

*Notre Dame de Sion*  
"SAINT JOHN IN MONTANA"  
*Congregational Novitiate Jerusalem*

Ein Karem, Thursday, 07 July 2016

The month of June brought with it a lot of wind and the heat of the desert, but also the excitement of the many feasts which we celebrated particularly in the last few days of the month.

On the first of June we remembered the founding of Ein Karem in 1861, by Father Marie Alphonse Ratisbonne. During the first week of June Jerusalem celebrated a festival of light and the whole city was illuminated with various modern artistic light installations designed by local and international artist. There were very special light and sound shows projected on the walls of the Old City, focused on the gates, but also on many of the walls between the gates; like so many others, we stopped to watch and listen. The festival ended with Jerusalem Day, celebrating the reunification of Jerusalem during the Six Day War in 1967; as you can imagine, in this context, that event holds much joy for some, but memories of sorrow and pain for others.

The Muslims all over the world observed the month of Ramadan through the last three weeks of May and until about July 6. This transformed life in the Old City of Jerusalem and its surroundings into long days of fasting and prayer, ending with long nights of feasting, illuminated with strands of multi-coloured lights, and all the sounds of the gatherings of family members for *Iftar*, that is, breaking the fast together.

Early on Sunday morning, the 12th of June, we drove to Mount Zion then went into the Old City through the Zion Gate and went through the Jewish Quarter to the Western Wall (The *Kotel*) to join our Jewish brothers and sisters in the celebration of the Feast of Shavuot (seven weeks after Pessah). From there, we continued our Pilgrimage towards the roof of the upper room remembered as the place where the disciples, along with the women and the brothers of Jesus, stayed united in prayer until the day of Pentecost (Shavuot). After reading relevant passages of Scripture, we shared bread and wine before returning to Ein Karem filled with memories of that very special moment nearly 2000 years ago in the city of Jerusalem. Pentecost is also remembered today as the birthday of the Church.

Later that morning we welcomed Sr. Elisabeth Losinsky, who will guide the novices in a study of the History of our Congregation during the coming month. We thank Brother Joel for the video he made of Sr. Ivone's volunteer work in the French hospital; it can be found on YouTube, and the FOS Website. Sr. Colette was busy this month with the many groups who came to enjoy our beautiful place (a little paradise!) at Ein Karem. Towards the end of the month there were more celebrations: the Feast of John the Baptist on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, which is the feast of the Novitiate for the whole Congregation of Sion, and on the 29<sup>th</sup>, the foundation of the Ratisbonne Center by Father Alphonse in 1874. The birthdays that we celebrated in the Novitiate during this month were: Sr. Juliana's on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June and Maria's on the 25<sup>th</sup>.

Juliana also had to prepare for participation in the 26th General Chapter of the Congregation to be held in Sao Paulo, Brazil beginning on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June and lasting most of a month. We have been united with all of the sisters in prayer before and during this chapter, which will give us a new Congregational Leadership Team and orientations for the next 6 years of the life of our Congregation.

Juliana for the St. John in Montana community