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TOWARDS JERUSALEM: **A PILGRIM'S 5 MONTH, 5,000K JOURNEY ON FOOT TO JERUSALEM**

Brother of the Military and Hospitaller Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem, Jörgen Nilsson (aged 39 from Hässleholm, in the south of Sweden), left Lund, Sweden on November 18th, on a five month, 5,000 kilometer pilgrimage on foot to Jerusalem. Crossing down through Denmark, Germany, France, Italy and through Greece, Jörgen is aiming to reach Jerusalem together with his partner, Rebecca, in time for his participation in the session entitled Positive Footprints (22 April) at the First International Jerusalem Symposium on Green and Accessible Pilgrimage.

The last leg of his pilgrimage, which will take him from Haifa, with overnights scheduled in Netanya, Raanana, Tel Aviv, Ramla, Harel and Ramat Raziël. The 5,000 kilometer pilgrimage will reach its climax on Sunday, 21 April when his partner Rebecca Agronius and Grand Chancellor of the Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem Count Philippe Piccapietra will accompany him on the final stage of his journey, leaving the Crusader Church in Abu Ghosh at sunrise and entering the Jaffa Gate in the mid-afternoon. Nilsson will be a guest of honor at the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Cool Globes exhibit at Mamilla Esplanade at 18:00 on Sunday, 21 April.

Up until this point in his life, he had been working as an engineer and with company management within different industries. Jörgen also has a long commitment to the Swedish Armed Forces as a reservist and has completed peacekeeping missions in Kosovo.

According to Jörgen, he chose to walk to Jerusalem for two reasons: *"Firstly, the ancient and holy city has always been a focal point of both conflict and peace. It is a symbol for the efforts needed to obtain a more peaceful world. Secondly, I am a Brother of the Military and Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem. Last year the order moved back and restored its magisterial seat in Jerusalem after several hundreds of years in exile in France. I decided to make a part of this pilgrimage a celebration of this great milestone in the order's history."*

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In anticipation of arriving in Jerusalem, Jörgen says: *“When I reach Jerusalem I will have been on the road for five months (starting from Lund in Sweden on November 18th), I will have walked some 5000 kilometers, met wonderful and generous people and hopefully encouraged others to continue talking about the issues of xenophobia and peace. We must never let the discussion fall into silence. I hope that Jerusalem will be a place for me to rest properly after this long walk and I will spend my time there contemplating and praying.”*

Jörgen talks about his pilgrimage: *“I strongly believe that, given the situation in Europe and the world in large, we all have to take on the challenge to try to get a more peaceful world for our children. That task is neither small nor easily fixed. Throughout this long journey, through the north European winter, the most important part has been the numerous meetings with people. These meetings have become important stories that I've shared on my web site and on Facebook to show that most people are good and generous.”*

The ancient flag of the Saint Lazarus hospitaller tradition is the green cross – nowadays symbolic of hope, healthcare and the sustainable use of earth's resources. Since its return to the Holy Land, the Order of Saint Lazarus of Jerusalem has begun to provide mobility scooters and small electric vehicles to help disabled people around the Old City of Jerusalem, making their spiritual home more accessible to pilgrims and citizens who have reduced mobility. Count Philippe Piccapietra recently donated 4 four-seater green hybrid buggies to the City of Jerusalem, as part of a pilot project to offer pilgrims with disabilities a “gate-to-gate” service within the Old City.

<http://towardsjerusalem.org/>

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