



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

Under the mantle of Our Lady Woman of Valor: welcoming migrants in Israel

The pastoral center Our Lady Woman of Valor was opened in Tel Aviv by the St. James Vicariate for Hebrew-speaking Catholics of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in March 2014. It is a place of welcome for Catholic migrants of diverse origins who are in Israel for business purposes or as asylum seekers. They require pastoral care in Hebrew and consideration of the specific issues that these communities are facing. The Center is one of the projects that the Order of the Holy Sepulchre supports with particular attention and generosity.

The history of the Centre

In March 2014, the Catholic Church, thanks to the support and generosity of many benefactors, including the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre, was able to buy a building in the south of Tel Aviv (33 Shivat Zion Street) to build the Our Lady Woman of Value Pastoral Center. The property was renovated and in 2014 a church, a chapel, a meeting room and two apartments were built, one for the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres who come from the Philippines and one for the Sisters of Perpetual Help who come from Sri Lanka.

Why Our Lady Woman of Valor?

Our Lady Woman of Valor, the name chosen for the center taken from the Book of Proverbs (31,10.15-17), comes from an iconographic representation of Mary as patroness of migrants in Israel, painted specifically for the Center. Our Lady has Jesus on her heart, behind her the city of Tel Aviv and gathers together all migrants under her mantle: She is the woman of valor who protects her children. Many of these migrants are strong women who have been forced from their homes and their families to provide financially for their needs.

Who are the foreign workers, migrants and asylum seekers in Israel?

According to statistics published by the Israeli Interior Ministry for 2015, there are 227,000 migrants in Israel. These include 91,000 who entered the country on a tourist visa and come mostly from the former Soviet Union, 77,000 who arrived with a work visa mostly from Thailand, the Philippines, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and China, and about 43,000 who are asylum seekers who entered Israel through the Egyptian border and come from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan. The vast majority are Christians.

What happens at the "Woman of Valor" Pastoral Center?

The main function of the Center is to host pastoral activities. Seven Masses are celebrated each weekend, with a participation of about 400 people per Mass. Particular attention is also paid to the religious education of children and young people. Added to these activities are initiatives to support and help migrants facing difficulty, such as providing daycare for children. To date, there are four facilities and they welcome 51 children cared for by twelve professional minders. The generous bequest of Rose Bente Lee, a Dame of the US Mid Atlantic Lieutenancy, has allowed the project to be taken forward. The Center also has a room for convalescing migrants following their discharge from hospital.



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