



Pearls of Wisdom

OPC Past President Linda Squarzolo

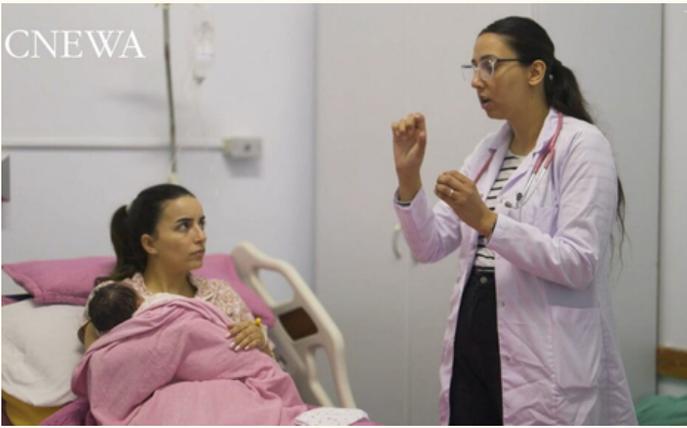
The Holy Land

On September 21, 2025, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney announced that Canada would recognize the State of Palestine with the right to self-determination and supporting the creation of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic and territorially contiguous Palestinian state. This was a milestone event for both countries.

In June 2018, I had the privilege of visiting the Holy Land on a pilgrimage organized for members of the Catholic Women's League by CNEWA (Christian Near East Welfare Association). CNEWA is an organization mandated by the Holy Father, providing humanitarian assistance throughout the Middle East and other parts of the world. Our trip took us to several places including Israel, the Palestinian territory and Jordan. Because Christianity was born in the Holy Land, a Christian presence there is essential. Over time the Christian population has been reduced to 2% of the people living in this area.



During this trip we visited and attended Mass at many of the holy sites but we also met with several Christian residents. They shared information about their daily struggles living in this area of conflict and about the humanitarian programs they had developed. These Christians serve society by offering projects to provide education, health care, orphanages and support for women. The programs are designed to assist both Christians and Muslims.



One of the sites, developed by Christians, was the Shepherd's Field Hospital in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem. (Aside: Bethlehem is located in Palestine, not Israel.) This hospital is operated by the Cooperative Society for Health Welfare.

Local families maintain the hospital for the poor in the area, mainly for pregnant women and babies. We were given a tour of their new hospital which was under construction at that time.

This project and another in Jerusalem (the Infant Welfare Center) are supported by The Catholic Women's League of Canada's national voluntary funds. Our financial support of the national voluntary fund called "**Velma's Dream**" is our way of making a difference for the Christians in the Holy Land.