

LAUNCH OF JERUSALEM APPEAL: *Shine a light ...*

Launch Address by The Most Reverend Dr Michael Jackson, archbishop of Dublin and bishop of Glendalough December 4th 2023

WELCOME: SET IN A CONTEXT OF SCRIPTURE, PSALM, PRAYER, SONG

Everyone is very welcome to St Ann's Parish Church this evening in the heart of the city of Dublin. St Ann's is The Anglican Church in the City. It has been here uninterruptedly for the last three hundred years. My thanks go to Canon Paul Arbuthnot and The Select Vestry for having us here. They also go to Ms Lynn Glanville and Ms Caoimhe Leppard for organizing and communicating widely this Official Launch of The Dublin and Glendalough '*Shine A Light*' for the Diocese of Jerusalem Appeal. I welcome The Right Reverend Dr Ferran Glenfield, bishop of Kilmore, Elphin and Ardagh, who is the chairperson of the Church of Ireland Bishops' Appeal with whom we are partnering in our endeavours to bring aid and assistance urgently to the territory known to most of us as The Holy Land.

In this dark time in the Holy Land, we are asking everyone to 'Shine a Light for the Diocese of Jerusalem' The Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem is home to about 7,000 Anglicans. It is also responsible for 30 institutions, including hospitals, schools, clinics and rehabilitation centres which welcome all people regardless of their faith or background. These include Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza. An explosion at Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza on Tuesday 17th October, killed and wounded hundreds of people who had sought safety in the grounds. We join with those around the world in raising funds to support the work of the diocese of Jerusalem in serving those affected by war. Partnership is very much what we are about in what we are doing. I hope that people who are here and people who are joining us online will be in a position to give whatever they can. They should feel secure in the knowledge that all monies given through this Appeal will go directly to the Diocese of Jerusalem and its institutions in dealing

with the fall out of the conflict in whatever way is needed. Our intention is to send everything that is donated at the end of the current Appeal which runs officially from today to February 2nd, 2024, aptly The Feast of The Presentation of Christ in The Temple in Jerusalem. Anyone is nonetheless free to contribute after that date and any donation will be received gratefully.

The Appeal is not solely, or even primarily, about money. It is about partnering and solidarity with those who live in a theatre of war and in a crucible of faith. Such solidarity is expressed primarily through Prayer and Psalm and Scripture and Song. These intentional activities connect us with the roots of our own Christian tradition; and, by extension, with members of Other World Faiths who are suffering so significantly in Israel and in Gaza and across the whole of the region as more and more people are drawn in. The launch is followed by hospitality and then by a Vigil to light to shine in darkness. It is to God we raise our voice. It is to God we give our best and our most. It is in the hope of God's mercy that we gather to launch this Appeal entitled: *Shine a light ...* Our conviction, like the author of St John's Gospel (St John 1.5), is that light is not overcome by darkness. We do this in part for our own need to grieve the pain of the world ripped apart by violence and destruction. Tonight, we do this most of all for the sake of everyone who suffers today in Israel-Palestine and most particularly for those in Gaza. Their home has become their place of suffering and alienation.

SETTING THE SCENE: OUR EXISTING LINK

For almost a decade we in The Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough have had a link with The Diocese of Jerusalem and The Middle East. It was formed in 2014 when a number of us went to Israel-Palestine and to Gaza City and The Al-Ahli Arab Hospital. On that occasion we celebrated The Orthodox Christmas in The Church of The Nativity, Bethlehem. We signed The Agreement in Jerusalem on The Feast of The Epiphany with Archbishop Suhail and a number of other diocesan personnel including the current archbishop then Dean Hosam Naoum. We named it The Epiphany Agreement. It is all the more fitting that the title of our

current Appeal is: *Shine a light* ... as The Seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany are Seasons where we hold steadfast to the sense that the darkness does not conquer the light. Our Appeal runs throughout these very rich Seasons of The Christian Year. Shining a light of hope in landscapes of fear, shining a light of love in landscapes of war, shining a light of care in landscapes of grief – this is the light we now hold up as an invitation to people here and across Ireland and indeed anywhere else who wishes to do so to embrace this Appeal, to pray with us and with those in The Land of The Holy One and to give as generously as you can financially to the cause of restoration and revitalizing essential medical services.

I offer you two quotations. The first is from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, now sadly deceased: ‘Peace is a duet not a solo. It can’t be made by one side alone. If it could it would have been made long ago.’ The second is from a Pastoral Letter written by the clergy of the Diocese of Jerusalem only two weeks ago: ‘We commended the ministry of our Diocese, exemplified today in our Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, and the dedicated actions of its staff following the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ – marked by service, selflessness, and love for others – bearing the cross of pain and the hope of life.’

Both speak powerfully and from complementary Faith Traditions into the situations unfolding before our very eyes and to which we want to respond as generously as we can.

SUFFERING AND DEVASTATION: A TIME OF HUMAN NEED

Why, you might fairly ask, do we call on you for help, why do we appeal to you in this Appeal? It is simply because there is a heart-rending need in a part of the world which, rightly, is close to the heart of all of us, not least as Christmas draws closer. It is not my concern to apportion blame nor again to trade in the virtue of any one cause. What we, in the world outside The Holy Land, see is devastation that needs fixing. Our response is properly humanitarian because it addresses the needs of human beings, people like us. We have witnessed young people being gunned down at an all-night festival. We have witnessed

homes in kibbutzim where people were cooking dinner reduced to a bloodstained murder scene. We have witnessed children with their names being written on their legs in the hope that, when they are killed, their bodies may be reunited with the families. We have witnessed patients in hospital having their wounds treated with vinegar and without any anaesthetic relief. Our pledge is to facilitate the long-term improvement in the life and the dignity of all and to work with The Diocese of Jerusalem to do this.

OUR ASPIRATION: WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO; HOW DO WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Our hope is that when the process of reconstruction gets under way – and it will have to do so because two communities who share the same landmass cannot look away from one another for ever – we want to make a significant contribution to the building and the rebuilding of infrastructure essential to the work of The Diocese of Jerusalem. The ethic of this work has always been to contribute to the wellbeing of everyone through its medical and care institutions. Renewed care will, of course, be offered to all who has suffered in the current conflict and who will continue to suffer for decades to come. In Jerusalem there is The Princess Basma Centre. It caters for educational needs of children of all abilities; it caters also for the needs of children traumatized physically and psychologically by living in Gaza, primarily through its Burns Unit. The Diocese, like God, makes no differentiation in response to suffering and to need. The fact that we are officially starting this Appeal now means that we are in a pivotal position to be an integral part of the development of long-term response as our partner diocese draws up its priorities and articulates its needs. We have done something like this before. I have every confidence we can do this again. People from right across The Church of Ireland and from right across Ireland itself contributed so generously in 2014 and I want to thank them once again. They held events which were enjoyed by everyone; they gave of their own resources and money; most of all they were not afraid to heighten awareness and to advocate for The Al-Ahli Arab Hospital and its work of service to the people of a

beleaguered society. In 2014 we raised sufficient money to kit out on-call facilities in The Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza; and to provide solar panels with a life of ten years. This was the maximum lifespan of batteries at the time, and we wanted to give the best to the hospital. I know that we can do this again – and more.

TARGET

So, you might ask, what is our aim and what is our target? Our first aim is to make available to people across Ireland a means to contribute directly to a cause that is secure in its being the cause of The Diocese of Jerusalem and The Middle East. Our second aim is to make a positive structural difference in the region, and specifically in Gaza City, which is now a wilderness of grey, of rubble, of metal, of charred remains of people and of buildings and to build it up again as a place of health, of dignity and of living humanity. Our third aim is to raise a very significant amount of money in the next two months (my personal aim for us is Euro 250,000 at least) to make this happen. With your help I have every confidence that this can happen.