Hand Carved Olive Wood from Bethlehem

History of Holy Land Handicrafts

The handicrafts trade in the Holy Land has evolved as a cultural tradition of the Holy land people over many centuries and has become an industry of significance to the local economy. Beautiful handmade souvenirs made from the native olive tree provide Christian pilgrims with cherished memorials of their holy pilgrimage. Olivewood artisans use only the pruned and discarded pieces of young olive trees and sprouts from the old, unproductive trees. The artistry of Mother-of-Pearl is a tradition traced to the earth 17th century and has evolved along with the olivewood trade.

The ancient crafts of olivewood and Mother-of-Pearl started in Bethlehem hundreds of years ago when Franciscan monks trained the local population in carving Crosses, crucifixes, and reproductions of the Nativity scene of Jesus birth in Bethlehem and the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem. The demand for souvenirs from the Holy Land can be traced to the early centuries of Christianity and the tradition of relic hunters. For centuries, early Christians believed in the spiritual powers of relics, the most sought after being The Holy Grail—the name of a legendary sacred vessel identified with the chalice of the Eucharist—and The True Cross, the actual cross on which Christ was crucified, believed to have been lost when carried into battle during one of the Crusades. Centuries later, Christians learned to satisfy their hunger for relics with other artifacts from the Holy Land, including ordinary stones which have been transported to every part of the earth by pilgrims. Historical documents and writing of Christian pilgrims over the centuries tell of the beauty of the olivewood souvenirs.

The proceeds are to support Christian Catholic families in the Holy Land since it is the major source of income for them there. **We got our wares from more than 75 families in Bethlehem** . They are very beautiful and unique items.(Nativities, Crucifixes, Rosaries, Statues).

The Christian population has dropped from 22% to less than 2% in the past two decades. And this is a way to support them stay there.

Thank you for your support