

# Bethlehem University - Br Peter Bray receives Papal Honour



Br Peter Bray, FSC, EdD, Vice Chancellor of Bethlehem University\* in the Holy Land since 2009, was awarded the Papal Cross of Honour during a recent visit to Rome, despite the fact that he will have to leave his post at the end of 2023. This is one of the highest honours the Pope can bestow on lay people and religious.

Brother Peter, a Brother of the Christian Schools, describes his 15 years at Bethlehem University as an extraordinary blessing and the most difficult job of his career. "I feel truly blessed to have had the opportunity to work here and to have been able to experience the wonder of God's spirit at work among young people," he says. "I have never been in a place where it is so evident that what we do is helpful. To perceive secondary school students arrive on campus and then see them grow, over the course of four years, into extraordinary, self-confident, self-expressive, engaging, committed and resourceful young people is a great inspiration to me. When I have this experience with these young people, I can put

up with all the other things that are part of my job here!”.

Initially, Brother Peter’s appointment as Vice Chancellor was to last five years. It was later extended to ten years, and then in 2017, at the explicit request of the previous Superior General, Brother Robert Schieler, it was extended to 15 years.

“After all this time, it is urgent that someone else works with the students of Bethlehem University!” commented Br. Peter Bray.



For this reason, Br. Hector Hernán Santos González, FSC, EdD, from Paraguay, has been elected as the ninth Vice Chancellor of Bethlehem University. He will officially take up his new post on 1 January 2024. Until then, Br Peter and Br Hernán will work closely together to facilitate a smooth and successful transition.

Brother Armin Luistro, Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, has remarked on the honour conferred on Brother Peter,

***“When we open our institutions to those who have been excluded or marginalised, we open wide the doors of salvation to usher in the Kingdom of God”. “Brother Peter Bray’s effective leadership at Bethlehem University in recent years has brought radiant light and solid hope to Palestinian youth and many other communities in the periphery. The Institute is proud of his achievements as an institution builder and deeply grateful for his commitment to our Lasallian educational mission”.***

Bethlehem University was founded under Israeli occupation in 1973. It was the first university registered in the territory of the occupied West Bank in Palestine and is the only Catholic university in the Holy Land. It is a co-educational Catholic institution in the De La Salle tradition, whose mission is to provide quality higher education to the Palestinian people.

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