



*Notre Dame de Sion*

## “SAINT JOHN IN MONTANA”

*Congregational Novitiate Jerusalem*

Ein Karem, Thursday, 31 March 2016

Excitement, Excursions and Lots of Information became part of our Orientation time.

During this month Sr. Maureen journeyed with us, focusing on Human Development; we closed that session with a 3-day retreat at the Franciscans' in Gethsemane, to prepare for our next step which will be the celebration of the beginning our Canonical year. Jesus went from Gethsemane, where his prayer before his Passion is remembered, and where there is a beautiful view of Jerusalem. He left there to fulfil his Mission by walking the way of the Cross towards his resurrection, his ascension into heaven, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to his disciples.

We celebrated Lucia's birthday, as well as Brother Carlos's and Brother Tiago's birthdays by having special Brazilian food.

Having finished an introduction to the Hebrew Alphabet with Brother Tiago, he is now teaching us the Our Father (Avinu she bashemaim) and all the shorter responses and refrains for the Hebrew Eucharist. With Sister Ann Catharine we explored the book of Esther and the celebration of Purim. We were saddened when we heard of the attack in Brussels just before the holidays of Purim and Easter; and that made us realize how much our world is influenced by what at times appears to be forms of slavery to such negative ways of thinking and being. Pessach is the celebration of freedom with its story of how people walked away from slavery in Egypt -- what a contradiction we are experiencing in our world today!

We had several excursions this month. First we visited Bethlehem, then Ein Gedi where we had a swim in the Dead Sea. Just some days before Palm Sunday we visited Bethany where Jesus and his disciples were frequently and warmly welcomed, and where Lazarus was raised to life by Jesus. Walking the Palm Sunday procession was one of the highlights during this month. Processing down the Mount of Olives, singing and waving palm branches, vividly reminded us of the day that the people of Jerusalem and Jesus' Disciples proclaimed "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

During Holy Week we went to Yad Vashem where our guide, Shlomo, made the experience both personal and informative. There we entered into the suffering of the Jewish people throughout the history of the past 2000 years and the suffering of so many people around the world today.

On Holy Thursday we went to Ecce Homo, which became our home for the next few days, so that we could participate in the celebrations of the Paschal Triduum. On Holy Thursday, after the washing of the feet, we went down to Gethsemane and walked the first way of the Cross via the Kidron Valley to the house of the High Priest, and then on to Ecce Homo where the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, had washed his hands before condemning Jesus to death. Early Friday morning we walked the way of the Cross from Ecce Homo to the Holy Sepulchre, where the crucified Jesus was buried and where on the first day of the week his resurrection was proclaimed. We were among those who chose to be locked in the Church until nearly midday that day in order to participate in all of the celebrations happening there that morning.

Saturday morning after breakfast we had a quiet time at the Garden tomb just outside Damascus Gate before we walked back to Ecce Homo for lunch and prepared for the Easter vigil in the Basilica of Ecce Homo that evening. On Sunday we celebrated with the whole Jerusalem Community, with an Easter Mass, followed by a Barbecue, in Ein Karem.

Our last excursion this month was to the city of Nablus, where Jacob's well is located, and Mount Gerizim with its Community of Samaritans, which, though small, continues to this day in Israel.

Sr. Juliana  
for the Community "St. John in Montana"