

HOLY LAND COMMISSARIAT

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To the people of the Church in Australia, on GOOD FRIDAY 2016 –

When Fr Pierbattista Pizzaballa OFM, Custos of the Holy Land, was asked how can we help the Church in the Middle East, he answered, “We must first pray, because prayer is a sign of delivery, prayer is trusting our lives and everyone’s life to God, our provident and merciful Father.”

“Then we must support, in every possible way, those few Christians who are still living in the Middle East. And most of all, we must let them know that we will remain here despite all the trials and difficulties and signs of death. And I would also ask for economic help to relief organizations in Syria that, despite this atrocious war, continue working.”

The fourteen Franciscan friars in Syria have opened their ten friaries and parishes to refugees and have organized four reception centres. These provide basic food and distribute clothing, medicines and other essentials. A friar commented: “You can’t ask the faithful to follow Christ or to journey spiritually if they can’t eat or sleep! We are constantly at work, but we depend on the resources and gifts that we receive.”

Fr Custos added, “It is important and necessary not to give up, to continue believing that it is possible to do something and that this is not the end of our history but that instead it is possible to conserve this unique Christian patrimony that the Middle East has preserved until today.”

A succession of Popes has commissioned and entrusted the Franciscans with organizing the Good Friday Collection for the benefit of the Holy Land. Pope Francis, in his turn, has asked all the Catholic dioceses in the world to hold this special collection and to send their contribution to the Commissariat of the Holy Land in their country.

What the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land receives is not only for the upkeep of the Holy Places but also for funding those pastoral, charitable, educational and social works that the friars promote in Syria and everywhere else in the Holy Land, for the welfare of their Christian brothers and sisters and of other local people in need.

The annual Good Friday collection unites all Christians in supporting our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. It allows our parishioners to help maintain the presence of Christians in the Middle East. We in Australia have our part to play in this effort. The friars and the local Christian communities greatly appreciate our contribution.

Our Australian Church has always contributed generously to the Good Friday Collection. I sincerely thank the Parish Priests for promoting the collection, and our lay people for your contributions, both great and small. The “widow’s mite” is very much appreciated.

Signature



Friar Carl Schafer OFM

Commissary of the Holy Land (Australia)

www.holylandfranciscansaustralia.org