



Welcome to  
**ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM**  
DISCUSSING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DISCUSSED



**SIR JEFFERY ABOOD**  
**SS. SIMON & JUDE (WESTLAND, MI)**  
**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 18, 2017**

## Introduction (Bishop Tom Gumbleton)



Good afternoon and welcome to another Elephants in the Living Room educational forum.

You may recall that we had talked to Fr. Drew Christensen about speaking with us; and he was all set to come; but then, as you know, he had to withdraw because of health reasons. Then I asked him, "Well, can you suggest somebody who can take your place?" And I thought a couple of days he'll call me back; but no, right

now, and he immediately said, "The person you want to get is Jeffery Abood and he is in nearby Ohio; so you will be able to get him easily."

So I contacted Jeff, and he is with us today, of course. But he has lived in northwest Ohio with his wife Denise, who is here today. They have been married for 36 years with two children and two grandchildren, Moses and Addicus. Jeff spent much of his time working to help build bridges between Christians and others in the Holy Land, people of other religious backgrounds; and especially between Christians and Jews. Jeff has served as advocacy and outpatient Director of Homeland and Christian Evangelical foundation located in Maryland and in Bethlehem.

In 2007 he received a certificate of special Congressional Recognition for his leadership in working with Palestinian Christian communities in the Holy Land. The Vatican has honored him by making him a knight of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. Jeff is a frequent speaker on the Church's perspective of the current situation of Christians in the Holy Land.

He has authored and edited various articles on the situation there, and most recently has completed a book entitled, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses: The Catholic Church's Experience in the Holy Land*, as the Christian population in the Holy Land has decreased historically from 18% of the population to 2% of the population.

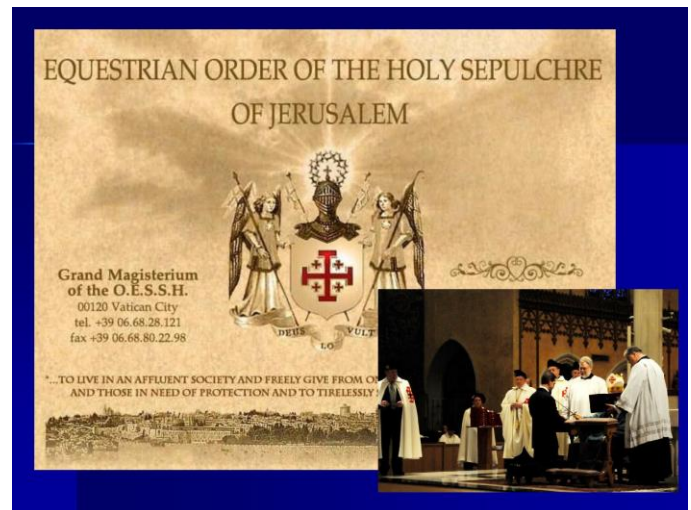
It is imperative that we correct and understand the situation of our brothers and sisters, for God who has stayed with us forever. The Christians in the Holy Land have an extraordinary spirit and hope based on their conviction that the Resurrection took place there, there is reason for them to constantly be filled with hope. And so I ask you to please welcome Sir Jeffery Abood who will help us to understand how we can support and strengthen this incredible spirit of hope demonstrated by our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land. So, Sir Jeffery Abood. (Applause)

## Hearing the Call of the Mother Church (Sir Jeffery Abood)

Thank you, Bishop Gumbleton for your kind introduction. I'm with the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. And what that is is that's one of two orders of knighthood that the Vatican maintains to this day. The Knights of Malta is the other.

Our order has been around almost a thousand years; and our mission is specifically, as it has always been, has been to support the Christian communities, and uphold the rights of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land. So, this is what our mission's about. This is what we do; and we're going to share a little bit about that with you today

Now, when we talk about the Holy Land, for most purposes, we're talking about Palestine and Israel; Israel being in the purple here; and then, Palestine, being the Gaza strip, and the West Bank, and East Jerusalem on the other part. It's a little bigger than Jordan, Cyprus, but when most people think of the Holy Land, they're thinking about this area. So, this is what we're going to be talking about.





Now, before we start there, I'm going to start you off in my kitchen. This is my one year old grandson and my 100-year-old aunt. I like this picture because it captures the beauty of continuity of going from one generation to the next; because that's something that the Christians in the Holy Land bring to the Church. In fact, they've been there over 2,000 years. They have kept the holy sites maintained. They have kept a living faith in

the land where it all started for us. And together, they constitute the living stones. They are, of course, the stones that make up the holy sites in the Holy Land and many people will go to see, for instance, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on the left, that is, the Stone of the Anointing, where Jesus' body was anointed. And those are the stones that make up the holy sites.

But it's really the living stones, the people there, that make it a living faith, and make it more than just museums and just the building to go to, but the people who are daily living out their faith. Those are some Catholics in Gaza on the right; and it may sound weird that there are Catholics in Gaza.

It's not something people are used to hearing, but there very much are. These are some of the people we support; and it's also, I think, an indicator for us, because it does sound strange that there is more to the Holy Land than we kind of get from news reports and stuff, because you have probably never heard there are Catholics in Gaza.

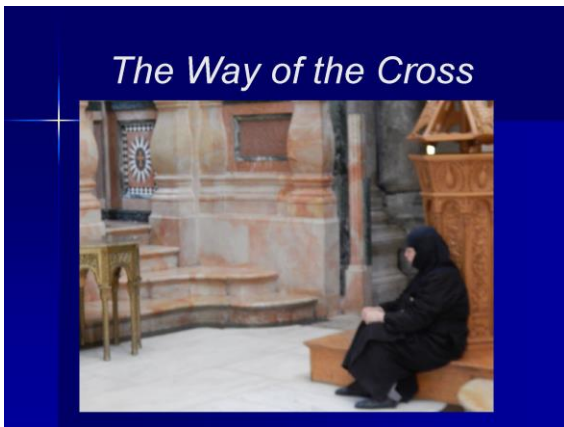
Now ethnically there, the Christian communities are almost all Palestinian and many of the cities that we associate with the birthplace of Christianity: East Jerusalem, where the Holy Sepulchre is; Bethlehem, of course, where the Church of the Nativity is; and you can go visit Jericho; Bayt Sahur, where the Annunciation occurred. These are all located today in today's West Bank. So when you hear Bethlehem, it's Bethlehem, Palestine. It's, not again, something people are used to hearing. But, altogether, the Catholic Church there is called the Mother Church.



Now in the West, we tend to think of the Mother Church a lot of times as the Vatican; but, obviously, preceding the Vatican was the Church from Jerusalem. And on the right is the last Latin Patriarch. There the Catholics are called the Latins, because kind of when the West came in, they spoke Latin; so they are the Latin's. And the Patriarch is the head of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land.



And being the Patriarch of Jerusalem he of course answers to the Patriarch of Rome, now Pope Francis. Recently, actually, Pope Francis named the first two Palestinian saints St. Miriam Baouardy and St. Marie Alphonsine Ghattas; and it was a cool thing that a lot of the Christians there got to travel to the Vatican to celebrate this, because it was very much a bright spot. And sometimes, unfortunately, in the Holy Land there aren't a lot of bright spots for the Christians there. In fact, the Latin Patriarch, Patriarch Foud Twai, said that the Christians there very much live the Way of the Cross.



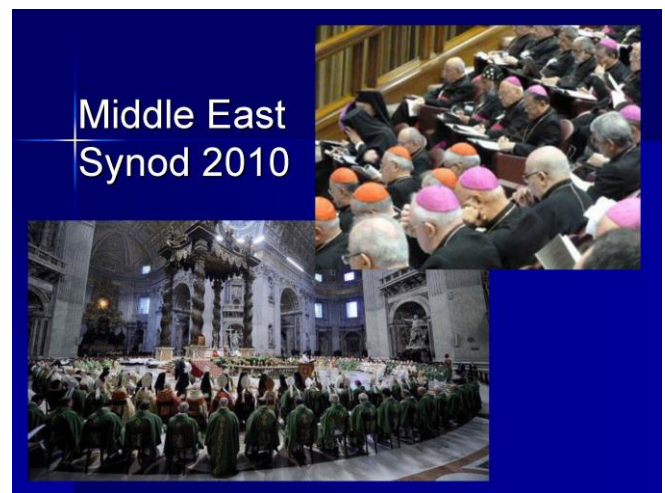
And we are going to look at a bit of what that is today; and this talk is not anti-anything. It's not against anything, because we need a concrete way to define the issues in the Holy Land, we look to what the Church is saying. So what has the Church said, actually, consistently, for the last almost 70 years? Especially for the work we do at the Order, it's important we don't get our news from the politicians, or a lot of the mass media; but we want

to look at what is the Church saying about it. I mean, nobody argues that there are issues with the Holy Land. Usually, where arguments, or politics, or agenda, or that kind of stuff, comes in is what those problems are. So we are going to share a little bit with you about what the Church says about the whole kind of stuff over there.

Now Pope Benedict, when speaking about this, he said, "We recite the seemingly endless list of difficulties separating Israelis and Palestinians, which makes it all the more urgent to address the problem of the fundamental injustice at the heart of this question." We know from Catholic social teaching, "If you want peace, work for justice;" so if there is no peace, it stands to reason there is injustice.

And Pope Benedict said this; and just to make a litany of symptoms: each side saying, "Well they did this to us;" "Well they did this back;" "Well they did this first;" doesn't really get to anything. It doesn't really get to the root cause. What's it all coming from?" So what is the root cause? Well this is a statement that was put out by all the heads of all the churches in Jerusalem; and they have reiterated it numerous times since then. They say that occupation remains the root cause of the conflict, and of the continued suffering in the Holy Land. Latin Patriarch, of course, being one of those. Again, head of the Catholic Church there. So if that is what it is: occupation by definition is just maintaining control over a place by military force. In the Holy Land this is nothing new, unfortunately. It was the Romans back in Jesus' time. It's been the Turks, and the British, and today, in many parts, it's Israelis. In fact, the occupation that the heads of the churches talk about is so bad that if you go to U tube, and bring up the presentation of the Latin Patriarchy, this is their official presentation; they'll say that this is a sin. And it has been the main reason for the Christian population there over the last 60 years going from about 18% down to less than 2% today. And the Christians there, again ethnically Palestinian, they live in Israel, they live in the West Bank, they live in Gaza; but their numbers in all those regions are less than 2%. So there is a fundamental injustice at the heart of the question, the heads of the churches say, "It's the occupation."

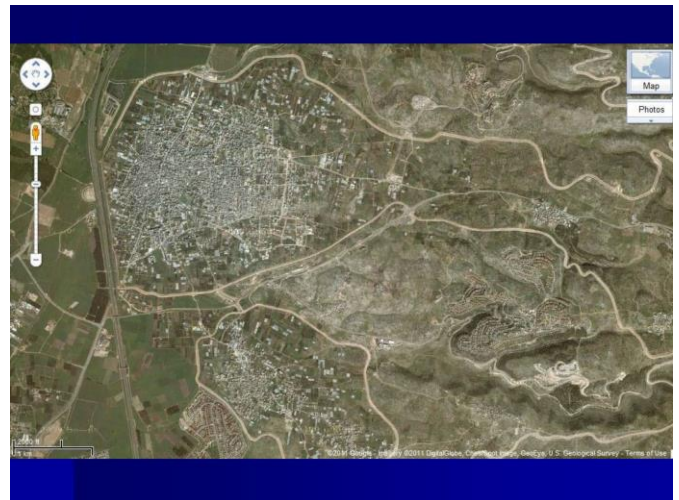
The Middle East Synod of Bishops met in 2010, it was all the bishops from across the Middle East, met at the Vatican; and they kind of broke that down. If this is so bad, why? What does it look like? Because, what does it mean, especially for the emigration of Christians from the region? Well in their official closing statement, which is: *Message to the People of God*, it wasn't that long, but they did include this paragraph: "We've taken account of the impact of the Israeli Palestinian conflict on the whole region, especially on the Palestinians," again the majority of Christians are Palestinian, "who are suffering the consequences of the Israeli occupation: the lack of freedom of movement, the wall of separation and the checkpoints, the demolition of homes and the disturbance of socio-economic life." So I am not going to get too much into these, but I do want to touch on them, just so you can kind of get an idea of the reality for the Christian communities there.





The Bishops spoke about freedom of movement. This is an image of Bethlehem that you will have on a Christmas card probably. You may have gotten one last month. And this is kind of when a lot of people think of Bethlehem that comes to mind. If you go to Bethlehem today this is what you'll see. This is, it is called a lot of different things, depending on who is talking about it: the

separation barrier, the separation wall, the security fence, the annexation wall, a lot of different terms, but this is the wall; this is Bethlehem. If you look at it from space, you'll see that this wall isn't built like you would think of a wall, built between me and my neighbor. A lot of this is actually built around people. For instance, the top area is the city of Kikilia; it's about 50,000 people. You can see the big white line is the wall and you can see how it snakes around and encloses that city, goes south of it, and comes around it, and encloses the next city, and so on, and so on. And it closes people off, you can see, from a lot of the agricultural land that generally they make their livelihoods by.



If you are going Bethlehem, this is entrance you will kind of starts on snakes around to all the way up line to the top of This is the same around Gaza. And this is inside Bethlehem. This is not that far from the Church of the Nativity; it's just off the tourist path so you won't see it on a kind of commercial tour; but if you live there, if you are a Christian living in Bethlehem, this is very much your reality.



from Jerusalem to the main notice the wall. It the left and the right; it goes under that tree it, and so on. kind of wall



So what the wall does is when it's completed, I think it is about three quarters of the way done now, it's going to be built between a lot of people and their farmland and water resources. And as I said a lot of it is agricultural. Tourism kind of isolates that from the people living there and

makes it difficult to make a living. It affects everything about your life. If you want to go to church or school, this is kind of what you are facing.

The picture at right is Our Lady Home of Sorrows. This is outside Jerusalem and you can see how the wall goes right through their property. This is the home for the elderly that we support it. It cuts these people off, oftentimes from medical care from their families that may live on the other side of the wall. It makes life tough.



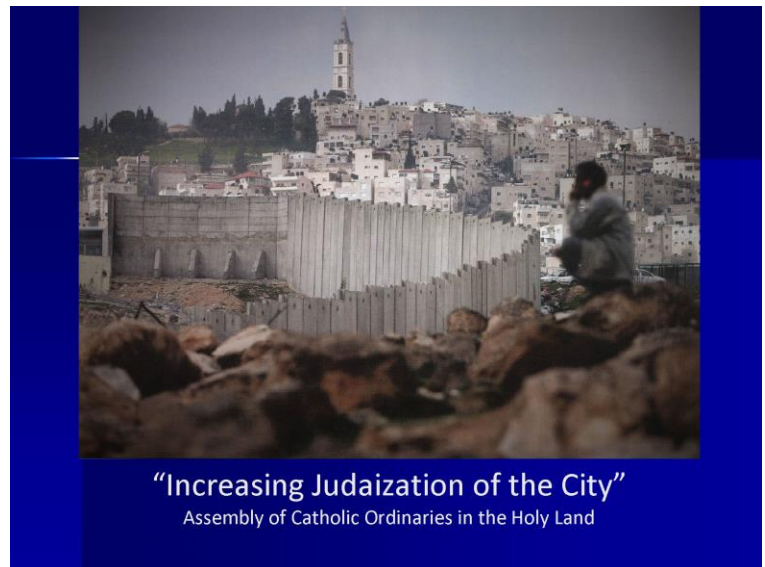
This is Caritas Baby Hospital in Bethlehem. I am on the board of their foundation. You can literally take this picture of the hospital, and it looks nice 'cause Catholic stuff always looks nice, and you can literally turn

around and take this picture here. So this is what the kids and their families face when they come to the hospital; and it affects everything, the economy. Pope Benedict spoke in front of it, and also, Pope Francis spoke in front of it. When they came he prayed for this wall to come down. Actually he prayed there. When I stopped there to pray, the soldiers opened up the access panel and told me to get away from the wall, so I did.



Now Cardinal Foley, who was head of our order until his passing, and there is actually on the handouts back there, there is an interview with him and an interview with our current Grand Master Cardinal O'Brien. He says in this interview, "The living conditions are far worse in the Palestine territories on account of the wall. It makes it difficult for populations to reach their jobs, schools, hospitals. So life is hard especially for the Christians." Again, Christians being Palestinians. And if anything isn't in your town, or your village, or your city, your university, your hospital, your school, navigating to get there becomes quite an ordeal. The assembly of Catholic ordinaries in the Holy Land, this is the heads of all the churches in the Holy Land, they said, "With Jerusalem, they are starting to see an increasing Judaization of the city."

The other ethnic and religious groups, there are more and more pressure to get them out. This is a wall that was going up the last time I was there around Jerusalem. So, for instance, the Palestinian village, there are Christians and Muslims that would normally depend on Jerusalem for their economic or religious hubs find getting there harder and harder and harder.



I showed you the picture of the satellite image of the wall kind of going around the cities; and this is that city. This is from inside that city; and this is what the wall will look like for the people living there. The next slide I am going to show you is almost the same section of the wall from the Israeli side. So, if you are not living there and going by, say for instance, in a tour bus, this is what you'll see. It looks a little different and your tour guide may say "Oh there is the separation barrier you heard about;" and you'll think, well that doesn't look so bad."



And it really doesn't; but if you kind of look at the picture, you will notice the guard rail at the bottom; there is an access road in between, and there is the top of the wall there; you can just see the highest trees over; so this is one of the reasons we always encourage people, if you get a chance to go on a pilgrimage, that you go with the Catholic Church. If you go with - there are flyers out there - Fr. Alex, I know someone was on a pilgrimage with him, he lives here in Detroit, he takes pilgrimages. The Latin Patriarch itself, if you go to their website, they take pilgrimages. They set up a pilgrimage office; so they could get people in the U. S., or wherever, to go and meet with the Christians there, because you will get a little different perspective than you will just going on your standard kind of commercial thing.



The bishops, in speaking about the freedom of movement that the people there face, mention the checkpoints; this is kind of what they are. There are anywhere from 3 to 500 of these that move around. Some of them are permanent inside, the size of something that is about the size of southeast Michigan. So movement between the walls, within them, around them, there's these. And they are kind of everywhere.



This is the main entrance for the Christians leaving Bethlehem would go through to get outside. Many of these people have to go to jobs, have to go to school, have to go to doctors appointments, whatever. And these checkpoints are not like at the airport, where they are made to get people to get through real quick; there is absolutely no hurry to get these people through. In fact, when I took this picture, as I have taken most of

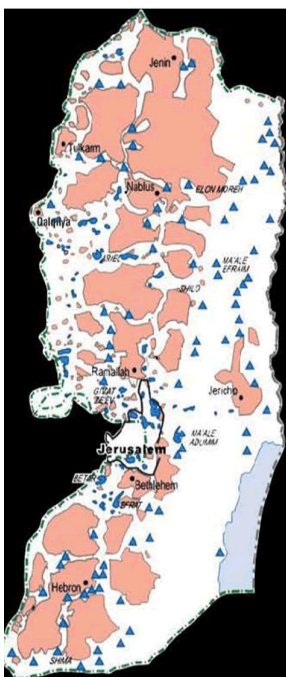
these on different trips, the soldier in the guard booth just beyond there, her friend came up; and she just shut the line down for probably 15 minutes, while she talked to her friend; and this is not uncommon.

You can imagine trying to get somewhere here; and you go to the toll booth on the turnpike; and the people there shut it down; and they are sitting there drinking coffee or talking on their cell phones. You get pretty frustrated pretty quick. And you can see the frustration of people who have to do this every day. And again, these are everywhere. I don't know how well you can see it, but on the left side of that gate there is a kid going through. 800 kids a day go through this particular one on their way to school. This is the one side of it; when you come out the other side, this is where they go through. There are five soldiers you can see; there is another one in the box there, another one on top. I know some of the teachers there; and I have spoken to them; and they said, "You know, these kids get to school, and they are so stressed out, it can take an hour to just get them calmed down enough to where they can begin to teach them. So, again, the schools. I will talk a little about those, but those are something we support with the order. And again these things are everywhere.

One of the bright spots of this lack of freedom of movement is one of the Israeli Jewish groups that work there. Machsom Watch is a group of a lot of grandmothers; and they will go monitor these checkpoints to help abuses not to occur, to help advocate for people to be able to get through to get where they are going. So what the bishops spoke about the freedom of movement, the difficulties it's been, what it has done: the map is just the West Bank; but Jerusalem and Gaza are in this too.



Machsom Watch



It's taken that whole white area and condensed people down into those darker areas. They are orange but you can't see the orange right now. So, for instance, Jericho, which is on the right side of that map, and Bethlehem, which is kind of in the middle of it, to get from one to the other becomes like navigating a maze.

And I don't usually talk about this, but I wanted to talk about it, just because it has been in the news so much lately. All that white area is being filled with Israeli settlements and it's been in the news a lot lately because the Security Council just voted 14-0 again saying, "These are illegal and they shouldn't be there."

So civilian populations moving in, in all those blue triangles; you can see they are setting up settlements; and the people that live there are getting condensed into tighter and tighter spaces. Basically, there are different mechanisms for the settlements; but I just want to give you a quick idea of what they are talking about when they talk about it. For instance, there may be a Palestinian village, like this one. Israeli settlers will

come in and set up some trailers, which is kind of at the top; because the army comes in to protect them, and they set up access roads around them. Because the army is there, they begin running utilities; so they continue to grow. The people that live right next to them, many of their dwellings are partially or wholly demolished oftentimes, and they get poorer.



You can see in the top picture, as the settlements continue to expand and grow, the people that live there get much poorer and poorer, and more destitute.



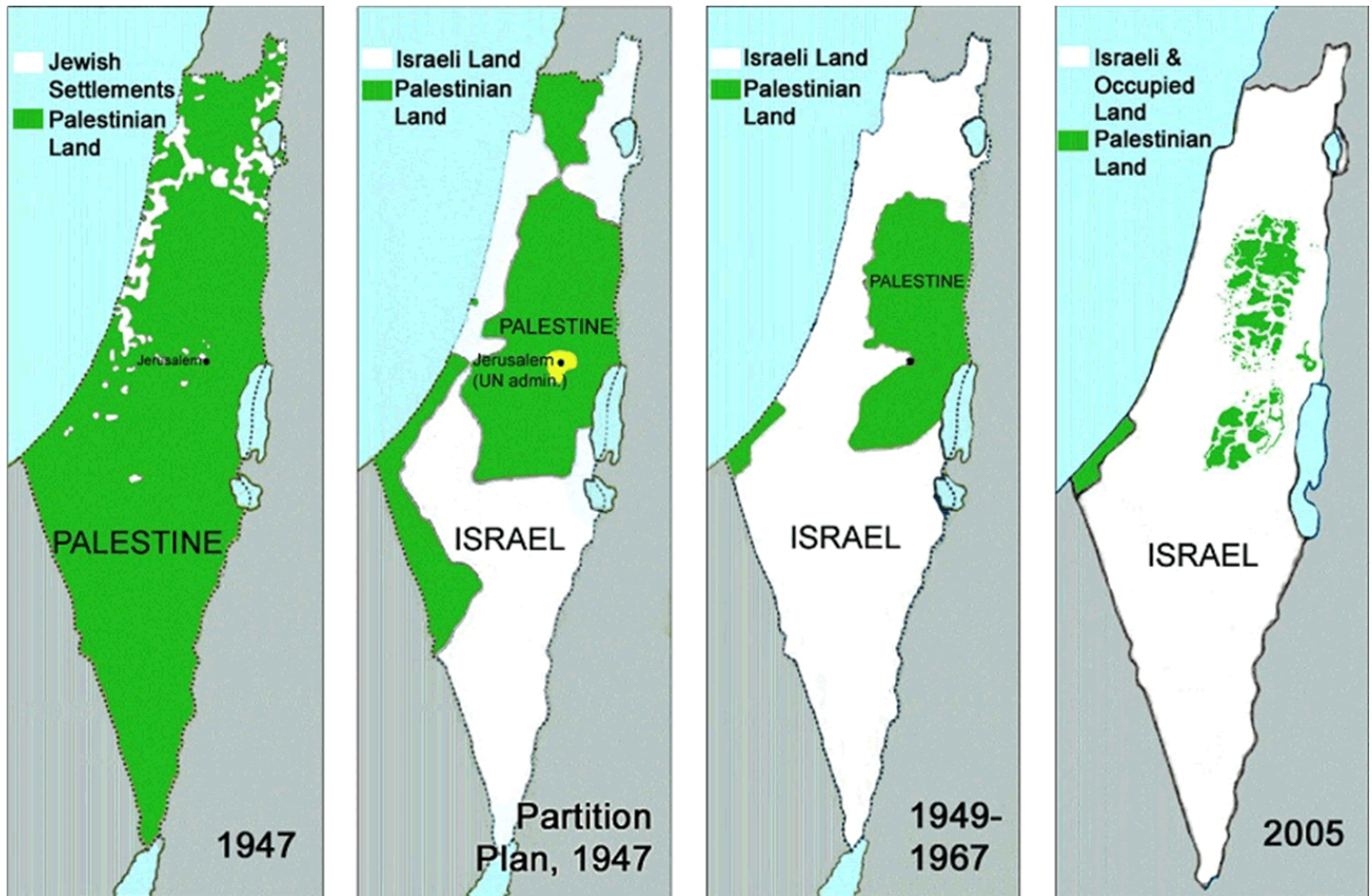
On the left again, one of the bright spots, kind of show you the caliber of people that are there working for peace and justice. This is Danny; he is an Israeli Jew; and they go out and advocate for the people living next to these settlements to be able to get to their farms to farm, or to

get water for that day. And I was with a group of different church leaders; and we saw the work they did. Two of the guys I was with were head of missions for one of the denominations. We heard Danny speak, and they said, "You know, we would like to donate to what you guys are doing." And Danny says, "You know, I appreciate that, and no disrespect," he goes, "but we don't want your money." He says, "We have to do this; and it costs us a tank of gas; but this is something we have to do." And I thought, "That is how the Church should be," you know? And then, eventually, the bigger settlements look like this.

This is Har Homas one of the 23 settlements ringing around Bethlehem that are kind of suffocating the city and driving many Christians out. It's no longer a Christian majority town. With all these restrictions, it's not just getting things into the city or moving people around, but sometimes it's getting aid in. And this is something we have run across on different occasions.



The Association of International Development Agencies is a kind of umbrella organization; Catholic Relief Services, Caritas, are part of this, and in their report, Restricting Aid, which is on line, you can find it, they say, "For this kind of thing, access and movement restrictions for NGOs are significant, widespread, costly and difficult to overcome. As a result vulnerable communities are not being reached."



So, on the above map you will see as the green areas, on 1947, on the left, maybe had a million and a half people, as expansions occurred, and the settlements have taken over; it's become less and less and less, to look on the right side (2005). So, if you want to get from one of those green dots to another, it becomes difficult. In fact, I was working with the Franciscan school in Jericho; and they built a new school and they had 900 kids. And Fr. Abraham says to me, "You know, we'd like to get laptops for these kids." And so we looked around and said, "Okay, there is an organization already in the next green dot over; they're kind of already there; they've got their infrastructure. Can we get the money? Yes, we can get the money," which is usually the hard part of a project like that. So, we got back to the organization that provides the lap tops for kids; and they go, "We can't do it." And we asked, "Why not?"

And they said they are not allowed to move any of their personnel or infrastructure over to Jericho, to the other green dot; so they would have to set up a whole new infrastructure; and for 900 kids, it just wouldn't be cost effective; so that didn't happen.



The bishops spoke about demolitions in their official closing statement. This is one of the Latin Patriarchy properties within Israel that was recently demolished. We're seeing an increase in vandalism and arson on Christian convents, or cemeteries, or monasteries, or churches. This is the Church of the Multiplication of Loaves and Fishes on the left and the Church of the Transfiguration on the right; that was just a few months ago. It was

vandalized; but that's the host on the floor. The U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, issued an Action Alert just a few years ago regarding demolitions in the Cremisan Valley. The Cremisan Valley is a valley outside of Jerusalem. This is the monastery that is there; they make wine. And the whole green area is the valley. It's hard to see on the picture, but on the upper left, there is a white dot; and those trees, that's the monastery. Just below that, to the right, is the convent and the school. All the land is owned by Christian families; that life around there and the villages are just out of the picture on the right. So that's the area.

The Action Alert came out, because what's happening is, those walls that you saw pictures of, the Israeli army is coming in and going to put a wall right through that valley. It's going to essentially take all that land from the people, or make it unusable for the people that live around there. So as the Latin Patriarchy said in their official statement, they took this to court for probably nine years; actually the walls in now, it has just gone in, within this last year. They said in their official case summary that this would, "Violate the nature of the convent and the monastery as holy places. It would breach peoples' right to worship.

**CATHOLICS  
CONFRONT  
GLOBAL  
POVERTY**



*Photo by their ally for CRS*

The Israeli-Palestinian separation barrier has cut off the city of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, from Jerusalem and other neighboring areas. The proposed re-routing of the barrier threatens to divide communities in the nearby Cremisan Valley.

confrontglobalpoverty.org  
1-866-608-5978  
info@confrontglobalpoverty.org



[Sign the petition now!](#)

**ACTION ALERT**

SIGN THE PETITION THAT SUPPORTS BRIDGES, NOT WALLS.  
RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND

The Cremisan Valley, an agricultural area near the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, is best known for its olives, fruits and grapes used in local wine production as well as a recreational area for family outings.

This area is now in danger of being destroyed due to Israeli occupation and security policies that would remove the Israeli-Palestinian separation barrier through it. More than 50 Palestinian families and two Catholic convents will lose their lands and their livelihoods. The [Catholic Sisters Convent and School](#) that provides education to more than 400 children in the adjacent villages will be surrounded by military presence and inhibit many children from going to school. Families will lose access to important green space that defines the community, and Palestinian youth will be cut off from friends, teachers, and mentors.

The Cremisan Valley situation is just a small glimpse of what has been happening throughout the West Bank, seriously impacting the possibility of lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace. This [recent statement](#), by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Holy Land reiterates this point. As the wall moves and expands, more and more Palestinian families from their lands and livelihoods, their movement against the State of Israel will grow and could lead to more violence. Such policies ultimately put Israeli citizens at risk and weaken initiatives for reconciliation and peace as stated in a [recent letter](#) by Bishop Richard Pates, Bishop of Des Moines and Chair of the USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace.

The Catholic Bishops of the United States and Catholic Relief Services have long called for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will build just and lasting peace for all people of the Holy Land. This will require strong U.S. leadership to ensure that both parties are held accountable for the Palestinians to end violence and improve their security measures and governance and for Israelis to cease further West Bank settlements, ease residency requirements, cease home demolitions in East Jerusalem, allow movement of people and goods in the West Bank, and review the route of the security barrier for its impact on Palestinian lives and livelihoods, including in the Cremisan Valley.

[Raise your voice](#) for peace and prosperity for all the people of the Holy Land. Join the Catholic community of the Holy Land to oppose the re-routing of the separation wall in the Cremisan Valley. [Your signature](#) will be delivered to the appropriate Israeli authorities. The final court ruling will be held on February 12 so make sure to sign now.

**TAKE ACTION!**  
[SIGN THE PETITION NOW](#)

*"For the peace of Jerusalem pray."*

—Psalms 122:6

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It violates the agreement between the Holy See and Israel. More than 50 Christian families and two convents will have their lands confiscated. And the convent and school, which has about 450 kids in it, will be situated in a closed military zone.” So now, the kids that are going to school have to go through those checkpoints, if they even want to put up with it that day, and even feel like going to school. It would be easier to stay home.



When I was there last—in the middle there, that is Archbishop Hanna of the Orthodox Church—this didn't sit well with the Church; so they were out there praying, and holding signs, and having Mass every day. It was ecumenical; there were priests from the Latin rite, and the Malachites, and the sisters from different religious orders having Mass, burning incense, which is one kind of smoke, all non-violently. And we were met with tear

gas! It was another kind of smoke in the Holy Land; and those are some of the leftovers I picked up afterwards. Again, one of the bright spots is one of the Jewish organizations that is composed of Israeli soldiers and intelligence officers called *Breaking the Silence*; and they won't serve in those areas because of this kind of thing going on.

Finally, the bishops, in their closing statement, talked about the disturbance of socio-economic life. One of those components is freedom of worship. When I was there last - you can see in this picture, that kid showed his ID to the Israeli police - and was turned away. What they were doing when I was there is denying, you know, the Dome of The Rock—you see the big Gold Dome when you see pictures of Jerusalem. These are Muslim kids who were going to go pray that day. That week, nobody under 60 was allowed to go pray, so, “Grandma and Grandpa, you can go, but the rest of you go home.” And they set up checkpoints around the Dome to make sure people didn't get in. Those kids are walking away; they just got turned away. And it isn't just the fact Muslim communities anymore in Jerusalem, but Christian communities too.



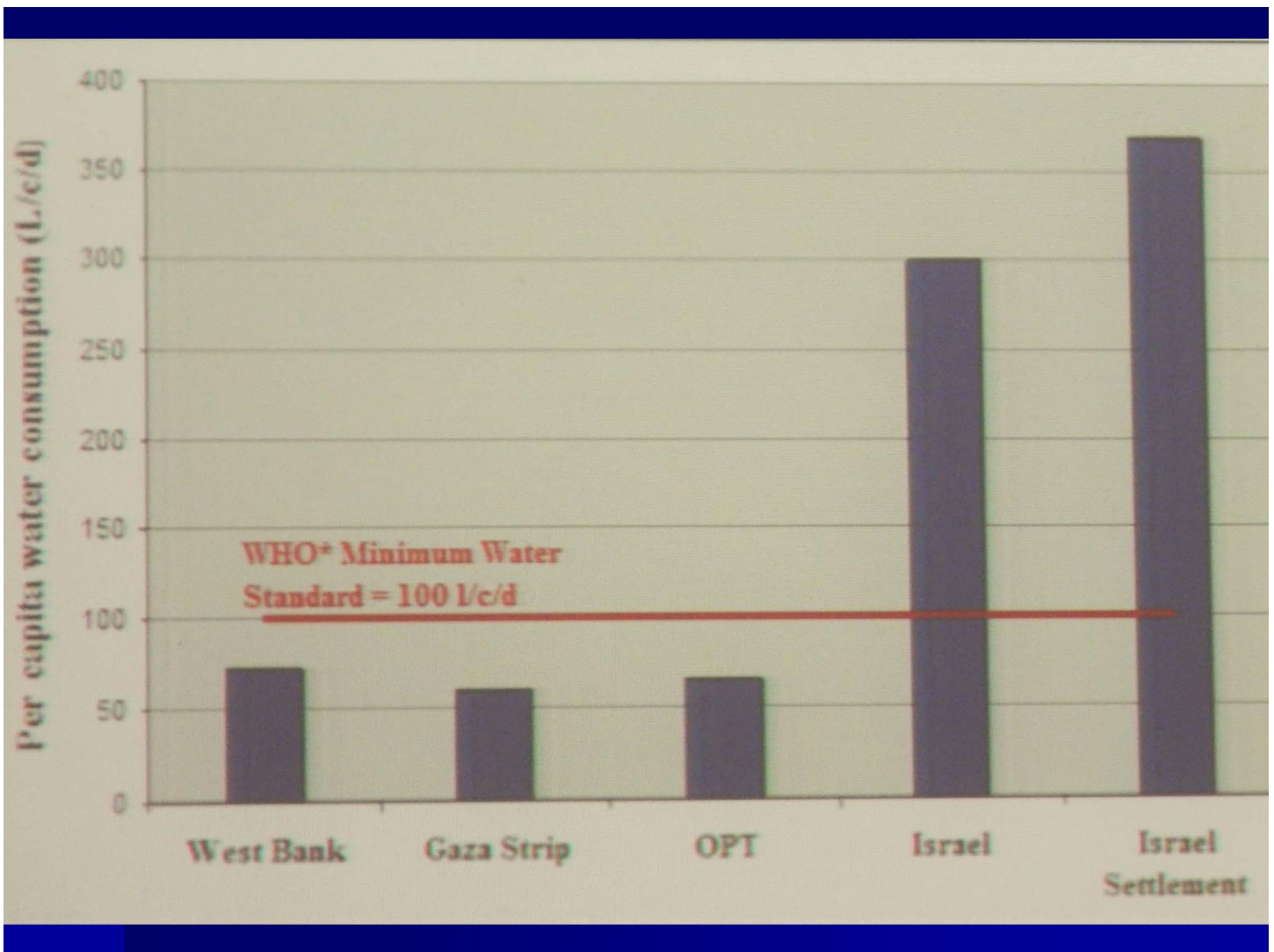
Again, this is the Stone of the Anointing where Jesus' body was anointed. This was a few years ago on Holy Saturday. They shut it down; they wouldn't let people in; they kept worshipers out on the outside. Fr. Arsenios from the Coptic Church tried to get through; and they threw him in a choke hold; but, "The Pope asks that the faithful should have free access to the Holy Places;" and that's one of the

important ones in Jerusalem. Why the Vatican says it should be international? Because it shouldn't be under the control of any group; it should be for everybody. Disturbance of socio-economic life: education, the Latin Patriarch schools have about 33,000 kids in their schools. It's a mix of Christian and Muslim kids. They grow up together, they develop relationships from the time they're young, all the way through higher education. Bethlehem University is the Vatican's university there.

Before this last September, I was there, and the Christian schools went on the unprecedented step of having to go on strike for a month. So, for the whole month of September, they were on strike. So why did they do that? Well, this is the official statement from the Office of Christian Schools in Israel: The Israeli Ministry of Education cut their funding to the Christian schools, probably 65% to 70%, yet maintained full funding for all other private schools. On top of that, they limited the amount of tuition that Christian schools could charge to make up for the shortfall; so they couldn't raise any more money, and denied teachers the right to participate. At the end of the month, they did come to an agreement. The Ministry of Education said, "OK, we'll restore your funding." Well, that was a year and a half ago; and it hasn't happened yet. As of the beginning of this school year, again, the Office of Christian Schools in Israel put out a statement saying, "We're on the verge of financial collapse." So that's kind of the situation of the schools there.

Finally, disturbance of socio-economic life that the bishops spoke about: water. Of course water in the Middle East is a big deal. These are different military orders that govern the use of water. They all are kind of summed up in the top line which is: "All water resources in the occupied Palestinian territories," again Christians being Palestinians, "are Israeli state property." So what does that look like?





Well, this is a graph. The red line is the World Health Organizations minimum standard for water; and you can see the distribution of water between the different factions here. What it looks like on the ground is that many of the Palestinian homes and villages have to get water where they can; so they have water tanks.



This is a Christian farm just outside of Bethlehem; they use cisterns to gather water. Every month, or maybe couple months, an Israeli water truck will come through and sell water; so they have storage tanks that they have to store. These are kind of everywhere.

In fact, one of the main ways you'll tell the difference between—this is like a Christian farm outside Bethlehem, and this is a settlement not that far from it—when you see these areas, you will see like the whole area, or whole village, or whole town, or whole settlement. You'll see, one has water tanks because they don't have free access to water; and the others don't have water tanks, because they do have free access to water. Now, I know it is a tough situation. Patriarchs said, "Christians live there the way of the cross." We know that there is a fundamental injustice at the heart of the question, and that the heads of the churches have said that the occupation, the bishops have broken down what that looks like.

Fr. Twil, the administrator for the Latin Patriarch, he told me, "Of course there can be hopelessness; but that's the life and we have to build from it. So that's what we do." That's what we do with the order, and that's what we do, a lot of the Catholic organizations do, as we help them. How do we build from this? If this is reality, what can we do about it?

Now I told you! I didn't hear any snoring. Thank you. So I will tell you about this plastic cup. I said I would tell you about it. You will hear often, when you are thinking about a pilgrimage, people will tell you, "Oh, you go on a pilgrimage and the scriptures will come alive." And they very much do. I mean, you go to Jerusalem; and you get an appreciation for how compact and noisy it is, kind of the daily bustle of life. You go to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher; and actually, for me, probably the most profound thing is putting your hand down through the hole underneath the altar; and you can touch Calvary. And you think, "This is where Jesus bled;" that's pretty powerful. And that's one way the Scriptures can come alive with the stones. But the Scriptures also come alive with the living stones, with the people there.

We went to a village, a group of about 30 of us; and these are people that were very much living day to day, that had those settlements around them. Every day was a struggle to get to their fields to farm, to get to wells, to be able to get water. And when a group of about 30 of us descended on them, these are people that are living in demolished homes; they are living in tents; some honestly are living in caves - I mean, 21st century. They made sure each of us got served coffee; and I know it doesn't seem like anything, but it's made out of water; and when water is a daily struggle, it brought the Scripture alive to me about the widow's mite; how the widow gave two coins; and it was more than anybody else gave. And those are the people there.

In fact, when you go, of course, the Holy Land is where the Transfiguration occurred; Jesus appeared in his glorified form. And he's still there today; and if you get a chance and, again, we encourage people to go on Church pilgrimages, you know, through the Catholic Church; and you get to meet the people there.



You will see the hands of Christ in the clergy and religious that stay there, and minister to the people, while they are living out the way of the Cross. You'll see it in the Palestinian Christians themselves. This is Basam, from Jericho, passing the faith on to his daughter. You'll see it in the sisters that live in Gaza; and despite Gaza being bombed every few years, they're always told to get out; and they never do. They say the people are here; we are staying with them; and they do; and they have a lot of respect there because of that. And they are there today; and they will be there tomorrow. And the Church is not an insignificant presence there. While we are less than 2% of the population, the church provides 45% of all the health, education and social services for people there. So it is a very strong presence; and we want to encourage people to be able to make a living, and to build from the realities they face to maintain that for the future. Actually Fr. Twil said to me, "You know, more than financial support even," he said, "we need brotherhood support. We need people to come and visit us and sit down to a meal with us." And when you get to sit down with people and share a meal or learn their name it really gives people, I think, help to restore a sense of dignity, that there is a value and worth to them, and that, I think, for me, is the heart of Catholic social teaching, the value and the dignity of the human person.

So, again, Latin Patriarchy: pilgrimages. I know Fr. Alex's pilgrimage would do that. There are different handouts. As I said, interviews with the last two Cardinals that headed our order, there is a book called *Kairos*. In the back of it is a document put out by all the heads of all the churches, explaining this kind of thing from the Palestinian Christian perspective: what we can do about it? Feel free to take all those. And then I have my book, *A Great Cloud of Witnesses: The Catholic Church's Experience in the Holy Land*. My book is just a collection of documents and interviews and statements that the Catholic Church has put out over the last 70 years. I thought it was important to put it in one place for people, because they have been consistent in what they have said.

We draw our information in this presentation from it; and I think they wrote some things in the 40's that were honestly prophetic. Because what they wrote in the 40's; and, it's like, that is what is going on now. It's weird, really. But, anyway, there's my email ([jabood@att.net](mailto:jabood@att.net)). If you have any questions, if you want any of the documentation we use, I will be glad to send it to you. Anything I can do please, contact me; and I think that's it. So thanks for having me. (Applause)

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