

## APPEAL

After the great changes that have taken place in Egypt, the situation in which Syria now finds itself shows in an unequivocal manner how the Middle Eastern panorama is being rapidly transformed. A year ago such scenarios would have been impossible to envisage.

In these months of great tension, when Syria is being torn apart by internal clashes, and where the conflict seems to be assuming more and more the form of a civil war, the Franciscans, together with the few other members of the Latin Church, are committed to supporting the local Christian population.

The Custody is present in various areas within the country: Damascus, Aleppo, Latakia, Orontes.

The medical dispensaries in the Franciscan monasteries, following the tradition of the Custody, have become places of refuge and hospitality for everyone, regardless of whether they are Alawite, Sunni, Christian, rebels or government-supporters.

At a time of total confusion and dismay, many businesses, especially exporters and importers, have closed their doors. Only bare traces remain of the thousands of tourists who until recently were the lifeblood of a modern and flourishing industry which had created hundreds of jobs in the transport, lodging and service sectors.

Agricultural production is also facing grave difficulties. The international embargo prevents any possibility of exporting and prices have collapsed. The weakest elements of the population have inevitably been the hardest hit, and are suffering in particular from energy and water shortages. In the major cities there are power outages at various times during the day, if not for the entire day, and gasoline is rationed. All of this has created enormous difficulties for the population, who are forced to face the harsh winter temperatures with no means of heating their homes.

To be with the people, to welcome and assist those in need, without regard for race, religion and nationality. To guarantee, through its confident presence, religious services to the faithful because they understand the importance of remaining in one's own country. This remains the sense of the Franciscan mission. In times not dissimilar from those in which Francis addressed the friars, exhorting them to maintain firm the values of the Gospel. In his simple exhortations Francis reflected the grace received from the Lord, and through his daily life testified to the acceptance of faith as the most dear and precious thing to be cultivated and strengthened. We friars, who find ourselves enriched by his extraordinary example, inherited without any merit on our part, have the task of emulating and transmitting the teaching of our master to future generations, so that they will be able to continue along the path traced out by him with such immense love and humble dedication.

We ask all friends of ATS pro Terra Sancta to support, through a concrete gesture, the numerous Syrian Christians and the charitable works of the Custody of the Holy Land. The funds collected will be delivered rapidly to the resident friars in Syria, who will ensure they are used wisely and carefully.

We would be grateful if you could transmit this appeal widely, and we send our best wishes for Peace and Goodwill!

*Fra Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM*



Your online contribution (credit card – VISA/MasterCard – or PayPal)

<http://www.proterrasancta.org/en/help/>

Your contribution via bank transfer

ATS – IBAN: IT67 W050 18121010 0000 0122691 - BIC /Swift code: CCRTIT2T84A

For further information on the situation in Syria: [www.terrasanta.net](http://www.terrasanta.net)

[www.proterrasancta.org](http://www.proterrasancta.org)

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