



FRIENDS OF THE HOLY LAND

“FRIENDS – HELPING CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND”

February 2014 update from the FHL

- **Gift from Cardinal Vincent Nichols for church in the Holy Land**

All ‘Friends’ of the Holy Land were very pleased to hear the wonderful news that Pope Francis will make Archbishop Vincent, a valued Patron of FHL, a Cardinal at the next Consistory on 22 February. ‘Friends’ in the Archdioceses of Birmingham, Liverpool and Westminster will already know that their Bishops suggested a gift from their parishes or parishioners as a sign of their congratulation and affection for him at this time, and in recognition of the honour bestowed on him by Pope Francis. Archbishop Vincent has asked that this gift be offered in his name to the suffering Church in the Holy Land, through the FHL, which he helped to found. FHL is honoured that he has asked us to do this for him.

With his blessing, FHL designed a flyer to increase awareness of the plight of the Christians over there and decided to include a special prayer card for the intentions of Archbishop Vincent and the Christians in the Holy Land. These were mailed last week to over 550 parishes.

- **Holy Land ‘Co-ordination’**

FHL Vice Chairman, Peter Rand, writes: ‘I was privileged to join Archbishops and Bishops from South Africa, Canada, USA and Europe as an observer on the recent Holy Land Co-ordination. Highlights for me included 24 hours in Gaza which included Mass at the Holy Family Latin Church, visits to the Sisters of Charity and their wonderful care home, to a vocational training centre for young men, to a rehabilitation centre overlooking the defunct tunnels down at Raffa and meeting with Suhaila Tarazi, the inspirational Director of the Ahli Arab Hospital, run by the Anglican Jerusalem Diocese. With mains electricity only being available in Gaza 6-8 hours a day, the cost of fuel to run their generator at \$120 per hours is proving a great drain on their resources, as it is at the Latin Patriarchate School, where the FHL recently provided funds towards a new generator. Other events in a busy 5 day programme included meetings with Ambassadors in Tel Aviv, audiences with the Latin and Armenian Patriarch, visits to Bethlehem University, the Schmidt Girls School in East Jerusalem and meeting families at the Cremisan Valley. I also had a ‘one to one’ meeting with Vera Baboun, the first

Friends of the Holy Land
2 Station Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 1JJ
Tel. 01926 512980

Email – friendsoftheholylan@btconnect.com Website – www.friendsoftheholylan.org.uk

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lady Christian Mayor of Bethlehem. She was particularly grateful for the work of the FHL and asked me to pass on her thanks to all of you'.

- **FHL Structure in the Holy Land**

The focus of the FHL to support the most needy individuals and families in the Holy Land together with the remarkable level of donations we are able to pass on to our Committee over there has accelerated our plans to grow our infrastructure in the Holy Land. During Peter's visit in early January, he laid the foundations for the creation of an office and two paid staff to undertake the considerable work needed to ensure that every penny that is distributed from the UK goes to the most deserving cases. For every case there is a ten-stage process from identification to review that has to be completed with a strong and transparent audit trail. Peter and Chairman, Jim Quinn will be travelling there at the end of February to finalise arrangements with the local Committee and meet with a new Anglican representative. Future monthly updates will continue to keep you informed.

- **Family Support**

'During my recent visit', writes Peter Rand, 'I was able to visit 13 families who are either being supported by the FHL on an ongoing basis or whose circumstances are under investigation. The list has now reached 43. If any individual or FHL Group would be interested in sponsoring a family at £3 per day, please contact the office. We would be pleased to give you background on a specific family'. Some families continue to experience severe shortages of water and we are discussing with our local Committee how the FHL can offer practical support to those most severely affected.

- **Archbishop Bernard Longley at Coventry Cathedral**

In an address at Coventry Cathedral to mark the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Archbishop of Birmingham highlighted how 'shared unity prompts us to remember our brothers and sisters of the suffering Church in the Holy Land and the Middle East'. He referenced 'the work of organisations such as the FHL which draws together Christians from all our churches in prayerful and practical support of these ancient Christian communities to whom we owe so much'.

- **Music for the Holy Land – Sunday 16 March**

Here is a date for your diary if you are within striking distance of Amersham in Bucks. Details are attached of a concert of sacred and secular classics at 4pm on 16 March at St. Michaels and All Angels Church. It includes music by Bach, Handel, Pergolesi, Delibes,

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Mozart and more! There will be a retiring collection for the FHL. For more information, please contact Chris Leslie cmles001@yahoo.co.uk

- **Icon Exhibition at Lichfield Cathedral. 2 Feb - Mar.**

Do take the opportunity to see firsthand the work of Bethlehem Icon School Director, Ian Knowles, supporting Christians in the Holy Land. Other activities include a lecture on 8 Feb 10.30am – 12pm 'Icons – their place in liturgy and prayer'; a 5 day icon course, 10-15 Feb; an artist in residence, 26-28 Feb and a lunchtime talk on 26 Feb – 'Icons in the Holy Land; yesterday and today'.

- **Sean on pilgrimage**

FHL Director of Development, Sean Higgins and his wife Sheila will be on pilgrimage with the Catenian Association, 17 – 28 March, including 4 days in Jordan where they hope to meet Fr. Twal at the Peace Centre in Amman, who is providing support to handicapped Christian refugees from Syria.

- **Deacon's stoles from Bethlehem**

The FHL, through Deacon John O'Brien, have facilitated the supply (though not the funding) of stoles for every Deacon in the Birmingham Archdiocese, to whom they will be presented at a Silver Jubilee Mass of Thanksgiving at St. Chad's Cathedral on 7 June. The stoles, designed to a high and exacting standard have provided work for a local Christian tailor in Bethlehem. A photograph is planned for the next newsletter.

- **Crib box reminder**

Now is the time of the year for crib boxes to be emptied and refreshed with new labels. Please contact Karen Baxter in the office who will advise on the process.

- **Just two months to go!**

The year end is important in any organisation and is the next line in the sand for FHL, as, with your help, we strive to meet our ambitious fundraising targets to enable us to meet our growing commitments in the Holy Land. So please forward any available funds in the next six weeks which we can distribute to worthy families and other projects.

Finally, if you can attend one of the Masses, when the Cardinal will return to the Archdioceses where he currently serves and has ministered previously, please make a note of the dates now – Westminster Cathedral on 2 March; Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral on 16 March and St. Chad's Birmingham on 30 March.

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