

CUSTODY OF THE HOLY LAND

SUMMARY REPORT

2014

For many centuries the Custody of the Holy Land has committed itself to conserve and give new life to the Holy Places of Christianity in the Land of Jesus and in the other countries of the Middle East. Among the various objectives of the Franciscan mission, we mention the support and progress of the Christian minority that lives in these regions, the conservation and cherishing of the archaeological areas and shrines, the interventions in cases of emergencies, the liturgies in the places of cult, the educative and formative activities through a net of elementary and secondary schools, and the assistance to pilgrims. Even in the year 2014, the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land has manifested itself through the projection, programming and execution of the following projects and works:

1. HOLY PLACES

1. JERUSALEM

- GETHSEMANE

Garden of Olives

–Conclusion of the restoration, maintenance and waterproofing of the roof of the Basilica of Gethsemane, restoration of the mosaics of the cupolas and of the floor of the basilica.

- HOLY SEPULCHRE

– We are continuing works of ordinary and extraordinary maintenance.

- FRIARY OF THE HOLY CENACLE

Jesus, together with the Apostles, ate the last supper of his life on earth

–Realisation of the new garden with spaces for the celebrations and welcoming of pilgrims, in an area of around 650m².

1. NAZARETH

- **BASILICA OF THE ANNUNCIATION**

The Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary the birth of Jesus.

- Installation of telecameras for the live or recorded transmissions of the Celebrations. Installation of a new lighting system in the basilica.
- Phase of elaboration of the new project of waterproofing of the grotto, that has been damaged by infiltration of water and humidity.

1. MAGDALA

- **CITY OF MARY MAGDALEN**

City of the origins of Mary Magdalen

- Continuation of the works of conservation of the archaeological area of Magdala, where important remains of the Roman port of the city have been discovered. We are preparing an itinerary for visits in order to consent to pilgrims to deepen their knowledge regarding the daily life of the town during the times of Jesus.

1. CAPERNAHUM

- **ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE**

Jesus lived here after he left Nazareth and here he began his preaching and accomplished numerous miracles.

- In good progress are the works of conservation of the archaeological area (Phase I) with works in the open space in front of the Church. The area is to be dedicated as a space for prayer and meditation.
- The mosaics of the Byzantine church on the house of Peter are in the process of being restored.

1. MOUNT TABOR

- **SHRINE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION**

Identified as the “high mountain” where the transfiguration of Jesus took place.

- We are working upon the realisation of the new parking lot close to the the main gate (1250 m²) – Phase I.

1. SEPHORIS

- **SITE AND SHRINE OF SEPHORIS**

Place recognised by tradition as the house where Mary lived during her adolescence.

- The works of maintenance and reconstruction of the external perimeter wall, which had partially collapsed, have been terminated.

A functional recovering of the ancient rooms and the installation of a new prefabricated unit with the function of a residence for the religious of the Incarnate Word, custodians of the Shrine.CANA

- **CHURCH OF THE FIRST MIRACLE**

The first miracle of Jesus

–First phase of the realisation of a parochial centre and a school, in order to meet the needs of the parishioners.

1. **MOUNT NEBO (JORDAN)**

- **SHRINE AND MEMORIAL OF MOSES**

- Conclusion of the project of the “New covering for the Memorial of Moses”. The project regards the realisation of a new roof covering for the entire Basilica and of an exhibition itinerary for the mosaics that have been discovered during the excavations. We have furthermore concluded the building of a new Sacristy, and the realisation of new electrical, mechanic and air-conditioning systems.

1. **WORKS IN FAVOUR OF YOUNG PEOPLE**

- **Scholarships.**

- ✦ The financing of 295 Scholarships for University covering the length of four years, distributed in the various Universities: Bethlehem, Hebrew in Jerusalem and Haifa, Bir Zeit, Amman and others.

- **Support for Aristan crafts.**

- ✦ Project of support to ten small artisan firms with the acquisition of spare parts, machines for production, and other aids in favour of security in this activity.

- **BETHLEHEM**

- **Laboratories for the works in olive wood and mother of pearl**

- ✦ We have completed the works of realisation of laboratories for the works in olive wood and mother of pearl. Institution of courses of professional formation for young Palestinians in order to keep alive the tradition of local manufacturing.

1. **ACTIVITIES IN FAVOUR OF FAMILIES**

- **BETHLEHEM**

- **Parochial family consultative board.** The work to support the Parochial Family Consultative Board is proceeding, in order to support the principal needs of families on an assistential level.

- **Franciscan House for young boys.** We are continuing the project aimed at helping twenty boys aged between six and twelve, coming from poor families or from families with particular difficulties. Besides the welcoming and assistance to study, the boys are followed by an educator, a social assistant and a psychologist.
- **Medical assistance.** We are continuing the project of medical assistance aimed at families with serious economic difficulties, by providing for the partial or total covering of their medical expenses.
- **Restructuring of houses.** Project of restoring houses where the most needy families dwell. The restoration is being done by local workers who would otherwise not find a job. Besides helping the families, this activity periodically guarantees hundreds of job opportunities.

1. WORKS IN FAVOUR OF PAROCHIAL COMMUNITIES

- BETHLEHEM

- **Parish cemetery**
 - ✦ Conclusion of the works of expansion of the cemetery, making use of an area of roughly 700m² adjacent to the existing cemetery.
- **Catholic Action Centre.** The centre of the Catholic Action of Bethlehem has been subjected to a series of interventions of renewal.

- NAZARETH

- **Parish centre**
 - ✦ Conclusion of the works to realise spaces for recreation for children of the parish of Nazareth.

1. APARTMENTS FOR THE POOR AND FOR YOUNG COUPLES

- JERUSALEM

- **Old City.** The phase of the project of renewal and restoration of the houses in the Old City is still underway (45 units for habitation have been restored in 2013).
- **St.James housing project at Beit Hanina:** This is a project of 6 bulding blocks with a total of 42 apartments divided in 3 levels.
 - ✦ We have obtained permission for the building of 24 new apartments.

- BETHLEHEM

- **Jesus the Child, St.Catherine and St.Francis housing projects**
 - ✦ The ordinary maintenance and the restructuring of the dwelling units in these residential complexes is underway.

1. OTHER CULTURAL WORKS

- Each year the Custody of the Holy Land economically supports the Faculty of Biblical Sciences and Archaeology of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem. It offers around 30 scholarships to students coming from different dioceses, for the whole length of their studies.
- **Franciscan Media Center.** A new form of communication through an updated website, with the help of TV networks in order to diffuse in real time facts and events linked with the Holy Places of Christian cult.

1) **WORKS IN FAVOUR OF LEBANON AND SYRIA**

Besides the works that have been realised and projected in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories, we have given particular attention to Christians in Lebanon and Syria, who are living in situations of extreme need.