

**Catholic Parish of St Ives and Papworth
A Registered Charity**

Supporting our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

12 of our parishioners recently returned from a visit to the Holy Land. There, we met many people who are suffering greatly as a direct result of the political situation. It is easy to forget that many Arab families and communities are Christian, and that many have been so since the time of Christ himself.

As well as raising our awareness of the suffering there and increasing our prayers for peace, the visit opened our eyes to poverty of an extent that tested our Christian hope. Many Christians are emigrating to get away from the increasing spiral of hopelessness. They feel abandoned by the Christians of the West and their cry is: "Please help us!"

As St Paul reminds us: When one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers with it. In the face of such suffering we felt we had to respond. The question is: "How do we respond?"

This leaflet is an invitation to you to join in supporting our Christian brothers and sisters in the Holy Land.

We found:

- ❖ An unemployment rate of over 70% in the Palestinian Territories
- ❖ Severe economic problems in regard to state infrastructure (buildings, roads, public services, education and healthcare)
- ❖ Mounting pressure on the social fabric of society
- ❖ For every one adult in employment, 9 others depend on that income in order to live.
- ❖ One in five children are chronically anaemic, leading to severe restriction in development of their immune system and cognitive function.
- ❖ The United Nations has identified the malnutrition of children a problem as serious as that in the Congo or in Zimbabwe.
- ❖ One woman we met had no food in the house and 5 children to feed. She was reduced to boiling stones in a pot while telling the children their food was cooking. She carried on the deception until the children fell asleep.

Many Christians faced with the apparent hopelessness of their situation see their continued presence in the Holy Land become more and more difficult. For many the only future is one lived in a country other than their own. The exodus of Christians from the land where Christianity began is an increasingly worrying development.

The magnitude of the problem was soon apparent, as were the limitations of our assistance.

Two projects seem to be within our capacity and, from our first-hand encounter, worthwhile supporting:

Aboud Village School .

The village of Aboud is about 15kms from Ramallah in the West Bank. It is a Christian/Muslim village with a population of 2000 consisting of Orthodox and Latin (catholic) communities living and working together. Food is very scarce and incomes for most families are severely limited.

School fees become less of a priority in these circumstances and so the education of the children – along with the future of the school – suffers. Teachers' salaries along with equipment and maintenance leave the finances of the school in peril.

- ❖ There is an urgent need for library books. On average the cost of a book is £2
- ❖ A standing order of £20 p.c.m. will pay for a child to attend school for a year.

There are 104 children attending the school and a staff of 15 teachers. The annual running cost of the school is \$150,000. Presently 80 % of the children in the school are Christian and 20% are Muslim. The parish priest estimates that there are about 200 children who are presently unable to attend the school as their parents are cannot find the money to pay the fees.

Fr Aziz, the Parish Priest of Aboud says: “We are in great need. Many of our men are unemployed and their families suffer the consequences. I try to use any money we get not only to improve our lives and our village; but I use it to employ local men on any work we do. Your help and support is so vital to us. We are constantly “locked in” by road blocks, only a few days ago many of our people did not arrive back in the village until after midnight due to being stopped at military checkpoints.”

Fr Aziz is presently getting local workers to repair and restore the local cemetery and to make a small park with flowers and benches for villagers to sit and meet. He is also trying to restore a 6th century Byzantine church just outside the village which was blown up by the Israeli forces for “security reasons”. The main income of the village

was from Olive trees, most of which have been destroyed by the Israeli forces for the same reason.

Taybeh Medical Centre.

Taybeh is a Christian village about 30kms from Jerusalem and 15 Km from Ramallah in the West Bank. Caritas Jerusalem helps provide a small medical facility as part of the Parish Center It is here where Dr Riad Muaddi runs the very busy clinic and surgery whilst also visiting patients in their own homes.

His “patch” covers 10 villages and 120 women receive antenatal care each week. The nearest hospital is 30 minutes away by ambulance, but due to road-blocks and curfews the journey can take up to 2 hours. In cases of serious trauma or complications at birth, these delays can prove fatal.

The Latin Patriarchate (equivalent to our Diocese) in collaboration with Caritas Jerusalem has said that it will build a maternity facility in the centre this year. Dr Riad’s concern is that he will need equipment for the facility along with drugs for his Dispensary.

- ❖ Would you like to provide a piece of equipment for the Maternity Unit? We have details of requirements and prices.
- ❖ Would you like to make a donation for the provision of drugs for the Dispensary Clinic?

Taybeh has a large secondary school and a youth retreat centre. There is also a convent in the village staffed by French sisters who help in the clinic, school and parish. Its main income was provided by Olive groves, but many of these have been destroyed by the Israeli forces. The main income to the village now comes from Taybeh beer!

Staying in touch.

There is a web page that gives more details about not only the village of Taybeh, but also the situation in Palestine at www.lpj.org/Nonviolence

The young people of Aboud have put together a web site, and this can be found at: www.hcsn.org/aboutyouth

Our parish web pages can be found at: www.sacredheart-stives.org

For more information on our visit to the Holy Land or to make suggestions about your own initiatives for fundraising, please go to our Parish web site and click on the Holy Land link.

How to help.

- ❖ Set up a monthly Standing Order which will give a regular donation which can be applied to any one of the four needs outlined, or can go into the general fund which will be equally split among the projects. Please contact us for the appropriate form.
- ❖ Make a donation. Cash or cheques can be put into any collection, put through the Presbytery letter box or sent to 19 Needingworth Road, St Ives, Cambs PE27 5JT. Please make cheques payable to: **Holy Land Fund 2003**
- ❖ If you pay Income Tax, signing one simple form will allow us to reclaim tax on your donation at the rate of 28p for every pound you give. Please contact us for the appropriate form.
- ❖ Save your 5p coins. Put a jar in the kitchen or near the phone and put your coins in each day. When your jar is full, bring the coins to us and we'll count the little devils for you!
- ❖ Fundraise. You might like to hold a garage sale, cake stall, car wash, coffee morning, sponsored something. You may have a gift or talent that you could use to raise some money – we already have the offer of a ballet concert for the fund.

Please photocopy this information sheet and give it to your friends, work colleagues, family members.

Members of the group who went to the Holy Land are very willing to come and speak to your club, society or organisation. We see raising awareness of the situation as a main part of our response. Please contact us to make the necessary arrangements.

**On behalf of the people in Aboud
and Taybeh "Thank you!"**

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