



**An excerpt from the Homily of His  
Most Rev. Pierbattista Pizzaballa,  
Apostolic Administrator of the Latin  
Patriarchate of Jerusalem for  
Christmas 2016**

“Behold: the Lord is at the gates!” (cf. James 5:9).

Christmas is the entrance of the Son of God into the world: Christ enters the world, he comes among his people. And before Him all is an opening and a closing of doors. In the time following the Jubilee of Mercy, we can interpret Christmas as the door that God keeps open to go out to man and invite him to enter into communion with him...

In this land of ours and in this world of ours, where many speak of peace and life but few decide to cross the threshold of commitment and decision, Christmas repeats the invitation to open the doors to Christ who wants to make Himself known, and to man. Through the rites and prayers of this holy night, the Father, in Christ His Son, comes again to meet man and ask him: where are you? (cf. Gen 3:9) and to invite him to enter into the house of brotherhood.

Will we cross the threshold? It is not in effect a slogan. It is an invitation addressed to man and to society, to politics and to economics, to the poor and the powerful of this world: will we come out of our enclosures, will we open the door of our judgments and prejudices and will we go

to meet Him, who calls us? Will we go to Bethlehem to begin a new journey or will we be closed in our palaces to protect our power, to defend our interests, ready even to exclude the other while maintaining our positions? Keeping our gaze on the Holy Child, will we know how to give an answer to the thirst for justice and dignity, to the desire for love and brotherhood, to the need of encounter or will we put our trust in our short-term political or military strategies?

Will we have the courage to let ourselves be provoked by the Holy Child, setting aside special interests, and to look at the other as a brother, in the full liberty of the children of God, stripping ourselves of all violence, oppression and arrogance?

The answer is not written in the stars but in our free and responsible choices. And while we look to the Christ Child, open Door of the Father that no rejection can close, trust is renewed and hope is revived and we sing again: *In te domine sperávi: non confundar in aeternum*, You are our hope: we will not be disappointed!

<http://bit.ly/2j9buAf>

## Christmas in Gaza

*The Gaza City community celebrated together, once again, another Christmas of hope, despite everything.*



A feeling of hope was perceived by the small Christian community in Gaza, on Sunday, December 18, 2016, when a delegation from the Latin Patriarchate went to Gaza to celebrate an early Christmas Mass with the local Christians. The Gaza Strip parish is one of the many small parishes in the Holy Land where there are only 1,200 Christians out of a total population of 2 million.



Fr. Raed Abusahlia, the General Director of Caritas Jerusalem *“Our message is clear: Stay here! We are here and we want you to stay here, because the Holy Family during their flight from Bethlehem to Egypt came through Gaza, and we want the small Christian family, what is left of it, the*

*little flock of Gaza, to stay, because we do not want to lose the Christian presence. So we are here, and we want you to stay.”*

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, around 500 people gathered in the Latin Patriarchate Parish hall in order to celebrate Christmas together. Caritas Jerusalem distributed 300 Christmas presents to children under the age of 14.



*“Life for a child in Gaza has never been harder, so I was wondering how to bring some joy to our children there and then I received a message from Brother Stephen Tuohy from Bethlehem University Community with a donation which might cover the Christmas gifts for the children of Gaza, immediately I wrote to him: “I would like to tell you that your donation was providential because just this morning we decided to offer an amount for the Christmas gifts for the children in Gaza because Fr. Mario asked us to help him... We didn’t know how to cover the expenses... and when your message arrived the same day I told our accountant to allocate it to this purpose... Truly, I am more convinced every day that we have to believe in the Divine Providence and strongly” Fr. Raed Abusahlia.*



Caritas Jerusalem would like to thank all the donors who support us in Gaza with different projects and programmes. Their support is invaluable and a proof to them that they are not alone.

You can see the report of our visit to Gaza:

<http://www.terrasanctablog.org/2016/12/22/it-is-already-christmas-in-gaza/>

### **Santa was here!**



On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, another Christmas event took place in Aboud medical center by Caritas Jerusalem's Health department in cooperation with the Holy Bible Society. 140 children came to the clinic to celebrate Christmas and get gifts from Santa with more fun, joy and love.

The children were so excited watching a theater that tells the story of the birth of Christ, the meaning of Christmas season and the importance of loving and respecting one another.



*“Despite all the difficulties that we face every year, we manage to celebrate Christmas in the heart of Aboud”* Stated Mrs. Mayasa` Kassabry, Health department's project coordinator

Children sang Christmas carols, danced, prepared Christmas decorations and crafts and played games with Santa.

The event came to its conclusion by distributing 140 packets of Christmas chocolates.

## Entertainment and presents to the children of Jerusalem



On the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, Caritas Jerusalem's Social Services Department distributed over 300 tickets to children from various kindergartens, orphanages and other institutions to attend a Christmas Show at Jerusalem International YMCA in cooperation with Ms. Osnat Yehudit, the events manager.



The event took place in the spacious hall of the YMCA where artists performed different activities for the children and among them were the popular local clowns Fozi & Mozi; the children were fascinated by the show and screamed out of pure joy.



The show was ended by a visit from Santa who danced and sang with the children and distributed presents to them.

Christmas is a time of joy for us all, but particularly to children who wait impatiently for their presents. Many of the children that we serve would have little or nothing to look forward to during these festive seasons and we are grateful for the generosity of our friends who support us and share the vision of Caritas.

## A Season Of Love And Laughter



Christmas is the time when churches are filled with families and children to sing Christmas carols and to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It is about spending quality time with family and loved ones, singing, dancing and creating memories to cherish forever.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 the Elderly Day Care Center (EDCC) celebrated Christmas with 75 senior citizens in the presence of Fr. Raed Abusahlia, the general director of Caritas Jerusalem, Dr. Laila Ghannam, Governor of Ramallah and Al Bireh, representatives from Jawwal, the Pal-Tel group and other participants. The event was organized by the youth department, the social workers and the team of EDCC.

The day started by a holy mass presided by Fr. Raed Abusahlia who mentioned the story of Jesus' birth. *"We should prepare our hearts and souls for fresh beginnings with the coming of the new year for the old man died and the new man was born with the birth of our Lord"*



The elderly were accompanied to the Latin Patriarchate hall in Ramallah, where St. Joseph school's choir performed Christmas carols and Dr. Laila Ghannam expressed her appreciation for taking part of the event by stating, *"Palestine is the origin of good news and the mother of monotheism, our forefathers represent our memories and history of Palestine"*.



Musicians entertained the elderly with their classical Palestinian songs and the youth sang and danced with them, then they had lunch together where they shared jokes and laughs. The event came into its conclusion by the coming

of Santa and the distribution of Christmas presents.



Caritas Jerusalem would like to thank our friends, the volunteers and local partners for making this day possible.

This Christmas, we demonstrated our gratitude to our beloved elderly for the support and love they have given us throughout our lives.

### **Who needs Santa?**



December is not only the last month of the year; it is the most joyful month where people celebrate the birth of the Lord; where homes and streets are decorated with the Christmas spirit and where people gather to light the Christmas tree, invite their friends, relatives and neighbors to enjoy the feast and share gifts.

As part of our tradition, Caritas Jerusalem celebrates with those who are lonely, sick and marginalized by visiting several institutions in Bethlehem to spread love and joy.



On the 30<sup>th</sup> of December 2016, Caritas Jerusalem's volunteers visited several institutions among them Caritas Baby Hospital, The Antonian Charitable Society of Bethlehem, Creche Center for Orphans, Jemima Center for handicapped, the Franciscan House of the Child, the Convent of Carmelite sisters and Al-Kalemeh Center in Bethlehem. The volunteers together with children and the senior citizens sang Christmas carols, danced, painted the children's faces and distributed 300 gifts.



*“Caritas Jerusalem encourages young people to volunteer in the society and to help those who are in need all through the year, I thank everyone who*

*participated in our activities and ask them to continue their hard work.”* Stated Tony Abdo, Caritas Jerusalem's youth coordinator

Caritas Jerusalem through the youth department was able to reach more than 400 children and senior citizens; we were able to draw a smile on the children's faces, we were able to make the senior citizens feel loved and we were able to give Christmas its true meaning.



### How can you help?

Support our activities

Your support is essential to provide long-term assistance to our beneficiaries.

Please see below our bank details to make a donation:

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Account number: 457793/0/510 USD

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Branch No: 9110

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