 Human life is relegated to a second plane in discussions of the Middle East, warns the Custodian of the Holy Land, while talk of territories and borders dominates the discussion.

Franciscan Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa (Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the FFHL) made these comments on Vatican Radio this month, and expressed gratitude to Benedict XVI for his very close and concrete concern to attract everyone to this reality, which is truly deteriorating and lacerating people's lives."

The Custos referred to the Holy Father's homily Jan. 1, solemnity of Mary, Mother of God and World Day of Peace, in which the Pope highlighted the "dramatic situation that characterizes precisely that land where Jesus was born," and that peace is promoted by respecting the human person.

The Pontiff asked: "In order to be lasting, a peace agreement must be based on respect for the dignity and rights of every person."

Father Pizzaballa said Benedict XVI's emphasis on the person is a "very important

affirmation, especially here, in the Middle East, in the Holy Land, where there is very often talk of borders, areas and territories, but people, perhaps involuntarily, are relegated to the second plane."

"If we thought first of all of the need of the person, of every person, perhaps the solutions would be closer," the Franciscan custodian suggested. The conflict in the Holy Land "involves the lives of all people, Israelis and Palestinians," continued the Franciscan minister provincial in the Middle East. He

*(continued on page 15)*

# FFHL Awards Ten University Scholarship Grants for 2006-2007

This past May another ten Christian students were chosen by the Selection Committee of FFHL's Scholarship Grant Program to receive a full four year college education which pays for both tuition and books. These ten students were sponsored by individual donors and institutions from the United States.

Fr. Pizzaballa, Chairman of FFHL, expressed appreciation towards those donors who have so graciously and generously given a unique opportunity to the young Christians in the Holy Land. He went on to say, "Without a college education our young Christians would be unable to secure professional positions in the Holy Land. And without securing professional employment they would continue to leave the country. These young men and women are the future of Christianity in the Holy Land."

Fr. Abdel-Masih, OFM, and Chairman of the Selection Committee expressed the fact "that FFHL has given over 130 college scholarships worth over \$1.3 million dollars and the dividends are paying off. More and more of these graduates have now decided to stay in the country."



**Mireille Assi**

Mireille was born in Jerusalem and presently resides there with her parents and three brothers and sisters. She is attending Hebrew University in Jerusalem majoring in dentistry. Her sponsor is the Holy Sepulchre Region, Kansas City, Kansas.



**Irene Salameh**

Irene was born in Jerusalem and has two older brothers and sisters who are all residing with her parents. She is attending Hebrew University in Jerusalem and majors in science. Her sponsor is Mr. and Mrs. Sam Skaggs of California.



**Joseph Goric**

Joseph, a Syrian Orthodox Christian, with two older brothers was born in Jerusalem. In order to help his family he deferred his higher education for two years and is now going to Haifa University and majoring in mechanical engineering. His sponsor is St. Vincent Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana.



**Basma Abboud**

Basma was born in Shefa'amer in the Galilee region. She is Greek Catholic and lives with her parents and two younger brothers. She attends Hebrew University in Jerusalem and majors in psychology. Her sponsor is the "Bishop John J. Nevins Scholarship Grant," Venice, Florida



**Issa Karra**

Issa was born in Bethlehem and has an older brother and younger sisters. He is living with his parents while attending Bir Zeit University in Jerusalem majoring in business administration. His sponsor is Mr. and Mrs. Sam Skaggs of California.



**Ramez Hanania**

Ramez was born in Bethlehem and lives with his parents, four sisters and two brothers. He will attend Bethlehem University, majoring in business administration. He is sponsored by the Holy Week Pilgrimage Group 2006.



**Nicola Stephan**

Nicola was born in Santiago, Chile in 1988 and moved with his parents to the Holy Land and more specifically to Beit-Jala, a suburb of Bethlehem in 1994. He has an older brother and is attending Bir Zeit University in Jerusalem majoring in mechanical engineering. His sponsor is Rev. Robert Cadrecha of Brandon, Florida.



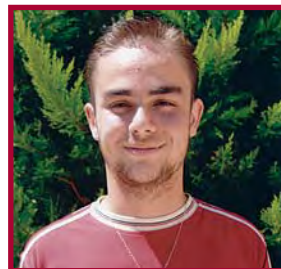
**Said Zarzar**

Said was born in Bethlehem and resides with his parents, three older brothers and one younger sister. He is attending Bethlehem University majoring in languages. He is sponsored by the Holy Week Pilgrimage Group 2006.



**Jeries Al Hihi**

Jeries was born in Beit-Jala, a suburb of Bethlehem and has three sisters and one brother. He is attending Bir Zeit University in Jerusalem and majors in engineering. His sponsor is the Gillooly Family of Colorado.



**Joseph Safar**

Joseph was born in Bethlehem where he lives with his one brother and his parents. He is attending Bethlehem University majoring in law. His sponsor is Juanita Austin of California.

# Father Peter Takes the Holy Land Message to Elementary & High Schools



Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM was invited to speak at Bishop Watterson Catholic High School, known for its academics and community services, in Columbus, Ohio. The entire student body, some 1200 students including their teachers, attended the Mass celebrated by Fr. Peter. In his address, Fr. Peter first spoke about the 800 year old Franciscan presence in the Holy Land and the works and ministries that the friars have been doing there. He later spoke of the Christian exodus, its causes and solutions together with a description of the Separation Wall and the

negatives effects it has had on the youth.

He stated, "Unlike most of the American youth, the young Christian Palestinians, who are like any other young teenager, face many problems in their lives. For example, if they live outside the West Bank they cannot attend a high school of their choice let alone a college outside the West Bank even though they received a letter of acceptance from that school. They cannot attend a baptism, a wedding or a funeral of their brother or sister if the brother or sister happens to live outside the West Bank." He went on to say, "It is a fact that thousands of young Christians who were born in Bethlehem or other Palestinian towns and are natives of the Holy Land, still have never seen nor visited Jerusalem because of Israeli governmental policies." Fr. Peter asked the student body how they would react if this happened to them?

He then pointed out to the students how fortunate they were and how they could make a difference. How they, by their motivations, intelligence and resources, could make things happen! Fr. Peter proposed that the Bishop Watterson High School adopt some type of program to help their fellow Palestinian teenagers in the Holy Land such as a Walk-a-thon for Christians, a Golf Tournament or a Christmas Fund Drive. They would not only give hope to their Christian counterparts in the Holy Land but would send a message that young Americans, with their zeal and resources can play an important part in maintaining the Christian presence in the Holy Land.

The address was carried live on the local radio station and Bethlehem bookmarks were given to the student body. Mrs. Hutson thanked Fr. Peter for coming to Columbus and for the very informative speech to the students. She went on to say, "We do plan to take up a project for the youth of the Holy Land so that the young Christians will know that we care." Fr. Peter was then presented with a check from the school.

Fr. Peter then went to Our Lady of Peace Elementary School and spoke to the middle school students. Following are some of the letters he received in response to his visit.

Dear Father Peter,

I am a sixth grade student at Our Lady of Peace School. When you came to visit us I learned that there was so much more going on in the Holy Land than I thought. For one, I had no idea about the wall that separated the Jewish from the Palestinians. I don't know what being a Franciscan Priest would be like.

I hope that someday I will visit the Holy Land and see where Jesus was born and where he died.

I just want to thank you for coming to our school and teaching about Israel.

Sincerely,

Sam

Dear Father Peter,

When you came to talk to us about the Holy Land I was very inspired. I know I needed to do something to help. I especially think it's unfair that they built a wall across Israel. I was amazed how long and tall it was. I thank you for telling us this because I didn't know this was happening in the Holy Land. I think we need to defend the other Christians that need our help.

Your friend,

Marlee



Fr. Peter with the Student Council of Bishop Watterson High School and their Principal, Mrs. Hutson.

Dear Father Peter,

Thank you, for telling me all about the problems in the Holy Land. It really helped me understand more about it. I also realized how much God blesses us in America. The wall doesn't let people be free and we're very blessed to not have a government like that. The thing that really touched me is that less than 2% of people are Christian. What I'll do to try to help is pray and send money.

Sincerely,

Vin

# Dallas Hosts Tenth Annual Dinner for FFHL

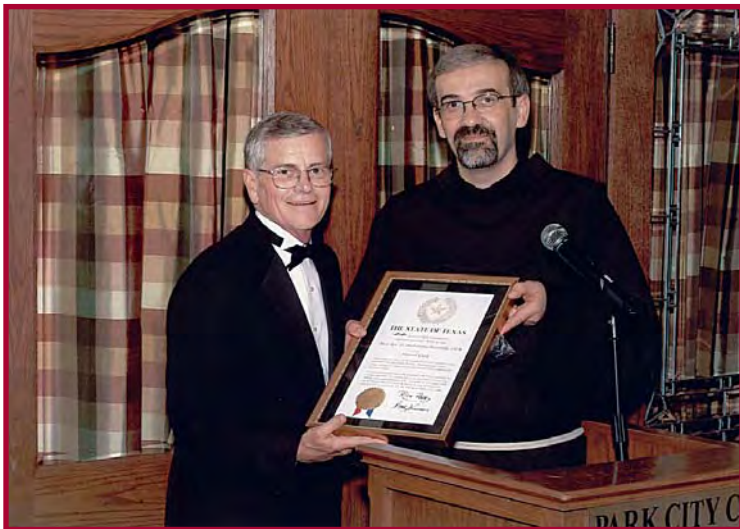
Over 200 Dallas guests and supporters attended the Tenth Annual Dinner benefiting the Custody's Foundation on September 7, 2006 at the Park City Club in Dallas, Texas.



Attending Prelates: Bishop Charles V. Grahmann, Dallas Diocese; Archbishop Pietro Sambì, Apostolic Nuncio to the U.S.; Fr. Pizzaballa, Custos and Chairman of FFHL; Bishop Kevin W. Vann, Ft. Worth Diocese; Bishop John J. Nevins, Venice, FL Diocese; Msgr. Donald F. Zimmerman, Pastor, Christ the King Parish in Dallas

Fr. Pizzaballa, Custos and Chairman of FFHL, opened the event by welcoming everyone and stated, "Because of you and like-minded Catholics and Christians around this great country of America, your generosity has given and will continue to give hope for the Christians in the Holy Land." He went on to say how the Custody's Foundation has been so successful in making a difference by providing much needed programs which have in turn motivated our Christians to remain. He stated that these programs have produced 'positive results'.

"Out of the last four classes graduating from college, some 65% of these students now have jobs as professional dentists, pharmacists, engineers, architects, businessmen and educators." In addition to the 130 students who are being given a college education, FFHL is also helping to provide supplemental funding for new apartments. Over \$1,000,000.00



has already been allocated by the Foundation.

The keynote speaker was His Excellency, Archbishop Pietro Sambì, DD, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States who gave an impassioned talk on the spiritual richness of the Holy Sites of Christianity in the Holy Land and why people must seek out those spiritual treasures through a pilgrimage.

"These Holy Sites," said Archbishop Sambì, "are in a way the 'stage props' of our redemption. To be at the place of the Incarnation in Nazareth at the Church of the Annunciation, to be at the site where Jesus Christ our Savior was born in Bethlehem at the Church of the Nativity, to be on Calvary...at the very place where Jesus was crucified and where He died for our sins, to pray in the very tomb where Christ resurrected are places that can only permeate and enrich one's very being."

He went on to say though, "These Holy Places cannot simply stand by themselves. They need a living worshipping community and that community is slowly dying." He suggested that this is one of the reasons why fellow Christians around the world must come on pilgrimage to the Holy Land...to be of moral support to their local brothers and sisters.



Fr. Pizzaballa presents the award to Archbishop Pietro Sambì, DD, as officers and Board Members look on. (L to R - Fr. Vasko, Fr. Custos, Archbishop Sambì, Ms. Scalzo, V.P. of FFHL, Mrs. Susan Stanzel, and Mrs. Rachel Trowbridge (not pictured), Co-Dinner Chairpersons

After a standing ovation in response to the Archbishop Sambì talk, Fr. Pizzaballa Chairman of FFHL, Fr. Peter Vasko, President of FFHL and Denise Scalzo, Vice-President of FFHL presented the prestigious "Guardian of the Holy Land Award" to the Apostolic Nuncio. The award reads as follows: **"A recognition given to individuals who have not only demonstrated an outstanding love of God in their personal life, but have held up the truth, the reality, the faith, and the hopes of the Holy Land...individuals who have placed themselves in the hands of God and have allowed their gifts and energies to be consumed for those in need."** After receiving the award, Archbishop Sambì thanked the Foundation for all the wonderful work that they are doing for the Holy Land.

Mr. Thomas Craddick, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of Texas (pictured left), then called upon Fr. Pizzaballa and presented, on behalf of the Governor of Texas, a proclamation honoring his first visit to Texas. With a warm applause, Fr. Custos accepted the proclamation.

# Msgr. Zimmerman of Dallas Received the Gold Cross of Honor

The Right Reverend Donald F. Zimmerman, Pastor of Christ the King Catholic Church in Dallas, was recently presented the Pope Leo XIII Gold Cross of Honor by Fr. Pierbattista Pizzaballa for the great work and support that he has given to FFHL. Those present at the ceremony were His Excellency, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, DD, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, His Excellency, Bishop John J. Nevins, DD Bishop Emeritus of the Venice Diocese, Honorable and Mrs. William F. Hartnett, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Stanzel and Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM.



Honorary Chairman for the FFHL Benefit Dinner - Mr. and Mrs. John Albers

Among the honored guests were Most Reverend Charles V. Grahmann, DD Bishop of Dallas, Most Reverend Kevin W. Vann, DD Bishop of Ft. Worth, Most Reverend John J. Nevins, DD Bishop of Venice, Honorable Thomas Craddick, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the State of Texas, Dr. Francis M. Lazarus, President, The University of Dallas, Rev. Mitch Pacwa, S.J. Television Host, EWTN.

The evening ended with Benediction given by His Excellency, Bishop Vann of Ft. Worth.



(L-R) Bishop John Nevins, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, Msgr. Donald Zimmerman, and Fr. Pizzaballa

## FFHL Welcomes Two New Regional Representatives

### Michael Kane - Georgia

Before entering the Financial Planning profession, Mike served as an officer in the U.S. Navy and holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Mt. Saint Mary's College. He completed graduate work at George Washington University School of Business.

Mike served as a member of the board of directors of The Buckhead Coalition for 12 years. He is a member of the Buckhead Rotary, an affiliate of Rotary International. To keep current on changes in the financial services industry, he is an active member of the Society of Financial Services Professionals (SFSP) and the Association for Advanced Life Underwriting (AALU).

- National Management Award (12 years)
- Million-Dollar Round Table Qualifying Member
- Edward A. Phillips Award for Outstanding Citizenship (1994)

- "Who's Who in Buckhead" - Atlanta Business Chronicle (1999)

Charity and volunteerism play an important role in Mike's life. He is past Chairman of the Atlanta Community Food Bank. He serves on the Parish Council of St. Andrew Catholic Church and is past Chairman of its Parish Finance Committee. Mike is also the President of Mt. Saint Mary's alumni chapter in Atlanta.

Mike resides in Roswell, Georgia with his wife and daughter. He enjoys running and playing tennis.



### Kate Asselin – New Jersey

Born and raised in New York, Kate now lives in New Jersey, but returns whenever possible to the Adirondack Mountains she loves. Educated at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Chicago, Kate also attended Loyola University's Institute for Pastoral Studies. Her career in higher education has led her to Seton Hall

University (South Orange, NJ) where she is currently Senior Director of Administration for University Advancement. A Secular Franciscan, Kate serves as Treasurer of Most Holy Name Fraternity and as a Eucharistic Minister at Our Lady of the Holy Angels Franciscan parish (Little Falls, NJ), where she is also involved in ministries of loss and healing. Inspired by the film *Crisis in the Holy Land*, Kate seeks to serve the Church and live out her Franciscan calling to be an instrument of peace by helping to advance the mission of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land.

# FFHL Partners with Friend Ships Unlimited



In the latter part of October 2006, Friend Ships Unlimited, a humanitarian relief organization that delivers food, clothes, medicine and other emergency relief to those in need along with MADP, an Israeli company, partnered with FFHL to bring 77 pallets of furniture including beds, mattresses, desks, couches, chests of drawers, kitchen tables and chairs as well as 2 pallets of diapers for Christian mothers and 2 pallets of toys for the children for distribution to the marginalized Christians in the Holy Land.

The articles were stockpiled in the schoolyard of St. James Parish in Beit Hanina, a suburb of Jerusalem, where for two days in December of 2006 they were distributed to needy Christian families. Hundreds of Christian families came from Bethlehem, Jericho and Jerusalem to pick out their needed items. They were assisted by the U.S. Marine Detachment assigned to the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem,



# Bringing Humanitarian Aid to Christians

who not only opened hundreds of pallets but lifted items off the pallets and carried them to designated areas for the families.

Needless to say, smiles of appreciation and thanks radiated from the faces of these Christian families as pre-Christmas gifts were given to them. This whole event was made possible by the generosity of the thousands of friends and supporters of the Franciscan Foundation. Fr. Peter said in a local news interview, "Because of the generosity of Catholic and Christian benefactors in the U.S. needy Christian families will now have a decent bed in which to sleep, families will now have a kitchen table and chairs to gather around during their meals, Christian children will now have toys for Christmas and young Christian mothers will now have diapers for their babies. And for this, we are most thankful."



# FFHL Gives \$400,000 for Housing and Educational Scholarships



Ms. Denise Scalzo, SFO and Vice President of FFHL, presented a check for \$200,000.00 to Fr. Pizzaballa, Chairman of FFHL, to be put toward new housing for the Christians in the Holy Land (pictured above). Ms. Scalzo is presently the Vice-President for Development for Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, California and one of the founding members of the Custody's Foundation.

In her presentation Ms. Scalzo expressed

how "so many committed Christians in the United States still consider it a privilege to be able to support their Palestinian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land by providing funds and in this case for new housing which is so important for the basic needs of every family." Fr. Pizzaballa thanked her for the work that FFHL continues to do by giving the Christians in the Holy Land new hope for the future.

An additional check for \$200,000.00 was presented to Fr. Pizzaballa by Fr. Peter Vasko, President of FFHL, for new child sponsorship programs as well as for new college scholarship grants for the year 2006.

In presenting the check to Fr. Custos and to Fr. Abdel-Masih who is the Chairman of FFHL's Selection Committee and Comptroller of the Franciscan Custody (pictured right), Fr. Peter stated how important it was to provide

our Christians with a college education. It will give them an opportunity to better themselves and to become professionals in their fields. Fr. Custos thanked Fr. Peter and the Board of Trustees for making such great strides in their goal of slowly but surely stemming the Christian emigration.



# Indianapolis Hosts First Benefit Dinner



"Reach out to the people from your heart!" encouraged Monsignor Guido August Maria Gockel, M.H.M. (pictured above), Assistant Secretary General for the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA) and Keynote speaker for the first annual fundraising dinner held at the Five Seasons Country Club on Indianapolis' north side September 22, 2006. Fr. Gockel spoke from his personal experience about some heart wrenching incidents while working in Jerusalem. "The Christians there in the birthplace of Christ do not want to be forgotten!"

Monsignor went on to say, "After all we are, in the words of St. Paul 'not fighting flesh and blood', we are not fighting Israelites

or Muslims. The worst that could happen to us in these conflicts is 'when we allow our hearts to be wounded by hatred towards them.' Unfortunately a lot of Christian leaders today are contributing towards intolerance and hatred, but that is not Christ-like! Jesus has left us the key to peace: 'reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.' This peace is our vocation, our calling. The Christian people in the Holy Land are facing the same crisis of faith that our Lord suffered, 'my God, my God, why have you abandoned me?' We cannot take away their suffering, but we can stand by them, and strengthen them in their faith by showing them our love — through pilgrimages, prayers, personal contacts and financial support. Let love inspire you how to love them!"

Bishop Thomas Paprocki, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago (pictured right) and a recent pilgrim opened the event with the invocation. He too encouraged the 150 people attending to make that spiritual journey to the Holy Land "because it will change your life

forever."

The dinner and accompanying silent auction were a great success thanks to the host committee: Regional Representative, Mike Hirsch, Regional Advisors, Bill Demaree and Mike LeCuyer, Public Relations Director, Richard Sontag and Lady Mary Jeanne McKeon of the Equestrian Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. The fundraiser for the Foundation raised over \$50,000.

Major sponsors of the evening were: Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Durlle, Mr. & Mrs. William Conwell, Mr. & Mrs. Dave Kinder, St. John Vianny Parish, Rev. Donald Eder, Mr. & Mrs.

*(continued on page 11)*



Dr. Khoury is a well known and much revered Christian Palestinian physician in the Middle East and especially in Jerusalem. After finishing college, Dr. Khoury attended medical school at the Ecole Jesuite in Beirut, Lebanon in 1945. A year later he studied general surgery at the Royal College of Surgery in Edinburgh and London. He then spent a year and a half studying at the Institute of Urology in London. In 1986, Dr. Khoury became the Director of St. Joseph's Hospital in Jerusalem and resides there with his wife and four children.

## 1. Dr. Khoury, can you describe what it is like being a Christian physician, working in a Catholic hospital in a non-Christian country?

I am quite content being a Christian and working in a Catholic hospital serving Christians and non-Christians alike. I'm especially happy to help the many non-Christians whom I have gotten to know over these many years, many of whom have been under my medical care. In medicine, religion plays no favorites.

## 2. What is the greatest obstacle that you face in delivering quality medical care to anyone who needs it?

Generally speaking, the greatest obstacle seems to be in the area of updating our medical equipment with new machines and new technology so that we can better diagnosis our patients and at the same time provide them with new and improved medical treatment.

## 3. Do the other local hospitals like Hadassah, etc. take referrals from you?

Generally speaking they do, but like anything else these transactions have to be properly organized. Contacts are always within the personal sphere and referrals are always done by the physicians themselves.

## 4. Is it difficult to recruit good doctors for the hospital?

No, it is not difficult to recruit good doctors but the choice of 'good' physicians is unfortunately restricted both in numbers and in technological experience.

## 5. Do you have volunteer physicians that come to help?

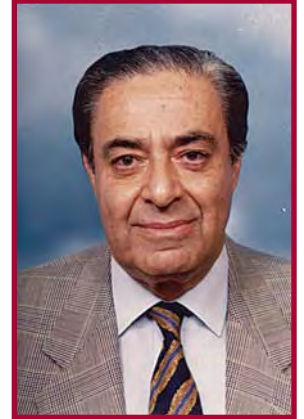
On occasion we do accept physicians from other countries who stay for 3-6 months. It also depends on how much funding the hospital can lay out for their stay with us. Many times we ask other charitable institutes to assist the hospital financially to make up any deficits. In any case, we are always open to competent and dedicated physicians.

## 6. How do you feel about the Palestinians that are living in the territories and are unable to reach a hospital for medical emergencies?

I feel a bit depressed about it because every time I am approached by someone living in the territories or the West Bank wishing to come to our hospital for treatment they have to first obtain a preliminary paper from us stating that we accept them. Then they have to go the military authorities asking for a permit for them to pass into Jerusalem. Some get the permits while others do not and it has had some horrific consequences for those needing emergency medical assistance.

## 7. What about the future generations of physicians--are there any opportunities for young scholars to follow in your footsteps?

I am sure there will be some opportunities for new physicians but not many for future Palestinian Christian physicians who tend to study in other parts of the world and generally do not come back to the Holy Land. We also have to remember that many Christian families left the country in 1948 leaving a void. Let us always remember that Christians have always been a minority within a minority.



(continued from page 10)

Tony Loyd, Mr. & Mrs. Carter Hofmeister, and Mr. & Mrs. Keenan Hauke.

Fr. Peter Vasko, President of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land closed the evening saying, "Because of you and like-minded Catholics and Christians around this great country of America, your generosity has given and will continue to give hope to the young Christians for their future in the Holy Land."

"Lastly, I would ask that each of you continue to pray for the conflict in the Holy Land and its surrounding region and especially for those innocent lives that were taken in the last conflict in Lebanon. As Christians we must be voices of moderation and mediation for others. It will only be through justice, peace, and security that we will eventually see a change in that land. Pray that one day, that reality will come true. In the meantime, let us always be God's instruments of peace, joy, and hope to others and especially to our Christians who are so often forgotten."



Fr. Peter shares his love for the Holy Land with a guest from the dinner.

# Christmas Story of Bethlehem

Once again, through the generosity of the supporters of FFHL, Christmas gifts were distributed to over 900 children living in the town of Bethlehem.

Mrs. Faith Libbe, Regional Representative for FFHL, who began this program several years ago, resides in Castleberry, Florida. Every year she and hundreds of donors from around the U.S. contribute to this Christmas Appeal. This year, St. Peter's Catholic Church, in Washington DC, greatly assisted financially in raising the needed \$12,000.00 to buy gifts for the children. "To be able to see a little child smile, to be able to bring some small joy to their otherwise dismal life," said Mrs. Libbe, "is surely worth all the effort that is involved in raising these funds."

The event was divided into two days, where over 900 children received numerous Christmas gifts. The event took place at Terra Sancta School in Bethlehem, a school operated by the Franciscan Custody. After a lively Christmas show, children from the age of 6-12 years old were taken to the various classrooms where 'Santa Claus' began distributing the gifts as Fr. Marwan Dides, OFM, Principal of the school and Fr. Peter Vasko, President of FFHL looked on. Fr. Marwan expressed his profound appreciation and thanks to the Christians of the U.S. who by their generosity continue to make this a yearly event. "Giving gifts at Christmas is a joyful encounter but the gift of seeing the beaming eyes of these little marginalized children as they open their presents," said Fr. Marwan, "is truly a gift from God."

At the same time, these Christmas gifts were also given to the Franciscan Family Center in Bethlehem whose budget is funded by FFHL and managed by Sister Maria Grech, the Executive Director of the Center (pictured at right). Sr. Maria was overjoyed by seeing the number of Christmas gifts and wanted to thank all those American donors who participated in this wonderful program and especially St. Peter's Church and Mrs. Libbe who, along with FFHL, began this Christmas program. "Those donors who gave to this program," said Sr. Maria, "not only have given joy to God's 'little ones' this Holy Season but has given them renewed hope that people really do care." She went on to say, "God has a special place in His heart for those who remember the children of this world."



# Children Benefit from Music Scholarship Grants

Two scholarship grants were given to two Christian Palestinian families at the *Magnificat Institute* in Jerusalem. The first grant was given to Sasha (pictured bottom left) and her brother Samer Sifri. Sasha is 8 years old and won first prize in her category of 4-9 years of age during the Seventh Piano Competition Program called "Carlo Tavasani". Her brother Samer, who is 14 years old, won second prize in the category of "Young Pianists"; he played the first movement of the Sonata "Pathetique" by Beethoven (pictured top right).

The second grant was given to the Shemmessian family for their one son and three daughters. Vahan, Narine, Yeran and Roupina are now studying music at the *Magnificat Institute* (pictured bottom right).

Vahan is studying violin; Narine and Yeran are studying piano and Roupina, who is six years old, will be studying flute.

For both of these families it has been difficult to support the musical studies of their talented children but it has been only through the generosity of the donors of FFHL that have given these young Christian children an opportunity to use their God given musical talent for the future.



## EWTN Special on the Holy Land

In July 2006, EWTN television production company spent several weeks shooting a special ten part mini-series on the Holy Land in conjunction with FFHL.

Each series has four parts: an explanation of the Holy Sites of Christendom; interviews with local Christians, both clergy and laity; history and issues regarding the Holy Land and the programs and projects undertaken by FFHL to help stem the Christian exodus.

**The mini-series will be airing in March 2007. Please check our website ([www.ffhl.org](http://www.ffhl.org)) for updates on the days and times.**

*EWTN interviewing Fr. Pizzaballa for the new television special on the Holy Land.*



Whenever Jesus came to Jerusalem, he stayed at the home of his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus in Bethany, on the opposite side of the Mount of Olives from the Holy City. Jerusalem can't be seen from Bethany which gave Jesus a sense of quietness and seclusion. While visiting the home of Simon the Leper, Mary anointed Jesus with expensive perfume (John 12:1-8). There are many rock-cut tombs in the area, and one is identified as the place where Lazarus was laid to rest before Jesus raised him from the dead.

The ancient Bethany is the present day Arab village of El Azariya situated on the Eastern slope of the Mount of Olives not far from Jerusalem. The population of the village was predominately Christian until the 20th century when many Moslem residents, especially from Hebron, were drawn to it.

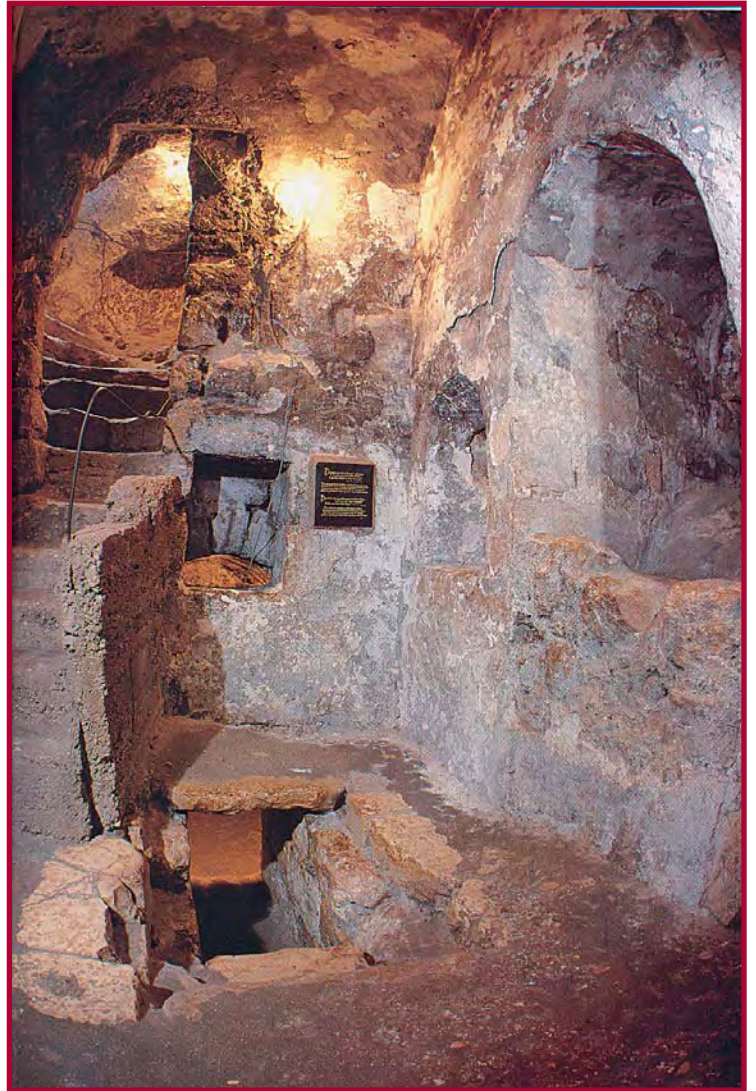
Prior to the building of the church, the site was excavated and remnants of a fourth century church were found. Its apse can be seen inside the new church, and part of its mosaic floor, which includes geometric designs, is in the courtyard. This early church was destroyed by an earthquake and rebuilt in the sixth century on a larger scale. It was in use until the time of the Crusaders, who restored it and reinforced it with buttresses. The foundation of the sixth century church was incorporated into the modern church.

The Church of Lazarus, built over a grotto where visitors may see a chamber commonly known as the "Tomb of Lazarus", is a modern construction from the 1950's.

Completed according to the design of the Italian architect Antonio Barluzzi, it is built in the form of a Greek Cross, crowned by a low dome supported on a polygonal tambour and flanked by a graceful bell tower.

The decorations in the lunettes, by G. Vagarini, represent the conversation of Martha and Mary with Jesus, the Feast of Bethany in the House of Simon the Leper, and Jesus Resuscitating Lazarus.

A stairway cut in the live limestone rock leads to an underground chamber; this is the so-called Tomb of Lazarus, the scene of one of the most acclaimed miracles performed by Jesus in the Holy Land.



## Texas Representative Receives Gold Cross of Honor

During a recent visit to the Holy Land, the Honorable Will F. Hartnett, State Representative for Texas, was presented the Pope Leo XIII, Gold Cross of Honor. The papal recognition is given to those individuals who not only have a great love of the Holy Land but are extremely supportive of the work in the Holy Land. The presentation was made by Fr. Pizzaballa, Custos and Chairman of FFHL to Representative Hartnett for his philanthropic undertakings towards the Foundation.



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# 30ft High Jerusalem Wall Bars Pilgrims' Way

Pilgrims wishing to follow in the footsteps of Jesus to Jerusalem from the place where he raised Lazarus from the dead will now need their own miracle, as the ancient route is severed by the Jerusalem wall. The cutting of the two-mile path from Bethany over the Mount of Olives and down past the Garden of Gethsemane into the Old City will end a tradition begun more than 1,600 years ago by the earliest Christian pilgrims.

"It is a great pity because we are all children of God," said Fr Eugenio Alliata, a Franciscan professor of Christian archaeology. "To place a wall between two peoples who share the same connection with God is a backward step," he added, before hitching up his cassock and crawling through a gap in the wall.

"This is a place of great historical value, not just to Christians but to Jews as well," he said. "The human cost for the Palestinian people who are forced to live behind the wall is enormous."

The 30ft-high grey slabs of the wall loom above the site revered as the place where Jesus performed the miracle of Lazarus, as shown in the Gospel of St John. John describes how word of the miracle, which took place days before the crucifixion, spread to Jerusalem and many Jews walked the short distance from the city to see for themselves what had happened. Exactly the same route was already being used by 4th-century Christians who traveled in large numbers to Bethany, then named Lazarium in honor of Lazarus, for a service on the second Sunday before Easter.

Archaeological evidence shows that Bethany, east of Jerusalem beyond the Mount of Olives, was a thriving Jewish village at the time when Jesus stayed there on the way to his crucifixion. Evidence of ancient homes with ceremonial Jewish bathing cisterns was found when the wall was being erected in the area. The route of the wall was hastily diverted to protect the Jewish artifacts.

Today Bethany is a Palestinian town. Its large Arab population means that it lies beyond territorial boundaries envisaged by Israel. So Bethany and the other large Palestinian communities are left outside the wall, which follows a spiky route around eastern Jerusalem including any large Jewish community but excluding any large Palestinian one. The wall forms part of a much longer separation barrier erected roughly along the edge of the West Bank territory conquered in the six-day war of 1967.

Thousands of pilgrims used to make the short drive from Jerusalem to Lazarus's tomb but the wall now requires an hour-long diversion. When the border is formalized, pilgrims will have to cross an international frontier.

"Thousands used to come here every month and there was a good living for people selling postcards or polishing shoes," said Mohammed Hamed, the caretaker at the Franciscan chapel next to Lazarus's tomb. "But now we see maybe one bus a day. It is the end of our livelihood."

The wall has made life extremely difficult for thousands of Bethany's residents who used to commute easily into Jerusalem for work and to visit the shops.

The land between Bethany and the Mount of Olives is so sacred for Christians that it is owned by a series of religious communities, including an order of Greek Orthodox monks and a Roman Catholic nunnery. One route favored by Palestinians jumping the wall cuts straight across the grounds of a convent and it is possible to see where an old cement wall has been rubbed smooth by the backsides of people dodging the patrols.

By Tim Butcher Reporter for *Telegraph*

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*(continued from page 3)*

added: "Objectively, the Palestinians suffer more than any one else, because of the economic situation, the internal divisions and the absence of a state. "But violence also strikes the Israelis indirectly: It is a situation that really exhausts the lives of almost all the families of this country."

Benedict XVI turned his attention again to the Middle East in his address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See, in which he referred to the region as a "source of great concerns."

The Pope added: "I renew my urgent appeal to all parties involved in the region's complex political chessboard, with the hope that they will consolidate the positive signs between Israelis and Palestinians, witnessed

in recent weeks. The Holy See will never tire of repeating that armed solutions achieve nothing."

Father Pizzaballa, in comments to SIR news agency of the Italian episcopate, said that "the Pope's appeals for a just and peaceful solution of the conflicts in this land, as well as for the conditions of Christians living here, are stronger than ever."

"It is a warning to the international community to mobilize urgently. The Pope reminded that peace in the world is also linked to the solution of conflicts in the Middle East."

The custodian added: "It is true that there are timid signs of dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians, but they are still too

lukewarm. The situation continues to be tense and the crisis also seems to be extending to countries of the region, such as Iran. "If a radical change in direction is not detected, the crisis might degenerate. The Pope has understood this well and always reminds us of it."

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# Pilgrimages to Benefit the Work of the Franciscan Foundation

Join us on a pilgrimage of faith:

- April 26 - May 6, 2007, Pilgrimage to the Holy Land
- June 12-23, 2007, "In the Footsteps of St. Paul" – Pilgrimage to Turkey and Greece
- July 18-29, 2007, Marian Shrines - Fatima Spain, Lourdes led by Bishop Thomas Paprocki, Chicago
- September 25 - October 5, 2007, Pilgrimage to the Holy Land
- October 11-22, 2007, Marian Shrines - Fatima Spain, Lourdes (90th Anniversary with Pope Benedict XVI in Fatima)
- November 5-15, 2007, Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

These pilgrimages exploring the Holy Land and Europe will provide an opportunity to open a new chapter in your own faith journey and your own response to God's generous grace. **Now is the time to reach out in support of our Palestinian Christians. Your presence can make a difference.**



*A recent pilgrimage group from Indianapolis, IN led by Msgr. Paul Koetter pose in front of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*

For information or to receive a brochure call toll free (866) 905-3787 or visit our website at [www.ffhl.org/pilgrimages.asp](http://www.ffhl.org/pilgrimages.asp).



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