



*Notre Dame de Sion*

## “SAINT JOHN IN MONTANA”

*Congregational Novitiate Jerusalem*

Ein Karem, Friday, 27 March 2015

This has been a month full of surprises and visits!

We began our month with a one-day session on finances, with Sr. Trudy and Sr. Phil, which was really good. We had questions for reflection and we were divided into two groups to share what we had learned through our experiences as well.

The following day we visited the school called “Hand in Hand”. This school brings together Arab and Jewish children. It is one of the five “Hand in Hand” schools – in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Haifa, Galilee, Wadi Ara, and Jerusalem. They are centres for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel which enable peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs through the development of integrated, bilingual and multicultural education. In four of the schools, the number of students at each grade level is balanced equally between Arab and Jewish children. Students at all grade levels are taught in both Hebrew and Arabic. Victoria looks forward to the challenge of working full-time as a volunteer in the first and second classes helping specially the Jewish children to learn Arabic.

Taking the bus to Tel Aviv became more familiar this month because of our arrangements for visas. Alejandra and Victoria will go to Krakow towards the end of June for a five-month apostolic experience. Joey’s visa for Egypt was refused, so she will begin her apostolic experience in Ecce Homo in Mid-April. We are still trying to find another meaningful apostolic opportunity for her near Ecce Homo, confident that God will respond to this situation somehow. Clara and Rozeni will go to Tunis at end of April; the Community of Tunis is waiting for them enthusiastically. Arlyne is going to help with the migrants living here in Israel, in a variety of ways – working with the migrant children, visiting prisoners, and accompanying migrants to doctors’ appointments. She will also begin a Hebrew Ulpan. Berba will welcome Alejandra for her first experience of living in a Muslim neighbourhood, where Christians are a minority, and are not Roman Catholics but Coptic Catholics.

Our excursion through Jerusalem with Br. Elio and the experience of walking up the Mount of Olives and then down again, left us convinced that Jesus must have been a strong man conditioned by such treks up and down the hills in the hot sun and the wind, which sometimes is a cold wintry wind, and at other time the hot “khamsin” wind full of fine sand. Our image now is not the delicate blue-eyed fair-skinned Jesus of some pictures, but a country man who knew the hardships of the Land.

For us the Jerusalem Community’s study day on *Nostra Aetate*, which was hosted at Beit Ruth, was also an experience of deepening the community spirit of our Sion Family in Jerusalem.

Our visitors this month were Sr. Paulina and Sr. Florenta from Romania, who came to Jerusalem for the NDS Passover-Easter French Biblical Program. They spent an afternoon with us sharing their experience of the life of Sion in Romania.

There has been a particular kind of joy visible on everyone’s faces lately. One of the reasons for that was our experience last week of seeing Sr. Colette’s reaction upon receiving her first tablet an Apple iPad. Our community decided to give her a surprise gift to enable her to contact her family and Sion sisters across the world through email and skype. It is a pleasure to see her eagerness to learn and her ability to remember how to use the tablet; it was also a joy for us as a community to follow the little inspiration of addressing the need of another in this way.



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On that same day we also bought our shoes/sandals which will be the symbol for the celebration of the beginning of our Apostolic Year. We want to send a big THANK YOU to the Congregation for these wonderful gifts, and for all of your unending support in so many ways! Last Tuesday, we celebrated the feast of St. Patrick with the Apostolic Sisters and the Brothers. The celebration was prepared by Sr. Phil and Sr. Collette, and ended with Irish coffee.

The other day we went to the Holy Sepulchre for an overnight prayer vigil – what a memorable experience! While awaiting the opening of the church at 10:30 PM, we went to Ecce Homo where we ate our picnic and watched the movie entitled “The Scarlet and The Black” prepared by Sr. Rita.

Inside the Holy Sepulchre we saw Christians of different dominations celebrating the day of resurrection according to their doctrines and traditions. This is a very different experience for us who have known only Roman Catholic traditions, or encountered the Eastern Rites only in books; so we marvelled at the many ways of celebrating the same faith.

Among all this activities we did not forget to look after our flower and vegetable garden nor to prepare the meals for our retreat with Fr. Lionel Goh, OFM, before the closing of our Canonical Year and beginning the Apostolic Stage, on Friday the April 27<sup>th</sup>. This month, we did the final planning for this celebration and the apostolic experiences that will follow it. For the last two days of March we booked a 9-seater car and made youth hostel reservations for our desert trip with Br. Elio. After returning from the desert, we will spend Holy Thursday until Easter Sunday at Ecce Homo to celebrate Easter in Jerusalem and to remember our own “Pessach night” with Jesus words, “Do this in memory of me”. YOU to the Congregation for these wonderful gifts, and for all of your unending support in so many ways! Last Tuesday, we celebrated the feast of St. Patrick with the Apostolic Sisters and the Brothers. The celebration was prepared by Sr. Phil and Sr. Collette, and ended with Irish coffee.

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