



HOLY LAND COMMISSARIAT

Franciscan Provincial Office

47 Victoria Street, Waverley NSW 2024, Australia

Tel: (02) 9369 9300 • Email: holyland@franciscans.org.au

To the people of the Church in Australia, for the Holy Land Collection 2026

As many of you are aware, for 800 years the Franciscan Friars have shared the difficult lives of Christians in the countries that make up the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land: Israel and Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Rhodes and Cyprus. The people of these countries face their own difficulties, but particularly Christians due to their minority status. Among them, the friars have never ceased offering their pastoral care and practical support.

Over recent years, with the Covid Pandemic, wars in Syria and Gaza, and now the war with Iran, the people of the Holy Land have endured great turmoil. Until now, the hope for a lasting peace in Gaza remains uncertain and the task of rebuilding lives and infrastructure seems overwhelming.

Just recently last November, I had the privilege of attending the international meeting of Holy Land Commissaries in Jerusalem. There our group heard from the local people and of what the Franciscan Friars are doing (and have never stopped doing) in support of them. We heard stories of courage and resilience and encountered Christians yearning for a future for their children. From them and Church leaders came the plea for peace and hope. They also pleaded for pilgrims to return, but now the hope for this has been set back by the fear created by the war with Iran. Pilgrims are vital as they generate income that allows the Friars and local Church to fulfil their mission of caring for the Holy Places, running parishes and schools, and caring for orphans, refugees, the homeless, and other social projects. Pilgrims also give much needed employment to local people, allowing Christian families to remain in the land where Christianity was born.

This year, Fr. Francesco Ielpo OFM, the Franciscan leader of the Holy Land Custody reminds us of the urgent need to continue supporting the Holy Land, especially in the light of recent happenings:

The last few years have been particularly difficult for the Christian communities of the Middle East. The war has brought death, destruction, and fear, not only to Gaza, but also to the West Bank, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria. The suffering caused by the conflict has been compounded by the prolonged absence of pilgrims, which has exacerbated an already profound economic and employment crisis. Many Christian families, who once relied on the Holy Places and pilgrimage-related activities, are now experiencing great difficulty.

We have just concluded the Jubilee Year of Hope and hope itself appears to be damaged: in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Northern Israel, as well as in the Christian communities of Lebanon and Syria. The lack of security and employment makes it increasingly difficult to support families and, even more so, to imagine a future for young people and the new generations.

Brothers and sisters, the Good Friday Holy Land Collection remains extremely important and a mission in which we can all participate. The hope is that our Australian parishioners, Parish Priests and Bishops will again be as generous as they have always been. Our donation is a direct way to make a difference in the lives of people who are keeping alive the Christian presence in the land of Jesus in the face of great difficulty. On their behalf, I humbly and wholeheartedly thank you all.

Mario Debattista ofm

Friar Mario Debattista OFM
Commissary of the Holy Land (Australia)



Good Friday Holy Land Collection – April 3, 2026

Good Friday is a unique day when we recall the love of Jesus unto death for us, when he shows us the extent to which God is in solidarity with our suffering humanity. Can we use this occasion to recall our need to be in solidarity with those suffering around us, and in a particular way, with the suffering Church of the Holy Land?

Supporting the church in the Holy Land is an historic mission. Since the time of St. Paul, who urged his missionary Churches not to forget the needs of the Church in Jerusalem, Christians worldwide have understood the responsibility of supporting the land where Jesus walked.

It has never been easy to be a Christian in the Holy Land. In these challenging times in the Middle East, Christians are experiencing unique hardships, made all the worse due to the past pandemic, the war in Gaza and now the war with Iran. We have an opportunity to help them through the Good Friday Holy Land Collection.

Christians in the Holy Land face special challenges, many of which we hear about in the daily news. The political, religious, and military challenges in the Holy Land are more complex than ever. The wars, unrest and instability have been especially hard on Christians. Supporting the Holy Land Collection offers hope to Holy Land Christians. Over recent years, their difficulties have been greatly magnified by the Covid-19 Pandemic and now two wars which are preventing pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. This has had severe economic consequences that have disproportionately affected the Christian people and the most vulnerable in Palestinian society.

The Holy Land Collection offers all Catholics an opportunity to express their solidarity with Holy Land Christians. A donation to the Pope's annual appeal directly makes a difference for those caught up in war, violence and instability. Normally, each year's Collection:

- Supports 29 parishes, 4 homes for orphans, 3 academic institutions
- Helps keep schools open for over 10,000 pre-K to Yr 12 students
- Supports 120 men preparing to be priests or brothers
- Helps rehabilitate 80+ homes for Christian families who cannot afford housing
- Provides senior care facilities in Bethlehem and Nazareth
- Creates over 1,500 jobs in the Holy Land for Christians who would otherwise be unemployed.
- Preserves 54 shrines connected with the life of Jesus and the prophets



Thank you for supporting the Holy Land (Good Friday) Collection as encouraged by Pope Leo XIV and every Pope before him. Through this Collection, you join with Catholics around the world to stand in solidarity with the Church in the Holy Land. When you contribute, you become an instrument of peace in the land where Jesus walked.

Donate by Bank Transfer:

Name of account: Holy Land Commissariat

BSB: 062 267

A/C number: 1001 4847

Please put the name of your parish as a reference.

You can also donate by card on the secure **Commonwealth Bank Bpoint Payment** on the Franciscan Friars website: www.franciscans.org.au/holy-land-commissariat/

Or scan this QR code



*For more information, please contact
the Franciscan Provincial Office on:
Tel: (02) 9369 9300 or
email: admin@franciscans.org.au*