

# The Pilgrims' Journal

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## Fr. Angelo Beda Ison, OFM— Our Spiritual Director and Guide



Fr. Angelo Beda Ison, OFM, 60, is the full-time chaplain to some 40,000 Filipino and Asian migrant workers in Israel.

He holds a degree in accounting and auditing from San Beda College. He took further studies in International Banking in Germany (1970-76), and Marketing at University of San Jose, California (1980-81).

But God had other plans for him. He pursued theological studies in San Jose, CA, New Jersey and the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. (1983-86).

In 1989 he joined the Franciscans of the Holy Land in Washington D.C. He went through his novitiate in Alexandria, Egypt and from there to the Franciscan International Seminary in Jerusalem where he obtained his B.S. in Theology, *Magna cum Laude* (1991-1995). Even as he was studying he learned the art of guiding numerous pilgrim groups of priests, religious and laymen. He was ordained on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1995.

He is fluent in speaking many languages among them English, Spanish, German, French, Italian, Hebrew and Filipino. He is also well versed in Latin and Arabic. His private extensive studies in Biblical History, Literature and Archaeological studies and excursions in Israel as far back as 1976 serve him in good stead when he became a guide in the Franciscan Monastery (Holy Land of the US) in Washington D.C. He guided American and foreign tourists in English, Spanish, French, German and Italian.

As the Vice Secretary of the Custody of the Holy Land from 1995-2005, he guided members of the Diplomatic Corps and other VIPs from the US, Canada, Germany, Spain, Italy, Japan, Philippines, Jordan, South Africa and the South American countries.

In 1998 up to the year 2000 he privately trained Catholic priests, religious, laymen and new Israeli guides on guiding Catholic pilgrims in preparation for the Jubilee Year. He was responsible in issuing Franciscan Guiding Licence to Franciscan and lay guides under the Custody of the Holy Land.

His full time ministry as the Official guide of the Custody of the Holy Land (2005-2009) guiding an average of two large groups of pilgrims and three smaller ones from various nations did not impinge on his appointment as the Chaplain to some 40,000 Filipinos in the Holy Land. □

## Pilgrimage: A Perilous Journey?

I have been asked by some about the safety and security in travelling to the Holy Land. With news of conflict and bloodshed between the Jews and the Palestinians cropping up every now and then in the media, I could not fault them for their anxiety.

Whereas the plight of the present day pilgrim is saddled by anxiety—despite the comfort of modern travel—the pilgrim of old had to contend with the brigands and robbers on the way. They laid in wait to divest the pilgrim of his meagre possessions including his “habit” which consisted of a long smock, over which was worn a hooded cape. On his head, he would wear a broad-brimmed hat that tied under his chin, and across his chest he wore a strap from which hung a scrip to carry his money, food, and souvenirs. In his hands he carried a walking staff or, sometimes, banners, crosses, bells, or musical instruments.

Many of these items -- the scrip, staff, and cross -- were blessed, becoming sacramentals. These were supposed to be for their safe journey and protection under God’s loving care.

So in reply to the anxious enquirers I would like to quote Fr. Angelo on an earlier email:

“There is nothing new about the troubles here. We could not guarantee but you are well protected. We do not go to those troubled areas. We have the best police and military personnel 24 hours a day.”

—menfisher

