



LATIN PATRIARCHATE OF JERUSALEM
VICARIATE FOR MIGRANTS AND ASYLUM SEEKERS
IN ISRAEL

Jerusalem, July 11, 2024

Abbot Nikodemus C. Schnabel, OSB
Dormition Abbey – Mount Zion
P.O.B. 22
9100001
Jerusalem

Dear Abbot Nikodemus C. Schnabel,

**2024 REPORT ON REBUILDING OF THE TENT
FOR THE ST. THERESA OF THE CHILD JESUS CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY (STCJCC), REHOVOT**

THE SAD EVENT OF 3 JANUARY 2024

In the early hours of 3 January 2024, a tent used for the weekly mass by the small Catholic community in Rehovot burnt to the ground. The possessions of this community went up in smoke with the tent – prayer books, benches, the sound system, the decorations, etc. This was a heartbreaking tragedy for the Rehovot Catholic community, composed of Filipino, Indian, African and other migrant workers as well as Catholic research scholars from all over the world enrolled in the Weizmann Institute and Hebrew University's Faculty of Agriculture. The tent was constructed in December 2016 with personal contributions from the community and help from some generous donors. Over the years it became a place of prayer, fellowship and a symbol of the fraternal spirit that marks this community. This blow came during the Christmas festive season and the peak of winter. The community was left homeless and without the resources needed to recuperate what was lost.

The tent stood on an empty lot, situated off any throughfare. Its discrete location avoided creating any disturbance to the surrounding population. The community can only gather on Saturday evenings when the congregants have a few hours off work.

Even though over the years, this location has attracted local extremists who have, on more than one occasion, attacked the congregation by throwing stones when the community was gathered in this place for Christian prayer, there was no evidence of arson. The final report of the fire department attributed the fire to a short circuit caused by the Christmas lights which though switched off was still connected to the mains.



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Considering the provisions in the agreement signed with the landlord which make it mandatory for the restoration of the property to the state it was when the lease was signed in July 2022; it was decided to restore the tent. The landlord gave verbal assurance that the community could continue to use the premises for at least another two years after the present lease agreement ends in July this year. As one can imagine, this involved significant costs and hard work. This community of faith was determined, and they continued to gather and pray, to rebuild and renew their place of worship. It is a place where so many migrant workers receive the strength to continue their service of the aged, the handicapped and the sick in the city of Rehovot and the surrounding vicinity.

When the Tent Chapel caught fire in the very early morning hours of 3rd January 2024, leaving almost everything in ashes, except a few metal bars standing, the community was left devastated. This was at a time when they were recovering from the corona pandemic effects, then the war tensions at hand and now the fire over their tent place of worship. The Vicariate for Migrants and Asylum Seekers and the St. Therese of Child Jesus Catholic Community (STCJCC), Rehovot are forever grateful to you for having immediately come to our rescue in all aspects, physically, spiritually and materially. We would like to acknowledge your closeness to us, dear Abbot Nikodemus and the Austrian Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. We are truly grateful for your prompt and generous offer of **5,000 EUROS (19,804 NIS)** for the rebuilding project.

Given below is a summary of the principal costs incurred in rebuilding the tent and providing some of the important furniture necessary for the community to continue praying and worshipping in the tent.

REBUILDING THE TENT AND PREPARING IT FOR WORSHIP

The final cost of the project undertaken by Avilia and others is:

Engineer: 1,170 shekels.

Assessor: 3,510 shekels.

Tent: Cleaning the tent's skeleton + Painting the tent's skeleton + welding + putting on the new cover etc.: 42,822 shekels

Plumbing repair – Drainage etc: 4,774 shekels.

Electrical fittings: 9,835 shekels.

Carpet and altar – carpentry works – 10,000 shekels

Total = 72,111 shekels

Your contributions, therefore, enabled our STCJCC Rehovot to reconstruct the Tent Chapel of Worship where they can now gather again for prayer and fellowship. Here they can celebrate new life through the sacraments, especially at the Eucharistic *Mensa* partaking of the Meal of God's Word and our Lord's own Body and Blood at Communion. They will also have a place to confess



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their sins and receive God's forgiveness, and study God's Holy Word. It will be a meeting place where they can dedicate their lives, time, talents, and treasures for the advance of God's Kingdom. Here they can meet as God's family to enjoy God's gifts and blessings, His Presence and Glory.

Through your generosity, the reconstruction of the tent also enabled the community to rebuild their love relationship with God, with each other, with other communities, with their families and especially among themselves as members of the same community. May the good Lord continue to guide them through the work of renovating and renewing their lives, making them happy, whole and complete as one family, one community, one people, children under one God and Father, especially given their situation as migrants in the Holy Land.

BLESSING OF THE RENOVATED TENT – FLORES DE MAYO CELEBRATION

With deep joy and gratitude, we would like to inform you that the renovated Tent Chapel was solemnly blessed on the 01 June 2024 combined with celebrating the vibrant and traditional Filipino feasts of *Flores de Mayo* and *Santa Cruzan*. Fr. Matthew Coutinho, SDB, the Patriarchal Vicar for Migrants and Asylum Seekers blessed the tent in the presence of Fr. Moses Wanjala, SDB Priest in charge of STCJCC Rehovot, Fr. Jose KM, Rector of Salesians Ratisbonne, Jerusalem, many priests and religious, Mr. Anthony Mandap, Consul General and his wife from the Philippines Embassy Tel Aviv, Mr. Ele Necessito Valde (STCJCC Coordinator), many representatives from the various migrant communities in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and the St. Therese community members and friends.

The festivities began with a Marian procession with representatives dressed according to the different titles of Mary our Blessed Mother, Queen Helena and Prince Constantino (both responsible for the finding of the Holy Cross). The festive mass was presided over by Fr. Angel Cortez OFM, who reminded the congregation of the true essence of the feasts. His homily emphasized the importance of unity, faith, and cultural heritage, resonating deeply with those in attendance.

Following the Mass, a short entertainment program was held, showcasing the rich cultural heritage of the members of the community who come from different nations. The program included traditional dances, songs, and performances that highlighted the diverse backgrounds and talents of the community members. The festivities concluded with a sumptuous dinner, where attendees shared traditional Filipino and international dishes. This communal meal fostered a sense of fellowship and camaraderie, reinforcing the bonds among community members.

This significant celebration on the Feast of Corpus Christi showcased the rich diversity of the community and demonstrated their resilience and unity in the face of adversity. The celebration was particularly poignant as it marked the community's recovery from a devastating fire that destroyed their tent and all equipment. The tent is the symbol of a new beginning for the STCJCC Rehovot community.



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We continue to express our heartfelt gratitude to you for standing with us and supporting us in such a trying time and enabling the Rehovot community to have again a place of worship and gathering.

Sincerely yours,

Sr. Gabriele Penka OSB

Sr. Gabriele Penka, osb
Administrator

Matthew Coutinho sdb

Fr. Matthew Coutinho, sdb
Latin Patriarchal Vicar for Migrants and Asylum Seekers
Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

