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My second journey to the Holy Land was a spiritual growth and educational experience, plus an outreach ministry to children of the area.

Traveling with Fr. Ed White, my pastor at St. Stephen the Martyr in Renton, WA, increased my spiritual and prayer life. I pray, join in adoration, daily Mass, and meditation more often. Father Ed shared his immersion in the Holy Land, and our trip in the bulletin and in sermons. Our shawls that identified us and touched so many holy sites, including the tomb of Jesus, continued to bless us as Father anointed the sick and dying of our parish. Now when I listen to the Gospel readings, I see the hills, valleys, buildings, streets, and byways where Jesus spent his 33 years with us on earth. When reading scripture and biblical literature, I understand with increased depth from the insights given by our guide, Jacob Shadar, Watching a movies or films cannot compare to the actually being in Israel. My interest in each current newscast or article has increased by the interactions experienced during the 11 days.

Donations for the Mt of Olives, Home of Peace continued to come in. Sister Raphaela sent a picture of the near completed NEW home in Bethlehem. She was so grateful for the \$1000 donation that allowed the electricity to be connected. Our contacts at the Holy Child Program in Bethlehem thanked us for funds to keep the school for the mentally, physically, and emotionally handicapped children operating at a total capacity of 30 students.



Every day of our journey brought new “little miracles.”



Tuesday & Wednesday: Our journey began with a lost passport but found just in time to board the flight. With 2 hours between flights in Atlanta, Father was given wine and Delta Airlines reps unlocked the “Situation Room” with seating for 13 persons for our first Mass, a blessing from the kindness of others. After our arrival drive to our hotel on the Sea of Galilee, Father again said Mass under the moonlight with borrowed candles in the warm air. .

Thursday: Evelyn got left behind but caught up by taxi, a ride that she enjoyed. We saw ancient ruins and caves, visited Caesarea, Mt. Carmel and Elijah’s Cave, where God is found in the silence.

Friday: I found veils screened with the “Song of Songs” for the brides at a bargain and rings for the grooms. In answer to Father’s joke the night before about learning the dance, there was impromptu Israeli Song and Dance on the Sea of Galilee boat ride. We were able to enter Mt. of Beatitudes Church even though it was closed.

Saturday: The Hotel found white roses at the price of carnations for the Cana renewal of vows. Ernie shared that his first marriage ceremony to Lori was a rushed and private one so he could get to Army training in time. I was touched to see the ring on Harry’s finger at our reunion. That evening, David & Lisa Mitts spoke about life as Messianic Jews in Israel. What a surprise to learn they were originally from our home town of Renton.



Sunday: We prayed for rain to ease the dry parched land and it came but not while we were at Mass outdoors in Emmaus. Our hotel could not provide lunches for our next day picnic but a contact was able to make and bring them to us. When the school supplies were brought together, it appeared to be the miracle of “loaves and fishes.” Every child received a filled back pack and enough left over for the “Holy Child Program” too.

Monday: There was no lunch delivery problem because the caterer knew Sr. Raphaela.

Tuesday: The tour company admonished us he did not know where to find the “Holy Child Program” but our Bethlehem driver had been there 3 weeks earlier for a field trip, so there was no problem. After our seminarian, Bryan did his first scripture meditation for us, a rainbow glowed over Jerusalem.

Wednesday: The doctor, who came to treat Anne L, stayed to pray with Father and then presented him with a book he authored about the area.

Thursday: Time stood still this morning. From the breakfast table, to the phone, to the meeting room, to packing more donations for “Home of Peace” and “Holy Child Program” and to meeting sister took less than 25 minutes. It had to be God’s time. It was an emotional goodbye for all.

Reunion: About six weeks after our return home, we met to share memories and pictures. Everyone was touched by this personal experience.

This special time of miracles drives me to I want to return to Israel and Palestine to explore and learn more. I invite you to come along too. *Kathleen*

