



Austrian Hospice  
of the Holy Family

# Austrian Hospice News

No. 14 · 2014

EDITORIAL

## Looking, not onlooking. *Christmas in the Holy Land*

*Christmas directs our gaze towards Bethlehem, to the crib; and thus the Holy Land – Israel and Palestine – are perforce connected.*

*The pictures of the summer war in Gaza are still very real; the high number of casualties on both sides unforgettable. Without any trace of malicious intent, the physically wounded and the countless wounded souls have become less real to us, even though they – in contrast to the dead – are still living among us and remain dependent on help from abroad – on our help! Who knows their number? Who can adequately care for them, in a small coastal strip which lacks decent basic medical care?*

*If there is no peace in the Holy Land itself, what significance can we ascribe to the birth of the Prince of Peace, Jesus? The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, between the various Christian communities in the country, threatens to become a barrier to faith, since the message of the Christ child has apparently not stood the test. Every day we see the notion of “brotherly love” being given the lie.*

*Ironically enough, it seems that “love of God” itself is what stands in the way of peace among the people. With their respective Scriptures in hand, Jews, Christians and Muslims claim their inherited right to the Holy Land: this place, that grove, the altar on the right!*

*This logic is incomprehensible to the secular, who relegate piety to the private domain of the individual. Not so in the steaming Orient where each pile of sand signifies a very real sacred landscape for at least one religion. And to a believer, to have no share in it me-*

*ans just that: to have no share in salvation! Some roll up their sleeves, others resort to arms.*

*The “integrity” of such contemporaries commands respect. Their conviction is of a political nature and is reinforced by religious belief. In the western hemisphere people like to*

*the issues of our time if it doesn't fulfil the particular religion. Religion creates that horizon of meaning which the world can neither engender nor simulate.*

*We ask about the purpose of the Christ child and his message of peace? It is not the love of God that is the obstacle to brotherly love, but*



*analyse and dissect, to understand things in detail and how they came about, taking into account the sweep of history, and in the end like to forget – because of their penetrating insights – to reassemble the picture into a design that makes life worthwhile. Why are we surprised then when young people join the Jihad if they imagine that only via this evil are they able to experience “real community”? There is no purely political solution to*

*a person who imagines that he has to help his God out by force of arms. This man does not believe his God is capable of much. But our God believes mankind is capable of everything.*

*Markus St. Bugnyar*

Rector Markus St. Bugnyar

# News

CALL FOR HELP



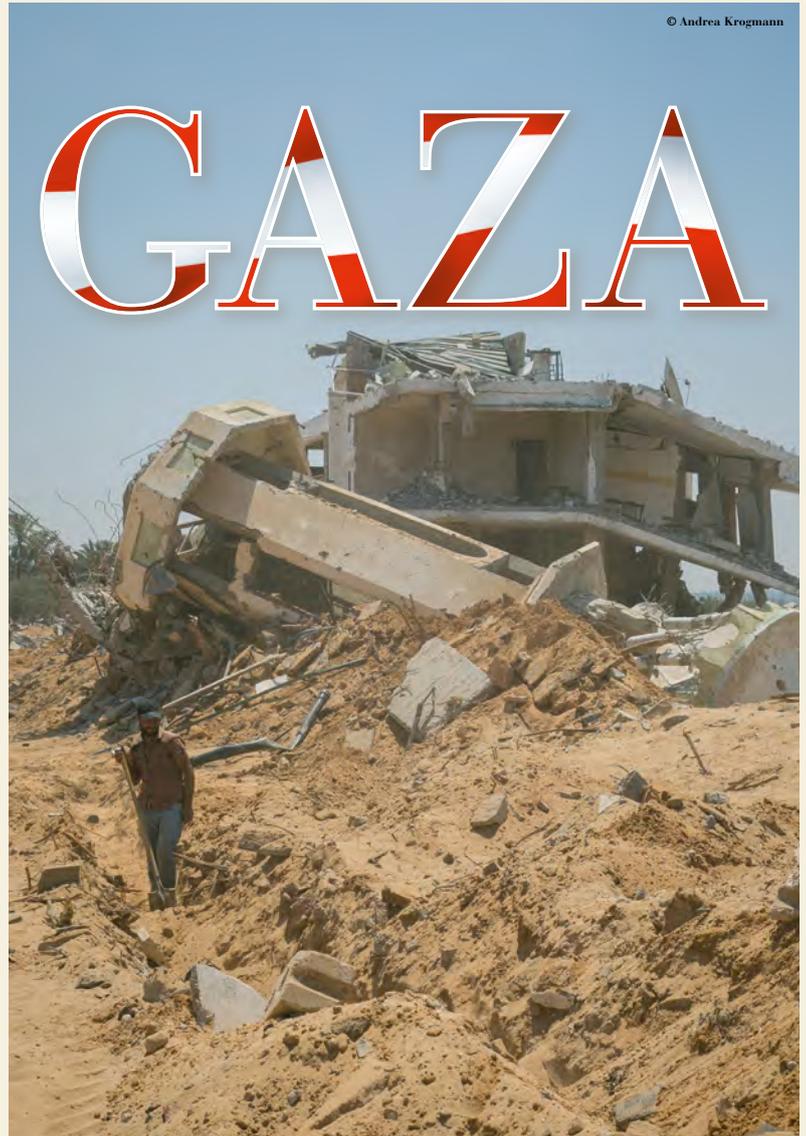
Rector Markus Bugnyar

We take pleasure in the child in the stable in Bethlehem and sing of peace.

Gaza City also has its place in the Christmas story. Fearing the wrath of King Herod, the Holy Family fled to Egypt; after his death they returned to Nazareth. They made a stop in Gaza. The Catholic parish church in Gaza is therefore dedicated to the Holy Family.

It was the Tyrolean priest, **Georg Gatt**, who established the parish in Gaza. Born in 1843 in Nörsach, Gatt

Gaza today.



Prayer book: War knows no respect.



was ordained priest in 1867 in Brixen. In 1871, the then Archbishop of Vienna, Joseph Othmar von Rauscher, appointed him Vice-Rector of the Austrian Hospice in Jerusalem. He remained there for two years before assuming the post of headmaster of a boys' school in the city. In 1879

he was faced with the decision whether to return home or to remain in the Holy Land. The second half of the 19th century was a time of economic and social change for Palestine. New roads and advances heralded by industrialisation brought many foreigners here in search of personal fulfilment in the Holy Places.

**Reverend Gatt decided to go to Gaza.** The city had for centuries been an important crossroads of trade

## CALL FOR HELP

routes heading for the Mediterranean, but was also a gateway between two continents, Africa and Asia. The city had enjoyed a rich history, but was now looking for reconstruction aid. Gatt knew of a small group of Christians living there who had no priest. Pastoral care was of utmost importance to him, he never wanted to proselytise. He was a man of action. The Patriarch in Jerusalem had no choice but to agree to his plan, whence Gatt set off on a begging trip to Austria, to collect the building blocks for his



**Pope Francis and the priest of Gaza, Jorge Hernandez, both come from Argentina**

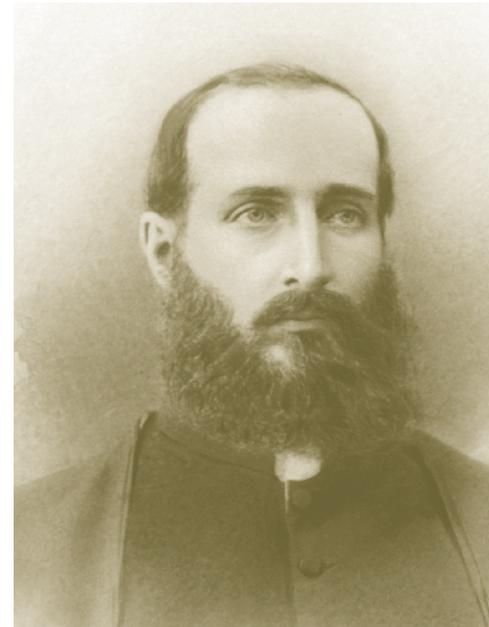
work. He bought a piece of land, built a large house on it, set up a school and endowed a chapel. Georg Gatt always thought in a practical manner: he was partner in two grain-steam mills in Gaza and Ashdod, which were to provide the financial basis for his Austrian community in Gaza. After 30 years he returned to the Hopsice in Jerusalem where he died in 1924. **His life's work flourished, but also suffered setbacks during the many wars.**

In the 70s our Knights of the Holy Sepulchre decided to honour their compatriot and facilitated the construction of a kindergarten and a large school in the parish of the Holy Family. We call it an "Austrian parish": Georg Gatt was Vice-Rector of our pilgrim house in Jerusalem. So it is only right that we care deeply about his community.

**School children at morning prayer in Gaza.**



©Andrea Krogmann



**Vice-Rector Georg Gatt**

During the weeks of the war in Gaza, the city's current pastor, Jorge Hernandez, opened the doors of the school, vicarage and church to thousands of refugees. Sisters of the Holy Mother Teresa of Calcutta help him. Food, clothing, medicine, clean water, helping hands and a loving heart are the key ingredients in this brotherly love. We also like to assist his endeavours and to raise funds for our community in Gaza.

### **DONATIONS**

marked "Gaza" can be transferred to:

Österreichisches Hospiz

Bankhaus

Schelhammer und Schattera

IBAN: AT951919000100150127

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**Thank you!**

# News

## CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

# The Austrian Society *of the Holy Land*

**The Austrian Society of the Holy Land is the Friends' Circle of the Austrian Hospice of the Holy Family in Jerusalem.** It was founded during the period of the Hospice refurbishment (1985–1988) by the then lieutenant of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre, Dr. Julius Schuster. The first call to



Dr. Gustav Ortner

solidarity “with our Austrian House in the Orient” garnered a resounding seven hundred members, thanks in part to the renown of the first president of the Society, former Austrian President Dr. Rudolf Kirchschläger. Many of these initial friends have remained faithful to the Hospice to the present day, through membership fees and donations, but especially through their kindness and their prayer.

Dr. Kirchschläger was succeeded as head of the Friends' Circle by the Deputy Editor in Chief of the Press, Dr. Pia Maria Plechl, and by Ambassador Dr. Georg Hohenberg, who are supported by a multi-member board. During his era as president of the Society from 2004 to 2014, **Ambassador Dr. Gustav Ortner** succeeded in recruiting new members and attracting new donors; he also oversaw the relocation of the office to its current premises in the Habsburgergasse. **A big thankyou for all your time, effort and devotion!**

**Ambassador Georg Habsburg-Lothringen** was unanimously voted new president of the Society at the general meeting of 18th November 2014. The Hospice in Jerusalem extends its heartfelt congratulations to him!

Georg Habsburg-Lothringen was president of the Hungarian Red Cross for nine years, an experience of “mobilisation for a good cause” which could be very useful to us too.

The other members of the new board are Dr. Ludwig Gruber, Dr. Alexander Kragora, Dr. Gottfried Locker, Hans Mooshammer, Paul Mitter, Dr. Gerald Scheidl and Thomas Weickenmeier. Mag. Matthias Nemeth and Mag. Michael Klinger were chosen as the Society's auditors.

Dr. Eva Katharina Trauttmansdorff recently ended her term of office in the Habsburgergasse; a warm blessing to her for her selfless service to our House in the Orient!

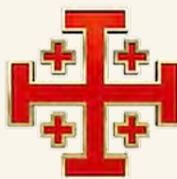
Already President Dr. Georg Hohenberg, as grandson of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, carried on a family tradition: When the Austrian Hospice was going through its difficult birth,



Georg Habsburg-Lothringen

the Habsburgs were already acting as protectors of our House through their mediation with their “counterpart”, the Sultan of Constantinople.

For further details and membership queries, please contact: [gesellschaft@austrianhospice.com](mailto:gesellschaft@austrianhospice.com)



**The red Jerusalem Cross denotes the Latin Patriarchate in the Holy Land and the Order of the Knights and Ladies of the Holy Sepulchre**

### Imprint:

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91194 Jerusalem

### To make a donation towards the renovation of the Hospice,

please write “donation”; to make a contribution for social or charitable causes, please write “grant”.

### Many thanks.

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zur Heiligen Familie  
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