



On 25 June at 11 AM *fra Pierbattista Pizzaballa*, Custos of the Holy Land, blessed the foundation stone of the **TERRA SANCTA MUSEUM** in Jerusalem. The museum project kicked off with a symbolic ceremony at the *Lapidarium*, an evocative hall which will be part of the coming museum.

Press Release, 25 June 2015

Thursday 25 June the ceremony of the laying of the **TERRA SANCTA MUSEUM** foundation stone took place in the Old City of Jerusalem. The Terra Sancta Museum is the world's first museum dedicated to the roots of Christianity and the preservation of the Holy Places. The museum is an initiative of the **Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land**, who for more than 800 years have safeguarded the Holy Places.

The first stone was blessed by *fra Pierbattista Pizzaballa* and placed atop the purple parchment, a symbolic document he signed and buried underneath the floor for future memory. The ceremony took place at the *Lapidarium* hall of the Monastery of the Flagellation in the Old City of Jerusalem, one of the coming sites of the Museum.

The Terra Sancta Museum will host three sections ☐ Archaeological, Multimedia and Historical ☐ to be set up on two sites in Jerusalem belonging to the Franciscans: the Monastery of the Flagellation and St. Saviour Monastery. The museum will cover an area of 2,573 m<sup>2</sup> that will be entirely restored and restructured.

Through the creation of a modern museum center the Franciscans of the Holy Land wish to enhance the cultural heritage preserved in the places where Jesus lived. At the same they hope to spread a strong message of peace and brotherhood among the faithful, to foster encounters between different cultures and religions (Christian, Muslim, Jewish, and secular), and to support the cultural and economic development of the local communities.

Association pro Terra Sancta, the NGO in support of the Custody of the Holy Land, is in charge of carrying out the project and coordinating the fundraising activities at an international level. The works have kicked-off thanks to the many donations that have arrived from different countries, and not only from the Christian world. Still more needs to be raised in order to carry out the project; a fundraising campaign is currently ongoing to sensitize public, private and non-governmental organizations and individuals.

The museum will be opened on a progressive basis, beginning at the end of 2015 with the inauguration of the Multimedia Section; to be followed by the Archaeological Section, and the Historical Section dedicated to the history of the Custody of the Holy Land by the end of 2017.

The Multimedia Section will offer an immersive and educational environment by means of animations and 3D reconstructions showing the development of the city of Jerusalem from the time of Herod to today. A type of time travel that will help pilgrims and tourists to discover what the city was like at the time of Jesus, and the principal modifications it has undergone in the ensuing two millennia of its tormented history. The aim of the Franciscans of the Holy Land is to use multimedia as an informative tool for understanding the historical and architectural evolution of the Holy Places: first and foremost the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the inspiration for pilgrimages and visits from all over the world. The major transformations and architectural changes that the church has undergone have in fact made it very difficult to understand today what it was originally like.

During the past months, there have been three exhibitions in Italy of items loaned by the Custody of the Holy Land that will showcase in the **Terra Sancta Museum**. The large exhibition dedicated to the figure of St. Francis at the Accademia Gallery in Florence presented a collection of archaeological works of great importance (capitals and tombstones) and archival documents. In Assisi, at the Bonacquisti Palace, the photographic and multimedia exhibition on Jerusalem included the video on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. And in Turin, at the Exhibition of the Holy Shroud (Museum of the Shroud, and the Museum of Oriental Art) four objects from the time of Jesus were on display.

#### **YOUR NAME IN HISTORY - Donor program**

With substantial donations donors can link their name to one of the three sections of the Terra Sancta Museum, one of the rooms, or a group of objects. Their name will be engraved on the famous Jerusalem stone that will be used for the museum pavement and located at the entrance to the rooms. A copy will be delivered to the benefactor. For smaller donations, names will be added to a special wall, located at the museum's entrance.

#### **TERRA SANCTA MUSEUM**

**Multimedia Section.** Jerusalem and the way of the Cross: from Herod to the present day

**Archaeological Section.** Gospel Sites in Palestine

**Historical Section.** The Franciscan Custody in the Holy Land

**The founding institution is the Custody of the Holy Land** ☒ a brotherhood of religious (the Friars Minor) active in the eastern part of the Mediterranean since the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. They are the Custodian of the Holy Places by the will and mandate of the Universal Church. The responsibility for curatorship belongs to the **Studium Biblicum Franciscanum**, an academic and research institute on biblical sciences and archaeology based in Jerusalem.

**Project management and fundraising.** **Association pro Terra Sancta**, Nonprofit organisation in support of the Custody of the Holy Land.

*Steering Committee* - Father Eugenio Alliata ofm, Carla Benelli, Father Stéphane ofm.

For further information: [www.terrasanctamuseum.org](http://www.terrasanctamuseum.org)

Video of the Terra Sancta Museum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LevYsAm5pVg>

Additional useful sites: [www.custodia.org](http://www.custodia.org), [www.proterrasancta.org](http://www.proterrasancta.org), [www.cmc-terrasanta.com](http://www.cmc-terrasanta.com)

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