A FACE FROM JERUSALEM

Claudette Habesch



A Life of Service

Claudette Habesch, née Ayoub, was born in the beautiful Jerusalem neighborhood of Talbiyeh to a Palestinian Christian family. At a young age, she alongside her family found themselves refugees after the *Nakba* of 1948. Having lost everything, from the warmth of her home, to her sense of safety and security, she observed how her parents toiled and sacrificed to rebuild their lives. Her parents' strength and faith were the first lessons learnt as she forged her life. She learnt perseverance, hard work, empathy and hope, pledging her life to achieving justice and prosperity for her Palestinian people.

After graduating from Beirut College for Women with a BA in Social Work and a minor in Child Psychology, Claudette trained at the American University of Beirut Hospital as a medical social worker. Upon her return home, she married Issa Habesch and settled in Jerusalem starting a long life of service. Her dedication to voluntary work, guided by faith and a deep sense of purpose, she headed Caritas Jerusalem as its Secretary General for 27 years, becoming President of Caritas MONA (Middle East and North Africa). She was elected twice as Vice President of Caritas Internationalis, the first woman to hold that position. She approached every responsibility with humility, compassion, and an unwavering respect to human dignity.

Believing that education is the foundation of development that empowers individuals, Claudette served on the Board of Trustees of Bethlehem University, as a member, then as Vice-President and later as President.

Claudette stands as a living example of service, generosity, and devotion, leaving a lasting impact on her church and the Palestinian community. She served as Board member and Chairperson of the Central Committee of the Department of Service of Palestinian Refugees, in addition to various organizations such as the Board of Faisal Husseini Foundation, the Presidential Commission for the Restoration of the Church of Nativity, YWCA and the Pontifical Council Cor Unum. She was a member of the Holy See delegation to the UN Conference on Women, Beijing 1995. In recognition of her work, she received various decorations and accolades.

Claudette never forgot her instrumental role as wife, homebuilder and mother, raising three children in Jerusalem, grandmother to ten and great-grandmother to two and counting.