



Icone miraculeuse de la Mère de Dieu du monastère russe de sainte Marie Madeleine au Mont des Oliviers.

## PILGRIMAGE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, WE MET AT THE AIRPORT AS PLANNED, JUST OVER FIFTY PEOPLE, MOST OF WHOM DIDN'T KNOW EACH OTHER. OUR TRIP TO TEL AVIV, VIA BUDAPEST, WENT OFF WITHOUT A HITCH. AFTER ARRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, WE REACHED OUR HOTEL IN JERUSALEM FOR A FEW HOURS OF REST. FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, WE MET AT THE AIRPORT AS PLANNED, JUST OVER FIFTY PEOPLE, MOST OF WHOM DIDN'T KNOW EACH OTHER. OUR TRIP TO TEL AVIV, VIA BUDAPEST, WENT OFF WITHOUT A HITCH. AFTER ARRIVING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, WE REACHED OUR HOTEL IN JERUSALEM FOR A FEW HOURS OF REST.

However, no rest was to be had! Bishop Gabriel, accompanied by his faithful deacon Father Athanasius and Fathers Basil and Yannick left the hotel immediately first to visit the Patriarchate, where, as every morning, matins and liturgy are celebrated in the presence of the Patriarch, bishops and members of the monastic community. That morning, S.B. Theophilus sang matins. Afterwards we were warmly welcomed and invited to have coffee after the service.

Our first visit was devoted to the Church of the Resurrection (the Anastasis), where places of the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord are venerated, and the nearby church of St. James as well as the Coptic and Ethiopian monasteries. Afterwards we went to the Patriarchate, where we were received by His Beatitude Theophilus III. We then went to lunch in the beautiful home of the Association of Palestinian Orthodox women, where we discovered the variety of local traditional cuisine.

On Sunday, October 23, 2011, we attended the Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth, built on the well, which according to tradition is where the Mother of God went to fetch water when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. Presided over by His Beatitude Theophilus III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Liturgy was concelebrated by Archbishop Gabriel of Comana, Bishop Kyriakos, Metropolitan of Nazareth, Bishop Isichios, Metropolitan and Archbishop of Capitolias Aristarchus of Constantine and the priests of the pilgrimage, the Fathers Jean Gueit, Yannick Provost, Basil Molnar and Jean-Michel Sonnier.

Sung fervently in Arabic by the entire congregation, the liturgy left a strong impression on us. It was deeply moving to discover such a dynamic liturgical tradition.

Following the liturgy and a humble meal, we began our tour of the main holy places of Galilee and Samaria by the monastery of Jacob's well. The latter is located in Nablus Samaritan territory, in the territories under Palestinian administration, the very place where Christ met the Samaritan woman. Its beautiful church, recently completed and dedicated, houses the relics of Saint Philouménos, a contemporary holy martyr who was a monk of the monastery and assassinated in 1977, canonized recently by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

The next day, Monday, in Galilee, was devoted to the Sea of Galilee near Nazareth, which played an important role in Christ's ministry. It was there, in Capernaum, along the Sea of Galilee, where he chose his disciples (the magnificent «Monastery of the 12 Apostles» that pilgrims have visited is devoted to this event). Moreover, it was in where He lived and taught in the synagogue, and where he heals Peter's mother-in-law.



La Liturgie en arabe avec le Patriarche Théophile III en l'église de l'Annonciation à Nazareth.

Close by is Tabgah, where the miracle of the loaves occurred. It is also the place where Christ welcomes his disciples after his Resurrection, where they ate grilled fish together.

Also nearby is the Russian Orthodox Monastery of St. Mary Magdalene. We were able to relive several events of the life of Christ and His disciples, by visiting the places where they occurred, singing hymns and listening to the corresponding liturgical reading of the Gospel episodes discussed by Bishop Gabriel. To top the day off, we shared a delicious and memorable lunch of grilled fish at lake Tiberias.

Tuesday will be remembered as



Monastère de Saint Sabbas

the day where, by pure coincidence, we ran into pilgrims from the parishes of Florence and Rome, led by Fathers George Blatinsky and Alexis Baikov, while climbing Mount Tabor. Beforehand, we had visited the huge Catholic basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, and then gathered at St. Gabriel's Orthodox Church where the Liturgy was held on Sunday morning.

On the way to Jerusalem, we stopped at the Monastery of Saint Gerasime whose spiritual feat is reminiscent of Saint Seraphim of Sarov's, as he lived in good company with a lion. Also commemorated here is the place where Mary and Joseph stopped when fleeing with Jesus from Bethlehem to Egypt, as well as the meeting between St. Mary the Egyptian and St. Zosimus. Our group was heartily welcomed in the courtyard by a multitude of birds singing.

The day of Wednesday was also devoted to Jerusalem: We visited the Wailing Wall and Via Dolorosa; the house of Joachim and Anne where the Mother of God was born; the jail where Christ was imprisoned; the pool of Bethesda, and the Armenian quarter with the Cenacle (upper House) and the Church of the Dormition. The day ended with a visit to Mount Zion and the seminary of

the Patriarchate, near which, thanks to Mother Marina, we saw a very old church where, according to tradition, St. John the Theologian prayed to the Mother of God.

On Thursday, after the liturgy in the cave of the Nativity in Bethlehem, during which the priests of the pilgrimage gave Holy Communion to several hundred faithful, we visited Bethlehem before going into the wilderness of Judea, to the monastery of St. Sava. St. Sava lived in this beautiful and holy place between 460 and 532, as well as many great saints such as John Damascene, who composed the canon of Easter Matins, and St. Andrew of Crete.

Afterwards our group went to the Monastery of St. Theodosius and the

Shepherds' Field, where we were warmly received by the community. Following lunch, we visited Hebron in the Russian Monastery of the Holy Trinity, near the Oak of Mamre.

Friday was devoted to Jericho and its surroundings. Our group began by going to the monastery of Saint Georges de Koziba, descending into the deep gorges of the Kidron Valley, where to go back up you sometimes need a donkey. We then went to the places of Christ's baptism in the Jordan River, followed by a visit to the Monastery of Quarantine, where Christ had withdrawn into the desert. Some of us went there on foot, while others (it was very hot up there!) took a cable car that had been built recently. The day continued with a visit to the Sycamore which Zacchaeus had climbed to see Christ, near a parish church in Jericho. The day ended at the village of Bethany where Mary and Martha lived with their brother Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead before entering Jerusalem. We all gathered in the tomb of Lazarus at the monastery of Martha and Mary.

Saturday, the day began with a beautiful liturgy at the tomb of the Mother of God, in Gethsemane, celebrated in Greek, French and Slavonic by Bishop Theophan of Gerason, Archbishop Gabriel and Bishop Varnava of Tchekboksar. We then visited the monastery dedicated to the martyr Stephen, at the place where he was stoned. We sang the Troparion and Kontakion before heading to the Mount of Olives, where our Lord



Après la Liturgie dans la Basilique de la Nativité à Bethléem



Méditation au monastère des 12 apôtres au bord du lac de Tibériade

ascended into heaven, and sang the troparion of in the Orthodox chapel dedicated to the Ascension. We then visited the church and monastery St. Mary Magdalene, before going into town to buy a few necessities. After lunch, we visited the beautiful monastery of the Mount of Olives, where at the invitation of Archbishop Mark of Berlin, we stayed for vespers.

Earlier in the night, our group took part in the sacred liturgy in Christ's tomb, presided by Archbishop Theodosius and concelebrated by

Archbishop Gabriel and four other bishops, as well as forty priests. Thousands of pilgrims from all different countries thronged the temple of this deeply Christian presence. Some of us found it difficult to concentrate amidst such a crowd.

The last day of the pilgrimage was attended by over fifty people of all ages from many different parishes of our diocese and other jurisdictions. According to everyone's wishes, the day was devoted to open houses. Afterwards, everyone gathered for a final visit to the Church of the Resurrection, to sing the Paschal stichera in front of Christ's tomb.

On Sunday morning, Bishop Gabriel, accompanied by Fathers John and Yannick, the deacon Athanasius and Anastasia Provost, went to thank Patriarch Theophilus III for his hospitality during their

stay. After asking many questions about the situation of Orthodoxy in Western Europe, the Patriarch assured Archbishop Gabriel of his fraternal support, and thanked him for the witness of Orthodoxy in the countries of his jurisdiction. The meeting ended with a friendly lunch hosted by the Patriarch.

The return to Paris transpired with the usual surprises due to strikes by «certain staff divisions.» At the Budapest airport, Archbishop Gabriel thanked Father Yannick who had taken it upon himself to organize the pilgrimage for us, and we all sang a heartfelt «Mnogaia lieta.»

It has since been decided that a repeat experience of the pilgrimage will be organized next year. The tradition of pilgrimage to the Holy Land has found its second wind.

«A pilgrimage to the Holy Land has been organized under the direction of Archbishop Gabriel, from 21 to 31 October, 2011...»



Le site de la piscine de Béthesda

*The information reached me 13 March, 2011.*

*A pilgrimage to the Holy Land... Jerusalem.*

*Yes, of course. Or, maybe one day... The geopolitical situation as well as impending heart surgery made me hesitate; but two doctors told me to go ahead: a Jew and a Muslim!*

*It seemed meaningful; I decided yes.*

*Friday 21 October at 4:50 PM ... Roissy Terminal 2. Seeing familiar faces I knew it wasn't a dream, or at least it was a shared dream. First stop Budapest, then Tel Aviv on the departures board - I still believe. At last things start going faster on the dark road where the name Jerusalem appears for the first time on a road sign. I'm really here, and nowhere else, what a shock!*

*One meets Jerusalem like a person. Hurrying along the streets of the Christian quarter*

leaves little time for meditation but the encounter is physical, a general mobilization of the senses, the impulsive need to touch, see, smell, hear... Then the overwhelming appearance of the church of the Resurrection, the Holy Sepulcher. Instinctively one stops. You don't observe, you observe yourself – if you are self-absorbed... a face to face of stone and flesh.

Father Yannick tells us, "Here every stone has a story to tell." He knows what he's talking about: Before this seeming architectural chaos his explanations are welcome. A scenario that is to become familiar: the Romans, the Byzantines, the Persians, the Arabs, the Crusaders, the Turks... constructions, destructions, reconstructions, restorations... the architectural chaos reflecting the historical chaos. Yet the absence of architectural unity is not unpleasant. I have always liked the stuttering of monuments that tell their story. An arch or bay half-concealed, a column encased in a wall holding up nothing, reused stones that answer your bemused interrogations with, "And where do you come from?" For these stones speak. You have to listen and hear, to touch. A strange confusion of the senses.

I take the steps leading to Golgotha, the place of the Crucifixion. Windows reveal a part of the living rock, contrasting with the ornate, worked stone around it. This opposition reoccurs in other places. Spontaneously one prefers the original nature of the place, but the centuries have left their imprint with their own way of venerating these places. To wish to see the original state is perhaps egocentric: me alone with the original virginity of the place... always me... but we are not alone.

And indeed we are not alone, rivers of pilgrims bear us down to the anointment stone where Our Lord was anointed before being buried. I bow down to touch the stone, like Thomas who touched and believed. But it is also to be touched; the relics relay something to us, like prayer, a relation from which we cannot separate ourselves. The idea of the symbol occurs to me, not as a representation, but as a part of reality, the union of two realities, one visible and one invisible, one tangible, the other intelligible. One that unites

dimensions of the person, body, soul, mind.

It's not all joy, there is a painful side sometimes to what we see and hear. The chaos of history is still present. It is difficult not to feel the still-existing tensions. In Jerusalem and elsewhere coexist communities ever ready for confrontation. But one also senses all the prayers that rise up from Jerusalem, the antinomic aspect of the pilgrimage, a light and dark side, the evils and miseries of the world on one side and the remedies and anti-



Premiers pas sur la Terre Sainte  
Devant l'église de la Résurrection ou Anastasis

rather than separating, in opposition to the separating "diabolos".

The concrete and material aspect of the pilgrimage coincides perfectly with this order of things. "Here and not elsewhere" I said to myself... Yes, I had to come here. When Our Lord incarnated he came to a precise location in our world, at a specific time. To come here is to reinforce a relationship, tighten the bonds. A pilgrimage is not only a spiritual undertaking but an effort of all the

notes on the other. Opposed to hatred, rancor, the desire to possess, the fear of losing, selfishness are love, pardon, selflessness sometimes to the point of martyrdom, like the holy new martyr Philomenos whom we venerated at the Monastery of Jacob's Well.

At each place where the important events in the life of Christ took place: the Transfiguration, the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the Last Supper, the resurrection of Lazarus, the Ascension, our archbishop Monsignor



Auprès du Puits de Jacob

*Gabriel would give an extempore homily after the celebration of a short office. On Mount Tabor he emphasized that the real miracle was not that the Lord shone in His divinity more than before. The real miracle was that the earthly vision of the disciples was capable of contemplating for a moment what they could not normally see. On a somewhat smaller scale one could say that one of the gifts we received during this pilgrimage was the transformation of our vision. It was apparent from the first day, while visiting the Church of the Resurrection. The chaotic nature of this monument as a condensation of human history, its oppositions and divisions, could overwhelm a different interpretation, one offered by the Death and Resurrection of Christ: He has assumed and integrated everything. As Father Jean Gueit has said, Christ came for everyone without exception, Jews, Christians, Muslims as well as atheists, the indifferent, the hostile, from the past and the present. In Him alone resides unity, cohesion, the end of chaos, where we normally see division and fragmentation.*

*The same alternation of light and shadow even played in anecdotic details: one guardian of a holy place would greet you with the friendliness and sensitivity of a bear deprived of its honey; another would receive you with real warmth, asking where you were from, treating you like a pilgrim, like a person... a wound followed by an unction.*

*Shadows could include health problems that bring one back to reality; a mounting fatigue took its toll. My heart condition and the attendant anxiety were ever-present, inspiring somber ideas. Die in Jerusalem? I don't really want to, and a friend points out that it's not on the agenda; but there have already been so many changes to the agenda which Father Yannick has taken in stride.*

*Maybe I could ask him to... put off my demise? But no, it's also the fear of missing something, but then you see and hear something else, people who appear. When you've hit bottom you see fundamental values such as the need to forgive, which underscores the vanity of all resentments. In spite of the season, we are never far from Forgiveness Sunday, and like an eager pupil who wants to do next semester's homework now, I got on some people's nerves. But I say to myself, I am not alone! In the last ten days have we not celebrated one after the other the Nativity, the Transfiguration, Holy Thursday, Pascha, the Ascension, Pentecost, the Dormition?! O happy upheaval! The cycles of liturgical time are God's time, come to pierce our complacent linear perception of time!*

*The time to end inevitably came too. But no. Twenty-five years ago I had the good fortune to accompany a pilgrimage to the Monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai. I have not yet come back down, appearances notwithstanding. When you go up to Jerusalem, nowhere is it written that you have to come back down... I try to imagine: if I had been alive at the time of Christ, no doubt I would not have been one of those who were willing to travel dozens of miles across Galilee to meet Him, especially not with my heart condition! I would probably not have climbed a tree like Zacheus the better to see Him, and not only because of my small stature... I imagine rather something like this, when a friend comes to draw me out of my lair:*

*-Come with me! Jesus is coming; let's go hear Him!*

*-Who?*

*-Jesus of Nazareth? You'll see, he's incredible.*

*-Oh, well, you know, incredible people don't really interest...*

*-This one is different. He's... He has... How to explain? Come, see, listen, and you'll understand!*

*-You think?*

*-I know!*

*-.....OK.*

*Yves Pointurier (Paroisse de la Ste Trinité Paris)*



An International group of adults gathered in the English Lake District to create and present a large piece of artwork they had made to the Orthodox Parish of St Bega, St Mungo and St Herbert in Keswick for display outside the church at Braithwaite. The group included visitors from Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Romania, Bulgaria, Latvia, Sweden, France, Germany, Slovakia & Finland. The work is a flock of birds taking flight and they are created from steel, zinc and copper to represent peace and reconciliation. The group included Muslims from Turkey and North Cyprus and from the United Kingdom. Everyone attended the liturgy and enjoyed the hospitality afterwards. The artwork has gained approval from the village and passers-by.

The week was organised by the local social enterprise called Grampus Heritage using EC (GRUNDTVIG Programme) funding on a project called 'How to Understand My European Neighbour' (HUMEN). The church will join with Grampus on several other European wide projects not only in Cumbria but in Cyprus and Romania.

*Père John Musther - PP Keswick UK*



## THE JOY OF AN ORDINATION

On Sunday the 2nd of October of this year in Lyon, Archbishop Gabriel presided at the ordination to the diaconate of Didier Veillat, in the community dedicated to St Alexis of Uguine and St Marie of Paris, gathered around their priest, Fr André Fortounatto, and their deacon Richard Vaux. There was an atmosphere of excitement that day in the temporary chapel (because they are soon going to move) of the parish gathered together for what immediately felt like a major event, a promising experience of eternity in the celebration of the sacrament of the eucharist and of the ordination. To this day, Didier and his wife Christine, faithful parishioners of the Body of Christ in this place of grace, had been recognised by the parish as people who could give a special service such as that of a deacon and his companion.

The day started beneath rays of sunshine with the arrival from Paris of the Archbishop with Hierodeacon Athanasios. The chapel swarmed with busy people, young and old, whose number and behaviour recalled to mind a family before a feast, each one having his role to accomplish in the preparation of the event. Archbishop Gabriel immediately found his place as a generous and affectionate father amongst them, distributing blessings and embracing each one with his personal affection.

The Divine Liturgy was remarkably solemn, efficient under the competent eye of the omnipresent rector; inspiring the choir to sing surprisingly capably and well together; beneath the bright and almost joyful gaze of the children shouting with their parents their traditional "Axios" when the moment came for the actual ordination. The Archbishop talked about the Church which he had seen at work in the sacrament and conviviality of the day, joyful and united, deep and open to the Lord,



and above all the increase in the body of the faithful to which he is a witness. He congratulated Fr André for his qualities as the architect of this community and his perseverance in prayer; and the new deacon Didier, modest and humble today, for whom the call is to serve attentively and with determination in holiness, the community at last, very lively, young in its vitality and old in its wisdom.

Afterwards we sat down in the room next door for some earthly food which the people had brought. Joy and pleasure to be together and serious or cheerful conversation – all created and nourished the friendship. For us, visitors for one day, but close due to family links, it was a joy to see a growing community, transfigured in Church, and loved and blessed by its Archbishop.

Michel Fortounatto, (retired priest of the Archdiocese)