

Newsletter, February 2014

St. John in Montana Congregational Novitiate, Jerusalem

Walking together in the land of Jesus

The first three arrivals with their experiences

During the first few days after our arrival, we lived through many experiences full of gifts, sharing between ourselves, praying with the story of the foundation and the last year (book 5) of Father Theodore, as well



as the beginning of our life in community even though we hadn't known each other before. But this week we lived as if we knew each other a long time ago. We went shopping, walked together the streets of Jerusalem and Ein Karem, and visited holy places like the Kotel and Holy Sepulchre and the visitation in Ein Karem. In our afternoons and evenings we sat together in a joyful atmosphere, played games and began to knit socks as Jerusalem starts to become cold and rainy. Sr. Michele is teaching us songs and we had good laughs together as well as deep sharing about our countries and who we are.

When we think that we are in the holy Land it is a blessing in its self. Like the first sisters we have started a wonderful adventure in our own lives, in another culture, different language and eating tradition. But the most important thing is that we are in this Land, the heart of the

congregation that gives us strength and encourages us to grow up in Sion.

-Alejandra, Clara, Victoria-

Rozeni's arrival



"Sr. Juliana cell Phone number: _____; she will pick me up here at the airport." was one of the prepared answers of the questions Rozeni had in her pocket, just in case.

Finally! We are here in Ein Karem



After patiently waiting for the processing of our visa requirements we arrived without any problems. We were happy to see all the novices waiting for us at the airport.

Ein Karem is a Jewish Village with a few significant Christian holy sites. Therefore there are many visitors and also lots of Christian pilgrims who come to visit, many of whom stay in our house. We welcome, serve and take care of them. Also Ein Karem is very meaningful to our congregation. To live in this place is like touching the roots of who we are and what we are called for.

When we arrived at Ein Karem our sisters, brothers and associates in Sion gave us a warm welcome. The big-



heartedness of the sisters is very touching. They make sure that we are comfortable and at home.

One afternoon we visited our contemplative sisters and were happy to know that they faithfully pray for our safe arrival.

Lastly it is a delight to share prayers, meals, life and the beauty of the place with all of them. It is good to be in this place in our beginnings of walking with Jesus.

- Arlyne, Joey

Visiting the Holy Sites

When we speak of Jerusalem we are reminded of the words of Bishop Cragg which says. "Our first task in approaching another people, another religion, and another culture is to remove our sandals, for we are stepping on the sacred grounds, lest we trample on people's dream, or worse, we may forget that God has been there before our arrival".

Living in a new country is quite challenging for the fact that we are simply different. However those differences lead us to a deeper respect for each culture and religion.

It was such a good experience seeing the historical places where our Jesus Christ was born, grew up and died. We were filled with so much joy and blessing for having an opportunity to be here.

Our experience in Ecce Home was a great blessing to all of us. Each Sister expresses her concern; kindness and love that make us feel at home.

First we visited the Western Wall where we have witnessed their deep faith in God. We joined the group of women who were dancing and singing. We were dancing with our soul glorifying and thanking God for all the blessings that we have received.

In the next day the cold windy morning welcomed us as we walked to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus and his 12 disciples had walked and prayed for Jerusalem. We can imagine that in our 2 years of living in Jerusalem, we will experience mountainous

challenges but like Jesus and his disciples we will walk hand in hand to sustain and



have courage in continuing the journey and moving forward towards our goal.

The following day we visited Bethlehem which is the beginning of our salvation; we remember the Holy Family of Jesus and the gift of his Incarnation. We expressed our heartfelt gratitude to Jesus for being simple and having a humble heart.

The silent atmosphere inside the Holy Sepulchre helped us to go back in His time especially the day of His trial. This is the place where full of tears, we remembered and contemplated the sufferings of Jesus. We simply sat in the corner, praying and listening to His voice in silence. Our Eucharistic celebration inside the Holy Sepulchre strengthened our faith in God. We felt the presence of Christ during the celebration of the liturgy; his words remind us always to follow him and to remain faithful.

On the other hand we have noticed that since Jesus' time up to the present, people have cried out for socio-economic-political justice. People have always struggled to obtain their daily human needs, their desire for peace, justice and fullness of life on all dimensions.

God is calling us to be more sensitive to the needs of our brethren and of all God's creation; to reach out to them in an act of loving service. Through this reality, we are challenged to be stewards of God's love for humanity.

Finally living in this Holy Land, we remember the words of Father Theodore Ratisbone saying: "I have no need to see the Holy Places. All I need to do is to contemplate from my window, the ruins of Mount Sion and the Mount of Olives".

- Clara, Joey, Rozeni -

TASTE, SEE, FEEL, SMELL AND TOUCH THE LAND WHERE JESUS HAD WALKED



A Warm Welcome from the sisters of St. Mary's community in Ecce Homo! We are grateful for the warm welcome of the sisters. Their generosity was touching. They showed great interest in our well-being and to know how we are doing. It was a great experience to be with them. It was a great experience to be with them. We felt at home in their community. We enjoyed our time with them.

The Pilgrimage

Our experiences of visiting various holy sites such as the Mt. of Olives, Bethlehem, the Holy Sepulcher, the Via Dolorosa, the Western Wall and attending the Arabic mass at St. Saviour were very meaningful. It was a moment that gives a new meaning to our faith. It was a grace filled experience to be in the place that is so significant to our faith tradition. We were able to see, feel, touch and smell what before was a mere words that we usually read and hear in the bible. Now we are becoming part of what makes the land of Jesus holy. We enjoyed each moment: praying on the Mount of Olives just like what Jesus and his disciples did 2000 years ago. We shared some jokes and laughs along the way and stopping and resting for a while every now and then. These experiences also enabled us to appreciate the beauty of the three religions trying to live together peacefully. It was a joy to see how the Jewish, Muslims and Christians worship one God.

On our way on the "Via Dolorosa" we were questioning ourselves, for example: What kind of cross do we carry? How can we carry the cross by ourself? Can we ask others for help? Can we help others

to carry their cross? Also when we fall down, are we able to continue our life journey like Jesus? We also prayed for the people suffering in our own country especially women and children who are exploited and abused.

We had a very rich experience in four days and it can be summarized by praying for peace for the whole world, that the wall of indifference would fall down: for example when we are at the place where Jesus told his disciples "Peace" for the first time after his Resurrection; also when he was weeping and praying for peace for Jerusalem. And it is also connected to the first Hebrew word we learned, "**SHALOM**" שלום which means peace. We also prayed with the sister for peace.

Finally what made our pilgrimage meaningful and joyful was that all of us were walking together in the land of Jesus.

In conclusion what made our pilgrimageworthwhile was food during lunch, like eating falafel together. This food is very famous for the Palestinian and Israeli people.

-Alejandra, Arlyne, Victoria

A Prayer for the Regional Assembly 2014

***Spirit of God,
We treasure the charism of Sion,
your gift to Theodore Ratisbonne,
which inspired and empowered him
to found our Congregation.***

***We ask you to touch our lives too,
that we might know your leading in
this time, in this place.***

***Purify us,
free us,
energize us,
to recognize your way with us now.***

***Attune our eyes to see,
our ears to hear,***

*our hearts to discern,
how you are leading us
to give new expression to this
charism,
your gift now to us,
in the Church and Society of our
time.*

*With faith in your presence and
confidence in your love,
we ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.*



Our first Hebrew Word

Hebrew lesson with
Sr. Michele.
Shalom is the Word

which she used for teaching us the first letters of the Hebrew Alphabet. "Shalom"

The letter shin stands for fire. The letter lamed stands for learning, study and teaching. The letter mem stands for water. As fire and water are eternal enemies so is the letter lamed which stands for learning, study and teaching, and also the letter for knowledge by heart (Lev), the one who brings together two opposites, two enemies, water and fire and makes peace between them.

**SHALOM, SALAM,
PEACE TO ALL!**

The three o' clock break

We decided to meet everyday at 3pm to have coffee and just share how we are. In that way we will get to know one another more.

**For all our families
and
sisters/brothers,
associates/friends in Sion,**

**Thank you! Obrigada!
Shukran! Maltiosh!
Salamat! Danke!
Merci! Todah!
For all your prayers,
support and love.**

**A big thank you to our sisters in
Beitruth for delicious and
bountiful lunch. We enjoyed
spending a lovely afternoon with
all of you.**

**A million thank youu for our
sisters, brothers and
associates in ein karem for
welcoming us!**

**Looking forward for
the opening of our
novitiate this coming
March and for more
walking together in
the land of Jesus.**