



Come, Prince of Peace!

RELEM

N. 4 DECEMBER 2023

NEWS

This is undoubtedly a peculiar year, when it seems that the death of the Holy Innocents preceded Christmas...

Our Europe-Mediterranean region is at the heart of the turmoil: refugees are arriving in large numbers on the coasts of Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain, still mourning those who did not survive the journey; Syrian refugees are arriving in Turkey and Lebanon; the violence in Israel and Palestine is unleashed; the Ukrainian conflict continues to exile families, particularly to Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Austria and Poland... There's no need to go on with the list: it's enough to show that all our Districts are affected.

How can we be, in all these places, signs of hope, outstretched hands, tangible proof that violence does not have the last word? Michel Scouarnec's song still rings out with the same acuity:

*Will we leave in our churches a little space for the foreigner?
When he comes, will he find hearts of poor and hungry?
Let's not let the earth die, let's not let the fire die.
Let us stretch out our hands towards the light, to welcome God's gift.*

*Happy Christmas, welcome par excellence to the Prince of Peace.
May God grant us, throughout 2024, the grace to be workers of his Peace!*



**La
Salle**

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Br. Joel with Jean, Tomeu and br. Enrico.

“WE STAND WITH THOSE WHO SUFFER AND BEG FOR THE LIGHT OF DAY TO COME ONCE AGAIN”.

Thank you for inviting me to give voice to what is happening here in the Holy Land. I want to begin by saying that the other Brothers and I have been safe so far. Travel restrictions make it difficult and sometimes impossible to move in and out or around Bethlehem. While there have been military incursions into Bethlehem resulting in the arrest, wounding or killing of some residents here, this has not reached the University campus as it has in the past.

As you are aware, there has been conflict in this region for



over 75 years with the establishment of the State of Israel and its Zionist aspirations. Since the 7 October surprise and brutal attack by Hamas on Israel and with Israel's superior military might, the situation in Israel and Palestine has gone from bad to horrendous; this latest outbreak of war is said to be the worst carnage in such a relatively short period in modern times.

The relative safety and security of our Lasallian school and university students, colleagues and graduates depends on where they live (Israel, Gaza, East Jerusalem or the Occupied West Bank) and how they are perceived by Israeli authorities, military, police, and illegal settlers. It has become obvious that in the eyes of many - not all - Israelis, all Palestinians are an “existential threat.” Consequently, Palestinians live under a range of heightened, real, and present threats including harassment, military administrative detention, various forms of physical violence and assassination; or they or family members are actual victims of these acts.



To date, we have some employees and almost half our students who have not been able to come to work and study at Bethlehem University because of travel restrictions or threats to their life or property; one employee and several students have been detained in prison without charges for an indeterminate time; one student has been killed; some graduates and family members of graduates have been killed or seriously wounded in Gaza. Currently, life here is more precarious than I have experienced in nearly 20 years.

Perhaps with growing international popular outcry for a ceasefire and a just resolution to the entrenched conflict here, Israel with pressure from US and European governments will pursue a path to lasting peace.

As we approach Christmas, let us join in heartfelt prayer for all the victims of the atrocities perpetrated in the Holy Land, imploring the Prince of Peace to give what only he can; let us pray for the conversion of our hearts that we might become instruments of his peace.

Live Jesus in our hearts.

Br. Peter Iorlano, Bethlehem University



RELEM ASSEMBLY: "LEAVEN FOR THE FUTURE":

For more than a year, the MEL Council has been busy organising the RELEM Assembly, which will take place from 26 February to 1 March, with a pre-session on 18 December.

The need for a new Assembly, after the first one held in 2018, stems from the desire to "foster new life" and to face together, Brothers and Lasallians, the call that God has given us. The Region is "*a permanent structure of coordination and collaboration*" (Rule fsc n. 135) and finds in the synodality between Districts and Delegations its natural way of discerning and acting so that the Lasallian Mission can be supported and implemented even in the most fragile areas.

RELEM comes to this meeting with a great historical, cultural and apostolic richness, but also with internal and external fragilities so that, as **the Leaven Project** teaches us, "*they help us to walk and to go out with our vulnerability, with our limits, with our fragilities, with our poverties*" (PL 13).

50 Lasallian men and women are called to take part in this experience of listening to the Spirit and of synodality, including the Brothers Visitors, those responsible for the Mission, 3 delegates per District and the members of certain Regional Commissions. We are called to "consider RELEM, more as a source of

The MEL Council's members: Jean-Michel (Near East), fr Jesus-Felix (ARLEP); France (Belgium South), Jean (RELEM), Iwona (Pologne), Joke (Belgium North) fr Enrico (RELEM), Julia (Central Europe), Tomeu (RELEM), fr Joel (General Councillor RELEM), Jean-Marie (France an French speaking Europe), Joseph (IGBM), absent Alberto (Italy).



inspiration than as a problem-solving body, toto move from subsidiarity to interdependence, within ourselves and also to see other possible collaborations with other Regions of the Institute" (Brother Carlos, Vicar, to RELEM, 9 March 2023).

In short, as a Region, we are called to respond truly together to the eternal question that God, "so good" and "who wants everyone to be saved", asks us: "**Where is your brother? Where is your sister?**"





Fraternity in action

YOUNG LASALLIANS TOWARDS THE PERIPHERIES



The fraternity in action project is an opportunity to re-establish the Lasallian youth movement in the region, to open the eyes and hearts of young people to a new reality. This project will help to build new relationships between the young people of the region which will result in exchanges, the creation of new groups of young Lasallians in different forms such as prayer groups, volunteer groups etc. This is the time to invite young people to become aware of what surrounds them and to take action in their lives. It is the time to move, to approach others, to build relationships, to give of oneself, to give of one's time to others, to be generous towards others. It's also important to open up and share our charism and mission with younger people and give them a voice in our decision-making, because they are our future, they are the future of our mission..

Formation in Egypt - Le Caire

25 - 28 April 2024

Actions

Molenbeek - Belgium

5 - 16 July 2024

Melilla - Spain

15 - 30 July 2024

Upper-Egypt - Egypt

20 July - 5 August

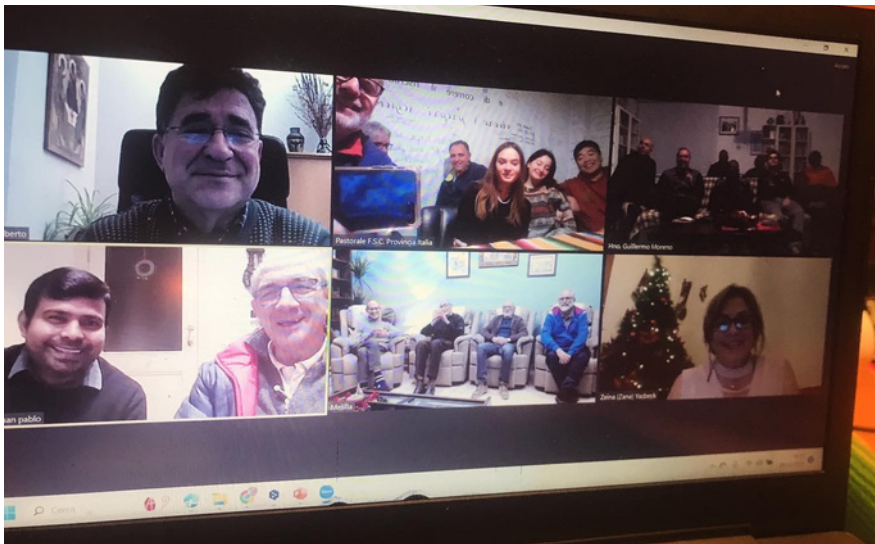
Scampia - Italy

28 July - 6 August 2024

For further informations
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PRAYING TOGETHER FROM SOME OF THE LASALLIAN PERIPHERIES

This is the second year that some Lasallian communities from RELEM are meeting online to pray during Advent; some are inter-congregational communities, or live in peripheral and vulnerable neighbourhoods, or are intentional communities with the presence of some volunteers. This network of spirituality that unites the Brothers of Lebanon Communities and suburban communities such as Molenbeek or Scampia came into being spontaneously in order to 'stay close', but it also wishes to intensify relations in order to dwell in our ministries, to remember that it is part of a larger divine project that is close to the poor and allows itself to be evangelised by them.

Preparing for Christmas together is an opportunity to feel our own journey towards the Bethlehem that dwells in our ministries, that is, towards the revelation that God is present and that the Kingdom is indeed near.

Celebrating the journey towards Christmas is also a sign of hope so as not to allow social, political, economic, cultural difficulties to get the upper hand in our hearts so that the Lasallian mission can be fulfilled in its fullness.

The theme that animated prayer this year came from Lasallian Reflection 9 "Where is your focus?". Sharing our gazes, looking in the same direction and working out together was a bit like following the teaching of the Magi who saw the star and let themselves be led by it because the meditation on the Epiphany of De La Salle is always a strong source of grace for Lasallian communities; like the Magi, we should not gloat at seeing the star, but only remember that it leads us to Jesus: "you must recognise Jesus under the rags of the children who come to your school".

The communities enjoyed this moment and are planning other regular meetings.



GOD HIMSELF BECAME A FRINGE

SO IF WE DARE TO GO TO THE FRINGES, WE WILL FIND HIM THERE; INDEED, HE IS ALREADY THERE. JESUS IS ALREADY THERE, IN THE HEARTS OF OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, IN THEIR WOUNDED FLESH, IN THEIR TROUBLES AND IN THEIR PROFOUND DESOLATION. HE IS ALREADY THERE.

(POPE FRANCIS, GE 135)

PRAYER FOR THE RELEM ASSEMBLY

**We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down
the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together
to eternal life and not stray from
the way of truth and what is right.
All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever. Amen.**

RELEM ASSEMBLY 2024:

Leaven for the future

26 FEBRUARY - 1 MARCH 2024
ROME - CASA GENERALIZIA FSC