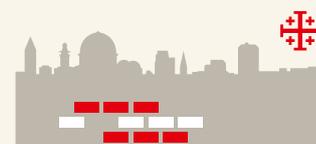


JERUSALEM

Korrespondenz

Bi-annual report of the Austrian Pilgrims' Hospice



JERUSALEM
Erleben. Gestalten!
Österreichisches Pilger-Hospiz



IMPRINT:

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Cover-photograph: © ÖPH

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**Rector Markus St. Bugnyar and Austrian
Pilgrims Hospice employees with the two
in-house dogs Tiara und Benny.**

Dear Friends of the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice in Jerusalem!

I am delighted to present you with our latest semi-annual report. It has been a very busy time and the opening of Casa Austria signals a truly historic stage in the life of our house in the Holy City. The report on the opening ceremony thus takes up a good part of our newsletter.

On two full-page double pages we offer you two photo collages; a foretaste of those pictures that adorn the new guest rooms in Casa Austria. Jonathan Knirsch selected photos from our archive collection and interwove, mirrored, and expanded upon them with scenes of the same place in the present. Our house looks back on a rich history and marches strengthened into the future with the addition of the new guesthouse.

A propos history: Never before has anyone thought to transcribe and comment on our historical house chronicles. Florian Schiemer has committed himself to doing so for his thesis in History at the University of Vienna. The result is a work of more than 300 pages, which will soon be accessible to the interested researcher and reader in book form.

The visit of the Federal President, Dr. Alexander Van der Bellen, who visited us in February with a large delegation, also represents an historical landmark.

This summer we started some projects to ensure the quality assurance of our house. Josef Ransmann, master carpenter and teacher at a vocational college in Münster, spent his vacation running a training course for our caretaking staff, so that we will not have to outsource such work in the future. Julian Kutos, a star chef from Vienna, and chef Bishara Jazrawi, re-worked the selection of delicacies offered by our coffee house and reconceptualized the menu.

Please allow me to take this opportunity to thank the many friends whose sincere wishes for recovery reached us on the occasion of the recent illness of Sr. Vice-Rector Bernadette Schwarz. Thank God, Sr. Bernadette is once again in good health. The supervisory board of our institution has dissolved the provision of services contract with the Order of the Sisters of the Cross in Linz in order to ensure that Sr. Bernadette has the best possible conditions to make a full recovery. In a separate article we report on the departure at the end of August of our much-loved Vice-Rector.



Photo: © Photostudio Floyd

The pilgrim hospice is thus embarking once again on a “sister-less” era. Again – because in our early decades no religious women worked in the house. Only in 1895 were the first sisters sent from Alexandria in Egypt. The Franciscan sisters from Vöcklabruck deserve special mention here; and also Sister Cordis Feuerstein, whom many of our guests will surely remember from our re-opening.

Sadly, there is no denying that the merits of women, even in our church, are often not adequately highlighted. I am taking the opportunity of Sr. Bernadette’s return to home to collect up the names of all the sisters who served in our house, in order to commission a beautiful stone tablet which will bear their names.

I am sure that you will appreciate this gesture and greet you warmly with all good blessings from Jerusalem.

Yours

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Markus St. Bugnyár".

RECTOR MARKUS ST. BUGNYÁR



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Österreichisches Pilger-Hospiz

What Casa Austria is really all about



Photos: © OPH

Festive gathering for the inauguration of Casa Austria on 25th April 2019.

These photos will hopefully allow you to participate in our small opening ceremony on April 25th 2019.

By **RECTOR MARKUS ST. BUGNYÁR**

The major work is over: Casa Austria is open! The new guestroom wing brings the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice to its originally-conceived size 160 years after its opening.

Wars, financial bottlenecks, political turmoil and simply lack of perspective had for a century and a half made this impossible. Or, as our cardinal said at the opening ceremony on April 25th 2019 in Jerusalem, “For a long time I didn’t believe that this building would ever come into being.”

It was admittedly neither to be taken for granted, nor easy. Not to be taken for granted that, in the Old City of Jerusalem, in such a politically sensitive and controversial area, in such a small space, a building permit would be forthcoming. But after a process lasting almost 7 years, we received one, in less than average time thanks to good contacts.

Neither was it easy; on the one hand because of the two building-objections that had to be resolved, on the

other because of some (minor) acts of sabotage resulting from envy and resentment.

When we finally got the building license in 2016, the big request for help and support began.

Countless lectures and informational events, meetings and appointments ultimately brought us 2 million euros in donations and private and public sector contributions. For all of you who contributed to this “two-century work”, an enormous thankyou!

You are all great friends! And you know that we will continue to need you when it comes to the general refurbishment of the main building.

Austria now and in the future should have a beautiful place in the most important city in human history, whilst our pilgrims and visitors from all over the world should have an address where they can rest and feel whole through meeting God.

But please allow me to talk to you about what really matters, after all the effort in recent years for Casa Austria. Yes, we have made history by completing the

original hospice plan of 1854, yes, we have significantly expanded our resources for pilgrims and thus strengthened our own economic base, yes, we can now create some more jobs and thus help the local community; but no, that's not it yet.

Above all, and that is the most serious thing, we have strengthened the Christian presence in the Old City of Jerusalem visibly, tangibly, immutably!

Every reader can decide for themselves whether this strengthening refers to the context of the Muslim quarter, along the Via Dolorosa, the route of the final steps of Jesus – our common path! – or to a strengthening in the political context of a disputed city in which we live as Christians as an absolute minority.

You decide; a little bit of everything, I would say. Hardly anything can be too far-fetched in this place, but not everything will (or can) I formulate.

Casa Austria, this crucial stage in our hospice history – for which I have fought over the past few years and for which Sr. Bernadette has tirelessly kept my hands free – strengthens the Christian presence. Not somewhere in the country, but in the middle of the Old City of Jerusalem, at the “navel of the world”.



Casa Austria marks the completion of the founding fathers' initial plans from the year 1856 – good reason to celebrate.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Markus St. Bugnyár (born 1975) has been the rector of the Austrian Pilgrims' Hospice in Jerusalem since April 2004. His term of office has witnessed the general renovation of the sisters' house and the expansion of the Viennese Café. He wrote history with the construction of the Casa Austria: After 160 years it completes the original plan of the founding fathers and sustainably strengthens the Christian presence at a particularly neuralgic point of the Old City.

As the driving force behind the Hospice Academy, he organizes intercultural concerts and scientific symposia and publishes material on the history and present of the pilgrims' hospice.

Dear and esteemed friends, that's what it's about!

All of you who contributed to this:

Consider that together we are building the Kingdom of God in our world. Through our word and example, through our actions and giving.

In return I ask for the blessing of the Almighty for all of you in the Holy City!

RECTOR MARKUS ST. BUGNYÁR



Christoph Cardinal Schönborn puts his signature to the capstone documentation; beside him Rector Markus St. Bugnyár.

August 25th 2019

A warm welcome!

By **SR. VIZE-REKTORIN BERNADETTE SCHWARZ**

I am glad to see you coming to say THANKS to me for 20 years Jerusalem.

My first area of influence in Jerusalem was the Dormition Abbey. I remember well the first day of my being here, when Father Matthias explored the Old City with me, went to the Wailing Wall and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It impressed me greatly!

Father Matthias, maybe you still remember? THANKS to the monks on Mount Zion for 8.5 years at the Dormition Abbey.

I have been at the Austrian Hospice since March 1st 2008, exactly 11.5 years.

My duties were: to take care of household matters and to provide a spiritual atmosphere in the house. You cannot do that alone, I could not do it alone.

Therefore very warm THANKS, dear Rector, for your friendly cooperation! You have repeatedly said: we are a good team. And we were! 1000 THANKS!

And without all the staff and the civil service volunteers?? Inconceivable!! Only with your help could I fulfill my mission.

Household concerns include many things: clean guest rooms, clean linen, a well-kept garden, friendly service at the reception, in the cafe and in general duties, good, tasty food from the kitchen and not to forget, the best apple strudel with the best cappuccino!

Each and every one of you has contributed to a harmonious and successful whole. Herzlichen DANK! Thank you very much! Sukran ikteer!

What would the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice be without guests, visitors and pilgrims? An empty house! You, dear guides, tour leaders and representatives of the travel agencies, contributed to their coming.

Working with you for the well-being and the joy of our guests and pilgrims was very enriching for me.

How happy I was when you arrived with your groups in our Viennese coffee house and enjoyed the beautiful view from my terrace.

And when greeting the groups – whether pilgrims or tourists – I had the opportunity to convey the values of our house.

Dear guides, thank you!



Photo: © Julian Kutos

A special gift was the visits of friends of the house from church institutions, other guesthouses, the arts, the worlds of culture and business.

They enriched my everyday life and made for variety. A very big THANK YOU!

Dear sisters from the different communities! You have accompanied me throughout these years. I greatly appreciate your fraternal support, without which I would not have been able to overcome my many hurdles and difficulties. Unforgettable for me is Sister M. Xaveria.

Dear sisters, THANK YOU with all my heart! God bless you!

Dear guests, dear friends! You can be sure I will miss you all!

The people and the country have become my home over 20 years. Now it's time to leave!

My path leads me back to Austria with the hope that contacts will persist and that I will remain in touch with you by mail and in personal visits from Jerusalem.

I wish each and every one of you success in your own sphere of influence, health, joy, God's blessing and much more.

And my wish for the house: May the employees continue to care for the business for the house with great dedication and zeal. May the Austrian Hospice continue to be an oasis of peace for pilgrims and visitors, where they are welcomed and made to feel at home in a spiritual atmosphere.

Dear friends, THANK YOU, and again THANK YOU for everything!



Photo: © Julian Kutos

Many friends and companions came to say goodbye at the Sister Bernadette terrace of the Austrian hospice.



Photo: © Julian Kutos

Vice Rector Sister Bernadette Schwarz with Rector Markus St. Bugnyár and Abbot Bernhard Maria Alter OSB.



Photo: © Julian Kutos

Julian Kutos and employees of the house with our homemade apple strudel.

Quality assurance in our gastronomy

By THE EDITOR

For decades, our Viennese coffee house and our Austrian kitchen specialties have enjoyed an excellent reputation far beyond the borders of the city. We know that we can't rest on our laurels, but need to pay attention to quality and originality. Styria-born, Vienna-based and internationally accomplished chef Julian Kutos graced our house this summer when he ran a workshop lasting several weeks with our head chef Bishara Jazrawi and his team. The existing menu in the coffee-house and restaurant has been redesigned, the classics of the house have been upgraded, and new creations launched.

A consistent desire on the part of our guests in the Orient is good bread – bread as we know it from home. Which happens to be the special expertise of Julian Kutos, who also offers culinary courses in Vienna. An abundance of breads enriches our breakfast buffet and finds its way, with delicious spreads, even as a small appetizer, into the coffee-house.

The recipe for our popular original Austrian apple strudel has been totally revised and our potato salad has been greatly improved to make it both tastier and creamier. Take a break 'at home' in the heart of the Old City before continuing with your visit, fortified by our fare.

The "relaunch" of our coffee house has already begun. If you need convincing, just give us a try. Bon Appetite!



**King Hussein and Sister Lilosia Fasching
in the Hospice chapel. Since then we have
welcomed many guests.**



UNESCO Jazz Day: Music for Peace – Dialogue – Human Rights

By JONATHAN KNIRSCH

The “International Jazz Day” of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) has taken place on April 30th for the past eight years. Since its inception in 2011, it has become a worldwide initiative to strengthen peace and cohesion among different nations, with special focus on the younger generation. Thanks to cooperation with the Willy Brandt Center Jerusalem, the Austrian Cultural Forum Tel Aviv, the Swiss Representative Office in Ramallah, the Italian Consulate and the “UNESCO National Office for Palestine”, we were once again able to offer our salon as the host venue this year.

The concert at the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice took place on April 29th 2019. After the salon gradually filled up, with an overflow having to sit in the hallway outside, Heidi Caviezel (vocals) from Switzerland, Lukas Leitner (piano) from Austria, Palestinian Mohammad Qutati (accordion), and Italian Luca Velotti (clarinet/saxophone) quickly enthralled the audience with an excellent performance.

Another highlight was the subsequent spontaneous recital of some musicians from Gaza.

As could be gathered from the organizers’ jubilation on the afternoon of the same day, some young artists from the Gaza Strip managed to acquire exit permits in order to participate in the concert. The radiant smiles of the young Palestinians, for whom this was a first stay in Jerusalem, helped create a wonderful atmosphere – the colourful ensemble was almost unstoppable even after two hours of uninterrupted music-making.

A big thank you to all those involved and to the participants for so many unforgettable moments!



Photo: © Petra Klose

World-Unesco Jazz-Day is celebrated for the third time in the Hospice; all thanks to Petra Klose (pic centre, red dress).

Piano Concert with Filip Martinka

Exceptional Czech talent inspires on our Bösendorfer.

By JONATHAN KNIRSCH

On June 27th 2019, Filip Martinka, a guest of the Czech representative office in Ramallah, treated us to a piano concert in the salon. Not only were his extraordinary skills on the piano exceptional, but also the ambience in our salon and of course the Czech beer on tap.

Filip is one of the most talented and gifted young pianists in the Czech Republic. Despite his youth, he has already achieved great success and has been honoured at national and international piano competitions. These include the Broumov Key, the International Smetana Piano Competition, Virtuosi per Musica di Pianoforte, the National Conservatory Competition, the International Radio Competition, the Young Pianist of the Prague Conservatory and many more.

At sunset in our salon, which was filled to the last seat, the young artist delighted us with pieces by Haydn, Chopin, Smetana, Ravel and Rachmaninoff. With astonishing precision and virtuoso technique, Filip won the audience over and was rewarded with a lengthy applause, ending in a standing ovation. The presence of members of the diplomatic corps and compatriots from the Czech Republic was also gratifying.

The evening culminated in a small reception offering plenty of opportunities for conversation.

This cooperative event contributed to a strengthening of friendship between the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice and the Czech representative office in Ramallah. We especially thank Mr. Pavel Bobek for his initiative.



Photos: © ÖPH

Filip Martinka on our Bösendorfer.

Inter-cultural dialogue: Sufis in the Hospice



Photos: © ÖPH

The Hospice is once again the platform for inter-cultural events; performances of the Sufis from our neighbourhood are always a highlight of the annual calendar.

Josef, the carpenter: a special traineeship



Photos: © ÖPH

Josef Ransmann was involved in many small and large carpentry projects in our institution. We are very grateful to him.

The well-known Berlin Islamic scholar Dr. Angelika Neuwirth brought Muslim Sufi tradition to the Catholic pilgrim house.

By THE EDITOR

On the 27th of February a traditional Sufi concert took place at the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice in cooperation with the Theological Year of the Dormition Abbey and under the direction of the German Islamic scholar, university professor Dr. Angelika Neuwirth.

Frequently, Sufi music is centred on recitations of the Qur'an, which honour either God or the Prophet Muhammad: at this event, Christian, Jewish and Muslim visitors curious to learn about Sufism were treated to musical renditions of parts of Sura 17 and 54, which deal with the Almighty and the heavenly journey of the Prophet.

The polyphonic singing was accompanied by a rhythmic accompaniment of several drums and bells, which were alternately led by the oldest and youngest Sufi member of the Nakshabandi order. The solo by the oldest Sufi, who came very close to a spiritual state of trance, was greeted with particular enthusiasm.

By THE EDITOR

We are always looking for talents who are willing to contribute their knowledge to our pilgrim hospice. Josef Ransmann teaches carpentry at a German vocational school – and this summer also taught our caretaking staff. The benefits of his instruction are manifold, not least insofar as simple jobs will longer have to be outsourced at high cost.

Mr. Ransmann became aware of our search for craftsmen after receiving a copy of Jerusalem Correspondence from a friend. The former theology student and master carpenter did not hesitate long; by August 2019 he was already on a plane bound for the Holy Land.

It quickly became clear that the master-teacher from Münster would not only lend a hand, but would also share his knowledge with our caretaking staff. For several weeks, our maintenance team worked on different “wood construction sites” in our house: windows, doors, chairs, the visitors’ terrace, sealing, sanding, and affixing hinges, etc. The dormitory furniture was polished, flower boxes were painted. Our antique armchairs in the salon were examined and any damaged areas repaired. The list of jobs was long. And now it’s time to consolidate what was learned!

In addition to the work, there was plenty of time to explore the city and the country. “What made it even better was that all the people were so friendly and helpful,” says Mr. Ransmann.

And we say a big THANK YOU and farewell!

Of pilgrims, dodgers and other illustrious figures in the Holy City

Photo: © Florian Schiemer

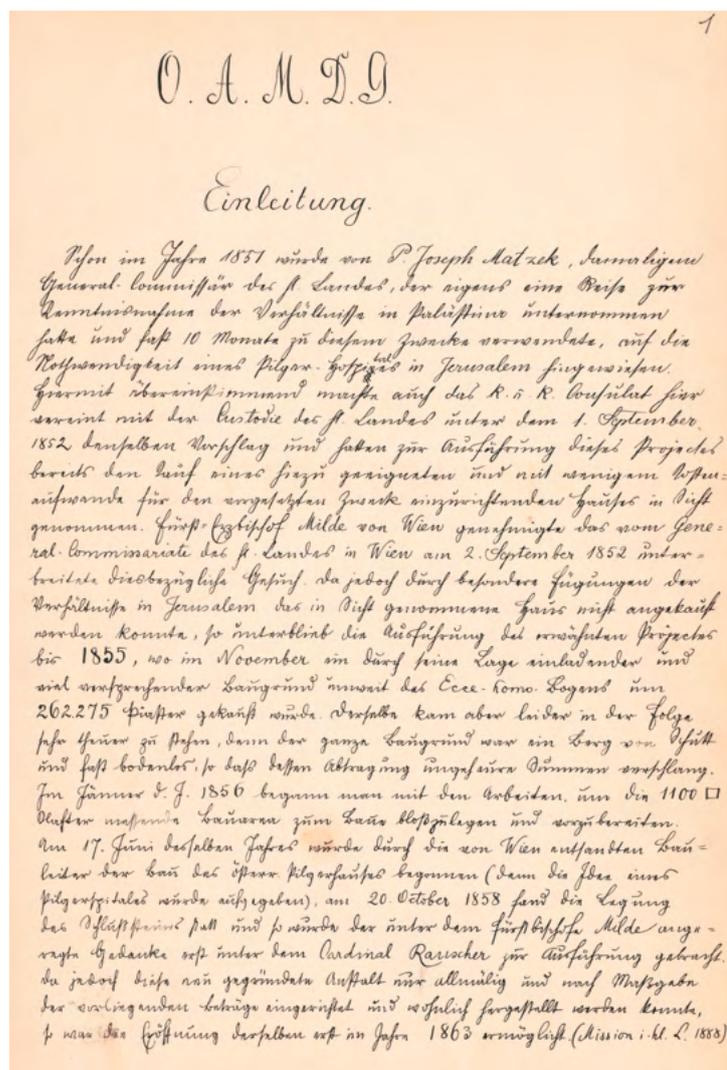


As part of a diploma thesis in History at the University of Vienna, the historical chronicles of the Pilgrim Hospice were transcribed for the first time and commented upon in light of their history. This work will be published in book form at the end of the year.

By FLORIAN SCHIEMER

In 2008 my overseas civil service began at the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice, where as the year progressed I increasingly took on administrative tasks. As part of the review of the archive material that had accumulated over the years in the Hospice, we came across guest books in which more as well as less prominent visitors had immortalized themselves. I was instructed to read through these books – my objection that I could not read Kurrent (late medieval German cursive script) was countered by Rector Markus St. Bugnyár who insisted that it was a matter of habit and I should just try it. And so the foundation was laid for handing over old handwritten Hospice books to me for review.

One day we came across a large-format book entitled “Chronik I des östr.ung. Pilgerhauses”, whose existence, but not its contents, was known to the rector. On the one hand, it became clear that this chronicle was very sketchy and covered very different periods of time; on the other hand, the typeface was generally easy to read, although highly variable. So the thought of reading this chronicle was not too daunting. Things were different when we looked at the Chronicle II – written mostly at the end of the 19th century, all in Kurrent,



Photos: © OPH

Omnia ad maiorem Dei gloriam – Everything for the greater glory of God. The incipit of our house chronicles.

Handwritten text in a dense, cursive script, likely a chronicle or diary entry. The text is written on thin paper and is partially obscured by a vertical crease. The ink is dark and the handwriting is very tight and consistent.

Handwritten text in a dense, cursive script, continuing the narrative from the left page. The text is written on thin paper and is partially obscured by a vertical crease. The ink is dark and the handwriting is very tight and consistent.

Photos: © Florian Schiemer

small, on thin paper which the ink had penetrated, and on which at first glance not even three words seemed legible. The third Chronicle, which we also found, consists of only a few pages and was not a problem.

So, after avoiding it for some time and for good reason, I decided to transcribe the chronicles as part of my diploma thesis and to write a commentary on them. What was initially intended as a large but feasible project evolved into a mammoth task. Many more pages turned up than expected, and the tight script meant that a handwritten page turned into one and a half computer-written DIN A4 pages.

I spent countless hours in front of the scans of the individual chronicle pages and transcribed. Sometimes whole lines were skipped because they were illegible; I started out by writing down only those words I could read with certainty. Some things could be ascertained from the context; in the case of other words and letters, the prophecy of the Rector became true: I got used to it. The chronicles were conducted by the different rectors – consequently there was also a change in handwriting which for me always meant relief on the one hand and renewed concern on the other that the new material would be even more illegible than the earlier.

So there were passages that I simply transcribed in parallel without hesitation and only occasionally got stuck

on single words. And there were passages on which I worked for hours. Desperately, I tried to decipher and assemble individual letters. I googled the most unlikely combinations of letters in the hope that Google would either propose a word to me (for example, from the old ecclesiastical vocabulary I'm not particularly familiar with); or would ask me, "Did you mean ...?" and miraculously suggest the right word. I skipped whole paragraphs to later return to them and suddenly read the words without any problem. I sat brooding over words for minutes, firmly believing that this absurdity of content or expression could not possibly be right – only to finally realize that this idiom was not uncommon at the time and that in fact there were people who gave so much weight to events which seemed to me to be completely meaningless that they described them in the greatest detail. There were places where I was completely unclear about the context, where I lacked the context to understand what they were about. On days when I transcribed over several hours, I was simply tired in the evenings, strained from reading and deciphering, cursing myself for having chosen this topic.

So why does someone do this to himself? What is the motivation behind not giving up and for completing the project? The small and the big successes. The small ones: to suddenly be able to read a word after ten minutes; to find a stance that is fundamentally different and stands out for its content or expression; to come across

Among friends

The descendants of the Weiner family in Haifa

By **RECTOR MARKUS ST. BUGNYÁR**

I had in fact known for years that there were descendants in Israel of the Jews expelled from my home town of Pama; on many an occasion the oldest of the three sisters living in Haifa – Shoshana Rozenfeld – was the subject of village talk: every time there were elections. At the time of her expulsion in April 1938, Shoshana was already inscribed in the electoral register and remained so until her death in 2019.

Nevertheless, I did not “manage” to make contact with them; other tasks in Jerusalem seemed at the time to be more important – but I was conscious of the fact that these immediate descendants of “our Pama Jews” were growing older and would not always be available as interlocutors. I probably postponed a visit more or less unconsciously.

In 2018 I was invited to participate in the March of the Living which commemorates the death march between Auschwitz and Birkenau. Together with Israelis, Germans, Swiss and Austrians we spent a week visiting places, sites and testimonies of Jewish life, suffering and dying in Poland. An oppressive feeling seized me and would not let go of me. I had to, a voice within me said, finally make contact with the Rozenfeld family. In Poland, standing at a holding area, I finally called Haifa, introduced myself, and asked for a meeting.

A short time later I drove to the Carmel, where Shoshana lived with her nurse in a small apartment; two other, younger sisters, living in similar circumstances, resided in a neighbouring area. They had all gathered, and children and grandchildren – all wanted to see, meet and experience at first hand the visitor from Pama, the old family home. Who am I and how do I relate to the memory of the Jewish families from Pama, Kittsee and Gattendorf?

The three sisters, all in their 90s, reminded me of our old womenfolk, who used to sit on small benches and chairs with headscarves “on the street” in front of their houses; dialect and hairstyles resembled each other to the point of confusion. It was almost spooky how deeply-rooted and apparent the mentality and village culture was, how deeply engrained in the sisters, such that after a few minutes in Haifa my visit seemed more like a local call to Pama.

They talked about their childhood, their parents, and their days on the river; the night of the expulsion, the months on the Danube, rescue in Haifa. And suddenly I realized why, unconsciously, I had delayed my visit for so long. I was probably scared to hear in their memories, good and bad, familiar names, maybe even my own. What did I know, who was on what side at that time and who had since managed to forget what happened? How relieved I was that the name Bugnyar evoked no negative connotation in them.

I asked, how could that be, from one day to the next; what was it like at school, what did the pastor preach? To understand, at least to get some idea, how “normal people” could become Nazis; how old friendships and lives could suddenly become secondary.

The two younger sisters insisted that they had always been surrounded by friends, that their parents were respected, and that nobody had harmed them before the Anschluss.

Shoshana, the oldest, the one with the longest memory, suddenly said energetically: “Friends? Yes. And yet nobody helped us in the end.”

Shoshana cried when I returned to Jerusalem after nearly 4 hours, longing for her village Pama. “You just arrived, stay longer.” My next visit was on the occasion of her death. How grateful I am to have heard her.

Visitors yesterday and today on the steps up to the Dome of the Rock.





Learning for Life – a Voluntary Year in the Holy Land



Photo: © OPH

**The Voluntary Service Generation 2018/19
visiting the Bedouin.**

By JONATHAN KNIRSCH

For nearly 30 years the opportunity has existed to volunteer for a year (formerly “Auslandszivildienst”) at the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice of the Holy Family in Jerusalem. For almost 30 years, young Austrians have been using the opportunity of this “alternative service” to gain unique insight into and experience of the Holy City. An experience that – at least from the personal perspective – will have a lasting effect on your perception of everything around you and most of all on yourself.

The experience of a year abroad, which varies greatly from individual to individual and is shaped by personal interests, characteristics and needs, is difficult to generalize. Although the starting conditions are almost the same, how the opportunity is exploited differs from person to person. Of course, there are certain factors that are common to all.

Study days

In addition to living and working abroad, the “Educational Support Programme” is an important component of volunteering. Thanks to the planning of the volunteer recruitment agency, volunteers also gain in-depth insight into the country of assignment outside normal working hours. Frequently, the organized excursions are difficult or even impossible for private individuals. They help to strengthen the group dynamic and the bonds between individual volunteers, making this resource an even greater privilege.

The topic chosen for this year’s generation of volunteers was marginalized groups in Israel.

The Austrian Hospice currently has places for up to 10 volunteers at any given time; the number of volunteers tends to average between 5 and 10.

Bedouin

On March 26th 2019, we dedicated ourselves to visiting several Bedouin settlements. Although Bedouin are the longest living population in the area, there are always points of discussion between the desert people and the State of Israel. On the one hand, there are many unauthorized Bedouin settlements that often lack electricity and running water, on the other hand, adapting Bedouin culture to the Western way of life is a very slow process. Polygamy and women's rights are a sore point, as are forced relocations and crime; these are among the issues that aid organizations devoted to the Bedouin currently address. During our visit to the Bedouin town of Rahat, discussions with the city administration and doctors in



Photo: © OPH

Our host's mother is said to have been divorced at the time of the Ottomans; we will never know the true facts.

Settler movement

one of the few medical facilities provided insights into the community's administrative system. Especially memorable was the encounter with a large family on an illegal settlement. Seldom are so many different ways of life found in such limited space as here in the Holy Land.

Another facet of Israel was captured during our visit to several Jewish settlements in the West Bank in mid-June. As could be seen during our visit to a settlement between Hebron and Jerusalem, the urban landscape reminds one more of an American suburb than of a crisis area. Many members of these settlements seem to have been attracted by the relatively cheap cost of housing and the surrounding nature. Life in the conflict zone, however, has its price. A friend of our interlocutor was assassinated in September 2018. The visit to the settlement in Hebron was far more dramatic. Since the Gaza Strip was returned, this has become one of the most conflict-prone places in the region. Tensions between Arabs and Jews were very noticeable here, and yet it was difficult to take sides, since both sides have their arguments for claiming a right to be there.

Rationale for voluntary service

Voluntary service at the Austrian Hospice means living in a "home away from home" for one year, getting to know foreign cultures, experiencing conflicts and problems first-hand and traveling the region, but it also means finding new friends – becoming part of the big "Hospice Volunteer Family".

The many shared experiences make a substantial contribution to the successful social structure. Highlights of the eventful year, arranged by the volunteer recruitment agency, were the several hour-long desert walk at the Dead Sea, which took place in June with Father Gregor Geiger in unexpectedly hot temperatures, and the visit to Haifa to see the Austria-Israel football match.

Although individual experiences and opinions may differ, one thing is for certain: this year abroad teaches one about life and is an opportunity that should be exploited for its maximum potential.



Photo: © OPH

The Czech Bishops Conference under Dominik Cardinal Duka op with Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the administrator of the Latin Patriarchate.

The Czech Bishops' Conference visiting the Holy Land

By THE EDITOR

From 11–20 March 2019, the Czech Bishops' Conference, chaired by His Eminence, Dominik Cardinal Duka, Archbishop of Prague, traveled to the Holy Land. The main focus of this group pilgrimage were spiritual exercises, led by Dr. Jaroslav Brož, Professor of New Testament at the Faculty of Catholic Theology, Prague.

We were given the task of welcoming and hosting the high-ranking guests in our pilgrim hostel for their stay in Jerusalem from 14–20 March. In March 1863, our very first pilgrim guest, a certain Mr. Franz Kreil, happened to have come to us from Prague as well.

Rector Markus St. Bugnyár's long experience in and knowledge of the Holy City was put to good use both in helping the organizers plan the trip and in en-

sureing that the Most Revered Bishops and Abbots and Abbesses enjoyed a unique experience once here. For their first evening, Rector Bugnyár, in conjunction with the Franciscans and the Latin Patriarchate, arranged a ceremonial entrance into the Old City and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre for Cardinal Duka and his entourage. For the Christian minority of the city, it is vitally important to keep alive and nurture such old privileges of the church: as a sign of life for a community whose existence often feels endangered.

If you are also looking for God and want to visit the Holy Places, you are welcome to stay in the Austrian Pilgrim Hospice.

We look forward to welcoming you!

Federal President Van der Bellen visits the pilgrim hospice

By JONATHAN KNIRSCH

From 3–5 February 2019, the Austrian Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen was on an official visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories. Between numerous appointments he managed to find the time for a visit with us, in the tradition of his predecessors Thomas Klestil and Heinz Fischer.

The visit to the Old City on the 3rd of February was marked by the presence of large numbers of pilgrims at the holy sites, which are the enduring and central feature of Jerusalem. And as the President emphasized, our Austrian Hospice has an important role to play too – to create an oasis of peace and reflection amidst the hustle and bustle inside the Old City walls.

After the date of the trip had been confirmed, the first evening was set aside for our pilgrim hospice: as a prelude on “quasi-Austrian soil”. In the weeks running up to the visit, preparations were already underway for receiving our Head of State. Invitations had to be written and sent out, a special menu created and the stage built. For over a week each and every employee was in thrall to a joyous mood of anticipation.

Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen and his wife Mag. Doris Schmidauer were greeted by Rector Hon. Prof. MMag. Markus St. Bugnyár at Jaffa Gate. Accompanied by a business delegation, ministers Dr. Heinz Fassmann and Dr. Margarete Schramböck, Rector Bugnyár led the presidential couple to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where the place of resurrection was expertly explained and devoutly visited. On the way to the Western Wall there was a stop at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, where Provost Wolfgang Schmidt was honoured to receive the delegation. The final stop on the walk through the Old City was at the entrance to the hospice itself.

After the final preparations had been made and the numerous invited guests had gathered in the entrance area, the Federal President entered the building in which exactly 150 years ago Emperor Franz Joseph had taken up quarters. Warmly welcomed by all those present – Christians, Jews and Muslims – the President expressed his thanks for the gracious hospitality and sent out a message of peace in the world and in Jerusalem.

“Jerusalem, as a microcosm, is a city sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims. As an Austrian, we are very familiar with the phrase Austria ‘is the small world from which greatness can emerge’. Jerusalem is also such a world. It would be wonderful if it were here in Jerusalem, a place sacred to three world religions, that peace were achieved.”

As soon as the official part of the evening came to an end, a traditional Austrian ‘Gemütlichkeit’, something rarely experienced in the Orient, enveloped the travel party and guests. Guests chatted cheerfully, stroked the dogs, the salon put to its original purpose as a dining room, the balcony a smoking lounge, and after an excellent dinner, which combined oriental and Austrian cuisine, the remaining time was used for photos and expressions of thanks.

A good start for a successful visit. Goodbye, Mr President!



Photo: © OPH

The Presidential pair with the house management team of the Austrian Pilgrims Hospice. After Thomas Klestil and Heinz Fischer, Van der Bellen is the third Federal President to visit the Pilgrims Hospice.

What the dead can do for us – and we for them



Photo: © unsplash.com

By **REKTOR MARKUS ST. BUGNYÁR**

Prayers for the deceased, for the souls of those who have preceded us down the path of everything earthly – for we too will die – are unfortunately no longer to be taken for granted.

No doubt we think of our deceased loved ones, we visit their graves and light candles and promote the association of local gardeners and florists in extravagant measure.

The prayer murmured quietly at the grave may take place, but let us consider what is going on:

Do I pray at my beloved's grave to gather myself, to focus on remembering their lives in a concentrated manner? Or do we actually apply this prayer to God? With a request to be close to the deceased? Close in the sense of not allowing his sins to weigh too heavily and letting him return home to the primordial ground that once gave rise to everything, life as such and the life of each and every one of us?

Several preconditions are necessary: the deceased may be dead, that not to be denied; but can he also live in a sense that exceeds our understanding?

When we speak of resurrection, that of Jesus and ours, it is difficult for us.

Our thinking, our speech, the structure of our language shapes words and images from the possibility of comparison. Something green is different from something red, and thanks to this difference between things, we develop cognition and association.

The counterpart of the resurrection is death, not visible but hidden.

We suffer from the impossibility of comparison and therefore find it difficult to put this eternal life into words. It is and remains indescribable because we cannot experience it in our human sense.

It is not for nothing that the scriptures are silent on the resurrection of Jesus – they cannot do otherwise if they do not want to be ridiculed.

If we trust and hope for an eternal life for our deceased, it is because our love prevents them from being dead in a total, comprehensive sense. Our memory, our memory keeps them alive – but that alone cannot be enough.

We also do not live forever, our memory fades with time.

Do we really want to make the survival of the deceased dependent on how long and how intensely we commemorate the dead?

We should not do that in our own interest for we too want to live for an indefinite time, that is, forever, when this life comes to an end.

At this point – to clarify things for the doubters – God comes into play. He is the one who does not forget, cannot forget, because he surveys everything and within the whole He also sees the individual human being. His memory never fails.

If we are allowed to experience – in our lifetime – that our love can give life, make people blossom and engender hope; recognize how fragile love can be, dependent on all sorts of factors, vanity and egocentricity, that love can give life for a limited time during a lifetime or a part of it: God's love is neither divisible nor untenable so He must be able to give life comprehensively and eternally.



This is how you can assist us:

Österreichisches Hospiz – Sozialfonds
AT43 1919 0003 0015 0125
BSSWATWW

Österreichisches Hospiz – Bauspende
AT17 1919 0004 0015 0124
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I am very grateful to you!

Die Österreichische Gesellschaft vom Hl. Land

Der Freundeskreis des Österreichischen
Pilger-Hospizes in Jerusalem
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