



Marcel Lemmen – State Deputy / Député d'État

393 Rymal Rd. West, Suite 201, Hamilton, ON L9B 1V2
Tel: 905-388-2731 Toll free: 1-800-759-0959 Fax: 905-388-8738
statedeputy@ontariokofc.ca www.ontariokofc.ca

2021 Jerusalem Students Mass

November 14, 2021

The famous American scientist George Washington Carver once said: “Education is the key that unlocks the golden door to freedom”

Reverend Father, My Brother Knights, Esteemed Sponsors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We take our free, open to all, public education system for granted.

As a black man in the deep south, born into slavery in the 1860s, George Washington Carver certainly did not take education for granted. He was not allowed to attend the local public school and had to travel far to get his elementary and college educations. He used this schooling to become a prominent agricultural scientist and an educator in his own right.

His struggles continue among the poor and persecuted minorities in various parts of the world to this very day. One of those areas that is of particular concern to us as Christians and Knights of Columbus is the Holy Land, the birthplace of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and of our Catholic faith.

For the past ten years, Knights and sponsors in Ontario have supported an increasing number of needy students at the Greek Catholic Patriarchate School in Beit Sahour. The school is located just east of Bethlehem in the Palestinian controlled West Bank. The school is important because the comprehensive education it gives is conducted in a prayerful, Christian environment. The students that graduate from this school represent the future of Christianity in the Holy Land.

How many scientists and educators are among the students you sponsor? Thanks to you we'll find out because they are now free to explore their talents. What a great gift you've given them and their Christian community.



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The Knights of Columbus have prioritized aid to Christians at risk, especially in the Middle East. Through our Christian Refugee Relief Fund, we have been able to rebuild communities destroyed by war and genocide. Since 2014 the Knights have poured over 25 million dollars' worth of direct aid into the Middle East in the form of food, clothing, medicine, building materials and catechesis to support Christians in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan. Our goal is to give them the resources they need to stay in their homes, where they belong and want to be. We don't want the Holy Land to become a museum of Christianity without any Christians.

I'd like to thank Brother and Sir Knight Hikmat Dandan, his team, and his council for the important work that they do each year on the Jerusalem Students project. Brother Hikmat's many efforts for persecuted Christians and refugees are being used as a model by our Supreme Council. That's a testament to his extraordinary vision, organizational skills and persistence.

But most of all, thank you, dear Sponsors. By your generosity you are handing to your student a key to the golden door to freedom. May God bless you.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Marcel Lemmen
State Deputy
Knights of Columbus Ontario State Council