



*Notre Dame de Sion*

## “SAINT JOHN IN MONTANA”

*Congregational Novitiate Jerusalem*

Ein Karem, Tuesday, 01 August 2017

During these last months many sessions and activities have filled the city of Jerusalem,

In one Session, “Healing Hatred” some of our sisters participated, others participated in the session on Reconciliation, some of our brothers and sisters were part of the Bat Kol program on Exodus and again others attended the Elijah Interfaith session of “Sharing Wisdom.”

In the session of Healing Hatred I meet Rabbi Miriam Berkowitz who runs an organization that introduces spiritual care to Israeli hospitals and nursing homes based on the American CPE model. She is organising a training course in 2018 for spiritual caregivers and it will be an interfaith course where various faiths take part. Fluency in English and Hebrew is required. Somehow I felt that I have found a meaningful way of using the efforts I am making in learning Hebrew and perhaps I will be able to volunteer within a ministry of caregivers in a one of the different institutions here in Israel.

Not all activities in Jerusalem have been life giving during this month of July, after the killing of two policemen by 3 Israeli Arabs near Lion’s gate tension rose in and around the old city of Jerusalem.

Looking at the history of Jerusalem Alphonse and our first sisters knew only the walled city of Jerusalem when they arrived in 1856. The people living in Jerusalem lived within the walls only. By the end of the 19th century some neighbourhoods outside of the traditional Jerusalem city were built. Moshe Montefiore, an English citizen was the first to build a neighbourhood outside of the walled city of Jerusalem close to Jaffa gate in 1860. In 1872 the Ratisbonne Monastery was built as a place for young men to learn a trade. The neighbourhood Me’a She’arim was built in the year 1874 and by 1880 the first families moved in. In 1887 the Jerusalem market was built where now also some Arab merchants left the old city to sell their goods in the new market which at that time was on the outskirts of Jerusalem about 2 km from Jaffa Gate.

The German colony in Jerusalem was founded between 1872 and 1910 by members of the German Templar Society as an agricultural settlement. At that time, the area was still outside the city of Jerusalem. This information was part of my project within the Hebrew class. Ecce Homo and the arrival of Sion in Jerusalem, what did they see? During this Hebrew class I also completed another Project, that of Ecce Homo (from the Via Dolorosa to Mount Scopus)

The school founded by the sisters in the convent of Ecce Homo welcomed Jews, Christians and Muslim children right up to the War of Independence in 1948. At the end of the war the convent found itself on the Jordanian side of the cease fire line until the year 1967. During this difficult time we educated the young Arab generation to the human values of tolerance and mutual respect, irrespective of differences in culture, religion or nationality.

After the Six Day war in 1967, Ecce Homo found itself within the unified City of Jerusalem. Mother Aline, superior of Ecce Homo at that time met by an unusual coincidence with Kalman Yaron, the director of the Hebrew University Martin Buber Institute. Mother Aline foresaw that the convent could be a an excellent meeting place for these two peoples who were so torn apart. The convent became the bridge between the Eastern and Western parts of Jerusalem. Together they decided to establish a cultural project in the convent in which Palestinians and Israelis would study each other’s language, converse with each other and get to know the neighbour as a fellow human being. A Israeli Jew, Kalman Yaron taught Hebrew to the Palestinians and a Syrian Catholic priest taught Arabic to the Israelis. These were the first steps towards a dialogue bringing together Israelis and Palestinians under the same roof and fostering a new way of looking at one another . By the year 1974 the Hebrew university completed the Martin Buber Centre which offered more space and improved facilities to help cope with the increasing numbers of students wanting to study both Hebrew and Arabic. Sr. Rose Therese continued with the administration of this program for the next 30 years. In 1997 the Ulpan was closed and studying Hebrew became a university course. Mother Aline’s strong personality and firm commitment to Sion’s Charism was a key factor motivating her to give a new direction to the convent after the Six Day war. Her prophetic vision kept her alert and attentive to the events and needs in the Holy Land.

Juliana for the St. John in Montana community