come and see

Walking in the Footsteps of Jesus
A Guide to Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.”
- Matthew 5:9
But a pilgrimage to the Holy Land is always more than just a visit to holy places; it is an opportunity for you to meet our Lord in your prayer, in your celebration of the Eucharist, and in what you learn. It is also a chance for you to meet the “Living Stones” – Christians living in the Holy Land today - and others who have made their home in this most wonderful of places. To meet with them, to hear their stories, and then to come home and tell their stories is what makes for real pilgrimage with Christ and a real journey into his message of love and solidarity.

The reality for Christians – and people of other faiths – living in the Holy Land is, of course, troubling for us. You will see that reality in a variety of ways. This booklet from Trócaire invites you, very simply, to ‘come and see’ and to be with those who are struggling for peace and justice in this place. It is a portal for enquiry rather than a comprehensive guide. It invites you to explore how the message of the Gospel can be encountered in a lived way during your journey.

And, of course, it reminds us that our pilgrimage does not end when we return home. Rather, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reminded us during his own Pilgrimage to the Holy Land “no individual, family, community or nation is exempt from the duty to live in justice and to work for peace.”

I wish you every blessing for a peaceful and joy-filled pilgrimage. In the communities and individuals you meet, may you encounter Christ alive today: challenging us now and always to stand with one another as brothers and sisters in our work together for a more just and peaceful world.

Your brother in faith,

Bishop William Crean
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Introduction

Every year many thousands of pilgrims set off from Ireland to travel in the footsteps of Jesus. They do so not simply as tourists but as people of faith.

This booklet, along with the accompanying DVD, challenge pilgrims to consider their journey not only as a visit to see holy sites but also as a chance to connect with the reality of life for Christians and others living in the Holy Land today. It is an opportunity to become more aware of the injustices and challenges people in the region face today, and also an opportunity to become agents of peace upon our return.

There are three important dimensions to any pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Firstly, deepening our faith in Jesus and our friendship with him. Secondly, meeting those who live in the Holy Land today. And finally, continuing to work for peace on returning home.

This material is provided in the context of the Church’s call to ‘Share the Good News’. This material is a resource not only to help enhance your pilgrimage experience but also to share your experiences with your wider faith community.

Trócaire has worked in the Holy Land since 2002. Our work in the Holy Land is guided by the same principle that guides our work in other regions of the world: our belief in justice and the dignity of all people.

Trócaire works with both Israeli and Palestinian organisations to create a just and lasting peace based on fundamental human rights. We support long-term peace-building work, as well as providing support to people at difficult times, including times of conflict in Gaza.

As we witness the daily struggles of people living in the Holy Land today, we continue to urge people in Ireland to do what they can to promote the cause of peace.

“...I wish to state my heartfelt conviction that the time has come to put an end to this situation which has become increasingly unacceptable. For the good of all, there is a need to intensify efforts and initiatives aimed at creating the conditions for a stable peace based on justice, the recognition of the rights of every individual, and on mutual security.” Pope Francis, visit to the Holy Land, 2014.

A visit to the Holy Land brings you to a troubled region; a land divided by conflict. The Holy Land encompasses modern-day Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories.

A pilgrimage gives you the opportunity to meet both Israeli and Palestinian people, and to understand the challenges they face. Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank live under military occupation. They suffer ongoing human rights abuses and are denied a homeland of their own. Israelis have suffered atrocities and attacks on civilians. There is much to be done to build peace in this land.

Roughly one in every three Palestinians lives below the poverty line. Daily life for many involves travelling through restrictive barriers, checkpoints and walls. They suffer daily harassment and humiliation.

Many Palestinians also face forced displacement from their homes as they are evicted to make way for the growth of illegal Israeli settlements.

Trócaire supports the rights of all Palestinians and Israelis to live in safety, security and peace. Our hope is that your pilgrimage will be an opportunity to explore and understand the complex issues faced by people living in the Holy Land, and that you will be inspired and informed to act for justice and peace.

A Challenging Context
Approximately 50,000 Christians live in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, making up roughly 1.2 per cent of the total population. They are an integral part of the indigenous Palestinian population and their presence goes back to the establishment of Christianity 2,000 years ago.

Despite their small numbers, Christians in Palestine are a dynamic community and are very active in the field of social services and education. Approximately 45 per cent of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Palestine are run by churches or church-related organisations.

Palestinian Christians belong to the four Christian families: Oriental Orthodox Churches, Eastern Orthodox Churches, Catholic Churches, and Evangelical Churches. There are thirteen officially recognised denominations, as well as some smaller, mostly evangelical, ones. The majority of Christians in the West Bank live around the holy sites in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. Emigration for economic and social reasons remains a huge issue, although there appears to have been some stabilising of numbers in recent years.

Benedict XVI’s visit to the Holy Land in 2009 was partly intended to offer support to the Christians living in this troubled region. Like others living in the Holy Land, the ‘living stones’ face many challenges.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

— 1 Peter 2:10
Preparing for your pilgrimage

Your pilgrimage to the Holy Land begins before you board the plane and continues long after you return home. Before you travel to the Holy Land, it is worth reflecting on the reasons why you are going.

GROWING IN FAITH AND LOVE

The call of faith is the call to love. Any authentic faith experience helps us to grow in faith and grow in love.

On a pilgrimage, we are first called to love the group of people we are traveling with – our fellow pilgrims. Along the journey, it is important to be attentive to each other’s needs, particularly older members of the group or those traveling on their own.

Loving one another also extends towards the people who call the Holy Land their home. Becoming more aware of the reality of their lives by asking questions and engaging openly with them is a vital way of growing love through your pilgrimage experience.

Before you travel, take some time to reflect on the lives of the “Living Stones”. Consider also the lives of people of other faiths who call this place their home. How are you being called to connect with them?

Pilgrims become connected not only with our holy places and monuments but also with the Gospel truths around peace and justice. These truths are at the heart of our faith and must be at the heart of our pilgrimage.

Consider ways in which you might be called to work for peace and justice in the Holy Land. As part of your spiritual preparation for your pilgrimage, pray for the courage to ‘come and see’ the Holy Land not just as the place where Jesus lived but also as a place now broken and hurting because of conflict and injustice.

Questions for reflection before you travel:

1. Why are you travelling on pilgrimage to the Holy Land?
2. In what way do you hope to grow in faith through this experience?
3. How do you hope to grow in love during your pilgrimage?

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

It would be useful to get a sense of the political and social situation you are going to encounter during your pilgrimage. You could invite a Trócaire representative to give you a briefing ahead of your visit, or else look at the materials available on trocaire.org.

Watch the DVD available with this booklet and take some time to reflect as a group on the Christian community’s life in the Holy Land.

Praying for peace as part of your weekly Eucharistic celebrations will allow your entire community to stand in solidarity with the people living in the Holy Land.

Learn a few phrases before you travel. Engaging with local people in their own language will help to enrich your experience. There are a few phrases in both Arabic and Hebrew on the back of this booklet.
The places you will visit on your pilgrimage will tell you the story of the incarnation. You are walking in Jesus’ footsteps. As well as being religious sites, these places also challenge us to consider how to build peace in the Holy Land. On your journey, it is important to take some quiet time at each site to reflect on the challenges facing the people who live there today.

**BETHLEHEM**

Matthew 2:4-8: So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Today, Bethlehem is a large Palestinian town surrounded by an eight metre high concrete wall. This wall divides communities, stifles economic life and causes much suffering. From his birth, Jesus knew what it was to be an outsider, to be excluded and to be vulnerable. As we pause in this historic town, we should reflect on these feelings and their relevance to the lives of the people who live there today.

How is this vulnerability being experienced in Bethlehem and throughout the Holy Land today by the people – Palestinians and Israelis – who live there?

How is it manifested in the attitudes and actions of the people you meet?

How can we help the most vulnerable in our world today?

**RIVER JORDAN**

Mark 1:9-11: At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptised by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased”

As the site of Jesus’ Baptism, the River Jordan is one of the world’s most revered rivers. It is also a contested political border. The river itself is much depleted as water is diverted due to the scarce and highly contested water resources in the region. It is a river that divides, yet for Christians its waters challenge us to reflect on what unites us.

Reflect on your own baptismal promises and how those promises link you to every Christian baptised here and around the world.

What does that connection mean to you as you stand in the place where Jesus was baptised?

What is that connection calling you to do?

**CHURCH OF DOMINUS FLEVIT**

Luke 19:41-44: As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.

The Church of Dominus Flevit is located on the Mount of Olives, facing the Old City of Jerusalem. Most pilgrims are unaware that the Mount of Olives is located on occupied territory. Jerusalem, a spiritual centre for Jews, Muslims and Christians alike, is a divided and troubled city.

Spend some time contemplating the view of the city of Jerusalem through the window in the Church of Dominus Flevit.

What have you seen that would make Jesus weep over Jerusalem today?

What has been your own emotional response to what you have seen?

What are you being called to do for peace in the Holy Land?
VIA DOLOROSA

Matthew 17:45-46,51: From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) And when Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

Saint John Paul II described praying at the Stations of the Cross as an “unceasing effort to stand beside the endless crosses on which the Son of God continues to be crucified”.

As we walk Jesus’ ‘way of sorrow’, we walk with those who are suffering in the Holy Land today. Take some time to observe the people going about their daily lives around you and stand in prayerful solidarity with them as they carry hidden crosses.

How are we to be Simon of Cyrene or Veronica to them in their pain and isolation?

CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE

Matthew 28:1-8: After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.”

The hope of all Christians is resurrection. Jesus has gone before us. We have nothing to fear and everything to hope for. Reflect on your own hopes.

Where is resurrection and hope in what you have seen in the Holy Land?

How can we, when we return home, be people of the resurrection in how we work for peace in the Holy Land?

How can we turn suffering into joy, and despair into hope?

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

Use the space at the back of this booklet to keep a diary to help you reflect on each day of your pilgrimage. These reflections can form the basis of work for peace you may undertake when you return home.

Take some time in the evenings to share your experiences and thoughts with others. Talk to one another; ask the difficult questions and be open to hearing answers you may not be used to hearing.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reminded us that “purchasing is always a moral – and not simply economic – act.” When you spend money, try to ensure that you are supporting local people as they struggle to make ends meet.

On Your Return Home

“There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ. There is nothing more beautiful than to know Him and speak to others of our friendship with Him.” Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Pilgrims returning from the Holy Land are charged with the important work of sharing, in faith, hope and love, all that they have seen. More than that, returned pilgrims are charged with working for peace in the Holy Land. We cannot ignore or forget what we have seen and heard. We are called to live justly and turn conflict into peace.

What are you being called to do?

What steps can you take to ensure you become workers for a Kingdom of justice and peace?

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS:

There are a number of practical steps you can take to ensure that your work for peace continues after you return.

1. Continue to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:6). As a parish, consider ways you can build this prayer for peace into your weekly or daily liturgies.

2. Share your experiences with your family and friends. Consider holding an information evening, either as an individual or a group, to share your photos and experiences.

3. Consider writing a reflection for your local media on your experiences.

4. Establish a Justice and Peace group in your parish to keep alive your experiences and work together on other important local and international justice issues.

5. Invite a Trócaire speaker to your parish to discuss Trócaire’s peace building work in the region.

6. Host Trócaire’s photo exhibition of the Holy Land in your parish.

7. Consider holding an event in your parish for World Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel, an ecumenical initiative supported by the local Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches.

8. Consider making a donation to Trócaire to support the organisation’s work for peace and justice in the Holy Land.


10. Contact Trócaire (churchofficer@trocaire.ie) about volunteering to meet other pilgrimage groups to share your own experiences.

11. If you made a connection with a ‘Living Stone’ in the Holy Land, keep that connection alive.

12. Encourage others to travel to the Holy Land to make a real ethical connection with the people living there.
Some Useful Phrases in Arabic and Hebrew

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ENGLISH</th>
<th>ARABIC</th>
<th>HEBREW</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Marhaba</td>
<td>Shalom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>Masalama</td>
<td>Le Hitra’ot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Shukran</td>
<td>Yoda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good morning</td>
<td>Sabah el kheer</td>
<td>Boker Tov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good evening</td>
<td>Masaa el kheer</td>
<td>Erev Tov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace be upon you (formal greeting)</td>
<td>As salam alaykum</td>
<td>Shalom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Further information:

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHRISTIANS IN THE HOLY LAND?

Kairos Palestine: www.kairos-palestine.ps
Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem: en.lpj.org
Tantur Ecumenical Institute: www.tantur.org

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT TRÓCAIRE’S PARTNER ORGANISATIONS IN THE HOLY LAND?

Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine & Israel: www.eappi.org
B’Tselem - The Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories: www.btselem.org
Palestinian Centre for Human Rights: www.pchrgaza.org
Rabbis for Human Rights: www.rhr.org.il
For more information on Trócaire’s work for peace and justice in the Holy Land please contact churchofficer@trocaire.ie

“All of us – especially those placed at the service of their respective peoples – have the duty to become instruments and artisans of peace, especially by our prayers. Building peace is difficult, but living without peace is a constant torment.”

POPE FRANCIS, VISIT TO THE HOLY LAND, 2014.

Pope Francis prays for peace at the Israeli separation wall in Bethlehem. This 8 metre high wall cuts through the West Bank, and separates Bethlehem from Jerusalem.
A Pilgrim’s Prayer
Living Lord Jesus, you rush out to greet us in our journey

May we always be aware of your presence with us on our pilgrimage.
You welcome us in all of our journeying with a Father’s love
Inspire us in that love to reach out to others.
Ignite in us a passion for justice,
And a yearning for peace especially in the land of your birth, the place you lived.

Strengthen us to work for reconciliation between communities
For harmony between faiths
Inspire us to act with the urgency of your quickening fire;

For blessed are the peacemakers
They shall be called the children of God.
[adapted, Ramani Leathard, Christian Aid]

Some space for your own reflections:

Acknowledgments

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