

Israel - Presentation

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When our Lord Jesus Christ wanted to take an infant's body to come to the world He chose Bethlehem, the jewel of Palestine. When He wanted to be baptised He picked the River Jordan, the core of Palestine. He also crowned and blessed Jerusalem, the beating heart of Palestine, with his crucifixion, sacrifice, resurrection and triumph.

Our land was granted exuberant grace when Jesus Christ stepped on every stone in it, His breath purified its air and His words touched the hearts and minds of its people. It became sacred and chaste when the King of peace, justice and love selected it to be the base from which His light is dispersed to the world. His rich teachings called for modesty, selflessness, unconditional love and inner as well as outer peace; these are without doubt the robust pillars of heavenly justice.

Since His ascension our land has suffered and been disputed by people who have clung to different kinds of ambitions and greed: historical, religious, regional and materialistic, hoping to exploit our land and rob it of its chastity. Our peace became just a void word, destitute of meaning and entity. It is just repeated unconsciously by old people who want to die in peace, adults who want to live in peace, youngsters who want to enjoy peace, children who want to grow in peace and babies who want to sleep in peace.

The Palestinian people have to confront sufferings every day as rigid restrictions have been imposed on their movement to certain areas in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Teachers from the West Bank are not allowed to reach their work places in Jerusalem without permits, which are not easily acquired. Also the educational process was negatively affected when many skilful and qualified teachers were forced by the current situation to leave their work in Jerusalem, saving themselves the trouble of being caught and sued. Checkpoints on roads detain and delay students as well as teachers in their efforts to reach their schools.

The building of the wall divided one school into two parts, and many students had to leave the part left behind the wall, in order to seek a more convenient place inside Jerusalem. Many workers lost their jobs and were left with hungry children and weeping wives. Many people lost their lives from both sides: Palestinians and Israelis, including women and children. People have become helpless and hopeless that any solution would be soon reached, and peace seems to be unattainable.

The Christian minority has suffered throughout the years from endless fights and conflicts. As Christianity calls for peace and love, Christians try to hold out the white flag of surrender, calling for peaceful methods to apply justice and equality. They feel that their identity is lost in the chaotic situation that prevails. They can't find themselves anywhere. The Palestinians view them as part of the Christian foreign countries which support Israel while the Israelis consider them part of the Palestinian people against whom they are fighting.

In our school the Christian presence is barely 10% of the total number of students. The number of Christians is declining every year as many of them prefer to leave behind an uncompromising struggle that threatens their existence. In addition, Christians prefer to have a limited number of children as many feel that they are fragile and weak and there is nobody to support them; trying to sustain their children and offer them the best life possible is not at all easy.

We dream of a unified Palestinian and Israeli curriculum that tries to dissolve the differences and disagreements between the two peoples. Students should be taught how to plant love and not how to take revenge. We would also hope that books would not include any cultural,

historical or religious bias, in order to create a healthy environment for the seeds of peace to prosper.

We hope to see the increasing construction of the Mary Ward educational and social institutions in places where people are in need of their services. We wish Mary Ward's Institution much success in carrying out its mission in making the world a better place. We hope that the coming years will be witnesses of its victory in reducing people's agony and sufferings.

We are left with hope that Jesus's words will conquer evil and oppression, that His image will live in our minds, His teachings will reside in our hearts and that one day He will make our land an inseparable part of heaven, embracing it the with love and peace to which we have for so many years so relentlessly aspired.