

E-BULLETIN #125

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 236

...a dream realised...

Our pilgrimage to Jordan, Israel and Palestine was a dream realised for our parish leaders at St Christopher's. We could walk in the footsteps of Jesus, had fantastic guides and drivers, and enjoyed the love, care and fun of being together. We constantly urged each other to get out of the bus to experience the places where Jesus lived, poured himself out for us and walked up and down tracks and steps. We realized the distances He and the early disciples covered, to preach and heal the crowds in every town and village. Celebrating Mass every day, in the very places where Jesus lived, brought the place and the gospels alive. Returning to four-star accommodation was a welcome end to each busy day.

This pilgrimage provided a mix of history and culture, archeology and scripture, leading to an ever-present awareness of Jesus. In fact we had to pinch ourselves that we were really there. Our two Catholic guides, from Jordan and Palestine, and our two Jewish guides enabled us to see so much that will take time to process. They were passionate about their own countries so we sensed both sides of the tension from the border crossings to the Golan Heights. We prayed constantly for peace and for Pope Francis' coming visit – commemorating 50 years since Paul VI's own trip to Jordan, Israel and Palestine.

Arriving in Amman, home to thousands of Palestinian refugees overlooked by a temple to Hercules, our guide was Hisham, a Jordanian Catholic [the changing of guides and drivers when in Jewish or Palestinian areas was a constant feature]. He took us to Madaba and a 6th century Byzantine mosaic map of the Holy Land in the Orthodox Church of St George.



The next day was spent in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Petra, an ancient Nabatean city carved out of rock, and a key point on the Silk Road linking China, India and trade cities of the Mediterranean. After walking about 4 kilometers through a gorge it appeared suddenly, many buildings carved out of the mountain itself, including churches and a monastery higher up, reached by 800 steps. An old man and his granddaughter sang a hymn in one of the empty churches.

We had a meal at Wadi Rum, in a bedouin desert camp where Lawrence of Arabia was filmed. A narrow gauge railway built by the Kaiser for the Ottoman Empire was nearby. We reached there on the back of jeeps and had an experience of desert sands and a taste of Bedouin hospitality. We then travelled on to Mt Nebo where Moses saw the Promised Land. We

remembered the words of Martin Luther King: "I have been to the mountain and seen the other side, but I won't get there..." This place made a deep impression.

Down to Aqaba and by camel to meet Abraham, to hear the recounting of his journey from Ur and be treated again to nomadic hospitality, and then cross into Israel at Eilat with a Jewish guide and bus driver. From here we visited Masada [Herod the Great's fortress] by cable car, the scene also of the last stand of 960 men, women and children – Zealots who killed themselves rather than fall into the hands of the 10,000 Roman army in 73 AD who after three years' construction were approaching their hill top perch on a colossal ramp. Proceeding to Jericho and the Mount of Temptation we encountered an almost biblical scene of two flocks of sheep led by their shepherds through the town.

We checked in at the Jacir Palace in Bethlehem [Palestine], changed guides, had Mass in St Catherine's church, and visited the Church of the Nativity built by the Crusaders over the earlier church that Helena, Constantine's mother, constructed over many sacred sites after the Edict of 313. The Persians destroyed these Byzantine churches in 600; the Crusaders rebuilt them in the 11th century. The Franciscans have had the custody of the sites for 800 years now, and have rebuilt churches under the guidance of a brilliant Italian architect, Berlucci, and are now engaged in constant maintenance. We met a Fr. Abraham who runs an orphanage, a seminary and a parish. He talked to us about the situation of Palestinian Catholics who receive \$50,000 annually from the Good Friday Appeal for the Holy places. He asked three things of us – to promote prayer for peace, pilgrimages and projects that could help them.

The Milk Grotto is where, tradition has it, Mary fed baby Jesus, but spilt a drop of breast milk and it turned a rock white. While we were there we heard the Carmelite nuns praying the Office. From there we approached the Shepherds Field and a church celebrating the story of the shepherds, hearing and telling the good news.

We drove to the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. The churches were in use by various groups, so we celebrated Mass in the Garden at Gethsemane. Later we returned for a Holy Hour, joined by another Australian pilgrim group, the muezzin meanwhile sounding the Muslim call to prayer. Some areas were restricted, being prepared for Pope Francis' visit, but we could visit the church where Peter denied Jesus. As we said Mass a cock crowed! We spent three days in Jerusalem, leading the Stations of the Cross and taking turns to carry it – it was very moving because we had time to reflect and pray. During it a little girl ran up, touched our cross and made the sign of the cross. Arriving at the Sepulchre we found it crowded and, as time was limited, we moved on in faith despite the human elements. We knelt where Jesus died on the cross, felt the rock, and prayed where He was hurriedly anointed on a nearby slab. We visited the Cenacle and prayed there, then moved to the Church of the Visitation which we had to ourselves, with time to pray the rosary. Our Jewish guide took us to the Holocaust Museum and to a memorial for children in complete darkness lit by five candles which were infinitely reflected by mirrors while the names of the children were spoken, and to a model of the second temple.



Day 12 brought us to Abu Gosh, Emmaus, to St Peter's Church in Joppa commemorating his vision preparing him to meet with Gentiles and convert the centurion Cornelius at Caesarea, seat of the Roman governor. One stone there bore the name Pontius Pilate. It had a hippodrome for chariot races and an amphitheatre. We ate there, and then visited the Carmelite monastery of St Elijah on Mt Carmel. From there we went to Nazareth, the city of Jesus' childhood and youth. We called at the church of the



Annunciation, then on to Cana in Galilee where our married pilgrims renewed their wedding vows and drank the special wine of Cana.

On Day 15 we went to the mount of the Beatitudes and an outdoor Mass. God was so good to us, it only rained at Cana when we were inside. We went to Caesarea Philippi where Jesus asked “Who do you say I am?” leading to Peter’s confession of faith, celebrating Mass at the church of the Primacy of

Peter. At the Golan Heights we could hear gunfire in nearby Syria only a kilometer away, then on to Tiberius from where we launched out on to the Sea of Galilee. A most beautiful spot, no wonder Jesus loved it. We sang and danced on the boat. Our bus took us to Mt Tabor and then smaller vans to the very top along winding roads. Here was the Church of the Transfiguration, designed by Berlucci in such a way that light through a rose window would light up the face of Jesus on August 6th.

We crossed back into Jordan to Gerasa, a well-preserved Greco-Roman city, and the sound of bagpipes in an amphitheatre and orations by members of our group. We had a fun time at the Dead Sea, floating and covered with mud and then on to Amman for the journey home. It was a time to pray, share, be anointed, shop, take photos, eat and sleep. We have gained so much that has and will change our lives. It was a fantastic opportunity, a spiritual journey for all of us.

Patrick Jackson sac [AU] – Syndal – AUSTRALIA
23.05.14
frp.jackson@syndalcatholic.org.au

item 237

Bravo John: making ‘freedom’ a reality

The 2014 *Volunteer of the Year* [WA], John Nagle, jokes that he is not a good enough humanitarian to fulfil his role with Outcare, a service supporting men in their transition from prison into the community. “Without my faith I wouldn’t be able to do what I do”.

Speaking to *The Record* after receiving his award on 15 May John shared the journey of his own transition from his career in the hardware business to his 13 years as a volunteer with Outcare.

He recalls the moment his interest was sparked, several years before his retirement. “I was approached by a young man looking for work and noticed a few years gap in his résumé. He informed me that he had been in prison and it made me aware of the difficulties he was going through in his search for work.”



John was able to put the man in contact with a friend who was able to provide him with employment. The encounter planted a seed which would bloom once John's own working days would come to an end.

"I used to work 10-11 hours a day before my retirement and I was never much of a television watcher, and there was only so much gardening I could do", John explained. "Besides my wife Joan was very encouraging – although her enthusiasm may have been driven by the thought of having me under her feet all day" he added with a laugh.

John has always been inspired by the example of eighteenth century saint and founder of the Pallottines, **Vincent Pallotti**, who spent his life reaching out to society's outcasts including those in prisons and he is grateful for the opportunity to be able to put his faith into action. John's compassion for those exiting prison grows each time he witnesses the difficulties many face as they make the step back into society. His experience has allowed him to see the devastating effects, both socially and economically, on individuals and their families. "We see the challenges not only for the men trying to re-enter the employment and housing markets, but also with their families who often have to deal with children, mortgages, schooling and everyday living without their partners," he said.

John recall a comment made several years ago during a talk he gave to a church group when a member of the audience expressed admiration for the work being done with offenders, but was quick to emphasise that he would not want them living in his neighbourhood. It is attitudes such as these that John would like to see change.

The 77-year old's experience has given him a deeper insight into the tragic cycle of recidivism and he believes that society needs to politically reassess its perception of offenders and adopt a preventative approach. "We are looking at the situation from the wrong end," he insists. "We should be promoting early childhood education and getting alongside parents who are struggling, and not putting our money into building more prisons".



John, an acolyte at Queen of Apostles parish in Riverton, has used contacts he made during his time involved with the WA Football League to assist men in their transition. During one of his first visits to a prison John discovered that there were a number of football teams playing one another. But their uniforms were falling apart. He was able to approach Outcare and they were able to provide sweaters, shorts and socks for all players.

John has also been able to observe the exceptional talent amongst the prison teams and has been able to link a number of young men into football clubs on their release. "All these men have something to offer and the role of receiving them back into society needs to be a communal one", he said. "We need to restore the dignity and self respect they have lost and assist them in breaking the cycle they have found themselves in."

When John's 4 adult children learned of his decision to spend his retirement years moving in and out of prisons, they were initially reluctant. "My wife has always been very supportive because she is a volunteer herself", he said, "but when I told the children what I was doing I think they were worried, not just about

my safety, but my mental health”, he chuckled. All, however, were proudly in attendance when he received his award from the WA governor, Malcolm McCusker on May 15.

interview thanks to Mark Reidy – *The Record*
04.06.14
therecord.com.au

John Nagle – Perth – AUSTRALIA
john.nagle@ozemail.com.au



sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #124

I find Francis both real and refreshing. As one involved in Catholic Education there are many challenges – Francis speaks of cultural and language differences when talking about formation – yep absolutely same challenges among teachers and at another layer among students too... integrating life and faith in real ways , working with the world of the teacher or student is the only way. Thanks.

JC 15.06.14

Thanking you for sending me E-Bulletin. This article is good.

BB 17.06.14