



un progetto della Custodia di Terra Santa



Sebaste, 3000 years steeped in history



The village of Sebastyia is situated just 10 km from Nablus, in the West Bank. The name comes from Sebaste, the city founded by Herod the Great in honour of Emperor Augustus, on the ruins of the ancient city of Samaria. In the citadel that stands today, the ruins of the roman city are still visible following partial excavation in the last century. Among the ruins one can see the forum, the basilica, the roman theatre, the Temple of Emperor Augustus, a colonnaded street and remains of the ancient city walls. During the Byzantine period, a church was erected just outside and to the east of the city walls, where today stands a mosque. Christian sources dating back to the Fourth century AD believe this church to be the burial site of Saint John the Baptist. The current building was reconstructed by the crusades during the second half of the XII century and was second in grandeur only to the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

The project

A substantial part of the village's historical centre is in severe ruin with evidence of much structural instability. The effects of this degradation and abandonment strike the younger population of Sebastyia in particular, who have come to use this area as a playground, however the whole towns population suffer from the unhygienic conditions, poor sanitation and terrible road conditions.



The involvement of ATS in Sebastyia, working alongside the local council to help the community, was fiercely supported and launched by the late Father Michele Piccirillo, an archaeologist of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum. ATS aims to continue with its efforts to preserve this sacred site. We also seek to support the local economy using local workers to help with the ongoing renovation of the historical old town, removing the rubble and debris in order to restore this site to its former glory. Once accomplished, the local community and pilgrims alike will be able to enjoy the town of Sebastyia once more.

Ongoing activities

1. - Research and documentation regarding the state of conservation
2. - Ridding the area of rubble and debris
3. - Consolidation and renovation of the ancient ruins
4. - Professional training for the local community to promote the importance of this sacred site
5. - Promotion of Sebastyia and of the lodging facilities available to visiting groups.



More information: www.proterrasancta.org

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Support the Holy Land!

ATS – Pro Terra Sancta

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ATS Pro Terra Sancta is the non-governmental charitable organisation of the Custody of the Holy Land. It promotes and coordinates activities for the development of international solidarity in the Middle East.