

Thank you, Monsignor. (Father John, Father Derek, if they are present)

As Monsignor mentioned, today's Mass is a special opportunity to recognize and honor the sponsors of the Jerusalem Students Project.

Just as a bit of background.....

About 8 years ago, Sir Knight Hikmat Dandan of Jesus the King Council in Thornhill, responded to one of the problems facing Christians in the Holy Land, Christian education. To provide very practical help, he put together the Jerusalem Students Project; received approval from the Archbishop of Jerusalem and began promoting how groups and individuals in Canada and across North America could sponsor students at the Melkite Catholic Patriarchate School in Beit Sahour near Bethlehem.

By the way, Beit Sahour where the school is located means 'place of the night watch' because this is where the angels announced the birth of Our Lord Jesus to the shepherds. So, these students are actually the great, great, great to the 100<sup>th</sup> power grandchildren of the shepherds who were the first to welcome Jesus.

The Project has two purposes; short-term, these Christian children are faced with a lot of economic hardship and their parents can seldom afford even the low tuition. And long-term, by helping them, we are strengthening the Christian presence in the Holy Land now and for the future.

The Project has been blessed to the extent that its sponsors now provide financial support for 70 students on an on-going basis. Since its beginning, the Project provided more than \$160,000 for the students. But, there are many students still in need of support. In fact, there are 600 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

There is a table in the foyer for more information how you can become a sponsor.

Now, every year, at this special Mass, we call forward the sponsors, to pick up their sponsored-student's file. We are proud to say that 5 students have graduated in June and their sponsors will receive a special commendation from the Melkite Catholic Archbishop of Jerusalem as well. One of these graduates, Ramez, has been sponsored throughout high school by the Knights here at St. Justin, Martyr. We feel like very proud uncles.

So, let me take the next 3 minutes to call forward the sponsors. Sponsors, please step up to the altar for Monsignor to hand you the document.