



FRANCISCAN FOUNDATION

FOR THE HOLY LAND

Theodore Cardinal McCarrick Named New Honorary Chairman

His Eminence, Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, DD, former Archbishop of Washington, DC, has graciously accepted the invitation to succeed His Eminence, Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua, former Archbishop of Philadelphia, as the new Honorary Chairman of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. The transition took place at a dinner meeting of the FFHL Board of Trustees in Philadelphia this past March.

In accepting this post, Cardinal McCarrick expressed his gratitude and appreciation for the leadership given by his predecessor, Cardinal Bevilacqua to FFHL over these many years and would attempt to continue with the legacy to help FFHL in its goals.

"I have," said Cardinal McCarrick, "spent a good amount of time in the Middle East seeing and observing the problems facing our Christian people. If we do not help them, who will? We hope to continue to make that 'difference' with this wonderful Franciscan Foundation."

Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick was born in New York City on July 7, 1930, to Theodore and Margaret McLaughlin McCarrick. He was ordained to the priesthood by Francis Cardinal Spellman on May 31, 1958 and earned a Ph.D. in Sociology from The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. His first assignment was at Catholic University, where he served as Assistant Chaplain, Dean of Students and Director of Development. In 1965, he was named president of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico in Ponce. In 1969, he returned to New York to serve first as Associate Secretary for Education and then as Secretary to Terence Cardinal Cooke.

Named an Auxiliary Bishop of New York in 1977, he served as Vicar of East Manhattan and the Harlems. In 1981, Pope John Paul II appointed him the first Bishop of Metuchen, a newly-established diocese in New Jersey and as Archbishop of Newark in 1986. On January 3, 2001, he was installed as



Archbishop of Washington, a position he held until May 2006. On February 21, 2001, he was elevated to the College of Cardinals.

Cardinal McCarrick is past chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committees on Domestic Policy, International Policy, Migration, and Aid to the Church in Central and Eastern Europe. He also has served on the Administrative, Doctrine, Laity, Latin America and Missions committees. He has been Chancellor of The Catholic University of America and Chairman

of the Board of Trustees of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. He serves on the Board of Directors of Catholic Relief Services. For the Vatican, he serves on the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples and Pontifical Commission for Latin America. He was one of 15 U.S. bishops elected to serve as a member of the 1997 Synod for America and on the Post Synodal Council. He is a founding member of the Papal Foundation and has served as its President since 1997.

Cardinal McCarrick has visited many nations as a human rights advocate and to survey humanitarian needs, including China, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, the Philippines, South Korea, Rwanda and Eastern Europe. In 1996, then-Archbishop McCarrick was invited to serve on the Secretary of State's Advisory Committee on Religious Freedom Abroad. In 1998, he was one of three American clerics invited to China to discuss religious freedoms in that country. From 1999 to 2001, he was a member of the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom. In 2000, he was honored by the Presidents of Lebanon and of the United States for his work on human rights, just two of many honors he has received.

Cardinal McCarrick speaks five languages: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

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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, PROTECTING, AND RESTORING THE CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE.

LETTER FROM THE CUSTOS

"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access (by faith) to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us".



Fr. Pierbattista Pizzabala, OFM

Romans 5: 1-5

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The passages that you read above were divinely inspired and written by St. Paul to the Romans. It is easy to read but difficult to understand, especially the line about boasting of our afflictions. Certainly your Christian Palestinian brothers and sisters are challenged each day by these words; endurance, proven character and hope. Know that we the Franciscans and the Palestinian Christians are so grateful to you for your prayerful support which shows us your proven character and provides us with great hope. We know affliction provides endurance as all here have felt this in this most Holy Land. We are also so grateful for your continued financial support.

Your generosity has provided for housing, education, jobs and the basic needs of so many people. We could not do this without you. Please be assured of our prayers for you each day. And please pray for us in the land where Jesus Christ was born, died and resurrected.

Pax et bonum,

Fr. Pierbattista Pizzabala, OFM

Chairman

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land

Where Are They Now?

Grace Jilleh

Ever since her teenage years Grace Jilleh desired to become a dentist, yet she knew later on that because of her family's limited income, she would not be able to attend college. But, God had other plans for her and in her senior years she heard about FFHL's College Scholarship program and made application. She was selected to receive a full four year scholarship paid for by Mr. and Mrs. Sam Skaggs of California.



Initially attending Nablus University, she switched to American University in Jenin in the West Bank. She graduated in 2006 with a degree in Dentistry and is presently in residency at the AlaMi Dental Center in Jerusalem. She is ecstatic about reaching her goal! Grace comes from a family of six children and her father and mother are so proud of her. "Grace," her father said, "was always a bright and determined young lady and when she received the scholarship we were all so very proud!"

In a brief interview with Grace, she expressed her gratitude for being given an opportunity to become a professional person. "It is because of the Franciscans and their foundation", she said, "that many young Christians like myself were given a 'once in a lifetime' chance to go to college when so many cannot afford it."

"I cannot thank FFHL and Mr. and Mrs. Skaggs enough for all that they are doing to keep the young Christians in the Holy Land. We are finally seeing that we indeed do have a future over here. Lastly, I would like to encourage all of our Christian brothers and sisters in the U.S. to continue to help us. For without a college education, we will have no future."

New Music Scholarship for Magnificat Institute

A music scholarship grant of \$3,000 was presented to Fr. Armando Pierucci, OFM Director of Magnificat Institute, to pay for the tuition of two young students: Nicola, age 10, and his sister Claire, age 11. These two young people are apparently following in the footsteps of their older brother, Jacobub Ghazzawi, who has been studying at the Institute for the past several years. He was recently asked to serve as a piano accompanist for the Jasmine Choir and just returned from Italy where he performed at a concert at St. Damaso Church in Rome. Nicola is taking up the piano and Claire, the flute. A Von Trapp family in the making!



The three siblings seated together at the piano.

Commemorating Your Family in Bethlehem

The Bethlehem Memorial Hall Project gives the Christian faithful from all over the world, an opportunity to take an active part in protecting the Holy Sites as well as maintaining the Christian presence for future generations to come. Many Christians have a strong desire to come one day to the Holy Land on pilgrimage and like so many others, to walk in the Footsteps of Jesus. This project gives those Christians who are not able to come to the Holy Land a unique opportunity to be linked to the Holy Sites both spiritually and emotionally.

The Church of the Nativity is recognized as one of the holiest sites in Christendom. This is the place where Jesus Christ was born and is indeed the Cradle of Christianity, the place where it all began.

The Christian community in Bethlehem in particular, and those in the Holy Land as a whole, finds itself in great distress from conflicts threatening its very existence. Your participation in this project will help rekindle hope in the community; will raise the spirit of Christianity in the Holy Land to greater heights; and will bring joy to the hearts of future generations.

The funding we receive for the Memorial Hall Project will be used to finance important programs such as educational scholarships, creating new employment opportunities, the construction of new apartments as well as the many humanitarian projects for Christians living in Bethlehem.

The Memorial Project at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was created by the Franciscan Foundation, the humanitarian arm of the Custody of the Holy Land, with the purpose of giving Christian believers, especially those who cannot visit the Holy Land, an opportunity to commemorate their names and that of their loved ones on plaques affixed to the walls of the Memorial Hall as well as on the walls of the Crusader Church adjacent to the Church of the Nativity.

The Bethlehem Memorial Project which began last Christmas is offers a distinct opportunity. By placing your name in **"Memorial Hall"**, you will not only be helping us to preserve our religious heritage but, more importantly, will be helping us to maintain the continued presence of Christians in this land. In this way you and your family will take advantage of an historic opportunity to become a 'living witness' in Bethlehem.

Hence by commemorating ones name or the name of loved ones at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, that person will share in perpetuity his/her love for Jesus and His Church in the Holy Land. The cost for each name plate is \$200.00.



The Nativity Church in Bethlehem and the Grotto within it, mark the Holy Place where Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ. The Grotto is adorned with a Silver Star call the "Star of Bethlehem", which marks the exact place where Jesus was born. It was placed in the Grotto by the Franciscans in the year 1717 and on this Star the following words were inscribed in Latin:

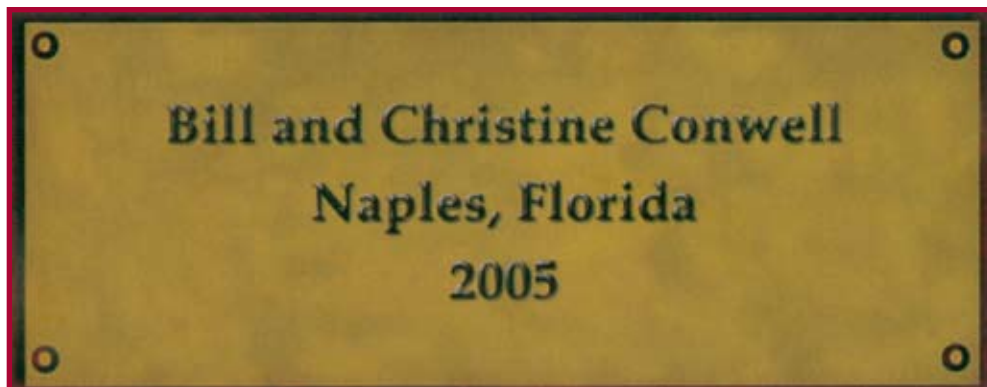
"Here the Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ"

None of the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims who tour the Holy Land miss the opportunity to visit the Church of the Nativity and descend into the Grotto in order to pray for themselves and their loved ones in this Holy Place where it all began more than 2000 years ago.

The Memorial Hall Project gives millions of Christians worldwide, and especially those who have never had the chance to visit the Church of the Nativity, the opportunity and the privilege to be spiritually linked to this Holy Place and to draw into their souls, and that of their loved ones, its Eternal Spiritual Light.

The Franciscan Friars will pray at the Memorial Hall and in the Church of the Nativity for the welfare of all who participate in this project as an expression of gratitude and appreciation.

Please let your charity assist the Christian community and the Church in the Holy Land. To enroll or for more information visit our website at www.ffhl.org or call toll free 1-866-905-3787.



The actual commemorative plaque measures 3.7 in. x 2.5 in.

FFHL Awards Ten Recipients for College Scholarships

This past July 2007, ten new Christian students were chosen to receive a full four year scholarship covering all tuition and books. There was much jubilation among the chosen recipients as each was notified of their award. One student commented "I don't know how to thank those wonderful Catholics who are opening their hearts to us by giving us this wonderful opportunity to better ourselves. I know that I would not have been able to go were it not for them and their kindness."

Fr. Pizzaballa, Chairman of FFHL, Fr. Vasko, and Fr. Fayed-Fahim, Chairman of the Selection Committee, were pleased to meet with the new scholarship winners. Fr. Pizzaballa said "that once again, hope is renewed for each of you through the generosity of the U.S. Catholics who not only feel the problems you are going through, but want to make sure that a proper education be given to you so as to give you a future. So, study hard, work hard, and become a professional in your respective fields of studies. We want you to become a valued member of the Christian community so that one day you will be able to help others in the same way."



Malda Abu-Said was born in Jerusalem and presently resides there with her parents and younger sister. She also has two older brothers. Malda would like to attend Hebrew University in Jerusalem and to major in Law or Journalism. **Her sponsor honors the memory of Mrs. Mary Dibs of Downey, California.**



Fadi Ballout was born in Bethlehem and presently lives there with his parents and older brother and sister. Fadi would like to attend Jordan University in Amman and major in Medicine. **His sponsors are Mr. and Mrs. William Conwell of Ashville, Alabama.**



Thaer Hassan was born in Jerusalem and resides with his parents and two younger brothers and sisters. He is planning to attend Hebrew University to study Medicine. **His sponsor is Mrs. Marguerite A. Kellett of Lincoln, Nebraska.**



Julia Hishmeh was born in Jerusalem and lives there with her parents along with her two younger brothers and sisters. Julia is planning to attend Bethlehem University in the field of Business Administration. **Her sponsor is FFHL.**



Jihan Mansour hails from Jerusalem and has been living there with her parents and one younger brother and sister. She plans to attend Hebrew University and to major in Languages. **Her sponsors are Dr. and Mrs. Bruce Nakfoor of Naples, Florida.**



Shireen Mansour was born in Jerusalem and presently resides with her parents and two older brothers. Shireen plans to attend Bethlehem University to major in Art and Languages. **Her sponsor is Mrs. Nancy Cotter of Naples, Florida.**



Ihab Mishirki was born in Jerusalem and has two older brothers and one younger sister. All live in the family residence. Ihab would like to go to Beir Zeit University in Ramallah and major in Engineering. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



Aziz Misleh was born in Jerusalem and resides together with his parents and younger brother and sister. Aziz would like to attend Bethlehem University in the field of Accounting. **His sponsor is FFHL.**



Lara Rafidi hails from Jerusalem and lives there with her parents and two sisters and one brother. She is hoping to attend Hebrew University to study either Science or Medicine. **Her sponsor is Bishop John J. Nevins Scholarship grant.**



Moudar Salman was born in Jerusalem and has applied for financial aid in order to finish his M.A. degree in Law from Ono Academic College in Israel. Moudar is married with two children and has attended the Pontifical Salesian University in Rome for his B.A. in Theology. **His sponsor is FFHL.**

Including FFHL in Your Financial Planning

Are you financially comfortable? Are all your needs met, your family secure and wondering how you might put some of your financial blessings to good use?

Many "Boomers" are thinking about their retirement years. They have made plans for years, putting away money for this time of their life. Now some have found that they have planned well and that God has blessed them beyond their needs. We are getting an increasing number of calls asking how to include the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land in a will or how to donate stocks/bonds to the Foundation.

Here are some practical suggestions which might help you make a decision rather than just think about it. Good advice from qualified lawyers, accountants, and investment advisors is invaluable as you consider:

Tax and investment planning: If your current level of cash flow is sufficient to meet expenses and support your desired lifestyle, there is little reason to select investments that will produce a lot of ordinary income that will be lost to income tax at a rate as high as 35%.

Estate planning: The more assets you have, the more you will need to be concerned about federal estate tax. Currently, you can transfer up to \$2,000,000 of assets at your death without incurring this "transfer tax". This amount is scheduled to increase to \$3,500,000 in 2009 and is repealed for the year 2010. It will return in 2011 with an exemption of \$1,000,000 unless Congress takes further action.

Establishing personal, family, and charitable, financial objectives: An inheritance may change the focus from "What do I need from my money?" to "What can I do with my money?"

Your first priority is to ensure your own financial security. The next priority for most is to determine what they can and should do for their families. Once you have addressed these objectives, you can be intentional in addressing charitable objectives to perpetuate your values beyond your own lifetime. You can currently give away up to \$1,000,000 of taxable lifetime gifts without incurring gift taxes and up to \$2,000,000 of testamentary gifts without incurring an estate tax.

Taxes can dip deeply into your estate after your death. Fortunately there are numerous strategies to reduce the amount lost to taxes. One of the best strategies for controlling the disposition of more of your assets involves giving some of them away – to family and charity.

Also consider an IRA. Distributions from an IRA are typically taxed as ordinary income. Both the contributions to the account and its earnings have never been taxed. Consequently, if the IRA account passes to your children – even though they get some deduction for estate tax attributable to IRA account - they may be paying 45% of their inheritance to taxes! If you direct the IRA account to FFHL, the children will be relieved of the income-tax burden. And because FFHL is tax exempt, it will not have to pay income tax on the IRA proceeds.

Encyclopedia Britannica Given to Christian Schools

In FFHL's on-going partnering with Christian agencies in the U.S., some 5,000 Year Book sets (2004 and 2005) of the Encyclopedia Britannica were distributed by FFHL to the various Christian schools in Jerusalem and the West Bank as an educational gift for all students in their senior year of high school. An additional set of encyclopedias were given to the libraries of the respective Christian schools.

The various Christian schools that were given the books included the Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Coptic, Syrian, Greek, and Armenian Orthodox schools. All this was made possible through the generosity of Hope Charitable Services whose mission is to put compassion and evangelism into the hands of the greatest resource in the world - lay men and women. They are based out of Portsmouth, Virginia.



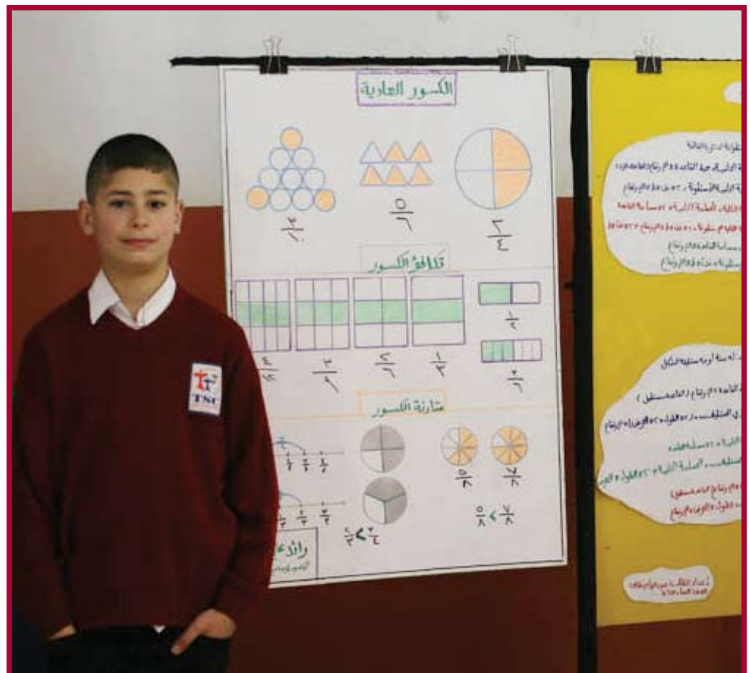
Franciscan School in Bethlehem sets pace for City Schools

"This is the eighth consecutive year that we have organized this kind of science fair," explains Doctor Nina Gedeon, director of the project and teacher at the Holy Land School in Bethlehem. "Two hundred and twenty of the school's 1,100 students, from first to eleventh grade, took part in creating the exhibits." For the three days of the fair, they take turns in being present to welcome visitors. This year is the first time that all the city's schools have attended, both boys and girls from private and governmental schools. The youngest drew sketches in front of the visitors, while the older ones did not lack for explanations of their projects. All branches of science were represented: medicine, chemistry, geology, physics, natural science, biology, technology, etc. The pupils demonstrated many experiments, and some of them gave explanations in English to the foreign visitors, who were amazed at their dynamism and enthusiasm. Doctor Gedeon is very proud of the pupils' level. "Thanks to the institution's management and the teaching staff who coordinates their efforts, we have reached an excellent level. Furthermore, the school often is in first place in projects organized among all the schools of the region. We thank everyone for their support," Nina continued.

Brother Raphael, OFM, happily shows off the book, made completely of olive wood, whose pyrographed leaves gained them, a few months ago, first prize in a contest on the theme of olive trees and their derivative products. Rami, a first grade pupil explains, "The fair lasts three days and today is the last but there are still lots of people coming. With the other pupils in my class, I spent four days making our booth but other classes worked on theirs for ten days."

In fact, it did take time to collect the booth's decorative items for some, to manufacture soap for others, to paint, color, assemble... "Do you like this?" "Oh yes, I like it a lot," says he, radiant and working together with his pals. To welcome all the visitors and organize the flow of movement, the pupils themselves keep order, using walkie-talkies with assurance and great seriousness.

In the city's streets, different groups of school children still pass by each other. Amid the pervasive gloom on this side of the Wall, the pupils are all wearing big smiles. A solid education and reasons for hope are exactly what the Custody of the Holy Land Schools wishes to offer them.



Inauguration of the Sports Center of Bethlehem

A new sports center was inaugurated in Bethlehem, June 9th, in the presence of an exuberant crowd. It was built on the property of the Catholic Action Center through the initiative of the Custody of the Holy Land. The Sports Center is the first office in the Palestinian Territories to correspond to international norms. The new building is a three story structure on 1,300 square meters, where several different kinds of sports are played.

The Sports Center comes out of the necessity to reinforce the Christian presence in Bethlehem, Beit Jala, and Beit Sahur, especially as a consequence of the uncertainties resulting from the construction of the wall, totally closing the Territories.

"We have been working for some time on this project," recounted Fr. Amjad Sabbara, OFM, Pastor of St. Catherine's parish there. "Because of the immobility that the people of Bethlehem know, we have tried to multiply activities available to the faithful, and in this way help them to be more active. The Catholic Action center (managed by lay faithful who are members of the parish) already participates in this effort. The new building's principle objective is to encourage the meeting of the families and of the youth around sports and its values, as a place of growth and socialization..."



"After a visit to the Catholic Action Center of Delfina Gomez Perez, a Spanish benefactress of the Holy Land enamored with Bethlehem, I suggested this project." Enthusiastically, she decided to finance 50% of the project! From then on, encouraged by this providential gift and helped by other benefactors, the Custody did the rest. Work began in November of 2004, six months after the visit of Mrs. Gomez Perez, and finished this past April 10th.

The inauguration date was chosen in order to permit the Franciscans of the Holy Land, gathered at their chapter meeting in Bethlehem, to take part in it. It was an occasion for the faithful of the city to discover the solidarity, closeness, and solicitude of all of the Friars of the Custody. The Holy Land is a part of their mission commitment, regardless of where they reside in the world. It is also an opportunity for the Friars who aren't involved in a direct apostolate towards the local community to see one of the completed projects of the Custody, and to unite themselves with the joy of those to whom this venture is dedicated.

The center is open to Christians of all denominations in the town, but also to those of nearby towns, including Beit Sahur and Beit Jala. Currently there are 280 members of the gym and 350 members of



other sports activities at the center. For the inauguration, the Father Custos, after uncovering the traditional plaque, blessed the building by walking throughout the center. For those who participated in this blessing, it was a splendid occasion to discover the excellent sports equipment, and even to give some of it a try.

Following the blessing, there was a speech of thanksgiving, as well as other speeches, given by the President of Catholic Action Center, by the Pastor, by the Treasurer of the Custody, and by the Sports Minister of the Palestinian Authority, representing the Bethlehem government.

A basketball game was played between the "De la Salle" team of Jerusalem and the Catholic Action's Bethlehem team. It was notable that the Bethlehem team made the first basket. The youth remained at the center late into the afternoon, and still wanted to remain longer. The Center is already a meeting place for them. They say that the sports center is "A dream that has become reality. Custody of the Holy Land, thank you."



FFHL Establishes "Franciscan Boys Home" In Bethlehem



For several years, the Franciscans and the local Catholic Community in Bethlehem have been grappling with a growing problem... how to help and assist some of the young children from the ages of 6 to 12, who come from dysfunctional family environments involving alcoholism, drugs, parental abuse, divorce, etc.

The thought of giving these youngsters a healthy psychological and structured environment which stresses religious, interpersonal, and community values as they grow and mature would provide the answer. After extensive discussions with Fr. Pizzaballa, Chairman of FFHL, together with the Franciscan Family Center (FFC) and Fr. Amjad Sabbara, the pastor of St. Catherine's Parish next to the Church of the Nativity, FFHL has decided to formally step in and to fully back and fund a 'Franciscan Boys Home' in Bethlehem. "It will be an expensive proposition but we cannot turn our backs on beleaguered children," stated Fr. Peter after the decision was made.

Restoration and reconstruction work has already begun on part of a building owned by the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionary



of Mary who have offered to rent it to the Home. Under the present structure we will be able to house 25 boys, with the intention of building on to the present structure for future needs.

These children will be attending the local Franciscan Terra Santa School during the week and come back to their 'second home' after classes which is only a five minute walk from the school. On the weekends, they will be able to go home and visit their families returning to our facility on Sunday evening. During the week they will live in a healthy environment where they will live, eat, study, play and pray together.

FFHL plans to hire a full time staff which will include a cook, several teachers, a child psychologist, a social worker, a housekeeper, a club supervisor, as well as maintenance and security personnel. We will have both a Franciscan priest and a Franciscan nun as Directors of the Boys Home which will open this September 2007.

Sister Marie Grech, FMM, Executive Director of the "Franciscan Family Center," stated that, "This is a dream come true! So many





children continue to suffer as they live out their lives within a dysfunctional family. Many thanks must be given to all those Catholic and Christian laymen and clergy from the U.S. who continually support the humanitarian works of the Custody's foundation by their prayers and donations."



Pictured are various interior features of the Bethlehem Boys Home.

California High School Student Makes a Difference

During Holy Week 2007 a high school junior named Michael Wong overheard FFHL trustee Steve Ramirez talking to his dad about the work of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land. Something stirred within Michael and he felt the need...the obligation...to do something to help his fellow Christians. A junior at Francis Parker High School in San Diego, Michael read all the articles on the FFHL webpage ... then he went to work...student by student...family by family... asking for donations to improve the lives of Palestinian Christians.

Late this spring he gave Mr. Steve Ramirez and Ms. Denise Scalzo, members of the Board of Trustees, a check for \$6,800 which he'd collected during lunch and after school from his fellow students. Mr. Ramirez said that "Michael is a remarkable young man. He gives his time and energy freely to causes that move him spiritually, and it delights me to see a 15-year old consistently contribute more money than most of the adults who support that cause."

Holy Land Christians in Profile

Khalil Doughbaje

Khalil Doughbaje is a lawyer working for the Society of Saint Yves which is a Catholic Human and Civil Rights legal aid organization serving the poor and marginalized of the Holy Land. He is soon to complete his ninth year with the Society while at the same time serving as a volunteer project officer with the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land.

Khalil was interviewed by Fr. Peter Vasko.

Fr. Peter: Khalil, tell us a little about yourself.

The most important thing to know about me is that I am a Christian Palestinian. I was born in the Old City of Jerusalem in 1971 after it had been occupied, annexed to Jewish West Jerusalem, and the State of Israel. That says it all, Father, because it tells you that I was born under the rule of a foreign army thus I have never known freedom. But I know a different freedom because I am a Christian. I was born just a few hundred meters from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher which commemorates where Christ freed us all through His resurrection.

Before 1967 my family was quite wealthy; owning lands inside the Old City walls and agricultural lands in the village of Taibeh, which is in the northern West Bank to the east of Ramallah. Now those lands are occupied by and under Israeli military rule. After I passed my high school exams I received a scholarship to study Law at the University of Kiev in what was then, the Soviet Union. The scholarship was a great help but not enough to survive, so my family made many sacrifices to help me complete my studies. After graduating with a Master's degree in Law, I went briefly to visit family who had emigrated to Canada and the United States. While I was there my parents contacted me and told me that my time was running out and if I didn't return immediately I would be forever prohibited from returning to Jerusalem. Not only could I not return as a resident but it would also be difficult for me to come back even as

a tourist or visitor. I came home.

Fr. Peter: Can you give our readers a background of the Society of Saint Yves and how you got involved in the organization?

The Society of Saint Yves began in 1991 as a Canonical Lay Foundation to serve the poor and the oppressed of the Holy Land by providing legal advocacy on their behalf. St. Yves was the brain child of Mrs. Lynda Brayer, a lawyer and a Jewess who converted to Catholicism. In early 1999 I received a phone call from a life long friend, Raf-foul Rofa. He asked me if I would like to work for the Society where he had been employed the previous year. When I returned from North America it was very hard to find a job, particularly in my field of law. I had to start earning money fast and giving back to my family some of what they sacrificed for me to earn my education.

Times were hard and I was working nights and days in the hotel industry in the western part of the city. When I arrived at the Society's office in Bethlehem it was in chaos because they had just lost a staff member. It was exactly the kind of atmosphere I didn't want to work in but I felt it was exactly where I was supposed to be, so I stayed. I did my apprenticeship under Lynda Brayer who taught me a lot. She was tough and she was a thinker but more than anything else she was a fighter! Up until that time the Society didn't take many cases, probably only about 40 or 50 a year but after the present Intifada started in September 2000 things began to change rapidly.

Fr. Peter: What are some of the typical cases that you represent in the Israeli courts?



We divide the cases into classifications mainly because of the different legal strategies and methods that have to be employed to bring them to a satisfactory conclusion. All the cases stem from the same problem; the occupation and illegal annexation of East Jerusalem to the State of Israel. The occupation gave rise to the Israeli government's sweeping policy of discrimination against the Palestinian population in order to encourage the people to emigrate. We represent clients whose houses are under threat of demolition in East Jerusalem and in the West Bank. We also represent people whose lands have been confiscated to build illegal settlements or the huge infrastructure of roads that join up those settlements.

The Society represents people whose families have been torn apart by new political borders which never existed before and which are unilaterally imposed and enforced by the Israeli military. These military controlled borders divide families and prevent husbands and wives from living together and children from caring for aged and infirm parents. They prevent people from attending family funerals and

weddings and from worshiping in their holy places. These borders are completely porous for Israelis but a solid wall for Palestinians.

We also assist people to realize their civil rights: receive unemployment, widows and old age pensions, and child education benefits. They have been paying taxes and compulsory state insurance all their lives but when they most need and claim these benefits, they have been denied them. The Society runs cases in all of the Israeli courts and military tribunals, and as of today, fewer than 200 open cases are before the Supreme Court of Israel. That's quite an achievement!

Fr. Peter: How many clients do you and your organization represent every year? Are the majority of them Christian, Muslim or a combination of both? Is there a fee for your services?

Those are good questions, Father, because they hint at the miracle of the Society over the last half dozen years. When I joined the Society we ran 60 or 70 serious cases every year, but for the past 6 years we have managed about 1000 cases a year. The Society does not discriminate in any way. Our clients reflect the demographics of the Holy Land so a majority is Muslim and surprisingly, at least half of our clients are women. Our offices are situated in the Christian quarters of the Old City in Jerusalem and Bethlehem and so we serve very directly the Christian community where we hold a love and affinity to the people. It is our home.

We do charge a nominal fee for opening and prosecuting a legal file and that is about 40 American dollars. The fee serves to give honor and dignity to the poor as they deserve more than cold charity. They deserve the very best we can give them from our heads and from our hearts. No one has to pay, but through the nominal fee they are invited to participate in their own just cause. Also when I say we manage 1000 cases every year, I have to stress that not everyone that comes to us results in a legal file being opened. Many people come and tell their story. We listen and refer them if we can to someone who can help. This is the

miracle that I talked of before, Father, that the people know there is a place where they will be heard. That is grace, Father. That's God's blessing.

Fr. Peter: Is the work difficult? What are some of the obstacles that you encounter?

The work we do is as difficult as the lives of the people we serve. Often our clients cannot visit us and we have to go to them. This involves crossing the Wall or Security Barrier and it leads us to places that are sometimes uncomfortable and sometimes downright dangerous. Colleagues and I have been trapped by firefights between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian militias and have been beaten up by settlers. But these are not the major obstacles really. I suppose I could say that it's the discrimination or the sense that problems never end. But really, the greatest obstacle is inside me and all of us: succumbing to overwork. We have a tendency to take on too much, commit to too many projects and surrender to too many demands. This can exhaust or kill our own inner peace and faith which is what makes our work so fruitful.

Fr. Peter: What do you think of the Israel Separation Wall?

The previous Pope, John Paul II, said forcefully, "What the Holy Land needs is bridges not walls." I believe that to be true. By building a Wall or a Security Barrier on Palestinian lands and depriving an already deprived people of their agricultural land and their space to grow and to live, Israel deprives them of the space to have peace and so deprives them of the wherewithal to make peace. At the same time Israel deprives itself of the opportunity for peace by creating a justly resentful and an unjustly impoverished neighbor.

Fr. Peter: As you know, Christian Palestinians are a minority within a minority. Do you see a future for other young professional Christians like yourself here in the Holy Land and if so, what opportunities are available?

Yes, the Christian community is a minority within a minority and it is a community, which by its nature and traditions is non-violent, peaceful and non-

discriminatory. I'm lucky because I was given the opportunity to build and protect the community. It is my life and my livelihood and it is my devotion and my passion. I certainly feel that there is a future for other young professional Christians in the Holy Land. I'm optimistic, Father, that with organizations such as the FFHL and the Society of Saint Yves among others who work together through their respective mandates, make life easier. Young Christians are getting a higher education through the generosity of your donors, giving them an edge which allows them to compete in the market for the better jobs within the different Christian associations and beyond. This will encourage the community to prosper again.

Fr. Peter: What do you see as some of the causes for the Christian exodus from the Holy Land and what can be done to stem it?

That's the 64 thousand dollar question, Father. The causes are obvious to me. The occupation, the lack of freedom, the teetering Palestinian economy, the lack of cultural recognition and cultural expression makes for a people and a community which is "clinically depressed". People want to experience hope and joy in their life, not constant depression, lack of hope and anxiety about the present, never mind the future.

What can be done about it? That's the hardest question of all. I however, know one thing, the cooperation between the FFHL and the Society of Saint Yves is bearing fruit. We in the Society of Saint Yves, through our direct contact with the local Christian population, tend to know the problems this community faces. We then convey these problems to the FFHL which implements programs to relieve these situations. I feel that encouraging organizations such as the FFHL to continue implementing the programs they are doing from housing to educating the young will certainly contribute towards stemming the exodus. This is manifested by the reaction of the local Christian community which is receiving the programs of the FFHL with gratitude and renewed hope for the future.



Upon an inquiry about learning how to meditate, St. Theresa of Avila once said, "To begin learning meditation, just say the "Our Father very, very, very, slowly five times a day."

For centuries Christians have honored the Lord's Prayer with a special church. This church stands on the traditional site in Jerusalem where Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. The church was built under the direction of Constantine's mother St. Helena, in the early 4th century and is built on top of a cave on the Mount of Olives, long ago associated with the teachings of Jesus. Its focal point is the cloister, decorated with tiled panels of the Lord's Prayer in 62 languages.

The Gospel account provides almost no information on the location of Jesus' teaching of the "Our Father", thus the name Church of the Pater Noster. The 3rd-century *Acts of John* (ch. 97) mentions the existence of a cave there associated with the teaching of Jesus, but not specifically the Lord's Prayer.

Like many buildings in Jerusalem, the Constantinian church suffered destruction by the Persians in 614. The memory of Jesus' teaching remained associated with this site, but the content of that teaching shifted from good and evil to the Our Father prayer. This new identification was based on a clever harmonization of *Luke* 10:38-11:4 with *Mark* 11:12-25 (the withered fig tree).

When the Crusaders arrived, the site was associated specifically with the Lord's Prayer. They constructed a small oratory amidst the ruins in 1106, and a church was rebuilt in 1152 thanks to the funds of the Bishop of Denmark, who was buried there. Pilgrims in the 12th-century mention seeing marble plaques with the Lord's Prayer inscribed in Hebrew and Greek at the church. Excavations have uncovered an inscribed Latin version. The Crusader-era church was damaged in 1187 and destroyed by 1345.

In 1910, the Byzantine foundations over the cave were found partly beneath the cloister. The cloister was moved and the Byzantine church began to be reconstructed in 1915. It provides a good sense

of what the original was like. The unroofed church has steps leading down into the cave, which was partially collapsed when discovered in 1910. It is an interesting medley of ancient rock cuttings, concrete supports and marble furnishings. The cave cuts partly into a 1st-century tomb.

Left of the church's south door is an area paved with mosaic and identified as a baptistery. The 19th-century cloister is in a European style and upholds the tradition of multilingual plaques bearing the Lord's Prayer — an impressive 62 tiled panels give the prayer in 62 different languages, from Aramaic to Japanese to Scots to Gaelic.

The prayer in Jesus' mother tongue, Aramaic, is more eloquent and evocative than our traditional English version.

Abwun

"Oh Thou, from whom the breath of life comes,

d'bwasmaja

who fills all realms of sound, light and vibration.

Nethkadasch schmach

May Your light be experienced in my utmost holiest.

Tete malkthach.

Your heavenly domain approaches.

Nehwe tzevjanach aikana d'bwasmaja af b'arha

Let Your will come true – in the universe (all that vibrates) just as on earth (that is material and dense).

Hawvlan lachma d'sukanan jaomana.

Give us wisdom (understanding, assistance) for our daily need,

Waschboklan chauben wachtahen aikana daf chnan schwoken l'chajjaben

Detach the fetters of faults that bind us, like we let go the guilt of others.

Wela tachlan l'nesjuna

Let us not be lost in superficial things (materialism, common temptations),

ela patzan min bischa

But let us be freed from that which keeps us from our true purpose

Metol dilachie malkutha wahaila wateschbucha l'ahlam almin.

From You comes the all-working will, the lively strength to act, the song that beautifies all and renews itself from age to age.

Amen.

Sealed in trust, faith and truth. (I confirm with my entire being)

Diapers Given to Needy Mothers

Pave the Way Foundation is an organization founded by Mr. Gary Krupp, a native New Yorker which is attempting to bridge the gap between religions through cultural, technological, and intellectual exchanges. In a recent visit to Jerusalem, Mr. and Mrs. Krupp came to bring baby items for newborn children. The wrapped packages consisted of diapers, baby oil, baby cream, etc.

Mr. Sam Phillipe, a member of the board of **Pave the Way Foundation** also assisted in the distribution of these baskets to the young mothers of Jerusalem. Mr. Krupp said that these 'baby baskets' were paid for by a Moslem community residing in New York and were to be given to Christians. Later on in the month, this same Moslem community will give the same baskets to Jewish mothers in the Holy Land. A great show of solidarity between men and women of good will!



Medical Assistance Given to Christian Family

Mona Moback, wife of Jack Moback and mother of two children, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis a year ago. Since then she has deteriorated to secondary progressive multiple sclerosis. Understandably she is also dealing with bouts of depression. The family is from Bethlehem and her husband is out of work. Needless to say the medical costs for her hospital stay and medication are quite high.

Her case was brought to the attention of FFHL and the family asked if we could at least take care of the expensive medicine. FFHL gave a check in the amount of \$5,000 to pay for her medicine. Please keep Mona and her family in your prayers.



SFO Quinquennial Congress



Pictured at the Foundation's exhibit are Kate Asselin, SFO, regional representative from New Jersey, with Ed Duff, SFO, an active FFHL supporter from Florida.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land was represented at the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) XVII Quinquennial Congress held in Pittsburgh this past July. More than 400 Franciscans from across the nation attended the five-day meeting on the theme of *Many Cultures / through Francis / in Christ*.

Beginning and ending with the eternal words of Jesus to "love one another as I have loved you," the program challenged all to create unity in diversity and peace through a Gospel model of dialog and power sharing.

Franciscan cultural diversity was well represented in the Congress' exciting and colorful mix of music, dance, and cuisine, as well as liturgies in a variety of languages and rites.

The Congress provided a valuable opportunity for the Foundation to spread the word and seek the support of fellow Franciscans to preserve the Christian presence in the Holy Land. Many of those who stopped at the Foundation's exhibit had lived in, or made a pilgrimage to Israel and were eager to learn how they could help their brothers and sisters there.

Spring '07 Awareness Campaign



Palm Beach: Mr. and Mrs. Rob Reveley opened their home to over 80 guests as a "fundraiser" to listen to a talk on the Christian exodus from Fr. Vasko.



Dallas: A reception for FFHL was hosted by Richard and Shelley Stanzel (center). Among those attending were his brother, Michael and his wife, Tiffany (left), his parents, Tom and Susan Stanzel (right).



Palm Beach: Pictured (front row) Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Sansone, Mr. and Mrs. 'Jack' Moran. (Back row) Fr. Peter and Mr. and Mrs. John Moran



Fort Worth: A dinner reception was held at the residence of the Dickerson family. (left-right) Tom Stanzel, Susan Stanzel (Board Member) FFHL President, Fr. Peter Vasko, Pat and Arthur Dickerson.



Palm Beach: Committee Chairman for a Palm Beach event, Mrs. Majorie Toner (center) and committee members, (l-r) Patricia Guiney and Eileen Donovan. Other members of the committee not shown are Julie Reverley, Alex Woodfield and Hank Baer.



Indianapolis: One of Fr. Peter’s many contacts during this visit was with (left-right) Dave Kinder, Fr. Donald Eder, Bishop William Higi, Bishop of Lafayette, Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM and Regional Advisor, Mike LeCuyer.



Indianapolis: Fr. Peter made presentations at St. Monica (pictured here with Pastor, Msgr. Paul Koetter), and Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Parish in Carmel, IN.

Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, DD receives “Guardian of the Holy Land” Award

At a recent dinner event of the Board of Trustees of the foundation held in Philadelphia, PA, His Eminence, Cardinal Bevilacqua, was presented the “Guardian of the Holy Land” award by Denise Scalzo, Vice President of FFHL, and Fr. Vasko, President of FFHL.

In his remarks, Fr. Vasko praised the dedication and commitment that Cardinal Bevilacqua had given as Honorary Chairman in stemming the exodus of our young Christians from the Holy Land for the past eleven years. Fr. Vasko stated that the Cardinal ‘threw all of his efforts as well as his office to that endeavor for which we are most grateful and appreciative.’

In appreciation for all of his efforts and dedication, Cardinal Bevilacqua was presented this special award which is given to individuals who have made a difference in helping to motivate and preserve the Christian presence in the Holy Land. As His Eminence received the award in the presence of Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington DC, Cardinal Regali, Archbishop of Philadelphia, Bishop John J. Nevins, Bishop Emeritus of Venice, Florida and the Board of Trustees, a warm and appreciative applause followed.

In accepting the award, Cardinal Bevilacqua thanked the officers and Board of Trustees for this recognition and reminded everyone about the importance of giving hope to our beleaguered Christians in the Holy Land and that like the Holy Father, we too must continue to encourage those ‘Guardians of Christianity’ to remain in their



homeland. “It has been and continues to be,” said the Cardinal, “the untiring work of FFHL which has made a difference in the Holy Land, so much so that we are finally seeing a small light at the end of a dark tunnel. We are now seeing more and younger Christians reversing their thoughts of emigration and for this I am grateful. As I step down and become Honorary Chairman Emeritus of FFHL I know that my successor, Cardinal McCarrick will continue on with our goal of helping to protect and maintain the Christian presence in the Holy Land.”

Pilgrimage to Benefit the Work of the Franciscan Foundation

Join us on a pilgrimage of faith:

- March 4-14, 2008, Pilgrimage to the Holy Land with Fr. Peter Vasko, OFM. Father Peter's only FFHL Pilgrimage to the Holy Land for 2008.

This pilgrimage exploring the Holy Land 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.**

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



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