

“SAINT JOHN IN MONTANA”

Congregational Novitiate Jerusalem

News from “St. John in Montana” - Congregational Novitiate

Ein Karem, Tuesday February 3rd 2015

Dear All!

Time passes quickly, and it can be astonishing to discover with the passing days how much one grows in understanding and love. During the first days of January, the sisters working in formation throughout the Congregation had meetings at Ein Karem. So the Novices had the opportunity to be visited by the sisters who are Postulate Directors in their own countries. What a joy it was to see them again – sisters who had lovingly journeyed with the novices in the two years before they came to Jerusalem. During these meetings of the formation responsables, those in the novitiate were busy inviting everyone, and we became more than ever an open, welcoming community to so many visitors who came to enjoy our hospitality.

After that, Maureen returned to our weekly schedule of sessions with us, on belonging and membership within the Congregation. She started by focusing on the desire and dream of our childhood. From there we explored what of that is important for me today? Is there some connection between that desire and why I joined a religious group, and especially Sion? We ended by exploring the question: what does being a sister of Sion give me in terms of belonging, through which Sion becomes my surname?

The responses led us into Sion traditions: sisters of Sion don't convert Jews, they share with others and respect each other. Sisters of Sion pray together – we can say some prayers in Hebrew and many of us can follow the Hebrew Mass; many of us now know some words in Hebrew, which we use easily and whose deeper meaning we know like “Teshuvah” (Repentance). We assume our responsibility to be sensitive to Judaism in our life, and we study the Bible in a particular way together and with others.

The official Church is working through documents to develop its relationship with Judaism; living and loving this relationship with Judaism is, of course, our charism in Sion. Sr. Maureen ended her sessions with us on the question: what is belonging; what makes me feel that I belong to or don't belong to?

With Mark David Walsh, an associate of the Sisters of Sion, from Australia, we explored Christian-Jewish relations, from a historic perspective, and with special attention to Roman Catholic-Jewish relations. In the month of January we had three classes with Mark. We spent two of them on the Church's relations with the Jewish people until the parting of the ways which, for some scholars, was in the fourth century, while for others it was much later, and even into sixth century. A question was put on the white board: was St. Augustine against the Jews and was St. John Chrysostomos good for the Jews? This was an opportunity to explore the question very openly, and in doing that we learned much and sometimes were amazed at what occurred in our Church's History, yet we also wondered if we would have done



Notre Dame de Sion

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better, had we been in their shoes? Then we moved on to the Crusaders, and through the following centuries, until the Shoah, which made us realise how the teaching of contempt shaped this terribly tragic history with the Jewish people. We felt that we were experiencing how bad things had become for those who lived that period of history.

Now we are looking forward to see, in the coming months, how the official Church began to reconcile this difficult relationship, which had begun with the two ways that emerged within the synagogue community.

Looking at our house and garden, we are grateful for all the work that has been done in and around our home, in the past year since we moved in. We celebrated Victoria's birthday and remembered that one year ago the Novices began to arrive, in the period between the January 29th and the February 14th. How much joy and how much learning there was for us since then!

We finished our volunteering days, of the last 3 months, during which we all had the experience of working in the guest house of Ein Karem, and in the Kehila (Hebrew speaking community) caring for the children. In the morning, we were with babies up to 2 years of age; in the afternoon, we were with school children who needed to be picked up at school; we then had to ensure that they had lunch and time to play, as well as do their homework. These children are all in the Israeli School system and so they speak perfect Hebrew, plus their mother tongue (Tagalog, Arabic, Eritrean or Indian languages), as well as English.

Greetings and Blessings

Sr. Juliana for the Community
“St. John in Montana”