

Holy Land Pilgrimage Guidelines

Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

In consultation with
The Catholic Near East Welfare Association
Catholic Relief Services
Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

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Pilgrimage may mean embarking on a journey of prayer; accompanying the poor, the oppressed, and refugees in their times of trial; visiting local holy sites; and countless other acts of faith. A pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a special time of spiritual journey for Christians. It is a time when we recommit ourselves to living a Christian life as a life of pilgrimage. For many American Catholics, going on pilgrimage to the Holy Land is an especially appropriate way to come to know the land where Jesus was born, where he preached and healed, suffered, died and rose again.

Originally issued at the time of the Great Jubilee in 2000, these revised and updated Holy Land Pilgrimage Guidelines are meant to encourage pilgrimages to the Holy Land and to offer suggestions to help deepen the spiritual experience of a pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage – A Spiritual Journey

The bishops of the United States, together with the Holy See and the Church in the Holy Land, desire to promote an authentic pilgrimage experience for Catholics visiting the Holy Land. We encourage those who already plan to become pilgrims and those who are considering doing so, to undertake their journeys in a profoundly religious spirit, understanding they will be walking along the way of the Lord. Pilgrimages offer a special opportunity for Christian renewal and for carrying out the Church's mission of solidarity and reconciliation. Pilgrimage is a unique religious undertaking. Down the centuries, pilgrimage, whether begun out of devotion or in penitence, has been the occasion for conversion. Pilgrims are changed by the experience. Hearts and minds transformed forever, pilgrims have returned home with a new sense of their Christian calling to take up a new way of life. We want to encourage Catholics undertaking visits to the Holy Land to do so in the spirit of true pilgrims, to walk prayerfully and devoutly in the steps of our Lord and with openness to the movement of the Spirit of Jesus in their lives.

Potential pilgrims should not be discouraged by reports of the ongoing political instability in the region. They should draw strength from the generations of Christians who have made the pilgrimage to the Holy Land before them. They should also realize that Catholics have a special calming gift to bring to the Holy Land in the mission of repentance, conversion and renewal.

Solidarity with Holy Land Christians

Just as the Gospels are continued in the Book of Acts, so too pilgrimages are made complete by encounters with the living Church in the Holy Land. The Church of Jerusalem was the Mother Church for us all. It was from Jerusalem that the apostles went forth to spread the Gospel. It was to the Church in Jerusalem that other early communities of faith looked for guidance. So, we also hope that pilgrimages to the Holy Land will be an occasion to build

solidarity between American pilgrims and the Church in the Holy Land whose center today is Jerusalem.

The great majority of Christians in the area are either Catholic or Orthodox. Most of the Catholics belong to the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, a church of the Byzantine tradition whose patriarch resides in Damascus. There is also a sizable Latin-rite community under the jurisdiction of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The local Orthodox Christians are part of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It has possession of many of the major Christian Holy Places. It shares custody (with the Franciscans and the Armenian Apostolic Church) of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, known to Greek Orthodox as the Church of the Resurrection. There is also a significant presence of Oriental Orthodox Christians, especially the Armenian Apostolic Church, which has a local patriarchate and a school in Jerusalem associated with Saint James Cathedral and Monastery in the Armenian Quarter. A number of smaller Protestant groups complete the mosaic of Christian churches in the Holy Land. Your pilgrimage can offer a valuable opportunity to make contact with these groups, most of which have maintained a prayerful presence at the Holy Places for many centuries.

Jesus, on the night before he died, prayed for the unity of the Church. When Pope Paul VI visited Jerusalem in 1964, he made the encounter with the Ecumenical Greek Patriarch Athenagoras a major part of his pilgrimage. Awareness of the richness of the manifestations of Christian faith, especially in Jerusalem, can make every pilgrimage an encounter on the road to Christian unity. The Holy Land includes Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Jerusalem and Jordan. For some Eastern Churches, the Holy Land also includes Lebanon and Syria. The Christians of the Holy Land have a difficult vocation to live out in the land of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Pilgrims should be attuned to the people, places and situations along their journey of faith. The whole Church will be strengthened by special efforts of solidarity on the part of pilgrims toward the local Christian communities. The Arab Christian presence in the Holy Land is part of the Church's historic witness to the Gospel. By experiencing the local Church's travails, pilgrims can share in the wider struggle for justice and peace, and can strengthen the bonds of solidarity between the Church in the United States and the Church in the Holy Land.

Solidarity with the Christians of the Holy Land is particularly necessary at the present time. The pressures faced by Christians of all denominations throughout the Middle East region and the ensuing emigration are major concerns for the bishops of the region. The Holy Land is of particular concern, for the whole Church has an interest in the survival and well-being of living communities of faith there.

Interreligious Ties

Traditionally pilgrimage is also a time for healing and reconciliation. Today pilgrimage can contribute to reconciliation between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and the three monotheistic religions of the Holy Land: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Abraham is the father in faith for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. All worship the one God, listen to the divine word instructing them through scriptures, and treasure the Holy Land. For centuries, adherents of the three religions have lived side by side.

For all these reasons, the spirit of pilgrimage is not exclusive. Pilgrims should not visit the historic and modern Holy Land without encountering the living Christian community. Likewise, they must also take pains to encounter the diverse peoples and traditions of the Holy Land. Pilgrimage today means meeting Christians, Jews, and Muslims and learning about the difficult issues they face together in the land all three call holy.

Knowledge of Key Concerns

A pilgrimage is not a political exercise, but pilgrims to the Holy Land ought to have an opportunity to understand the suffering of a local Church caught in the midst of conflict and the work of the Catholic Church for justice and peace in the Holy Land. Materials from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on peace between Israelis and Palestinians should be made available. Any pilgrimage should be a journey of faith and a prayerful search for justice and peace in the land that is holy to us. Many pilgrims are moved to work for justice and peace upon their return.

Guidelines

To allow pilgrims to experience the full religious power of their journey of faith, we make the following recommendations to potential pilgrims, guides, chaplains and Catholic travel agencies:

Pilgrimage

1. Pilgrimage should be planned and carried out as a genuinely religious exercise in the spirit of prayer, with reverent openness to the workings of the Spirit and the possibilities of conversion of life. Accordingly, pilgrimage differs from religious tourism and study tours of the Holy Land.
2. Pilgrims should be led by an accredited spiritual animator or licensed guide who appreciates and respects the Christian tradition and pilgrimage as a distinctive religious undertaking. There are Church-authorized and government-recognized pilgrimage animators. While, for the spiritual purposes of pilgrimage, Catholic or Christian animators or guides are preferable, when they are not available, non-Christian guides should be supplemented with approved chaplains and spiritual directors. Be aware that in addition to licensed Israeli (Jewish and Arab) guides, certified Palestinian guides are now available for areas under Palestinian control. (Unfortunately, no reciprocity agreements are yet in effect with Israel.) Many of these guides have trained at the Holy See's Bethlehem University.
3. Pilgrimages should be planned and conducted with ample opportunity for prayer, celebration of the Sacraments, and personal and group reflection. The spiritual atmosphere of a pilgrimage can be enhanced by the simplicity and quiet of pilgrim hostels as opposed to the busyness of commercial hotels.
4. Care should be taken, with advanced planning, for the celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, the Sacraments, and special events such as the renewal of baptismal and marriage vows.
5. The pilgrimage experience is enhanced by liturgical and devotional music. Groups should identify musicians and song leaders, and select music or hymnals in advance. Musical tapes can help preserve a sense of prayer on longer bus rides.
6. The Holy Places that are staffed by the Franciscans will have specialized sacramentaries and lectionaries adapted to the memory of the people and events associated with the site. In addition, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has local liturgical books with Masses commemorating many pilgrims, hermits, penitents and other holy men and women who

journeyed to the Holy Land or made it their home. These may also be a source of inspiration for pilgrims and may be obtained from the Chancery of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

7. Commercial contacts should be carefully limited with a view to retaining the religious intention of pilgrimage. Pilgrims can lend support to the local economy, but shopping ought not to become a preoccupation. Group leaders should prearrange a limited number of scheduled shopping times and/or allow free time for activities not essential to journeying as pilgrims.

Solidarity

8. Catholic pilgrims are encouraged to show their solidarity with the local Church in the Holy Land by becoming acquainted with the faithful, by being attentive to their stories, and by sharing their living faith.

9. Catholic Relief Services has created outreach programs for pilgrims and the Pontifical Mission of CNEWA revived its programs. These offices can help orient American pilgrims and assist them in making contact with local Christians, along with Muslims and Jews. They can also assist groups in making contact with local organizations, especially related to peace, justice and development issues.

10. We encourage parish groups to meet with the parishes of the local Church in its different forms, especially Latin and Greek Melkite Catholics; likewise, diocesan groups, priests and religious should endeavor to make contact with local Church leaders and their institutions. Arrangements may be made through Catholic Relief Services' Outreach Office and the Pontifical Mission Office. The Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center and the Catholic Information Center can also be helpful.

11. When planning your pilgrimage, obtain a copy of the calendar of events sponsored by the Office of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land (evcat@palnet.com), which is located at the Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center.

12. Ecclesial solidarity will also mean learning about issues of justice and peace from Palestinians, Israelis, Christians, Jews, and Muslims.

13. When visiting or meeting with local Christians, explore ways to establish sustained relations between your parish or diocese and Catholic parishes, Catholic institutions (including the justice and peace commission), and the local Catholic hierarchy.

Ties to the Jewish Community

14. The spirit of dialogue especially recommends making serious efforts to come to know the life and aspirations of Jewish communities in Israel. Therefore, pilgrims should try to engage in interfaith dialogue with Jews. The Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI) maintains offices in Jerusalem which offer opportunities for learning about interreligious dialogue in the Holy Land, identifying speakers for pilgrim groups, and learning about lectures and discussions during pilgrims' stays.

15. Visit the shrines and historic places of the Jewish people, such as the Western Wall, and the ancient synagogues at Capernaum and Nazareth. Visits to these sites can be occasions for prayerful understanding of the Jewish culture of Jesus' time and the Jewish

roots of our Christian faith. A visit to Yad Vashem, the Israeli Holocaust Memorial, also would be important as a sign of respect and solidarity. Pilgrims should know that the Church disputes the way Pope Pius XII is depicted in the Museum.

16. Take advantage of lectures, symposia and other events sponsored by institutions such as the Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center.

Ties to the Muslim Community

17. Visit Muslim holy sites and meet with Muslim religious leaders. The CRS Outreach Office and the Pontifical Mission Office can be helpful in arranging meetings with Muslim groups and visits to religious sites, such as the Haram el Sharif (the Dome of the Rock) and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

18. Visit a Muslim village and meet the people, especially where Catholic Relief Services, the Pontifical Mission, or the Franciscans are sponsoring a project.

19. Participate in Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue events at the Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center.

Practical Issues

20. Many Christian institutions will provide meals for pilgrims, the income from which helps support their operations. Plan in advance to take meals in hospices, orphanages, or schools, or take your accommodations with them.

21. Where possible, pilgrims are encouraged to visit programs supported by the U.S. Catholic Church: the Pontifical Mission, Catholic Relief Services, and Bethlehem University. With a hotel training program, the university can provide meals as well as a chance to meet with Palestinian students and faculty from the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza. This can be easily achieved and incorporated into one's itinerary.

22. Guides and tour agencies will be alert to security concerns. The U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem also issue alerts which can be helpful in planning and executing your pilgrimage. In general, keep to tour buses and avoid public transport (buses).

23. If your guide does not want to enter certain areas, inquire about reasons. Has there been a recent disturbance? Is a disturbance expected today? Be aware that some guides will be averse, solely for ideological reasons, to entering some areas. If a pattern of comments seems to suggest that this reluctance is ideologically based, consult with his superiors, CRS or the Pontifical Mission, or with local Christian leaders for advice. While not taking unnecessary risks, the religious goals of the pilgrimage, including solidarity and reconciliation, would suggest crossing over boundaries when possible.

24. Without prejudice to others, be attentive to opportunities to support known Christian businesses, including Christian travel agencies and guides. The majority of Christians in the Holy Land are poor and economically disadvantaged. Patronizing their businesses can be an act of solidarity with a Church seriously threatened by emigration. Such business contributes to the economic development of Arab Christian communities and helps retain the threatened Catholic presence in the Holy Land.

The Holy Land – Contacts for U.S. Catholic Pilgrims- Updated October 2015

Bethlehem University

Location Address:

Rue de Freres, Bethlehem

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 11407

92248 Jerusalem

Contact: Brother Stephan Tuohy, FSC, Vice President for Advancement

Mr. Demitri Awwad, Public Relations Officer

Tel: 011-972-2-274-1241

Fax: 011-972-2-274-4440

E-mail: stuohy@bethlehem.edu

demitris@bethlehem.edu

info@bethlehem.edu

Website: www.bethlehem.edu

Sponsored by the Vatican, chartered in the United States, and staffed by the Brothers of Christian Schools (De La Salle Christian Brothers), Bethlehem University offers higher education opportunities to Palestinians and Arab Israelis, both Christian and Muslim. Tourism and hotel management programs permit the university to host pilgrim groups, providing lunch as well as meetings and discussions with students and faculty.

Catholic Relief Services Outreach Office

P.O. Box 19447

91193 Jerusalem

Contact: Hanan Nasrallah, Project Officer

Matt Davis, Country Representative

Tel: 011-972-2-656-9240

Fax: 011-972-2-656-9243

E-mail: hnasrallah@eme.crs.org

Set up to assist U.S. pilgrims, the CRS Outreach Office can provide background briefings, contacts with local Catholic, Muslim and Jewish groups; instruction on justice, peace and development issues; and site visits to U.S. Catholic Church-sponsored projects in nearby villages.

Christian Information Center (CIC)

P.O. Box 14308 (Jaffa Gate - Old City)

Jerusalem 91142

Contact: Rev. Fr. Athanasius O.F.M – Director

Tel: 011-972-2-627-2692

Fax: 011-972-2-628-6417

E-mail: cicinfo@cicts.org

Website: www.cicts.org

Operated by Franciscans, CIC provides information on religious events throughout the country. They have opening hours, Mass schedules and addresses for major religious institutions; provide travel details for buses, taxis, etc. to locations around the country; sell books, maps, travel guides; and arrange for Masses in the Holy Sepulchre and other sites.

Custos of the Holy Land

P.O. Box 186
Jerusalem 9100101
Tel: 011-972-2-626-6561
Email: custodia@custodia.org
Website: www.custodia.org

The Custos, Franciscan friars designated by the Holy See to have “custody” of the holy places, promote pilgrimages and offer itineraries and proposals and practical information useful in planning journeys of faith. They can help coordinate and direct the reception of pilgrims at the Holy Shrines, offering spaces of prayer and making available Franciscan centers of hospitality (hostels) for those on pilgrimages organized by them.

Holy Land Incoming Tour Operators Association (HLITOA)

P.O. Box 19597
Jerusalem 91190
Contact: Mona Hamuri, Executive Director
Mob1: 011-972-54-812-8380
Tel: 011-972-2-628-3140
Fax: 011-972-2-628-3118
Email: admin@holylandoperators.com
Website: www.holylandoperators.com

Established in 2005, HLITOA comprises 43 member tour operators working in the inbound tourist sector who arrange tours and pilgrimages that provide active private sector support for the Palestinian economy, bringing in foreign currency; directing business to service providers such as hotels, transport companies, guides; and creating major employment opportunities for Palestinians, including Christians.

Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel (ICCI)

P.O. Box 8771
Jerusalem 91086
Contact: Ophir Yarden
Tel: 011-972-2-561-1899
Fax: 972-2-563-4148
E-mail: education@icci.org.il
Website: www.icci.org.il

ICCI is an umbrella organization of institutions and individuals that seek to promote interreligious and intercultural understanding within Israeli society.

Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Patriarchatus Jerusalem
Jaffa Gate
P.O. Box 14152
Jerusalem 91141
Contact: Fr. Humam Khzouz, President and CEO
Tel: 011-972-2-647-1470
Fax: 011-972-4-601-9185

E-mail: ceo@lpjp.org
Website: www.lpjp.org/

Since 2013, the Patriarchate's Pilgrimage Agency has arranged pilgrimages for 5,000 people in the Holy Land, Rome and other major religious sites. They can assist pilgrims in visits to parishes and charities to encounter the "Living Stones," Christians living in the Holy Land. They have special youth pilgrimage and youth exchange programs. With an advance request from tour agencies, they can provide pilgrims with certificates confirming their completion of the pilgrimage. In a limited number of cases, the Patriarchate can also arrange for meetings with His Beatitude Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, and the awarding of pilgrim shells to Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre.

Melkite Greek Catholic Center

Jaffa Gate, Old City Jerusalem
P.O. Box 14130 - Patriarchal Vicarate
Jerusalem 91141
Contact: Anthony Munayer
Tel: 011-972-2-628-2023
Fax: 011-972-2-628-6652
E-mail: gcp@pgc-lb.org
Website: <http://www.mliles.com/melkite/index.shtml>

The Center has a book shop, library, and pilgrim accommodations, and can provide services such as an introduction to Eastern Churches (they have a museum with a display for each Eastern Church). They are able to take people around on day tours, but have limited staff.

Middle East Council of Churches

P.O. Box 14634 - Jerusalem Liaison Office
Jerusalem 91146
Tel: 011-972-2-628-4931
Fax: 011-972-2-626-4730
Website: http://www.mec-churches.org/main_eng.htm

The office can provide invaluable information regarding events, contacts, and issues related to ecumenical and interfaith relationships in the Holy Land.

Notre Dame of Jerusalem Center

P.O. Box 20531
Paratroopers Road #3
Jerusalem 91204
Contact: Fr. Juan María Solana, L.C., Director
Tel: 011-972-2-627-9111
Fax: 011-972-2-627-1995
E-mail: jsolana@legionaries.org
Website: www.notredamecenter.org

Located just outside the Old City, Notre Dame is a Vatican pilgrims' hospice and a major meeting place for Christians visiting Jerusalem, often hosting ecumenical, interreligious and cultural events. Evening Prayer and Mass are offered daily in their chapel.

Pontifical Mission-Jerusalem

P.O. Box 19642
Jerusalem 91196
Contact: Mr. Sami El-Yousef, Regional Director
Tel: 011-972-2-627-2126
Fax: 011-972-2-627-3777
E-mail: pmp@pmp.co.il
Website: www.pontificalmission-jerusalem.org

Founded in 1949 to assist refugees and displaced persons, the Mission is administered by the Catholic Near East Welfare Association. It supports charitable, medical, educational and cultural programs, including schools for the handicapped and the deaf in Bethlehem. It promotes Christian unity and fraternal relations with non-Christians, advocates for human rights for all, and seeks to raise consciousness about the churches and people of the East.

Saint Peter Gallicantu Church – Mt. Zion Gate

P.O. Box 31653
9131601 Jerusalem
Contact: Ma-aleh Hashalom
Tel: 011-972-2-673-1739/ 673-7420
Fax: 011-972-2-672-6991
Email: stpeter@gallicantu.co.il
Website: www.assomption.org/fr/oeuvres/pelerinage/saint-pierre-en-gallicante

Beautifully restored, Saint Peter is the traditional site of Jesus' imprisonment and Peter's denial. Run by the Fathers and Oblate Sisters of the Assumption, the Church offers handicap access, rest facilities and an amphitheater for use by large tour groups, as well as basic accommodations (minimum 3 night stay). The gift shop offers religious and artistic items fashioned by local religious communities.

Tantur Ecumenical Institute

Rehov HaRosmarin at the corner of Derech Hevron
P.O. Box 11381
9111301 Jerusalem
Tel: 011-972-2-542-2900
Fax: 011-972-2-676-0914
Email: tantur@tantur.org
Website: <http://tantur.org>

Situated on a hill overlooking the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, the Institute serves as a place of learning, prayer and hospitality for visitors from all over the world. A frequent host of pilgrimages and retreats, Tantur also offers Continuing Education and Sabbatical Programs. Each program includes a variety of lectures and excursions designed to introduce participants to its geography, history, complex religious life, local people and the Bible. It has one of the best theological libraries, an auditorium and numerous seminar rooms to hold events.