

IN MEMORIAM FATHER MICHELE PICCIRILLO – A TRIBUTE

Father Michele Piccirillo sadly passed away on the 26th of October, after spending many years of his life as a priest, a scholar and a friend to Jordan. Born in Casanova di Carinloa, Italy, yet Father Michele spent much of his life at Mount Nebo in Mādabā, where he was known as Abuna Michele.

A Father of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, he had a true passion for archaeology, excavating numerous Christian religious remains in Jordan and Palestine. As director of the Archaeological Mission of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jordan, he collaborated with counterpart institutions, particularly the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

He was not only instrumental in uncovering significant Christian remains, like the ones at Umm ar-Raṣāṣ, but also advocated the necessity of their preservation for generations to come. He interpreted mosaic images like few others would, which made him an expert and a reference on Jordanian mosaics.

His impact in Jordan in general and in Madaba in particular, can be greatly felt, especially by those who studied and worked with him. He was one of the founders of the Madaba Mosaic School, and later assisted and promoted its upgrading to become the Madaba Institute for Mosaic Art and Restoration, which he served on its

board of trustees.

His contributions were not only confined to Jordan, but extended to the region. As a professor in the Faculty of Biblical Science and Archeology in the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem, he transferred his knowledge and experience to numerous students.

With great sincerity, he promoted the archaeological heritage of Jordan. As a true scholar, he was fascinating in his accounts of art, archaeology and history. One of his most prominent publications is “The Mosaics of Jordan”, published in 1993, which presents a rich variety of mosaic remains of the Byzantine and early Islamic periods in the country.

Father Michele was also an example of humbleness, generosity, and a true compassionate for all that he represented. True to his ideals, he advocated tolerance and coexistence as a means for achieving peace in the region.

Father Michele was laid to rest on the first of November, at Mount Nebo, a place he loved and cherished.

He will be greatly missed by all of us at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan.

May God bless his soul.

Maha Khatib
The Minister of Tourism and Antiquities

