



Bethlehem is elderly too

A project for not forgetting the elderly in Bethlehem.

"the one who sits with the elderly is respected" Pro. 31, 23

When people think of Bethlehem, they think, above all, that it's the place where Jesus was born. They think of many children who were born and continue to be born here, in this land that is as holy as much as difficult and full of contradictions. But Bethlehem is not only a place of birth but also a place where people grow, become adults and, why not, sometimes get old. The complicated political and economical situation strongly hits the weakest and particularly, besides the children, the elderly. Many families have no income, with serious problems on their shoulders and it is very difficult for them to look after the elderly. There are more and more cases of abandonment.

The Project

The Custody of the Holy Land, with the help of the parish priest and the friars in Bethlehem, wishes to be a support for the families taking care of the elderly and to sustain works of the Antonian Society of Bethlehem, which has attempted to help the poorest and the least well-off since 1913. A home for the elderly was founded in 1942 and it's where today 5 nuns of various nationalities called 'Gianeline' dedicate all their energy with patience and dedication, despite difficulties, to accommodate the elderly, or rather, that part of society that is being forgotten too often. The nuns, together with some local "social workers" look after, wash, feed, give medical cures and keep company to about 40 elderly women, each day and each night. But food, medicines, water and electricity have also here a certain cost. Most of these elderly people don't have a family and therefore, the charge for bed and board, which is in theory requested, doesn't get paid by anyone. In fact, on the territory of the Palestine autonomy, there is no system of public health assistance. The cures linked to any type of illness are to be paid by families who don't receive any financial help, if not from their parish. In other words, the only hope for these elderly people and for the ones who have decided to dedicate their life to them is providence.



With the raised funds we wish to deal with the most urgent emergencies which are mainly connected to the purchasing of medical equipment and medicines, as well as to bear the costs of operations in hospitals and subsequent medical cures.

Besides, we want to bring a program of the structure extension to a conclusion. The objective is to set up a home for the elderly men. At present, this structure is almost completely finished: in order to accommodate its first guests it is necessary to purchase some furnishings, mattresses, beds and medical and first aid equipment.



The project gets promoted by the Franciscan friars of the Custody of the Holy Land who have for more than seven centuries guarded and livened up the Sacred Places of the Holy Land, amongst which those important ones concern the Basilicas of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, of Nativity in Bethlehem and of Annunciation in Nazareth. Beside the pastoral ministry there are numerous actions of social character of the Custody: schools, scholarships for students, accommodation support for families, support for small craftsmen, parish clubs, accommodating homes for the elderly, after-school, female laboratories, summer camps, medical ambulances, and support during period in hospitals.

The project gets realized in place in collaboration with the Franciscan parish of Saint Catherine. The parish, through the young people and family centres makes every effort to give help and comfort to the population respecting the most urgent needs.

To find out more: www.proterrasancta.org

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The Franciscans of the Custody remember every day in their prayers all those who help the Holy Land in any whatsoever

The **Holy Land Association** is the non-governmental charitable organization of the Franciscans in the Holy Land. The mission of the NGO is to serve the Custody of the Holy Land in its proper task of: maintaining and promoting the Holy Places, keeping up the Christian Community in the Middle East, advancing peace and dialogue.