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Years

December 2024

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One

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◀ Faithful gather for Sunday liturgy at the Cathedral of the Holy Savior in Adigrat, Ethiopia.



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Front: Amira was among the Lebanese displaced from their homes by Israeli airstrikes; she sought safety in Beirut's central Martyrs' Square at the beginning of October.

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CNEWA

Founded by the Holy Father, CNEWA shares the love of Christ with the churches and peoples of the East, working for, through and with the Eastern churches.

CNEWA connects you to your brothers and sisters in need. Together, we build up the church, affirm human dignity, alleviate poverty, encourage dialogue — and inspire hope.

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Rebuilding a Post-War Church in Ethiopia



Msgr. Peter Vaccari, third from left, joined Abune Lukas Teshome Fikre Woldetensae of Emdibir for the opening of Bata Lemariam Church in Arekit, central Ethiopia, in mid-October.

Kidane Mehret Catholic School in Woliso, and in the north, such as Blessed Gebremichael Catholic School in Bahir Dar, the monastery of the Bethany Fathers in Goro, and the newly constructed Bata Lemariam Church in Arekit. The church's construction was funded by a generous donation from the Pollock family.

"It's a small church, but it was absolutely packed. Aisles were filled with people," said Msgr. Vaccari of the inaugural liturgy with the local bishop of Emdibir, Abune Lukas Teshome Fikre Woldetensae.

"It was a beautiful ceremony," he said. "You get the sense of the whole liturgy, the whole congregation participating in chant and song."

Msgr. Peter I. Vaccari, CNEWA president, visited Ethiopia in mid-October, along with Thomas Varghese, director of programs. Msgr. Vaccari said his primary objective on such trips is to "show solidarity and support for our staff."

The trip included visits to CNEWA-funded projects situated southwest of the capital, Addis Ababa, such as

While in Mekele, situated in the northern Tigray region, Msgr. Vaccari met with Abune Tesfaselassie Medhin, bishop of Adigrat, whose priests, parishes and faithful were severely impacted by the 2020-2022 war and who are in a process of healing and rebuilding.

Read more on **page 32**.

Webinars on Mideast Conflict

CNEWA held two briefings on the escalating conflict in the Middle East, involving Israel, Hamas and Hezbollah. CNEWA's team in Ottawa held an online seminar on 16 October with Michel Constantin in Beirut, regional director for Lebanon, Syria and Egypt, and Joseph Hazboun in Jerusalem, regional director for Palestine and Israel.

Both directors updated CNEWA donors again from their respective regions during a live briefing at Dillon Hall in New York City on 4 November.

Mr. Hazboun recalled the bombing of the Orthodox Church of St. Porphyrios in Gaza on 19 October 2023, which killed 21 people sheltering there, including the parents of Sami Tarazi, a project assistant with CNEWA-Pontifical Mission. St. Porphyrios and the Latin parish of the Holy Family continue to host the displaced in need of basic provisions, he said.

That the people in Gaza "have survived so far and remain steadfast ... really is a sign of encouragement and hope for all of us," he said.

Mr. Constantin said the war, which now engulfs Lebanon, has displaced more than 1 million people. The 20,000 Christian families who lived near Lebanon's border with Israel have declined to less than 5,000.

"They are completely besieged. They cannot go out of their village," he said. "We have seen people killed not only in their homes in the south, but in their shelters, in safer areas."

He added that this war is "the worst" he has seen "in terms of brutality" in his 35 years with CNEWA.

In Memoriam

Brother Austin David Paul Carroll, F.S.C., who served as special assistant to the president of CNEWA-Pontifical Mission, from 1985 to 2009, died on 21 September. Born 22 November 1935, the De La Salle Brother of the Christian Schools was known for his good humor and passion for justice and peace.

Brother David entered religious life in 1953, received his habit and religious name, Austin, the same year, and pronounced perpetual vows in 1960. His career included assignments in the schools of his religious community, data system services in the dioceses of Brooklyn and New York, and a variety of roles with CNEWA-Pontifical Mission, which included serving as an adviser to the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, helping to establish the Path to Peace Foundation of the Holy See Mission.

50 Years of ONE

With this edition, *ONE* wraps up its 50th anniversary, marked by highlighting the Eastern churches, their work and their challenges at the annual Catholic Media Conference in June, where CNEWA hosted an international panel on the theme, “Conflict, Crisis and Hope: Eastern Christians in the World’s Hotspots.” Before the panel, CNEWA presented Metropolitan Borys Gudziak of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia with its Faith & Culture Award for his work toward the promotion of the dignity of the human person.

Throughout the year, a weekly blog feature included past *ONE* articles, highlighting the wealth of material from the world of the Eastern churches over five decades. Go to cnewa.org/blog, choose the



The late Brother Austin David Paul Carroll, F.S.C., left, is pictured with Joy and Norman Gorbaty at a 50th-anniversary event for Pontifical Mission at the Vatican in December 1999.

category, “*ONE* @ 50: From the Vault,” to read this treasure trove of content. As well, a handful of exceptional landmark articles from the past 50 years were reprinted within these pages. Read the final article in this special anniversary series on [page 12](#).

Congratulations to the team at *ONE*, past and present, and thank you to our readers for your ongoing interest in critical and compelling reporting from the world CNEWA is humbled and privileged to serve.

Healing & Hope Honorees

At its third annual Healing & Hope Gala on 9 December in New York City, CNEWA will recognize two individuals who have made outstanding contributions in the areas of justice, peace and the promotion of human dignity around the world.

Archbishop Gabriele G. Caccia, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations since November 2019, will be CNEWA’s guest of honor, and Gayle M. Benson, owner of the N.F.L.’s Saints and the N.B.A.’s Pelicans, and prominent advocate for the presence of faith in culture, will receive the Faith & Culture Award.

CNEWA Jubilee Pilgrimage

To mark the Jubilee Year 2025, CNEWA will host a Pilgrimage of Hope to Rome, 26 April to 3 May 2025. Led by Msgr. Peter I. Vaccari, the eight-day itinerary features a papal Mass in St. Peter’s Square, visits to the major basilicas and historic sites, and special CNEWA events at the Vatican. Email info@cnewa.org or go to petersway.com/cnewa.html to learn more and sign up for this specially created jubilee experience.

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Rooted in the Land Called Holy

Palestinian Christians rally for survival in the West Bank

by Claire Porter Robbins

A dusty dirt road four miles northwest of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank leads to a stunning view of Al Makhroun valley.

The steep, verdant basin, with its stepped agricultural terraces — treasured by its Palestinian custodians and designated a UNESCO World Heritage site — is ideal for growing sturdy olive trees and stone fruit. Christian Palestinian farmers have worked the land in Al Makhroun for generations.

Increasingly, however, the valley has become a focal point of settler violence and Palestinian land displacement — part of the mounting pressures on Christian communities in the West Bank since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on 7 October 2023.

The war's reach is not contained to the Gaza Strip, and West Bank Palestinians suffer from Israeli military incursions, resulting in the killing of 736 Palestinians as of October 2024 — 719 by Israeli

forces, 12 by Israeli settlers and seven by unknown perpetrators.

Of the 2.7 million Palestinian residents in the West Bank, about 50,000 identify as Christian. Within this territory, Jerusalem and Bethlehem have been centers of Christian life since the time of the apostles. Arab Christians founded Ramallah in the 17th century, and it remains an important Palestinian Christian center.

Churches and advocacy groups have voiced concern for decades about the decline of the vibrant Palestinian Christian community in the region. Reports of increased discrimination and hate crimes against Christians and their churches by extremist settler groups, particularly in mixed cities, such as Jerusalem, have fueled existential fears.

Christians in the West Bank, along with their Muslim neighbors, also grapple with the challenges of living under military occupation, which have worsened since the outbreak of the war. Israel's severe restriction of movement has hindered workers from moving between Israel and the West Bank, reducing the percentage of Palestinian workers employed in Israel from 22 percent to 2.3 percent since October 2023,

according to the International Labor Organization.

State-sponsored efforts to displace Palestinians in the West Bank also escalated since last year. According to the United Nations, in the first 11 months of the war, "Israeli authorities demolished, confiscated or forced the demolition of 1,598 Palestinian structures," including homes, schools and other communal buildings, displacing more than 4,000 Palestinians — among them about 1,700 children — more than double the number of people displaced in the 11 months prior to the war. Families have lost their homes and their livelihoods.

For almost two decades, Palestinians have prevented settlers from confiscating and squatting in Al Makhroun valley — but they are losing ground.

Alice Kisiya, 30, is a Palestinian Christian whose family has cultivated the land and resided in the valley for generations. Her family's land on a terraced slope close to the top of the western hill is visible from the lookout.

"We call it 'heaven of Bethlehem,'" says Ms. Kisiya, "because it's one of the last places that's clean and unspoiled, where people can enjoy nature and watch the sunset."

Supporters of the Kisiya family's plight for their land in Al Makhroun valley gather for interfaith prayer at a make-shift sanctuary at the end of September. The structure was torn down by Israeli soldiers the next day.

The CNEWA Connection



For 75 years, CNEWA-Pontifical Mission has provided socioeconomic, medical and humanitarian support through its network of partners in the West Bank, including its long-standing partnership with the Arab Orthodox Benevolent Society in Beit Jala and the Crèche, which cares for abandoned children. Church-led organizations in the occupied Palestinian Territories provide more than 33 percent of all social services to the Palestinian people. Yet they do not receive government funding, relying instead on charitable donations, such as grants received from generations of CNEWA-Pontifical Mission donors.

To continue to support CNEWA-Pontifical Mission's work in the West Bank, call: 1-800-442-6392 (United States) or 1-866-322-4441 (Canada) or visit cnewa.org/donate.

However, on 31 July, Israeli soldiers of the Civil Administration accompanied a group of settlers and presented her family with a military order. They evicted the family from their one-acre plot and declared adjacent land as a military zone. The settlers tore down the Kisiyas' fence and erected a new enclosure as the Israeli army stood guard.

By mid-August, Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich had announced a military order allocating 148 acres of land for the construction of a new settlement in the area west of Bethlehem. It followed the Israeli cabinet's approval of five new settlements on 27 June in retaliation against the Palestinian Authority's diplomatic efforts to have the international

community recognize crimes against the Palestinian people. Settlements in the West Bank are illegal in international law.

The family's battle began in 2005, when civil authorities began stopping in every few months, claiming the family had no right to build on their land, says Ms. Kisiya.

The situation escalated in 2012, when Israeli soldiers demolished the family restaurant on their property, claiming it was built in 2001 without a valid permit. A cycle of rebuilding and demolishing ensued in 2013 and 2015. In 2019, their restaurant and their home were demolished, and the family resorted to living in tents, which were repeatedly torn down by Israeli soldiers and which the family

The Crèche in Bethlehem cares for abandoned children. Opposite, Alice Kisiya and her mother make bread at their home in Al Walaja, West Bank, in October.

would rebuild, says Ms. Kisiya. Throughout these years, the family remained on their land and continued to cultivate lemons, figs, almonds and apricots.

In 2019, seeking to resolve the case, the family decided to take legal action. Ms. Kisiya and her mother, both Israeli citizens — an advantage many Palestinians do not have — presented land registration documents they received from the civil administration to a district court in 2023 and lost. The legal battle included a claim by the Jewish National Fund that it purchased the family's land in 1969 — a claim the Kisiya family denies. The family is planning to appeal.

The violence and uncertainty have taken a toll on Ms. Kisiya and her family. To fund the family's legal battle, Ms. Kisiya took a delivery job, which ended with a serious road accident from which she continues to recover. An online fundraising appeal helps to pay for the family's needs, cover legal fees and pay off debt the family incurred from rebuilding their home and restaurant after demolitions.

Conversely, she says, her faith has been strengthened. The family has taken their approach of nonviolent resistance as an interfaith struggle. After the land seizure, the Kisiyas built a "solidarity tent" several yards from their land, where they lived for about a month and held interfaith sit-ins with supporters and activists, until the army took it down. Ms. Kisiya and her mother were arrested during this time, on 25 August, and released the next day.

In late September, the Kisiyas and several activists set up a church-like structure over three days on public land near their seized property.

Ms. Kisiya says priests, rabbis, sheikhs and non-religious activists came to the makeshift shrine to pray for peace and light candles. The Israeli soldiers dismantled the shelter the next day.

The family has not been permitted on their land since it was confiscated and now rents a house in Al Walaja, close to Beit Jala. Ms. Kisiya says she monitors the family land from a distance each day. At the end of October, a few settlers were living there in small trailers.

Ms. Kisiya attempted to reclaim the land with a handful of supporters on 26 October, when the initial military order was set to expire. They approached the Israeli

soldiers at the perimeter of the closed military zone but were handed a new military order and turned away.

Ms. Kisiya claims the map on the new document does not include her family's land and she is exploring action through legal channels. Unlike many Palestinian families who have no legal recourse after being evicted from their land, Ms. Kisiya says her family is not giving up.

"I am sure things will change and we will go back to this land," she says. "We are watching them. We are not going away."

"We know we are going back. Sooner or later, we will take it back."

Christian charities have been helping to preserve the character of Al Makhrou valley and promote agricultural development.

A Palestinian Christian farmer in his 60s has a terraced plot of land in the valley down the hill from the Kisiyas' land. After his wife died and his children were fully grown, Jamil, a pseudonym used to protect his identity, began farming his land in earnest, growing grapes, apricots and olive trees.

He says the land "healed" him from his grief. His grapevines, however, are only about six inches tall; they were growing back in mid-September after being trampled

**"We know we are going back.
Sooner or later, we will take it back."**





“The price of one missile could feed so many families.”

and destroyed by settler sheep. Bringing sheep to graze on Palestinian agricultural lands is a common tactic used by settlers to displace and demoralize Palestinians and their connection to their land.

“I put all my strength into the land, watering, growing my plants, but then I came to farm one day, and the sheep had eaten all the harvest,” says Jamil. “I used to want to fight them, but now [that they’re armed] I can’t. I want to live.”

Caritas Jerusalem, the charity of the Catholic Church in the Holy Land and a member of the Rome-based Caritas Internationalis, funded a new fence for his plot to fend off sheep and a water tank for better irrigation. This support has renewed his resilience.

“This land is my spirit, but my children are afraid for me,” he says, referring to the intimidation he has experienced when armed settlers have flashed their weapons at him.

“But I tell them I belong to this place.”

His sons come from Beit Jala to farm with him at Al Makhrou; he hopes they will experience the same healing essence. His youngest had worked in Jerusalem for the Lutheran Church, but his permit to travel out of the West Bank was revoked after the war started, and he has been out of work since.

Despite picking up odd jobs, including at churches in Beit Jala and Bethlehem, Jamil’s son has been talking about emigrating. Jamil says he is heartbroken by his son’s decision, but he understands young people need opportunities to thrive.

Bethlehem has been economically depressed since the outset of the war. Once packed with tourist buses, hotels, gift shops and restaurants

Father Rami Asakrieh, O.F.M., ministers at the Latin Church of St. Catherine in Bethlehem.

catering to pilgrims from around the world, its winding streets are now quiet.

According to the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce and Industry, before the war, tourism constituted 23-25 percent of the local economy. With far fewer tourists, jobs are scarce. The rate of unemployment in the West Bank exceeds 35 percent and about 26 percent of the population is living below the poverty line, reports Samir Hazboun, who heads the chamber.

In mid-September, volunteers were laying out bags of fresh bread in the hall of the Arab Orthodox Benevolent Society in Beit Jala, two miles from Bethlehem, for people in need. CNEWA-Pontifical Mission has supported the group for many

years. Imad Abu Mohor, the director, says due to lost tourism the needs are growing among the town's population, which he estimates is 70 percent Christian. His organization also provides income support for school tuition and medical bills, but he worries donations will run out as the war continues and the situation becomes increasingly dire.

Mr. Mohor says a rising number of young Christians have been leaving the West Bank for Europe and Gulf countries since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, and he worries about the erasure of Christian life in Palestine.

For young people who remain employed or have chosen to stay in the West Bank, the impact of the war has penetrated home life, says Father Rami Asakrieh, O.F.M., who ministers at the Latin Church of St. Catherine in Bethlehem. The Franciscan priest spends his days counseling parishioners in their hardship, including many young couples troubled by the violence this past year and its financial impact.

"The price of one missile could feed so many families," he says. "This war is destroying our society with long-term effects on the psyche."

The parish is assisting families with food, rent, utilities, medicine and tuition. Previously middle-class families have plunged into poverty and many families cannot access health care due to the cost.

"We hear some families have left," he says. "Many want to leave because of the terrible situation, but they can't afford it."

On the anniversary of the war, 7 October, his 5,000-member parish participated in the universal day of prayer and fasting for peace, called for by Pope Francis and the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

"We're hoping and praying for peace, and a return of the pilgrims."

Sister Anna Salwa Isaieda of the Daughters of St. Anne runs the St. Francis Youth Group at the church, which provides work opportunities and faith-based retreats for about 150 young adults. She says these young people "are losing their hopes and their dreams."

At the beginning of the war, "people were praying a lot, but now they seem more tired," she adds. "They ask, 'Where is God in my suffering?'"

On a sunny Friday in September, Sister Salwa was surrounded by several young adults, busy preparing the hall adjacent to Shepherds' Field Chapel for a prayer retreat.


Lina Jackaman and Zain Sleibi, both in their early 20s, described how the war has impacted their lives and their dreams. Ms. Sleibi is studying to be a medical analyst but cannot get enough training hours, as her supervisors are often unable to get to the school laboratory in the increased security environment. Ms. Jackaman works at the Holy Family Children's Home, known locally as the Crèche, in Bethlehem while studying to be a teacher. Teaching remains a viable profession that will allow her to support her parents.

The young women and Sister Salwa were looking forward to the retreat, aimed at helping young adults "find peace in the Word of God," says Sister Salwa.

The word "peace" is mentioned in the New Testament more than 400 times, she points out.

"They want hope," she says, gesturing to the group of busy young adults behind her. "I try to stay close to them, and I tell them, 'You are not alone, God is with you even when you suffer.'"

Claire Porter Robbins is a freelance journalist and former aid worker who has worked in the Middle East and the Balkans.



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one@50

Editors' note: To mark ONE's 50th anniversary in 2024, each edition features a reprint of a ONE "classic" — an article that continues to capture the attention and interest of readers years after its publication.

This final edition of 2024 features a piece from the May-June 1997 issue of ONE by Bishop Emeritus Nicholas Samra, then auxiliary bishop of the Melkite Greek Catholic Eparchy of Newton. In it, he discusses the dialogue pertaining to the reunification of the Patriarchal Church of Antioch, one of the five major patriarchates in early Christianity, which in 1724 split into the Melkite Greek Catholic Church and Orthodox Patriarchal Church of Antioch. This year marks the 300th anniversary of the definitive split of the Church of Antioch into two particular churches.

At the time of this reprint, the healing and unity the bishop describes in his article have not yet been achieved.

Healing the Church of Antioch: The Greek-Melkite Initiative

by Bishop Nicholas Samra

In July 1996, the Synod of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church issued "Reunification of the Antiochene Patriarchate," a document boldly announcing the synod's desire to heal the rupture between Catholics and Orthodox of the Church of Antioch. Although somewhat unique, this gesture has historically had a basis in the life and activity of the Antiochene Church.

Unity in diversity has always existed in the Church of Antioch. During apostolic days when "in Antioch ... the disciples were first called Christians" (Acts 11:26), a variety of traditions and peoples had lived side by side in this cosmopolitan city, now an archaeological site in Turkey.

The Church of Antioch spread throughout the Middle East and was not limited to the city of Antioch, but to the greater area influenced

by Antioch: what is now modern Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, even Armenia, Egypt, India, Iraq, Kuwait, Sudan and the New World.

The Church of Antioch, which was founded by the apostle Peter, embraced a diverse yet united community. Antiochene Jews and Gentiles lived together; many from both communities accepted the Christian faith. Some Christians fully observed the Mosaic law, while others retained but a few Jewish observances. There were some who rejected all Jewish observances. Yet they all lived and worked together despite these differences.

During the patristic era, Antioch was the home of saints as well as heretics. And from Antioch various traditions were born: As a Greek-speaking city of the Byzantine Empire, its customs and traditions influenced the capital,



This fresco of Peter and Andrew, brothers and apostles, in the Melkite Greek Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Jerusalem depict the unity of the churches of the West and the East.

Constantinople, and there helped shape the Byzantine Church.

Antioch's native Syrians developed two church traditions: the Eastern and Western Syriac. The Assyrian and Chaldean Catholic churches follow the Eastern Syriac tradition. The Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic and Maronite churches grew from the Western Syriac tradition. Both traditions spread to India, forming the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara Catholic churches.

Antioch influenced the formation of the Armenian Church and for some time Antioch had authority over the Church of Georgia.

The Byzantine Church of Antioch continued to use a secondary nomenclature — Melkite — meaning “royalist,” or “those attached to the Byzantine emperor.” This name was given to all who followed the teachings of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 by the opponents of this same council.

In 1054, when representatives of the churches of Rome and Constantinople cast excommunications at each other, then Patriarch of Antioch Peter III tried to reconcile them, choosing no side in the dispute. Certainly, there was no definitive break between Rome and Antioch as there was with Constantinople and Rome.

The Muslim domination of the Middle East, succeeded by the region's Crusader dominions, slowly divided the two. Antioch gradually followed Constantinople and the other Eastern patriarchs. Yet, throughout the years that followed, we find Antiochene patriarchs open-minded and friendly to both Rome and Constantinople — these tended to be the indigenous Syriac-



and Arabic-speaking patriarchs. Ethnic Greeks tended to be more pro-Constantinople.

With the arrival of Western missionaries to the Middle East in the early 1600s, a new sympathy for the West developed among some of the Antiochene Christians. Realistically, this sympathy was more political and economic than religious. Sympathy was so great that in 1724 two patriarchs were elected for Antioch's Greek-Melkite community:

one pro-Rome and Catholic and one pro-Constantinople and Orthodox. A new rupture had taken place in Christ's Church, dividing villages, even families. The Catholics called themselves Greek-Melkite Catholics and the Orthodox simply, Greek Orthodox (in the United States, “Antiochian Orthodox”).

The Greek-Melkites had never intended a division in the Antiochene Church; they saw the election of a Catholic as patriarch as

a move to unite Catholics and Orthodox. Thus, they attempted to remain firm in their Orthodox traditions, jealously preserving their particular Eastern customs and way of life. It was inevitable, however, that they would experience Latinization, but never to the same extent as many other Eastern Catholic churches.

The Greek-Melkite patriarchs have often articulated the sensibilities and concerns of the Eastern Catholic churches. Gregory II Youssef, the Greek-Melkite patriarch of Antioch during Vatican I (1869-70), never favored the proclamation of papal infallibility. Greek-Melkite Patriarch Maximos IV was known as the “voice of Orthodoxy” at Vatican II, a title given him by the ecumenical patriarch, Athenagoras I.

The ecumenical spirit grew in the 1950s and 1960s with four Greek-Melkite Catholic priests, three of whom later became bishops and one a patriarch: Fathers George Hakim (Patriarch Maximos V), Oreste Kerame, Joseph Tawil and Elias Zoghby. These men tremendously influenced the Greek-Melkites in matters ecumenical and liturgical. A revival began — the “courage to be ourselves” grew within the universal Catholic communion.

This spirit of openness and diversity continues today in the Greek-Melkite Catholic Patriarchate. Greek-Melkites are “uncomfortable” with disunity. In 1974, through the efforts of Archbishop Elias Zoghby of Baalbek, Lebanon, the synods of the two Antiochene patriarchates — Greek Orthodox and Greek-Melkite — exchanged visits and formed a joint theological commission to discuss and work toward full communion.

Archbishop Zoghby saw the possibility of a dual communion with Catholics and Orthodox.

Unfortunately, the disastrous 15-year civil war in Lebanon ended these discussions for a while.

The archbishop, however, did not give up on unity. In 1981, he followed up with a book, “Tous Schismatiques?” (“Are All of Us Schismatic?”). In 1995, he reawakened the unity efforts with a profession of faith on two points:

“I believe in everything which Eastern Orthodoxy teaches;

“I am in communion with the bishop of Rome, in the limits recognized to the first among the bishops by the holy fathers of the East during the first millennium, before the separation.”

“
**A new rupture
had taken place
in Christ’s Church,
dividing
villages, even
families.**
”

Archbishop Zoghby, presently the archbishop emeritus of Baalbek, developed the thinking of ecumenists East and West. Both Paul VI and John Paul II have spoken of looking toward the understanding of the first millennium when East and West were one and united.

Archbishop Zoghby presented his profession of faith to each bishop member of the Greek-Melkite Synod in 1995. All but two agreed to it and affixed their signatures. He then presented it to

the Greek-Melkite Catholic patriarch of Antioch, Maximos V Hakim, and to the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Antioch, Ignatius IV Hazim.

The ecumenical spirit of the Church of Antioch came back to life — a dialogue and a new theological commission were formed among the Orthodox and Catholic bishops. Their goal would be to work toward healing the division in the Church of Antioch.

The 1996 Synod of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church met in July and studied the new work of the joint theological commission. This commission consisted of two Catholic hierarchs, Archbishops Zoghby and Cyril Salim Bustros, and two Orthodox hierarchs, Metropolitans Elias Audi and George Khodr. The deliberations were positive, and a document was produced by the Greek-Melkite synod: “Reunification of the Antiochene Patriarchate.” All the fathers of the synod — the patriarch, 34 bishops, and four general superiors of religious orders — subscribed to the new unity endeavor.

Excerpts follow:

“The fathers of the Synod of the Greek-Melkite Catholic Patriarchate convened in Raboueh, Lebanon, 22 July to 27 July 1996, and studied the documents presented by the Patriarchal Commission established by His Beatitude Maximos V Hakim on 25 March 1996. ...

“The fathers of the holy synod are happy to announce the following:

- [We] anxiously look forward to the day when the Greek-Melkite Catholics and the Greek Orthodox in the Antiochene Patriarchate return to being one church and one patriarchate. ... This reunification does not mean a victory of one church over the other, or one church going back to the other, or the melting of one church into the other. Rather, it means putting an end to the

separation between brothers that took place in 1724 and led to the existence of two separate independent patriarchates and returning together to the unity that prevailed in the one Antiochene Patriarchate.

- [We] see that this reunification has become possible today through the progress in the communion of faith that has taken place through the grace of God in recent years on the international level through the Joint International Theological Commission between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches. ... [We] consider [our] task of reestablishing communion within the Church of Antioch a part of reestablishing full communion between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox churches on the international level.
- The joint commission will discuss one point further, that is, 'The role of the bishop of Rome in the church and in the ecumenical councils.'

"On this subject [we] adopt what was stated in Vatican II: 'To give due consideration to ... the origin and growth of the churches of the East, and to the character of the relations which obtained between them and the Roman See before the separation' (Decree on Ecumenism).

"Concerning the primacy of the bishop of Rome [we] declare that [we] are inspired by the understanding in which East and West lived in the first millennium in light of the teachings of the seven ecumenical councils, and [we] see that there is no reason for the separation to continue because of that primacy.

- Based on the unity in the essence of the faith [that existed in the first millennium], [we] see that 'communicatio in sacris' is possible today, and that [we] accept it, leaving the ways

and means of its application to the joint decisions of the two church synods — Greek-Melkite Catholic and Greek Orthodox.

- [We] announce [we] will remain in full communion with the Apostolic Church of Rome and at the same time will work out with her what is required to enter into communion with the Antiochene Orthodox Church.
- [We] will delegate the Synodal Ecumenical and Theological Commission to research deeply

“
**These breaches
 cannot be
 healed from
 the top down;
 rather they must be
 healed locally.**
 ”

the ways of the unification, and discuss its canonical and pastoral implications, and to hold joint conferences and conventions to include the faithful of both churches on the path toward this unity.

- Finally, [we] ask all the faithful to join with [us] in prayer so that the will of God be fulfilled in all of us and that the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ to his heavenly Father be accomplished: 'so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they

also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me' (Jn 17:21)."

The document received great press throughout the Middle East, Europe and the U.S.

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Antioch met in October 1999 and discussed the Greek-Melkite initiative and document. Patriarch Ignatius IV Hazim and the bishops of the synod were delighted to see the Greek-Melkite desire to transcend the separation of 1724.

The synod expressed its desire to continue the discussions of church theology on the Antiochene level, while pursuing the work of the international commission between the Catholic and Orthodox churches.

The synod stated that they do not favor intercommunion because it is seen as the last step in the quest for unity, not the first.

They also questioned how the Greek-Melkites may be in communion with Catholics and Orthodox at the same time, stating that unity with Rome and Orthodox Antioch cannot be separated from restoring communion between the See of Rome and all Orthodox sees; Antiochene unity cannot be realized without the approval of sister Orthodox churches.

Their discussions and thinking, however, would not prevent them from continuing good relations with the Greek-Melkite Catholic Church, they said, stressing that their ecumenical commission would continue to dialogue with the Greek-Melkites.

Historically, schisms develop in the local churches. These breaches cannot be healed from the top down; rather they must be healed locally. Antiochene Greek-Melkites have begun such a healing process and Antiochene Orthodox are willing to listen and respond. May God bring this healing to full fruition. ■

University student Daria Bazylevych was at home in Lviv, western Ukraine — 560 miles from the front — when a Russian missile struck her home on 4 September, killing her, her mother and two sisters.

Within weeks, Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU), where she was enrolled, created an endowed scholarship in their memory.

Daria is among the growing list of members of the UCU community who have been killed in Russia's nearly three year-war on Ukraine. As of 30 September, 31 students, alumni and staff had been killed as active military. Another 130 were serving in the Ukrainian army; numerous others were assisting with humanitarian aid efforts across the country.

UCU operates a veterans center that collects aid and assists veterans with re-entry into civilian life. Pavlo Koval, the center's director, notes all veterans face many similar social and personal challenges. However, the common request among young veterans who joined the military without completing their education is to study and build a career.

Dr. Oleh Romanchuk, a psychiatrist and director of the university's Institute of Mental Health, says Ukraine's current young adults, aged 18-25, faced an onslaught of challenges before even reaching adulthood.

"First, they experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, and now they are going through a full-scale war," he says. "During their youth, everyone wants to envision their future and pave the way toward it. But that future is shrouded in uncertainty, because no one knows how long the war will last."

Dr. Romanchuk says the constant stress of war, massive shelling, power outages, and the loss of homes and loved ones have resulted in a common list of mental health issues among this population,

namely anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disorders and eating disorders.

However, the psychiatrist says it would be wrong to consider this generation to be "lost."

"They are already hardened by the war. We see an incredibly strong civic stance, massive involvement in volunteer work and resilience," he says. "Despite all the challenges, they continue to pursue education and firmly state they are only young once and do not intend to start living only after the war."

While these young adults have been deprived of carefree days, he says, and many have attended more funerals than weddings typical at this age, there is also a widespread phenomenon of post-traumatic growth toward greater resilience, humanity and purpose.

Ukraine's 18- to 25-year-olds are a relatively small group. The economic crisis during the restructuring of the country's post-Soviet economy in the late 1990s and early 2000s discouraged young couples at the time from having children.

According to the World Bank, the birth rate in Ukraine in 2001 was 1.1 births per woman — the lowest in the 31 years between Ukrainian independence and the current war. As a result, 3.1 million people in this age group were living in Ukraine in January 2022 compared with 5.5 million people aged 35-42, according to the State Statistics Service.

Uncontrolled mass migration at the start of the war and the ongoing loss of life makes the current size of the 18-25 age group within the country — as well among the 6.5 million Ukrainian refugees worldwide — indeterminable. However, about 350,000 people aged 18-25 are estimated to be among the 3.7 million internally displaced, according to the

International Organization for Migration. By 1 October, no casualty data specific for this age group was available, although total civilian deaths had exceeded 11,500, and military deaths were believed to have exceeded 31,000 — the latest official figure for Ukrainian military deaths reported by the president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in February.

Ukraine has had a general mobilization since the start of the full-scale war, initially for men aged 27-60. In April, the conscription age was dropped to 25. However, men and women under 25 have been volunteering for the military since the war began.

While the number of these recruits is classified information, the average age of Ukraine's roughly one million active military ranges between 40 and 45, says Serhiy Rakhmanin, a member of parliament on the National Security, Defense and Intelligence Committee.

Vasyl Dzes, a recruiter for the 24th Mechanized Brigade, based in Yavoriv, Lviv Oblast, says recruits under age 25 are usually motivated by a desire to avenge loved ones killed in the war. Their admission is not automatic, he says. His reflex is to send them away and advise them to reflect further on their decision. Some reconsider, while others return, taking on combat roles as soldiers, drone operators and medics.

Volodymyr Shypitsyn, motivated by honor and the pursuit of justice, was 19 and studying law at UCU when he enlisted. After completing his military training, he carried out combat missions in Donetsk Oblast, eastern Ukraine.

Uninterested in military desk work after an injury in battle last

Volodymyr and Solomiya Svyst were married at Sts. Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, 21 September. Volodymyr had returned from the front for their wedding.



RESPONDING TO HUMAN NEEDS

HARDLY LOST

Ukraine's young adults choose purpose amid travesty of war

text by Les Beley with photographs by Konstantin Chernichkin





**“THESE YOUNG
PEOPLE CARRY SUCH
TREMENDOUS BURDEN
THAT, WHEN THEY DECIDE
TO SHARE IT, NOT EVERY
CIVILIAN WILL BE ABLE
TO HANDLE IT.”**



At Sts. Peter and Paul Garrison Church in Lviv, Father Andriy Khomyshyn stands next to photos of Ukrainian soldiers who died in the war against Russia.

year rendered him unfit to return to the front, he demobilized. He says he was spared any severe psychological consequences he had expected from serving in battle and has restarted his university studies, this time in international relations.

"The war prompted me to study the reasons behind the war's occurrence," says Mr. Shypitsyn.

"I want to be a specialist who brings maximum benefit to post-war Ukraine, helping to build a new image," he says, "not as a place of destruction and sorrow from which people flee, but as a place of great opportunities."

Not all young men return to civilian life after combat. A Ukrainian soldier with the call sign Sabotage says he knows nothing aside from the war.

Sabotage, 20, was studying to become a feldsher in his home region of Sumy Oblast, northeast Ukraine, when it fell under Russian occupation in 2022. He decided to enlist after witnessing various war crimes by Russian soldiers.

"I realized that I am a man. I have arms and legs, I am healthy. Why should someone else die for me? The last straw was when a good friend of mine died in the war," he recalls.

He told his mother he was leaving to work as a security guard on the railway, then joined the 3rd Assault Brigade, based in Kyiv, 186 miles away. The brigade is among the most popular with young volunteers due to its reputation for excellent training — and, in part, to its strategic YouTube and billboard advertising campaigns.

His mother only learned later he had joined the military from a

TikTok, in which her son, concussed, was lying under a tree.

Sabotage spent two months on the front near Avdiivka, Donetsk Oblast, sustaining two heavy concussions. The second occurred in March 2024, when an artillery shell exploded nearby. He recovered. However, no longer suited for battle, Sabotage became an instructor at his brigade's training base in central Ukraine.

"Younger recruits are more motivated and always eager to fight," he says. "Older people think more about their families, while young guys don't have that."

Sabotage, who used to be timid, says he has found true friends in the army and has lost his sense of fear. He is satisfied in his new role, as he had always dreamed of becoming an instructor.

The Reverend Andriy Khomyshyn, an UCU graduate, has been providing spiritual support to Ukrainian soldiers since 2008. He serves as chaplain at the Hetman Petro Sahaidachny National Army Academy in Lviv, where officers are trained.

Before the war, young people were widely considered to be "unreliable and indifferent" to the political events in the country, he says.

"But they have shown they were underestimated," he says. "They have a strong desire and readiness to shape their own future. They understand they can only rely on their own knowledge and skills, and they have a completely different understanding of authority."

Young people are not impressed by status or rank, he explains. They judge people by their actions, they are prepared to question everything they are told and are irritated by empty slogans. Bridging the gap between generations is challenging, he adds.

In addition to providing the sacraments and other spiritual care, listening to the young soldiers' experiences in battle has become an important part of his ministry. He recalls a few of the difficult stories he has heard: a soldier who talked at a corpse for two hours when there was no one else in the trench to speak to; another soldier who feared killing had become "easy" for him after battling enemy forces in Bakhmut; and yet another who was recovering from a gunshot wound to the head.

"I realized these young people carry such a tremendous burden

that, when they decide to share it, not every civilian will be able to handle it," he says. "We will have to establish a public dialogue after the war, not only between different generations but also between those who have gone through the war and those who have not been as deeply affected by it."

Kateryna Kremin had dreamed of becoming a teacher, but the war moved her to pursue a different path.

This past summer, Ms. Kremin volunteered nearly full time, helping children with special needs at

a center in Ternopil, 70 miles east of Lviv, run by Caritas Ukraine, the charity of the Greek Catholic community in Ukraine.

When university resumed in the autumn, Ms. Kremin turned her focus to logopedics, or speech-language pathology, which helps children and adults with neurological damage to develop or regain speech.

"Many of my friends have chosen professions related to supporting the military — psychologists, medics," says the 19-year-old. "I have two cousins serving [in the military], and it's hard. I understand they will need professional help."

**"I THINK ONLY ABOUT TODAY.
EVERYTHING ELSE IS IN GOD'S HANDS."**



The CNEWA Connection

Volunteerism in the country has increased since the war began, especially among young adults. Volunteer coordinator at Caritas Ternopil Natalia Protsyk says her team of seven volunteers before the war grew to about 100 in 2022. Of her 35 volunteers in mid-September, 20 were young adults. She says young volunteers are “full of energy, and creative ideas, so they contribute a lot.”

“They have the possibility to see how people in need are living and they have much commitment and empathy,” she adds.

Lidia Hnatiuk, 21, a finance student in 2022, was among the volunteers to join Caritas Ternopil. Inspired by its mission, she decided to pursue a career in social work instead. She has been working as a case manager with Caritas for the past two years, assisting vulnerable people with documentation, access to medical care, housing and employment.

On 17 September, Ms. Hnatiuk and her colleagues welcomed an evacuation train from Donbas, eastern Ukraine. The 65 passengers — adults, children, elderly and some with special needs — came with modest packages of belongings and their pets. Caritas staff greeted them on the platform, showing genuine care. About two evacuation trains arrived in Ternopil each week in September.

Ms. Hnatiuk says it was difficult initially not to take on others’ pain, but she learned how to maintain professional boundaries and still show empathy thanks to the training she received at Caritas.

“Under the influence of war, I have matured,” she adds. “I have begun to notice how many people need help.”

At left, Kateryna Kremin volunteers with children with special needs and, above, Lidia Hnatiuk helps recent evacuees from eastern Ukraine to fill out forms at Caritas Ternopil.



Since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, CNEWA has rushed funding to provide food, shelter, medicine, psychological and spiritual support for those who have fled their homeland and for those who have remained. This assistance is directed through our partners, including Caritas Ukraine and Ukrainian Catholic University. CNEWA also continues to support the formation of a new generation of priests, and of men and women religious, including seminary formation at Theodore Romzha Theological Academy in Uzhorod.

CNEWA’s commitment to the people of Ukraine remains steadfast. To support this mission, call 1-866-322-4441 (Canada) or 1-800-442-6392 (United States) or visit cnewa.org/donate.

Maria Khudiakova, 22, lives in Brody, about 42 miles northwest of Ternopil. Her hometown in southern Ukraine, Oleshky, in Kherson Oblast, was occupied by Russian forces on the first day of the full-scale invasion. During the occupation, she volunteered to stand in various lines on behalf of elderly people to buy them food and deliver it to their homes.

When she fled Oleshky alone in mid-April 2022, she believed the war would soon end and she would return. However, in June 2023, 80 percent of the city flooded after an explosion at the Kakhovka hydroelectric station. The number of casualties has gone unreported, and power still has not been restored to the city that remains under Russian occupation.

Her new life in Brody was not without its challenges.

“In the first month, I was extremely withdrawn,” she says. “I had hallucinations: I could walk down the street and see a shot-up car with the Russian symbol ‘Z’ or, in the complete silence, I could hear explosions in my mind.”

Ms. Khudiakova, who is a remote student in music at Luhansk State Academy of Culture, says volunteering with teenagers at the local Caritas center helps her cope with her trauma.

Once a month, she and her husband, Fedir Khudiakov, 25, also volunteer to drive their van full of humanitarian aid they collect at their Baptist church to the combat zone in Donetsk Oblast. They have come under shelling on



“WE DECIDED TO GET MARRIED BECAUSE LIFE GOES ON. ... THERE’S NO POINT IN WAITING FOR THE WAR TO END.”

their runs to the front, but they say their desire to help outweighs their fear.

The couple met in Brody in 2022. Mr. Khudiakov, originally from Pavlohrad, Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, in southeastern Ukraine, also fled alone to Brody, where he works at a factory that manufactures replacement parts.

While the war has taught the couple not to make too many long-term plans, they married on 22 September and honeymooned in the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine. They decided to build their life in Brody, where they have rented an apartment.

“We decided to get married because life goes on,” says Ms. Khudiakova. “We have to live in the circumstances we have.”

“As for children, I believe everything is in God’s hands,” she adds. “There’s no point in waiting for the war to end because it’s unclear when it will be over.”

With the possibility of conscription ahead, Mr. Khudiakov says he is ready to serve on the front as a chaplain, given his religious commitment to pacifism.

“I wanted to serve this way, but there are no vacant positions at the moment,” he says.

Lidia Hnatiuk, a case manager at Caritas Ternopil, welcomes refugees who arrived on an evacuation train from Pokrovsk, eastern Ukraine, on 17 September.

In Zakarpattia Oblast, western Ukraine, Oleksandr Smereka, 19, has chosen the path for the priesthood. He was in his last year of high school when Russia began its full-scale invasion. When classes were suspended and later moved online, he joined the humanitarian efforts of the Greek Catholic church in his hometown of Khust.

“I met many people from different parts of our country, listened to their stories,” he says. “I was pleased I could help these people.”

Later that year, he began his studies at Theodore Romzha Theological Academy, the seminary of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo in Uzhorod.

Mr. Smereka says he first felt the call to the priesthood at the age of 8, when he was preparing for first Communion. He decided to pursue the call in his teenage years.

Three years into the war, Greek Catholic priests in Uzhorod continue to deliver humanitarian aid to the front line, and Mr. Smereka and other seminarians help sort and pack the aid.

“I want to finish my studies, be ordained, maybe serve in a parish and, if needed, become a chaplain,” says Mr. Smereka.

“I don’t know what the future holds for me. I think only about today. Everything else is in God’s hands.”

Les Beley is a freelance journalist and linguist based in Kyiv.



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Pontifical Mission @75

Editors' note:

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of CNEWA's operating agency in the Middle East, Pontifical Mission for Palestine, each edition of the magazine in this year of multiple anniversaries will feature at least one article on this special endeavor of the Holy See in the Middle East.

In the December edition, we feature a report on the Dbayeh refugee camp in Lebanon, supported by CNEWA-Pontifical Mission since its establishment to care for Palestinians who were expelled from their villages in then Mandatory Palestine during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war.



@75

AT AN IMPASSE

**Church groups weave a web of support
for refugees in Lebanon**

text by Laure Delacloche with photographs by Raghida Skaff



A mother and her children take a minute from their day at Dbayeh refugee camp, north of Beirut.

The people living at a refugee camp in Dbayeh, Lebanon, were barely keeping their heads above water when a full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah, a powerful Shiite Muslim force based in southern Lebanon, was unleashed in mid-September.

A day after Israel began bombing Gaza in retaliation for the Hamas attacks on 7 October 2023, the Iran-backed militia of Hezbollah launched missiles into northern Israel in support of Hamas. Exchange of fire between Israel and Hezbollah ensued.

The conflict escalated drastically with Israel's launch of a full-scale war on Lebanon on 23 September and a ground invasion that followed on 1 October. By the end of October, Israel's bombardments in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley and the suburbs of Beirut had killed more than 2,600 people and internally displaced about 1.2 million — about a fifth of the country's total population.

By early October, 100 internally displaced families had arrived at Dbayeh camp seeking shelter within a setting already stretched to the breaking point. Located about eight miles north of Beirut, the camp in Dbayeh was established to shelter Christian Palestinian refugees expelled from the Galilee.

"We were not prepared to receive them," says Sister Magdalena Smet, P.S.N. "The conflict escalated so quickly."

Sister Magda, as she is affectionately known at the camp, is a member of the Little Sisters of Nazareth, a Belgian community of religious women who have been serving the camp since 1987. The three Little Sisters currently working there are at the heart of the response to this latest hardship.

"The families are in need of everything: mattresses, clothes, food, covers," she says. "We have to count on the generosity and

hospitality of people who already have very little."

In Dbayeh camp, as in most of Lebanon, solidarity with the displaced was immediate.

"I gave my office and my house to three families, and we are using the church hall to organize the supplies and food distribution," says the Reverend Joseph Raffoul, a Melkite Greek Catholic priest who serves the camp's parish of St. George.

Rita Ghattas, a Christian Palestinian, says "the situation is stressful." She was born and raised at the camp, as was her husband, Bassel, and their 15-year-old daughter, Reem.

Bassel's father was 14 when he was expelled from his village, al Bassa, in the Acre subdistrict of then Mandatory Palestine during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. The Israeli expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians from their villages at that time is called the Nakba, which means "catastrophe" in Arabic. An estimated 15,000 Palestinians and 6,000 Israelis were also killed in that war.

In 1949, Pope Pius XII established Pontifical Mission for Palestine to channel Catholic aid to these Palestinian refugees, entrusting its leadership, administration and direction to Catholic Near East Welfare Association.

The Dbayeh camp was formally established in 1956, on the land of the Maronite Monastery of St. Joseph, where years earlier the monks had set up a tent camp in response to the crisis. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and CNEWA-Pontifical Mission collaborated to replace the tents with one-room shelters.

Bassel's father eventually took refuge at Dbayeh camp, which over the years has received Syrian refugees and Lebanese displaced

by conflict. The Ghattas family is not the only Palestinian family to be living at the camp — originally intended to be a temporary solution — for three successive generations. Prior to the current war, the camp was home to about 610 families — 264 Palestinian families, 271 Lebanese families and 75 Syrian families.

Gerasimos Tsourapas, a professor of international relations at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, explains why the camp has become a permanent home for Palestinian refugees.

Post-World War II nations realized the need for an independent global system "to manage both labor and forced migration, in order for the atrocities of the first half of the century not to be repeated," he says.

"A global refugee regime emerged, the United Nations and several agencies were created," he says. "At the heart of this global refugee regime lies the principle to protect the vulnerable."

An important document in this global effort is the 1951 Refugee Convention, which "outlines the basic minimum standards for the treatment of refugees, including the right to housing, work and education ... so they can lead a dignified and independent life," according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The UNHCR serves as the "guardian" of the convention and works with signatory states to ensure the rights of refugees are protected. However, Lebanon is not a party to it.

"The global refugee regime has been unable to provide these

The Dbayeh refugee camp, located about eight miles north of Beirut, was initially established in the 1950s. Top, children gather in a rundown section of the camp.



**“WE ARE MARGINALIZED. PEOPLE WORRY
ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN’S FUTURE.”**



groups with adequate protection” and host countries continue to carry the main responsibility for their well-being, says Mr. Tsourapas.

According to UNRWA, 45 percent of the estimated 250,000 Palestinian refugees residing in Lebanon as of March 2023 live in the country’s 12 recognized Palestinian refugee camps and experience various forms of discrimination in the law.

Lebanon imposes employment restrictions that prevent Palestinian refugees from working in 70 professions, including as engineers, doctors or lawyers. They are denied the right to own property. They are also forbidden from building additional floors to their housing in the camp to increase their living space.

Lebanon’s economic crisis, exacerbated since its banking collapse after the August 2020 port explosion, has compounded these challenges. In March 2023, 80 percent of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were living below the country’s poverty line, which stands at \$91.60 per month, according to the World Bank. Lebanon’s average monthly income in 2023 was about \$122.

While the vast majority of Palestinians in Lebanon are Sunni, the Dbayeh camp hosts majority Christians.

“The Christian refugees are in a different situation than the Muslim ones,” says Marie Kortam, a sociologist and associate researcher at the French Institute of the Near East in Beirut.

In general, the socioeconomic situation of the Christians and the Sunni Muslim Palestinians is similar.

“They face the same restrictions when it comes to accessing the job market, unless they work with religious organizations,” she says. “What is projected onto the Christians is an image of modernity.”

“The solidarity is also stronger, because Christian Palestinians are a small community in comparison with Sunni Palestinians. Some of [the Christians] were granted Lebanese citizenship, especially in Dbayeh camp, in 1991, for electoral purposes,” she says.

Lebanon is a confessional state where elected representatives are religiously affiliated, and where it is common that access to social services or employment is granted in exchange of political loyalty.

A civil committee serves as the camp’s coordinating body and organizes humanitarian aid for residents. Elias Habib, the committee director, says Dbayeh is “different” from other Palestinian camps “because we have to take charge of ourselves, because we have very few UNRWA services.”

Church-run groups, such as CNEWA-Pontifical Mission, which has been present at the camp since its beginnings, and the Little Sisters of Nazareth help to fill the gaps.

The UNRWA-run school at the camp, which was built by CNEWA-Pontifical Mission, was destroyed in 1978 during Lebanon’s civil war, and a new UNRWA school built off-site after the war was closed in 2013 due to low enrollment. The camp has not had a school since, despite UNRWA’s mandate to provide health care and education.

“The public schools give priority to Lebanese students, and then to Syrians, before accepting Palestinians,” says Sister Magda. “Our Palestinian students are pushed toward expensive private schools. This year the tuition fees have doubled; it costs on average \$2,500 per year.”

The Little Sisters help coordinate tuition assistance for Palestinian children, since tuition is unaffordable for their families.

“Without Sister Magda, we cannot do anything,” says Ms. Ghattas, whose daughter, Reem, benefits

CNEWA-Pontifical Mission staff deliver foam mattresses in mid-October to assist those displaced by the war between Israel and Hezbollah.

from Sister Magda’s coordination efforts. At the start of the school year, the family received \$250 in tuition assistance from CNEWA-Pontifical Mission.

However, the onset of full-scale war between Israel and Hezbollah has required the sisters to redirect their time and resources from the education of 150 Palestinian children to emergency aid.

The camp’s ecumenical Joint Christian Committee for Social Service also covers a portion of enrollment. Its two-story center at the camp offers homework support, vocational training, remedial classes and children’s activities, including a summer camp. The camp’s sports facilities welcome about 150 children, aged 7-17, for soccer and basketball.

Reem, with her hair in a bun and her socks pulled high, says “playing soccer is an escape from everything.”

Lebanon hosts an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees.

Massab Alawi, his wife, Hala, and their five children are among 75 Syrian families residing at Dbayeh camp. They fled the civil war in Syria in 2012 and found refuge in a coastal town north of Beirut. However, their children were unable to attend school for two years.

Moving to Dbayeh provided their children with the rare opportunity to benefit from the remedial classes offered by the Joint Christian Committee for 75 Syrian students, whose education was disrupted by the civil war.

“The Syrians are, compared with the Palestinians, doing better,” says Mr. Habib, who also heads the Joint Christian Committee. “Many of them

The CNEWA Connection



Pontifical Mission has been on the ground in Lebanon since its founding by Pope Pius XII in 1949.

Entrusted to CNEWA, Pontifical Mission has supported Dbayeh's refugee

camp since refugees from Galilee arrived in 1949. In the past decade alone, CNEWA-Pontifical Mission has allocated more than \$2 million to the social service works of the Little Sisters of Nazareth and the Joint Christian Committee for Social Service.

Pontifical Mission also provides emergency relief when crises arise. When the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah escalated in September 2024, Pontifical Mission mobilized immediately, coordinating aid to its partners on the ground, including support to the Dbayeh camp, which received a number of families displaced from the south, as well as to:

- The Daughters of Charity, who welcomed more than 2,000 displaced persons in their schools and convents.
- The Maronite Archeparchy of Deir el Ahmar, which welcomed more than 9,000 displaced persons.

- The Melkite Archbishopric of Tyre, which welcomed more than 60 families.

CNEWA-Pontifical Mission has launched an appeal to provide 8,000 families with food and hygiene boxes, 2,000 mattresses, blankets and pillows, clothing, baby formula, diapers and fuel for the winter months, as well as trauma counseling. As many families took in displaced persons and depleted their winter provisions of food in the process, a wider food shortage is anticipated.

One million students are out of school, as about 1,000 public schools are being used as shelters. The church is seeking to repartition some of its buildings to relieve at least a few of the public schools, so classes may resume.

By mid-October, only 150,000 of the 1.2 million internally displaced in Lebanon were living in shelters. While some were being hosted in people's homes, many were homeless.

The needs in Lebanon are expected to compound as the conflict escalates and winter approaches.

To support Lebanon's displaced families,
call: 1-800-442-6392 (United States)
or 1-866-322-4441 (Canada) or visit
cnewa.org/donate.



“EVERYONE SUFFERS, IT IS SYSTEMIC.”



Dr. Elie Sakr examines a patient at a dispensary that operates within the camp. Below, Sisters Magda and Cecilia visit a Syrian refugee family living at Dbayeh camp.

can visit their families in Syria, and they know the war will end one day.”

Lebanon has seen increasingly xenophobic public discourse around the presence of Syrian refugees, but the Alawi family says they feel accepted at the camp.

In the camp, the tension lies elsewhere. The push and pull of influences tied to Christian and Palestinian political parties simmers below the surface. However, the coexistence of Syrians, Lebanese and Palestinians is “going as well as it can,” says Mr. Habib.

Lebanon’s ongoing economic crisis, ranked among the top 10 economic crises worldwide since the mid-19th century by the World Bank, has exacerbated the health care challenges at the camp.

UNRWA runs a dispensary two days a week. A dispensary funded by St. Elizabeth University of Health and Social Work in Slovakia since 2014, where dozens of Lebanese health care workers run volunteer consultations, has been operating five days a week.

“If we need something, we come here directly,” says Rachel Halawi, a Lebanese mother of three.

Each month on average, 650 people visit the dispensary and 1,000 home visits take place. The dispensary covers 50 percent of the costs of the medicines and medical appointments.

Cardiologist Elie Sakr, who heads the dispensary, says the health of camp residents “is worse than 10 years ago.”

He claims the economic crisis “reinforced people’s sedentary life, which generates stress, which in turn generates low immunity, heart attacks, and so on.” The most

prevalent illnesses are hypertension, diabetes, kidney, heart, prostate problems and cancer.

“With the same risk factors, people in the camp are [still] in better health than people outside the camp, as the latter have more restricted access to medicines,” says Dr. Sakr, referring to World Bank statistics that indicate 95 percent of households living below the poverty line in Lebanon cannot access medicines they need on a regular basis.

The Little Sisters help to cover health care bills for residents. However, they expect the wave of internally displaced people from southern Lebanon to stretch their meager resources further.

“We will share what we have. God will not let us down,” says Sister Magda.

Psychologist Hala Imad has been volunteering at the camp since 2016. She says the compounded crises and restricted opportunities for camp residents take a toll on mental health.

“Everyone suffers, it is systemic,” she says. “The very camp settings, the overcrowding, are weighing on people.”

Ms. Imad says she sees a prevalence of depression among the residents, noting how the trauma and the tragedy of the refugee experience has been passed on from one generation of residents to the next.

“This is transgenerational,” she says.

“It is very hard,” says Mr. Habib. “We are marginalized. People worry about their children’s future.”

“The hardest aspect of our work in the camp,” says Sister Magda, “is that it is akin to carrying the cross and never reaching the light or the resurrection.”

Laure Delacloche is a journalist in Lebanon. The BBC and Al Jazeera have published her work.



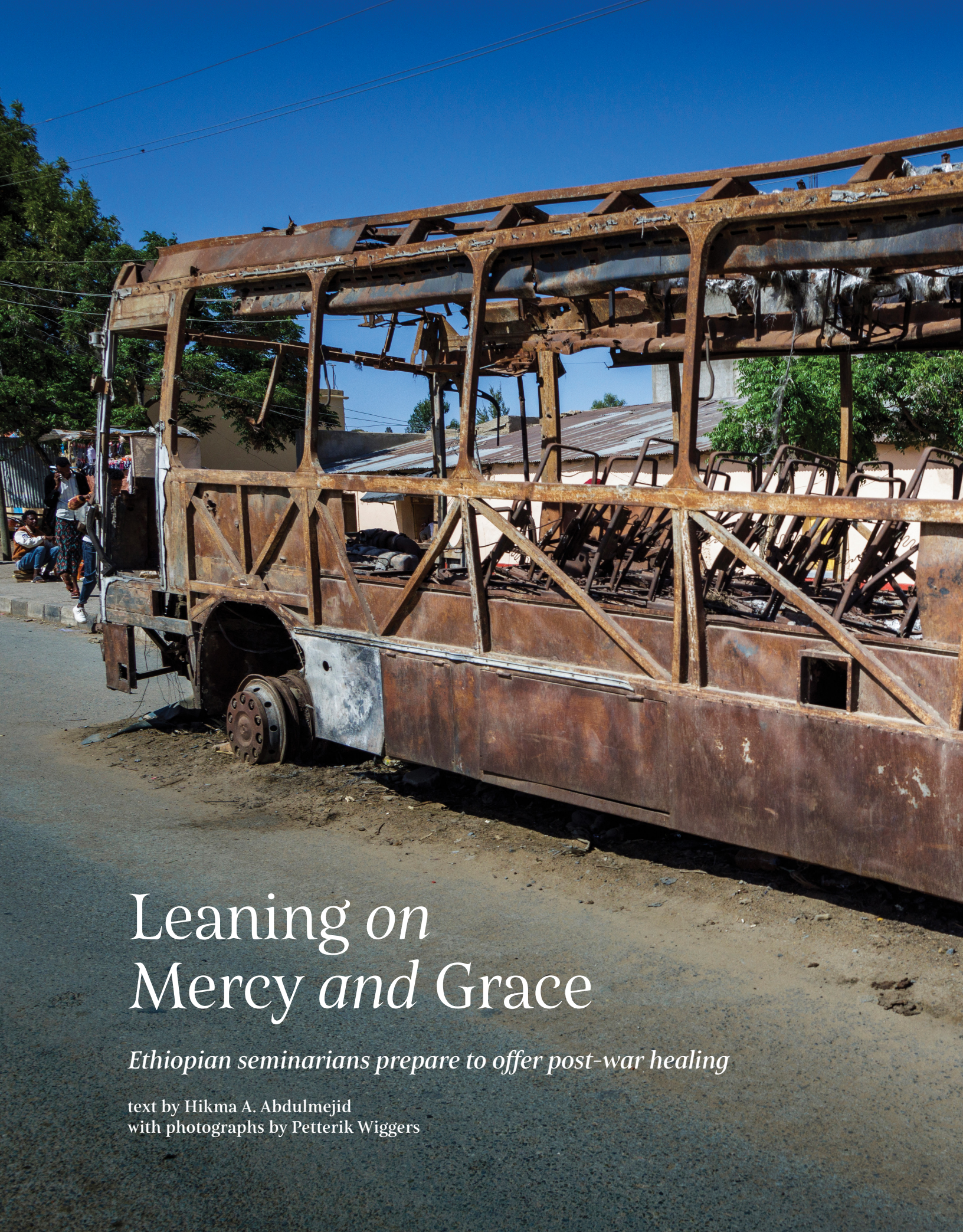
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Leaning on Mercy and Grace

Ethiopian seminarians prepare to offer post-war healing

text by Hikma A. Abdulmejid
with photographs by Petterik Wiggers



The bishop's voice trembled as he recounted the horrors of the two-year war that terrorized the people in his eparchy in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region.

"Our own faithful, dragged out of their celebration on Christmas, massacred. Priests taken from the altar while celebrating liturgy on Christmas," said Abune Tesfaselassie Medhin of the Ethiopian Catholic Eparchy of Adigrat. "Myself included, I was dragged from my cathedral and surrounded by killer forces. But my priests shielded me, and, with God's miraculous protection, we survived."

The bishop painted a haunting picture of his local church in the crosshairs of war. Where previously people of diverse backgrounds coexisted peacefully, nothing was exempt from the violence.

In November 2020, a bloody armed conflict erupted between the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Ethiopian National Defense Force, backed by the Eritrean Defense Forces.

By mid-2021, more than 5.2 million people — almost the entire population of Tigray at the time — required emergency food assistance, and hundreds of thousands lived in famine-like conditions. Sexual violence had surged, and 2,204 survivors had sought medical help.

By the time a cease-fire came into effect in November 2022, an estimated 600,000 civilians had been killed and 2.6 million people were internally displaced. An estimated 10,000 people, mainly women and girls, were victims of sexual violence as a tactic of war.

"We have witnessed a genocide by every standard," the bishop said, his eyes heavy with the weight of untold stories. "Our women suffered unspeakable violations."

Basic infrastructure in the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray was destroyed during a two-year war and much of it has yet to be restored.

The CNEWA Connection



CNEWA knows that strong and dedicated leadership in the church is essential to live out the Gospel and care for those most in need. Supporting formation programs in Ethiopia, CNEWA ensures that seminarians and novices receive the resources required to answer this call. At the Catholic Major Seminary of Adigrat, subsidized by CNEWA for decades, ongoing displacement, financial hardship, and calls for justice after a devastating war add stress to the already pressing needs. By adapting its curriculum to address the trauma and suffering of the people, the seminary is preparing leaders who can serve amid hardship and violence.

To support the formation of seminarians for the church in Ethiopia, call: 1-800-442-6392 (United States) or 1-866-322-4441 (Canada) or visit cnewa.org/donate.

Clutching the armrest of his chair, he added: “Very little has been said about what happened, but believe me, the truth will come out one day.”

Nearly two years later, in October 2024, about one million people were still displaced within Tigray, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Catholic Relief Services also reported nearly 4 million people faced food insecurity exacerbated by last year’s drought.

Access to health care and education remained severely restricted. More than 88 percent of educational institutions and 77 percent of health facilities were damaged in the war, said Daniel Zigta, the eparchy’s education coordinator.

Abune Tesfaselassie said the role of the church in the healing and rebuilding process has been vital. The Catholic population in the region numbers only 25,000 — about 0.4 percent of Tigray’s total population of nearly 6 million — and is served by 99 priests in 34 parishes. Although small, the local church extends its concern to all.

The eparchy’s pastoral workers and communities of women religious, particularly the Daughters of Charity, have been offering trauma recovery services, directing victims of sexual violence to hospitals for counseling and providing financial and medical assistance to those in need.

In order to accompany the people in healing and rebuilding in the

years ahead, Abune Tesfaselassie said his seminary has adapted its curriculum to include courses on healing trauma, which recognize the devastating experiences of both the seminarians and the communities.

“This involves a new look at the pastoral subject, where you are addressing society, individuals, families,” he said. “They need, above everything else, healing.”

“Wounded healers have to target how to heal best, how to heal the wounds in yourself and in others.”

The eparchy is also establishing the Resilience and Peacebuilding Institute that will work toward community reconciliation and promote conflict resolution through training, community engagement and peacebuilding programs.

“I am hopeful for a better future,” said the bishop. “Although I know it will bring more complex problems.”

The Catholic Major Seminary of Adigrat is about 25 miles from the Eritrean border in the city of Adigrat. The eight-year program offers intellectual, spiritual, human and pastoral formation. Three years are dedicated to the study of philosophy, four years to theology, and one year to pastoral service. Exams are overseen by institutions affiliated with the Holy See, particularly Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome.

Subdeacon Berihom Berhe was in seminary during the war. As the violence approached Adigrat in October 2021, he and 10 other seminarians fled on foot. They crossed the desert near Mount Asimba and survived on figs for a month.

“We hid, knowing people were being killed daily,” he recalls. Locals

Above, seminarians at the Catholic Major Seminary of Adigrat, northern Ethiopia, attend class and, at right, participate in a retreat.

helped to sustain the seminarians, sharing the food they had. "They saw us as their children. Thanks to God, and then to my people, we survived."

The seminarians returned to Adigrat after Eritrean forces left the area.

The subdeacon's resolve to be ordained a priest, anticipated in 2025, has only grown through these challenges.

"As Christians, we believe in sacrifice," he said. "What I learned during the war was that, even in the

worst times, I could still help people, and that gave me strength. I hold on to hope that better days will come. Until then, I will continue helping those who need it most."

Amaha Abebe had just begun his studies in theology when the war broke out.

"It was incredibly hard, not only because of the war but also because COVID-19 was spreading across the region. There were bombs and gunfire constantly," he said. "It was really a test of faith, but by God's grace, we survived."

Mr. Abebe had his sights set on university when "something stirred" within him to enter seminary. The priesthood is more than a calling, it is a responsibility, he said.

"I saw the love, care and service priests provided to the community. Their dedication brought me joy and made me reflect deeply on my own path," he said. "I know I've made sacrifices, and I'm prepared to make more for this vocation."

Now in his seventh year of seminary, he believes rigorous formation is imperative.

"This generation is highly educated and aware of many things. If I want to guide them, I must be well-informed, both intellectually and spiritually," he said. "As priests, we must balance secular and religious knowledge."

Despite the reduced capacity of the seminary during the war, classes continued, and five seminarians

"It was really
a test of faith,
but by God's grace,
we survived."





“I know I’ve made sacrifices,
and I’m prepared to make
more for this vocation.”

were ordained to the priesthood: three for the eparchy and two for the Salesians of Don Bosco.

The Reverend Habtegabriel Zigta, seminary rector, said the past four years were a test of endurance. “We faced economic difficulties, lack of transportation and shortages of basic necessities, like electricity and water,” he said.

However, “formation under such circumstances makes you stronger,” said Abune Tesfaselassie. “It prepares you to serve people in the harshest conditions.”

The bishop recalled how dialogue and negotiation with the Eritrean soldiers intending to abduct him ended with the soldiers agreeing to take 13 vehicles, including an ambulance, instead. As towns burned and archives were destroyed, he hid crucial church documents.

“If I die, I want the history of my diocese to survive,” he said.

For months on end, the communication infrastructure in the region was cut. There was “no electricity, no ability to use phones, and no rule of law,” the bishop said.

“In Shire, priests and expatriate sisters were isolated for months with no word of their well-being,” he continued. “Messages were passed person-to-person when possible and, for long periods, they had no news of each other.”

“Although some priests had to flee life-threatening situations, the majority stayed, finding ways to serve their people despite the dangers,” he said of the commitment of his clergy to be present with their parish communities in their suffering.

“Our missionaries, our clergy, they remained in some areas even without food to eat,” he continued.

Subdeacon Berihom Berhe is a seminarian at the Catholic Major Seminary of Adigrat.

“Where we could, we helped. Where we couldn’t, we remained.”

This past autumn, a third of the eparchy was still inaccessible, and the region was in a general state of disarray, despite the cease-fire. As well, several parishes were in areas occupied by Eritrean Defense Forces, says Father Habtegabriel.

The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia released a report in September 2023, indicating that the Eritrean Defense Forces, which were not signatory to the cease-fire agreement, maintained a continuous presence in Tigray and were “responsible for continuing atrocities.”

Subdeacon Berihom, whose family lives close to the border with Eritrea, confirmed that it “is under control of the Eritrean soldiers.” On his visit to the border area this past summer, he met with families affected by the violence, many of whom lost their children or their homes.

“They want to speak and have you listen to them,” he said. “Most of the people have been changed.”

With the same wartime resolve and commitment, the priests in these occupied areas maintain their presence, offering hope and support. Their ministry at times extends beyond spiritual care, intervening between armed forces and civilians, sometimes averting violence with gestures of peace or providing scarce food supplies.

“Christ suffered for humanity, and in the same way, the church, its followers, priests and missionaries must stay with the communities they serve during crises,” said the bishop.

“The only thing you can lean on is God’s mercy and God’s grace.”

Hikma A. Abdulmejid is a freelance journalist in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Petterik Wiggers contributed to this report.



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The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven,
may the *faith* you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of *charity* enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within
both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you, our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise forever.
Amen.

***“Spes non confundit.
‘Hope does not disappoint.’ ”
(Rm 5:5)***

With this phrase, Pope Francis begins the papal bull introducing the Jubilee Year 2025.

Hope — and being “pilgrims of hope” — is the central theme of the jubilee year. The official logo features a row of four stylized figures floating on water, each one in a different color and embracing the next. The figure leading the pack clings to a cross, at the bottom of which is an anchor, a symbol of hope.

Our world is inundated with a seemingly endless list of challenges and concerns: the omnipresence of A.I., the vulnerability of creation, a “throw-away culture,” disrespect for the sacredness of human life at all stages, divisive partisan political rhetoric, the devastation of wars and violence, the scourge of human trafficking, natural disasters, severe malnutrition, famine and a consistent rise in the rate of suicide.

In such a world, does not everyone seek some glimmer of hope?

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis will walk through the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica and usher in the jubilee year.

Everyone seeks a hope that will not disappoint! The source of this hope is love “springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross” (“Spes non confundit,” 3).

In October, Pope Francis published an encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, “Dilexit nos” (“He loved us”). It is my hope that our rediscovery of this devotion, a relationship with Jesus in his Sacred Heart, will enable and encourage us to be missionaries of true hope in our world.

I plan to devote my column throughout this upcoming jubilee year to an understanding of the virtue of hope and its integral connection with the mission and work of CNEWA.

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, archbishop of New York and CNEWA chair, visits with children at the Holy Family Children's Home in Bethlehem, 13 April. Below, children participate at an awareness session on human trafficking at Dbayeh refugee camp in Lebanon, 20 July.

CNEWA as an agency of hope, with our partners and collaborators, is evident as you read *ONE*.

In April, Michael J. La Civita, director of communications and marketing, and I traveled with Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, archbishop of New York and chair of CNEWA, to the West Bank, where we witnessed the work of Pontifical Mission, CNEWA's operating agency in the Middle East, in action.

In July, Tresool Singh-Conway, chief financial officer, Thomas Varghese, director of programs, and I visited the Dbayeh refugee camp just outside Beirut. We participated in a day devoted to identifying signs of the horror of human trafficking, especially among children and young women. We experienced the work of CNEWA-Pontifical Mission at the refugee camp.

Then, in October, Mr. Varghese and I traveled to Ethiopia. In the north, along with Argaw Fantu, CNEWA's regional director in Ethiopia, we met with Abune Tesfaselassie Medhin of Adigrat, who shared his experience of the great courage and heroism of his priests during the horrific two-year conflict in the Tigray region. We also met with Abune Lukas Teshome Fikre Woldetensae of Emdibir and a group of his priests. They all expressed gratitude to CNEWA for our role in the support of their priestly formation.

Let's journey together as "pilgrims of hope." ***I invite you to join our eight-day CNEWA Pilgrimage of Hope to Rome, 26 April through 3 May.*** Please visit petersway.com/cnewa.html or email us at info@cnewa.org to request a brochure and view our itinerary. The pilgrimage will offer time for prayer and solidarity and will serve as an important fundraising opportunity for all our efforts!

With my gratitude and prayers,

Peter I. Vaccari

Peter I. Vaccari
President



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