



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

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

The Order addresses the difficult situation of migrants in the Holy Land



The human situation of migrants in the Holy Land is critical and the Order of the Holy Sepulchre is committed to supporting them through the activities and facilities offered by the Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew speaking Catholics. In fact, more than 60,000 migrants are Catholics and they represent an important part of the face the Catholic Church has and will have in Israel. Legal issues, poverty, the need to work but nowhere to leave children, contribute to creating a complex framework pushing parents to put their children into dangerous “baby warehouses” (discover more about it here on the right).

The Order of the Holy Sepulchre wishes these children may have a start in life that will allow them to lead lives devoid of suffering and that will promote their right to flourish as human beings. In order to make that happen we support the promotion of day care units that guarantee an acceptable environment for babies from the age of three months to three years. At present 90 babies are being looked after daily, giving these children a chance in life but also applying a model of healthy child care that can be adopted by others. We also promote after-school programs where more grown-up children can receive adequate help in coping with the load at school and also providing a safe haven, where children can come when their parents are still at work.

This Christmas the Grand Master Cardinal Edwin O’Brien wants to remind us of all the activities that the Order supports on behalf of these very young migrants so that all our members may celebrate Christmas in communion with these children who today give an African or Asian face to the Baby Jesus, thus well representing the universality of the Church. Through your regular contributions, each year the Grand Magisterium of the Order is able to

send a sum of money to support these facilities for migrant children and thus support their whole families.

(December 21, 2016)

There are around **227,000 migrants in Israel** of whom about 45,000 are asylum seekers (who have applied for refugee status but have not received it). About 75,000 are legal migrant workers, 15,000 more are no longer legal after the expiry of their legal status and over 90,000 are those who arrived as tourists and have stayed to work. About 40% live in Tel Aviv and surroundings. Very few migrant workers gain permanent residency. The children of migrants born in the country, who are fluent in Hebrew and part of society often have no status.

In Israel, **asylum seekers** are in the most precarious situation as they have no rights, often not even to work legally. Many of them are from Eritrea and a large number of these people, especially the women, have passed through the hands of human traffickers, some tortured, raped and mutilated. Since 2007, Israel has only recognized four individuals as refugees. Thus, this population has no access to health insurance or welfare and most do not have a regular permission to work.

The situation is dire but worst for the most fragile: the sick in mind and body and the infants. In south Tel Aviv they live in slums and today there is a dire situation where discrimination and poverty, despair and violence intersect. Among the most tragic of consequences is the emergence of "**baby warehouses.**" Here babies under three years old are "stored", up to 60 babies from one month old to three years old, in darkened rooms, crammed together, wrapped tightly in swaddling clothes so they do not move and can be looked after by one or two untrained adults. The children are underfed and not looked after properly. Lack of proper nutrition keeps them quiet. This storage of young lives permits mothers to work and so to make the whole family stay alive.

When these children, at the age of 3, are integrated into **educational structures supervised by the state** they are at a severe disadvantage, not having been stimulated to develop as normal children are. The tragic lack of human contact in the early months of life will inevitably lead to motor, linguistic, emotional and behavioral retardation and poor cognitive and physical functioning. This can be the beginning of generations of suffering. Once these children are integrated into the Israeli school system, they need support to keep up with their classmates.

Discover the Order's support for the children of migrants in Israel... Download the informative brochure and experience Christmas in spiritual communion with them

Valuing ALL

Every child deserve the chance to grow and mature.

Most often the children suffer most!

Caring for every child is a way we can fulfill our duty, as an Order and as Catholics, to give every child an opportunity to LAUGH, LEARN & LOVE



This Christmas

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SHE THANKS YOU!

THE MIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE HOLY LAND NEED OUR HELP



The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre