

Dear Friends,

It is Ash Wednesday and I've just returned from Mass to celebrate the beginning of Lent. In his homily the priest talked about Lent being a sacred time of prayer and fasting to reflect on the life, death and resurrection of Christ, and he said that in our busy lives time is one of the most precious gifts we can share with those in need. He recommended that we think of different kinds of fasting, not only from a favorite food or entertainment. For example, we can ask ourselves if we engage in unnecessary activities that take excessive time and leave us too busy to give attention to God and our neighbor. This Lent can we "give up" some unnecessary activity and use the time saved to spend time with God in prayer, to befriend a lonely person, to visit the sick, and so on.

I had recently attended a Caritas Regional Conference entitled "At the Service of Common Good in a Pluralistic Context: Conference on the mission and role of Caritas at the heart of the Catholic Church in the MONA region (Middle East and North Africa). As different participants reported on the work of Caritas in their countries I was in admiration at the diversity and breadth of service offered by so many committed people to the poor, the persecuted, the lonely, the sick, the refugees ... I could go on and on. Then, as I listened to the priest's homily on Ash Wednesday encouraging people to give their time as well as resources to those in need, I reflected on how all over the world people of abundant and meagre means contribute what they can to their local Caritas and it is their contribution in money and kind (volunteering) that makes this world-wide service of the common good possible.

In this Newsletter you can read about some of the many services that Caritas Jerusalem provides for the young and old, for potential leaders to develop their capacity to serve their local communities, and to enable families to earn a decent living with the help of small loans. These are basic services made possible through donations from you our friends and partners, and in many cases with the help of volunteers and donations in kind as in our Elderly Day Care Centre.

Together we are "Caritas". I feel privileged to be part of this world-wide organization at the heart of the Catholic Church of which each one of you is equally a member. Thank you for your support.

Sr. Bridget Tighe FMDM
General Director
Caritas Jerusalem

One More Reason to Smile



Health education in schools

Preventing tooth decay among children and pregnant women in remote villages is one of the projects that Caritas Jerusalem operates in the villages of Aboud and Taybeh in Palestine where dental care is not a priority to the residents and pregnant women avoid visiting the dentist because of false belief that it may negatively affect the child.



Fun activities during health days

“My son used to argue with me every morning before going to school about brushing his teeth, now thanks to Caritas Jerusalem he brushes his teeth on his own and tells me ‘mama, don’t forget to brush your teeth as well’” a mother said.

The team also focused on pregnant women, since most of them refrain from going to the dentist whilst pregnant. During the year, 589 pregnant women attended multiple sessions on the importance of dental care and hygiene, 102 of them received treatments.

“I suffered from severe tooth ache when I was 4 months pregnant, and my mom told me not to go to the dentist because it’s bad for my baby. But thanks to Caritas Jerusalem I now know that we can get treated and it won’t affect the baby at all” one pregnant woman said.

Over the past two years, this project succeeded in raising awareness among the Aboud and Taybeh villagers about dental health problems and health care. And it changed the mentality around the myths related to treating oral health problems during pregnancy. Moreover,

the team was able to alter bad oral habits of children into good habits and they in turn passed the message to their siblings at home.



Fun activities during health days

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Service Cooperation au Development (SeCoDev) in Switzerland for the funding of this three-year project which is making a huge difference in lives of the people in Aboud and Taybeh and the surrounding villages.

Valentine’s Day in the Elderly Day Care Center (EDCC)



The elderly and social workers

On the 15th of February 2018, Caritas Jerusalem's EDCC celebrated Valentine's Day with the senior citizens. Each year we celebrate Valentine's day to express love and appreciation to our senior citizens.

The event started with a holy Mass at the Holy Family Church in Ramallah, where 30 senior citizens participated and Father Akram Musharbish, the parish priest told them about the story of Saint Valentino and why we celebrate this day. After the Mass, everyone went back to the center and talked about the importance of love.



During the mass

The event was concluded by singing traditional songs together, dancing, and eating dessert that local donors granted to the EDCC.

Caritas Jerusalem is thankful for all the local donors that made this event possible. This small gesture made tens of senior citizens feel loved and cared for on this special day.



Cutting the cake with the senior citizens

Since 1990 Caritas Jerusalem has been running the EDCC in the city of Ramallah in the West Bank. It provides social services for more than 85 needy and lonely senior citizens.

Local Health Committees



Presentation of the project

Caritas Jerusalem tries to provide new opportunities, capabilities and the needed support to help communities flourish and have a better future through the local health committees project.

The local health committees (LHC) promote awareness on issues such as health, commitment towards a cleaner environment, social justice and encourages a better educational system.

Through various activities implemented among the local villages, the members in cooperation with Caritas Jerusalem seek to create community leaders and provide instruments of change in the society.



Lecture on social justice

In total there are 9 committees, 5 in the West Bank and 4 in Gaza, each committee consists of 10 members. In 2018, they were able to administer medical checkups for 200 people in 5 different villages in the West Bank. In addition, they conducted open medical days reaching 889 people in 5 different villages. In the Gaza strip the LHC conducted 4 training sessions and the courses varied between medical, environmental and social.



Women in Gaza attending a lecture

“We can see how people are adopting a healthier lifestyle. For example, in some villages numerous women decided to start walking on a weekly basis. In other villages we can see volunteers cleaning up streets and painting walls together” Said one of the committee members.

Over the past three years these committees were able to promote new opportunities, a healthier lifestyle and a better future for their villages

We would like to thank Caritas Spain for funding this project and helping us create a better future for these communities.

Small Loans but Big Changes

Loans can make a significant change in people’s lives. Caritas Jerusalem grants loans to business owners, families that need house renovation or university students for educational purposes.

Caritas Jerusalem aims to enhance the lives of Palestinians through multiple ways, our microcredit department is one of them. Through granting small loans we were able to help tens of Palestinians improve their economic status and make a real change in their lives.



Icons in the souvenir shop

E.A owns a souvenir shop. He mainly sells icons which is a profitable trade in Bethlehem, where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from all over the world visit and purchase souvenirs. The icons are imported from Greece and Italy. He needed to replenish his shop with icons but found himself short of cash. Therefore, he approached Caritas for an income generating loan to import new products.



Icons in the souvenir shop

With the help of Caritas Jerusalem not only was he able to keep his business running but also sold icons to other local stores in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. This small loan was able to help multiple Palestinian business owners by providing them the needed products in the right time.

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:

Bank Name: Arab Bank

Swift Code: ARABPS 22110

Account number: 457793/0/510 USD

Credit Account: Caritas Jerusalem

At Arab Bank in Al-Ram

P.O.Box: 2445-Al-Ram