



HOLY LAND COMMISSARIAT

Franciscan Provincial Office
47 Victoria Street, Waverley NSW 2024
Tel (02) 9369 9300 Fax (02) 9369 9322
Email admin@franciscans.org.au
Web www.holylandfranciscansaustralia.org

To the people of the Church of Australia, on GOOD FRIDAY 2019 –

For 800 years, Franciscan friars have shared the hazardous lives of Christians in the war-torn countries of the Middle East. The civil war in Syria has inflicted unspeakable suffering on the people. The friars are still doggedly present, living among and for them.

Christians and Muslims pleaded with the ISIS when Fr Hanna Aloof OFM was about to be killed. "This priest helps all of us. He found food for us. Our children attending his school were never charged." The ISIS let him go, but the Cross, statues and pictures had to be demolished in 48 hours. Another friar, Fr Dhyia, was released after six months in captivity. Unaware of who he was or where he was, he was taken to Italy for medical treatment.

Syria has captured our attention, but the Custody of the Holy Land embraces not only Syria but also Israel and Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Rhodes and Cyprus.

The Good Friday Collection finances the works of the Custody, including parishes, schools, homes for orphans, lodging for pilgrims, positions of employment and residences for the Arab Christians most in need, as well as the perennial upkeep of ancient sanctuaries. The Arab Christians trace their faith back to Pentecost, where they are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles: "... Cretans and Arabs, we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God" (Acts 2:10).

Our Pope's world-wide Good Friday Collection offers us Australian Catholics an opportunity to contribute to the upkeep of the Holy Places and to express our solidarity with Christians not only in the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land but also in the Latin Diocese of Jerusalem and in six ancient Oriental Communities in the Middle East. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, writes: "I am glad to transmit to all who work for the success of the Good Friday Collection, the deepest gratitude of the Holy Father together with my own gratitude and that of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches."

Our Australian parishioners, Parish Priests and Bishops have always been most generous to the Good Friday Collection. In 2018, your contributions combined to raise a record total of \$1.4 million. Our donation is a direct way to make a difference in the lives of those caught up in war, violence and instability in the Custody of the Holy Land and elsewhere in the Middle East. I thank you all wholeheartedly on their behalf.

Carl Schafer OFM

Friar Carl Schafer OFM
Commissary of the Holy Land (Australia)